

Original Research Article

Ethnotherapy of *Yiénum* (Hemiplegia) Among the Bamoun Socioculture of West Region-Cameroon

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Abstract: Introduction: Hemiplegia, or *Yiénum* in the Bamoun language, is a disease characterized by paralysis or weakness of one half of the patient's body, rendering him or her disabled. This article looks at the management of *Yiénum* in a context where the population believes in the supremacy of Bamoun traditional healing methods over biomedicine or conventional medicine.

Objective: The aim of this article is to analyse the ethnotherapy of *Yiénum* (Hemiplegia) in the Bamoun cultural universe, in the West Cameroon region.

Methodology: The qualitative method in Medical Anthropology was used to collect secondary and primary data in the Division of Noun over a period from 2 January to 31 August 2019. Data collected from patients, close relatives, community members, traditional healers and health professionals were analysed using the content analysis technique. Arthur Kleinman's interpretative cultural theory was used to interpret the results. **Results:** The causes and treatment of this condition differ depending on whether biomedicine or traditional medicine is chosen. According to biomedicine, hemiplegic patients are predisposed to sudden death linked to a stroke. This is the main cause of disability in adults. According to the second, in the Bamoun socio-culture, it is a mystical disease, or its origin is unknown. The results of the survey reveal the use of alternative medication in the care of hemiplegic patients, with ancestral practices predominating. **Conclusion:** There is open collaboration between conventional medical practitioners and traditional medicine initiates predestined to eradicate this disease of mystical origin. The people of the Noun division are opting more for traditional practices and biomedicine.

Keywords: *Yiénum*, Hemiplegia, biomedicine, conventional medicine, traditional medicine, Noun.

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INTRODUCTION

Hemiplegia, commonly known as "half-death", was defined in the middle Ages by Pierre André Sigal (1985) as a "pathology of the miracle books", because certain causes originated in the affected limb, while others remained unknown. This lack of public awareness was due to the fact that cases were not recorded. Diagnostic methods were almost non-existent. Only observation of the hemiplegic patient's physical appearance confirmed the diagnosis. The pathophysiology of hemiplegia was unfathomable, and any attempt to explain it was confirmed. According to Belo M. et al., (2016: 10), "Twenty years ago, strokes were unknown to the Cameroonian public. Today, it remains a real public health problem. In 2010, an

epidemic of hypertension and diabetes hit women the hardest, with 523 deaths per 100,000 and 472 deaths per 100,000 men". Deaths linked to cardiovascular accidents are direct consequences of high blood pressure. More than 60% of patients who recover are left with a hemiplegic disability. "Stroke kills more people than road accidents and was the second leading cause of death after HIV/AIDS in 2013 and is the main cause of neurological disability". (SSS, 2016- 2027). Stroke is considered to be one of the main causes of neurological disability in developed countries and the leading cause of death in developing countries, particularly Cameroon. According to a 2005 WHO annual report, the number of stroke victims worldwide will rise from 16 million to 23 million by 2020. From this projection in 2017, it emerges

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that one person is affected by stroke every 5 seconds worldwide, and that 60% of stroke patients suffer from hemiplegia.

This article takes into account the criteria of traditional pharmacopoeia in the Bamoun socio-culture. The definition, socio-cultural causes and therapeutic practices in three health areas of the Noun Division were used to evaluate the management of hemiplegia as described by traditional healers, while also seeking to establish its scientific validity.

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study. Data collection techniques included individual interviews, documentary research and participant observation. The random sampling method, sometimes based on the "snowball" strategy, made it possible to interview around ten informants until the saturation threshold was reached. Primary data was collected in the field at the same time as secondary data through documentary research in documentation centres and libraries. In the field of social sciences, mainly medical anthropology, field research was carried out in two phases: pre-testing and actual data collection. The first phase was aimed at understanding in order to refocus the questions in the interview guides. The actual data collection phase made use of the data collection techniques and tools developed and updated following the pre-survey. The direct observation technique consisted of taking part in all care activities throughout the data collection period and at the same time getting involved in the management of hemiplegia. It also enabled us to learn about and use traditional Bamoun pharmacopoeia in relation to the care of hemiplegia patients in our study area. In fact, we not only integrated the medical and health epistemology of hemiplegia among the Bamoun through the hemiplegia healing sessions organized by Bamoun traditional healers, but also acquired endogenous knowledge on the management of hemiplegia in this socio-culture. The data was collected using android phones (audio recording). The recorded data were transcribed using Microsoft Word software, then processed and interpreted using content analysis. Iconographic information was collected using photography. These photographs made it possible to identify the materials commonly used in therapeutic practices and the environmental elements favourable to therapeutic practices among the Bamoun. In view of the above, the tools used were: interview guides, notepads, ballpoint pens and a digital recorder. The fieldwork procedure was a classic one, i.e. using the community introduction technique and conducting interviews and focus groups. The community leaders were the gateway. These community leaders also acted as relays to help identify therapists in the community. The interviews were conducted in the vernacular (the researcher's mother tongue) and sometimes in French in order to overcome the probable difficulties associated with field research. At the level of the health centres with the specialists in

conventional hemiplegia medicine, French was the language used in particular. The latter are not always users of the Bamoun language but, above all, certain technical terms specific to medical language do not generally make sense in the local language.

Given the ethnographic approach of this study and the involvement of human subjects, a number of ethical considerations were taken into account before, during and after data collection in the field. Indeed, after validation of the research protocol and data collection tools, this research obtained a research authorisation issued by the Division of Anthropology at the University of Yaoundé1. We also submitted the research protocol and obtained ethical clearance from the Western Regional Ethics Committee. These various authorisations facilitated meetings with the health authorities, local institutional players and community leaders, as well as therapists and members of the communities we met. After examining these documents, the latter generally agreed to our investigating their spheres of influence. Participation in the study was voluntary. An information note was drawn up and consent to participate was obtained verbally, although an informed consent form was drawn up. Respondents were informed of the objectives, risks and potential benefits of agreeing to give their opinion on the subject. They were also informed of the individual and community benefits of participating in the study and the reasons for their involvement. As far as confidentiality is concerned, we used a common code name to refer to the informants throughout the reporting of the field data in the ethnography chapters.

The data collected in the field and recorded on a digital recorder were transcribed and stored on a removable disk and then in a database created on a secure computer. As for the notes taken during the informal interviews and observations, they were entered and recorded in MS-Word. After this stage, we organised the data by theme and sub-theme.

The spatial framework chosen was the Noun Division. Data collection took place between January and August 2019.

RESULTS

In Cameroon, in popular imagery, the Bamoun, mainly those living in our study sites, are reputed to be the proven holders of mystical powers in all areas of human life. Traditional Bamoun medicine specializes in the treatment of many illnesses. The writings of Marc Monbget Lamare (1975) on Bamoun medicine reveal the extraordinary therapeutic potential of traditional doctors in Bamoun country. The medical landscape in this cultural group is organized into specialties', conferring on each traditional doctor the possession of therapeutic knowledge that makes him or her a specialist in his or her field. This is the case with *Yiénum*, where therapeutic

knowledge is held by a small number of initiated Bamoun therapists.

Initiation to the Practice of *Yiéum* Medicine

In the quest for health, some Bamoun opt for initiation. They receive a divine anointing that confers on them the therapeutic power of the *Yiéum* medicine. On this subject, a parent testifies that after spending months in the North-West region in search of a cure for his child suffering from *Yiéum* without success, he finally received his therapeutic power through a divine anointing to the point where he was able to provide healing care to his offspring. Since then, he says that in 35 years of practice, he has healed many people. *"I started treating Yiéum 35 years ago. This was because my child had this disease and I went to spend 6 months with him in Nkousoh (Banssoh, Koumbo, in the North West) without a solution. When I came back, God gave me this remedy and I treated my child. That's how I started healing people until now"*. The gift of healing is also transmitted by a supernatural or even divine force.

