

System of Objects Production and Issues of Museum Process in Contemporary Africa: Art and Heritage in the Bamum Cultural Universe

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Abstract

Whereas the system of object production in the Bamum country was originally closely linked to the political and social organization embodied by royal authority, it is also noticeable that, in recent times, artists have emancipated themselves and now occupy a prominent place in this society. They have gradually moved away from a traditionalism that limited their creative freedom through the reproduction of essentially ethnographic objects (ritual or symbolic). Today's trend is influenced by aesthetic and economic concerns. This development should have an impact on the ongoing process of musealization in this kingdom, where the objects on display contribute more to the staging of power and the transmission of cultural values. This situation contrasts with the increasingly popular rise of contemporary works that belong more to the realm of art than to heritage. This shift in perspective raises the issue of the inadequacy of the museological project in relation to present realities. However, concerns for the preservation and enhancement of heritage can adapt to exhibition demands in this era of globalization. In other words, this situation gives rise to divergences between the external artistic gaze and local meanings. Through the current artistic dynamism in Foumban, the Bamum region offers an interesting experimental framework for confronting elements of tradition and modernity that are currently in vogue. In this context, the recently established museum in the region, primarily dedicated to royal collections, seems to endorse a postcolonial approach namely ethnographic, identity-centered, and essentially nostalgic at the expense of aesthetics.

Key words: Bamum culture, Cultural linkage, Heritage, Museum, Primitivist orthodoxy.

1 Introduction

The Bamum people, although resolutely attached to their original culture, are not immune to the influence of the surrounding world. This is reflected in the profound changes that affect their daily lives, to the point where they are now losing some of their artistic originality and cultural identity. This is why we need to take a broader look at Africa in its current specificity, because since its contact with Europe, this continent has been altered and is increasingly seen as a two-

headed continent: it is the object of a western experience known as “modern” and its own experience known as “traditional”. We are therefore dealing here with the confrontation of two cultural experiences, and it is only within the framework of a mixed culture that we need to consider, on the one hand, the question of art or aesthetics and, on the other, that of heritage and therefore ethnography in any policy of exhibiting objects and/or musealizing them. This approach is a matter of emergency in the context of globalization, which is synonymous with the crumbling of barriers and the sharing or dialogue of cultures as an antidote to identity-based withdrawal, ethnocentrism or any other form of nationalism and isolationism, which are currently sources of intolerance and sometimes of conflict in this world.

2 Methodology

Data collection involved documentary research with focus on our thesis dissertation and field surveys. This fieldwork, carried out between March 2023 and April 2024 enabled us to use mix method combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. That’s why we conducted surveys in Fouban and in Yaoundé over a sample of fifty respondents. This method has been enriched by interviews with collectors like Njoya Monta René, Mbouemboue Abdoulaye and art dealers like Tapche Nsangou Ahmadou, Nchankou Fifen Issa, Njoya Abdou, Manjia Salamatou, Mfoloum Ousman and many others. Among the artists, we can list Patouokoumche Mama, Gbetnkom Claude, Njoya Edouard, Yiagnigni Adamou, Njitoyap Paul, Mouliom Ibrahim and many others. As well as with other social components and traditional, administrative and municipal authorities. We took a closer look at the bamum king’s museum project in particular. We have also taken the option of adopting both a synchronic and diachronic approach in this article. Through a multidisciplinary approach, we have taken the study beyond strict geographical or ethnic boundaries.

3 A brief history of art in Bamum region

The end of the 19th century constituted, as indicated by Claude Tardits (2004, p. 18), a decisive turning point in artistic activity in the bamum kingdom. Indeed, this period was marked by the initiatives of king Ibrahim Njoya, who under his reign undertook reforms to encourage the production of objects that could be sold to regional and international customers visiting Fouban. Thanks to this new awareness, the bamum people as a whole understood the stakes

involved in transforming their production techniques. This in turn led to the appearance of new works more suited to the developing market of the time. This context, according to Claude Tardits (2004, p. 15), has revealed the “singularity” of art in bamum region, enabled those involved in the sale of these objects to compete in imagination. They thus demonstrated economic realism in their production and distribution strategy, which consisted in satisfying the desires of their target customers or, more precisely, their sponsors as point out by Mama Nchourupouo (2017, p. 40).

