



# Research on Football Development Cooperation between China and Cameroon

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## Abstract

The sports exchange between China and Cameroon is an important connotation of the exchanges between the two countries and a link and bridge to promote the development of China Cameroon relations. The healthy development of sports and cultural exchanges between China and Cameroon is crucial to the establishment of long-term and stable development cooperation between China and Cameroon. “China’s international development cooperation in the new era” clearly pointed out that China’s international development cooperation in the new era should be guided by the concept of a community with a shared future for mankind, and stressed that China’s foreign assistance should comply with the requirements of the times and be transformed and upgraded to international development cooperation. Since the Bandung Conference, China Africa sports exchange has gradually become an important topic, but at present, there are more horizontal research and less vertical in-depth research in China. This paper takes the China Cameroon football development cooperation as an example, and from a historical perspective, from the three dimensions of assistance in the construction of venues, the introduction of foreign aid and football exchanges, to lay a solid foundation for the China Cameroon football development cooperation and enrich the practical theory of China Africa sports exchange. 2021 is the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cameroon. This paper combs the sports and football exchanges between China and Cameroon, and puts forward a clear direction for the better development and cooperation of football between China and Cameroon in the future, which is conducive to further understanding the relations between China and Cameroon, promoting the “people to people connection” between China and Cameroon, eliminating cultural barriers, establishing friendly relations between the people of China and Cameroon, and jointly promoting and maintaining the human democratic movement community between China and Cameroon.

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## Subject Areas

Sports Science

## Keywords

China, Cameroon, Football, Development Cooperation

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# 1. Sports Exchanges Promote the Construction of a China Cameroon Community with a Shared Future for Mankind

## 1.1. Background of China Cameroon Sports Exchange

Cameroon is located in the Midwest of the African continent. Its full name is the Republic of Meron. Its capital is Yaound é, covering an area of 475,422 square kilometers. Its main common languages are French and English. It is mainly composed of fulbe, bamilek, equatorial Bantu and other nationalities. It enjoys the reputation of “little Africa”. In addition, it is also famous for its national football team and local music style. The establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cameroon began on March 26th, 1971. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, bilateral relations have been developing steadily and smoothly, with close cooperation and exchanges. Since 1975, China has sent 17 batches of medical teams to Cameroon. China’s Hubei Province, Shenyang City and Taiyuan city have established friendly provincial and municipal relations with the southern province of Cameroon, Yaound é city and Douala city respectively. The four principles of China Africa economic and technological cooperation put forward by Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang during his visit to Africa in 1982 laid the foundation for the development of comprehensive, multi-modal, mutually beneficial education, trade and economic and technological cooperation between China and Cameroon. This cooperation has a complementary role in promoting the economic development of both sides and is an important part of South cooperation [1]. In 2000, the ministries of foreign affairs of China and Cameroon established a political consultation mechanism, and the two sides signed an agreement on cultural cooperation, resulting in closer cultural exchanges and cooperation. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cameroon, and with the gradual improvement of China’s policy towards Africa, the assistance to Cameroon has also reached a new height, and the development of China and Cameroon has also risen to a new height. In 2018, China and Cameroon signed a cooperation agreement on jointly building the “the Belt and Road”, opening up broader prospects for bilateral cooperation. China and Cameroon will also further deepen traditional friendship and cooperation, share development strategies with foreign countries, and take the opportunity of jointly building the “the Belt and Road” and a closer China Africa community with a shared future as an opportunity to sincerely carry forward the past and forge ahead, and write a more brilliant chapter in China Cameroon re-

lations.

## 1.2. Context of China Cameroon Sports Exchange

After the independence and liberation of China and African countries, great attention was paid to the fundamental, overall and leading role of education in national development. Based on this background, the sports exchanges between the two sides experienced a slow development process from single exchange to diversified coordination, from local to overall [2]. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cameroon, sports exchanges between the two countries have been developing continuously. The athletes of China and Cameroon learn from each other and exchange experience through friendly exchanges, so as to promote the development of bilateral relations through sports exchanges. The opening of the chapter of sports and cultural exchanges between China and African countries began in July, 1957, when Sudan sent a football team to China for many matches [3]. Since 1972, China and Cameroon have had frequent exchanges and visits in table tennis, basketball, football and other group sports. From August 15 to September 5, 1974, the Cameroonian sports delegation visited and played five games in Beijing and other places, with the visiting team winning 2 and drawing 3. From June 20 to 24, 1976, the Chinese men's handball team visited Cameroon and played two games in Yaound é, with a negative score. In 1994, Cameroon football team played against Shenzhen football team, and Shenzhen won with a small score of 1-0 (**Table 1**).