A former hemiplegic patient, in his morbid state, was transported by the spirits to a mysterious forest where various therapeutic plants were shown to him. When he woke up, he had the gift of curing hemiplegia. *"It all started when I fell ill. The spirits took hold of my illness while I was asleep. They began to show me the remedies in the forest, which remained engraved in my memory when I woke up, to the point where my healing power spread to all the surrounding villages"*.

Another person initiated into *Yiéum* medicine has benefited from an apprenticeship with his treating traditional practitioner. "I became a traditional practitioner because I was ill and went to Mon fon Bangoum in the village of Mangouon, but I wasn't cured. In the end, it was tradipratician Nji Ali (now deceased) who treated me, and because of his efficiency in providing care, he initiated me. I became his assistant wherever he went: Banso'o to meet other traditional healers to take the remedies". Initiation also passes from father to son. This is the case of the son of a healer to whom his father, weakened by illness, passed on *Yiéum's* gift of healing. 25 years after his death, his son continues the *Yiéum* therapy. *"I started after my father died on 5 January 2001. Before he died, he was ill for 9 years, and while he was ill, I looked after the patients who came to me. That's when he taught me how to treat. So, I've been treating this disease for 25 years"*. The most well-known initiatory approach in *Yiéum* medicine among the Bamoun is divine. Another specialist therapist today was a sinner to whom the therapeutic power was transmitted by an ancestor in a dream and then by the assistance of a spirit. The inspiration of the therapeutic Koranic verses transmitted in a dream are fulfilled with the real presence of a spirit who acts as a guide and gives treatment instructions to the new therapist. This account given by him retraces the history of his initiation

I was a sinner. My late father revealed through dreams to his successor, my brother, that I was predestined to heal hemiplegia patients. I had the same dream three successive days in different houses where I was shown the Koranic verses that would enable me to cure them and I read them aloud. And on the third day I was told in the dream that I would have the sick on Sundays. But it was on Wednesday that I got three. And I began to read the Koranic verses about them and the spirits began to speak in them. A few days later, another one arrived and when I was talking to him, the spirits came out in him and explained a lot of things to me. The spirit told me that I was going to heal several people by calling my name and that this was from God. I spent more than a month with this spirit who explained many things to me before leaving. And all the event's he predicted came true.

Initiation into *Yiéum* medicine among the Bamoun therefore follows three criteria. The therapists are either former patients, sons of former therapists or people chosen by the ancestors to whom the medicine is passed on or inspired. In most cases, the therapeutic power of *Yiéum* medicine is transmitted by the divinities.

Diagnosis of the Disease and Care of *Yiéum*

In any therapeutic procedure, the diagnosis of the disease is the main step that guides the care to be given to the patient. As medical practice is plural in Bamoun country, therapeutic diagnosis varies according to practice. There are therapies based on Islamic medicine with the use of Koranic verses and prayers, therapeutic practices based on the use of natural means or forces of nature and Mixed therapeutic practices which use modern methods of diagnosis and administer natural treatments.

Diagnosis by Mastering the Forces of Nature

In the Bamoun cultural universe, the identification of a *Yiéum* patient through diagnoses based on the mastery of natural forces is done on the one hand by observation and after discussion with the patient on the signs and symptoms felt by the latter. On the other hand, it is done through a traditional diagnosis and a specific method depending on the therapist. Healers observe the loss of sensitivity in patients by means of sensitivity tests. Saliva dripping from one side of the patient's mouth is often one of the signs of paralysis, indicating the presence of *Yiéum*. *"We recognise that a person has this disease when saliva flows constantly from his mouth, and also when he no longer reacts to pinches on the skin. When he feels no pain when pinched"* (Interview with a Healer, Mambain village).

Medical diagnosis essentially involves analysing the statements made by the patient in relation to the various manifestations of the disease. For example, if the patient reports itchy bones or increased blood pressure, these are signs of *Yiéum*. *"And in other cases,*

it paralyzes you. Blood pressure can be treated in the same way as hemiplegia". There are divinatory techniques specific to each therapist that enable them to identify the illness and its cause.

Boiling Pot Technique

For the Mengba specialist in Bangourain subdivision, it goes beyond other divinatory methods, identifying it by observing the behaviour of bark and other therapeutic products when cooked. As the therapist explains, a pot placed on the fire can be used to determine the different forms of hemiplegia. "*The traditional practitioner recognizes each case in the same way that a doctor identifies each illness in hospital after a blood test. When we put the pot of product on the fire, it is this that enables us to identify the different cases of hemiplegia*". In addition to the boiling pot technique, only the therapist knows the significant elements of the different types of *Yiéumum*. The specialist uses a stick to scan the patient's sputum in order to determine the type of illness, after which the patient is treated.

Diagnosis by Islamic Medicine

For specialists who use Islamic medicine based on Koranic verses and prayer, as soon as the disease is identified, the patient is put on treatment. Through their attitudes, these specialists make it clear that *Yiéumum* disease is transmitted by an evil spirit that must be extracted once the disease has been identified. Accompanied by prayer and the reading and writing of Koranic verses, the sacrifice of a goat brought by each hemiplegic patient is carried out directly to extract the evil. After prayers and the writing of Koranic verses, the traditional healers the goat's throat. The medicinal bark is mixed with the Koran and then given to the patient to drink. Diabetics are treated without scarification. Following sacrifices, the reading of Koranic verses and their writing, the treatment can be changed and adapted according to the progress of the illness.

Traditional Healer Using the Biomedical Diagnostic Method

Some therapists use both biomedicine and traditional medicine. Biomedical examinations are required before any therapeutic action can be taken, because for these therapists, if the illness is natural, it can be treated by biomedicine. On the other hand, if there is no explanation for the illness, it is automatically of mystical origin and must be treated by a traditional practitioner, considered to be a specialist in complicated illnesses. When biomedicine fails to treat hemiplegia, the Bamoun therapist considers the presence of an evil spirit and takes appropriate measures. The disease is first and foremost a phenomenon related to an organic malfunction that acts on the brain, causing paralysis. It is only when biomedical treatment is ineffective that the disease is taken in hand by the Bamoun.

Treatment of Hemiplegia by Traditional Bamoun Medicine

Bamoun therapists use medicinal plant bark, leaves and roots to treat hemiplegic patients. Patients coming from other regions and countries testify to their therapeutic effectiveness, without establishing a scientific link between the plant used and its beneficial effect on the body. A census of the plants used by Bamoun traditional healer, a search for the scientific names of these plants and a comparison of the plants with the effects already analysed by botanical experts are sufficient to establish a causal link between the substances contained in the plants and the reactions of the human body's systems. Even if the significance of the plants used cannot be emphasised in this article.

Dream Interpretations during Therapy for Hemiplegia

Human life oscillates between wakefulness and sleep. Established scientists recommend at least eight hours' sleep a day to optimise physical performance. The waking period corresponds to the period of activity of the physical body. Sleep, in turn, corresponds to rest of the physical body and the active life of the figure. This definition vindicates Eric de Rosny's (1981) assertion that man is twofold. During the active period of the physical body, i.e. when awake, the person himself is active, interrelating with his fellow human beings, improving his economic performance in order to reduce nuisance. During sleep, its photocopy or double, which is the silhouette, frees the physical body which is lying in bed. This spirit, which leaves the body, begins a life as if keeping its physical carapace, recognising its friends and all its relationships. It sometimes becomes difficult to distinguish real actions from those carried out in dreams. Exegetes believe that the figure leads a life in advance of the one we lead. This stage requires a little more concentration, an organized life and a healthy lifestyle in order to read the future through the signs in the dream. Because illness attacks both body and mind, any morbid or dangerous situation is first perceived in dreams. Some great healers have honed their silhouettes to pick up information about their professional activities very quickly. This phase enables them to see the list of patients they are going to see the next day, their problems, their therapies and sometimes the approaches to solving their problems. As soon as these healers recognize the patient they saw in the dream the day before, they tell the story without waiting for the patient to explain, thereby gaining their trust. During therapy, the patients' dreams also guide them in their choice of therapeutic itineraries. Dreams thus become an indisputable stage in the therapy, hence the importance of decoding them. Experts in dream interpretation have put together a book to give even the uninitiated an idea of how to understand the details of dreams.

