



Research Report

Stereotyping Queerness: The Mythic Contents of Cameroonian Urban Music

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Abstract- The bulk of scholarly works devoted to homophobia in Cameroon's elite media mainly focus on television, newspapers and cinema. These works also concentrate essentially on the role of Western broadcasters and the Internet in the propagation of LGBTQIA+ messages and westoxification in the country. No modicum of attention has so far been given particularly to Cameroon popular music's representation of the local LGBTQIA+ community. Meanwhile, this form of artistic production (popular music) is not only avidly consumed in the country, but also represents a key purveyor of popular myths in the country. Given its massive reach, music is likely to play a central role in the proliferation of institutionalized homophobia in the country. This role is likely to be subtle, complex, evolving and thus worthy of scholarly attention. In view of filling the aforementioned gap in knowledge, the present paper shows how Cameroon urban music has since the early 2000s, tapped into various popular myths and idiosyncrasies to perpetuate and vulgarize LGBTQIA+ bashing in Cameroon. Hinging principally on secondary sources, critical observations and semiotics, the paper attains three principal research goals. First, it examines how mediated cultures create and perpetuate homophobic myths in Cameroon. Second, it explores LGBTQIA+ people's agency in the Cameroon music industry and finally, it analyses ways in which homophobic myths are reflected in the country's popular music.

Keywords: LGBTQIA+ Sexualities, Cameroon Urban Music, Mythic Contents, Semiotics, Popular Homophobia

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Introduction

According to various anthropological studies, LGBTQIA+ sexualities have been part of some Cameroonian ethnics' cultures since the pre-colonial period. Mainly situated within various traditional practices, these sexual orientations have survived and are today subject to serious controversy in the Cameroonian public sphere. Appiah and Gates (2005) for instance, observe that, among the Bafia people of Cameroon's center region, the practice of *Ji'gele keton* has long before colonization been a site of homosexual activities. Actually, before the coming of Western colonizers, Bafia men observed this practice as a sign of deep friendship among them. Two men could engage in carnal sex in guise of manifesting their deep friendship. Similarly, sociologists such as Tolane (2018), Menyengue-Menguele (2016) and Awondo (2012) affirm that the "So" rite of passage practiced among the Eton people of southern Cameroon has been another site of same sex relation.

In effect, during the performance of the *So* rite, adult Eton men usually had canal knowledge of little boys. These adult males practiced anal sex with the little boys in guise of initiating them (the little boys) into adulthood. In addition to the *Ji'gele keton* and the *So* rite of passage, anthropologists also mention the *Yan daudu* phenomenon observed in pre-Islamic Hausa societies of Cameroon. The Hausa tribe actually inhabits the northern parts of Cameroon, Nigeria and some other west African countries. The term "*yan daudu*" refers to communities of men exhibiting feminine traits. The *yan daudu* people originate from a historically queer community. They are believed to be a kind of transgender people, without formal sex change. They exhibit feminine mannerisms and have an astute sense of women's style (Appia & Gates 2005).

In spite of the aforementioned anthropological studies, Cameroonian masses majorly regard LGBTQIA+ sexualities today as being un-African or exogenous cultural phenomena. Actually, contemporary social arbiters and conservative entities in the country are of the persuasion that the aforementioned sexualities are mainly imported from the Western world. According to these arbiters, LGBTQIA+ sexualities are indexes of westoxification (western cultural intoxication) and should be combatted by all means, including repression, education and correctional rape among others (Awondo 2012, Ebana 2025). In effect, the growing penetration of Christianity and Islam in the country coupled with homophobic colonial laws, persistent conservatism and superstition has, in

the long run, made such practices as *Ji'gele keton* and *So* (mentioned above) to popularly be demonized and abysmally represented in the popular cultures. In tandem with this, LGBTQIA+ sexualities have become abominations in the popular consciousness. Religious movements in particular view these non-heterosexual orientations as perversions that can only attract the wrath of God upon the whole Cameroonian nation (Njankou 2018). In line with this, the Cameroonian popular cultures have since the colonial period, logically become purveyors of homophobia or LGBTQIA+ bashing. These homophobic popular cultures have attracted the attention of a handful of indigenous and exogenous scholars, who, in their theorizations, have mainly focused on the level of acceptance of LGBTQIA+ sexualities in Cameroon and foreign lobbies' role in the spread of the LGBTQIA+ rights movement in Cameroon (Awondo 2012, Menyengue-Menguele 2016, Ebana 2025, Endong 2025).

In tandem with this, the bulk of scholarly works devoted to homophobia in Cameroon's popular culture and elite media has mainly focused on television, newspapers and cinema (Endong 2025, Ebana 2025, Njankou 2018). These works have also concentrated essentially on the role of Western broadcasters, the Internet and foreign LGBTQIA+ rights lobbies in the propagation of LGBTQIA messages and westoxification in the country. No modicum of attention has so far been given particularly to Cameroon popular music's representation of the local LGBTQIA+ community.

Meanwhile, this form of artistic production is not only avidly consumed in the country, but also represent a key purveyor of popular myths in Cameroon. Its role in the proliferation of institutionalized homophobia is likely to be subtle, complex, evolving and worthy of scholarly attention. In view of filling the aforementioned gap in knowledge, this paper shows how Cameroon urban music has since the early 2000s tapped into various popular myths and idiosyncrasies to perpetuate and vulgarize LGBTQIA+ bashing in Cameroon. Hinging principally on secondary sources, critical observations and semiotics, the paper attains three principal research goals. First, it examines how mediated cultures create and perpetuate homophobic myths in Cameroon. Second, it explores LGBTQIA+ people's agency in the Cameroon music and entertainment industry and finally, it analyses ways in which homophobic myths are reflected in the country's popular music.

