

Original Article

Self-defining and ethnic expressions in the sports field in French -speaking black Africa: the case of Benin

PASCAL DAKPO¹, BERNARD MASSIERA², ALPHONSE GAGLOZOUN³, IONELA NICULESCU⁴

¹ African and Madagascar Council for Higher Education (CAM) in Sociology of Sport, Laboratory of Human Sciences and Society, National Youth Institute of Physical Education and Sport (INJEPS) University of Abomey (Benin) - Email: Pascaldakpo@yahoo.fr

² Sports Science, Faculty of Sport Sciences (UFRSAPS), University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis

³ Educational Sciences, Laboratory of Human Sciences and Society, National Youth Institute of Physical Education and Sport (INJEPS), University of Abomey-calavi (Benin)

⁴ Faculty of Physical Education and Sports (FEFS), University of Pitești, Romania.

Published online:: September 25, 2011

(Accepted for publication September 18 2011)

Abstract

This article analyses self-defining and ethnic demonstrations in the sports field in the Benin. Since this democratic young country of the French-speaking Black Africa breaks with ten seven years of Marxist regime Leninist across «national conference " in 1990, a more democratic and liberal regime is established which favours the hatching of a multitude of associations with social, political, cultural and sports character. Effect, sports, practice imported by French colonial power (1870-1959) uses this associative infatuation to become a space and a ground advantageous for the cultural and ethnic expression of individuals and groups in search of a social and political affirmation. From a qualitative inquiry of type, results reveal that the ethnicity in a pacifist determination is going to express itself in a democratic manner jointly in the sports space in the Benin, instead of manifesting itself by bloody violence. It is these forms of expression of the ethnicity and identity that offers to bring to light this study.

Key words: Sports - ethnic group, culture, power, policy

Introduction: Sports as put into play self-defining

This job offers to explore in the sports field, the expression of the ethnic identity of the Benin, country of French-speaking Black Africa from its entrance in democratic epoch after ten seven years of Marxist-leninist regime. Our interest carried in most cases on the correlations of sports middle and demonstrations of the ethnicity which register in it reinforcing idea as well as « sports establish themselves as a privileged support of self-defining expression, whatever are levels and forms of examined practices » (Callède, 2009). It is one of the major de facto traits cultural characteristic of XXè century that this study reveals. We were particularly interested in sports associations and in confederations as being material and support to analyze self-defining and ethnic expressions in the new democratic system in the Benin there. Objective is to surround and arrest sports as being a space advantageous for the cultural expression of groups and individuals in search of a social existence on one hand and to reveal on the other hand that the sports field conceals strong ethnic and political stakes which melt networks of comparatively complex connivance. Having put down the problems which underlies the phenomenon of self-defining and ethnic expression in the Benin and redrawn adopted method, it was displayed a short historical outline Benin and of its associative sports movement before displaying the main acquired results which express the théâtralisation and the local self-defining and ethnic productions of phenomena.

The problems of self-defining and ethnic expression

The division of the world in two blocks behind the United States and ancient USSR made room for the break-up of Soviet empire and for a collapse of the Marxist-leninist ideology. In his wake the regimes collapsed which were linked to her persuasion and in that case the Benin. Did not more than two decades of Marxist regime leave traces on the men and the cultures of this earth of Africa? or then, « the failure of vast collective aspirations, little by little corrupted, which involved reason, modernity, secularism, internationalism and class struggle " has t-elle not launched, in reaction, a process which repudiated western rationality, exacerbated nationalism and rehabilitated the worship of the soil and blood? » (Mariane, on 2002).

They can wonder if the Marxist ideology effaced in a radical manner Community relations, tribal hierarchies and stocks which are linked to it. In this frame, do not they attend with possibilities given by a more liberal political regime in resurgences of these same stocks or in a new syncretism blending democratic principles and traditional stocks? Besides, the ré rooting in the past and ethnic-religious thrill they do not act as auto protective shelter or

else do not they constitute an ideal space of exercise of power for deposed notabilities and ancestral prerogatives of which they restored? In this perspective, do not sports across self-defining demonstrations constitute a tool with numerous manners?

So we favoured question setting on correlation between associative movement and society across the analysis of sports phenomenon such as it fans out in the Benin in the epoch of democracy by focalizing our attention on football to understand social dynamics, stakes and ethnic strategies which register in it. So, to understand these dynamics, we drew inspiration from models of sociologists' analysis (Crozier and Friedberg, on 1977), of anthropologists and political scientists of whom David Easton (1974) who approached political life as an opened and adaptable system. Norbert Elias and E. Dunning (1994) underlined moreover that « key of the knowledge of the society » meets in the pertinence of the analysis of the sports movement of this society. That's why, to confront this logic with the reality of facts, we postulate that the advent of democracy in the Benin favoured resurgences of the ancestral ethnic which expresses itself in various areas of social life and particularly in the field of sports. This space-time proves to be advantageous for expression, affirmation and ethnic identification. Sports participate in the production of the ethnic reports and constitute a revealing of the positioning of various actors.

An exploration by the methodology of strategical approach

The used methodology is the strategical approach of the social actors of Crozier and Friedberg (1977). We also drew inspiration from models of analysis of Easton (1994) which approached social and political life as an opened and adaptable system and of Norbert Elias and E. Dunning (who underline moreover that the pertinence of the sports analysis is « key of the knowledge of the society »). The investigation was accomplished from a qualitative step and called techniques of observation, semi maintenance directive and of analysis of biography or tales of life of subjects that composes our sample to thirty nine (39) subjects, federal leaders, sports leagues, clubs of quarter of city and arrondissement, of sages and heads crowned with the local traditional chiefs. Analyses have combining sociological techniques (observation, discussions, biographical or tales of life) to a directed population of 45 subjects. It took into account as well the existent data of available documentary archives. Data, grabbed by means of software Ear information 6 were treated by supporting us in most cases on the analysis of verbal speeches and on observation.

The historical context of the Benin

Independent since 1960, the Benin in former days called Dahomey knew three political regimes which regulated and marked the social and cultural dynamics of the Beninese society. Sports, practice imported by colonial power (1870-1959) will be taken back by the various governments of post independence (1960-1971) and instrumentalist for political aims. In Beninese context, sports are not any more only an amusing practice but first of all a place of exercise of power, political stake and ideology in the gramscien sense of term.