Therapy and Improvement in Patient Condition

The administration of therapies and the improvement of care are linked to the stage of the

disease. Depending on how long the patient has been ill, healing can be slow or rapid. For some Bamoun healers, when the patient has just contracted the disease, healing can take just a few weeks and the patient regains his or her health. For this healer, for example, when the illness is recent, the results of the therapies administered can be seen one week after the start of treatment. "If I start treating the patient when they've just been affected by the disease, you can see the change after a week. Some people take one week and leave, others take three weeks and three months, which is why I say that blood is different". If after the first few weeks of therapy with certain healers the patient is not back on his feet, the healers refer the patients to health facilities for investigation. The healers use biomedical diagnosis to determine the type of *Yiénum* or hemiplegia. In the case of this therapist in Machoutchi, the patient is put back on his feet after a month of treatment. If at the end of this period the therapeutic response is not positive, the patient is referred to a health facility for further investigations.

Traditional Bamoun medicine and so-called modern medicine work closely together. Most of the time, so-called modern medicine is the last resort when the illness becomes complicated to the detriment of traditionally administered care. Treatment is then administered according to the identified cause of the

disease. With traditional Bamoun therapists, the treatment administered takes into account the various supernatural, natural and other causes, which may change as the illness progresses. For this healer, there are several categories of treatment, which he varies until the patient's health is restored. Our informant goes on to explain that when recovery is slow despite the treatments administered, the treatments should be changed or varied. The treatment is therefore changed and varied until the patient is completely cured. This variation can be spread over time, resulting in variations of 5 to 6 treatment categories in the cost of the treatment.

Specific Medicine Commonly Used by Bamoun Therapists

Bauhinia reticulata is the main plant used by the Bamoun cultural group for all types of hemiplegia. A decoction of the bark is taken in the morning and evening. The ash from the fruit, to which Canon powder is added, is used to scarify the paralyzed side once every three days. The residue of the plant's bark is also used for massage. This plant remains the main treatment for hemiplegia.

- **Pien Tree Or Bauhinia Reticulata (Bark And Fruit)**



Source: Inoussa (2019)

Pien or *Bauhinia reticulata* (bark and fruit) is an essential medicinal plant in the treatment of all forms of hemiplegia in the Noun region. It is used in different ways in all the therapeutic combinations of *Yiénum*: the decoction is obtained after cooking for one hour. This brown herbal tea is given to the adult patient to drink one glass morning, noon and night; the second way is to incinerate the strips produced as the fruit of the plant. They are burnt until a black powder is obtained, which is then mixed with the kassein product to scarify, first the side of the sick body, then the whole body. The Long Bone of the Lion is also used for regular massage of the sick side at least once a day.

Length and Cost of Treatment

The duration of treatment depends on three parameters that healers present. These are the duration of

the illness, the causes and whether it is complicated or not. The cost of the treatment also depends on these different parameters. In fact, the longer it takes to heal or the more complicated the illness, the higher the cost. Speaking of duration, according to healers, the longer the illness lasts, the longer the therapy takes and the longer it takes for the patient to recover. For a case of hemiplegia that has not lasted long, as they say, the therapists estimate that it will take 5 months to recover, while for an old patient, i.e. someone who has been ill for a long time, the length of therapy required to recover is indeterminate. This is what our informant, a healer in the community of Bangourain, explains. He says, "If it's a patient who hasn't been ill for a long time, he can be cured after 5 months. But if it's an old patient, we don't have a specific timeframe for treatment. We'll just give them the treatment until they're cured".

The duration of the therapy is indeterminate, hence the complexity of the cure linked to the so-called complicated *Yiénum* disease. Indeed, *Yiénum* is perceived by therapists as a complicated pathology. As a result, the duration of treatment is indeterminate or depends on the patient's ability to heal. The therapist administers a variety of drugs until the patient is cured. This has an impact on treatment costs. One therapist explains that there is no precise or set duration for a case of *Yiénum*. It's a complicated disease that requires perseverance in treatment, and the length of treatment is sometimes difficult to determine, as is the cost of the treatment, as a traditional doctor in Bangourain, Village Mengba, explained. *"You keep changing treatments until the patient is healthy again. And there's no specific price required. It depends on the family. Sometimes you help someone who has no family. And those who have the means will be asked to buy the ingredients for the treatment. We give them the bill after they've recovered. If he cries out, he's sent away, but we ask him to give what he wants. Sometimes you ask for a sum of money, even though it's a small amount, but at work I let the patient assess the extent of the work and give what they can. You take what they give you"*.

For some healers, there is no fixed cost for a traditional Bamoun *Yiénum* treatment. For others, the cost of the treatment is voluntary and can be adapted to the duration of the treatment. With the former, the patient and family appreciate the therapist's efforts and the extent to which the disease has been eradicated. However, it has to be said that experience has shown that the cost of the equipment is borne by the patient or his family. For others, on the other hand, the price of treatment is set according to the patient's condition and the stage of the disease. *"There are several complications. When a patient arrives with his condition, you ask for money according to his condition. You can't ask the same of someone who has been out for a fortnight or three and has regained their health as you would for someone who has been out for two or three months"*. (Interview with a traditional healer, Village Kourom-Mambain)

The length of treatment also depends on the cause of *Yiénum's* illness. For therapists, when the cause is mystical, an appropriate treatment is applied within an average period of one month, and patients are cured without the disease leaving any after-effects. In cases where the causes are related to blood pressure or hypertension, or to an organic malfunction, both are treated at the same time. That is to say, restoring order or managing the hypertension that is causing the paralysis. This is what this therapist explains, pointing out at the end of his speech that blood pressure is treated by biomedicine and the rest of the treatment is traditional. *"When it's mystical, the treatment is for a month. There are no after-effects. And when it's blood pressure, you treat it for two months. Because it's when you treat the blood pressure that you start your undignified*

treatment". (Interview with a traditional doctor, Machoutchi village).

In addition, apart from the cost and duration, traditional treatments are preferably administered in the therapists' homes or in spaces set up by the therapists to receive patients. There are, however, cases where Bamoun therapists travel to patients to administer treatment at home or in a health facility. Sometimes they travel to patients outside the Bamoun region. For example, our specialist from the village of Kourom-Mambain says, *"But I've already been to the Unity Palace to treat a patient. I spent 12 days at the Palace of Unity to treat the bodyguard of the President's wife"*.

Typology of Therapeutic Care

There are several types of treatment for *Yiénum* among the Bamoun: massage, scarification and prayer. For some therapists, there is no specific way of treating or curing *Yiénum*, but rather small changes in the different treatments administered depending on the therapist and the form of the illness. *"There is no particular way of treating hemiplegia. Whatever the type of hemiplegia, it is treated in the same way. When the disease recurs, it is complicated and mystical. In this case you change treatment because there is no single cure. We treat according to how it manifests itself"*. (Interview with a traditional health practitioner, Village Kourom-Mambain).

Among the different changes adopted depending on the illness, we have distinguished several procedures for administering care to the patient.

