



# FROM THEON OCHEMA TO KAMERUN

Joseph Pascal Mbarga

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# **FROM THEON OCHEMA TO KAMERUN**

**A monograph by  
Mbarga Joseph Pascal**

**I am humbly grateful to TDA and to Mr Kofane Guillaume for  
having aroused my curiosity!**

**@Paris 25 December 2023**

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## INTRODUCTION

Names are of great importance in various aspects of human life and society. It plays an essential role in personal identity, culture, communication and the construction of meaning. This construction takes place at both personal and collective levels (community, state, continent, etc.).

At an individual level, our name is often the first thing that identifies us as individuals. It is intimately linked to how we perceive ourselves and how we are perceived by others. It may reflect our family heritage, our culture, our nationality or our spirituality, among other things. It helps to shape our identity.

On a collective level, the name can reflect a sense of belonging and a shared history. The epics, the original myths of a people, the founding texts or stories of a spirituality or religion, are just some of the elements that give the people in question their unique character; a unique character from which derives their own identity, different from that of other peoples, as well as their own geographical area of expression. All of these elements contribute to the unique identification of a group of individuals, and therefore to its qualification by name.

Generally speaking, through a name, the *present being* and the *future being* forge a path, project themselves. So a name is not simply a name, an identification. At least not among the First Peoples and in advanced African societies. In Africa, names have a symbolic and/or metaphorical meaning that transcends their mere linguistic aspect. They can evoke qualities, characteristics, aspirations and/or values. Sometimes names are deliberately chosen to evoke specific emotions, associations or destinies. In South Korea, a name is said to be "*the shortest fate*". A name is therefore an action, a movement, an impulse that gives meaning to existence and through which an individual or a group can acquire the suffrage of time in a negative or positive way.

This is why we are going to question the distant origins of the territory known today as Kamerun<sup>1</sup>, as well as the circumstances that have built the current narrative concerning the origin of the name Cameroon<sup>2</sup>. We intend to row against the tide of this narrative and provide factual elements that will lead to the emergence of a new narrative that is much more coherent and that gives a better account of the facts and less of the ideological fiction of the colonisers.

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<sup>1</sup> We will use the *General Alphabet of Kameroonians Languages* (GAKL) for the spelling of local names.

<sup>2</sup> English spelling.

## 1. HISTORICAL REMINDER OF THE BEGINNING OF THE INVASIONS IN AFRICA

European invasions of Africa began at the end of the 15th century with the era of the great maritime discoveries. These voyages also led to encounters with African peoples and kingdoms. Not all of these encounters were happy ones.

In the 16th century, European powers such as Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, France and England embarked on expeditions to Africa. They sought to appropriate the continent's riches, in particular gold, spices and human beings who would be used as slaves in Asia Minor<sup>3</sup> and on the North and South American continents. This raid on black men and women had devastating consequences for African populations, causing social, economic, cultural, spiritual and demographic genocides throughout the continent.

It should be noted that these European invasions of Africa continued throughout the following centuries, culminating in the period of colonisation in the 19th century, when most of the African continent fell under the direct or indirect control of the European powers. This had terrible consequences for the peoples and societies of Africa, who had to face exploitation, barbarism, dispossession of land and the loss of their political, economic and cultural autonomy - in short, the disintegration of the very essence of their society. As a result, many African peoples and their territories have been given names that are even more grotesque than the others. Names sometimes given simply on the basis of anecdotes, without any source or historical foundation. In the case of some territories, the process often consisted of simply naming the country or settlement area according to its usefulness in the colonisation project, either to qualify the type of resources present, or to more or less locate the resource to be exploited. For others, it was simply a matter of giving a name to the area they had supposedly "*discovered*".

## 2. THEON OCHEMA, THE DISTANT ORIGINS OF KAMERUN

As we have argued above, the ravages of slavery and Western Christian and Roman colonisation have helped to obscure Kamerun from its historical roots. Nevertheless, a number of contemporaries from antiquity, with a different vision, namely that of research and the sharing of knowledge, without any ideological colouring, have bequeathed to us their writings and testimonies and/or those of their contemporaries. Thanks to these testimonies, we are now in a position to discover the world as they lived it in their time and to witness what they observed.

