

**POST COLONIAL CONFLICT AND CULTURAL COMPLEXITIES: A READING OF
MONGO BETI'S REMEMBER RUBEN, KING LAZARUS AND PERPERTUA AND THE
HABIT OF UNHAPPINESS**

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Abstract

The French colonial government was quite different from the English, in francophone countries the policy of assimilation was used against the policy of association as used by Anglophone countries. As such literatures coming from these former French colonies were written in French. With the end of colonialism, the new trend of post colonialism afforded writers the opportunity, to represent themselves through literature. This paper aims to look at the francophone literature and representation of post colonial Cameroon, through the works of Mongo Beti. An essential theme of Beti's early novels, which advocate the removal of all vestiges of colonialism, is the basic conflict of traditional modes of African society with the system of colonial rule and the attendant cultural complexities. This paper attempts to bring out these features in Remember Ruben, King Lazarus, and Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness and establishes the intricacies inherent in the postcolonial Cameroon.

Keywords: Post Colonial Conflict, Mongo Beti, African Literatures, African Society, Cultural Complexities.

Introduction

Beti has been called among the most perceptive of the French-African writers in his presentations of African life from an African perspective. His first novel, *Ville Cruelle* (1954; *Cruel Town*), appeared under the name Eza Boto. Although Beti eventually rejected both novel and pen name, the book fore-shadowed the subjects of his later work, especially the confusions experienced by rural villagers trying to adjust to cultural changes in an emerging Africa. Beti's theme is the destructive influence of colonialism, particularly in education and religion, which results in the loss of African identity and tradition. His principal method of conveying his ideas is satire, often presented in colloquial dialect or language inappropriate to the situation, from the viewpoint of a young, naive narrator. After publishing another novel, Beti stopped writing for more than a decade. When he resumed, his criticism focused on the colonial characteristics of Africa's post independence regimes. *Main basse sur le Cameroun* (1972; "Rape of Cameroon"), a book explaining the emplacement of a neocolonial regime in his homeland, was immediately banned in France and in Cameroon. Two years later he published the novels *Perpétue et l'habitude du malheur* (1974; *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*) and *Remember Ruben* (1974).

Perpetua is a mystery story of the murder of a promising young woman by the combined forces of backward traditions and neocolonial evils *Perpétue*, the story treats of the victimization of the modern African woman in today's independent Africa, is a noteworthy event which should arouse the interest and curiosity of most scholars of African literature. In short, Mongo Beti is taking a critical look at well-known and accepted African traditions, in his homeland as well as in greater Black Africa.. *Remember Ruben* published in (1974), a documentary-styled account of colonial politics, revolving around the character of Mor-Zembe, its sequel, *La Ruine presque cocasse d'un polichinelle* (1979; "The Nearly Comical Ruin of a Puppet"), chronicle the fortunes of several revolutionaries who fight against and defeat a French-backed regime in their newly independent country. Some of Beti's later novels, including *Les Deux Mères de Guillaume Ismaël Dzewatama, futur camionneur* (1983; "The Two Mothers of Guillaume Ismaël Dzewatama, Future Truckdriver").

In 1958, Mongo Beti published *King Lazarus*, the text centered on the attempt by a catholic priest in converting a warrant chief which brings the community to conflict.

Critics praise Beti for his humanistic presentations of characters from different, even conflicting, viewpoints. While he satirizes misguided missionaries or self-important students, he also sympathizes with them as human beings. In this way, Beti relates specifically African matters to the larger context of humanity in general.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical frame work used in this paper is the post colonial theory. According to Rajeev G

"The adjective "post colonial" signifies the notion that the novel or be it any piece of writing for that matter, goes beyond every possible parameters of the locality, region and nation to participate in the global scenario today which is an aftermath of European colonization".

The start of nationalist movement lead to the dismantling of colonial control, as countries inspired by each other gained independence from colonizing powers. Writers from former colonies sort to define themselves and create an identity for their selves and thereby depicting the effect of colonialism on their respective cultures.