- **Massage Care**

Massage treatment involves massaging the whole of the patient's body, focusing on the parts most affected. In other words, the paralyzed part. The aim of these warm massages is to free the pathways of the obstructed blood vessels that prevent circulation, rendering parts of the body inert or paralyzed. *"When I finish working on him, I scarify and massage the whole body again, because sometimes it stays in someone's stomach. I also massage the stomach and make him lie on the bed"*. (Interview with a traditional doctor, Kouoptamo village). *"When you massage the person with the product you've boiled, it opens up the vessels and helps the blood to circulate. It's better to boil the bark you need and then take a towel, dip it in and massage the patient with it. When the paralysed side cries out when you massage it, you realize that this side is already coming back to life"* (Interview with a traditional doctor in Bangourain, Mengba village).

The massage is therefore done hot, with decoctions brought to the boil. The masseur dips a towel in the concoction and then places it on specific parts of the body, applying small, increasingly strong pressures on the paralyzed parts.

- **Scarification Care**

Scarification involves making small incisions on specific parts of the body using a sterile blade. Through these incisions, the therapist applies products that come into contact with the blood. This treatment comes after the massage. For our specialist, he applies three small incisions per area in application of the teachings received for the practice. He describes the process in these terms: "I also scarify it when the sun comes out, because at that moment the blood heats up. We massage it in the morning with the boiled product before scarifying it. Everyone does what they know. I scarify the whole body three-three times. Because that's how I was told to do it. It's just so that it gets into the body really well".

The sun, the boiled or hot products, the heating of the blood - all these elements reflect the need for fluid blood circulation to ensure that the injected products are transported to the organs. Based on empirical observation, scarification treatments generally follow hot decoction massage sessions. These various treatments and practices on the physical body are accompanied by prayer.

- **Prayer Healing**

In the therapeutic practices of *Yiéumum* among therapists in Bamoun country, most practise Islamic medicine based on the writing and reading of Koranic verses applied to the patient in the form of food: the specialist writes formulas based on Koranic verses on a slate using an anchor. These writings are then washed with water. The patient drinks the liquid regularly, as prescribed by the therapist. Prayer is thus an integral part of the healing process. Prayers are also prayed by the patient or his family before going to the healer, and after the cure. The Bamoun people are deeply rooted in tradition and identify their ancestors as a link who intercedes with God on their behalf. Moreover, among healers, when the illness recurs or the patient struggles to regain health despite the treatment administered, they check with the family whether a prayer has been said before coming for treatment. If so, they are advised to make a prayer to the ancestors or to go home and talk to the dead before continuing the treatment. They should also talk to the living. Among the Bamoun, the anger of one's peers can have repercussions on an individual's life and the *Yiéumum*. This is why it is also recommended to hold family meetings, at which family members are called upon to reconcile in order to free the patient. Generally, following these procedures, further therapy brings positive results.

Treatment Times

Traditional medicines are administered at specific times. Therapists have many reasons for respecting these times. Hot massages, for example, are performed very early in the morning before sunrise and in the evening after sunset. As for scarification, it is carried out after sunrise, and the therapists give as their

explanation the presence of the sun's heat, which helps the blood to flow more easily. This allows the medicines introduced through the incision points to be taken away: "Normally, the treatment is given in the morning and at night. In the morning, when you go with another treatment, you ask about the state of his health. I also scarify him when the sun comes out because at the moment the blood is heating up. We massage him in the morning with the boiled product before scarifying him". However, not all therapists adhere to this strict timetable. In fact, some have no set times for administering treatment.

Perception of *Yiéumum* Therapy

Yiéumum therapies are perceived as difficult treatments. According to the people interviewed, based on their experience of the disease, either first-hand or through observation or knowledge of people who have been affected, the disease is difficult to cure. Once it catches a person, it takes a long time to heal and has the reputation of keeping the patient alive for a long time. *Yiéumum* patients generally have a long period of morbidity before death occurs. This is what we can deduct from the words of the patriarch of the Mengba community in Bangourain.

Therapies seem even more difficult and time-consuming when the patient is elderly. In fact, as we said earlier, the people most exposed to *Yiéumum* are the elderly. According to therapists, treatment is more difficult when the patient is well advanced in age. Some therapists have even reported that it is easier to cure *Yiéumum* in young people than in older people. "In this case, I'll take you between the banana trees and get you in there, then I'll tap you little by little with the remedy until the paralyzed side starts to come back, if the patient is not yet 50 or over. But if he's already 50 or over, I can't treat him. But if the patient is still between 30 and 40, we can treat him. But over 50 we can't". (Interview with a traditional practitioner in Bangourain).

There is a general perception of the longevity of *Yiéumum* patients and the difficult nature of the therapies administered. Sometimes families have recourse to several therapeutic itineraries and the care administered is often multiple and multi-faceted.

Plurality of Medicines for *Yiéumum* Care

Among the Bamoun, the medicinal essences used to treat the *Yiéumum* are varied. They can be anointed, sacrificed or massaged. "There's what you scarify, what you anoint the patient with, and what you drink. So there are three categories of remedy. I make all these remedies from herbs".

Relationship between Care and Cause of Illness

The types of treatment given depend on the cause of the illness. With therapists, patients receive treatment according to the cause of their *Yiéumum*. The causes of *Yiéumum* illness can be mystical, natural,

malefic or even linked to the breakdown of a family tradition. In this case, we speak of *Yiéumum* of the ancestors or due to the anger of the ancestors towards the victim. Most often, therapists proceed by elimination to find the treatment to be administered according to the type of illness. For example, as our therapist in Machoutchi says, when the hypothesis of blood pressure or hypertension as the cause of paralysis is eliminated, more often than not the cause is mystical and the intention of the treatment is adapted to the mystical approach. *"If you want to know, it's when a patient arrives with no blood pressure that you can tell that their case is mystical. When the patient has no blood pressure, we understand that it is a mystical case. Other therapists, on the other hand, use traditional diagnosis or clairvoyance to determine the origin and cause of the illness. It is this diagnosis that enables them to determine the therapeutic approach to be adopted and sometimes indicates the medicines to be administered. "When a person arrives with this illness, we check in our water, which enables us to do clairvoyance. It's the water that enables us to know the causes of each type".* These different ways of identifying the cause of an illness make it possible to link the treatment to be administered to the etiology of the illness.

Etiology and Typology of Care

The treatment process therefore depends on the cause or origin of the disease. Among the Bamoun, *Yiéumum* disease can be caused by several factors. The data collected makes it possible to identify three types of etiology attributed to the onset of *Yiéumum*. It can have a natural cause, it can be caused by the anger of the ancestors and/or the dead, it can be caused by the action of an evil individual or by the fact that the patient has behaved badly in the community and nature has decided to punish him by attributing this illness to him. It may also result from the patient deciding at some point to take a product from a fetish plantation without the owner's authorization. Therapeutic processes are adapted to these different etiological forms.

***Yiéumum* Due to Ancestors and Therapies**

At first glance, the *Yiéumum* of the Ancestors has something to do with the ancestors. It could be said that individuals come into direct conflict with the ancestors. However, according to the Bamoun, the anger of the living can arouse the anger of the dead, and the actions of the dead can be observed on the living and lead to *Yiéumum* disease. *"When it's like that, it's not the dead who get angry but human beings. And so the dead connect to harm you. All you have to do is ask forgiveness from the person you have wronged. When you make peace with him, the dead will leave you. When I see that it's due to the curse, I first send you to talk to the dead before starting the treatment. You ask forgiveness of the ancestors and of those you have provoked. Then you can heal yourself. In that case I'll tell you what to do and pour on the way. You can do the ADOUA, make the prayer and the custom. If you don't*

have your parents any more, you'll prepare the food that your parents ate the most and give it to the people you're going to invite and make them eat. (Interview with traditional doctor in Bangourain, Mengba village).