During the period of the post independence marked by a series of State blows, political instability does not miss to affect the sports system which knows in the space of decade, eleven ministerial tutelage. The State in the absence of long-term sports policy and medium following financiers, cannot impose this cultural practice of importation. During this period, Beninese sports millind on the colonial sports system.

The new and young republic instituted in 1972 opens with an epoch marked by Marxist regime Leninist who impregnates with her ideology all political, social and cultural institutions. From 1975, sports associations are dissolved and a downward vertical centralized flowchart is imposed on the Beninese sports society. In the course of this stage, there is a gap between the organization imposed by the top and the real functioning of the federal system, since strategical posts are hoarded by the politico administrative authorities which impose a Charter of sports. It is the promotion of sports of elite at which aims the undertaken policy inscribing the country and the sports society in the register of the Marxist-leninist countries. This experience proved to be at the end of fourteen years disastrous because it sacrificed sports of mass to sports of elite with nationalist aim, without benefiting therefore from medium financiers in keeping with its ambition.

From 1990, the Benin breaks with Marxism across the « national conference » which institutes a more liberal and more democratic regime. If political regime changes, it is however the same politicians who assure the continuity of the State. However this new regime is going to favour a proliferation of sports cultural associations and development and to print a new dynamics of democratic expression.

Short historical of Beninese associative movement

The history of sports associative movement in the Benin revealed that this one knew his full development only after the advent of democracy across «national Conference »¹ who was held in Cotonou in Februar, 1990.

In effect, heir of colonial sports (1870-1959) which decorated with flowers Frenchwoman (AOF) in Western Africa before 1960, Beninese sports knew two periods harmful to his development. During immediate post independence (1960-1971), period flusters on political plan, dominated by a series of State blows, the leaders of the country neglected sports. Political instability was in its roof space. Eleven ministers succeeded one another at

the head of the ministry of sports during twelve years. Tossed around in this torment, the department of sports lives together successively with the departments of State education, culture, health, tourism and trade. This untimely renewal of the representatives and tutelage was not likely to give a solid bedding to this cultural activity and to favour its development. The Beninese sports system reproduces the colonial sports system structurally without having however medium financiers and human beings of its development. They could expect a rebound of Beninese sports movement then it opportunity of the institution of the Marxist-leninist country in 1972. On the contrary, not sportswoman was reduced to nonexistence par an excess of control and social regulation of this area of social and cultural activity. Under the influence of the Marxist ideology, they attend the dissolution of basic sports associations replaced by departmental and provincial teams, decision which gives a blow of stopping in the development of sports. The Marxist-leninist sports system favours theoretically federal structures adapted to sports of performance, while the Charter of sports adopted in 1976, supports the principle of the development of sports of mass. The government of epoch was not capable of exceeding this polarity all the more so as it had not medium financiers and human beings to take up this challenge. Faced with this utopian plan, cultural resistance crystallized across the « Games of the North », a form of organizations of sports which favours local self-defining affirmations and allows the return to tradition by leaning on local bodily cultures (Gérard, 1995). It is with the advent of democratic regime in the Benin in 1990 that national sports movement indeed took its takeoff. Since then, this new regime participates in the effervescence of sports and cultural associations and development and prints a new dynamics of democratic and ethnic expression implicating other political actors at the head of the sports confederations and local sports structures between others. In this context of liberalism of social and sports life, ethnic expressions crystallized around sports event and of football particularly. How these did they then fan out?

Of national identity in the social and ethnic groups

By supposing that the ethnic or tribal identity, which constitutes an argument leitmotiv of numerous studies on Africa in the sociological analysis of sports (Fatès, on 1994; Mbengalack, on 1993), she is not the only one to govern membership in sports associations. Without disappearing therefore ever, ethnic identity would be decisive any more today because exceeded and competed by other types of affinities groupings, as for instance the phenomenon of the local sports associations and the sports supporters. Sports associations and their sports supporters are holders of several identity: geographical, cultural and political who pose however the problem of their tangle, their logic as well as that of the social roles of the actors in presence. Seen under this angle, African sports remain sports of more or less big solidarities going of the nation to the different social and ethnic groups. It is a structuring built on a geopolitical presentation which takes into account considerations of self-defining order and occupation of social space. On this subject, geographers and French sociologists that are Jeans-Pierres Augustine (1985), D. Mathieu, J. Praicheux, Borhane Erraïs and Jean-Paul Callède showed the links which exist between " sports culture " and the geographical place. Jobs of Jean-Pierre Augustine (1985), showed between others than " sports culture " is productive of local identity as much as concept of " territory ". These two concepts are particularly efficacious in the interpretation of dynamics géo sports and internalized as a game of defence of won ground. These jobs revealed besides " the process of Community identification which constructs the local society around its club " (1995) and " promote the social dimension of space facts while underlining the element of sports facts " (on 1995, 167). So, sports appear as being a place of geopolitical presentation based on self-defining considerations. It will be the object of the analyses which are going to follow.

Self-defining considerations

They notice in the Benin, a proneness to constitute of clubs, to create of teams and other associations as ONG and political parties between others on the basis of considerations microphone self-defining the ethnic group of which is the main element. The ethnic group being understood as a grouping of persons (families, clans, tributes) eloquent the same dialect and feeling or recognizing itself a common origin. We supplement this presentation of the ethnic group by definition that in deal Paul dealer in notions (1968, 73), that is to say " *a closed group, going down from a common forefather or more in general having the same origin and eloquent a common language* ". According to the UNESCO, " *the members of an ethnic group or a tribe involve common forefathers and occupy a territory which is clean to them. They share the same language, the same culture and the same tribal name. Term indicates a type of social structure at the same time, where the consanguinity and lineage have a fundamental importance, and a certain stadium evolution of the society* " ²

From this perspective, sports think then it are used as a very good indicator of the classificatory consanguinity, the link of blood. What would mean that he allows consequently appreciating the social structuring of the Beninese society by differentiating between the " *Fon, Dendi, Bariba, Mina, Wla, Youruba* or else the *Goun and Holli* " ³ of the tray of Ouémé. Sports allow so to operate on pence classifications aiming at not merging these any listed ethnic groups for instance. We consider the ethnic group therefore to be a social product which defines itself in comparison with people, in power, in local territory. It is also a space of expression of the conscience of the interests of a given group and feeling of membership in this group. All in all the ethnic group puts in an

obvious place stocks, aspirations and behaviours as characteristic and differential factors of each of the groups as Bruno Vitte (1982) in his jobs supports it so well. How then express themselves these self-defining data in the local sports associations in the Benin?