It is necessary to support whatever argument presented in this essay with existing scholarship relating to the topic. This will help to establish points of convergence and divergence, through which fresher perspectives on the topic may be presented. Post colonial works on earlier literary works have placed the spot light on the master subaltern relationship, the misrepresentation of Africa, political disillusionment that followed independence, the place of women in third world countries and the use of religion as a weapon ;as a colonialist tool. Ngugi as quoted by Patrick Ebewo in his work "*Religion as an Ideological Weapon in Africa: A View from the Stage*" asserts that the church is a tool for neo-colonialism:

But, ultimately the African church's greatest danger is in its area of social involvement. After independence, African middle-class was born: this class is busy grabbing and amassing land and business concerns at the expense of the

peasants and working masses.....will the church as happened in Europe and Latin America, form alliance with this bureaucratic, commercial middle elite, the members of which, in any case, act as agents of foreign capitalism? Can the church as a body reject the exploitation of the masses by a few who, because of the benefits of education and control of social institutions, are in a position to amass so much wealth? Will the church reject capitalism which is being found wasteful and inhuman?

Ngugi has often noted with disgust how Christianity has aligned itself with the ruling class and given the lie to its protestations of support for a humanistic vision of life, he is particularly incensed with the hypocrisy of religious leaders and with the ineffectuality and sheer apathy of the intellectuals. Ngugi attacks religion as instrument of exploitation and impoverishment of the poor. The Christianizing mission came with colonization. The missionaries are accused of holding the Bible in the left hand and the gun in the right. Mda, like Ngugi wa Thiong'o, censors the role of Christian religion and some of its ideologies in controlling the African mind.. Religion is often regarded as the "essence of transcendental values". According to Patrick Ebewo:

Ngugi and Mda are not painting this bleak picture of church and religion simply because they dislike them. They acknowledge, when there is need to do so, the positive contributions of religion to the development of mankind and society in Africa. The two playwrights see nothing wrong in church's participation in politics; they only express disgust, and are disillusioned with the church's negative involvement in national politics.

Other post colonial works have concentrated on the role of women in post independent countries, which is seen by some scholars as the role of women in third world countries, seen from the post colonial feminist perspective.

Third World Women and Feminism

Within the postcolonial literary discipline there have been ongoing discussions about First World feminism in relation to Third World women (McLeod 174). However well-meant, universal claims of a global womanhood always run the risk of marginalizing someone and of leaving culturally specific patterns of power and oppression unseen. Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticizes western feminists in her essay "*Feminism Without Borders. Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*". and accuses many of them for unconsciously reproducing the unequal power relations that already is at work politically and financially, within their analysis . Mohanty shows how Third World women are often described in sweeping terms as religious, family-oriented, illiterate and domestic, placing them in a position as 'the other' in contrast to the allegedly more progressive and modern women in the First World.

In Third World countries, they tend to describe women as powerless exploited objects and victims as opposed to the assumed powerful male exploiters. Mohanty also notes that the relationships between women are often ignored, as well as different kinds of relationships between women and men. There is no standard male-female dichotomy in the novel but rather a plurality of relationships. Hopefully it is by now clear to the reader how far-fetched it is to

assume that all women share the same cultural or political interests only because of their similar bodies. Women as a group are more likely to be deeply divided by boundaries like class, ethnicity, and nationality.

Some other preoccupation of post colonial literature was the disapproval of Eurocentric writing and ideologies. During the colonial period written text favored the Europeans and their superiority over the non-Europeans. It was the system of power that determines the representations. Terry Goldie maintains that *"the indigene is a semiotic pawn on a chess board under the control of the white signmaker"* (Goldie 1995: 232). Thus, in oriental discourse the Europeans were portrayed as "masculine", "democrat", "rational", "moral", "dynamic", and "progressive". Otherwise, since the writing was under the direct control of the Europeans the non-Europeans were described as "voiceless", "sensual", "female", "despotic", "irrational", and "backward". Colonial discourse never depicted the anxiety and the suffering of the colonial stemmed from the underestimated image of themselves.

Throughout the colonial period and the aftermath, the west had cultural and economic hegemony over the non-Europeans through orientalist discourse. According to Bill Ashcroft the colonizers who believed themselves as "a high level of civilization", fabricated the colonized lands in colonial discourse as *"civilizations in decay, as manifestations of degenerate societies and races in need of rescue and rehabilitations by a civilized Europe"* (Ashcraft, 1998: 158). Upon settling down, therefore, the colonizers desired to bring the best of their country to the colonized territory, and to change this native country to a civilized one. Colonial discourse fabricating the native cultures as both primitive and degenerate was because fearing of contamination amongst the colonizers.