The anger of the living arouses the anger of the dead, with repercussions for those involved. When, after the traditional therapeutic diagnosis, the healer finds that the illness is linked to a curse due to the anger of the ancestors, the therapist's approach is generally to get the patient and his family to communicate with the ancestors. The process involves organising a family meeting during which the patient talks about his mistakes and confesses his faults to the family. In the therapeutic process, it is therefore essential to refer to these ancestors before the therapist administers any treatment. In reality, there is no question of going to see the ancestors, as this is materially impossible. As this informant explains, it's a question of calling a family meeting and speaking to calm the hearts of angry living people. The wrath of the ancestors can fall on an individual when he does something negative to members of the family, etc. *"We don't go to see the ancestors, but we call a family meeting even if it's the head of the family who's ill. "You don't go to see the ancestors, but you call a family meeting, even if it's the head of the family who's ill. Sometimes it's when you act badly towards your brothers that the ancestors get angry with you and send you this illness. When this happens, we get together, make peace and touch you with a leaf before starting the treatment. When we do this, your recovery becomes easier. And when we take this we talk and say if your illness comes from our anger towards you because of your negligence towards us what we ask this illness to go back where it came from. We have forgiven you. When you get angry with your brother, he gets it. You call a family meeting and say that I made a mistake. Everything I had to do, I did unconsciously. Forgive me and then you share the food with the people before we start with the treatment".* (Interview with traditional doctor in Bangourain, Mengba village).

After organising family meetings during which the patient obtains the forgiveness of the family and thus that of the ancestors, the patient can return to the therapist for treatment. According to Bamoun perceptions, the ancestors are considered to be gods. They are the transmission belt between the living, their families and God. They are therefore able to intercede on behalf of the living with God. This is also one of the reasons why they are invoked during family reunions organised when certain types of hemiplegia occur in the Bamoun community. *Yiéumum*, in particular, is caused by the ancestors. *"The ancestors are the gods. They are his children. They are with God; we don't see them. We pray to the God; we don't see them but they see God".*

As far as treatment is concerned, many Bamoun therapists apply the same treatment to all cases, once the cause has been clarified and the ailment remains. The therapy is the same. *"There is a single treatment for all*

cases. *If it's caused by a curse, the whole family is brought together to see if you have provoked someone in the family, who will come forward and ask the ancestors to forgive you. The curse can take a person when the ancestors are angry with you. To cure this type of course, you have to use words. You talk to the ancestors. After a few days, you'll see the illness disappear. Once you've spoken, you're cured. Sometimes you go and ask his forgiveness, if you know him, he'll forgive you".* (Interview with a community member, Bangourain-Mengba village).

In short, after the preliminaries, during which the curse or the anger of the ancestors is lifted by the family, the patient undergoes treatment like anyone else suffering from hemiplegia.

Mystical *Yiéumum* and Therapies

Mystical *Yiéumum* is a disease whose causes are mystical, as its name suggests. It may be caused by an evil individual who uses mystical methods to transmit the disease. There are many reasons for the mystical transmission of *Yiéumum*. They may be offences or simply the use of someone else's property. *"If you're courting my wife and I transmit this disease to you, I'm not going to accept that I'm the cause. In this case, when you come to see me, I put you in God's hands. And I cure you".* (Interview with traditional doctor in Bangourain, Mengba village)

Motives can also be tests to verify the effectiveness or functioning of an evil gift obtained or the physical and even mystical capacities of an individual. As the healer attest, the mystical illness transmitted always has a motive that pushes an individual to do it, as a member of the Menbga community explains. According to some therapists, these people can also take advantage of disagreements or open conflicts with one or more people around them to introduce the illness and blame others. This is also the case for some people, as one therapist explains, who after consultation identify a malaise between the future patient and the family or ancestors.

Therapeutic procedures generally involve removing the cause and then treating the disease, as with other types of procedure whose causes are external to the sick individual. Therapeutic procedures vary from healer to healer. For some, the therapeutic process consists of administering medicines that induce the patient to see in their dreams and reveal the subject of their dreams to the therapist, who analyses them and finds a direction for the treatment to be administered. *"When you treat hemiplegia sent mystically, the patient receives certain things in his dreams and brings them back to you in the morning. It's up to you to understand that it's mystical. Some people come with spirits. And sometimes it comes on its own by the will of God. When treatment begins and the patient feels a little better, the patient in turn defends*

himself by doing sport. They have to walk to stretch their veins".

For other healers, the therapeutic process is designed to expel the mystical spirits introduced into the patient's body. When they are completely extracted, the patient is cured. The healers then apply the usual treatments, i.e. massages followed by scarification. *"When the patient arrives and you confirm that he's suffering from hemiplegia, you make up the remedy, boil it and massage him with it first. After the massage, I scarify him and I burn the other one. When I finish this stage, the spirits inside him start to come out".* (Interview with a traditional doctor, Machoutchi village).

Natural *Yiéumum* and Therapies

For cases of *Yiéumum* of natural cause, or where the causes are due to an organic dysfunction that may be related to lifestyle or age, or to other natural factors, the therapy is an ordinary one. According to the people of Noun, this type of hemiplegia is due to God, and the treatment is just as easy. Here it's a question of submitting to God and imploring his forgiveness so that the treatment administered brings healing. *"You submit it to him, he is the one to help you heal, because no man can heal if he doesn't give his consent. Tension is excess anger. When the patient arrives, you do what you've been shown. Now many of my products are inspired by God. When I go to bed I have revelations about how to treat this or that illness. And in the morning, I apply it".* (Interview with traditional doctor in Bangourain, Mengba village).

Obstacles and Treatment Risks for Healers

Treating *Yiéumum* presents risks for therapists, the main one being to catch the disease themselves when trying to cure a patient. This is often the case when attempting to extract illnesses of mystical origin. In fact, the spirit of evil that already exists in the person who is initially ill can be transported to anyone who tries to extract it, including therapists. The example of the Mambain healer underlines the fact that mystical illness can leave one body for another. The mystical illness can be transferred to the therapist. *"I had treated a sick person, so his case was mystical, running the risk of catching the disease. We can speak of the disease being transferred from the patient to the healer. Gans are used for scarification. Macabo stems are also used instead of gangs to avoid contamination. The razor blade is not used on two patients or twice on the same patient".* (Interview with a healer, Mamabain village).

Precautions are therefore taken by the therapist when extracting the disease to avoid the disease returning to him or her. At the onset of the illness, ideas about the disease, its causes and manifestations impose a therapeutic trajectory that families adopt in the search for a cure.

Biomedical Management and Recovery from Hemiplegia

In the biomedical approach to *Yiéumum*, as explained by the biomedical specialists we met, the disease can be partially or totally cured depending on the level of damage to the patient's nervous system. When the nervous system is affected, the patient regains health with after-effects: *"Well, patients recover but it's when the nervous system is affected that they recover, but with after-effects"*. (Interview with a doctor in Foumban). The healing process has a cost, which is not always the same for traditional healers.

Biomedical Treatment and Cost

The cost of treatment remains high and is generally out of the reach of the patients seeking care. The geographical and climatic area of the Noun Division is highly agricultural, with populations on relatively low incomes. It is not easy for them to bear certain costs associated with the care offered in modern or biomedical health facilities. This is what this biomedical specialist had to say. *"You can imagine with me that a scanner alone in the region costs 100,000 francs, which not everyone can afford. I think it's all that, because patients have to live with their medication until they're cured. We're in an extremely agricultural area, so not just anyone can afford to pay such a sum"*. (Interview with a doctor in Foumban). The cost of treatment is therefore a factor that could influence the use of biomedical services to treat *yiéumum*.