Materials and Methods

This paper is based on a descriptive research design. It specifically describes the state of homophobia in Cameroon's popular music and editorial cartoons. Three principal methods of data collection and analysis were used in the course of the study namely documentary analysis, critical observations and textual analysis (semiotics). The former consisted in deriving relevant data from a variety of secondary sources such as research articles, book chapters, monographs, government communications, working papers, newspapers articles, and online materials among others. Critical observations on the other hand consisted in mobilizing empirical evidence drawn from recent events and development in the Cameroonian music/entertainment industry as well as in the media and political spheres of the country. The use of documentary analysis and critical observations was relevant in reaching the two first objectives of the papers namely 1) examining the role of Cameroon media in creating and spreading homophobic myths and 2) exploring the agency of LGBTQIA + people in the Cameroonian music industry.

The third specific objective of the paper – that has to do with the representation of homophobia in Cameroon urban music – was attained through a textual analysis of three Cameroonian popular songs (namely Petit Pays's *Pédés* (2007), Ronz's *STOP* (2009) and Snoopie la Melodie's *Les Nerfs des Boys* [2024]). All the songs selected for the study were on homosexuality in Cameroon. These materials were generated in specific episodes of the LGBTQIA+ actuality in Cameroon. These episodes will be explained in details in the analysis part of this paper. Given that songs on homosexuality in Cameroon are not that common, this researcher depended essentially on the available ones – the three musical and graphical texts considered for the study. Thus, the corpus under study was purposively sampled. Furthermore, given that each song considered develops or represents the theme of homosexuality from a singular perspective, the paper adopted a case-by-case treatment of the corpus. In other words, the analysis wasn't organized in sub-themes substantiated with evidence drawn from multiple songs.

The textual analysis of the songs was based on semiotics. By definition, semiotics is the systematic study of signs and symbols. It is also the use of signs and symbols in interpretation, meaning making and semiosis. A sign is anything that conveys intentional or unintentional meaning. [Peirce \(2012:117\)](#) defines it as “something which stands to somebody for something”. Thus, signs' meanings are usually culturally or situationally

determined. In theory, a sign is composed of a signifier and a signified. The former is the physical form of the sign – notably image, word, color or sound – while the latter is the concept or meaning for which the signifier stands. Semioticians categorize signs into three types: icons, indexes and symbols. An icon resembles what it stands for (its referent), notably a road sign standing for falling rocks. An index is associated with its referent – notably smoke for fire – while a symbol is related to its referent only by convention notably the black color standing for death.

The reading of the three selected songs was also done along [Roland Barthes'](#) theories presented in his [1964](#) article titled “Rhetoric of the Image” (translated by [Stephen Heath 1987](#)). Although they emanate from an analysis of images deployed in advertising context, Barthes’ theories are relevant to the semiotic study of music videos. This follows from the fact that Barthes theories in “Rhetoric of the Image”, partly seek to explain the function of text with images in advertising copy ([Borgerson & Ellingse 2004](#)). Music videos – like advertising copies – are usually structured with both text and images, in addition to sound. Hence the relevance of Barthes theories to this study which considered some music videos.

According to Barthes, an image contains three messages: linguistic (the verbal text contents), denotation (the surface or direct meaning of the image) and the connotation (the image’s cultural or deeper meaning). Barthes explains that there are two possible relations between the linguistic message and the iconic or message (the image): anchorage and relay. As a verbal text, the anchorage explains what any viewer can see in the image. It gives preferred reading particularly when the visual message is too polysemic. The relay on the other hand explains connection or progression. It re-enforces the surface meaning of the image.

Mediated Culture, Mythmaking and Homophobia in Cameroon

By definition, myths are “elementary ideas”, “ethnic ideas” or “popular ideas” that have a variety of epistemological, ontological, psychological, social and political functions in a community. These functions, range from explaining natural phenomena and expressing the complexities inherent in the realities of the world to setting the moral and ethical tone of society ([Jung 1993](#), [Shynkaruk et al. 2018](#), [Kagaba 2024](#), [Naumovska et al. 2024](#)). According to [Levi-Strauss \(1996\)](#), a myth should be construed as a form of language capable of revealing the fundamental structure of the human mind. It operates through

binary oppositions and mythemes to address logical contradictions and mediate between abstract thoughts and human experience. According to Levi-Strauss, mythemes are the smallest units of narrative meaning.

Myths are fueled and propagated by a plurality of agents, some of which include the media of mass communication. In effect, the media usually feed on news – manipulated facts as well as empirical evidence – to give credence to, or popularize specific myths. For instance, by constantly associating migration or blackness with crime, and Islam with terrorism, the media of mass communication have constantly created various negative myths about the Other. Similarly, by associating queerness with a whole lot of negativisms, these media have also generated or validated various otherizing myths about the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly in conservative African countries.

Such media-born or media-aided myths have great abilities to sway the hearts of the masses given media's influential socio-political status and socializing functions. In tandem with this, [Morales \(2013\)](#) explains that, similar to science, the media of mass communication enjoy “a higher status than the theoretical criticism expressed by a marginalized Other. In that way, the hegemonic discourse, stereotyped and exclusionary, can't be rejected or denied. And finally, this mono-discourse ends up becoming an accepted reality, in a shared belief. Therefore, by means of myth, conveyed by the media, it is possible to construct an admitted and shared logic” ([Morales 2013](#), p.40). Morales' observations are true to popular media representations of LGBTQIA+ sexualities in Cameroon.

Actually, since the mid-2000s, the Cameroonian media have entrenched and popularized various negative myths about the local LGBTQIA+ community (Benkam 2017). While elite Cameroonian newspapers such as *L'Anecdote*, *La Météo*, and *Nouvelle Expression*, have published lists of presumed homosexuals in a bid to otherize, exoticize or shame members of the LGBTQIA+ community, contemporary urban musicians such as Snoopie la Melodie (whose production will later be examined in this paper) have released songs that demonize LGBTQIA+ people and call for the latter's lynching and ostracization. One of the popular homophobic myths relayed and entrenched by the Cameroonian media stipulates that LGBTQIA+ sexualities are a manifestation of Satanism or moral decay, particularly in the country's political sphere and civil service.