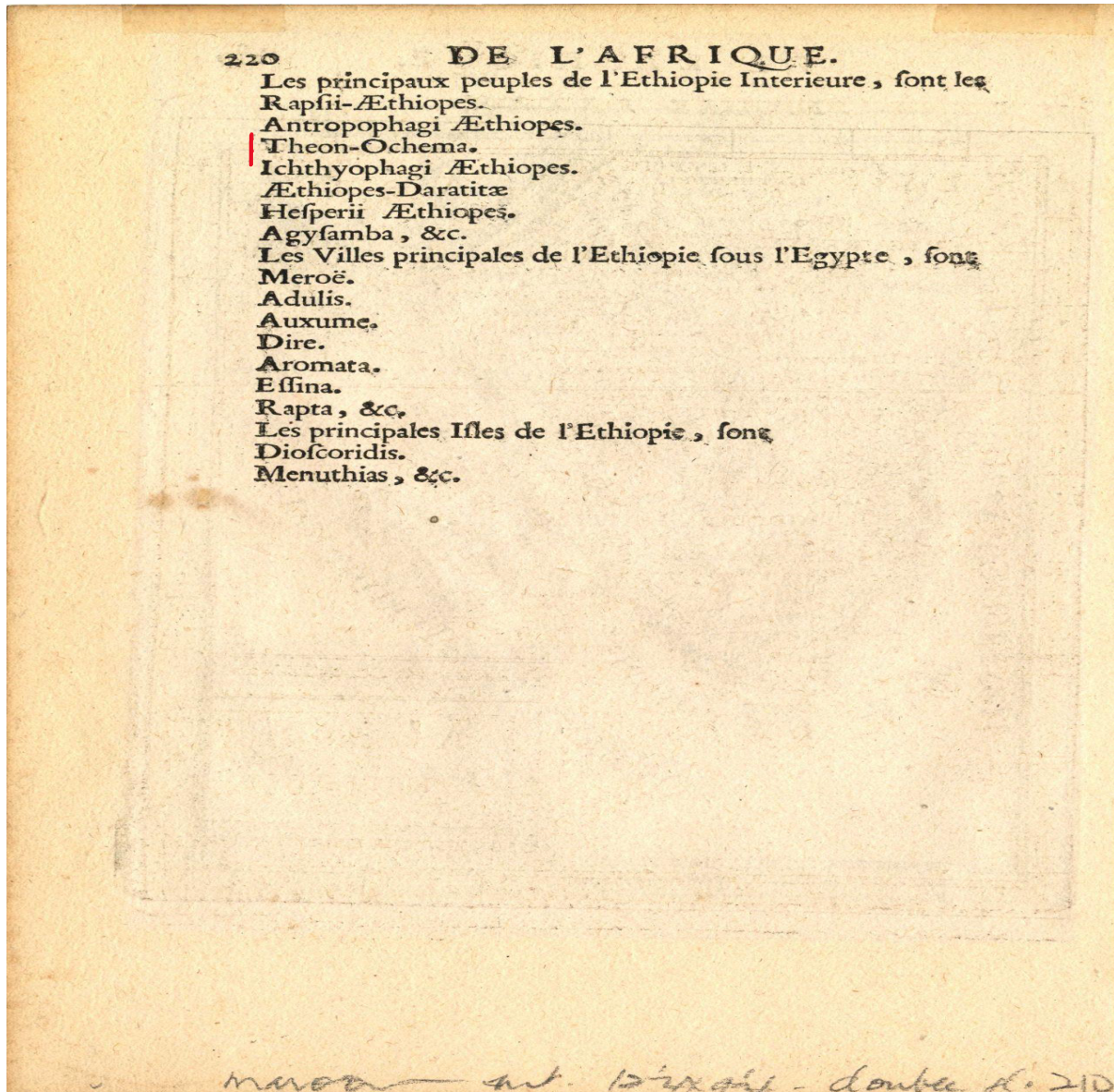
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<sup>3</sup> Europe

## 2.1. THEON OCHEMA, PEOPLE AND TERRITORY

### a. THÉON OCHÉMA, THE PEOPLE

Alain Manesson Mallet was a French military engineer, geographer and cartographer. He was born in Paris in 1630 and died there in 1706. In one of his publications, entitled "*Inner Ethiopia*", on page 220, he lists the main peoples living in Inner Ethiopia.



#### [Names of the peoples of inner Ethiopia](#)

Among the main peoples of Inner Ethiopia<sup>4</sup> mentioned in this list, we can easily identify "*Theon Ochema*". In other words, Theon Ochema is the name of a people clearly defined by ancient

<sup>4</sup> Inland Ethiopia corresponds to sub-Saharan Africa today.

Westerners. On the website that serves as our source for this item, we are offered a detailed description of the above reference.

### Details

<b>Title</b>	Ancienne Ethiopie
<b>Creator</b>	Manesson-Mallet, Allain, 1630?-1706?
<b>Subject</b>	Africa -- Maps -- Early works to 1800
<b>Description</b>	Small map of Africa from the "Keras Promontoire" and "Mer d'Ethiopie" in the South [Cape of Good Hope area] to Libye [Libya] and Egypte [Egypt] in the North. The map shows the Golfe d'Arabie [marking the Red Sea not the Arabian Gulf], Asie [currently Yemen and Saudi Arabia], "Isle Menuthias" [Madagascar], Ocean Occidental [Atlantic Ocean], "Golfe Hesperique" [Gulf of Guinea], "Ocean Meridional" [Indian Ocean], "Golfe de Barbarie" [Mozambique Channel] and "Mer d'Hippade" [western part of the Indian Ocean]. The map also indicates lakes, rivers, some mountain ranges and place names., The map is headed "De l'Afrique. Figure LXXXV. [page] 219". Extracted from Mallet's "Description de l'Univers" (Paris: Denys Thierry, 1683), of which volume III comprised a "comprehensive history of ancient and modern Africa." See Richard Betz: The mapping of Africa: a cartobibliography of printed maps of the African continent to 1700 (t Goy-Houten: Hes & de Graaf, c2007): 409-410., The map is bordered by a graticule and indicates the equator. A classical column base forms the title cartouche., On verso: text in French concerning the content of the map including the names of what Mallet regarded as the principal peoples in the interior of Africa; principal towns in Africa South of Egypt; and the principal islands surrounding the continent. The names of peoples, towns and islands are given in Latin.
<b>Publisher</b>	University of Cape Town Libraries, South Africa
<b>Contributor</b>	
<b>Date</b>	1683
<b>Type</b>	map
<b>Format</b>	image/jpeg, 1 map : hand col. ; 20.5 x 13 cm.
<b>Identifier</b>	islandora:19712
<b>Source</b>	aslmaps_bms_6_a_2_710_p2.jpg
<b>Language</b>	fre
<b>Relation</b>	Aleph: 871946, BMS 6.a.2 (710)
<b>Coverage</b>	
<b>Rights</b>	

### [Description map of Inner Ethiopia](#)

In the detailed description, it is specified, among other things, that the Hesperic Gulf is the Gulf of Guinea. Why this precision and why this information is important, precisely because the Theon Ochema people mentioned above live on the edge of the Gulf of Guinea, as can be seen on the map below.



