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Title of the thesis:

A comparative analysis of reunification discourses in Cameroonian history textbooks

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Summary:

More than five decades after the (re)unification on October 1st 1961 of the former UNO trusteeship territories of French and British Southern Cameroons, to form a single nation-state, the phenomenon remains a hotly contentious and controversial discourse in both public and academic space of the Cameroonian society. Most often than not, the tensions around discourses on reunification have resulted in activities that have threatened the fabric of peaceful coexistence and social harmony between the Anglophone and Francophone communities of reunified Cameroon. Remnants of Anglo-French colonial heritage in the form of language, legal and educational systems, curricula and textbooks amongst others have most often been at the heart of the contention. In an era where textbooks in general and history textbooks in particular have been recognised to go beyond their core pedagogic purposes to also serve ideological and political functions, the need for their content to be constantly analysed with regard to their depiction of contentious phenomenon such as reunification has become a matter of absolute necessity.

Against this backdrop, this study adopted a qualitative research approach and an interpretive paradigm to analyse six school history textbooks purposively selected from the Anglophone and Francophone sub-systems of education in Cameroon – three each from each of the sub systems. Making use of a bricolage of tenets of the qualitative content analyses methodology, nuanced with the discursive postcolonial theoretical framework, the analysis of the historical genre and historical knowledge types of the texts revealed certain dominant and supporting consistent and conflicting discourses on the nature of representation of reunification in Cameroonian history textbooks. These discourses include: an uncritical nature of school history and textbooks as it relates to reunification; an adoption of old styled school history characterised by substantive rather than procedural form of

historical genre and knowledge; Cameroon as an imagined state; presence of single and master symbols/narratives; identity and nationalism discourse; big men historiography, male chauvinism; and exclusion. In explaining the reasons for the presence of these discourses, the analysis revealed the following notions: the nature of school history and textbooks as a colonial legacy performing the same ideological function in Cameroon as during the different periods of German, British and French colonisation; the complex nature of reunification as a phenomenon with a similar context of the reunification controversy in Germany; the ideological nature of history textbooks at the disposal of government authorities with examples such as the presence of master symbols in apartheid and post-apartheid South African school textbooks and the ideological use of history textbooks in the defunct German Democratic Republic (GDR) of post-WWII Germany. The postcolonial theoretical explanations of the discourse were linked to the notions of the postcolonial voiceless subaltern; the challenges of textbooks and author hybridity; and internal colonisation. The study recommends a harmonisation of the textbooks' content, a more robust system of checks and balances in selection of history textbooks for use in schools, a review of the history syllabus and curriculum to be more inclusive of the contributions of women and ordinary Cameroonians in significant historical developments of Cameroon, to ensure a more critical curriculum that incorporates critical enquiry skills and multiperspectivity from learners and discards rote learning of history, and finally that both trainee and in-service history teachers be workshopped on these curricula improvements for history education in Cameroon schools.