A guide to the musical instruments of Cameroun: classification, distribution, history and vernacular names

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Preface

Despite some individual studies, the traditional music of Cameroun is little-known in comparison to the richness of its musical cultures. This book was begun to try and improve the definitions of musical instruments in dictionaries and ethnographies, by providing technical terms to describe instruments, bibliography, maps and images. However, the potential to compile comparative names for instruments also suggests some historical and cultural speculations, and these have become an integral part of the book.

The text has been written in English, but with the intention of creating a bilingual English/French text when the main part is complete.

It is very much a work in progress, and all contributions to improving it would be very welcome.

Roger Blench
Cambridge
Friday, 31 July 2009

Glossaire/Glossary

This glossary is highly provisional, since I have not had a chance to check it against a technical work of ethnomusicology in French.

Français	English
Idiophones	
bagues de concussion	concussion rings
bâton râpé	scraped notched stick
bâtons de concussion, bâtons entrechoqués	concussion sticks
boules de concussion	concussion balls
calebasse frappée	struck gourd
cloche avec battant	clapper bell
cloche en fer (double) sans battant	clapperless bell
cloches de concussion	concussion bells
gong de pierre	rock-gong
grelot	pellet-bell
hochet de calebasse en réseau	gourd net-rattle
hochet en boite	box-rattle
hochet en calebasse	gourd-rattle
hochet en vaisseau	vessel-rattle
hochet en vannerie	basketry rattle
hochets de concussion	concussion rattles
tambour à fente	slit-gong
tambour à friction	friction drum
xylophone	xylophone
Membranophones	
tambour-sablier	hourglass drum
tambour en baril	barrel-drum
tambour cylindrique avec un seul peau	single-headed cylindrical drum
tambour-gobelette	goblet drum
tambour calé avec lacets	wedge-laced drum
Chordophones	
arc en terre	earth-bow
arc musical	musical bow
guitare	guitar
harpe arquée	arched harp
luth à bâton	spike-lute
mvet	mvet, idiochord bar-zither with central bridge
pluriarc	pluriarc
vielle à bâton	spike-fiddle
Aerophones	
accordéon	accordion
anche double	double-reed
anche simple	single-reed
clarinette	clarinet
corne traversière	transverse horn
déguisant de voix	voice-disguiser

Français	English
ensemble de flutes verticale oblique	single-note bevel-flute ensemble
flute à bec	duct flute
flute en vaisseau	vessel-flute
flute traversière	transverse flute
flute verticale	end-blown flute
flute verticale de corne	conical end-blown flute
flute verticale en V	notch-flute
flute verticale oblique	bevel-flute
hautbois	shawm
ocarina	ocarina
rhombe	bullroarer
sifflet cruciforme	cruciform whistle
sifflet Européen	European whistle
trompe cylindrique	cylindrical trumpet
trompette	trumpet
tuyau tapé	stamping-tube
vaisseau frappé	struck vessel
Lamellophones	
sansa, piano à pouces	sansa, thumb-piano

Table 1. Sources and language projects contributing to the datasets

Phylum/Branch	Language	Informants/ Collaborators	Co-ordinator	Date	Source
Niger-Congo					
Atlantic	Fulfulde				
Adamawa	Mambay				
	Dii				
	Mbum			1966	Duvelle (1999)
Ubangian	Gbaya				
Bantoid					
Mambiloid					
Tivoid					
Beboid	Noni		Dave Lux	03/09	
Ekoid					
Grassfields	Limbum			03/09	
	Yamba			03/09	
	Ngyembɔɔn		Steve Anderson, Brian Schrag,	03/09	Schrag (2005)
	Ngomba		Scott Satre	03/09	
	Bamun			2001	Njoya & Bois (2001)
Bantu	Oroko		Dan Friesen	03/09	
	Kwasio		Dan Duke	03/09	
	Bagielli		Dan Duke	03/09	
	Akɔɔse		Robert Hedinger	03/09	
	Ɓasaa		Emmanuel Njock	03/09	
Afroasiatic					
Semitic					
Chadic	Kotoko	Marouf Ibrahim	Aaron Shryock,	02/09	
	Muyang	Philippe Avivai	Tony Smith,	02/09	
	Mofu		Ken Hollingsworth	02/09	
	Vame		Willie Kinnaird	02/09	
	Uldeme		Willie Kinnaird	02/09	
Nilo-Saharan					
Saharan	Kanuri				

1. Introduction

1.1 General

All continents are rich in music, but Africa has a particular diversity of instrumental music, partly as a result of its ethnic diversity and also because of the multiple influences the continent has undergone over many millennia. This music has remained poorly known, partly because of a decline in research, partly because the rise of 'world music' and many types of intermediate urban music types has allowed many who should know better to assume it has 'died out' or 'is on the way out'. Moreover, those who are wedded to European notions of music, in particular regular time signatures, and the key system, find this music hard to interpret and it is thus often ignored in scholarly accounts and other types of anthropological description.

Yet those who work in African villages know that none of this is so. Traditional music has certainly taken a severe battering in recent years and certainly some instruments or musical forms may have disappeared or are only remembered by an older generation. But other types of musical performance still flourish and are holding their own in an age of electronic media. It is also easy to be over-influenced by urban views and imagine that all villages now have access to electricity, radio and portable music sources.

Traditional music deserves to be documented in its own right and preferably recorded both in audio and video. Changes in patterns of performance as a consequence of contact with world religions and modern recording technology are also worthy of more than a footnote.

Cameroun is an African country where much of the rich musical heritage remains intact and where there has been some, albeit highly sporadic, documentation of traditional music. However, many descriptions are rather inexact, and it is sometimes unclear from the existing materials what instruments are being referred to and their exact status. This book is being prepared to make both Camerounians and outsiders aware of their musical heritage and to encourage the better description and documentation of that heritage. The description of melodies and other musical performance characters is rather specialised and will only be dealt with in passing here, but the main object is to provide a summary of existing knowledge of musical instruments. The text therefore covers;

a) the correct description of musical instruments likely to be encountered in Cameroun
b) the likely distribution of those instruments, with notes on where they are found outside Cameroun
c) the vernacular names for the instruments, where these are known
d) the history of those instruments inferred from geography and history
e) the distribution of particular types of instrumental ensemble
f) changes to the instrumentarium as a result of external influences such as Islam and Christianity, as well as globalisation and recording technology

It is emphasised that this is a highly provisional document. Our knowledge of instruments is fragmentary and the records are sometimes hard to interpret. Part of the function of this book is to encourage further work and better materials.

Is it really true that African musical culture is dominated by drums and percussion? This stereotype probably arose from early travellers, who landing on the coast, could hear percussion ensembles at night and assumed that these were the dominant musical form, and perpetuated this in their accounts. But complete repertoires of musical instruments and sound-producers usually give at least equal weight to wind instruments and in many cultures these were the most prestigious. Ascribing drums a dominant role in African culture is like assuming SE Asian musical culture is defined by gongs. Important, but not that important.

1.2 Indigenous and Western classifications

The European mania for classification has dominated much of the historical discussion of African musical instruments. Two major systems have been proposed in the twentieth century, Hornbostel/Sachs (Hornbostel & Sachs 1919 trans. Baines 1963) and Schaeffner (1954). The translation of Hornbostel/Sachs into English

in 1963 ensured that it has become dominant in the Anglophone world although some French publications still use Schaeffner's system. The exact point of classification, except as a reference tool, is sometimes hard to determine; clearly many instruments present combinations of sound-production systems. African societies are not so obsessed with this type of classificatory order; few have a term corresponding to 'musical instrument' and even informally, performers do not distinguish sound-producers from other items typical or dance performance, such as fly-whisks or cowrie-belts. Even rather evident categories such as 'drum' may often not have a unitary term as opposed to specific names.

The Hornbostel/Sachs system for classifying musical instruments and sound-producers divides instruments primarily on the basis of the way sound is produced, whether through percussion, vibrating strings or air. The early version of their system envisaged four categories, idiophones, membranophones, chordophones and aerophones. More recently it has become necessary to add electrophones, instruments that produce sounds by purely electronic means, such as synthesisers. Another more controversial category used here is lamellophones, instruments where the sound is produced by a vibrating tongue or lamella. This particularly applies to the Jews' harp and the African sansa. Such a classification is helpful for comparing instruments across cultures and for cataloguing museum collections, but is very remote from the way instruments are classified in indigenous systems. Typically, instruments may be classified by the material they are made of, the ensembles they are part of, or not classified at all, but simply given individual names.

1.3 History and the distribution of musical instruments

Photo 1. Arched harp: Muyang

Photo courtesy Tony Smith

Musical instruments are generally the most concrete evidence we have about the music of the past. Even if we can only speculate what type of music people played, we often know what instruments they used, and something about ensembles and techniques of performance. As a consequence, a large part of musical reconstruction is devoted to tracing the evolution, development and change in morphology and distribution of musical instruments. This has a long intellectual history in ethnology; it was thought in the German *Kulturkreislehre* school that musical instruments were associated with different cultural layers in human evolution. The apotheosis of this type of scholarship is Curt Sachs' (1927) *Geist und Werden der Musikinstrumente* which trawled the ethnological literature and museum collections of the world to produce a massive database of distributions of instrument types. The interpretation of those distributions would not make much sense in terms of modern understanding of ethnohistory, but the compilation of data it represents remains unsurpassed. It seems rather clear that human societies have a way of borrowing each others' cultural practices in a rather more haphazard fashion than such neat historical schemas would suggest.

Photo 2. Rock-painting of arched harp in the Ennedi

Source: (Bailloud 1997)

There exists no general overview of the musical instruments of Cameroun; indeed it is safe to say that for the majority of ethnic groups no information exists. Most dictionaries are nearly useless, giving only definitions such as 'flute' or '*tambour'* without further description. Museums with significant collections of instruments do not have catalogues, so the only way to explore their holdings is physically visit each museum. The literature search for this monograph leans heavily on relatively few publications and also draws on the often scant notes accompanying commercial recordings. Some overviews of material culture (e.g. Wente-Lukas 1977) or Geary (1984) provide information on regions or particular ethnic groups, but they tend to be incomplete because their focus is not strictly ethnomusicological.

There are some valuable publications for neighbouring countries; most notably Soderberg (1956) which is a detailed inventory of instruments for the region he calls *Bas-Congo*, roughly speaking modern-day Congo-Brazzaville and western DRC, touching on the southern limits of Cameroun. Many of the instruments described are very similar to those in Cameroun. A series of significant publications are those of the Tervuren Museum on individual musical instrument categories of the former Belgian Congo (later Zaire and now DRC). These include xylophones (Boone 1936), drums (Boone 1951), stringed instruments (Laurenty 1960), sanzas (Laurenty 1962), slit-gongs (Laurenty 1968) and wind instruments (Laurenty 1974).