However, the colonized people after obtaining their dependency, who acknowledged the importance of their identity and who learned not to be embarrassed about their culture and past, started to create their own text called post-colonial literature. Then, post-colonial text began to abolish the Eurocentric assumptions created by the Europeans, although the colonized had not the privilege to break the European domination and to portray the Europeans the same way they were illustrated through the colonial period. To put it more precisely, they have had the opportunity to present Europeans as "immoral", "irrational", and "sensual", just as they were pictured during the colonial period. Moreover, the colonized, having been neglected for a long time, and tolerating the suffering for decades, upon starting to write the text began to imitate the colonizer.

According to Mommad Zaheh in his work *"A Postcolonial Discourse In The God Of Small Things By Arundhati Roy"* Roy used the text to depict the intricacies of a post colonial India. The story which is about a family in post independent India, that struggle with the class structure of India, the family eventually under goes the grief of the loss of their British Cousin Sophie Mol, who drowns in India, Sophie Mole's drowning is a metaphoric sign of the hegemony of the Eastern over the European, which has the power to swallow up the colonizers easily.

This is also the power of the wilderness and primitiveness of Eastern that the colonial elements always fear and never resist. Postcolonial discourse maintains that the threat of the Eastern for the European is either to devour the European in the wilderness or to make the Europeans

go wild. The death of Sophie Mol in Roy's story metaphorically illustrates that there is no escape from the tragic fate waiting for the colonizer in the colonial land. As previously mentioned, the deep interaction with the colonizer creates not only the suffering of the colonizer but also that of the colonized that recognized and felt upset and anxious about the inferiority of their own culture when compare to that of the colonizer. The feeling of the inferiority created a community that was not glad about his existence, and that had no peace anymore. The colonized having felt their inferiority, appreciated everything that belonged to the colonizer and forget their own history, culture and language.

To be precise, they transformed into a nation who had not culture of their own, and felt second-class thereby struggling to become a member of the superior culture of the colonized. Thus, as it is stated in novel several times "*things can changes in a day*" (32), implies the day on which the colonizer's arrival has changed everything in the land of the colonized. Thereby they suffer from hybriditiy of culture. They were neither here nor there. Mohammed reiterates that:

Seeing themselves inferior, the colonized people recognized that the only way to make their situation better is to become similar to the colonizer, and thus, they try to imitate the colonizers ideas, values and practices. They appreciate and value the colonizers way of living and try to imitate their culture in view of not having of their own.

Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness

Perpetua is an excellent "representative" of Beti's considerable oeuvre and has lost none of its bite as a commentary on African failures, problems and possibilities.

As *Perpetua* opens we share the gaze — wondering yet sharply observant — of the novel's chief "centre of consciousness", Essola. He has been released only recently from six years of harsh imprisonment and torture for his political activities: organising and activating resistance to the dictatorial yet contemptible head of state, Baba Toura. We soon learn that Essola had forsworn his former political commitments and undertaken to do political work for the corrupt regime in order to be released from the life imprisonment to which he had been sentenced, and to return to employment (as a teacher). Now, for the first time, he is revisiting the village in which he was born, where his mother and brother still live. With him in the bus are "*poor peasants ... broken down by labour and by the barrenness of their lives*", from whose "*soiled cotton clothes*" come "*stale smells, acrid and yet, at the same time, almost delicious*" (1), and this description signposts the unillusioned social vision of Essola, and of this novel in its entirety. Gradually the reader discovers that Essola is on a type of detective's quest to lay bare the complex causes of an unpunished crime — the death in childbirth of his favourite younger sister, Perpetua (barely in her twenties at the time), during the time of his own imprisonment. Essola begins by acting on his strongest hunch: that it was their mother who, as soon as he himself was out of the way, had transgressed Essola's injunction that Perpetua, at least, should never be married off in exchange for a "*bride-price*". Maria (the mother) simply screams denials in response to Essola's accusations, leaving him all the more determined to get to the bottom of the case. Gradually the reader discovers that Essola is on a type of detective's quest to lay bare the complex causes of an unpunished crime — the death in childbirth of his favourite

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It needs to be emphasised that Beti (or his narrator) does not hold up Essola as an unblemished hero. Not only is he referred to in a detached and decidedly acerbic manner as a political "sell-out" (34), but Essola himself acknowledges (concerning Perpetua) that he "never really saw her" (34, emphasis added). His surviving sister directly accuses him of having "abandoned" his siblings by being totally absorbed in political resistance work (60). At times the reader is even made to wonder whether Essola's "family problem" is not in turn being used to help him evade his political responsibilities (56), or might not be mere sentimental indulgence.