It's hardly surprising, then, that the bamum's awareness of the economic stakes of art is reflected in the mass reproduction of copies of african art classics. Through their ability to imitate and successfully manufacture objects from other african tribes and ethnic groups, bamum artists helped build a new image for the kingdom. The kingdom could thus be presented as a veritable “Africa in miniature”, given the extreme variety of copies and “ethno-aesthetic” productions on offer as considered by Germain Loumpet (2006, p. 6).

With the abolition by the king himself in the second decade of the 20th century of privileges to which he alone was entitled, such as exclusive possession of brass and ivory objects, the practices of craftsmen and artists changed, as did the market. As a result, new objects began to appear, such as panels, drawings and paintings presented to tourists visiting Foumban. This phenomenon, which began under king Ibrahim Njoya, was accentuated under king Seidou Nji Moluh, leading to the development of an international art form as indicated by Mama Nchourupouo (2017, p. 75).

Photo 1: Imposing bronze objects from the collections of Bamum artists exhibited at SIARC 2010 and which demonstrate the aesthetic character of this contemporary art (2010).



Source : M.M. NCHOURUPOUO

Photo 2: A statue symbolizing the dynamism of the Bamum woman and the artistic (aesthetic) approach of bamum artists (2010)



Photo 3: A statue symbolizing the warrior character of the Bamum man and also their artistic (aesthetic) (2010).



Sources: M.M. NCHOURUPOUO

4 African art classics regularly reproduced in Foumban

These artists and craftsmen work exclusively in the reproduction of bamum material culture, demonstrating their knowledge of the realities of the international art market. Indeed, bamum objects are not always highly prized, as it is the case with certain specimens from Gabon, Congo, Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Togo, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Guinea, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, Angola or Bangwa, Mbatchesam and Fang from Cameroon. It was with this in mind that these artists very quickly moved away from the first-degree communitarianism that still characterizes artists in other regions, and adapted themselves to a rapidly expanding market as enlightened by Mama Nchourupouo (2017, p. 42).

In addition to the primordially commercial dimension that recent production has taken on in Foumban and in a few other african cities, the ability, or rather the very tendency, to excel in reproducing objects from elsewhere to an unrivalled extent compared to the production of local objects is undoubtedly a major factor. This further reinforces the uniqueness of the art produced in bamum region. Foumban truly represents a hub of artistic “traffic” and an interesting testing ground for the dictates of production. In this sense, we note the influence of increasingly published catalogs, which reveal the pre-eminence of the international art market, which now conditions local artistic production. Photo 4: A store full of reproductions of african classics art in Foumban (entrance to the palace). (2009).



Sources: M.M. NCHOURUPOUO

5- Contemporary art in bamum region: between rupture and continuity

The objects produced today in bamum region undeniably mark a break with so-called “traditional” art, both in terms of the techniques and materials used and the symbols evoked. Germain Loumpet (2006, p. 26) rightly emphasized the influence of confrontation with the western world through the introduction into the endogenous field of a proliferation of signs whose interference eventually gave rise to interpretations in a perfectly identifiable style. The effect of these changes was to broaden and transform the creative field by introducing new themes and decorative elements.

However, through their layout and the composition of their catalogs, exhibitions devoted to contemporary art produced in Fouban should clearly accentuate the central position of the artist as an individual. Although seemingly self-evident, this notion of the artist's individuality would create a relatively new dimension, as it would stand in opposition to the long-dominant western perception. The cultural expression of non-western societies should no longer be perceived exclusively as a form of communal tribal art that in no way involves the personality of a particular artist as indicated by Giorgio Vasari quoted by Ernst Gombrich (1996, p. 46).