1.4 Musical instruments and sound-producers

The definition of a musical instrument is not as obvious as at first sight appears. Many societies have what can be described a noise-makers and 'sound-producers', often used by children. In one location they will be used simply as a sound-producer whereas elsewhere they may play a part of a musical ensemble. Music is often associated with seasonality, especially in the drier zones where timely planting and weeding are essential to survival. As a consequence, particular noise-makers are associated with the growing crops or other agricultural processes. Similarly, bullroarers and mirlitons (kazoos) are often used as the voice of the spirits in traditional religion. They are not themselves musical but may enhance musical practice, by distorting the singing voice, for example. Children make and use their own distinctive repertoire of sound-producers. Sometimes these are in imitation of adults, for example unpitched raft-zithers of cornstalks and drums made from tin-cans with plastic heads. As a consequence, the text makes no clear distinction between sound-producers and instruments since the boundary is often hard to establish.

1.4.1 Tourist instruments

Musical instruments also play an important role in selling images of Africa to tourists. From Dakar to Johannesburg, poor-quality copies of African instruments provide a cheap souvenir for tourists satisfied with something for the wall. As with masks, these instruments have a tendency to wander from the originals, so that apart being only marginally functional, they also become increasingly strange in appearance. It seems unfortunate that there is not a more developed market for quality copies of instruments to encourage instrument-makers to retain their traditional skills.

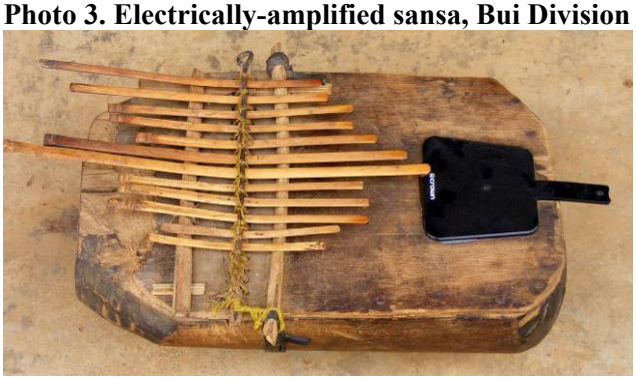
1.4.2 Modern materials

African musical instruments have also modernised the materials they use. From an early period, instruments have been made from plant and animal materials, with the introduction of bronze and iron as techniques for smelting these metals became known. They tended to be carved rather than painted, because the vegetable colours available would rapidly degrade with the instruments in use. The first major change was probably the replacement of vegetable fibre and gut strings with metal and later plastic strings. Once scrap and metal ingots became readily available, blacksmiths hammered out bells and other percussion instead of using precious smelted metal. Later, materials such discarded tins and oil-drums became available and the wooden bodies of drums were replaced with industrial materials. More strikingly, wind instruments have replaced the cane and wood with metal and rubber. For example, the end-blown flutes made of naturally hollow bark tubes typical of the Maroua region have been replaced by sections of plastic or metal piping. However, the music made on these less appealing but more durable instruments is not significantly different from the older bark instruments.

1.4.3 European instruments

European musical instruments may have been introduced as early as the seventeenth century, just as the xylophone was first carried back to Europe in the 16th century. However, the significant period was from the late nineteenth century onwards, when soldiers, missionaries and schools introduced a wide variety of previously unknown sound-producers. Few of these have been incorporated intro traditional forms, but many exist in urban settings and often have indigenous-sounding names in many languages. For example, the military trumpet, *clairon* in French, has become *gi-lilɔŋ* in the Nualibie language, and provided with an appropriate noun-class prefix. Similarly, the accordion and harmonica are widely known as *ŋgombɛ* in many languages, probably from roots for 'drum' n Bantu languages. A European instrument that is widely used in dance music is the whistle.

Photo 3. Electrically-amplified sansa, Bui Division



Source: Author photo

1.4.4 Electrification

Another feature typical of the modernisation of the Western instrumentarium is electrification. The most iconic instrument is the guitar, but the piano and others have also been important in changing the sound of music. Although (bad) amplification is common, even in African village music, in some countries, electrified instruments are still rare. Photo 3 shows a sansa from the Noni people in Bui Division which has been adapted so it can be amplified, allowing the performer to play at large, noisy meetings. The electric guitar itself is being adapted to some quite traditional musical forms. Electrification is unlikely to prolong the life of many instruments; the prestige of traditional instruments is so low that they are simply replaced with global detritus.

1.5 Linguistic background to Cameroun

Understanding the peopling of Cameroun and its complex linguistic makeup is essential to interpreting the patterns of musical instruments. The languages of Cameroun can be divided according to their linguistic affiliation; the three main African language phyla represented are Niger-Congo, Afroasiatic and Nilo-Saharan. These in turn are divided into several branches (Table 2);

Table 2. Language families of Cameroun

Phylum	Branches
Niger-Congo	Adamawa, Ubangian, Bantoid, Bantu
Nilo-Saharan	Kanuri-Kanembu
Afroasiatic	Chadic, Semitic,

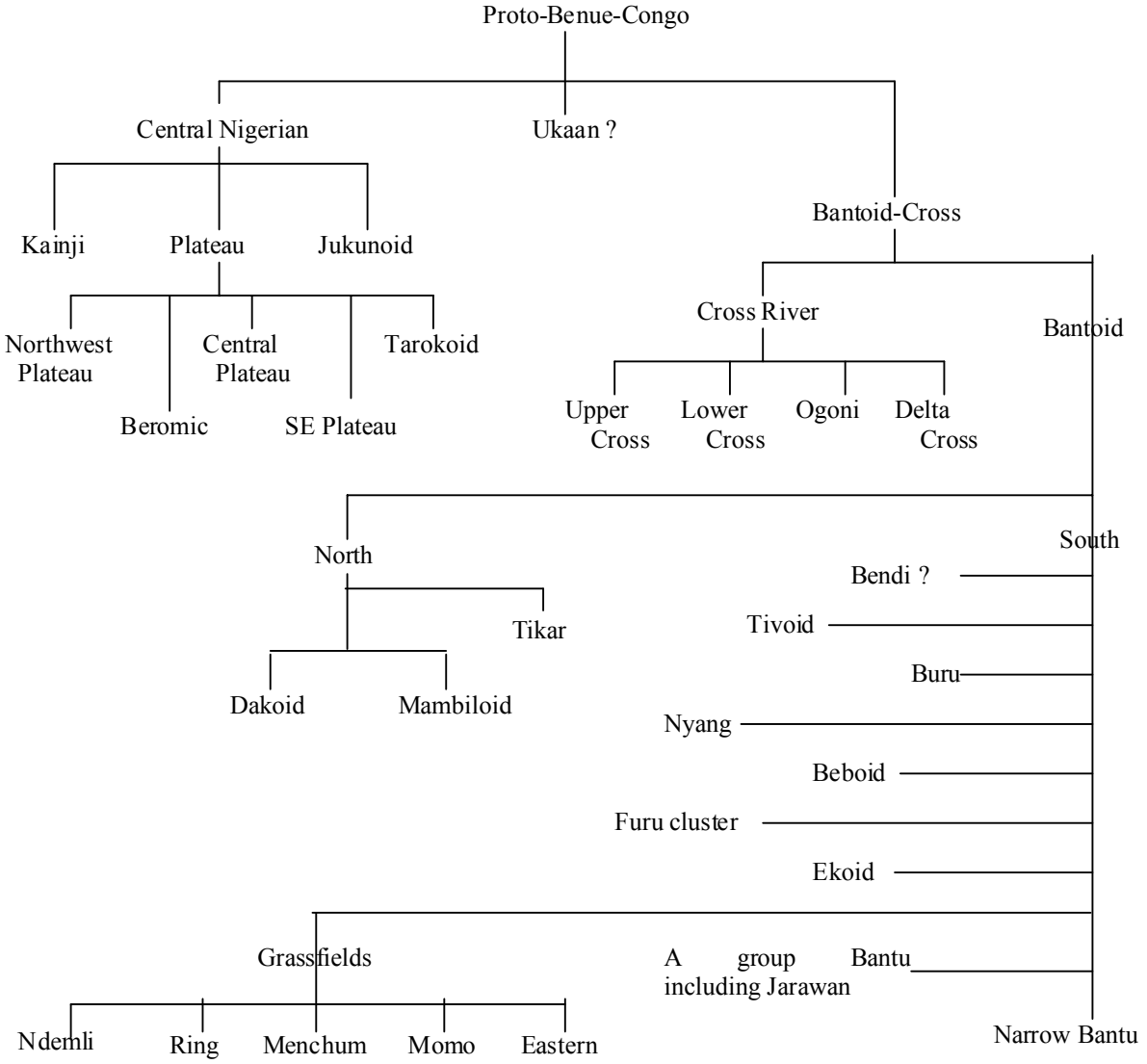
The ALCAM (Atlas des Langues du Cameroun) (Dieu & Renaud 1983) is the most complete book publication locating and classifying these languages, although more recent discoveries can be tracked through the Ethnologue (2009).

Nilo-Saharan is represented by a single language, Kanuri, and Afroasiatic principally by Chadic languages apart from Arabic, which is Semitic. The vast majority of languages in Cameroun are Niger-Congo, almost entirely confined to the Benue-Congo subgroup, apart from the Adamawa-Ubangian languages in the centre of the country and Fulfulde, an Atlantic language spoken originally by cattle nomads from the Sahel, but now an important regional language in Northern Cameroun. The most well-known group of Benue-Congo languages are the Bantu languages spoken in the southern regions of Cameroun, but there are many other subgroups, some of which remain little-known and even less described.

Figure 1 shows a classification of Bantoid languages, incorporating the most recent research. Ukaan and Central Nigerian are included for completeness' sake but are not found in Cameroun. Exceptionally, a few Jukunoid-speaking colonies, usually known as Akum, occur Northwest Province. Cross River languages are

extremely marginal, with just to languages from Lower Cross, Efai and Usaghade, in Cameroun. Jarawan Bantu was formerly spoken in Cameroun, but it seems that its two representatives have become extinct. The isolate language, Buru, is probably spoken only over the Nigerian side of the border.

Figure 1. Revised subclassification of Benue-Congo languages



The data tables that are incorporated into the text show the languages arranged according to phylum, family, branch and subgroup. Colour-coding is sometimes used in the tables to show the affiliation of lexemes across language boundaries.

1.6 Vernacular names of musical instruments

Musical instruments in Cameroun have a complex terminology. By collecting vernacular names in individual languages it is often possible to infer how instruments spread from one culture to another and explore the extent to which they can be reconstructed in individual language subgroups.