Indeed, besides the numerous references to the assassinated national leader Ruben-(with whom Essola had worked ten years earlier) as a figure worthy of reverence, the novel gradually reveals the true heroism, dignity and political insight of Perpetua herself. Even though only in her late teens, when (as soon as her protector Essola was safely out of the way) her monstrous mother literally dragged her out of convent school into an arranged marriage, it did not take Perpetua, the village girl, long to analyse urban decay among the supposedly superior city-dwellers of her society: their "slovenliness", "drunkenness" and (worst) "swaggering subservience" (87) — like her (petty official) husband's. Predictably, however, it was her blatant intellectual and moral superiority (97) that made her husband hate and abuse her. He eventually even prostituted her to a superior in order to get a better job!

It is Perpetua who articulates the distinction between two kinds of Cameroonians: her husband's kind, cynical and full of selfish, "vile realism" (152), and those (like Ruben and her brother and herself) who think it better to be a person "who cares" (128), despite the cost.

One begins to see that Beti wants us to recognise in the dynamic of the (corrupt) family a miniaturised image of the state and society at large. Essola and Perpetua's mother Maria, in having "sold" her daughter to an unsuitable and cruel husband, acted like the corrupt rulers who, for huge personal bribes from the Western powers, betray their people and compromise their welfare — reducing them to "foreigners" in [their] own country" (50). Despite a few trappings of democracy they "rig the elections like a trap" (53) — much like Perpetua's "acceptance" of the vicious husband chosen for her by her mother.

The bad family, bad state parallel is pointed out early on to Essola by one of Perpetua's friends in the city: "*The Government with their swarms of police*", he tells Essola, are "*really expert ... when it comes to killing nationalists*", but "*when it comes to ... protecting a young mother, ... they couldn't care less*" (48). Perpetua's death, he believes, "*is a direct result of the assassination of ... Ruben*" (48).

The cynical exploitation of the nation's daughters by greedy mothers like Maria is echoed in the sexual greed and abuse of the dictator, Papa Baba (the parody of a nation's father) who "would have half a dozen of [very young girls] served up each evening, like oysters on a plate" (108), in the narrator's aptly gross image. Similarly, Perpetua's husband Edward, who rises rapidly in the police force through forcing his wife to take a senior officer as a lover, is "precisely the Zombotown replica of Baba Tura" (179), the nation's dictatorial ruler, abusing her, yet refusing to allow her to join the man who really loves her.

Uncovering as he does the concentric circles of blameworthiness for the death of his sister, Essola keeps coming back to the actual, corrupt family as the primary cause of social as well as political disease; feeding and pampering its worst at the expense of its worthiest members. In a central quotation near the end of the novel Essola tells his mother:

You killed Ruben or anyway you accepted the crime so that your favourite sons, whom you spoil until they become totally irresponsible, can go on making money with their sisters' ransom, in a way feeding on the blood of those wretched women like cannibals. You wanted Ruben's death so that justice could be banished and her sword would not cut through the dense routine of your savage customs (212).

Maria, we are told, had "hardly bothered to hide her feeling of triumph" (66) when Essola was "conveniently" imprisoned, leaving Perpetua at her mercy. She emotionally blackmailed her innocent and idealistic daughter by denouncing her "You're no woman!" — (70) when she was reluctant to accept a husband — just before completing her schooling, thwarting her dreams of studying medicine. As a sympathetic neighbour tells the despairing Perpetua on the eve of her marriage: "Your mother has trapped you. We are always trapped, and it is our own family that traps us" (76). Essola concludes that "under the pretext of marrying Perpetua" his mother had "hand[ed] over a child bound hand and foot to her torturer" (62). His older sister confirms this: "Mother has always smashed anyone who stood up to her" (60).