This myth specifically suggests that the practice of homosexuality in the Cameroonian civil service is a form of transactional sex and a spiritually damaging act. On one hand, the practice is an esoteric tool mobilized by highly ranked officials to absorb

the vital energy of their subalterns and ultimately enhance their spiritual and political powers. On the other hand, homosexuality is a form of prostitution (Tolane 2018). Concretely, it is a means by which junior clerks surrender their bodies to their boss in view of gaining promotion or recruitment into elite offices of the Cameroonian civil service. According to this myth, many young Cameroonians are compelled to accept same sex relationship with influential politicians and senior or highly ranked officials to be recruited into the civil service or to gain promotion to higher ranks in the civil service. In its January 1, 2006 edition, Cameroon elite newspaper *La Nouvelle Expression*, relayed the aforementioned myth. In an attempt to rationalize the explosion of homosexuality in the Cameroon, the tabloid wrote that:

The most popular hypothesis surely revolves around the belief that many esoteric communities have been created in the politico-administrative heights of the Cameroon State since the end of the last century. It is amply visible to all that the resocrusians who, hitherto enjoyed numerical strength in Paul Biya's government, have, these last years, been outsmarted by freemasons who, in addition to their growing representation in Cameroon's administrative apparatus, enjoy a grander influence on the global stage [...]. The Cameroonian popular cultures are therefore likely to replicate a French-like scenario where the advent of numerous cases of corruptions and misconducts principally involving freemasons had spurred the "fellow freemasons" to sanitize the administrative system of the State, allowing members of other esoteric communities to be promoted to prestigious administrative posts or to be part of the political transactions that hitherto, were the preserve of the freemasons. According to some rumors, homosexuality is a tolerated practice among members of the aforementioned nebulous community. [My translation]¹ (Bambou 2006, p.5)

¹ L'hypothèse la plus courue est assurément liée aux cercles ésotériques qui ont trusté le sommet politico-administratif du Cameroun depuis la fin du siècle dernier. Nul n'ignore que les rosicruciens, naguère nombreux dans l'appareil de Paul Biya, se sont fait supplanter ces dernières années par des francs-maçons qui jouissent aussi du rayonnement mondial plus grand de leur organisation. [...] L'idée probable est donc de construire un scénario à la française, où la révélation de nombreuses affaires de corruption et mœurs incriminant principalement des francs-maçons avait conduit les "frères" à faire la purge dans leurs rangs, laissant ainsi d'autres accéder à des fonctions ou à des transactions jusque-là confisquées. D'autant qu'on laisse courir le bruit qu'au sein de cette confrérie nébuleuse, l'homosexualité est de tradition, au moins tolérée [...] »

The popular belief in the esoteric essence of homosexuality has regularly been fueled by the sporadic testimonies of alleged eyewitnesses or victims. These alleged victims include people who claim specific government officials, politicians, opinion leaders or senior civil servants pressured them into consenting to homosexual relations in exchange for favors, promotion or recruitment into the Cameroonian civil service. In May 2019 for instance, popular musician Romeo Dika provoked a huge buzz in the country's socio-political sphere when he alleged that a powerful Cameroonian minister and member of the party in government (the Cameroon People Democratic Movement – CPDM) tactfully pressured him (but in vain), in view of same-sex relationship in exchange for some administrative and political favor. The favor consisted in helping the artiste surmount administrative bottlenecks in view of receiving payment for some services rendered to the CPDM for close to ten years. In the artiste's words, the Minister in question "asked me to pull off my boxer while I was in his office. He wanted me to do this in exchange for the payment of the 90 million debt the CPDM owes me. The money owed me had been diverted to finance the 2018 presidential campaign" [My translation]² (cited in [Coups Francs 2020](#), para 5). By the term "pull off my boxer", Romeo Dika means practicing sodomy. Dika's allegations were refuted both by the incriminated Minister and the latter's fans ([Coups Franc 2020](#)).

LGBTQIA+ rights organizations negate or question the myth around the esoteric essence of homosexuality on various grounds. One of these grounds is that, the myth is hastily generalizing and too encompassing. The aforementioned organizations actually argue that the myth indiscriminately amalgamates natural with nurtured breeds of homosexuality. The Director of the *Réseau de Défenseurs de Droits Humains d'Afrique Centrale* [Network of Human Rights Defenders for Central Africa], Maximilienne Ngo Mbe, contends for instance that:

All the detractors of homosexuality do not say the truth. There exists a natural and ordinary homosexuality that has nothing to do with the esoteric practices much talked about. This natural homosexuality is even hardly showcased by its authors. The truth is that the aforementioned typology of homosexuality should be differentiated from the predatory practices

² [II] m'a demandé de baisser ma culotte dans son bureau pour entrer en possession de ma facture de 90 millions utilisés pour financer la campagne présidentielle de 2018

observed in sects where some politicians sexually exploit and weaponize a youth population that struggles to survive and dreams big. [My translation]³ (cited in [Tchakam 2012](#))

The second homophobic myth propagated by the Cameroonian media revolves around the negative effects of cultural globalization. It states that LGBTQIA+ sexualities are abominable and unreligious kind of orientations as well as imported cultures. This myth is naturally grounded in religious or conservative doctrines and is usually brandished by media houses or practitioners who defend imported religions such as Christianity and Islam. Actually, the Bible⁴ and the Quran proscribe homosexuality, representing same sex relations as being unnatural and abominable. Following such biblical and qur'anic injunctions, many Cameroonian media outlets or practitioners demonize LGBTQIA+ sexualities. A case in point is Philip Soteh, Program Director at *DBS TV*. Soteh who affirms that “homosexuality should be proscribed because it is forbidden by the Bible. Thus, the criminalization of homosexuality in Cameroon should be maintained” [My translation]⁵ (cited in [Njankou 2018](#): 51). Elsewhere, Soteh views the decriminalization of homosexuality in Cameroon as “a cultural suicide” (cited in [Njankou 2018](#): 58). In line with the aforementioned myth, LGBTQIA+ people are usually portrayed in the media as social deviants, spiritually sick people, westernized entities and agents of Western cultural intoxication.