From this point of view, only the representation of the “indigenous artist” will have changed. Today, it's clear that the producers of traditional art lacked neither creativity nor no artistic personality. It's just that these skills were obscured by the western gaze, always on the lookout for some kind of primitive artistic communitarianism. In this sense, an event that places the emphasis on the artist's individual personality and trajectory already represents a genuine epistemological break, albeit a belated one, in the contemporary conception of post-colonial cultural production. Contemporary” creation thus marks the ascension of producers to the rank of artists. For instance, individuals endowed with their own artistic personality and no longer simply anonymous spokespersons for a culture and an artistic tradition as noticed longtime ago by Alois Riegl (1901, p. 27).

Clearly, socio-anthropological reality is gradually overturning the representations inherited from western common sense. The bamum artist has ceased to be a mystical, shadowy figure who lives cut off from the world, in sole contact with nature, telluric forces and ancestral spirits. The aesthetics of these artists' works no longer derive is no longer based solely on “inspiration from the

spirits or “genius” of tradition. It’s also the fruit of extensive technical and conceptual apprenticeship, as well as regular practice guided by the quest and affirmation of a personal style, which means a signature.

Paradoxically, these artists, who have achieved institutional recognition and even notoriety by virtue of the modernism of their work, nonetheless all seem keen to maintain a strong ethnic symbolism based on a number of references to tradition. It’s in this sense that Olu Oguide (2004, p. 19) thinks that, by this spirit, they evoke a continuity with the past or with the art of the ancients. The art which is sometimes discreet; through the simple use of natural materials or traditional objects, indigenous symbolism can also be strongly expressed when more specific cultural traits are evoked.

Photo 5: A bronze bamum rider at Njiyouom-Foumban, exhibited for trade purpose (2010).



Photo 6: A bronze “bamum” mask which although symbolic, serve more as artistic (aesthetic) tool, Coll. Venembouo (2005), Foumban,



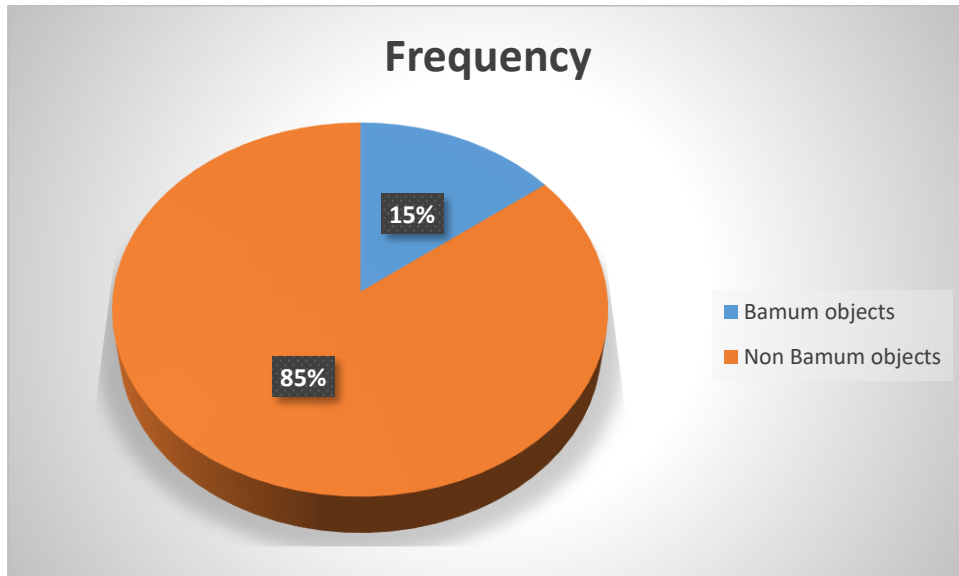
Sources: M.M. NCHOURUPOUO

6- Some statistics on artistic production in Foumban

While the bamum kingdom is increasingly asserting itself through its capital -Foumban- as a veritable “city of arts”, statistics reveal a clear disproportion between traditional and modern production, which we shall refer to for the moment as non-bamum objects. Thus, out of 5610 objects inventoried during our surveys, we recorded 4794 non-bamum objects, a relative frequency of 85.45% of all inventoried objects, compared with 816 Bamum objects, 14.54% of all collections. Also, out of a total of 34 artists surveyed, 8 declared that they had no bamum objects at all, compared with just one respondent who had as many bamum objects as non-bamum objects. On the other hand, 25 respondents said they had more non-bamum objects. This trend makes it possible to situate the bamum kingdom as a hotbed of mass production of so-called african art objects¹.