Family Organization and the Care Process

In the social structure of the Bamoun, the family occupies an important place in the lives of individuals. Through the heads of the family, the family has a say in all the happy and unhappy events in a member's life. We have already described the role of the family in the care process, when it comes to atoning for evil of mystical or malefic origin, etc. When *Yiéumum* occurs, the family not only organises itself to make a symbolic contribution to healing through rituals of words and blessings, but also to provide financial assistance. Knowing that *Yiéumum* treatment is very expensive, the family mobilises financial and material resources to support any therapeutic action that might help the patient. And this is what community members explain. *"When the family realises that the situation is complicated, the head of the family organises a family meeting and a collection to take the patient to the traditional healer. He's the one who can tell you where to go. And more often than not, because it's the head of the family who falls ill, and everyone's counting on him, treatment is very difficult"* (Interview with a doctor in Bangourain village Kourom chiefdom).

Family members therefore organise themselves to take decisions in response to their member's health problems. A particular feature of the *Yiéumum* case is that participation is compulsory for certain categories of family members. This family mobilisation therefore has

an impact on decision-making on therapeutic choices and the routes to be taken.

Therapeutic Itineraries

The choice of treatment in cases of *Yiéumum* is often influenced by the patient's family and friends. This choice is often motivated by the family's idea of the aetiology of the disease. In general, in their quest for healing, families take several routes at once. Traditional and biomedical care are combined, as this informant explained. *"I had an uncle who had this disease, but he eventually gave up the ghost. We went with him to several hospitals, all the way to Bingo. The traditional healers also tried to treat him, but in the end, he died (focus group in Bangourain, Mengba village). More specifically, several factors explain the therapeutic choices made by patients when hemiplegia occurs. In the Bamoun community and according to the data collected, these factors are:*

- **Perceptions of the Etiology of the Disease**

They provide guidance on the therapeutic itineraries adopted by families to introduce patients to care. In the sense that the idea of the cause of the illness triggers the action to be taken by the patient's family. Once the illness is identified and known, families turn to traditional medicine.

Alongside these perceptions of aetiology and the choice of treatment, representations of the disease also influence the patients' choice of treatment when the disease occurs. In Bamoun communities, in general, all manifestations or symptoms linked to hemiplegia are considered to be mystical illnesses caused by a spell cast on a victim who is ill at the time. These perceptions and representations of the disease mean that traditional medicine is called upon as soon as the first symptoms appear. *Yiéumum* is therefore generally understood to be a disease caused by bad luck, as this informant tells us. *"Some sufferers go to traditional healers. They tell themselves that the patient has been the victim of bad luck"*. (Interview with a doctor in Bangourain village Kourom chiefdom).

The Choice of Treatment Depends on Each Family

When an illness occurs, families organise themselves around the heads of the family to decide on the treatment to be adopted in order to cure the patient. In the case of this family, illustrated by our informant from Koumengba Village, *"In my family's case, when it happened, we first went to Nkousoh hospital. It was there that we were made to understand that it was blood pressure. After one or two weeks, he started to move and talk. Even now he walks and works at the same time. In our family, whatever the illness, the family gets organised and takes him to hospital"*. (Interview with a community member, Koumengba village). In the case of this family, the therapeutic route taken is that of biomedicine. The patient is then taken to a hospital outside the community or even the region.

Availability of Healthcare Services

The availability of healthcare is also a factor influencing the choice of therapeutic itineraries in the search for a cure for *Yiéumum* among the Bamoun. According to the Bamoun people in communities where the only treatment available is traditional treatment, it goes without saying that people take the only treatment available. *"I'm going to tell you that my father died of a stroke. But it was much more complicated because nobody could accept that it was linked to a pathology of the body. When you're in a family where there isn't an influential person, it's not always easy to convince the family. It's hard for them to accept, but for some people who don't have an influential person, they prefer to go to the traditional healer."* (Interview with a doctor in Fouban).

In addition to the availability of services, as this informant points out, the cultural influence on the idea of the cause of the illness also influences the itinerary. This order of conception of the disease has an impact on the choice of path to be taken by families in search of a cure.

• Ignorance of the Disease and its Manifestations

Ignorance of the disease is also a factor in the multiplication of therapeutic itineraries. According to the therapists we met, the lack of knowledge that would enable people or the families of patients to identify symptoms or signs to determine the type of disease leads to an increase in the number of people seeking appropriate care. Families in search of health find themselves successively in several health care referrals. *"I had a complicated case. We sent it to hospitals, but even in Yaoundé it didn't work. I asked them to bring him here. When we came with him, he had "Surgoue" and was barely eating. I started the treatment and slaughtered two goats on him. He had a mystical case when he went to solve the problem, we increased the "Surgoue" on him and hemiplegia. I slit the throat of another goat to remove it again. I treated him again. Now he's well and truly cured."* (Interview with a traditional health practitioner, Kouram-Mambain village)

In *Yiéumum*, when the cause is not clearly identified, it is difficult to find appropriate treatment. As this therapist explains, after several unsuccessful referrals to local and even external hospitals, the family returns to traditional care only to realise that the cause is a mystical hemiplegia. Appropriate treatment was then administered. This is also the case with this patient, who ended up going to a traditional doctor, where he received treatment that seemed to be the solution they were looking for.

Traditional Therapeutic Processes

According to a patient admitted to a traditional clinic in Njitapon by Bangourain, the therapist practises mixed traditional medicine. He combines traditional medicine and Arabic medicine with the use of Koranic verses and prayers. In this procedure, the doctor scarifies

and anoints the patient using medicines prepared for this purpose. The patient then recites Koranic verses. The frequency with which this procedure is repeated varies according to the level of the illness and the patient. In the case of the present patient, this frequency is four days.

Traditional Therapies and the Conservation of Medicines

Bamoun therapists work to preserve medicines so that they can be passed on to future generations. In Noun, there are personal botanical gardens protected by private individuals in small areas where selected therapeutic plants are cultivated. According to the therapists, therapeutic essences are found in the environment, in forests and other botanical conservation areas. Rare species are cultivated in gardens set up on the estates of therapists specializing in a particular disease. This is also the case for *Yiéumum* care, as our therapist from Machoutchi, a specialist in *Yiéumum* care, explains. You need to create a small garden and plant the "ndié" in plastic. And the bark used to treat this disease is found everywhere here, because we're in the village.

Therapeutic Syncretism

To speak of therapeutic syncretism is to refer to the pooling of several therapists or several therapeutic itineraries to treat the same *Yiéumum* patient. In some cases of *Yiéumum*, therapists combine traditional medicine with biomedicine, traditional medicine with Arabic medicine, using Koranic verses. Several combinations of treatments are possible, or all three at once. According to the traditional doctor we met in Baïgom, the combination of medicines depends on the availability of financial resources and the commitment of the patient or his family.

In other words, the combination of treatments can be as broad as possible depending on the funds available. What needs to be made clear to therapists is that certain costs are required depending on the risks to the patient. The mystical *Yiéumum*, according to the therapist, is specific in that it can return to the patient during the extraction rituals. This is all the more dangerous as the therapist points out that not everyone can remove the disease. At the moment of extraction, it can kill both the patient and the treating physician at the same time, or multiply itself tenfold on both, the patient and the treating physician. This is what the therapist continues to explain in his remarks

According to the therapist, it is therefore necessary to have mastery of the therapeutic acts to be carried out, at the risk of being struck down by the disease when trying to extract it from a patient. Therapists often demand procedures that take these different risks into account. But in this specific case, our therapist in Baïgom applies a dual therapy, traditional and Arabic. In this story, he describes his treatment procedure. *"I mix the two. When you arrive, I take my red cock. I check what has caused this illness in you before*

starting treatment. When you take the rooster, you speak, you say words. You ask God to help you in this situation and you slit the cockerel's throat. The blood of an animal speaks in favour of a person before God. Then you start the treatment. When it comes before God, this blood speaks in your favour in these terms: it is I who have come to you to ask for help for my situation. Only you can cure him, give us the solution to his problem. When it's like that, when you go to get the products, God sends you the spirits to inspire you and even to give the product to the sick person. When it takes hold of you, it settles on the blood vessel that distributes the blood in the body and quickly spreads to you". (Interview with a traditional doctor in Baïgom).