The self-defining dramatic quality of multi-ethnic people

In 1998, "the win in World Cup of football of the team of France caused a kind of sociological mini-seism. Until then comparatively distant regarding phenomenon football, the French society, any merged social categories, suddenly had a passion for the wins of its team up to final apotheosis, on July 12th. The people of France seem to have recognized himself in the composition crossed by the national team and in his virtues. The symbols of the Republic, tricolour and national hymn, particularly, confiscated by the extreme right, were recovered by the citizens central event occurred out of stadiums, in this sudden wish of each to go towards other one, to share, all together, the happiness of triumph " (Augé, on 1998, 9). This phenomenon of crystallization of the nation around a sports event such as it is introduced by the ethnologist Mark Augé and who concerns a big sports nation as France is stretchy in nations of lesser importance, in this case of developing countries as the Benin. From this example, they can keep idea that sports practice maintains a private relational link with the concept of the nation. So, around the victorious national team a process of identification.

For instance, in Africa, when a national team occurs as part of international competitions, all different social groups are reconciled the time of match or collective celebration of a sports win, to share the same design. Together, they acknowledge in the team of opposite a common adversary. It leaves so of "Fon, Goun, Holli, Dendi, Bariba, of Mined, of Wla, of Pla, of Popo, of Yoruba, of Ditamari, of Peuhl, etc. " which formed a line behind " Squirrels " ⁴ of the Benin, during eliminatory counting for the Cup of Africa of Nations 2004, on September 8th, 2002, while in Cameroon the clubs of "Bassa, Bulu, Bamiléké etc." ⁵, beat in unison to encourage "the indomitable Leos ". Also, in Ivory Coast, the impulses of "Baoulé, Bété, Agni, Woobé, etc." ⁶ try to grow inarticulately and invariably " Eléphants " towards win.

Thanks to the impact of national selections, in l 'instar from other countries, the African nations confided a new space of affirmation and thrill of the feeling of national membership: football. That's why, when the clubs of the Benin, such for instance, the *Dragons of Ouémé*, the *Sharks of Atlantic*, the *Buffaloes of Borgou* or the *Leos of the Atacora*, or else the "Jeunesse Sportive of Pobè (JSP)" represent the country in international competitions, they slide of the national stage towards the international stage, about which they know that it is the exclusive field of States. This sliding of sovereignty of local level at national level and national level at international level, is instinctively accompanied, on sports plan, by a transfer of affects and by feeling that leads to a not organic national unit. The sports object is what use the best the African States to re-make more dynamic solidarity and national unit. It is ideal opportunity, for numerous fractions ethnic groups (60 about in the Benin) to express a common cultural minimum which passes by sports. In other words reasons and motives of support of the national team appear as the recognition shared by one " *standard of excellence of identity* " (Dakpo, 1997). In this sense, honour and pride which provokes the win of the national team of a country link protagonists every national, to such an extent that subconsciously, each goes to the common good, believing go to its particular interests. In case of international sports wins, elements of the society which everything tends to compare, manage to acquire and to share together, the same dignity. Mark Auge translates in marvel this consensual aspect of sports by maintaining that «*champion title, determines a report of European Economic Community (CEE), is not only won by a team but also by the society from which she comes. The group casts therefore in the team and puts in her its hopes of conquest, its energy to conquer, but also its personal frustrations and its aggressivity* " ⁷.

The phenomena of identity and identification

In the Benin, sports are as political power, a very good frame of experimentation of the notion of identity. Football particularly, reference sports in the continent, is a place in which watch each other and manifest themselves the phenomena of identification and identity. "*Identity, as qu'appréhension cognitive self, refers to the feelings of both similarity and difference, change and continuity, that one feels towards oneself and the need have and save a sufficiently positive self-image and central* " ⁸ specify Nakbi & Lebreuilly (1991). From this definition, we believe that to join a sports club, to support it or refrain from doing so, is not neutral because it is then in fact d'an integrated and internalized, and perfectly suited to a need for cognitive consistency. Instead, we believe that people join a club with membership of mobile convergence. Engaging in any activity whatsoever, is thus dependent on a response. In this regard, the Cameroonian Achille Mbembe clearly summarizes the subject of our argument by writing that "the African is worked by a beam of multiple representations of identity. People identify with regional environments they are geographically economic, historical or cultural "(Mbembe, 1998). But this situation is not unique to Africans; it is the result of any situation when it comes to an issue of nationalistic advocacy. Thus, international events, especially when they result in a win, are an opportunity to raise the sport to the level of international or national issue, but surely an object of mobilization of an entire people who temporarily gum its various components ethnic. K. Heinila does he not say: "It Is not only athletes

and teams share a common Than Win identity" (Heinila, 1976, 34). This means that not only athletes and winning teams sharing a common identity.

The multiethnic being discussed, support of draft around the national team, « the Squirrels of the Benin »

National draft around the Squirrels of the Benin at the stadium René Pleven de Cotonou during the eliminatory of the Cup of Africa of the Nation 2004, September 8th, 2002 was an opportunity which allowed the win of the Beninese national team on that of Tanzania (the Taïfa Stars) by the score of four purposes zero. In effect, the infatuation provoked by this match to defend Beninese national identity with diplomatic connotation besides, filled up wait of all people, any merged ethnic categories. About fourteen Beninese thousand (14.000) were at the stadium to accompany what they can call event in Beninese football; four hundred fifty (450) policemen and red berets were unfolded for the security of the players and the audience, one had being reminded of thirteen (13) professional players for the first time since Europe to defend national colours. One asked for it a participation of frank fifty thousand (50.000 francs) CFA the members of the government and twenty five thousand (25.000 francs) CFA the deputies to support the national confederation of football owing to the stake which constitutes for the Benin, the match the Squirrels of the Benin against the Taïfa Stars of Tanzania. To say that behind this event, there was a prompt and attentive action of all members of the government.