¹ The number of bamum objects might still have appeared insignificant or almost non-existent if, during our stay in the field, we hadn't made a point of visiting, on the advice of certain connoisseurs of the art world in Foumban, the workshops based in the Mambain district at a place called Mashinron. These artists and craftsmen work exclusively in the reproduction of bamum material culture.

Figure 1: Representation of the type of objects produced in Fouban



Source: field survey

7- The international exhibition paradigm in question

The contemporary art used by the Bamum, while breaking with an essentialist, fixist and quasi-museographic conception of “indigenous cultures”, must nevertheless be recognizable as such. Insofar as certain artists as much as other members of the community make this art the cultural medium of the entire ethnic group. In this way, contemporary bamum artists, although in a way freed from a traditionalism deemed reductive and anti-creative, are at the same time implicitly, even unconsciously, and constrained to avoid deviating too far from an aesthetic that would more or less identify them from an ethnic point of view.

Without overstating the case, we might conclude that contemporary art produced in Fouban by the Bamum and inspired by abstractionism, cubism or expressionism, and which contains no visible reference to bamum culture, would have little luck of being exhibited in an international contemporary art show. As a result, these objects can only enter emerging exhibition spaces if they conform to the canons of a contemporary “post-colonial” aesthetic - in other words, “ethnic” or “identity-based”. As a result, african artists are encouraged to resort to evocations and symbols of their native culture, which inevitably limits their

freedom of expression. The architecture of the current palace museum in Fouban is no exception to this symbolism.

As a result, some bamum artists of the early 20th century and of the new generation feel themselves to be true pioneers in terms of aesthetics, while others like Nsangou Gérard and Ngouyamsa Zouber refuse or find it difficult to appropriate the label of artist, perceived more as a western label with which they find it hard to identify themselves.

8- The pre-eminence of the art market over local production in Africa

Elsy Leuzinger (1962, p. 58) believes that colonial policy has long been at the root of exaggerated admiration for the exotic. She points out that missionaries fought against pagan cults, replacing them with european representations. As “native markets” were flooded with imports of all kinds, this dealt a fatal blow to time-consuming, unproductive handwork. However, in this new context, the black artist did find new outlets, even if this meant conforming to what was demanded of him. According to Georges Balandier (1972, p. 136), “today's african artist has escaped the demands of his social milieu only to submit to the demands of colonial society.”

He was no more transformed into a free creator than the man emancipated from the clan was freed in the colonial situation. What we have here is a kind of “european dirigism”, to quote Badi-Banga (1977, p. 85). A situation or observation that led Georges Balandier (1972, p. 125), referring to the case of Brazzaville, that we were witnessing the creation of a modernist art inspired and used by/in Europe, and Paul Mercier (1972, p. 68), referring to Dahomey, that we were almost faced with an “ industrialization of art”, with commercial concerns now in the foreground.

It's hardly surprising then, that when “native craftsmanship” survives in a mediocre state, it owes this respite only to an european clientele curious about the exotic, since it is no longer at all integrated into the group that generated it, and hardly exists as a spontaneous, free creation. Aside from decorated everyday objects for personal use, Georges Balandier argues, “african art has nothing to offer existed only at the request of the group, at its service and according to the forms imposed by it. It was therefore essentially directed, a character it has retained in its modernist manifestations, since it is subject to the dirigism of the European, protector or friend of indigenous art”.

As Germain Loumpet (2003) points out, the case of the Bamum is emblematic of a situation in which it was precisely foreign influence, in this case the western world of Guillaume II at the beginning of the 20th century, that favored the birth and development of a new art recognized as tribal in Europe. A unique phenomenon that took place at a pivotal time when, paradoxically, an ideology of modernity and the “end of the primitive savage” was beginning to spread, as well as a desire to possess truly tribal objects on the one hand, and presumed tribal objects on the other.