In the case of Cameroun it is certainly possible to put together the distribution of instruments and their vernacular names to speculate about their history. To take an example, the arched harp (Photo 1). Such harps are found in Africa between Central Nigeria and Uganda and extend down into Gabon (Bruguière & Grootaers 1999). They are strikingly similar to harps illustrated on Egyptian wall-paintings and found in Egyptian tombs. Similar instruments are also found on rock-paintings in the Ennedi region of Northern Chad

(Bailloud 1997, ill. 109[1], 155 and Photo 2). From this we can conclude that it probably spread across the Sahara desert some thousands of years ago and came into Cameroun with the Chadic peoples who are its main players today. A more detailed discussion can be found in §4.5.

2. Idiophones

2.1 General

Idiophones are 'self-sounding' instruments, that is they make sound by vibrating without a stretched membrane, vibrating string or air. They include bells, gongs, slit-drums, rattles and a variety of other instruments. They are often included under percussion, although in fact they make sound in a number of ways. A problematic class are the lamellophones, instruments that make a noise with a vibrating tongue. These include the African sansa. A key division is between tuned and untuned idiophones. Most sounding bodies produce a definite pitch, and these can either be treated as untuned, or arranged in sets according to a scale system. The most common tuned idiophone in Cameroun is the xylophone.

Beyond that, an important division in struck idiophones is between percussion and concussion. Percussion instruments are when the sounding body is struck with a different type of implement, such as a beater or stick. Concussion instruments are those where two similar objects are struck together. Typical concussion instruments are paired wooden clappers, bells or other metal pieces that sound when clashed together, for example when tied around the ankle. Idiophones can also sound through scraping and Cameroun has a number of idiophones based on scraped sticks.

Photo 4. Anthropomorphic slit-gong, Grassfields

Source: Author photo, National Museum, Yaoundé

2.2.1 Percussion

2.2.1.1 Slit-gongs

Slit-gongs are hollowed logs or sections of bamboo internode with a lengthways slit, often with resonator holes at the ends of the slit, producing two distinct notes when struck with sticks. Slit-gongs are found across the world, throughout much of Africa, SE Asia, Oceania and Central-South America (ref). They occur in all sizes from small hand-held instruments to instruments as much as 5 metres long. It seems likely that this distribution reflects the occurrence of forests with larger tropical hardwoods. Although sometimes known as 'slit-drums' they have no membrane; even 'gong' is somewhat misleading, but does at least refer to an idiophone. The local name, 'tam-tam' is also applied to drums and idiophones and should not be used. They are often referred to as 'talking drums' and many were used to 'talk' in the past, but the smaller sizes were often played for musical purposes.

Photo 5. Large slit-gong, Oroko

Source: Author photo, Big Bekondo

[1] This rock-painting was judged sufficiently iconic to be reproduced on a Chadian postage stamp

Slit-gongs are strongly associated with communication systems in many areas and when the first outsiders began to report back from the interior of Africa, very large slit-gongs were in use in many areas as part of systems of long-distance communication. By mimicking the tone patterns of the syllables of the spoken language it was possible transmit messages over long distances extremely rapidly. In the nineteenth century, messages could travel a thousand miles in two days along the Congo River and there is probably a link between the spread of Lingala, the *lingua franca* of the river, and the system of slit-gongs that were established at intervals along its banks. Sadly, the large slit-gongs of Africa are fast disappearing. Not only are the large tree trunks no longer available in many regions, but their communication function has been supplanted by telephones and fast public transport. However, there is at least one classic description of the use of slit-gongs in Cameroun, the description of the music of slit-gongs among the Nen, in the Grassfields (Dugast 1953). Dugast describes the way in which the two-tone pattern beaten out on the gong mimics the speech tones of the Tunen language and the periphrases used by the drummer to avoid ambiguity.

Photo 6. Slit-gong, southern Cameroun

Source: Author photo, National Museum, Yaoundé

Large slit-gongs do still survive in some parts of Cameroun. Photo 5 shows a very large instrument played by the Oroko people in southwest Cameroun. It is used for signalling major events to the population, still relevant in an area without electricity or mobile phone coverage. It stands on a base of elephant jawbones.

Table 3 shows the vernacular names of slit-gongs so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 3. Vernacular names of slit-gongs in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid		
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam		
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam		
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Ekoid	Ejagham	egyû̱k

2.1.1 Untuned

2.2.1.1.1 Struck plaques

2.2.1.1.1.1 Lithophones

Rock-gongs are pieces of sonorous rock usually left in their natural state and struck with small stones in rhythmic patterns. They are known all over the world and have been described from the inselbergs of Central Nigeria. They are also used among the Mofu people of northern Cameroun. More unusual are the flat lithophones played by women among the Noni and related peoples in Bui division. A large flat stone *ncéw* is laid on the round and struck with smaller stones, ncùy **(**Photo 7**)**. Such lithophones have only otherwise been reported from Northern Togo (ref).

Photo 7. Noni lithophone, *ncéw*

Source: Author photo

2.2.1.1.1.2 Struck iron plaque

Among the Kwasio and Basaa of south-east Cameroun, a triangular iron plaque is struck with two sticks in rhythmic patterns.

2.2.1.1.2 Struck bars

A long section of Indian bamboo is laid on the ground and several players with pairs of sticks strike the bar in rhythmic patterns. Such instruments are used among the Basaa, Kwasio and other peoples of Southwestern Cameroun. Duvelle (1999) illustrates a struck log (*pilon*) played by four players with paired sticks among the Mbum in NE Cameroun (Photo 8).

Table 4. Vernacular names of struck bars in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Adamawa		Mbum	disam

Photo 8. Mbum struck log, *disam*

Source: Duvelle (1999)

2.2.1.1.3 Struck vessels

2.2.1.1.3.1 Struck gourds

Large, hemispherical gourds are placed on a cloth and struck with paired sticks to accompany various types of women's entertainment music in Islamic regions in northern Cameroun. In a variant of this, the gourd maybe upturned in a basin of water, and the pitch adjusted by the amount of air trapped under it.

Table 5. Vernacular names of struck gourds in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	kálá

Photo 9. Struck tortoise-shell, Bekondo, Oroko people

Source: Author photo

2.2.1.1.3.2 Struck tortoiseshell

A dried shell of a land tortoise, such as Bell's hinged tortoise (*Kinixys belliana*), may be dried out and struck with a stick. These are usually used by priests to accompany incantations. Photo 9 shows a typical struck tortoise-shell, used by the Oroko people.

Photo 10. Mankon double clapperless bell

Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

2.2.1.1.4 Clapperless bells

). Such bells seem originally to have been the prerogative of chiefs, presumably because iron was rare and expensive. The coming of cheap iron meant that these were easy to make and they are now common in most parts of Cameroun (Photo 13, Photo 10). In the Grassfields chiefdoms, expensive double bronze clapperless bells were sometimes made for chiefs (Photo 11).

Photo 11. Tikar double bronze clapperless bell

Source: Author photo, National Museum, Yaounde

Photo 12. Oroko single clapperless bell, Bekondo

Source: Author photo

Table 12 shows the vernacular names of the clapperless iron bell so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 13. Noni iron double clapperless bell, Nkor

Source: Author photo

Table 6. Vernacular names of the clapperless iron bell in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	fiŋkuy
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Ngyembɔɔn	nzème mmó
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Ngyembɔɔn	kẅì' fùɔ
Niger-Congo	Bantoid		Bamun	nkwom

2.2.1.1.5 Clapper-bells

Clapper-bells are any bells which have an internal striker attached to the interior of the bells. Church bells, school bells are all examples of clapper bells. Such bells were also used traditionally, sometimes with multiple bells attached to a bar (Photo 14). In parts of the Grassfields, clapper-bells were cast in bronze and were used in various types of ceremony associated with chiefs. Photo 15 shows a small bronze clapper-bell owned by the Fon of Mbem in the Yamba-speaking area.

Photo 14. Multiple iron clapper-bell, southwest Cameroun

Source: Author collection

2.2.1.1.6 Pellet-bells

Pellet-bells are bells where a vessel, usually metal, contains a rattling pellet. The vessel is usually slit to ensure improved resonance for the bell. There are two important subtypes in Cameroun, iron pellet-bells, usually crescent-shaped and spherical or oval pellet-bells, cast in brass or bronze and strung on a chain as a rattle, usually slung around the waist or ankle, and often also treated as jewellery.

Photo 15. Yamba bronze clapper-bell, Mbem

Source: Author photo

Iron pellet-bells can be attached to rings and worn around the ankle or they can be used on a wide variety of implements (Photo 17). Photo 16 a dog-bell tied round the neck of a hunting dog, preserved in the Palace Museum at Bandjoun.

Photo 16. Dog-bell, Bandjoun

Source: Author photo

Photo 17. Mankon pellet-bells

Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

Table 7 shows the vernacular names of iron pellet-bells so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 7. Vernacular names of iron pellet-bells in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Ngyembɔɔn	kéjyága
Niger-Congo	Bantoid			

An important subtype of iron pellet bell is the rattling stick or spear. The pellets are enclosed in the crescent shaped bells welded to an iron shaft, which is sometimes a spear. The stick is shaken up and down or stamped against the ground. Photo 18 shows a rattling spear used by the Yamba people at Mbem. Table 8 shows the vernacular names of iron rattling sticks so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 8. Vernacular names of iron rattling sticks in Cameroun

Phylum	**Branch**	**Subgroup**	**Language**	**Name**
Afroasiatic				
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Ngyembɔɔn	

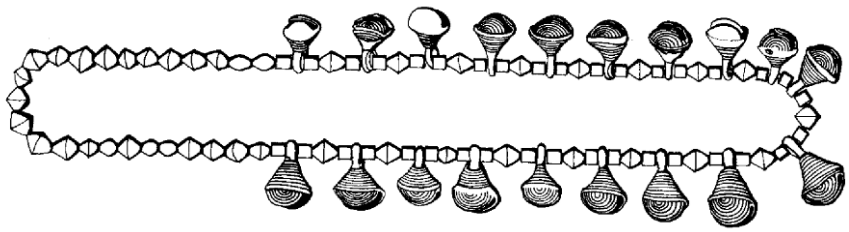
Recorded among the Dii and the Dowayo.

Photo 18. Yamba rattling spear, Mbem

Source: Author photo

Photo 19 shows a string of cast bronze pellet-bells from Northern Cameroun. Many of these instruments have disappeared, sold to collectors.

Photo 19. String of bronze pellet-bells



Source: Wente-Lukas (1977)

There is every reason to think they were once extremely common.