Emotions went up of a notch. Of course "stadiums or palaces of sports are places or the expression of emotions sometimes attains a kind of paroxysm drastically absentee of ordinary life " (The Breton, on 1998, 135). During all period of these special sporting events, passions raged. The Beninese had remained hung on their receiving post, to follow this such a waited match which finally saw the win of Squirrels. The analysis of these actions of draft recalls games of strategy which take in into operations of support (Easton, on 1974) and from campaign electioneering meadow of the governmental team for the municipal and communal elections of December 15th, 2002. In this respect, the attention of sphere of influence in power and its infatuation for the sports thing during these pre-election periods appear as calls concealed from the vote of the voters with the intention of draining voices in favour of the candidates of presidential sphere of influence.

Sports, in the electoral situation, participate then of political life and to sphere of influence in power in most cases. In exclamation "*they won*" the political speech of confiscation of this national win resounds in response. What translates very expressly Nazaire Vikou (2002) by writing that "*the win of Squirrels yesterday on the Taïfa Stars of Tanzania is that of the government of the general Mathieu Kérékou. Never they would have seen a so important contingent of ministers to move at the stadium to support a national team All governmental gratin was there. Among this deputation, they could also note the presence of the prefect of the departments of Atlantic and the Coastal region Barnabé Zinsou Dassigli. This massive presence of these political personalities is proof that the government of the general Mathieu Kérékou has in heart the development of sports in the Benin, particularly football. Presence of nine (9) ministres9 yesterday at the stadium René Pleven doped the morale of the players who gave the best of themselves to acquire this bright win. They saw the ministers in half, to go to give wise advice to the players to take back up to them to morale. The first one! (...)*" (Le Béninois, of September 09th, 2002). This illustration confirms idea that sports participate of a self-defining presentation in national macro plan and show as a result the infatuation of whole people for this practice, what allows to evacuate any ethnic considerations to the advantage of national stake. In the middle of this national conscience international conscience invigorates. And this double emergence is only after all is said and done, only the home of whole culture. In this situation, euphoria earns whole people.

Pessimism and disappointment after Community frenzy

International sporting events, however, do not inhibit the specific characteristics which we return soon also spent time to community enthusiasm, since a few weeks after this mobilization of the government and people of Benin September 8, 2002 behind the Squirrels, joy Unit galvanizing soon gave way to disappointment in this community. Indeed, the Government of Benin is not able to provide the necessary financial resources to the participation of the same national team (some time before winning), it was announced that season ticket to the playoffs for the Olympic Games (OG) 2006 football (Africa region). Follow in this regard, the analysis made by Jerome Carlos, Journalist, Director of Radio "Cappfm" of the situation in his "Chronicle of the day":

"Football in Benin is fixed for the Olympic Games. As decided by the government of our country. Reason: no money to support and to carry out the operation. How would this relate to missed appointments which, obviously, is far from the joy of many friends of football in our country? (...) "Football (...) in our country, on a roll. (...) A whole nation is now recognized as a" national team ". The first benefit of this team, as part of qualifications for the CAN 2004, convinced. it vibrates the whole country. (...). So is it acceptable that the rise, it forces us to a forced landing? is it admissible that renaissance, we are denied the right to life? Started putting green of our players for the preparation of qualifying matches for the Olympic Games (OG) when their order was given to break ranks and to postpone everything. Psychologically, it's a stab in the back of a convalescent football, a football renaissance. The doctor shakes his patient does not help him to take the road to recovery. Lack of money t been told! in countries where football is counted to the rank of a national priority, the costs of

preparation and participation of the national team of the reach of the Olympic Games stand for expenditures of sovereignty. That ie expenditures deemed essential attesting that the country is that the country is standing, the country retains its place in the comity of nations (...). "

The pessimism and disappointment shown by the journalist are up to the challenge posed by participation in the elimination phase of the Olympic Games (OG). Participate in the international game is to show that "the country is that the country is standing, the country retains its place in the comity of nations," said Jerome Carlos. Without this saving national mobilization, the country will take refuge in the local and regional competitions for the expression of ethnicity. And very early in fact, it was in the minds of each and other, and the inevitable return to the instinctive sense of identity and ethnicity. This isolationism is often dictated by the interests and issues of power for the exercise by some political hegemony at the local level.

The local club

There is a part in the creation of associations and sports clubs which aim to be as close as possible to the identity of state institutions: sub-prefectures, counties, towns, villages, communes, districts of cities etc. . This is the case, for example, "Dragons Football Club Ouémé" representative of the department of the same name or the Youth Sports Cotonou (JSC), multi-ethnic association, which represents Cotonou, cosmopolitan and of Benin. We can see a hand and through the study of names of sports clubs, membership or implied in certain areas of identity. Thus, the Jeunesse Sportive of Pobè (JSP), if it expresses a geographical location within a city of Benin, behind this identification belonging to ethnic Holli, the majority in this city. Another example of the Lions Atacora Somba identify with, to Berba, in the vicinity of Ditamari Natitingou, Northern Region which is from the President Kerekou. By asserting the identity of the club through a region but also through an ethnic group. Thus, with reference to the composition of the sporting landscape of the Department of Ouémé, the example of the team of Dragons FC helps to illustrate the appearance of ethnic ramifications related to the geopolitics of the representation of Benin sports landscape. Considering the history of the team reported in the prospectus, pamphlet of that sports association "*Dragons of Ouémé sports*" is initially:

"The idea to gather all the son Ouéménous (read from the native language Ouémé Goun) players from the city of Porto-novo selection has been created training Dragons Oueme. Agondanou Mr. Jean-Pierre then delegate the town of Porto-Novo is the origin of this initiative. it was in 1974. His concern, he has said was intended "to have a team worthy of the" Ouéménous "representative of the city of Porto-Novo where people have a blind passion for playing football. Football has become a second religion for all people of this town. He added that "these are the best players from the son of our soil who operate in teams Postel Sport, Asso Porto-Novo, the Etoile, the boom, which we called to defend Aïnonvis¹⁰ of the land. These are the Djidonou Josiah Gandonou Gerard Koukoï Just, Toudonou Hogue, Saadou do Rego, Ogoungnon Adolphe, Soubérou Moutairou, Adéchokan Marouf, Chidicofan Valere, etc... and much later Ahlonsou Agossou who we asked the time to resign from the Sharks team's Atlantic this team from the neighboring department with whom we compete, that he joined us in Porto-Novo "(Sic) (Interview, 22/11/02).

