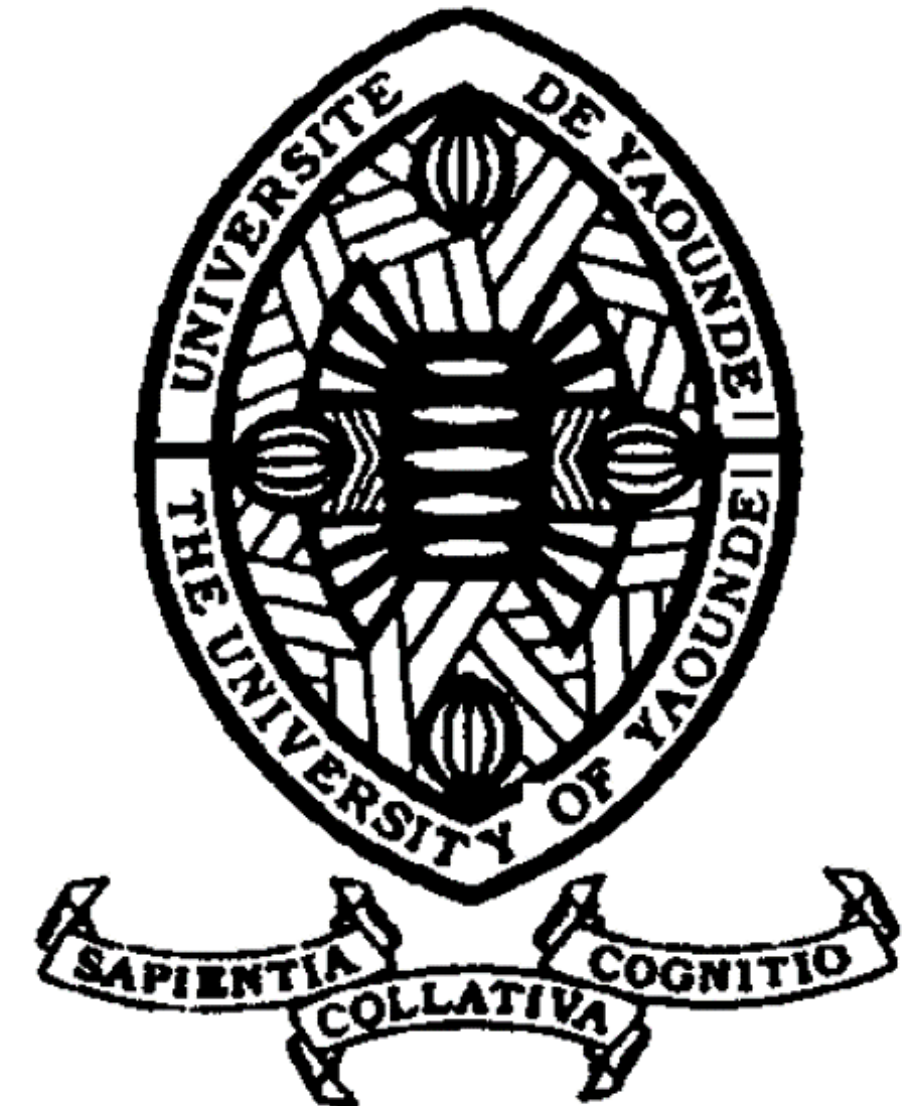


By PAUL HENRI SOUVENIR ASSAKO ASSAKO

Logo University Yaounde

Engelbert Mveng, Atelier arts nègre, 1961 / 1993 drawing second picture: example of a token used for the game Abbia, approx. 2,5cm x 1,5cm the author



The Sesame of Modern Culture

The University of Yaoundé

ART AND TRADITION FOR THE CONCEPTION OF MODERN SOCIETY

Why did i choose to talk about this image?

What does that look like?