As a result, many aspects of social life underwent profound changes, and the destination of art was bound to be altered. Artistic productions have taken on new orientations, no longer satisfying the same needs, or rather, new needs have been juxtaposed with old ones. While some art forms continue to live on as they are, others are being renewed, while those that were linked to a very specific social context are in decline. Paul Mercier (1972, p. 74) speaks of a decadence of african art, which is not necessarily to be seen in a negative light.

It's easy to see that the conditions for creation are indeed different from what they were before the arrival of Europeans. The different arts did not follow the same evolution. The importance of demand, the various possibilities of adaptation, and the position in the ancient society are all factors that influenced their respective destinies. Woodcarving, the most widespread of the arts, has undoubtedly been the hardest hit. Its most popular form was religious sculpture. In such cases, it is obvious that the decline of beliefs leads to a sharp drop in aesthetic value, since new objects, far from marking a new inspiration, are purely the expression of a formal adaptation.

This secular art is profoundly oriented towards a distinctly commercial form, with the mass production of largely utilitarian objects. This brings us back to the craft sector, where sculptors do not work to order, but constantly produce the same series of objects. This is the case in Fouban, for example, with an artist called Assako, who essentially reproduces “Fang-Bobo” objects in series in the Manka district. Such examples can be extended to many other workshops, as the trend seems to be towards increasing specialization.

The network of social relations in which art production is embedded remains largely similar to that in place before colonialism, to which a European model of art education reserved for an elite has been added. In other words, the colonial situation only accompanied the constitution of contemporary African art.

In making this pertinent clarification, Sidney Kasfir (2000, p. 16), whose analysis we share, distances himself from the one-sided theme of the artist's invention often used to address this issue.

9 The ambiguous relationship between colonial and post-colonial western art and traditional indigenous art

Looking at the material culture of Australia and New Zealand for example, Nicholas Thomas (1999) has shown that, through post-colonial artistic production in non-western contexts, the history of modern art in these regions has been built above all around a dualism between colonizers and colonized. As such, contemporary works produced by artists from these cultural universes are mainly the more or less direct and explicit expression of a confrontation between colonizing and colonized peoples.

Like Oceanian artists, bamum artists are heirs to a cumbersome biculturalism and a painful colonial past. This heritage has left a strong mark on their personal trajectory, as well as on the history of the bamum kingdom, which is inevitably reflected in their works. These works incorporate themes or representations attesting to western influence and modernization. Their contemporary material productions therefore reflect a radical departure from the more traditional art forms.

However, these traditional productions continue to be reproduced and marketed through the so-called "airport art" tourist market, are marked by a genuine form of aesthetic innovation. According to James Clifford (1995), their "post-modernity" is expressed through the paradox of "neo-traditionalism", which resembles international contemporary art nourished by universalism, while affirming the specificity and irreducibility of "immemorial" indigenous cultural values.

In these cultural universes, a kind of fashionable multiculturalism coexists with a heightened ethnic awareness. According to Caroline Graille (2018), "modern ethnic art" has become a privileged mode of self-representation, revealing both the political issues at stake and the socio-cultural current mutations. Recent works by African artists reveal the trends of a new post-colonial aesthetic in the making.

From this perspective, the modern works of artists from outside the western world constitute new forms of endogenous iconography that are

seeking to become institutionalized not only within the country, but also and above all, on an international scale, and to find their place within dominant or emerging artistic centers such as museums, cultural centers, galleries and art events.

10 The “new art” of non-western societies as a consecration of “the death of the authentic or primitive art”

The question of the relationship between the west and non-western material cultures was often raised, albeit in varying terms, at the beginning of the 20th century. At the time, ethnographic objects were being collected by scientists, explorers and missionaries in the colonies of Africa, America and Oceania. These overseas lands, with their objects hitherto regarded as curiosities and then as “witnesses” to so-called “primitive” cultures, attracted the attention of european artists. Many western artists, such as P. Picasso, A. Giacometti, C. Brancusi and many others, were so enthusiastic about the art of the “primitives” that they used it as inspiration for their creations. That’s what point out Jean Clair (2011, p. 28).