This statement clearly shows that the formation of the team of Dragons Oueme serves as a performance comparable to an ethnic identity claim of a "*Ouéménous*". This hypothesis is also another mask that would be a political insofar Anjorin Moucharafou, vice president of the National Federation of Football, from Porto-Novo argues that:

"Dragons of Ouémé was a club of political expression against the government that oppressed the PRPB Ouéménous. That's because most of the rich were from South Ouémé and the revolution seems to be drawn against as Ouémé all departments were then concentrated in Porto-novo. and after all departments were brought back to Cotonou. This explains everything. in doing so, this has greatly hindered the development of the city of Porto-Novo. in so the struggle between the Fon and Gun expressed through sport. that's the history of the Dragons team originally I was born "Sic. (Interview of 19/12/02).

As shown, these testimonies the idea of a geopolitical and ethnic representation staged in sport in Benin. This idea is the paradigm of Bruno Vitte who considers the notion of ethnicity as one of a group that includes first cultural connotations. This is a social group, a class of people they wanted to distinguish, either on the basis of objective factors (language, history, race), or on the basis of subjective (feelings identification of the group). This author concludes in the direction of our observation that "the term ethnic highlights the values, aspirations and behavior as factors and differential characteristics of each group" (Vitte, 1982).

Sport and local identity representation

The analysis of patronymic players on the team of Youth Sports Pobè (JSP) in the Department of the plateau reveals the ethnic affiliations of these. She confirmed this and other realities of local identity representation. Indeed, most of the players, sports administrators and players all the JSP from the surrounding countries of Pobè. In Benin, the name given to an individual based on the consonance and resonance of names is a priori origin. Thus almost all the players and sports leaders of this team are from the region. This also strengthens their

determination to defend their identity and more importantly, their territory. This means that a leader of the team stating that:

"the goal that galvanizes each other within our organization revolves around the defense of culture Holli once seen as warriors in the tray Ouémé. Our concern is to sustain the affirmation of our identity through sport, not just football but also by our development associations, the dance of our land that is to say Guèlèdè dance, etc.. You saw yourself how we got up as one man, all as the son of Pobè the composition of our local team, the Youth Sports Pobè. You saw all the king, the notables, merchants, workers, welders, farmers and Séfou Fagbohoun himself president of our party the MADEP, everyone was involved. This is our worthy son is a scout for us, the bright star that guided the Magi to the manger of baby Jesus "Sic. (HB, interview of 11/12/02).

These words evoke a form of instrumentalization of ethnicity. Some examples of names of players in the original JSP Holli just below support our argument: *Wassiou Oladipupo, Lama Oladipupo, Amoussa Abiola, Adéochoun Wassiou, Ogoukounlé Bienvenu, Agba Owolabi, Obot Udémé, Ibrahim Roufaï...* The names of some leaders as Odjo Paul, president of the JSP and the heirs of the founding team as *Olowolagba Jean-Baptiste, François Gnonlonfoun* to name a few, are indicative of the report with the local onomastics. All these names reflect a certain connotation of ethnicity and similar *Holli* Region Pobè. The proof is that the office director of the JSP is composed exclusively of all natives of the region. This form of "regionalization" of members of local governing body would appear as a form of ethnic exclusion, a kind of "unspoken" in the sport, and that manifests itself in some other office managers of local sports association's countries.

Sport as a secret protection of ancestral values

Through our investigations, it appears that one of the reasons for this state of affairs is bound to safeguard the confidentiality of the club and the protection of values taboos related to the myth and occult powers of voodoo fetish held by teams local. Here we report a wise member of the team in the region of Pobè who wishes to remain anonymous "if we accept one that is not in our area, that of Hollis, it will be made aware of mystical secrets of our forces, and when we leave, it will spill the beans to our convent. our forces will thus be weakened and our team will often be beaten. it is our honor is at stake and we do not want that . our ancestors have left us the powers we use to protect and exploit our team to defeat the opponent. and if so, we accept someone else who is not of us and therefore our blood, it could destabilize us because it is already at currents that could reveal our secrets. is a matter of confidence pact ". (O.P., interview of 28/012/03).

The play of ethnicity in a cosmopolitan city, Cotonou

Among the multiplicity of ethnic and territorial representations which refers to sport, the neighborhood, as a reduced form of the territory, seen as an essential reference. In built around the neighborhood, the sport seems to have married the structure of large cities in many neighborhoods whose boundaries generally coincide with lineage divisions. Thus, in Cotonou, cosmopolitan city in southern Benin, were brought into play considerations equally apparent that evoke clear ethnic representation. These neighborhoods *Wlacondji Zongo* and which are parts of cities that we call village in the city in this case in Cotonou. We attribute this qualifier to these areas because in their lineage groups came together in strong communities from the region of Popo came from the department of Mono (*Wla, Pédah*, and in lesser extent, from *Mina* and *Ashanti* of Ghana) who have invested the district *Wlacondji*.

Just as a community of ethnic "northerners" composed of *Dendi, Bariba, Peulh, Somba*, etc., came from the north of the country to settle in Cotonou. Sport in these geographical areas, participates in the staging of a strong representation of *Wla* and ethnic northerners in the area of social life. Indeed the development teams of these areas led to the establishment of true bastions of identity that are transfers of ethnic *Wla* and *Popo* and the propensity to migrate to this community in Cotonou. It should be emphasized that the special *Wla* What a name to designate ethnicity, locality, their dialect and tribe *Wlacondji* which means the era of geographical *Wla* is a perfect example. As one of the teams in the locality called Adja Olympic Club, composed exclusively of players from ethnic Adja ethnisation is suggestive of the sport in the cosmopolitan city of Cotonou. Given this, we can say that the field is a space where sports is exercised and developed a tribal hegemony involved in this locality of the city of Cotonou. Moreover, as we have already mentioned, the names of players *Wlacondji*, the *Olympic Club Adja* example clearly confirm that inbreeding is deployed. In fact most players are almost all from the same lineage and claim to common ancestry and occupy a territory of their own. "They share the same language, same culture and the same tribal name." ¹¹

In this regard we find the players of the same family line: *Amoussou Ephrem, Amoussou Florentine Dossou Stephen Dossou Thibauld, Dossou Cyprian, Agognon Armel, Gregory Agognon, Julien Agognon ...* with a management team whose leaders also same ancestral kinship: *Agognon Faustin* and *Ekouevi Evariste*. These are the wise men of the village community in the city and embody a wisdom and a respectable second to none. "We are in Cotonou, but we do not want a mix because we are large enough to represent *Wla*", says Mr. *Faustin Agognon*, president of the "Olympic Adjas club" *Wlacondji*. It seems ultimately that ethnic groups seek to preserve the sport, what they hold most dear: their authenticity and identity. The cosmopolitan city of Cotonou is

characterized by well defined territorial ethnic settlements within the neighborhoods and *Zongo Wlacondji* who by reason of their group in each of these areas is a "homogeneous and autonomous political perspective and social a territory of their own "(Panoff & Perrin, 1973, 26).