The novel has a shocking dénouement, when Essola entices Martin — the brother for whom Maria had wanted Perpetua's huge bride-price (who had himself refused to lend Perpetua any assistance when she had begged him for it shortly before her death) — to drink himself into a fatal stupor, leaving him to his death. In doing so, he is punishing both his mother and Martin, and aligning himself with the one person who did devotedly love Perpetua. This is the young man (Zeyang) who had sworn to Essola, when the latter had seemed to flag in his quest, that "We will avenge Ruben, we will avenge Perpetua" (56). Zeyang, too, has since been killed by the representatives of the dictator. For in a society like this, as Essola realises at the end of the novel, "they don't love their sons any more than their daughters" (218).

Like most post colonial works, the place of women in society, was limited to marriage and procreation. Mongo Beti's *Perpetua and the Habit of Unhappiness*, the image of the black woman are vividly brought out, in the themes such as oppression in the traditional education, marriage, procreation, sex, and language usage. The process of change is seen in an attempt of woman freeing herself from the patriarchal society, re-valorization of marriage and motherhood, modern view of education, sexual re-appropriation, and the usage of language.

Marriage

Perpetua is forcefully taken out her school by her mother and blackmailed into a marriage she does not want. This forceful marriage did not give Perpetua time to mature, mentally and physically. That is why she begs her mother to give her a time as she says:

If they had only let me have a few months, a few weeks, to get used to the idea. It's lucky everyone is here now – they'll have to ask me: then I'll shout "No I don't want to get married, I refuse to get married." Then, perhaps they 'll give me the time I need.

Sometimes, these women do not know their bridegroom, since the marriage is not from their own accord. It is imposed on them and so, their parents choose their bridegroom or son-in-laws This can be seen when Maria tells Perpetua that You will meet your husband tomorrow Another ridiculous issues about marriage, is that bride price must be paid before a woman leaves for her husband's house. Perpetua is bought for 100.000 francs by Edward. This act alone makes the women an acquired property. Edward mistreats Perpetua even sending her into prostitution for his own selfish interest

Sexual Oppression

Women undergo sexual abuses psychological as well as physical. First of all, they do not have the right to choose their partners and are forced to have sexual intercourses against their will. Perpetua is neither prepared for marriage, nor for sexual intercourses, but her mother pushes her to Edward's hands. Perpetua experiences this step of her sad life, as a punishment.

Secondly, the better way for Perpetua to return to her home, is trough the fact that Sophie, his second wife, refuses to go to bed with him. At this point, Sophie appears as only been used for sex, and nothing else. She is of low value. She is almost a prostitute, a woman's image largely displays throughout both novels.

When their wives are not enough to satisfy their sexual desire, men go out to look for those women who sell their body for money. For Edward to have a job, Perpetua has to have sex with the Commissioner Mbarg'Onana. A woman's sex at this level, is seen as a commodity that can be exchange for position. She refuses but she is forced by her husband:

Behind the times, you are my poor Perpetua, you really are behind the times. What I asked you to do, in a rather roundabout way, I admit, is nothing terrible. This sort of thing is normal all over the country and especially in the capital since independence...Any wife who isn't a complete fool would be only too pleased if she could get a job for her husband as easily as that.

Procreation

In many African novels, women bear the image of the reproductive tool of a family. Her main role is to give birth to many children, as many as possible, for the serenity of this family. It is the condition for a woman to be accepted even if, she finally has children, remain a kind of tacit clause, that the baby should and must be a boy. A woman is valueless unless she is able to bring forth children especially male children who will inherit their fathers. Perpetua's constant visit to the labour room becomes part of the reason for her early demise. Her lover

the Vampire is more determined to release her from her husband when he finds out that she is with his child.

Beti used his fiction as a vehicle to condemn the imposition of European culture on African peoples, but also negatively portrayed those Africans who came to power—and then abused it—in nations like Cameroon.

These portrayed life in Cameroon after independence, such as *“Remember Ruben”* from 1973, which follows the story of orphaned Mor-Zamba, who is adopted by a village. When he grows into adulthood and wants to marry the daughter of the community’s most esteemed family, he is forcibly sent away to a labor camp. Eighteen years later, he is reunited with his best friend from childhood, and learns the reasons for his internal exile.