The avant-gardism of various surrealist movements has long been described as the first recognition of the aesthetic value of traditional non-western societies. In contrast, many other authors have seen it as yet another form of cultural colonization, whereby western artists appropriated “indigenous” forms and graphic motifs, integrating them into their personal style and adding their own signature. In this case, the fascination of western artists with objects from these far-flung cultures was quickly matched by the enthusiasm of an ever-widening public.

Exotic art and modern western art are thus more or less placed on an equal footing. James Clifford (1995, p. 64) speaks of a “taxonomic moment” that translates the shift from ‘artifact’ to “work of art” classification. This phenomenon owes nothing to any objective change in the quality of the objects themselves, but stems solely from a change in the way these objects are viewed. More precisely, this was a critical moment in aesthetic development, when objects were elevated to the status of works of art and redefined institutionally through the creation of new, now firmly established categories of aesthetic appreciation, such as “primitive art” and “tribal art”.

To illustrate the socially constructed nature of these notions, Shelly Errington (1998, p. 43) uses a metaphor. The notion of art, she explains, is used

like a bag in which the repositories of “good taste” - that is, legitimate authorities such as collectors, art dealers, etc. - arrange objects of their choice. Once institutionalized through museums, galleries and publications, these categories are articulated around certain aesthetic “canons” that are supposed to define the boundary between the true (authentic) and the false. Thus, through the performative discourse of the “social magic” referred to by Pierre Bourdieu (1992), the exotic object acquires or does not acquire the status of a work of art, and is thus “transfigured”.

Deconstructing such a process of aestheticization allows us to better define the question of authenticity in african art. Underlining the elasticity of this concept, as well as that of its corollary, the notion of “fake”, primitivist orthodoxy initially defined authentic primitive art as being produced by a native under pre-colonial technical conditions, for the sacred or profane use of his community alone and not for the attention of westerners. However, many of the ethnographic objects collected in the colonies at the beginning of the 20th century were produced on commission not only for colonial administrators, but also sometimes for scientists, including westerners themselves, speculating on the growing popular infatuation with “primitive” art. According to Patrick O'reilly (1970, p. 24), such orders were “forgeries”, some of which were subsequently “authenticated” through their inclusion in ethnographic museum showcases or private collections.

11 The impact of contemporary productions on museum institutions

Non-western art is not limited to objects such as the african sculptures discovered by modern western artists and then reproduced over and over again to satisfy a growing demand. While the pre-colonial cultures from which these objects originated have disappeared as such, african societies have been producing new, mostly hybrid cultural forms ever since contact with westerners began, primarily as a reaction to colonial domination, and later as a result of the development of tourism and the craze for “tribal art”.

They combine traditional motifs and symbols, materials of industrial origin, and styles and supports drawn from western art. Eminently modern and contemporary in function, whether as political iconography or religious objects, pictorial forms of popular expression or simply works intended for contemplation. These neo-traditional arts - not to be confused with copies of the past, nor with “airport art” export goods - are in a way “snapshots” revealing the

social and cultural ruptures and mutations underway in post-colonial societies, from which they draw all their meaning².

If we dwell briefly on the very designation of these contemporary, hybrid forms of material culture, it would seem that no existing artistic or anthropological category can define them satisfactorily. In this respect, references in western discourse to the works of contemporary african artists are often a source of ambiguity and controversy. Caroline Graille (2003, p. 13) points out that to reason simply in terms of “contemporary arts” would be to neglect the political as well as artistic history in which they are embedded. And also to minimize both the endogenous (tradition) and exogenous (westernization or globalization) elements on which their ante- or post-colonial symbolism draws.

On the other hand, concepts such as “indigenous contemporary art”, “new non-western art” or “neo-traditional art” are built in opposition to, or at least in distinction from, the current classic categories of “tribal art” or “primitive art”; they are bound to attract criticism and, for example, are readily accused of neo-colonialism.