A geo immigration and ethnic representations

Immigration and in terms of ethnic representation, everything went like a village with its hierarchies, its manners, customs and mentality was transplanted into the capital, hence the term village the city. Thus the *Wla* settled in the area south of the city while *Dendi, Bariba, Somba, Peulh, etc.*, Ethnic groups from the north of the country occupied the *Zongo* neighborhood in the heart of the capital. In this geographical division was superimposed a cutting sports organization. Thus, apart from the big corporate clubs: Mogaz 90, representative of the oil SONACOP, Sharks of the Atlantic Energy Company FC Benin Electricity and Water (SBEE), Postel Sport etc., Eight teams have respectively, shared space in this neighborhood football *Wlacondji* Cotonou. The space of the football as it unfolds in this part of *Wlacondji* for example, perfectly reflects the ethnic identities of sports training. The eight sports training, *Castel, Eagles, Olympic, Sodom, Baya, Ajax, Finalist, Zougrou* is a clearly identifiable ethnic area like the terrain and other *Wlacondji Yénawa, Whouédacômé, a Sodom, Sodom 2, Tromkponou, Gossimiti, Kpodji*. To these correspond territorialities micro ethnic groupings: the *Wla*, and the *Pédah Pla, the Pla, the Pla and Popo, the Pédah and Wla*. These distributions show well-defined identity and identifiable in some cases such as *Wla* and *Pédah* but also alliances and ethnic groups. Football, mainly urban phenomenon, while it promotes identity claims led to ethnic unions. Beyond these football matches between territory and ethnicity, there has been a process of revealing ethnisation even within an ethnic football, families dominant as shown in the study of surnames of the players associations mentioned above. These are the dominant families following the *Agognon, the Amoua, Agboévi, Chicou, Houngnibo, Hangbé, Dossou, Amoussou*. So the team from *Castel Wlacondji* field, there are only players whose names *Wla* dominant family are "Agognon" The team "Eagles" of *Yénawa*, is consists of *Pla* with players whose dominance of family is "Amoua" while in "*Whédacômé*", we see that the "Agboévi" of ethnic *Pédah* are mostly represented in the team "*Olympic*". Clubs and districts a *Sodomé 1 and Sodomé 2, Pla and Popo* from the ruling families' *Houngnibo* "and" *Hangbé* "whose dominant. By cons, in the district *Tromkponou* the *Wla* family «Hangbé» is strongly represented in the team "Adjax." These results indicate that we are in the presence of ethnic characters in teams that occupy the space of their territory of location, distributed within the same broad community represented by the *Popo* and *Wla* or within the town area in the city (*Wlacondji*) Cotonou. This means that the identity of an association is first and foremost, territorial. In the example of football in this district, the desire of each team is to see the territorial scope coincide with ethnically and culturally part of the population *Wla* or *Popo* or even *Pédah*, which remains a highly homogeneous population and welded. This representation of sport in terms of micro ethnic identification is equivalent to a commodity in the rationalization of behavior between sports associations and their members in the neighborhoods. This means that *Wlacondji (Wla district, the Popo, and Pédah)* as *Zongo* (district races from the north), despite the presence of a plurality of micro-ethnic groups within them, remain friendly family homes, might say, and which sometimes look like a mini traditional society which eventually restored both the party around a victory, that the meditation after a defeat. This would return to the idea of Pierre Bourdieu when he writes: «no group so isolated, so introspective that do think; each group research and its identity is the difference» (Bourdieu, 1961, 8).

After this analysis concerning the dynamic sports association in the district *Wlacondji* in the city of Cotonou, is a day multiréférencé identification process. If we take the case of the team *Castel*, some members of the team claim the identity *Agognon* corresponding to the dominant family in the club, but at the same time, they refer to ethnicity *Wla* present in the club. They identify with *Wlacondji terrain*, the area of athletic identification. Tomorrow, on the occasion of an international competition involving the national team of Benin, they will identify with it. These benchmarks show the complexity of identificatory processes. This complexity is exacerbated by the reference centers, some within the tradition (family, ethnicity), others within modernity (club, stage and state).

When ethnic ties take precedence over logic entrepreneurial

In this relationship between sport and ethnicity, now consider the case of the leader of the party "the MADEP" Fagbohoun Séfou, from the region of *Pobè* (*Adjahouère* specifically), which faces a painful political choice. In addition to his role as party leader, this three-headed policy is also Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the National Society of Marketing of Petroleum Products (SONACOP). He is also the honorary president of Youth Sports *Pobè* (JSP) and President of subsidiary Mogaz 90 SONACOP. It happened that the JSP is located opposite the final of the Cup of Benin, November 24, 2003 in Pleven Stadium in Cotonou in the corporate team SONACOP. This policy because of the accumulation of functions is then faced with a dilemma. Which team will he support? Which side of it? For this son of *Pobè*, the choice is quickly made. Between the corporate team of Sonacop (Mogaz 90) he leads by proxy and the local (JSP), the balance has weighed heavier on the side of the soil than in the company's business has since Fagbohoun Séfou simply chosen to show support to the team of its

soil and its transfer to blood brothers. Thus Séfou Fagbohoun donated 10 million CFA francs and an air-conditioned bus for Youth Sports in Pobè (JSP), the team of that region and has at its disposal several means of transport (taxi distance between others), to transport fans and native Pobè in the final. The victory of the JS Pobe (JSP) against the Mogas 90 (Score: tie in regulation time, 0-0, and 4 goals to 3 after penalty kicks) has devoted Cup winner of Benin. Moreover it is she who represented Benin in the African Cup Winners' Cup 2002-2003 season with the heavy responsibility of bringing the glory of a nation. The logic of the soil has awarded. This is the ultimate manifestation of the sign of the covenant of trust "son of the soil" in the place of his brothers. In this regard, Jerome Olowolagba after the victory of the JSP writes, "is the tribe that has taken precedence over the company. *Hollis*¹² the great teams have triumphed over daring to eliminate the Sharks and Mogas 90 FC which are nevertheless club experience. "Support Fagbohoun has naturally focused on the team in his region to the detriment of his business. While the urgent solicitations blood brothers were decisive about the financial and material support given to the JSP. The 90 Mogaz have not suffered unduly from the choice of political and ethnic Séfou Fagbohoun since this club is continually sponsored SONACOP. Symbolic and political benefits that collects the politician is up to the rally to ethnicity and income cursing the JSP Cup winner of Benin. The strategy of the politician is subtle: not to betray his people because he will need them one day and keep control of its subsidiary sport.