This text starts out somewhat at a tangent. The interlocutor, Mor-Zamba, appears as a refugee from another clan as a small boy, and he meets with both African hospitality and foreigner rejection in equal measure. He is teased and rough-handled by the local boys, and celebrated for upholding the honor of his adopted village by winning a wrestling contest which pitted "his" village with another. But he receives little gratitude from the villagers afterwards as he proceeds to build a house for himself. Only Abena, whose family has welcomed him and who will remain his live long friend gives him a hand. And to cap it all, he is sent away as an indentured servant (a colonial kind of slavery) to work for the colonials as a prisoner. His crime: the colonial authorities need laborers and the local chief has to provide them. The local stranger with no family roots in the village is the obvious victim. But Mor-Zamba endures prison life, and his friend Abena also leaves the village and takes up degrading work with a European priest to be near his friend. But that is not all... This time Cameroon is on the verge of political independence, and the trade union leader, Ruben (Um Nyobe) and his PPP (UPC) party are asking for the type of independence the French authorities are unwilling to give their colony. The French will go very far, supporting a more amenable Baba Toura (Ahmadou Ahidjo) and will engage in covert assassination of local leaders opposed to their choice. And so Baba Toura's opponents are killed by a ruthless gang of French-backed mercenaries. Ruben (um Nyobe) becomes the first martyr and his followers resort to guerrilla tactics--les maquisards. Meanwhile, Abena returns from a long war effort for France that had taken him from Europe to Indo-China. His return is a boost for the Rubenists, but it also heralds a new destiny for Mor-Zamba, who has to return to the village and reclaim the chief's stool that had been usurped by his erstwhile nemesis

Echoing the title of the text, much of the story focuses on the character of Ruben and his agitation for a better Cameroon that had the needs of the masses at heart. However after colonial administration elections are conducted and Baba Toure an uneducated man becomes president, this gives rise for a willing neocolonialism rule;

...thank you, France, thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you; yet again,
thank you! France, think of us poor little Africans! France, think of us! (164)

Ruben forms the PPP Peoples Progressive Party as the party of the masses, young men and women pay allegiance to him and they are called *Rubenist*. They would do anything at the command of Ruben. Mor-Zembe rescues Ruben and pays him allegiance.

Ruben uses his oratory skills to rally young people who pay total allegiance to him. Language as used by the writer is simple. Though the text was originally written in French its eventual translation to English enabled to get wider readership. Ruben political figure made him speak at different occasions spurring the young people to action

As seen in Achebe's *Arrow of god* the ability to speak is a very important virtue of a leader in the African context. Ruben's ability to speak to the hearts of young people earned him much love from them.

Like in most post colonial works Beti's text reveal the class distinction that followed the end of colonialism. According to Ngugi the end of colonialism saw the birth of the middle class that was busy amassing wealth. In the text the poor masses reside in shanties, that lack basic amenities, *kola-kola*. The people are forced to stop brewing their local drinks 'maize bee' and 'holy Joseph', rather foreign drinks are imposed on them so as to enable the colonial government make profit.

In "*Remember Ruben*" there is mistrust of the black stranger as seen in the reception of Mor-Zamba, it further goes to show that Africans allowed colonialism thrive. The white though forcefully welcome is nevertheless the accepted, respected and even feared.

Again Mongo Beti joins his fellow African writers in painting the church as a hypocritical institution that is a tool for imperialism. Like in most post colonial works the church is seen as a tool to capture the minds of the people, thereby putting a hold on the revolutionary spirit. In "*Remember Ruben*" Mor-Zamba is captured and sent into slavery right in front of a priest who does nothing to save him or stop his capture, further into the novel we see a priest who only allows Abena see Mor-Zamba because Abena gets dung for him. Father Dietrich had earlier used school boys who could not pay their school fees to get the dung which was against the rules of the school. This goes to show that the church itself is corrupt, and does not practice what it preaches in terms of love for a fellow human being.

The text is set around the period of the world wars. Africans are sacrificed and forced to fight the wars they know nothing about. African countries have nothing in particular against Germany however thousands of African lives pass away in the bid to put an end to the Nazi government.

In Ferdinand Oyono "*The Old and the Medal*" Meka sacrificed his sons for the war of the white man he knows nothing about.

Abena joins the Army in his bid to get a gun, he returns twenty years later. The African soldiers receive no commendation for their hard work and sacrifice rather they are laughed at when they demand residency in Europe and are eventually deported back to Africa.