Map of Inner Ethiopia

On the map above<sup>5</sup>, taken from the same book on page 221, we can clearly identify *Theon Ochema* and right next to it we can read Gulf of Hesperia, which today corresponds to Gulf of Guinea.

#### b. THEON OCHEMA, THE TERRITORY

Thanks to the historical resources of ancient Europeans, we have been able to identify a people called 'Theon Ochema'. They located this place in Central Africa, on the edge of what they called the *Hesperian Gulf*. We shall see later exactly where this Hesperian Gulf is located. For

<sup>5</sup>

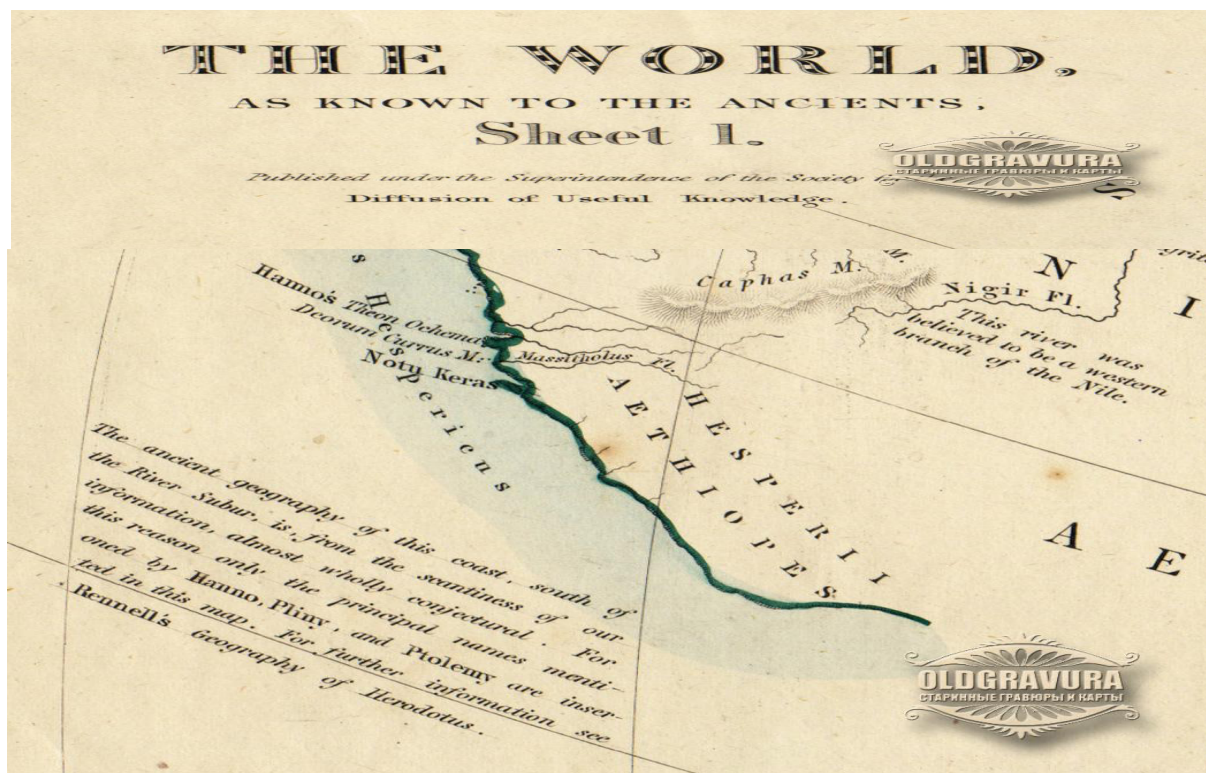
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/df/Description\\_de\\_l%27univers\\_%281683%29\\_%2814761295506%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/df/Description_de_l%27univers_%281683%29_%2814761295506%29.jpg)

the moment, let's focus on the accounts of those who were able to identify and locate the area we know today as Kamerun.

Pliny the Elder, whose Latin name was *Caius Plinius Secundus*, was born in 23 AD in *Novum Comum* (now Como) in northern Italy (in Transpadan Gaul) and died in 79 AD in Stabies, near Pompeii, during the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

He was a Roman writer and naturalist of the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman writer and naturalist. He was the author of a monumental encyclopaedia entitled *Natural History* (*Naturalis Historia*), published around 77. Comprising thirty-seven volumes, it is the only surviving work by Pliny the Elder. For a long time, this document was the reference in science and technology. It is precisely in Book VI, paragraph 18 of *Natural History* that Pliny situates the Theon Ochema territory. Here's what he says about the area where he locates what corresponds to present-day Kamerun: **"Ethiopia is oriented from the east to the west in winter; the part that lies to the south<sup>6</sup> has vast forests where ebony dominates; in its centre, a high mountain, leaning over the sea, burns with eternal fires; the Greeks<sup>7</sup> called it Theon ochema (Chariot of the gods)"**.

It should be noted that Ethiopia is one of the names that Africa has borne. Inland Ethiopia therefore corresponded to the area known today as sub-Saharan Africa. Below is a map dating from 1850, showing the world as known by the "Ancients"<sup>8</sup>.



[\*Map of the Gulf of Hesperiens\*](#)

<sup>6</sup> Central Africa.