2.2.1.1.7 Vessel-rattles

Vessel-rattles are where rattling pellets are enclosed in a vessel and shaken to produce a rhythmic sound. The South American maracas are based on this principle. Four main types of vessel-rattle have so far been recorded in Cameroun;

a) Basketry rattle
b) Gourd rattle
c) Box-rattle
d) Palm-leaf box suspended rattles

Photo 20. Ngyemboon tin-can rattles, *tsétsá'*

Source: Schrag (2005)

The most common type of rattle is the basketry rattle. Two cylindrical basketry vessels are filled rattling grains and shaken. In recent times these have been replaced by tin-cans, which are often pierced with small holes to improve their resonance (Photo 20). Another shape of basketry rattle is shown in Photo 21, where the vessel is broad, squat and cylindrical. In yet another variant, the rattles are conical and their base is made from a curved section of calabash. When the rattles are shaken up and down, the pellets strike against the base and produce a rattling sound (Photo 25). The two rattles are often linked together with a piece of string. Table 9 shows the vernacular names of the basketry rattle so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 21. Noni, squat cylindrical basketry rattle, Nkor

Source: Author photo

Table 9. Vernacular names of the basketry rattle in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Zulgo	kwedekwede
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	mbàcà
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	

Also recorded among the Dii, Voko, Mafa, Parəkwa and Fali (Wente-Lukas 1977: 242).

Photo 22. Yamba squat conical basketry rattle with gourd base, Mbem

Source: Author photo

Photo 23. Noni gourd net-rattle, Nkor

Source: Author photo

Photo 24. Coconut shell rattles, Makak

Source: Author photo

Table 12 shows the vernacular names of the gourd net-rattle so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 25. Mofu conical basketry rattles with calabash bases

Source: Author photo

Photo 26. Ovoidal wooden vessel-rattles mounted on handles

Source: Author photo, Mus-Art, Kumbo

Table 10. Vernacular names of the gourd net-rattle in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	ficáw
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	

Another type of vessel-rattle is the gourd rattle, made from dried gourds containing seeds or pebbles. Photo 28 shows such a rattle used by the Yamba people at Mbem.

Table 11. Vernacular names of the gourd vessel-rattle in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	kásákásá
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Zulgo	dukuced
Niger-Congo	Adamawa		Mbum	mbara
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid		
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam		

A modern rattle shown in Photo 26 is a carved wooden rattles with integral wooden handles. The rattling vessel is ovoidal and is filled with seeds. The unusual shape of the rattle recalls a fish-tin and it seems likely that there were rattles made from old tins, mounted on handles and that this is a copy in wood of such a rattle. Although no tin rattles of this shape have been seen, the versions of basketry rattles made from cylindrical tins (Photo 20) certainly point to this possibility. Photo 24 shows another modern adaptation, rattles made of dried hollow coconut shells filled with pellets, with wooden handles screwed to the shell. These instruments are almost certainly inspired by Caribbean maracas.

Photo 27. Nso box-rattle

Source: Author photo, Kumbo

Box-rattles, made from raffia-palm slats bound together into a rectangular box and fill with loose seeds occur in the Nkambe region. Table 12 shows the vernacular names of the box-rattle so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 28. Yamba gourd-rattle, Mbem

Source: Author photo

Table 12. Vernacular names of the box-rattle in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	cɛ́ɛ̀sáŋ
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	cɛ̀ɛ̀nsáŋ

Palm-leaf box suspended rattles

A very characteristic type of rattle in Northern Cameroun is made from the dried leaves of the fan-palm (*Borassus aethiopium*). The leaves are woven into small rectangular boxes and filled with small pebbles or hard dried seeds. Large numbers are then strung on cords and looped around the body. Most commonly the ankles but also sometimes the legs or waist.

Table 13. Vernacular names of the palm-leaf box suspended rattle in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	gh́ízgá
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Laamang	txwtsa
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid		
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam		

2.1.2 Tuned

2.2.1.1.1 Xylophones

The principal tuned idiophone is the xylophone. There are two main types found in Cameroun, the Central African type, which has loose wooden plaques laid across banana logs, and frame-xylophones, consisting of keys in a wooden frame with calabash resonators. Some frame-xylophones are in a rectangular wooden frame standing on the ground, while others are portable and slung from the performers' neck (Photo 31). The large banana-log xylophones are tending to disappear, as they are not portable and musicians increasingly find the need to move around to play at events in different locations. In parts of north-east Nigeria, xylophones resonated with cow-horns with resonators have holes covered with spider-webs to emphasise a buzzing sound. In the Mandara mountains, the Mofu until recently made a xylophone with calabash resonators and a single horn resonator, which appears to be the easternmost distribution of this type of xylophone. The large xylophone ensembles of the Beti in Southern Cameroun are described in Map 1 shows the distribution of the two types of xylophone in Cameroun. Information about the central regions of Cameroun is frankly shaky; the isolated report of the Mbum xylophone (Duvelle 1999) may represent a whole tradition. Banana-log and calabash-resonated frame-xylophones are not distinguished as the two seem to be interchangeable at present.

Photo 30. Banana-stem xylophone, *nzăŋ*, Ngyemboon

Source: Schrag (2005)

Photo 29. Portable, gourd-resonated xylophone, central Cameroun

Source: Author photo, National Museum, Yaounde

Photo 31. Mbum xylophone performance

Source: Duvelle (1999)

Table 14 shows the vernacular names of the xylophone so far recorded for Cameroun;

Map 1. Distribution of xylophones in Cameroun

Table 14. Vernacular names of the xylophone in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid		
Niger-Congo	Adamawa		Mbum	nzaŋa
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Ring	Bum	ṅjáŋ
Niger-Congo	Bantu		Beti	mendzaŋ

2.2.2 Concussion

All concussion idiophones are untuned, so a division by tuning is unnecessary.

2.2.2.1 Concussion sticks

The simplest form of ideophonic concussion are two sticks struck together. If a suitable hardwood is chosen, then the noise is quite loud and penetrating and can be used to create an underlying rhythm for a percussion ensemble. Photo 32 shows two pairs of concussion sticks from the Oroko people at Bekondo.

Photo 32. Oroko concussion sticks, Bekondo

Source: Author photo

Table 15 shows the vernacular names for concussion sticks so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 15. Vernacular names of concussion sticks in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Ekoid	Ejagham	ŋ̀jâk
Niger-Congo	Bantoid			

Photo 33. Concussion bells, Mandara mountains

Source: Author's collection

2.2.2.2 Concussion bells

Concussion bells are clapperless bells strung so that they strike together when shaken. Very often such bells of different sizes and shapes are attached to a frame and strike together when the player shakes the frame. In the Mandaras, it is common to attach bells to iron rings and shake the whole instrument (Photo 33).

2.2.2.3 Concussion rings

Another type of concussion rattle uses iron rings strung on a frame, perhaps also attached to a sounding vessel (Photo 34). The whole frame is shaken to produce a rattling sound.

Photo 34. Concussion rings, Mandara mountains

Source: Author's collection

2.2.2.4 Concussion rattles

A very common type of rattle is the multiple concussion rattle. Usually made from dried fruit-shells, many of these are strung on a cord and tied around the ankles or waist (Photo 35). In a variant of this, very large fruit-shells are split in half, the pellets enclosed and then sewn together with vegetable fibre (Photo 38). A third type is attaching dried fruit-shells on cords to the end of sticks or raffia bars and shaking them by hand (Photo 36).

Concussion rattles can also be made of iron. Photo 37 shows ankle-rattles used by the Yamba people. They consist of crescent-shaped pods of iron, similar to the iron pellet bells described in §2.2.1.1. but without rattling pellets. The pods are strung on an iron ring and clash against one another when the ring is fixed around a dancer's leg.

Photo 37. Yamba iron concussion bells, Mbem

Photo 35. Oroko fruit-shell rattles

Source: Author photo

Photo 38. Foumban fruit-shell rattles

Photo 39. Fruit-shell concussion spheres

Source: Author photo, Kumbo

2.2.2.5 Concussion spheres

A common noise-producer mainly played by women consists of two spherical dried fruit-shells joined by a short cord (Photo 39). One is held in the palm of the hand and the other manipulated so that it clacks against the first in a rhythmic pattern. These are sometimes used to accompany simple songs. They are found throughout the country. Table 17 shows the vernacular names of the fruit-shell concussion spheres so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 16. Vernacular names of fruit-shell concussion spheres in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Bana	térékatétlí

Also recorded among the Lamang, Guduf and Mafa.

2.2.3 Scraped idiophones

Photo 40. Scraped notched stick, Grassfields

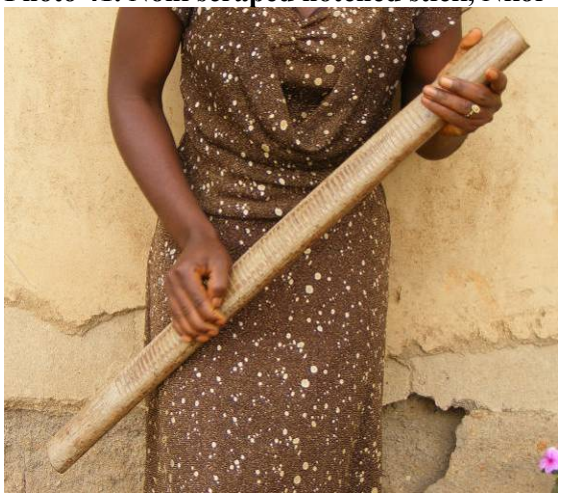
Source: Author photo, Mus-Art, Kumbo

Scraped idiophones are much rare than percussion or concussion but in Cameroun the use of a scraped notched stick is widespread. These instruments are the origin of the guiro used in Cuban music. In some cases, a solid block of wood is carved with notches and scraped with a stick (Photo 40). Alternatively, a section of raffia midrib is hollowed out and notches are carved along one side (Photo 41). The player scrapes an iron ring or a stick along the notches producing a rhythmic clacking sound. Table 17 shows the vernacular names of the scraped notched stick so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 17. Vernacular names of the scraped notched stick in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	kwàkwàr
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	kenkpwaà
Niger-Congo	Bantoid		Bamun	kpatkpat

Photo 41. Noni scraped notched stick, Nkor



Source: Author photo

2.2.4 Friction idiophones

Friction idiophones are extremely rare in Africa and have generally only been reported from the Congo. However, among the Noni in Bui division a friction drum, **kèbweè ke coŋ ɛ́**, is played for the **coŋ** society dance. This consists of a cylindrical drum, open at the base, with a stick attached to the inside of the skin. The player wets his hand and rubs the stick up and down. The squeaking noise is amplified by the skin and the pitch corresponds to the speed at which the player moves his hand. Njoya & Bois (2001) also mention a friction drum, **ŋgwon**, used by a Bamun secret society, but do not describe its morphology.