In this account, we understand that therapeutic practice combines elements of tradition with recourse to God for spiritual support in healing the patient. Despite the complexity of treatment and care, therapists strive to pass on this knowledge to other generations and to anyone who wishes to acquire this knowledge, whatever their cultural background.

Transmission of Therapeutic Knowledge beyond the Bamoun Cultural Sphere

The transmission of knowledge is essential in the process of conserving knowledge. The process of acquiring knowledge, in the sense of Mbonji E. (2001), is relative and can be explained by the cultural environment in which the knowledge is developed. In the Bamoun cultural group, the holders of therapeutic knowledge and practices ensure that this wealth is perpetuated and passed on to younger generations. Medical knowledge is passed on from one generation to the next in several forms. For some, medical knowledge is an inheritance passed down from parent to child. Therapists receive it from their parents and make sure they pass it on to their children in turn. *"Here in Kouram, it's the local father who treats hemiplegia. Everyone has their own field. Hemiplegia is my speciality. It's like an inheritance. Even my own children don't know what it's like. My father taught me. If I die, this knowledge will disappear. I said it's an inheritance. And if we're talking about an inheritance, that means he can show his children".* (Interview with a traditional health practitioner, Kourom-Mambain village).

The therapeutic knowledge of the *Yiénum* is thus an inheritance that must be passed on to one's offspring at the risk of seeing it disappear on the death of the holder. However, the choice of children to receive this knowledge as an inheritance is based on criteria of morality and good conduct observed by the parent holding the knowledge. In reality, the younger generations acquire therapeutic knowledge from their parents as they grow up. Nowadays, however, it is becoming difficult for this process to be respected. Today's young people are more inclined towards modern schools, which provide education but detract from cultural values such as learning traditional therapeutic

practices, the only way of acquiring which is by living with parents and grandparents, the holders of this knowledge.

Young people grow up with their parents and learn from them. But today's schools are a hindrance. Moreover, this therapeutic knowledge can also be passed on to strangers who request it, but subject to a certain number of conditions. These conditions may be economic or symbolic, depending on the therapist who agrees to pass on this healing power. The applicant's commitment to acquiring the healing power is also a reason why the holder of the power can decide whether or not to pass it on. The transmission of therapeutic knowledge is therefore a reality among the Bamoun. From one generation to the next, it is passed on by inheritance, by legacy or simply at the request of a member of the community interested in the practice, but also to a person from a different cultural group whose commitment to knowledge is clear, albeit subject to certain conditions. The aim was to present the various therapeutic procedures, as well as the initiative to preserve therapeutic knowledge in general and the treatment of *Yiénum* in particular. A few life stories will enable us to appreciate the therapeutic journey of patients and their families.

Experiences of Illness As Expressed By Patients' Life Stories and Wardens

The accounts presented here will provide an insight into the different experiences of *Yiénum's* illness and its management. After initially self-medicating, the patient went to a health facility and finally saw real improvements in his illness with a traditional therapist from the community. This demonstrates the effectiveness of traditional Bamoun medicine in treating paralysis. The nurse who reported the incident concluded his account by saying that "since we've been here, he's already managed to wake up, we're already over a month in. It started with cramps in the fingers and toes. Then part of his body became paralysed, and I realised it was hemiplegia. We started treatment once. My brothers tried to find out the cause. They saw that the family were angry with him. We spoke to him and he apologised. We forgave him. And he was treated and cured. That's when they take you to hospital and put the drip in. Even if you recover, it leaves a scar. It's like meningitis. When they first realise that it's hemiplegia, and start treating it with traditional medicine, it ends up without a scar. (Interview with a community member, Bangourain-Mengba village).

This story expresses another form of aetiology attributed to the illness. The illness is caused by family anger. In order to recover, the patient is asked to apologise at a family gathering. It is also clear that there is a therapeutic prohibition against combining care.

In Bamoun communities, traditional medicine and biomedicine compete, interchange and collaborate in

the treatment of hemiplegia. Experts in conventional medicine practising in the Bamoun environment or in the Bamoun cultural sphere are unanimous in the fact that a perfect cure would only be possible if traditional and conventional medicine were combined in the therapeutic process. To borrow the words of our informants, it is in fact a question of Bitherapy, which consists of combining different therapeutic models in terms of their methods and approaches to bring health to the patient. *"In principle, because everything starts with etymology, from the moment we identify the cause, if it's bacterial, we isolate the bacteria and target the treatment on the bacteria. As soon as we identify the bacterium and target the treatment on the bacterium, we can cure it. Now when it's viral, we can also try to provide a solution. Treatment is possible, but it's a long-term treatment that always leaves after-effects. In this sense, the best treatment we are currently considering is dual therapy, in the sense that we combine traditional and modern medicine. To develop a joint action, a synergistic action, the efforts of the two medicines are combined and the effectiveness is very good and the treatment has a good result"*. (Interview conducted with a specialist in conventional medicine at Foubot district hospital).

This argument supports certain empirical observations. In fact, we observed that in the hospital wards where hemiplegic patients were found in the conventional hospitals visited in the Bamoun localities concerned by this research, traditional healers came to provide treatment after the doctors had passed. This was evident from the bottles of decoction and other traditional products discreetly placed at the bedside. Although this therapeutic complementarity seems to be accepted by biomedical experts, the fact remains that the unenforced official nature of this recognition of a possible combination of the two medicines for a more effective therapeutic result does not always make the task easier for traditional practitioners and families whose ultimate goal is to bring healing to their patient. As we were told by this informant, traditional doctors, fearing the reaction of those in charge of modern health facilities, do not always agree to go to hospital to apply their treatments.

This fear of visiting modern health facilities, or doing so without the knowledge of conventional doctors, is certainly linked to the difficulty of integrating traditional medicine into the health system in Cameroon. Although some people acknowledge the existence of an official note on collaboration between traditional and conventional medicine, traditional medicine remains relegated to the background. This is what emerges from the analysis of this informant's comments when he states: "We work in full collaboration with all the traditional practitioners here in Foubot. The proof is that they hold meetings here at the health centre at the end of each month. We get together to share experiences. The next meeting is on 12 February to share experiences. (Interview with a specialist in conventional medicine at

Foubot district hospital). In these areas, there are platforms for collaboration between traditional and conventional medicine. However, doctors remain sceptical about certain medical procedures performed by traditional medicine. Collaboration is therefore effective on the basis of certain precautions to be observed by both the treating physician and the patients who consult the traditional healers.

There is therefore medical collaboration between these medicines for the overall management of the disease. Doctors and biomedical specialists recognise the significant contribution of traditional Bamoun medicine in the treatment of the disease. They maintain that the experience of traditional Bamoun medicine in the management of hemiplegia is remarkable, and that there are forms of hemiplegia for which it alone is capable of providing solutions.

Conventional medicine, as well as local players and specialists, have thus acknowledged the effectiveness of rational medicine in the treatment of hemiplegia. They also stressed the importance of reviving and perpetuating these traditional practices, which they felt were sinking into oblivion and abandonment. However, these biologists have reservations about traditional therapeutic practices. One nurse felt that certain dietary prohibitions were less necessary, since at this stage of the illness a certain diet is necessary for the patient, which seems rather forbidden for traditional healers.

Despite the acknowledged prowess of traditional medicine, the fact remains that there is still a contradiction between the two types of medicine, even though they work together. For example, traditional doctors believe that for certain complications of illness, it is necessary to have recourse to specialists in conventional medicine. In the traditional treatment process, doctors are called upon to provide occasional support in order to resolve certain complications which they are able to resolve more quickly. Traditional healers appreciate this collaboration, affirming the contribution of conventional medicine to the success of traditional therapies.