King Lazarus describes the transformation of a fictional African town by capitalism, Christianity, and colonialism. The hero here, Le Guen, had been a minor character in *The Poor Christ of Bomba*; this novel is set shortly after World War II. Le Guen takes advantage of a seemingly miraculous recovery from death to convince the local Chief of Essazam to embrace Christianity. The Chief does so zealously, but his repudiation of his many wives leads to chaos, as each jockeys for the right to be his one "true" wife. This chaos alarms both the Church and the colonial administration; at the end, Le Guen is transferred, and Essazam returns to its traditional ways.

The year is 1948: the hereditary Chief of the Essazam clan is, to all appearances, dying. As his life has been one long round of eating, drinking, and nocturnal exercises among his twenty-three wives, this is not, perhaps, altogether surprising. But his illness worries the Administration: he is a staunch prop of the European Establishment. An even more dangerous situation is produced when the Chief, against all expectations, very suddenly recovers — and the local Roman Catholic missionary, Le Guen, persuades him to renounce his tribal ways and adopt Christianity.

The novel centres on The Chief of the Essazam, who has decided to embrace the catholic faith unwillingly(as he was sick when he was baptized and not have the ability to object however, prior to being sick he had always objected any attempt to baptized him). Now this is where the problems start for him ,because he has a number of wives 23 in all .The church has been pushing him to choose just one of the women so he choose the youngest of his wives to be his only bride in the eyes of God .Now this isn't the simplest thing for him to do because the other 22 wives don't want to lose the position or lose face within the tribe ,thus setting up a trick situation .On top of this the chief is being pushed into this by Le Guen the priest, as Le Guen in turn is facing pressure from his bishop to make the chief convert as they see him converting as a powerful figure for the church in the country.

The title is a spin on the old tale from the bible. However, instead of everything turning to gold as the priest and his bishop hopes ,it in fact the opposite effect for the Chief .Given that Beti was critical of Laye , the novel appeals to Africans in the post colonial world at the time it was written in 1958, France and both the UK were starting to withdraw from Africa ,in fact Cameroon became independent just two years after this book was published .Satire is the way Beti chose to show the world of the chief and the priest ,to show the madness of the two worlds clashing with the Christian world and it values and the Tribal world. The Pressure on Le Guen to make him decide to become a Catholic ,without seeing the bigger picture .Beti has written here a sharply observed book capturing a shifting world in time that world of older values and western messing with these values .This book seems out of print which is a shame but old African writer copies seem easily available online .This book shows yet again how in the early years of this series the Late Chinua Achebe ,made some great choices for this series by picking strong voices out of Africa.

The chief is entitled to marry as many wives as he deems fit. He is married to twenty-three wives and the youngest is pregnant for him. His sudden conversion to Catholicism would see pick a wife from the twenty-three to wed in church. The first wife Makrita believes she is to have this position. Because even though he had married other women she was the woman he

married in his youth, when he was sick he had stayed in her hut and would not be attended to by anyone except herself, she had also bore him two children and was a Christian herself. Beti uses her character to depict women struggle in the face of problems.

She calls on her kinsmen and clan to help keep her in her husband's home. The wives of the chief have no problem being married to one man, they all co-exist peacefully as each wife is a representative of her clan. However the text goes to show the mute nature of women. As his wives are driven away as though they had no claim in the marriage. The women leave without much of a struggle, giving their children up for foster care on the command of the chief

Conclusion

Like Chinua Achebe Beti's works chronicled colonial rule and its attendant cultural conflict and complexities in Cameroon. Beti with his text documented the role of religion, the place of women and the disillusionment that followed after independence in Cameroon. It should be noted that Beti's works were continuous in nature hence the similarities in the thematic thrusts of the texts studied. No work is isolated from the other, as each text continued the story already started by the other. In a nutshell, Mongo Beti takes a critical look at well-known and accepted African traditions, in his homeland as well as in greater Black Africa and the erosion of values and cultural ethos of the African people caused by the colonial rule. In painting such a depressing picture of a new Africa which has emerged from decades of colonial rule, Beti prescribes the ideal African society that is capable of extricating itself from the imposed cultural and ethical crises and complexities with characters such as Mor-Zamba, The Vampire, Essola, and Perpetua.

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