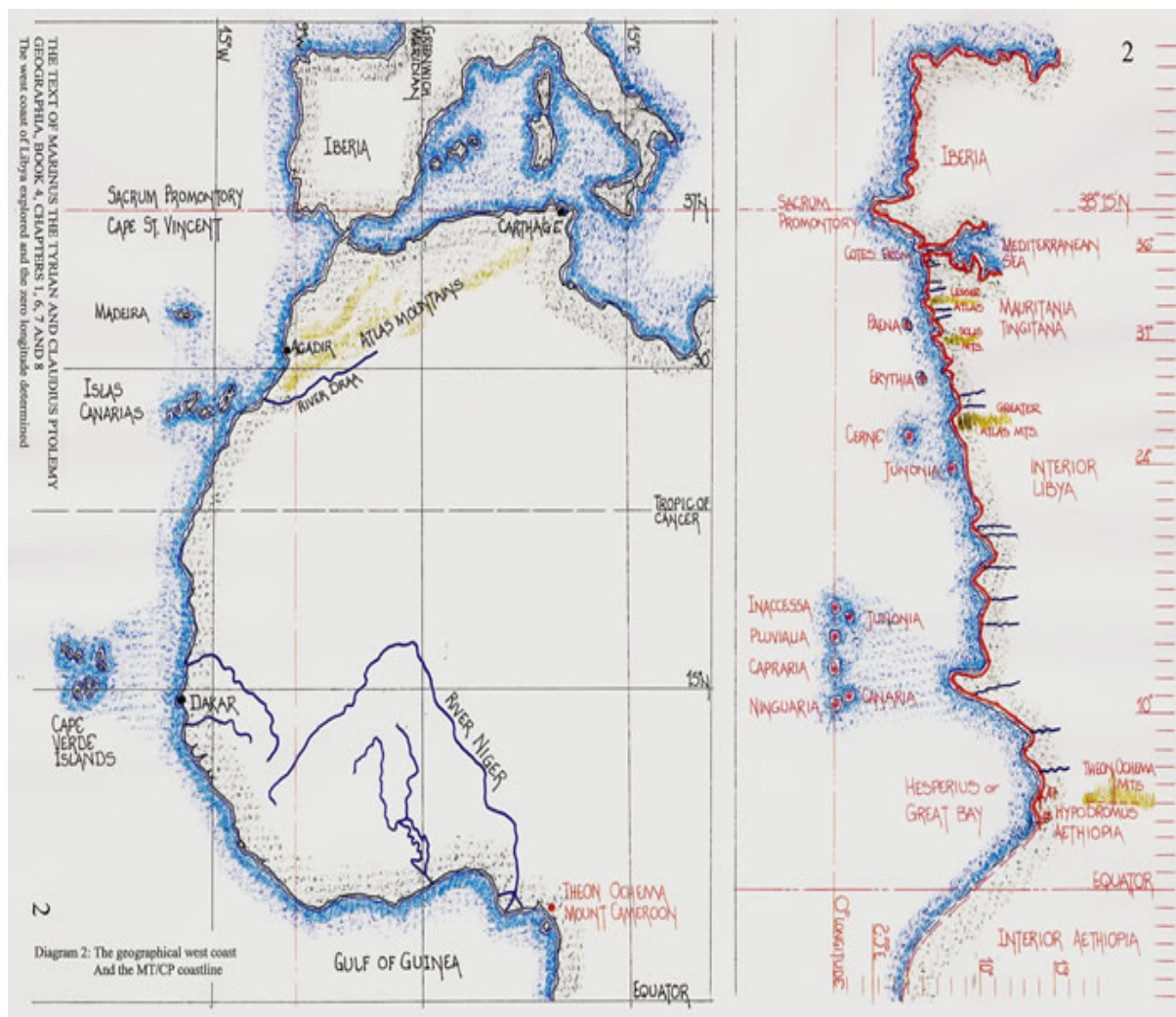
<sup>7</sup> Hannon and his crew are the Greeks mentioned in Pliny's encyclopaedia.

<sup>8</sup> The ancient Greeks.

What do we see when we look at this map? On the side, in Latin, we have the following text in Greek: "*Hamos Theon Ochema*", which means "*Jointure Theon ochema*". And just below it we have the Latin translation: "*Deorum Currus*", which in French means "*Char des Dieux*". We also note that we are located on the Hesperian Gulf, also noted here in Latin.

We can already note that the location of what was known in ancient times as the "Hesperian Gulf" has never changed. It is always in the same place, which leaves little room for illusory interpretations or reinterpretations.

There are other references to this area. Geographers also mentioned Theon ochema on maps. They were Marinus the Tyrian and Claudius Ptolemy in the first century BC, just over two thousand years ago.



[Map of the Gulf of Guinea](#)

We have two maps above, on the left the map by Marinus the Tyrian and on the right the map by Claudius Ptolemy. From this layout, it is clear that in the Gulf of Guinea, also known as the "Great Bay" or the Hesperian Gulf, we can clearly identify Theon Ochema, which is translated

by name as "Mount Kamerun". On Claudius Ptolemy's map, we can see that the Esperic Gulf and Theon Ochema are located precisely above the equator.

Further mentions of Kamerun, formerly Theon Ochema, can be found in volume 2 of the Greek and Roman Dictionary of Geography, on page 294.