Traditional Bamoun therapists welcome this openness to collaboration between medicines, but continue to believe that they have the exclusive right to cure the disease. This sentiment can be easily understood in the words of one member of the community, who acknowledges the possibility of biomedical treatment of the disease but maintains that only traditional medicine can cure it. "I know that traditional medicine is generally used to treat this disease. Because several people have already been to hospital with this disease without finding a cure, and it's thanks to traditional medicine that this disease is treated". (Interview with a community member, Bangourain-Mengba village). This statement may seem pretentious, but it must be acknowledged that

traditional healers make a clear distinction between *Yiéumum* and blood pressure or any other explanation of illness related to physiological deficiencies, as biomedicine or biomedical experts tend to explain. For Bamoun traditional healers, *Yiéumum* is purely mystical and can be caused by the anger of the ancestors or the dead, by an evil person who casts a spell on his victim or simply by poor management of the family estate. There are similarities with biomedical hemiplegia in terms of physiological and physical manifestations, but the local reality is that it is different. This is what our therapist and *Yiéumum* specialist insists on.

In addition to this feeling that traditional Bamoun medicine has primacy over conventional medicine in the treatment of *Yiéumum*, specialists in conventional medicine are critical of the quality of hygiene applied by traditional healers. They believe that the lack of financial resources available to traditional practitioners means that they are unable to put in place all the hygiene conditions required for optimal care. Beyond the application of adequate hygiene conditions, biomedical experts continue to believe that traditional healers are not sufficiently trained in the hygiene of therapeutic care. Nevertheless, we must continue to believe that interchanges between the two types of medicine would contribute to more effective care.

Interchange of Patients between the two Medicines for More Effective Care

Medical collaboration in Bamoun communities between traditional and conventional doctors is a reality. It has now been formalised in view of the proven effectiveness of traditional Bamoun therapists in treating certain conditions beyond the reach of modern medicine, in particular *Yiéumum*, or hemiplegia. Specialists in conventional medicine also attest to this collaboration. The existing healthcare system incorporates these traditional treatments. Patients are referred from hospitals to traditional clinics, and visits are generally made to monitor patients referred in this way.

Not all illnesses can be treated solely by modern medicine or entirely by traditional medicine. This conception of medicine in a context of medical pluralism is valid for the management of hemiplegia or *Yiéumum* in Bamoun communities. In an environment where populations are faced with a range of healthcare services, medical cohabitation is essential. In Bamoun communities, there is medical communication between the two medicines for the treatment of hemiplegia. In fact, at local level, the effectiveness of traditional healers in the treatment of *Yiéumum* and hemiplegia is known and recognised by doctors in conventional hospitals. The cases that can be referred in principle are much more cases of hemiplegia linked to a traumatic aspect, hemiplegia of traumatic origin. In other words, a patient who has had a traffic accident and the complication of this accident results in hemiplegia. Traditional practitioners are quite effective in these cases because

they have treatment options that we don't really master. Experience has shown that hemiplegia of traumatic origin that we send to the traditional practitioner come back to us with satisfactory results". (Interview conducted with a specialist in conventional medicine at Foubot district hospital).

In addition to these cases caused by trauma, hemiplegia or *Yiéumum* is treated in collaboration between the two medicines. According to traditional healers, hemiplegia always has a mystical connotation in one way or another, requiring traditional intervention. Therapists are known to be effective in dealing with complicated cases. This is why, as a traditional doctor can attest, Bamoun traditional health therapists are sometimes called upon to assist or recover patients in health centres. This is the example of a traditional doctor from the village of Machoutchi. He is regularly asked to collect patients after the hospital doctors have given them first aid. He says; "*Hemiplegia is generally mystical. The cases I come across are mystical, the kind that one person sends on another. So, one brother can decide to send this on another. Because sometimes I get called to the Malantuen health centre. When I arrive, the doctor asks me to wait a little so that he can first lower the blood pressure before I take the patient with me. Sometimes when I see that a patient's blood pressure is very high, I go and get the doctor to lower it first before I continue with my treatment*". (Interview with a traditional doctor, Machoutchi village).

This is a recurring example of collaboration, and the cases can be seen in several localities in the Bamoun region. In this other case, the doctors at the hospital realized that biomedicine was limited in its ability to deal with cases of *Yiéumum*, and turned to traditional medicine. Certain medical procedures are incompatible with traditional treatments for *Yiéumum*. As this specialist in traditional medicine states, these procedures can lead to complications for the patient as well as curing the disease. This perception is also shared by doctors in health facilities. The incompatibility suggested by traditional healers regarding the infusion of *Yiéumum* patients is a matter for biomedical initiatives. Faced with this recommended incompatibility, doctors are nevertheless finding ways around it to administer their treatment. Traditional healers, who are more flexible in their treatment, are less demanding and collaborate easily with biological care practices. The latter, on the other hand, believe that interventions at the health facility level are necessary when patients are in a health emergency. For the latter, infusing a patient in *Yiéumum* may make the disease worse, but it is still necessary when the patient needs to regain his or her strength.

Medicine takes note of these incompatibilities and facilitates medical cohabitation for effective care. In an environment of cohabitation between modern and traditional medicine for effective care, medical

collaboration between modern and traditional medicine also comes into play for cases of parallel pathologies occurring during the *Yiénum*. In traditional treatment centers, healers collaborate with the hospital on cases of malaria that occur during the treatment of cases of hemiplegia.

Prohibitions Linked to *Yiénum* Disease

When we talk about prohibitions, we are talking about a set of behaviours or practices that must not be followed. These prohibitions may be temporary or definitive, depending on the object of the prohibition or the circumstances. In most cases, they are dietary. In other words, there are certain foods that are forbidden to individuals in a particular state of health or for particular illnesses. In the case of *Yiénum* disease among the Bamoun, several dietary restrictions apply. These are particularly dietary and sexual. For example, it is forbidden to have sexual relations with people suffering from *Yiénum*, particularly men. As far as dietary prohibitions are concerned, it is generally advisable to reduce one's consumption of cooking salt, sugar or cancel completely; not to consume okra, chicken meat, frozen poison, fresh meat, red oil or reduce one's consumption. All these prohibitions are prescribed in order to avoid relapses. These prohibitions are periodical, with the exception of a particular type of freshwater fish ("with a red mouth"), whether the cure is definitive or partial for anyone suffering from *Yiénum*. According to these therapists, eating this fish reawakens the disease even when the patient is completely cured.

CONCLUSION

There is a two-way vertical collaboration between these two types of medicine. Just as hospitals transfer patients to traditional doctors, so traditional doctors refer patients to hospitals. In fact, in both types of medicine involved in the treatment of hemiplegia, there is a flow of patients between the two therapeutic corridors. In reality, depending on the type of illness or the physical condition of the patient on arrival at the care centre, they may be transferred or simply referred to one or other therapeutic route by the healer after assessment. In conventional medicine, the cases of hemiplegia that can be transferred to traditional doctors are often, as our informant points out, hemiplegia of the traumatic type. From a theoretical point of view, our study aims to enrich existing documentation with new concepts about hemiplegia, new representations of the disease, other therapeutic approaches and the exploration of new plants that can be used in the treatment of *Yiénum*, and to further arouse scientific curiosity with a view to improving the proposed treatments so that the people or patients find health. We also want to encourage the demystification of this disease and motivate people to combine their local treatment with that of modern medicine, the risks of which can very often be accurately assessed using radiological diagnostic techniques.

Understanding hemiplegia and the active ingredients used by the healers of Noun in the treatment of hemiplegic patients will enable us to think more carefully about how to refer patients to these care centre, and also to develop strategies for extending them to benefit as many people as possible.

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