Sport as directed by the politician, the son of the soil

The spontaneous gesture of generosity of the politician Fagbohoun Séfou towards the team of its soil could be accused of premeditated nature propagandist. In fact, he intervened in an election campaign of municipal and communal December 15, 2003 and may participate in a form of purchase of consciousness or a call to vote for the political party of the movement in power, including the MADEP he is president. Here's what the journalist (Gérard Abiola Omnisports Magazine in its issue of Monday, December 2 005 writes):

"It was after this that Mr. Séfou Fagbohoun reacted spontaneously to give ten million (10,000,000) CFA francs and placed three air-conditioned buses available to the team and supporters for their transport to go back Pobè in Cotonou in the final. It also has chosen the occasion Mr. Adrien Houngbedji, president of the National Assembly of Benin, also originating in that region of Ouémé, to follow the top of the official stand on the stage of Pleven Cotonou, the first confrontation between the JSP and Mogas 90 not to mention the many senior citizens of the sub-prefecture of Pobè who have never been closer to the goal. This opportunity big reunion is a sign that announces that today, something happens at the football Pobè and it only remains to support this movement for positive change of carrying sport Pobè, especially since the victory of the JSP comes as we talk about decentralization, synonymous with a return of power to the base" (Abiola, 2002, 5).

So it is not to remain on the sidelines of this metamorphosis, and to gather the citizens of Pobè and the region around what can be termed dynamic sports or even sports revolution was born the JSP-FAN Club, and also to provide a framework for reflection and action to accompany the football Pobè like the association of supporters of the team of Dragons Oueme and the Shark Atlantic existing on the ground. The audience enjoyed quite popular football team in the region of Pobè has pushed for a general mobilization around it. This sacred union around the JSP Pobè made her team "darling" of the royal leadership in the region, according to observers, would have caused the dramatic actions of the politician, the rich for his Fagbohoun Séfou material and financial support for the JS Pobe. This leads us to believe that blood ties and the criterion of ethnic origin or residence involved in establishing an order of preference in supporting deployed in a particular action.

Role of leadership in sport royal

To confirm the role of royal leadership in sport, one could mention the example of the process embodying the traditional leaders and customs *Holli* in the department of the plateau region of origin of the JSP.

Thus, the Kings and Olafindji Eku Labe, guardians of tradition *Holli* respectively traditional and spiritual leaders of the chiefdom and Kétou Pobè have used all their power to seek and obtain the support of Fagbohoun Séfou for the cause of their region of one hand and their team (JSP) on the other. Mobilization of the "crowned heads"¹³ of the region around the JSP denotes par excellence that we can call the referent of the nesting of the royal leadership and sport. Including both the traditional power, spiritual and political authority in Benin is traditional gathering of men and as a true tonic and inciting ethnic and regional solidarity which can not make or politics or sports. Garant unquestionable unity of the region, the traditional leader also aims to recall the duty of solidarity all parts of the region to mobilize their energy and motivate them face to a cause. In this relationship, one could add political fallout associated with these positive actions since the last elections and municipal December 15, 2002, the party (MADEP) of Séfou Fagbohoun, politician from the region won the majority *Holli* seats in the different municipalities of the plateau region to play a leading role within the local authority. This means that when the political leadership and the mix of sports, players in these areas derive substantial profits symbolic and political. In this we agree with Jean-Louis Laville (1997, 332) that "*the association has a political dimension as it seals alliances beyond the international personality by including*" (Laville & al., 1997, 332), since according to the same author, "*the conquest of space social and communicative relationship is a political act*" (Laville &

al., 1997, 333). In the light of what has been revealed, it appears that the chiefs have again in association with a certain authority and power significant. They face in the sports field in a discreet but effective. Ultimately, the sport in Benin is a space of power invested by men politiquent ethnic and notables.

Political and ethnic collusion

The federal structure of handball is an example of where are formed and dilute the ethnic relations, political patronage and ownership of a sector of public life in Benin. Indeed, Marius Francisco, a member of the National Assembly (March 1991-June 1991), minister for relations with parliament, government spokesman (June 1991-July 1993), Minister of Culture and Communications (1993 -1995), Chairman of CNOSB since (1982), former head of the national handball federation had conducted such sports structure for several terms from 1979 until 1999, during which he handed over to Naouhm Eleazar is became president of the National Federation of handball in 1995 and a member of the African Handball Confederation. The director of hospital services, from Kpomassè in Ouidah, a member of the National Assembly of Benin, the second quaestor in the said institution, and blood brother of the same ethnic group as its predecessor, inherited the office of President of the Federation national handball. This means that the Benin sports area, allows the tribe, by subtle games, to keep control of the sports institution. Here's essentially what the MP said Naouhm Eleazar, President of the Handball Federation:

"A brother, a friend in this case the Minister Marius Francisco, knowing me for my sports activities, came to tell me he wanted me to come take charge of handball in order to replace the head of the federation because it was him, spirit to leave the head of the Federation of Benin handball. as my big brother, what is more, my blood brother, I had to accept. And there was still in place members of its executive board, I started working with the team, and since my appointment as head of the federation of handball Benin, I think that Benin is known abroad" (Sic) (NE , interview of 08/18/2002).