## 294

## MASSILIA.

The medals of Massalia are numerous, and some of them are in good taste. It is probable that they also coined for the Galli, for the Galli had coined money of their own long before the Christian era with Greek characters. The common types of the Massaliot medals are the lion and the bull. No gold coins of Massalia have yet been found; but there are coins of other metal covered over with gold or silver, which are generally supposed to be base coin; and base or false coin implies true coin of the same kind and denomination. It has been also supposed that the fraud was practised by the Massaliots themselves, to cheat their customers; a supposition which gives them no credit for honesty and little for sense.

The settlements of Massalia were all made very early: indeed some of them may have been settlements of the mother city Phocaea. One of the earliest of these colonies was Tauroeis or Tauroentum (a doubtful position), which Caesar (*B. C.* ii. 4) calls "Castellum Massiliensium." The other settlements east of Massalia were Olbia (*Eoubes* or *Eoubo*), Athenopolis [*ATHENOPOLIS*], Antipolis (*Antibes*), Nicaea (*Nizza*), and the islands along this coast, the Stoechades, and Lero and Lerina. West of Massalia was Agatha (*Agde*), on the Arauris (*Ucrault*), doubtful whether it was a colony settled by Phocaea or Massalia. Rhoda (*Ros*), within the limits of Hispania, was either a Rhodian or Massaliot colony; even if it was Rhodian, it was afterwards under Massalia. Emporiae (*Ampurias*), in Hispania, was also Massaliot; or even Phocaeon (*Liv.* xxvi. 19) originally. [*EMPORIAE*]. Strabo speaks of three small Massaliot settlements further south on the coast of Hispania, between the river Suero (*Jucar*) and Carthago Nova (*iii.* p. 159). The chief of them, he says, was Hemeroscopium. [*DIANIUM*].

The furthest Phocaeon settlement on the south coast of Spain was Maenace (*iii.* p. 156), where remains of a Greek town existed in Strabo's time.

There may have been other Massaliot settlements on the Gallic coast, such as Heraclea. [*HERACLEA*]. Stephanns, indeed, mentions some other Massaliot cities, but nothing can be made of his fragmentary matter. There is no good reason for thinking that the Massaliots founded any inland towns. Arelate (*Arles*) would seem the most likely, but it was not a Greek city; and as to Avenio (*Avignon*) and Cabellio (*Cavaillon*), the evidence is too small to enable us to reckon them among Massaliot settlements. There is also the great improbability that the Massaliots either wanted to make inland settlements, or were able to do it, if, contrary to the practice of their nation, they had wished it. That Massaliot merchants visited the interior of Gallia long before the Roman conquest of Gallia, may be assumed as a fact.

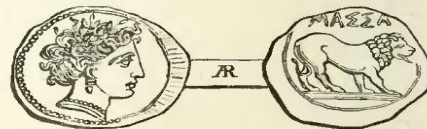
Probably the downfall of Carthage at the end of the Third Punic War, and the alliance of Massalia with Rome, increased the commercial prosperity of this city; but the Massaliots never became a great power like Carthage, or they would not have called in the Romans to help them against two small Ligurian tribes. The foundation of the Roman colony of Narbo (*Narbonne*), on the Atax (*Aude*), in a position which commanded the road into Spain and to the mouth of the *Garonne*, must have been detrimental to the commercial interests of Massalia. Strabo (*iv.* p. 186) mentions Narbo in his time as the chief trading place in the Provincia. Both before

## MASSITHOLUS.

Caesar's time and after Massalia was a place of resort for the Romans, and sometimes selected by exiles as a residence. (*Tac. Ann.* iv. 43, xiii. 47.) When the Roman supremacy was established in Gallia, Massalia had no longer to protect itself against the natives. The people having wealth and leisure, applied themselves to rhetoric and philosophy; the place became a school for the Galli, who studied the Greek language, which came into such common use that contracts were drawn up in Greek. In Strabo's time, that is in the time of Augustus and Tiberius, some of the Romans who were fond of learning went to Massalia instead of Athens. Agricola, the conqueror of Britannia, and a native of Forum Julii, was sent when a boy by a careful mother to Massalia, where, as Tacitus says (*Agric.* c. 4), "Greek civility was united and tempered with the thrifty habits of a provincial town." (See also *Tac. Ann.* iv. 44.) The Galli, by their acquaintance with Massalia, became fond of rhetoric, which has remained a national taste to the present day. They had teachers of rhetoric and philosophy in their houses, and the towns also hired teachers for their youth, as they did physicians; for a kind of inspector of health was a part of the economy of a Greek town. Circumstances brought three languages into use at Massalia, the Greek, the Latin, and the Gallic (*Isid.* xv., on the authority of Varro). The studies of the youth at Massalia in the Roman period were both Greek and Latin. Medicine appears to have been cultivated at Massalia. Crinas, a doctor of this town, combined physic and astrology. He left an enormous sum of money for repairing the walls of his native town. He made his fortune at Rome; but a rival came from Massalia, named Charinis, who entered on his career by condemning the practice of all his predecessors. Charinis introduced the use of cold baths even in winter, and plunged the sick into ponds. Men of rank might be seen shivering for display under the treatment of this water doctor. On which Pliny (*xxix.* 2) well observes that all these men hunted after reputation by bringing in some novelty, while they trafficked away the lives of their patients.

The history of Massalia after Caesar's time is very little known. It is said that there are no imperial medals of Massalia. Some tombs and inscriptions are in the Museum of *Marseille*.

A great deal has been written about the history of Massalia, but it is not worth much. The following references will lead to other authorities: Raoul-Rochette, *Histoire des Colonies Grecques*, a very poor work; H. Ternaux, *Histoire Reipublicue Massiliensium a Primordiis ad Neronis Tempora*, which is useful for the references, but for nothing else; Thierry, *Histoire des Gaulois*. [G. L.]