The last – but not least – homophobic myth entrenched by the Cameroonian media revolves around sex (geo)politics. It stipulates that the LGBTQIA+ rights movement is one of the multiple manifestations of a grander West-led ploy aimed at queering Cameroonian socio-political institutions and establishing a new order in Cameroon ([Lado 2014](#)). Of course, this myth is anchored in various conspiracy theories. It partly feeds on the visible indexes of western neo-colonialism in Cameroon. More than 60 years after independence, France – Cameroon's former colonial master – continues to subtly

³ [...] Tous ces gens qui tirent sur les homosexuels ne disent pas la vérité. Il existe une homosexualité naturelle, ordinaire, qui n'a rien à voir avec ces pratiques sectaires et qui ne se montre même pas. La vérité, c'est qu'il y a des sectes qui utilisent et instrumentalisent la jeunesse qui veut un emploi, qui veut faire sa vie et qui rêve

⁴ In Leviticus 20:13 for instance, the Bible says that “If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death; their blood is upon them”. Similarly, the Qur'an (Surah Al-A'raf, verses 80-81) condemns same sex relation saying “Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people.”

⁵ L'homosexualité n'est pas à encourager parce qu'elle est interdite par la bible, par ricochet : Dieu l'interdit et la loi devrait être maintenue.

interfere in the political and economic affairs of Cameroon. In line with this any LGBTQIA+ rights proselytism conducted by French chancelleries in Cameroon is likely associated with neo-colonialism. Vision 4 TV's program Director, Mboule Epoke for instance affirms that "Now [...] we know that some foreign lobbies are pressuring our government for homosexuality to be decriminalized in Cameroon [My translation]"⁶ (cited in [Njankou 2018](#): 49).

The pressure evoked in Mboule's contention has, in many instances, manifested in the Cameroon's political sphere or in the country's diplomatic relations with Western countries. For instance, French Ambassador for LGBTQIA+ rights, Jean-Marc Berthon tried in vain to organize a conference on minority sexual rights in Cameroon in June 30, 2023. Cameroonian authorities blocked the diplomat's ploy on the ground that Cameroon's legal system and cultural values are strictly antithetical to homosexuality. Berthon's abortive ploy was popularly interpreted by the Cameroonian media along conspiracy theories (see [Image 1](#)).

In the poster shown in [Image 1](#) (and published in *L'Eco Judiciaire* on June 21, 2023), Berthon in particular and France in general are portrayed as agents of a neocolonial influence in Cameroon. The copy graphically and verbally represents this French neocolonial influence as a force aimed at entrenching LGBTQAI+ sexualities in the country, thereby neutralizing core Cameroonian values related to family. The visual message of the poster shows a Cameroonian family that is happy and united under the protective umbrella of the homophobic Cameroonian laws. The family symbolizes the Cameroonian nation as a whole while the umbrella symbolizes not only protection from the too much dreaded under-population that may result from the normalization of LGBTQIA+ sexuality, but also Cameroon's counter-hegemonic weapons against external politico-cultural influence from France. The French caption "*Berthon reste chez toi*" [Berthon, do not come to Cameroon] is complementary to the visual message. It suggests, not only support for Cameroon authorities' blocking of Berthon's ploy but also a rejection of French neocolonial influence. It also suggests popular rejection of France's attempts at purveying the LGBTQAI+ rights movement in Cameroon. The aforementioned caption is therefore an anchorage pointing to the conspiracy theory that states that some powerful lobbies from France and other Western countries are working towards the decriminalization of homosexuality in Cameroon.

⁶ On sait que certains lobbies veulent faire adopter l'homosexualité au Cameroun



Image 1: Poster conceived in reaction to Jean-Marc Berthon's abortive Conference

The three aforementioned myths are very much reflected or relayed in many government communications on homosexuality in the country. A good example is Cameroon National Communication Council's communiqué⁷ issued on June 12, 2023, to warn against the broadcast of inclusive contents in Cameroon. The strongly worded communiqué actually represents homosexuality as being un-Cameroonian and injurious to local moral cultures. Contrary to government, most indigenous and exogenous LGBTQIA + rights activists have not hesitated to debunk the aforementioned myths. In their counter-narratives, the aforementioned rights activists have tended to attribute the prevalence of the myths to such phenomena as populism, religiosity and poor democratic cultures.

⁷ The National Communication Council (NCC) is Cameroon's audiovisual media regulatory organ.

LGBTQIA+ Sexualities and Cameroon Popular Music

In countries across the world, LGBTQIA+ identities have been important stakeholders of the entertainment industry. You will hardly find an entertainment industry that is totally devoid of LGBTQIA+ people. The Cameroon music industry has been no exception given that, a number of Cameroonian musicians have functioned either as openly gay people or suspected LGBTQIA+ people. Perhaps, the only particularity of the Cameroonian experience is that, very few LGBTQIA+ musicians in the country have dared to do their coming out. This, of course, has logically been due to the homophobic structures and strictures prevailing in the country. As earlier mentioned, the country's legal system criminalizes homosexuality and any public manifestation of sympathy for/by LGBTQIA+ people is likely subject to controversy, if not repression. Such manifestation of sympathy can only be detrimental to any (pro-)queer singer's career.