3. Membranophones

3.1 General

Drums can be categorised in a number of ways, according to their shape, the number of heads and the way the head is fixed. Often in Africa, the way the head is fixed to the body is the most characteristic feature. In Cameroun, the main ways of head-fixing are;

a) Pegged or pinned. The skin is fixed to the body with wooden pegs, and more recently, nails or metal pins
b) Laced. Laces pass through the skins and are fixed to the body of the drum or hold in place a second skin at the lower end of the drum.
c) Wedge-laced. The head is laced and linked to another loop halfway down the body. Wedges are used to tighten the skin
d) Screw-tensioned. Modern, manufactured screw tensioners are attached to a loop going round the head of the drum. Associated with imported drum-types in churches and not generally seen in villages

3.2 Pegged or nailed drums

Photo 43. Mankon pegged and laced drum

Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

Photo 42. Ngyemboon single-headed pegged drum, *muɔ sèm*

Source: Schrag (2005)

Pegging or nailing is by far the most common method of fixing drum heads in Cameroun. A series of cords often passes over the wooden pages to present them from tearing holes in the skin. A very typical drum type a slightly conical drum with a short squat body, closed at the base, with legs long enough to stand the drum directly on the ground, so that it can then be played using the palms by a standing player (Photo 42). Photo 42 also shows a different drum with similar head-fixing, the narrow cylindrical drum, which is often held at an angle, for example between the legs of the player. The Ngomba people use such drums in pairs (Photo 45). Photo 43 shows another drum of this type with a short cylindrical body and base. The Mbum in NE Cameroun have extremely tall pegged drums with legs fixed to a circular base. The player beats the skin of the drum with the palms, while a second player taps the side of the drum with a stick simultaneously (Photo 44).

Photo 46. Yamba spherical footed pegged drum, Mbem

Source: Author photo

Photo 45. Ngomba nailed drums

Source: Author photo

Photo 44. Mbum cylindrical pegged drum

Source: Duvelle (1999)

Table 18 shows the vernacular names of the pegged drum so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 18. Vernacular names of the pegged drum in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	kèntóm
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	ǹcùm
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	ǹtàm
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	
Niger-Congo	Adamawa		Mbum	dali

3.3 Laced drums

3.3.1 Laced single-headed drums

Laced single-headed drums are quite rare, but the single-headed hourglass drum is an example of such a drum. Instead of passing to a second head, the laces pass to the base of the drum, where they pass through holes and can thus be tightened by pulling them taut. The Fulɓe are strongly associated with such drums, but they also occur in the Grassfields (Photo 47).

Photo 47. Ngyemboon hourglass drum, *làmbì*

Source: Schrag (2005)

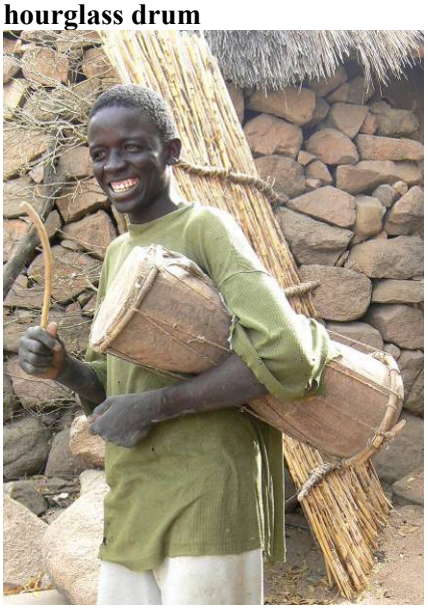
3.3.2 Laced double-headed drums

3.3.2.1 Hourglass drums

Hourglass drums have a typical double-conical shape. The laces pass from the beating head to the far end where there are rolled around a cane cylinder holding in place a second head (Photo 48). The drum is held under the arm and squeezed to alter the pitch of the drum-head and beaten with a distinctive curved stick. Hourglass drums are strongly associated with Islam and are frequently modelled on the Hausa *kalungu* but they have clearly spread to non-Muslim groups long ago.

Table 19 shows the vernacular names of the hourglass drum so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 48. Muyang double-headed hourglass drum



Courtesy Tony Smith

Table 19. Vernacular names of the hourglass drum in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid		Bamun	ndinda
Niger-Congo	Bantoid			
Niger-Congo	Bantoid			
Niger-Congo	Bantoid			
Niger-Congo	Adamawa			

3.3.2.2 Barrel drums

Barrel drums have short wide bodies and the two heads are joined by a network of laces, beaten with sticks or hands. Most commonly the two heads are equal sizes, but sometimes the lower head is small than the beating head, given the drum a conical profile (Photo 49, Photo 50). Among some peoples, they are made in several sizes, laid on the ground and beaten with sticking by a bending player.

Photo 49. Paired barrel-drums, Ouldeme

Source: Author photo

Photo 50. Muyang double-headed conical drum

Courtesy Tony Smith

Table 20 shows the vernacular names of the barrel-drum so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 20. Vernacular names of the barrel-drum in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Muyang	timi
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Muyang	gwenderi
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Vame	tèm
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Ouldeme	àtìm
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Mofu	′gaŋgaŋ
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Podoko	gáŋəka
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Podoko	tímé

3.3.2.3 Conical drums

A closely related drum is the typical double-headed conical drum found in parts of Northern Cameroun. In contrast to the barrel-drum, this is usually played with the hands by a seated player (Photo 52). Table 21 shows the vernacular names of the pegged drum so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 21. Vernacular names of the two-headed laced drum in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Adamawa		Mbum	madan

Photo 51. Oroko conical wedge-laced drum, Bekondo

Source: Author photo

Photo 52. Mbum two-headed laced drum

Source: Duvelle (1999)

3.4 Wedge-laced drums

A characteristic type of drum found only in southern Cameroun is the wedge-laced drum. The head is fixed by means of a cord threaded through the edge of the skin which passes to another loop about halfway down the body of the drum. Triangular wooden wedges are hammered between the cord loop and the body of the drum, and the tension of the skin depends on how far the wedges are driven in. Photo 51 shows a typical wedge-laced drum of the Oroko people.

3.5 Screw-tensioned drums

Screw tensioners are not traditional in Africa and would first have been applied to African-type drums in the New World. However, the conga drums, which are Caribbean copies of Akan drums from Ghana, have been widely exported back to Africa in the form of church instruments and it is common to see locally made congas in pairs in church ensembles. In addition, screw tensioners are now also sometimes applied to more traditional drum forms, for example the squat cylindrical drums with legs that attach to a circular base (§3.2).

4. Chordophones

4.1 Musical bow

The musical bow seems to have developed from the hunting-bow but is now only used for music. It is a quiet instrument, normally played for personal amusement. The string is usually a vegetable-fibre cord, resonated using the mouth. A small flat stick is placed against the string to elicit different harmonics.

4.2 Spike-lute

The spike-lute is a lute where the neckpiece is a stick inserted into a resonator and protruding at the far end through the base, providing a place for the strings to be fixed after passing over a bridge (Photo 53). The strings are tuned by a series of tuning nooses fixed round the neck. Different types of lute are distinguished by the shape of their resonators. The sound-box is usually covered with either lizard-skin or tanned animal hide. There are three main shapes, those with resonators made from spherical gourds, those with bowl-shaped hemispherical resonators and those with trough-shaped sound-boxes. These correspond to those found elsewhere in West Africa (Charray 1996). Table 25 shows the vernacular names of the bowl-lute so far recorded in Cameroun;

Photo 53. Two-stringed bowl-lute

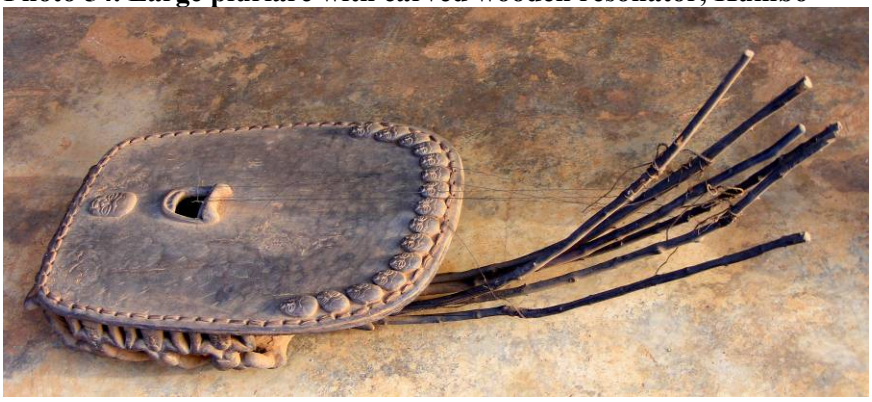
Source: Author photo

Table 22. Vernacular names of the bowl-lute in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	gúlúm

4.3 Pluriarc

Photo 54. Large pluriarc with carved wooden resonator, Kumbo



Source; Author photo

The pluriarc is an unusual African instrument typical of Cameroun, Gabon and Nigeria. It consists of a triangular, round or rectangular resonance case, usually made of sheets of a light wood. A series of flexible curved bows are fixed under the resonator and curved upwards in an arch. Individual strings pass from the resonator and are fixed to the bows. The effect is similar to an arched harp, except that each string has its own neck. The tuning of such instruments can be described as approximate, since there is no mechanism to ensure a very accurate tightening of the string. Some of the Grassfields chiefdoms made very large, elaborately carved instruments, such as shown in Photo 54. Table 23 shows the vernacular names of the pluriarc so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 55. Mankon pluriarc

Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

Table 23. Vernacular names of the pluriarc in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	komè
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	
Niger-Congo	Bantoid		Bamun	paata

4.4 Mvet

Mvet is a short and convenient name for a complex instrument, technically an idiochord bar-zither with a central bridge. The mvet is known from Cameroun, Gabon and a small region of DRC and no parallel instruments exist anywhere else in the world. Traditionally, it was made from a long piece of wood or cane and the outer skin or epidermis was raised up and run over a central notched bridge, creating rows of divided strings producing a note on either side of the bridge. The resonator was a spherical gourd, open at the base, held against the player's chest. Raising or lowering the instrument could change the volume and harmonics of the notes thus played. Modernised instruments often have strings made of wire or other materials are thus technically heterochord bar-zithers.

Photo 56. Mvet, Southern Cameroun

Source: Author photo, National Museum, Yaounde

4.5 Arched harp

The arched harp has a boat-shaped resonator, an arched neck and a series of strings stretching from the neck to a bar that runs down the middle of the soundboard. The neck is usually of the same piece of wood as the central bar. In Cameroun it almost always has 5-6 strings and pentatonic tuning. It is found from the region of Maroua to Tibati in the south. In Africa it is found from Central Nigeria to Uganda and very similar instruments are found in Egyptian tombs (Krah 1991). The arched harp first became known to a European audience through an illustration in Michael Praetorius' *Syntagma Musicum* (1618) although the origin of the specimen he illustrates is unclear. The arched harp was probably first heard in London in 1879, when the envoys of the Kabaka of Uganda to Queen Victoria brought their harps and played them until late in the night in their hotel rooms (Felkin 1886). Sachs (1927) is probably the first author to analyse the Old World distribution of this instrument. Wegner (1984) is an important preliminary survey of African arched harp traditions. Wachsmann (1964) appears to be the only author to attempt to link this pattern with human migrations. Wachsmann proposed an initial division into arched and angle harps and that all these harps came directly from Egypt via two routes, the Nile and directly to the Western Sahara in the case of the angle-harp. The Lake Chad harps are a branch of the Nile harps and spread thence both to Gabon and back eastwards to Uganda across Central Uganda. Cloarec-Heiss (1999) has collated the vernacular names of the harp in a large number of African languages and she argues that the diversity of names and their links with different language phyla suggest considerable antiquity.