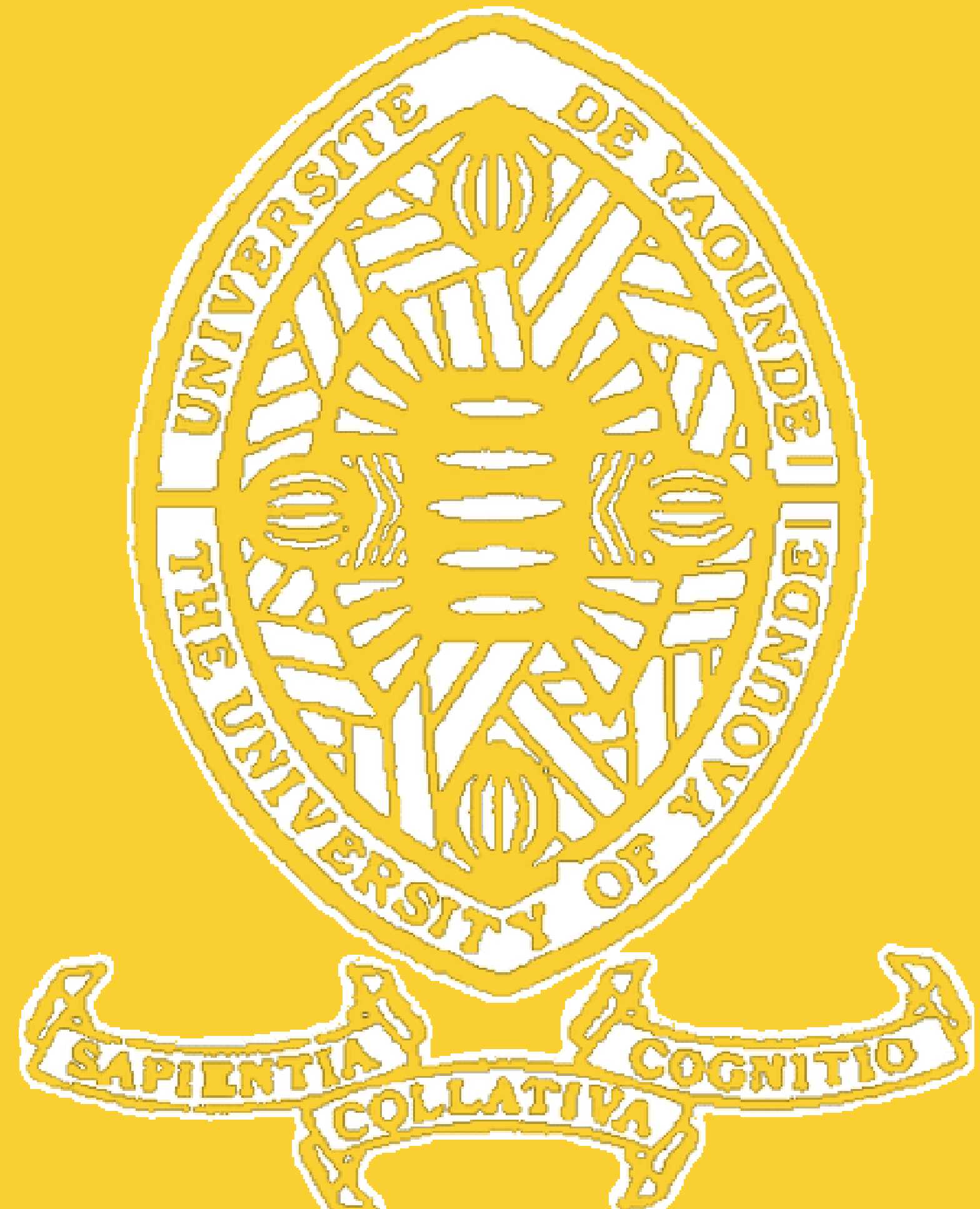
What does the form of this logo remind us?

What does that represent?

What remains untold?