Rapper Brenda Biya (alias King Nasty), the daughter of the country's president (Mr. Paul Biya) for instance, is one of the rare female artistes who are openly lesbian or bisexual. The rapper did her coming out in July 2023 amidst serious scandals and widespread criticism surrounding the 43 year-rule of her father in Cameroon. The artist's coming out provoked mitigated reactions from social arbiters, political critics and LGBTQIA+ rights lobbies in and outside Cameroon. Another rare example of openly queer artist is Shakiro, a transgender musician who presently lives in asylum in Nigeria. Thus, artists' coming outs have been very rare in the Cameroonian entertainment industry. In spite of this rareness, critics suspect the existence of larger LGBTQIA+ communities among Cameroonian artistes ([Awondo 2012](#), [Tchakam 2012](#), [Rahim 2024](#), [Cameroon Web 2024](#)).

In a [2024](#) Facebook-based outing, [Shakiro](#) revealed that many headliners of the country music and comedy industry are LGBTQIA+ people. In that Facebook-based outing, he mentioned more than 20 big names and popular figures of Cameroon music and comedy industry as being of the queer community. Examples include Aveiro Djess and Happy d'Effoulan (in the music industry) and Ma'a Jackie, Dexter Timberlake, Dyklan Comedie, Cabrel Nanjip Nyamton, Tik Dengue, Steve Fah among others (in the comedy industry). Although subject to controversy, Shakiro's outing brought to the fore LGBTQIA+ people's tendency to conceal their sexual identities for security reasons as well as the latter's agency in Cameroon popular music industry.

In spite of this perceptible presence of LGBTQIA+ identities in the Cameroonian art and entertainment industry, sexually inclusive songs or other forms of queer-affirmative artistic productions are inexistent. The release of such inclusive artistic productions could even be considered a distant aspiration, given the slow pace at which mentalities change in favor of homosexuality in Cameroon. The aforementioned scenario is contrary to the Nigerian experience where LGBTQIA+ artists have for some decades now been releasing literary productions – notably Unoma’s *Blessed Body: Secret Lives of the Nigerian LGBT* (2020) and *Mounting the Moon: Queer Nigerian Poetry* (2020) – as well as films such as Uyaiedu Ikpe-Etim and Pamela Adie’s *Ife* (2020) to celebrate queerness. The Cameroonian experience is also different from Western music industries where the concepts of gay songs and gay pride have for many decades now been an aphorism.

Thus, the Cameroonian music industry has for many decades been a breeding ground for the very homophobia that rules major social institutions of the country. Like their counterparts from other sectors of the entertainment industry, most Cameroonian musicians tend to steer clear off LGBTQIA+ inclusive music making. They even tend to avoid the simple mention of these non-heterosexual sexualities in their songs, visibly for fear of being automatically associated with homosexuality. Actually, Cameroonian masses are likely to regard a public figure’s open interest in homosexuality as an index of the latter’s homosexual orientation. In view of this, most Cameroonian artists and media practitioners avoid public discussion on homosexuality as much as they can. Artists’ public statements on the issue are usually conscious and mindful of potential backlash. Such statements also aimed mainly at severely bashing non-heterosexual orientations. The aforementioned caution is rooted in the fear of raising suspicions and rumors that may associate them with LGBTQIA+ communities. [Njankou \(2018: 50\)](#) highlights this paradox with strict respect to Cameroonian TV stations’ editorial policies. He writes that:

In Cameroon, homosexuality is considered a serious taboo, to the extent that most people do not regard it as an ordinary topic for discussion. To such people, mentioning homosexuality is tantamount to either supporting its practice or being a homosexual person. In line with this, same sex relations are mentioned in the news wholes or in TV and radio programs

only in derogative terms or in the advent of legal actions against some suspected LGBTQIA+ people. Outside the aforementioned contexts, it is risky to venture in any journalistic reportage – be it neutral or stereotyping – on homosexuality [My translation]⁸.

Famous *Makossa*⁹ maker, Adolphe Alexandre Claude Moundi (alias Petit Pays), for instance experienced the aforementioned suspicions from Cameroonian masses in 2007 after he released “*Pédés*” [Broken French for “Homosexuals”], a song on same sex relations. The suspicions actually stemmed not so much from the lyrics of the song but mainly from the sexually suggestive and shocking visual composition of the official poster the artiste conceived for his album. This poster featured a nude picture of the artist (Petit Pays). Cameroonian masses quickly interpreted the shocking images of the poster as a perversion no less repugnant than the homosexuality Petit Pays evoked in his song (Awondo 2012). Suspicions even grew worse, to the extent that the Makossa maker was subtly invited to clarify his artistic intentions on various media platforms. For instance, Cameroonian magazine *Situations* interviewed him to cull firsthand information for a French article dedicated to homosexuality in Cameroon (Awondo 2012: 80-81, Ebana 2025: 119).

While local LGBTQIA+ artistes shy away from the making of sexually inclusive music, their heterosexual counterparts do not hesitate to occasionally mobilize their artistry for severe queer bashing. A case in point is francophone artiste, Snoopie la Melodie who released *Les nerfs des boys* [The nerves of the Boys]), a trendy *Mbole*¹⁰ song that calls for the death of homosexuals in Cameroon. In one of its stanzas, the song incites audiences to stab homosexuals as the latter are hated and unwanted people in the Cameroonian social system. Few weeks after its release, “Les Nerfs des boys” (which

⁸ Certains trouvent le sujet tellement tabou qu’il n’est même pas abordé en interne comme tout sujet de discussion. Parler d’homosexualité dans ce cadre équivaut soit à l’encourager, soit à être soi-même homosexuel. Dans les rédactions ou sur les plateaux d’émissions, le sujet ne sera évoqué que pour condamner ou lorsque les procès des présumés homosexuels ont lieu. En dehors de ces cadres, il est très risqué de s’aventurer à faire un reportage ou le thème d’une émission neutre ou pour l’homosexualité.

⁹ Makossa is one of Cameroon’s most popular patrimonial rhythms. Headliners of this musical tradition include Toto Guillaume, Hoigen Ekwalla, Ben Ndeca, Dina Bell, Henri Njoh, Misse Ngoh, Grace Ndeca, Nkotti Francois and Petit Pays among others.