Photo 57. Tikar bronze arched harp

Source: Author Photo, Mont Febe Museum

Bruguière & Grootaers (1999) represent a recent attempt to gather together distributional information in the context of an exhibition catalogue, somewhat marred by a relentless emphasis on the material from Francophone countries and thereby the virtual exclusion of Anglophone Africa. This volume also represents another important aspect of the African arched harp; its often anthropomorphic carved necks are highly collectible and are often traded as art objects irrespective of their musical context.

It seems most likely that the harp was widespread in both North Africa and the Near East some 5000 years ago and that it spread southwards, both down the Nile corridor and directly across the desert from North Africa. One reason for thinking this is that arched harps are regularly illustrated in rock-paintings from the Ennedi in Chad (Bailloud 1997, ill. 109[2], 155). The Ennedi is in the central Sahara, where no arched harps are played today, providing strong evidence for its transmission directly from North Africa. The Ennedi rock-paintings are not directly dated and must be assigned to phases based on style and content. the earliest illustration of an arched harp is in the pre-cameline period which can be assigned to prior to 2000 BP.

In Cameroun, the arched harp is characteristic of the North, occurring among most peoples, as far as the region between Kousseri and Maroua and spreading down to Tikar and Tibati in the South (Photo 58). In some of the Grassfields chiefdoms elaborate instruments made of bronze are made for chiefs, but presumably these are not very functional in terms of their resonant properties (Photo 57). Table 24 shows the vernacular names of the arched harp so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 58. Mofu arched harp

Source: Author photo

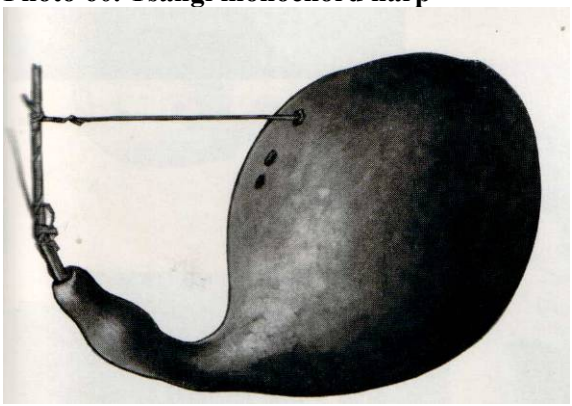
Table 24. Vernacular names of the arched harp in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Vame	kùlénděŋ
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Ouldeme	kurndù
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Mofu	gànjával
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Muyang	tindu
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Mada	kélndèw
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	gàzlàmà

4.6 Earth-bows and monochord harps

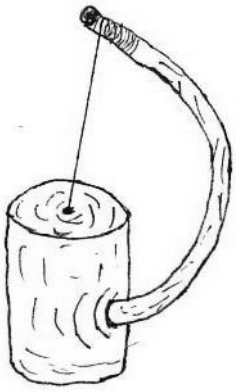
The earth-bow consists of a flexible stick inserted into the ground, with a single string attached to the upper end. This joins to a membrane, such as a leaf, stretched over a pit in the ground. Although reported in older literature from the Congo (Soderberg 1956), it is unclear whether this instrument is still made in this form. However, a modern variant is a monochord arched harp, with a single string attached from the tip of a bowed stick to a resonator, either made from a gourd (Photo 60) or in more recent times a tin can (Photo 59). The player

Photo 60. Tsangi monochord harp



Source: Soderberg (1956: Planche XX, 3)

Photo 59. Ngiemboon monochord harp



Source: Ngiemboon dictionary

[2] This rock-painting was judged sufficiently iconic to be reproduced on a Chadian postage stamp

plucks the string and varies the pitch by bending the flexible stick. For this reason, although the instrument appears to be similar to the arched harp organologically, its paying technique is extremely distinctive and depends on only having a single string.

4.7 Spike-fiddle

A bowl-resonated spike-fiddle with a lizard-skin table and one horsehair string, principally played in Islamic societies, notably for ecstatic cults, but also as accompaniment to praise-singing. Table 25 shows the vernacular names of the spike-fiddle so far recorded in Cameroun;

Table 25. Vernacular names of the spike-fiddle in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	kúkú

5. Aerophones

5.1 Flutes

Photo 61. Mofu modernised end-blown flute

Source: Author photo

5.1.1 Terminology of flutes and whistles

There is no true distinction between flutes and whistles in terms of the way they are played or their organology. Both make a sound when the player blows air across a sharp edge. Normally, however, flutes are considered to be instruments which produce a series of regularly related pitches, usually a scale, while whistles produce notes which are different pitch heights but showing no regular relation. In Cameroun, as across much of Central Africa, an intermediate case occurs, sets of tuned whistles which individually produce a single note, but a played in sets to produce a scale. Flutes can also be classified according to the shape of the vessel, either cylindrical, conical or vessel-shaped. Vessel-flutes are often known as ocarinas.

5.1.2 End-blown flutes

Flutes can be divided into end-blown and side-blown or transverse. Side-blown flutes are quite rare in Cameroun. End-blown flutes can be subdivided into three types;

a) flutes without a mouthpiece blown across a chamfered end similar to the Arab *ney*
b) bevel-flutes, where the blowing end is sliced across at a 45° angle to create a blowing edge. These are also common in single-note polyphonic ensembles
c) notch-flutes, where the player blows across a V-shaped notch cut in the top end of the flute, like an Andean *qena*

5.1.2.1 End-blown flutes without embouchure

5.1.2.1.1 Cylindrical end-blown flutes without embouchure

The most common end-blown flute has either no mouthpiece or the top end of the flute is slightly bevelled, to improve the position of the lips. Some end-blown flutes have elaborate decoration, such as the Kanuri *shilashila*, which has a metal bell on the lower end and cowries gummed to the tube. Table 26 shows the vernacular names of the *shilashila* flute so far recorded in Cameroun;

Table 26. Vernacular names of the end-blown flute in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	mbáyá
Nilo-Saharan	Saharan		Kanuri	shilashila

Photo 62. Pushing out the core of a branch to make a bark tube, among the Mofu

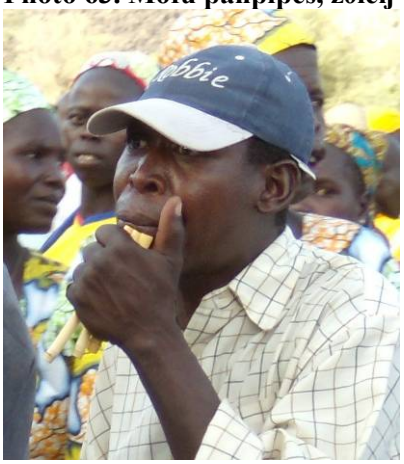
Courtesy Ken Hollingsworth

Among many peoples of Northern Cameroun such flutes were typically made from bark, choosing a tree where the bark easily comes loose from its core. Photo 62 shows part of the procedure among the Mofu people, where sand is pressed down into the tube which is then hammered to loosen the bark. These bark flutes have largely given way to modern materials, plastic piping or aluminium tubing, which are more durable if less aesthetic. Photo 61 shows such a modernised flute among the Mofu in the region of Maroua.

5.1.2.1.2 Panpipes

Panpipes are ensembles of single-note pipes bound in a row so that the player can easily move the mouth from one to another, producing notes in rapid succession. Pan-pipes are more typical of South America but occur in Africa, particularly among some of the peoples of the Mandara mountains. In most cases they are played by women, but Photo 63 shows a three-note panpipe being played, rather uncharacteristically, by a man.

Photo 63. Mofu panpipes, zə̀lɛ́ŋ



Courtesy Ken Hollingsworth

5.1.2.1.3 Conical end-blown flute ensembles

Photo 65. Ouldeme end blown horn whistles

Source: Author photo

Apart from cylindrical end-blown flutes, a common flute type is an animal horn blown across the top. Such horns may have one or two fingerholes and may produce one, two or three notes. They are typically found in sets of at least five and sometimes as many as eight instruments. Such ensembles are characteristic of the Mandara mountains, but may spread as far south as the Mabm-speaking areas north of Yaoundé. Photo 65 shows a typical set of such horn flutes among the Ouldeme people. Although the instruments are mostly antelope horn, note that at least one is made of wood and that the instrument has a slightly raised embouchure.

Photo 64. Mankon cruciform whistle

Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

5.1.2.1.4 Cruciform whistle

The cruciform wooden whistle is blown across the top like a panpipe, and has two fingerholes in either side of the body, often on projecting arms. The embouchure may be plain or have elaborately raised 'horns' which help support the lips but probably do not contribute to the timbre of the instrument. Cruciform whistles are usually not tuned and may have developed from signal instruments, since they are still common among hunters for communicating without disturbing animals. Often used in dances and occasionally found in pentatonic tuned sets. These instruments are the basis of the whistles that mark the Brazilian *samba* and have been made in modern materials. Cruciform wooden whistles are one of the most characteristic of African sound-producers and are found all over the continent in different forms. Table 12 shows the vernacular names of the cruciform whistle so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 27. Vernacular names of the cruciform whistle in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	**ǹdoŋ**
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	

5.1.2.1.5 Vessel-flute

An unusual flute is played by the Noni of Bui Division. A spherical calabash has a blowhole cut in the top and is open at the base. A tubular resonator is inserted in the base and moved up and down, thereby changing the pitch during performance.

5.1.2.2 Bevel-flutes

5.1.2.2.1 Bevel-flutes without fingerholes

Bevel-flutes in Cameroun are represented by the bark-flutes made in the Mandara mountains. They are made in the same way as the end-blown flutes from a tree where the bark comes loose easily. However, there are no fingerholes and the player makes a melody by a combination of overblowing and altering the resonant cavity by placing his hand over the lower end and altering the amount of air released from the tube. These are played in sets, but are probably not tuned in any conventional sense.

Photo 66. Mankon, set of single-note bevel-flutes

Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

5.1.2.2.2 Single-note bevel-flute ensemble

Another quite different type of bevel-flute is represented by the ensembles of single-note instruments used in some regions of the Grassfields. These are short wooden tubes with bevel-cut embouchures made in tuned sets. Photo 66 shows a highly-decorated set kept and played for the ruler of Mankon and Photo 67 shows typical Bandjoun bevel-flutes in a plainer but larger set.