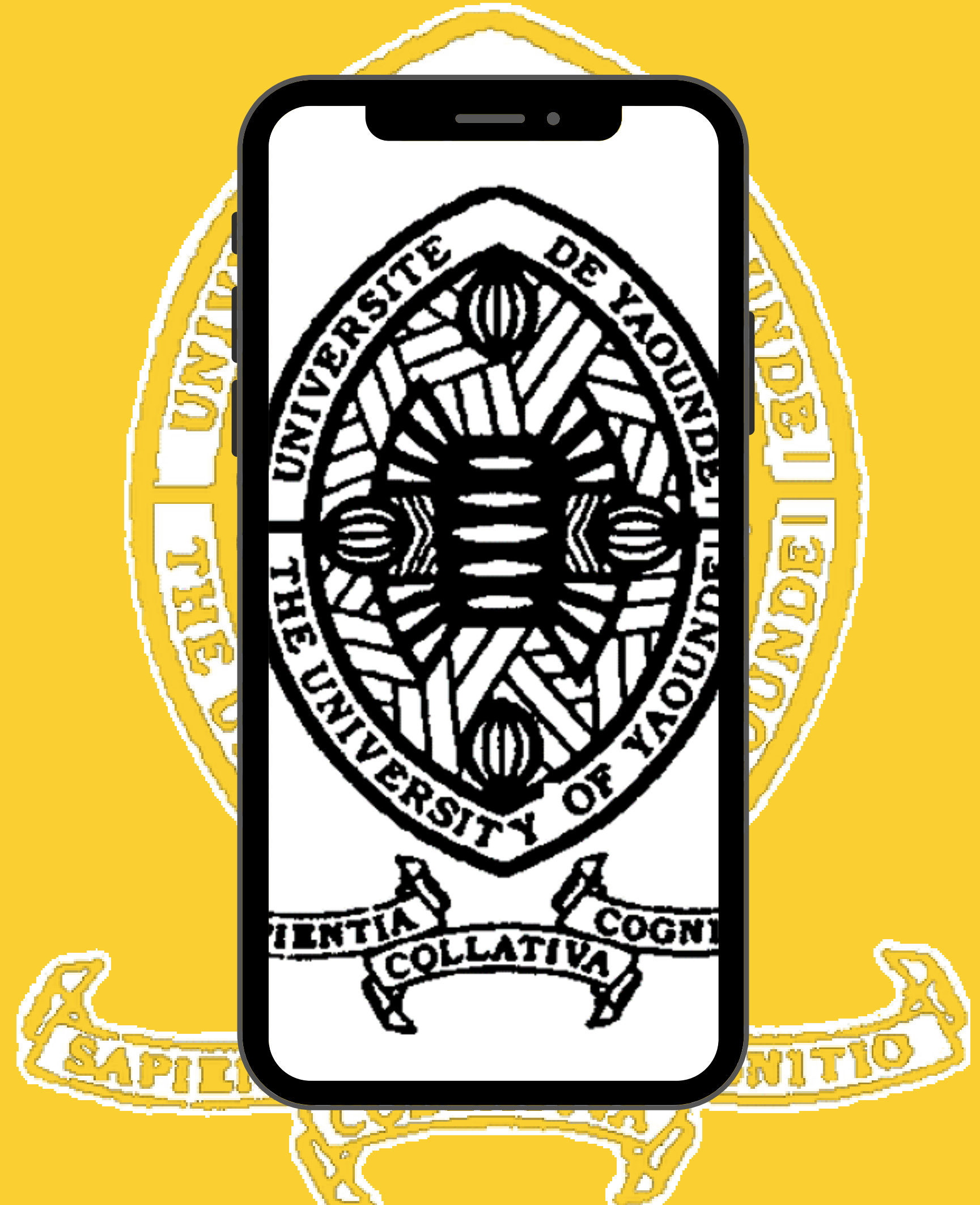
WHY DID I CHOOSE TO TALK ABOUT THIS IMAGE?

BECAUSE IT'S AN IMAGE THAT MATERIALIZE THE CONCEPTION OF THE MODERN SOCIETY : TRADITION & IDENTITY (The modern society in Cameroon needs to build its own identity)



The LOGO

The logo takes on the formal look of the chips used in the "Abbia" game. It is a traditional game that was played only by men in the South Cameroon until the beginning of the colonial period. In its general form, the logo is comprised of two main parts: an upper part which bears the phrase "The University of Yaoundé 1" (in French and in English) and a lower part that is defined by the slogan in Latin words "sapiencia collativa cognitio" (wisdom is collected cognition).