COIN OF MASSILIA.

MASSITHOLUS (*Μασιθολος*), a river of Libya, the source of which Ptolemy (*iv.* 6. § 8), places in the mountain called Theon Ochema, and its "embouchure" (§ 9) in the Hesperian bay, between Hesperium Ceras and the Hypodromus of Aethiopia,

## 2.2. THE ORIGINS OF THE NAME KAMERUN

### c. RIO DOS CAMAROEES?

Kamerun, under the German occupation, then Cameroon and Cameroun under the British and French protectorates, that's how we officially identify this area of 475,442 km<sup>2</sup> today. From the historical data we have been able to gather, it appears that the name derives from the Portuguese word *camaroes*.

The few resources found tell us that it was around 1472 that a Portuguese explorer named Fernando Pô, faced with the abundance of prawns in the Wouri, exclaimed "*Rio Dos Camaroe*" to name the Wouri estuary. Subsequently, the Germans used this name to describe the entire territory. This is how we went from *Camaroes* to *Kamerun* in German, then to *Cameroon* in English and *Cameroun* in French.

This narrative is found in all the references we have been able to identify. With the exception of a few words, this narrative is the same, whatever the source. Which leads us to believe that there is, in fact, one and only one source. The only problem is that the origin of this source is unknown to us. In the current state of scientific research, no historical source is able to corroborate the origin of this story. Is it Fernando Pô's memoirs, or his logbook? Is it the writings of one of his contemporaries? Or was it written by one of his companions on the voyage to the Wouri estuary? In the final analysis, this account, which is now popularised by all and sundry, derives its authority from nothing.

To date, we have no answers to these simple questions. What's more, we know nothing more about the explorer himself.

### d. WHO WAS FERNANDO PO?

What we know about this character is very insignificant. We know his name, we know that he was of Portuguese origin and that he was the first European to "*discover*" an island in the Gulf of Guinea<sup>9</sup> and the Wouri estuary around 1472. This is all the information we have been able to find, whatever the source.

Where and when was he born? Where and when did he die? We don't know. Who were his travelling companions? Where are his memoirs, his logbook? None of these questions have been answered, or even the beginnings of answers. One might imagine that a seasoned explorer like Fernando Pô, travelling great distances around the world, would keep a logbook to record his exploits and discoveries. Especially as the vast majority of these navigators were financed by nobles and sovereigns of kingdoms, we can easily deduce that their refinancing depended on their spoils and discoveries - potential sources of enrichment for them. It was therefore

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<sup>9</sup> The island is now known as *Bioko* and belongs to Equatorial Guinea.

generally in the logbooks that these discoveries, spoils and other curiosities were recorded, which would attract interest in financing another expedition.

In the same way, the memory of explorers responsible for glorious deeds was preserved through the accounts and memoirs of their contemporaries and/or fellow travellers. Not so in the case of Fernando Pô.

When we do the same exercise with other explorers of identical renown, the result is completely different. Whether we're talking about Magellan (1480-1521), Henry the Navigator (1394-1460), Vasco da Gama (1469-1524) or Pedro Alvares Cabral (1467-1520), to name but a few, we find their personal details, sometimes their parentage, and for a number of them, we even find their academic backgrounds. At first glance, this leaves very little doubt about their feats of arms, but more importantly, it leaves no doubt about the veracity of their existence.

In the case of Fernando Pô, however, this is not the case. All the evidence suggests that he never existed. So what credence can we give to the various accounts attributed to him? Can we seriously base so-called historical information on such fragile elements? Our answer is categorical: no, we cannot.

With these questions and doubts in mind, we concluded that further research was needed into the origin of the name Kamerun.

### 3. KAMERUN AN ENDOGENOUS NAME

Following the disputes raised earlier, we turned to other avenues of reflection, in particular the endogenous origin of this name. It was on this basis that we obtained public documents from the Kamerunese territorial administration on the toponymy of villages in Kamerun. After consulting these documents, we realised that the name "Kamerun" is known throughout the territory.

Indeed, many villages in the country bear this name. In the southern region, in the Sangmelima district, in the Afamba-Libi area, there is a village called "Kamelon"<sup>10</sup>. We discovered this by studying volume IV of the report on the third population census of Cameroon carried out in 2005, in its section entitled "Updated directory of villages in Cameroon".

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<sup>10</sup> Dialectal variation reflects the dynamism of the language. It is a phonological process that is commonplace in linguistics. The same word will be pronounced differently depending on whether you belong to a particular geographical area or speak a particular variant of a language unit. On a regional level, this is called a regiolect.

Quartiers / Villages	Sexe		
	Total	Masculin	Féminin
ABEK	170	82	88
ADJAP	283	167	116
MEDJENG	297	162	135
ANDOUNG	250	133	117
BIFOT	115	54	61
ESSAMENKOU	110	52	58
NDJA	250	130	120
ANYOUNGOM	113	70	43
NKONO	277	141	136
ONON	67	29	38
NGWASSA	490	237	253
ONON	56	32	24
MEKO'O	34	17	17