¹⁰ Mbole is another urban Cameroonian rhythm, and a musical culture that sprang up just recently in Cameroon. At its inception, the culture consisted in religious songs mainly performed during wake keeping and death ceremonies. The culture evolved rapidly as it moved from mortuary situations to recording studios, musical concerts and online contests. This positive development has been thanks to the brilliant artistry of the likes of Aveiro Djess and Happy d’Effoulan.

shall be analyzed in greater details in the next section of this paper) inspired various musical contests in the country and provoked a huge buzz on social media (see [Image 2](#)).

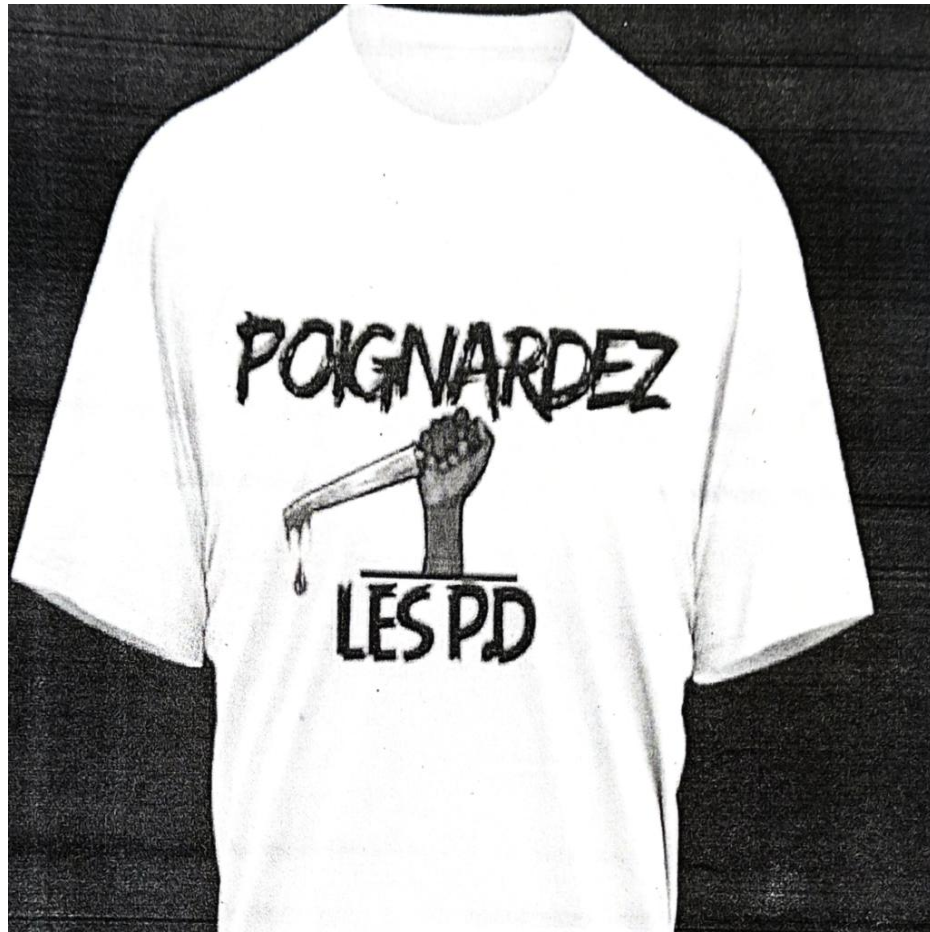


Image 2: A T-Shirt relaying the Homophobic Lyrics of Snoopie’s “Les Nerfs des Boys”

While a good number of local influencers used the homophobic song to spice up their online contents, rights organizations lamented the dangerous effects the song may have on the already precarious situation of LGBTQIA+ people in Cameroon ([Dissoke 2024](#), [Bobo 2024](#)). On November 9, 2024, the LGBTQIA+ rights group called ADEFHO (Association for the Defense of the Rights of Homosexuals) filed a complaint against Snoopie la Melodie on ground that the artist’s song could incite violence against members of the Cameroonian LGBTQIA+ community. The complainer urged the public prosecutor at the Ekounou Court of First Instance, to investigate the songwriter for inciting the murder of LGBTQIA+ people in Cameroon. In the same vein, some art critics qualified Snoopie la Melodie’s work as a worrisome perversion of the *Mbole* rhythm. *Jeune Afrique* reporter, [Bobo \(2024\)](#) for instance, lamented that the song is evidence of the fact that the

new wave of *Mbole* makers – to which Snoopie la Melodie belongs – is progressively diverting from the humanistic, positivist and optimistic penchant of the pioneers and headliners of the *Mbole* musical tradition.

Cameroon artists' obsession with queer bashing has also been very visible in situations where local LGBTQIA+ musicians do their coming out or where there is a new development on the persecution of LGBTQIA+ community in the country. A case in point is the coming out of Brenda Biya – alias King Nasty – which provoked huge waves of criticism and condemnations from fellow Cameroonian heterosexual musicians. The criticism varied from open mockeries to moralizing pronouncements. Popular rapper Koppo for instance, derided King Nasty in one of his Facebook posts. In this post, Koppo mocked King Nasty claiming the female rapper's behavior and queer sexuality are antithetical to her Ewondo/Beti origins. According to some popular Cameroonian myths, Ewondo women are so sex-hungry that their (heterosexual) male partners must be very good in bed to satisfy them. Koppo mockingly claimed that King Nasty's avowed sexual orientation was not compatible with the aforementioned popular belief – that is, the myth stipulating that Beti women have insatiable appetite for (heterosexual) sex.