Let see together how it was made



The central part of the upper component of the logo features four human figures organized around a table. The rigid geometrization of the composition of the logo and the regularity of the lines give great expressiveness to these graphics. The treatment of the shape of the logo exhibits remarkable influence by traits of the "Abbia" token. The geometric schematization of the pattern and the ogival shape of the logo scrupulously drawn by regular lines determine the elements that mark this influence.

The simplified form of this process is "OLMC" where O represents "natural object", L represents "essential line of the object", M is for "motif", and C represents "composition". This process was inspired by a methodological scheme of synthesis that Mveng (1980) notes by studying traditional artistic practice in several African societies. Mveng observes a recurrence of certain principles of creation: the observation of the natural object, the graphic representation of the object limited to the essential line and finally the use of the essential line as motif / sign in the composition of the works of art.



WHAT DOES THIS LOGO REMIND US?





The “abbia” token

The “abbia”token

The name of the game “Abbia” refers to “hazard”, “a game of chance where bets are placed, which may be a simple gourd of palm wine, a human being (woman or child), livestock, or the player's farm or plantation.”

These are not just simple tokens but a characteristic artistic expression that is pertinent to the sculptural heritage of South Cameroon’s population. These tokens obtained from the pits of the sapotaceous fruit (*Mimusops le-testui*), present on their smooth faces a wide variety of anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, geometric subjects. minutely engraved in bas-relief by the artists. In addition to their use for the game, Abbia tokens are also ideograms and pictograms that have sometimes been associated with divinatory practices. Designing a logo that is inspired by them is significant from a dual aesthetic and symbolic perspective capable of inspiring elements of content to national identity.



WHAT DOES THAT REPRESENT?

the mission of the university is to train the Cameroonian elite to foster the nation's prosperity through modernization at the economic, political and cultural level. More than a simple element of identification, the logo of the university reminds of the issues of identity on the one hand and modernity on the other. A tension that the African political and intellectual elite has faced since the years of independence. Universities are considered by politicians as the contexts for the conception of modern culture with identity characteristics for the young nation. Infact, Mveng (1930-1995) does not lose sight of this perspective. This is how he undertakes the re-appropriation and integration of traditional knowledge and skills in the creative process of the logo. Thanks to the privileged social and political position held by the artist (priest, academic and artist), l'atelier Art Nègre succeeded in producing several works (paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, etc.) both in Cameroon and in the diaspora ...

WHAT

REMAINS

UNTOLD

WHAT REMAINS UNTOLD?

the socio-political context ...

On the independence trajectory of the 1950 - 1960 period, the year 1957 is significant. It is marked by the creation of Cameroonian citizenship and the adoption of the first symbolic acts of the nation. After the investiture of André Marie Mbida, the first Prime Minister of the State of Cameroon on May 15th, 1957, the Legislative Assembly of Cameroon (ALCAM), on November 10 of the same year, chose the first national emblems: national anthem, flag, and a motto. From that moment, the visual and artistic elements revealed themselves and displayed their importance very early in the narrative of the history of the Cameroonian nation and the constitution of its heritage. The adoption of these national identification symbols is not unequivocal. We note with regret the anonymity of the authors/creators of these national emblems: "but we must nevertheless state the fact that no specific and nominal mention was made of the Cameroonian authors of the national anthem thus chosen. Later in 1960, the same silence will be reserved for the author - also Cameroonian, of the seals of the Republic of Cameroon, without us fully understanding the meaning to be given to these oversights" .

The trauma created by the sanctions imposed by the colonial powers on the various forms of reference to local iconographic and symbolic culture could justify the timidity of an exaltation of visual culture and its authors. The elements of visual and symbolic language such as the logo will come from an experience of distant memory and sporadic circumstances for several years. We observe, for example, that for several years the University of Yaoundé remained without a logo. The covers of the University's annals of 1969 and 1970 illustrate this and bear only the words "Federal University of Yaoundé". During the same period within the intellectual elite of the aftermath of independence, a nostalgia for traditional artistic culture is expressed in a literary modality. For example, one of the most important cultural journals created by this elite in 1962 is called Abbia in reference to the art of "Abbia".



THANK YOU