Photo 67. Bevel-flute ensemble, Bandjoun

Source: Author photo

5.1.2.2.3 Multiple-note bevel-flute ensemble

In the Mandara mountains, clay versions of the bevel-flute exist, mostly played by boys undergoing exclusion following circumcision. The flutes may have one of two fingerholes and produce a pentatonic scale when played in hocket-style. Boys makes sets of these flutes, and today they are often decorated with aluminium foil or other materials. Photo 68 shows a typical example of this flute among the Mofu.

Photo 68. Mofu clay bevel-flute

Source: Author photo

5.1.2.3 Notch-flute

The notch-flute is a vertical flute with a V-shaped notch which the player blows across (Photo 69). Notch-flutes are common in the Grassfields, usually in ensembles.

Photo 69. Notch-flute, Grassfields

Source: Author's collection

5.1.3 Transverse flute

The transverse or side-blown flute is rare in Cameroun and some examples may well be European introductions. Tessmann (1913, II:329) describes a women's flute from the Yaunde people in Cameroun with a single fingerhole. Gansemans & Schmidt-Wenger (1986: Abb. 201) picture a similar flute among the related Eton people with the name *odin* (Photo 70). These flutes resemble other instruments reported from DRC and are probably traditional.

Photo 70. Eton single-fingerhole flute, Cameroun

Source: Gansemans & Schmidt-Wenger (1986)

5.1.4 Duct flute

Duct flutes are flutes where a constricted tube leads the air across an edge, typically like the European recorder. Such instruments were traditionally unknown in Africa, but metal manufactured whistles have been widely adopted to provide a rhythm for dance ensembles. Two types, the cylindrical whistle and the snail-shaped whistle, are used to set the changes in dance movements, and often have their own names.

5.2 Trumpets and horns

5.2.1 Trumpet, horns and others

Trumpets and horns are distinguished by the way in which the sound is produced; the player compresses the lips against an embouchure and forces air through them. In this way they act as a type of natural double-reed. Throughout most of European musical history, trumpets and horns were 'natural' i.e. they depended entirely on the player producing the natural harmonic series through lip-tension. Fingerholes and keys are recent introductions and are not generally found on African instruments. The distinction between 'horn' and 'trumpet' is slightly artificial, but is taken here to imply a distinction between a cylindrical bore (trumpet) and a conical bore (horn). The most common horn is an animal horn (antelope or ivory) which is naturally conical.

5.2.2 Trumpets

5.2.2.1 Long metal trumpet

Associated with the Islamic courts of Northern Cameroun are end-blown trumpets usually of brass or bronze, though now frequently made of scrap materials including aluminium. Most commonly played in pairs but sometimes in sets of up to six. Permission to have a set made was widely recognised as the seal of authority of a newly established or upgraded polity. They are almost always played together with the *algaita* shawm. In the kingdom of Foumban they have been combined with a traditional wind ensemble of end-blown wooden horns (Njoya & Bois 2001). Photo 71 shows the *kakaki* long trumpets played after Friday prayers in Foumban. Table 28 shows the vernacular names of the long metal trumpet so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 28. Vernacular names of the long metal trumpet in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid		Bamum	kakaki
Niger-Congo	Bantoid			
Afroasiatic	Chadic			

Photo 71. Kakaki trumpets, Foumban

Source: Author photo

5.2.2.2 Cylindrical trumpet

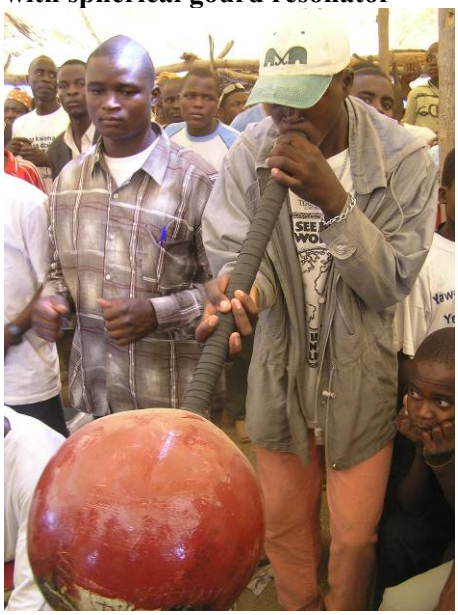
Photo 72. Ngyemboon end-blown trumpet, *cǔ*

Source: Schrag (2005)

In the Grassfields, it is common to blow a short cylindrical tube using a trumpet embouchure. Photo 72 shows an end-blown trumpet used by the Ngyemboon, made from a plastic tube. The Bana people in the Mandara mountains use much longer tubes which harve very large spherical gourd resonators (Photo 74). A variation of this practice is to hold the lower end of the tube inside a movable resonator, for example a spherical gourd or a cowhorn (Photo 73). The player moves the resonator up and

down, affecting both the pitch and the timbre of the trumpet. Formerly, these trumpets were made from bamboo or other hollow tubes.

Photo 74. Bana cylindrical trumpet with spherical gourd resonator



Source: Courtesy Ken Hollingsworth

Photo 73. Noni end-blown cylindrical trumpet with moveable gourd resonator

Source: Author photo

Table 29 shows the vernacular names of end-blown cylindrical trumpets so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 29. Vernacular names of the end-blown cylindrical trumpet in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	kènffuy
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	kìnsii
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Ngyembɔɔn	cŭ

5.2.3 Horns

5.3.2.1 Side-blown or transverse horn

A common signal instrument in Cameroun is the transverse-blown horn. Originally made from antelope horns, they are now principally either cow-horns or wood. The distal end may be open or closed, producing either one or two notes. Most commonly treated as unpitched, and used as a ceremonial or signal instrument almost throughout the country. Another important instrument is the related ivory horn, characteristic of courts in the Grassfields (Photo 76). Few of these are in use today and the disappearance of the elephant has made new ones hard to make. However, in some areas, copies are being made in wood. These are usually played by men, but among the Oroko peoples in SW Cameroun, they are played by women (Photo 77).

Photo 75. Mankon transverse antelope horn

Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

Photo 76. Tikar ivory transverse horns

Source: Author photo, Mont Febe Museum

Table 30 shows the vernacular names of the transverse horn so far recorded for Cameroun;

Table 30. Vernacular names of the transverse horn in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	kèmbaa
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	káál shí

Photo 77. Transverse wooden horn, Bekondo, Oroko

Source: Author photo

Photo 78. End-blown horn, Kumbo

Source: Author Photo, Mus-Art, Kumbo

5.3.2.2 End-blown horn

End-blown horns are very rare in Africa as a whole and also in Cameroun. They are, however, played in parts of the Grassfields, for example Foumban and Kumbo. Photo 78 shows a typical horn from Kumbo played by the Nso people carved from a single piece of wood. The end-blown horns in Foumban are much longer and of two different types, the *tatat* and the *tiratira* (Photo 80).

Photo 80. Foumban end-blown wooden trumpet

Source: Njoya & Bois (2001)

Photo 79. Alacita shawms, Foumban

Source: Author photo

5.3 Double-reeds or shawms

Double-reeds are instruments where two pinched reeds are brought together and sound when the player blows through them. Only one shawm is used in Cameroun, a sub-Saharan version of the Maghreb *ghaita* and presumably dating from the medieval trans-Saharan trade. It has four fingerholes, a wooden body and bell as well as a long metal mouthpiece into which the reed is inserted. The *algaita* is almost always played together with the long trumpets in Islamic court ensembles. Photo 79 shows the *alacita* shawm played after Friday prayers in Foumban,

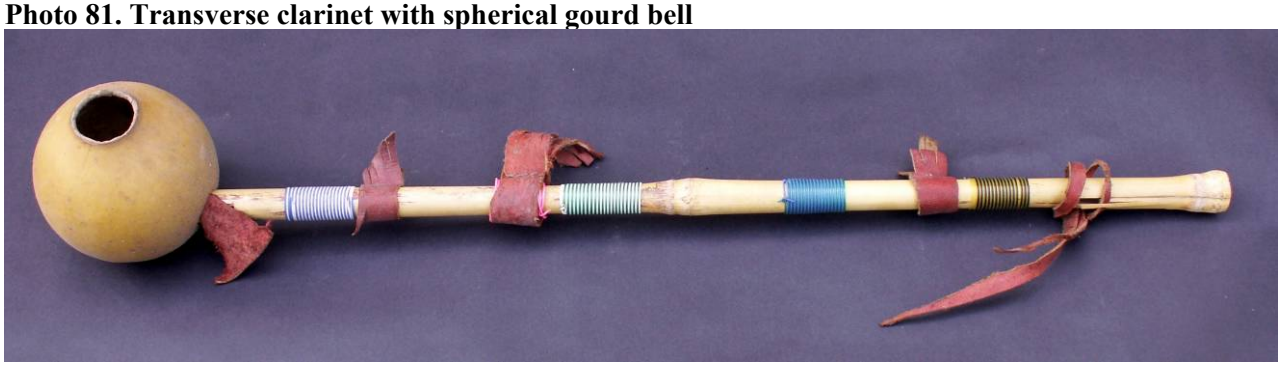
5.4 Single-reeds or clarinets

Single-reeds are instruments where a single reed beats against a surface when the player blows through it. Only one type of single reed is known in Cameroun, a transverse clarinet made from cereal-stalk internodes open at the distal end commonly made by children after the sorghum harvest. Some instruments have a resonator made from a dried fruit-shell fixed to one end (Photo 81). These instruments are found widely across West Africa, from Senegal to Chad, always in the dry, semi-arid regions. Table 31 shows the vernacular names of the transverse clarinet so far recorded in Cameroun;

Table 31. Vernacular names of the transverse clarinet in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Afroasiatic	Chadic	Central	Kotoko Lagwan	líkò

Photo 81. Transverse clarinet with spherical gourd bell

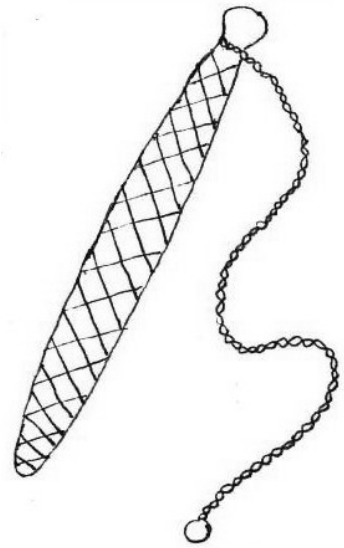


Source: Author's collection

5.5 Whirling aerophones

The bullroarer is one of the most ancient musical instruments known to human beings and occurs all over the world and in archaeological excavations. It consists of a flat plaque of wood, usually approximately diamond-shaped, attached to a piece of string and whirled around (Photo 82). The wooden plaque spins on its axis, producing a deep roaring noise. The bullroarer is often associated with secret societies as the noise it makes is said to be the sound of a spirit.