Mythic Contents as Markers of Homophobia in Cameroon Music

The homophobic myths explored in the preceding sections of this paper are reflected in Cameroonian popular music. This is illustrated in this section through a textual analysis of three popular songs that evoke LGBTQIA+ sexualities/communities in Cameroon. The aforementioned corpus includes Petit Pays's *Pédés* (2007), Ronz's *STOP* (2009) and Snoopie la Melodie's *Nerf des Boys* (2024). A case-by-case treatment of these songs is deployed to attain a more complex analysis of the corpus.

Petit Pays's "Pédés"

Petit Pays's Makossa song entitled "*Pédés*" [meaning "Homosexuals"] is popularly regarded as a controversial celebration of queerness. This popular view partly follows from the fact that, many parts of the song's lyrics contain linguistic markers which, on surface, suggest tolerance towards LGBTQIA+ sexualities. For instance, in the first stanza of the lyrics, Petit Pays expressively says "It [homosexuality] is 'sweet'". In the same stanza, he adds that "Love has no frontiers", visibly to suggest that gender barriers should not exist in matters of passionate love. These utterances and many other similar markers in the lyrics are susceptible to spur listeners into associating the song with pro-

LGBTQIA+ message construction. No doubt, many critics have hastily interpreted *Pédés* as Petit Pays' support or sympathy for LGBTQIA+ sexual orientation (Awondo 2012). The song thus, earned the Makossa maker virulent criticisms and misrepresentations from many Cameroonian media and music critics.

However, the above reading is faulty to some visible extent. Actually, *Pédés*, carries many indexes and symbols reminiscent of homophobic myths. First, Petit Pays, deliberately makes huge parts of his lyrics to sound like some nonsensical utterances. He repetitively uses statements that naturally makes no sense in French. Good examples include « *Tout le monde est fou de nous [...]* », « *Balancez, Balancez les pédales [...]* » among others. This could, in some sense be indexical of all the popular Cameroonian beliefs that associate homosexuality with senselessness, mental sickness and unnatural orientations. Actually, the popular fantasy in Cameroon relegates homosexuality to an irrational and hard-to-understand culture. It is common to come across critics who questionably feel animals – that follow the natural their sex drive or obey nature principles – are more intelligent than gays, lesbians and bisexual people (Njakou 2018, Tolane 2018). It is also common to come across social representations that associate LGBTQIA+ communities with mental sickness. No doubt various typologies of homosexuality cure are envisaged particularly in religious movements. The deliberate linguistic nonsense deployed in *Pédés* may be associated with the above pejorative myths around homosexuality.

Second, the video of the song re-enforces this allusion to nonsense and mental sickness. Actually, Petit Pays chooses to dress both in female clothing and as a clown in the video of the song (see [Image 3](#)). His dress code is visibly anachronistic and cacophonous. He wears a loose and long skirt – an attire culturally worn only by women. He also puts on a headscarf, male shoes and dark eyeglasses. This dress code gives him the appearance of a public amuser. Added to this anachronistic dress code, his dance style, facial expression and body language in the video connote mental unbalance and goofiness. It is as if the artist intends to act partly as a jester and a mentally deranged person on the dance stage. All this evidence is indexical of nonsense. This index could hint to Petit Pays's derogative attitude towards homosexuality.

Third, the song is designed in a call-and-answer style. While the call part of the song majorly makes a case for same sex relations, the answer part re-iterates the fact that, whatever the defense provided by LGBTQIA+ people for their sexual orientations, homosexuality remains injurious to cultural sanity and social order. In the call part of the

lyrics, a supposedly gay character (represented by the main singer) narrates his predicament in a homophobic environment understood to be the Cameroonian society. This character explains in what sounds like a soliloquy, his resolve to brave homophobic (social) strictures in Cameroon. He confesses that, in spite of society's judgmental and asphyxiating attitude towards his sexuality, he will not stop loving his gay partner. In the answer part of the lyrics, a crowd (represented by the voices of accompanying singers) replies by what sounds as an insult. The insult is perceptible in the way the term "pédé" is intonated in the answer part of the song.



Image 3: Petit Pays in the Middle, on the Dance Stage
(Extract from the Video Conceived for *Pédés*)

Snoopie la Melodie's « Les Nerfs des Boys »

While Petit Pays uses series of double entendre and subliminal manipulations in his musical composition (*Pédés*), Snoopie la Melodie (the second case study) is rather direct and outrageously "overt". In his Mbole song titled "*Les Nerfs des Boys*", Snoopie unambiguously bashes LGBTQIA+ sexualities using very aggressive lyrics containing open calls to murder. Good examples include: "*on déteste les pédés*" [we hate homosexuals] and "*poignardez les pédés*" [stab all the homosexuals you see around]. The artiste's work is overall a hate song aimed at portraying LGBTQIA+ people not only as enemies but also as criminals deserving to be treated along the principles of jungle justice.

Actually, by deploying the term “stab the homosexuals” Snoopie calls for the application of mob justice on LGBTQIA+ communities. In other words, he calls for the death of members of these communities by public elimination. Such a call is reminiscent of the popular Cameroonian belief that homosexuality is an abomination which must be arrested through radical – nay quasi-extremist – social therapies. Viewed in such an abysmal light, the practice (homosexuality) is in no way inferior to heinous crimes such as witchcraft, armed robbery and public disorder which most often are efficiently dealt with through the application of jungle justice. In effect, many rural and urban communities in Cameroon have set specialized vigilante groups and secret societies that often apply jungle justice on suspected or culpable armed robbers, sorcerers and other miscreants. The weaknesses of the Cameroon judiciary have enabled the prevalence of jungle justice in various Cameroonian communities. In line with this, social arbiters tend paradoxically to trust jungle justice more than they believe in the Cameroonian judiciary system. In the advent of any crime, the aforementioned arbiters (vigilante groups and secret societies) would for instance, prefer the lynching, public shaming or extra-judicial treatment of the miscreant to the application of classical justice in legal courts of law. In line with this, homosexuality – the same as armed robbery and witchcraft – is popularly repressed through public shaming, lynching and other extrajudicial tools.