The confusion engendered by this vocabulary is above all the product of the difficult relationship between western and “other” arts, as it has been built up over the course of history and as it contributes precisely to producing the current artistic reality of post-colonial societies. The absence of an appropriate term to categorize these neo-traditional productions is a problem in itself.

12 The mismatch between the production system and the museographic approach in bamum country: the case of the king museum in Foumban

After the king palace, which already housed nearly 3,000 heritage objects in one of its compartments, the town of Foumban now has a museum in its own right. Indeed, this project, undertaken by mfon Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya since May 25, 2013, was designed to provide an appropriate framework for conserving and promoting some 12,000 objects from the royal heritage, including not only

²To avoid any misunderstandings, it should be pointed out that the artistic dynamic of the Bamum people did not begin with colonization. Contacts with other people took place long before the arrival of westerners and contributed to the transformation of local cultures. This article deals exclusively with changes that occurred after the encounter with the West, which is why we do not speculate here on what pre-colonial cultural dynamics may have been.

so-called “sacred art” objects, but also war trophies and relics from the dynasty founded by Nchare Yen. With its impressive architecture inspired by the kingdom’s emblem, the designers of this jewel were determined to make it a marker of bamum tradition.

Judging by the name of the institution and the content of the permanent collections to be exhibited there, this museum project seems to reflect the condescending view of an ethnographic, identity-based and essentially nostalgic perception. All of which is reminiscent of the colonial exhibitions of the early 20th century, and reveals a disconnect with the dynamics observed on the local artistic scene. While it is to be hoped that this presentation model will be somewhat relativized through the semi-permanent exhibitions planned for it. It must be stressed that the current challenge lies in the need to bring this museum of the kings, and other initiatives of this kind, into line with the current context.

It is therefore urgent and necessary to encourage cultural promoters to create new museum institutions that do not reflect post-colonial art. The time has come to set up museums which, both in their design and in the way they will present the collections, must absolutely reconcile aesthetic or artistic concerns with ethnological ones. Now more than ever, therefore, it’s a question of enabling previously antinomic visions to reach a set of agreements and compromises in order to propose a new, updated definition of the african or non-western object. All the more so since, as Pataud Cel  rier (2004, p. 37) points out,

The boundaries between art and science, between aesthetics and anthropology, are not permanently fixed, since in fact, anthropology and art museums have recently shown signs of a reciprocal influence. Science can (thus) be aestheticized (and) art made anthropological if it isn’t already.

In other words, the extremely varied range of objects produced today in Fouban can reasonably be approached from a dual perspective: aesthetic for those seeking delectation, or anthropological for those whose purpose lies in the quest for meaning and significance. The selection of works to be preserved in contemporary museums should therefore no longer be based solely on the aesthetic quality of the “pieces”, but also on their testimonial value, which is just as important. Alongside aesthetically interesting objects, we need series of

everyday objects that don't need to be “beautiful”, but have social and cultural sense.

Photo 7: A view of the new Bamum Kings Museum in Foumban



Sources: Ibrahim MOUNGANDE

Photo 8: The coat of arms of the Bamum kingdom, which inspired the architecture of the new Bamum Kings Museum in Foumban and symbolizes the two-headed serpent and the spider mygale.



Sources: M.M. NCHOURUPOUO

13 Conclusion

At the end of this study focusing on ethnographic objects that are primarily dedicated to the royal collections conserved in the museum recently built in Fouban, it appears obviously that this tendency is identity-based and essentially nostalgic (post-colonial) to the detriment of aesthetic. In this context where profound changes have affected bamum people who today have to some extent lost what made them original or their cultural identity in artistic matters. That's to say in other words that the question of art or aesthetics on one hand, and that of heritage on the other should now be considered within the framework of a mixed culture. This new approach of musealization is urgently needed in the context of globalization synonymous with the crumbling of barriers and the need for dialogue between cultures. It's only in this way that the new museum will be able to position itself as a centre by excellence for civilizational dialogue on a universal scale - in other words, as a cosmopolitan museum that transcends all ethnic, geographical or racial presuppositions.

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