Photo 82. Ngiemboon bullroarer



Source: Ngiemboon dictionary

5.6 Percussion aerophones

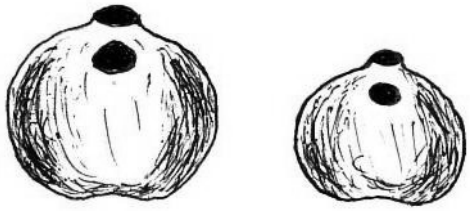
5.6.1 Stamping tubes

Stamping tubes are hollow tubes closed at the base which are struck on the ground. They produce an aerophonic sound corresponding to the length and diameter of the tube.

5.6.2 Percussion vessels

5.6.2.1 Struck spherical vessels

Photo 83. Ngiemboon struck gourds



Source: Ngiemboon dictionary

Hollow vessels can be struck in such a way as to excite the air inside and make a deep thumping sound. Controlling the amount of air expelled by the action of striking makes to possible to partially control the pitch. Instruments based on this principle are widely used in Nigeria made from pottery. However, in some Grassfields societies comparable instruments are made from the dried calabashes. The embouchure is a single hole cut in the top of the calabash and a fingerhole is cut in the sidewall (Photo 83). The player strikes the top hole with the palm of the hand and the side hole with the other hand to produce a rhythmic noise. Instruments are often played in pairs.

Photo 84. Basaa stamping tubes, Makak

Source: Author photo

5.6.2.2 Snail-shells

In southwest Cameroun, young women take dried snail-shells and pierce a hole in them. They then slap them against different parts of the body, opening and closing the hole to create quiet aerophonic and percussive sounds. This is used as a rhythmic accompaniment to personal songs.

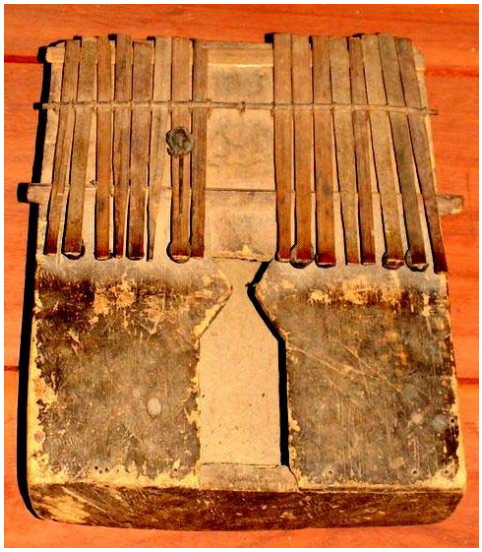
5.7 Voice-Disguisers

Widespread secret societies and masquerades have generated a great variety of voice-disguisers, through which spiritual entities speak or sing. Commonly these have mirliton membranes similar to a kazoo, inserted in the sidewall of a wooden, bamboo or horn tube. In initiation ceremonies, these may be used in gradated sets like wind ensembles. Other voice-disguisers include spherical clay pots and wooden megaphones. Photo 85 shows a set of three mirlitons, *momeka*, played for the *ŋgwon* society in Foumban.

Photo 85. Momeka mirlitons, Foumban

Source: Njoya & Bois (2001)

Photo 86. Mankon double keyboard sansa



Source: Author photo, Mankon Palace Museum

6. Lamellophones

The only lamellophone or sansa in Cameroun is the instrument based on paired hollowed raffia midribs with keys of the same material, tuned with latex (Photo 88). Larger instruments can have a hollow wooden box resonator and a split keyboard (Photo 86). Extremely

elaborate instruments with bronze accoutrements and multiple keyboards were made as ceremonial instruments for some of the Grassfields chiefdoms (Photo 87).

Photo 87. Tikar ceremonial sansa

Source: Author photo, National Museum, Yaounde

Table 32 shows the vernacular names of the sansa so far recorded for Cameroun;

Photo 88. Lamellophone, *ndeenge*, Ngyemboon

Source: Schrag (2005)

Table 32. Vernacular names of the sansa in Cameroun

Phylum	Branch	Subgroup	Language	Name
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Mbam-Nkam	Limbum	ntákùp
Niger-Congo	Bantoid		Bamun	mambila
Niger-Congo	Bantoid	Beboid	Noni	ǹtáká

7. Electrophones

Electrophones are all modern instruments where the sound is generated electronically, rather than by direct vibration of the air. Many such instruments have been developed in Europe and America but the only ones regularly in use in Cameroun are electronic organs and pianos. These are used in churches and in urban popular music ensembles, but do not yet play a role in village music. Amplified instruments (§1.4.4) do not usually count as electrophones.

8. Musical ensembles

8.1 Introduction

Musical instruments are generally played in ensembles and it is important to document such ensembles, to describe which instrument is played with which others and for what purpose. Unfortunately, so far this an area for future research in Cameroun, rather than an area where existing descriptions can be drawn upon. Very broadly speaking, there are two major ensemble types, aerophones and percussion. String instruments are often played along, or two three of the same type are played together. Aerophones, usually flutes, are played in characteristic polyphonic wind ensembles. Drums and percussion are generally played together and iron bells are characteristic rhythm instruments.

8.2 Polyphonic wind ensembles

8.2.1 Introduction

One of the most distinctive forms that characterizes 'African' music is the polyphonic wind ensemble. From Eastern Mali across to Ethiopia and down to South Africa, ensembles of wind instruments, similar in structure but graduated in size, constitute some of the continent's most distinctive and involving types of music. Paradoxically they are also the forms of music most under threat, because they reflect the broadly egalitarian nature of African village life; performances require a large number of players of similar status to be present regularly within the village. As labour migration, radio music and world religions make an increasing impact on village communities, so these types of co-operative music are often the first to disappear. Ironically, these rich sounds have influenced twentieth century composers and both Gyorgy Ligeti and Steve Reich have acknowledged its influence on their work.

The earliest likely record of this type of music is recorded in the journals of Vasco da Gama who saw Khoikhoi people performing wind music at Mossel Bay, East of the Cape of Good hope in 1497;

> 'and they began to play upon four or five flutes, some of which were high and some low, so well in fact that they played harmoniously…'
>
> trans. from Morelet (1864)

However, this remarkable music is still very much alive in many parts of the continent, and new evidence about its distribution and forms is constantly coming to light. No previous literature treats this type of music synthetically on a continent-wide basis, though there have been a number of studies of individual musical forms (e.g. Kirby 1933). Most notable of these is the work of Simha Arom (1991) on the polyphonic ensembles of Central Africa. Arom has probably made the single most important set of contributions to knowledge of this topic through a series of recordings (see discography in Dehoux et al. 1995) and has also carried out experimental work with performers to understand how the musical parts are fitted together.

8.2.2 Characterisation of wind ensembles

The main characteristics of polyphonic wind ensembles are;

a) Ensembles consist principally of wind instruments, with some added percussion, either drums or untuned idiophones. Chordophones are very rarely included.
b) The wind instruments are of the same type, organologically. Occasionally the base instrument in the ensemble is different, for example a horn is added to an ensemble of flutes, but instruments operating on radically different principles are rarely mixed.
c) The principal instrument type in Cameroun is the flute; trumpets and horns are rare and reed instruments of any type are unknown

d) The tuning of such ensembles is almost invariably pentatonic or heptatonic[3]. In many cases, instruments produce a single note. One instrument is assigned to each degree of the scale, even where the instruments are capable of producing a wide variety of notes, for example, notch-flutes.
e) The minimum range represented in such ensembles is an octave, although a tessitura of more than three octaves has been recorded. Additional octaves always double the main melody-line and do not seem to be given independent lines.
f) Each musical part is of approximately equal importance; canon or hocket-like structures are usual.

However, such ensembles invariably reflect a rather specific social context and some sociological generalizations can also be made;

a) Instruments are almost invariably played by men; women sometimes sing in association with the wind instruments, but do not play the instruments themselves.
b) Such ensembles are rarely if ever found in highly stratified societies, and do not play for courts, chiefs or other authority figures.
c) Polyphonic wind ensembles do not usually exist in societies with a class of professional musicians.
d) These ensembles are not usually found where named compositions are attributed to individual composers.

8.2.3 Distribution in Cameroun

9. External influences

9.1 The Muslim impact on sub-Saharan Africa

Islam is now the main religion of North Africa and dominates the Sahara, the Nile Basin and Northern Sudan. Much of Sahelian Africa either is Muslim or has come under strong Muslim cultural influence, as is reflected in food habits, patterns of commerce, dress and attitudes towards women. In Cameroun, the primary source of Islam was the ancient Kanuri kingdoms in Nigeria and Chad and the Lamidates of Northern Cameroun established following the jihad of Usman dan Fodio in the early nineteenth century. Arab culture has also been introduced via the nomadic Shuwa Arabs who began to penetrate the region in the thirteenth century. The Islamic commercial diaspora has resulted in settlements of Muslims in all major Camerounian towns. Politically, the furthest south Islam has penetrated appears to be the Sultanate of Foumban in Northwest Province.

Islam has also brought a significant change to musical practice and musical instruments. Large ceremonial ensembles used to legitimate traditional rulers, include kettledrums mounted on camel-back, long metal trumpets and shawms are typically Maghrebin. These instruments are found in the main Lamidates and other Muslim polities in Northern Cameroun.

[3] One exception to this is the calabash horn ensembles found between eastern Africa and Chad where tuning is fairly aleatory and players look for a graduation in size and contrasts in timbre

9.2 European impacts on music in Cameroun

Prior to the establishment of the colonial regime the first importation of Western musical styles began through the missions, and once recorded music became widespread, urban populations were exposed to a wide range of musical styles. Fusions of traditional styles with European instruments began in the 1930s with major growth in the 1940s and 1950s, probably fuelled by the experience of soldiers. Congolese music has been very influential, along with jazz, West Indian calypso, Latin American styles such as *samba* and some types of Black American music. Ensembles tend to mix some traditional drums and iron clapperless bells with guitars, keyboards and increasingly electronics.

9.3 The impact of the Christian church

Christianity may have made minor incursions on the coast before the nineteenth century, but it is likely that the major impact was after anti-malarials made it possible to survive in the interior after the 1850s that it became a significant influence. The linguistic and cultural divisions are reflected in the dominance of particular types of Christianity, with Catholicism in the Francophone areas and the Baptists and Presbyterians in the Anglophone areas. Originally the musical styles were imported wholesale from Europe, but there has been increasing encouragement of 'traditional' music. This is often problematic to congregations who may associate various musical instruments with traditional beliefs, which they are trying to exclude. As a consequence, there has been widespread borrowing from a sort of pan-West African church music, especially from Nigeria.

9.4 Technology and the rise of the recording industry

10. Conclusions

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Discography

Some of the best evidence for the composition and form of these ensembles are found not in published articles but on the notes of recordings, some of which are extensive and scholarly. Unfortunately, especially in the case of LPs, these are hard to find and are not necessarily kept in institutions of record. CD re-issues often omit some of the illustrations accompanying the original LP releases due to the difference in format.

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Videography

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