On September 22, 2024 for instance, two gays were caught having sex in a car in a Yaoundé neighbourhood called Ekounou. The crowd who witnessed the social deviancy took the two men to a nearby police station hoping that justice will be served, in accordance with the country’s legal system. Sadly (for the crowd as well as for the two LGBTQIA+ people), the gays were freed few hours after their arrest. The crowd guessed that the gay men must have bribed law enforcement officers to secure their release, in clear violation of the law of the land. This guess spurred the crowd into hunting down and publicly lynching the two gays ([Winner 2025](#)). Snoopie’s song is in line with this popular belief in extrajudicial approaches to dealing with serious or unnatural crimes. According to this popular belief, the Cameroon judiciary system is plagued by corruption and some other malfunctioning. This corruption hampers the efficacy of justice. Following this state of things, jungle justice is popularly considered more efficacious and more pragmatic than traditional justice, when it comes to punishing or repressing homosexuality in Cameroon.

The aforementioned extrajudicial repression of homosexuality has drawn the attention of most LGBTQIA+ rights organizations/activists that criticized Snoopie la Melodie’s song. The Association for the Defense of the Rights of Homosexuals

[ADEFHO] (cited in [Dissoke 2024](#)), for instance denounced Snoopie's call for the stabbing of LGBTQIA+ people on the ground that it is antithetical even to Cameroon's constitution and Penal Code. Actually, according to the Code mentioned above, homosexuality may attract a jail term and/or fine, not death penalty. The organization also highlighted that Snoopie's call is a violation of Article 267 of Cameroon's Penal Code which states that "Anyone who publicly justifies the crimes of murder, pillage, arson, destruction, theft, as well as crimes or offenses against the security of the State shall be punished by imprisonment of one to five years and a fine of 10,000 to 20 million francs or one of these two penalties only".

Another striking feature of *Les Nerfs des Boys* is that, Snoopie subtly – but remarkably – mixes hate speech with symbols of Christianity, a LGBTQIA-unfriendly religion. In effect, the last segment of the controversial song is a deformed version of a popular Christian hymn meant to praise Jesus Christ. In this deformed version, the religious message is artfully replaced with homophobic statements that say "Some people asked me the following question:/ what is the origin of your anger/. In reply, I told them that/ homosexuals are the cause of my anger". In its original version, the lyrics of this Christian hymn say "Some people have asked me the origin of my joy. In reply to their question, I told them, Jesus Christ is the source of my joy".

By tapping profoundly into the Christian hymnology, Snoopie la Melodie not only seeks to align its message with popular *Mbole* traditions in Cameroon but also gives a spiritual or Christian outlook to his song. He spiritualizes in some ways, his homophobic message. Actually, his spiritual-artistic appropriation of the Christian hymn is reminiscent of the popular belief stipulating that religious principles should guide reflection on societal issues, notably LGBTQIA+ sexualities. And as earlier pointed out, these religious principles – particularly the Christian ones – are coincidentally and unfortunately LGBTQIA-unfriendly. In effect, in the name of religion, Cameroonian LGBTQIA+ people are usually stigmatized, ostracized, disowned, shamed, delivered to humiliating spiritual therapies or simply lynched.

Ronz's "Stop"

Like Snoopie la Melodie, religious singer Ronz taps into Christian puritanical doctrines to bash LGBTQIA+ sexualities. In his song titled "STOP", he presents homosexuality as one of the abominable perversions that ultimately attracts divine retribution. In one of the song's stanzas, Ronz uses series of lexical and semantic deviations as well as metaphors

and euphemism to make allusion to the aforementioned sexual perversion and retribution. He says “Even those who consume cigarette, by taking it through the mouth, the nose and the downiest opening will face the anger of God” [My translation]¹¹. Through the use of “downiest opening”, Ronz evokes anal penetration, which is most often associated with gay relationship. This understanding is rationalized by the gestalt deployed by Ronz in the song’s video.

The act of “consuming cigarette through the anal means”, is therefore pregnant with much connotations. In effect, the expression is a metaphor for anal penetration and homosexual relations. The use of the aforementioned metaphor has at least two functions. First, it enables Ronz to euphemistically evoke a thing (homosexual relations) considered in Christian traditions to be a taboo; secondly, it suggests the artist’s pejorative view of homosexuality.

Conclusion

This paper examined how mediated cultures create and perpetuate homophobic myths in Cameroon. It argued that, through the constant coverage of issues involving LGBTQIA+ identities in the country, local newspapers, radio and television give credence to a multiplicity of gay-unfriendly myths. One of such myths is the belief that homosexuality is non-Cameroonian, un-African and principally Western. The second myth is that, homosexuality is related to esotericism and transactional sex in the political realm of Cameroon, while the third myth is that, Western neocolonialism is partly aimed at purveying homosexuality in Cameroon and engineering the decriminalization of same sex relationship in the country. This third myth is fueled by various conspiracy theories.

The paper also explored LGBTQIA+ people’s agency in the Cameroon music industry and analyzed ways in which homophobic myths are reflected in the country’s popular music. It argued that through verbal and visual metaphors, double entendre, religious allusions, cultural appropriation and euphemism, the Cameroonian music has represented or evoked the three homophobic myths mentioned above. The study thus reveals that Cameroon music industry is just as homophobic as the other sectors of the country’s media. One has the impression that the asphyxiating nature of institutional homophobia in the country is stultifying pro-gay songs in the musical industry of the country. Thus, contrary to Western LGBTQIA+ singers who have been using their artistic

¹¹ Le tabac STOP/Il y en a qui fument /D’autres mettent au nez, dans la bouche/ et même en bas en bas/Tout cela finira.

productions to campaign for an amelioration of their social and political conditions, Cameroonian queer musicians have literally been cowed or muzzled. Their muzzling makes conditions favorable for greater LGBTQIA+ bashing by presumably heterosexual singers.

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