## 9.1.6. ARRONDISSEMENT DE SANGMELIMA

Quartiers / Villages	Sexe		
	Total	Masculin	Féminin
<b>SANGMELIMA</b>	<b>82513</b>	<b>42341</b>	<b>40172</b>
<b>SANGMELIMA VILLE</b>	<b>51333</b>	<b>26940</b>	<b>24393</b>
AKON I	4066	2231	1835
AKON II	4855	2714	2141
AKON III	3810	2040	1770
AKON X	1172	601	571
BASE	1855	998	857
BISSONO	2900	1547	1353
CENTRE ADMINISTRATIF	529	261	268
EBOLENGBWANG	2098	1079	1019
LOBO-SI	11783	6054	5729
MBEL'I	1034	493	541
MONAVEBE	1348	707	641
NKOLNGUET	772	416	356
NYLON	3070	1576	1494
QUARTIER CHIC	800	395	405
SANGMELIMA VILLAGE	9276	4819	4457
SOURCES	666	332	334
OTOAKAM	1299	677	622
<b>AFAMBA-LIBI</b>	<b>1814</b>	<b>913</b>	<b>901</b>
● KAMELON	631	304	327
NDJANTOM	863	447	416
NYAZANGA	320	162	158
<b>MEPHO</b>	<b>7653</b>	<b>3833</b>	<b>3820</b>
EFOULAN	147	73	74
EVINDISSI I	665	336	329
EVINDISSI II	296	143	153
KOMBE	413	199	214
KONDEMEYOS	377	191	186
MELEN	328	150	178
MENDONG	256	139	117
MEPHO	575	306	269
MEYOS	257	123	134

In the eastern region, we also find other occurrences of this name. These include :

*Kamelone* : in the Messamena district, Léhé-Mpouo canton.

*Kamelone 1 or Kabiloun 1* : in the Messamena district, Badjoué-Nord canton.

*Kamelone 2 or Kabiloun 2* : also in the Messamena district, Canton Badjoué-Nord.

*Kameloun or Kamelon* : in the arrondissement of Lomié, Canton Dzimou du Sud.

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KAK II : C.M.R. et ARR. NGUELEMENDOUKA  
Canton : Ayon-Yerap  
Posit : Mér : 12°55' Par : 4°12' Carte : Nanga-Eboko (2b)  
Route de Nguélémendouka à Lamba et à Ngoap  
Popul : 444 (1966/67) MAKAMA MBOAN

KAK III : C.M.R. et ARR. NGUELEMENDOUKA  
Canton : Ebessep  
Posit : Mér : 12°58' Par : 4°31' Carte : Nanga-Eboko (4b)  
Route de Nguélémendouka à Mbet (Route Yaoundé - Bertoua)  
Popul : 270 (1966/67) MAKAMA  
Poste Agricole

KAKA-ACHIP : Voir ACHIP-KAKA (p. 2)

- KAMELONE : C.M.R. et ARR. MESSAMENA  
Canton : Léhé et Mpouo  
Posit : Mér : 12°58' Par : 3°31' Carte : Akonolinga  
Piste auto d'Esienbot à Doumo  
Popul : 54 (1966/67) BADJOUE.
- KAMELONE I ou KABILOUN I : C.M.R. et ARR. MESSAMENA  
Canton : Badjoué-Nord  
Posit : Mér : 12°50' Par : 3°36' Carte : Akonolinga  
Piste auto de Messamena à Maleuleu et à Nkonzu  
Popul : 100 (1966/67) BADJOUE.
- KAMELONE II ou KABILOUN II : C.M.R. et ARR. MESSAMENA  
Canton : Badjoué-Nord  
Posit : Mér : 12°51' Par : 3°37' Carte : Akonolinga  
Piste auto de Messamena à Maleuleu et à Nkonzu  
Popul : 110 (1966/67) BADJOUE.
- KAMELOUN ou KAMELON : C.M.R. et ARR. LOMIE  
Canton : Dzimou du Sud  
Posit : Mér : 14°07' Par : 3°01' Carte : Medoum  
Piste auto d'Eschiambor à Messok et à Zoulabot II  
Popul : 163 dont 52 Pygmées (1964/65) DZIMOU et PYGMEES.

KAP : C.M.R. et ARR. NGUELEMENDOUKA  
Canton : Ebessep  
Posit : Mér : 13°01' Par : 4°25' Carte : Bertoua (1c)  
Piste de Djende 1 à Bika et à Mbet  
Popul : 186 (1966/67) MAKAMA.

This information can be found in the *Dictionnaire<sup>11</sup> des villages du département du Haut-Nyong*, published in June 1968. It can also be found in volume IV of the report on the third population census of Cameroon, carried out in 2005, in the section entitled *Répertoire actualisé des villages du Cameroun*.

## 3.2.10. ARRONDISSEMENT DE MESSAMENA

Quartiers / Villages	Sexe		
	Total	Masculin	Féminin
<b>MESSAMENA</b>	<b>26153</b>	<b>13441</b>	<b>12712</b>
<b>MESSAMENA VILLE</b>	<b>3180</b>	<b>1677</b>	<b>1503</b>
MAYOS	585	290	295
MOKOLO	533	266	267
NYLON	386	199	187
PLATEAU ADMINISTRATIF	660	356	304
PAYS BAS	385	221	164
LAC	236	132	104
MAVRO	395	213	182
<b>BADJOUE</b>	<b>1580</b>	<b>837</b>	<b>743</b>
BINTSINA	125	69	56
DOUMO PIERRE	78	40	38
DOUMO-MAMA	368	189	179
KABILONE II	42	28	14
MALENE V	138	69	69
MINPALA	231	128	103
NEMEYONG II	277	140	137
NTIBONKEH	70	37	33
NTOUMZOCK	251	137	114
<b>BADJOUE-NORD</b>	<b>8589</b>	<b>4473</b>	<b>4116</b>
BELAY	212	111	101
BIBOM	543	297	246
BITSIL	297	157	140
DIOULA	101	55	46
DJEUBLA	69	38	31
DJOLEMPOUM	166	87	79
EKOI	154	80	74
ESCHOU	335	190	145
ETCHU	113	59	54
KABILONE	253	114	139
KOUA	433	195	238
MADJOI I	116	53	63
MADJOI II	133	60	73
MALENE II	77	37	40
MALENE III	51	25	26
MALEULEU	293	141	152
MATOL	210	105	105
MBOUMO	1072	574	498
MEDJOH	108	44	64
MPAN	149	77	72
NKONZUH	3054	1647	1407
NKOUL	49	22	27
NTSINA	179	102	77
TESSANG	151	69	82
TIANE	155	76	79
ZEMBLE	116	58	58
<b>BIKELE NORD</b>	<b>4289</b>	<b>2084</b>	<b>2205</b>
AKOK BIKELE	469	225	244
BISSOUA	526	257	269
BLANDJOCK	126	61	65