Through this member's speech Naouhm Eleazar reflected a strategy of cooptation. To do this, a campaign machine was set in motion so that it is elected. This also comes in the aspirations of the Minister Marius Francisco who wanted to position his brother-friend. Note that Naouhm Eleazar holds a comfortable economic capital to carry out his responsibilities as president of federation. Thus says Hessou Fernando (journalist, Confederal handball referee) about this:

"I'm one of the very people who have contributed to the election of Nahum Eliezer because it has an interesting enough economic power to develop our handball because sport needs a lot of ways, yet the state does not provide sufficient or with a delay. with regard to financial means, one, he has and does not skimp on this. sometimes even while it funds itself a championship until it receives subsidies from the State "(HF, interview of 11/10/2001). Naouhm Eleazar is a man of experience and heads an association of basic as president, "as I have at the same time a sports club, the yacht club that has the infrastructure, I think it is thereby I'll start to reach my goal".

Note that Marius Francisco Naouhm and Eleazar, the Beninese political figures belong to the Renaissance of Benin (RB) is an opposition party in power. They are also both members of the executive board of the party. This strategy of transfer of power sports a blood brother of the same ethnic region, which is more of the same political affiliation, could be elements of the sports field dynamics Benin. It is thus more confidence in his brother with whom one is related by blood, urging to take responsibility sports. The political support is a kind of control strategy and / or ownership of an area of public life and social sport. It can be said here that the handball was for several decades, held by the Fon of Ouidah as it passes from one man to Ouidah to another of the same ethnicity. In addition, the secretariat of the African Handball Confederation (CAHB) is held by Professor Arê mou Mansourou, director of the Office of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and a native of this city of Ouidah. The sponsor of that policy would be Marius Francisco we retraced the route above. Admittedly, this senior official from Benin holds a strong cultural and economic capital and a broad-based in their region they serve as elders and notables of the chiefdom of Ouidah. There is ethnic and reports collusion. These recruitment procedures certainly reflect motivations or personal affinities and absolutely subjective factors. But they support the main ethnic solidarity. The final dimension of these assumptions seems very plausible if one refers to the ethnic network policy mentioned above.

Conclusion

Following this study, it was revealed through the analysis of sport in general and sports associations in particular, the important role played by sport in terms of identity in communities in Benin. One can also argue that the sports area of Benin is not immune to a form of political exploitation, ethnic and that the State shall, through sporting events especially in election periods, to mobilize the masses in the direction of unity and solidarity and the invigorating feeling of belonging to a nation-state. Through demonstrations and political identity and ethnic issues that dramatize in the field of sport, it is emphasized the values of culture groups. This also confirms the idea of Mauss (1973) who argues that sport, social practice is no longer regarded as a social phenomenon usually uninteresting but as a social phenomenon. Referring then to Durkheim (1985), we can say that sport is sacred, because it requires or has a real respect and social popularity. About the sacred, in fact, this author does not he say that "... are those sacred things which the company has developed its own representation,

he enters any sort of collective states, traditions, emotions common feelings that relate to objects of general interest ... "

The study also revealed clusters of "trust companies" to base subsidiary, cultural and ethnic diversity that are staged. These are the "trusted sites" where people can trust their brothers' blood "or" son of the soil "by bringing them to the heads of various sports and other structures.

We can embrace the idea that "trust" is a motto or expression of identity Benin. In all, the sport in general and / or football in particular is proving to be fertile ground for the expression of a culture and identity and nationalistic affirmation. He participates in the staging of political and ethnic relations and provides a revealing of positions of various actors.

Notes

1. The Franco-African summit in La Baule which held its sitting June 30, 1990 and headed by President Francois Mitterrand has resulted in a proposal of "mechanistic application of the precepts democratic" African countries in developing so that they can move towards electoral processes through the ballot box, the establishment of democracy as a political system (Philippe Leymarie, in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, 1998, p. 6). Also, their economic reforms have been proposed as conditions to enable them to benefit from the generosity of the former metropolis "of democratization and structural adjustment should introduce them to stability and prosperity". Thus, this national conference, the first of its kind in Africa was held in Cotonou, Benin from 19 to 28 February 1990, under the chairmanship of Archbishop Isidore de Souza (who died in March 2000) in an atmosphere of great uncertainty at first, then largely consensual. Participants impose the sovereignty of their meeting at the head of state, who finally recognize it. After this conference, the transition bodies are set up for a period of one year with the mission, developing a constitution and organizing elections. The conference continues the President Kerekou in office while electing Nicephore Soglo as Prime Minister. High Council of the Republic (HCR), led by Archbishop Isidore de Souza, acts as a legislature and constitutional court. Finally, a constitutional commission was established with the mission to develop a new basic law. After the local elections in November, the constitution is ratified by the people and promulgated on December 2 December 11, 1990.
2. Dictionary of UNESCO, quoted by Pinçon-Michel Michon & Charlot Pinçon-Monique. Aristocrats and upper middle class, can we talk about "tribes"? In *Humanities*, 37: p. 26.
3. These are ethnic groups in Benin.
4. The name given to the national team of Benin.
5. Ethnic groups in Cameroon.
6. Ethnic groups in the Ivory Coast.
7. AUGÉ M., 1962. - Football, history, social anthropology of religion, In Calman Levy, peace and war between nations, Paris. In the same vein, R. Aron thought about him that science could possibly substitute for the wisdom would be that which developed from game theory, it would make rules under which a common will emerges from the contradictions between individual wills.
8. We borrow this definition Nakba Lebreuilly JN & K. The organization of the identities of self and others in a situation of electoral choice: An approach to social psychology. In *French Review of Political Science*, vol. 43: 553.
9. Ministers (government of General Kerekou, the second term of office) that were at the stage Pleven this international event are: Bruno Amoussou, Minister of State, Daniel Tawéma, Minister of Interior, Security and Decentralization, Gaston Zossou, Minister of Communication and New Technologies, Lazare Sehoueto, Minister of Industry Promotion and the ¹ Employment, Kamarou Fassassi, Minister of Mines and ¹ Energy, Yvette Celine Seignon Kandissounon, Christian Enock Lagnidé and others, the Minister of Youth, Sports and Recreation (MJSL) Valentin Adidi Houdé and the Minister of State for Defence, Pierre Osho.
10. Aïnonvis means son of princes of the dynasty of Aïnon related to the lineage of the royal families of Portonovo dominant.
11. Dictionary of UNESCO, quoted by Pinçon Michon-Michel & Monique Pinçon-Charlot, Op Cit, p. 26.
12. The people of Hollis is a set of Ouémé one of whose features is the fierce defense of their dignity. The members of that group do not hesitate to commit suicide when their dignity is violated! a strong ego of the rest!
13. This is the name of kings and chiefs of Benin chieftaincy.

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