<sup>11</sup> [https://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins\\_textes/divers15-04/02870.pdf](https://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/divers15-04/02870.pdf)

Quartiers / Villages	Sexe		
	Total	Masculin	Féminin
MASSENS	297	159	138
MEBEM	248	109	139
YANEBOT I	384	207	177
ZOULABOT II	679	409	270
<b>DJIMOU-SUD OU ZIME</b>	<b>5673</b>	<b>2986</b>	<b>2687</b>
BAREKO	1037	588	449
BEUH	212	103	109
BIZAM	705	394	311
● KAMELONE	422	220	202
MBENG-MBENG	485	241	244
MEKOUA	63	37	26
MESSEA	432	211	221
MINDOUMA	530	270	260
NKEADJINAKO	561	286	275
NKOAKOM	551	274	277
ZOADIBA	675	362	313

## 3.2.12. ARRONDISSEMENT DE NGOYLA

Quartiers / Villages	Sexe		
	Total	Masculin	Féminin
<b>NGOYLA</b>	<b>4424</b>	<b>2206</b>	<b>2218</b>
<b>NGOYLA VILLE</b>	<b>1271</b>	<b>646</b>	<b>625</b>
MOKOLO	350	169	181
NGOYLA VILLAGE	384	185	199
ZOULAMEYONG	537	292	245
<b>ETA-FRONTIÈRE</b>	<b>382</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>178</b>
BAREKO	53	32	21
DJADOM	79	44	35
ETA	100	55	45
MALETSENE	5	3	2
NKOLAKAYE II	51	23	28
NKONDONG II	10	6	4
YANEBOT BEL-AIR	49	21	28
YANEBOT BELLE-VUE	35	20	15
<b>MBALAM 2</b>	<b>944</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>492</b>
ASSOUMENDÉLÉ I	24	15	9
ASSOUMENDÉLÉ II	27	14	13
ASSOUMENDÉLÉ III	289	136	153
MAKEMENKOUA	526	253	273
MBALAM II	78	34	44
<b>NGOYLA-MIE</b>	<b>1827</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>923</b>
ADJELA	9	4	5
DOUMZOK	175	85	90
ETEKESSANG	480	222	258
LAMSOM	200	103	97
LELEN NOUVEAU	168	88	80
MABAM	244	131	113
MBALAM I	288	133	155
MESSOK-MESSOK	98	55	43
NKONDONG I	67	30	37

RGPH 2005-ZIME district

It should be noted that these villages with names similar to Kamerun, or even identical to a few phonemes, are located in the interior of the country. And in these areas, there is no question of

rivers abounding in prawns. These names therefore have a local imprint and a local experience. These places are so named because of their history, their culture, their traditions and their own vision of the world. This is an important point. As Gouvard, 1998: 62 puts it: *"If, in general, (de)naming or the act of naming is both an act of categorisation and referencing of some portion of the universe, it has to be said that in Cameroon in particular, it is far from being perceived as an entity 'devoid of meaning', that is to say, a mere semantically and symbolically gratuitous 'act of baptism', the result of a linguistic coquetry or an act of linguistic elegance"*.

## CONCLUSION

We had two objectives when we began this research project. The first objective was to restore the territory now known as Kamerun and its people to their historical roots. We were able to do this thanks to the testimonies left to posterity by explorers from the first centuries BC and AD, through historical resources such as encyclopaedias, logbooks and maps. As a result, it was under the name "**Theon Ochema**" that the territory of present-day Kamerun and the people who occupy it were known to the ancients. From the Greek, Theon Ochema, which in French means "**chariot of the gods**" and which we know today as "Mount Kamerun".

The second objective was to question the origin of the name *Kamerun*. We found it extremely difficult to find factual evidence that would fit in with the current narrative, commonly presented and accepted, which is that the name *Kamerun* comes from the Portuguese "Camaroes". This name was given to the territory by the explorer Fernando Po. Given the current state of scientific research, we can state without a shadow of a doubt that the facts relating to the discovery of the Wouri estuary by the explorer Fernando Po are the stuff of fables. The same applies to the famous explorer, whose existence is impossible to say, given the lack of proof of his existence. On the basis of these facts, and given the paucity of historical evidence at our disposal, we can conclude with Christopher Hitchens 2007, as follows: "what can be asserted without proof can also be rejected without proof".

On the other hand, we have had no difficulty in finding endogenous evidence of the existence of the name "Kamerun" and therefore in asserting that this name is of local origin. On the strength of this concrete evidence, it now seems obvious to us that we should delve deeper, not into the estuary of the Wouri or some obscure explorer, but rather into the country itself - language, geography, tradition, spirituality - to find the true origins of the name Kamerun.

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