On November 14, 2007, the Chinese ambassador to Cameroon, on behalf of the Chinese government, presented a batch of sports materials to the Ministry of sports of Cameroon to help the development of sports in Cameroon. The donated items included 48 basketball, 45 volleyball, 200 table tennis, 10 TV sets and 5 freezers. In 2019, Cameroon men's basketball team was invited to visit China to participate in the warm-up match, helping the men's basketball team quickly return to the pre match state and better prepare for the world cup. Finally, the Chinese men's basketball team defeated Cameroon 84-70. This warm-up match not only helped the men's basketball team to prepare for the war, but also made a certain contribution to the friendly exchanges of sports between China and Cameroon. In modern times, it is more famous for the "African lion" plan of Dalian Shide in 2001 [4]. As the overlord of China's football industry at that time, Dalian Shide was not satisfied with the current situation and focused on the selection of African players. It introduced 23 young players from Cameroon to form the lion team. It plans to let these young players join Chinese nationality and train them as reserve talents for clubs and even national teams. After a period of training, the strong physical quality of this group of African children began to appear. In the competition with the youth training team of the same age, this "African lions" team often won with a big score of 5-0, but it didn't last long. Due to the problems of the system at that time and the lack of self-discipline of small players, this plan failed.

**Table 1.** China Cameroon sports exchange.

Project	Time	Place	Team	Score
Football	1974.8.18	Beijing	Cameroon-China	2:2
	1974.8.21	Beijing	Cameroon-Beijing	3:2
	1974.8.25	Shanghai	Cameroon-Guangdong	3:3
	1974.9.1	Kunming	Cameroon-Yunnan	1:0
	1994.	Shenzhen	Shenzhen-Cameroon	1:0
Handball	1976.6.20	Cameroon	China-Cameroon	8:13
	1976.6.24	Cameroon	China-Cameroon	15:22
Table Tennis	---	Douala	Sichuan-Douala	(male) 5:1 (female) 3:0
	---	Yaounde	Sichuan-Cameroon	(male) 5:1 (female) 3:0

## 2. China Cameroon Cooperation Promotes the Development of Cameroon Football

### 2.1. Football Development in Cameroon

Cameroon is not the representative of football, but football is the representative of Cameroon. It's hard to say whether Cameroon will have today's attention in the world without football. Football was first introduced to Cameroon by the British, and then became one of Cameroon's favorite sports. After the independence of Cameroon, football gradually became the "national culture" of the country. Cameroon is one of the most successful national teams in Africa. They have reached the finals of the world cup seven times (1982, 1990, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2010, 2014) more than any African country. They are also the first African team to reach the top eight of the world cup. In addition, they have won the African Cup four times and won the Olympic gold medal in 2000. Before the founding of the Federal Republic of Cameroon, it established its own football system, established the football association in 1959, and created the National Football Association Cup. After the establishment of the Federal Republic, he joined FIFA in 1962 and the African Football Association the following year. In the 1980s, Cameroon team began to emerge in African and world football. It rose rapidly in the 1982 World Cup qualifier and successfully entered Spain. In the final stage, it drew 0-0 with Peru and Poland and 1-1 with Italy. After this game, Cameroon has leapt to become a strong team in African football, and its football is also called a trump game by the Cameroonian people.

In general, Cameroon has been a country with outstanding football in the African continent since the 1980s, known as the "lion of Africa". However, since the 21st century, Cameroon's football has begun to show a state of high opening and low going. It won the gold medal in the 2000 Olympic Games. After winning the two African Cup championships in 2000 and 2002 and the runner up of the 2003 Confederations Cup, its football performance began to decline, and it has been poor for more than a decade since then.

## 2.2. Construction of Cameroon Yaounde Multi-Functional Gymnasium

Sports assistance is an important part of China's foreign assistance and an integral part of China's foreign strategy. It has made positive contributions to promoting the development of foreign sports assistance and shaping the image of China as a big country. Assisting in the construction of sports venues and facilities is a livelihood project and a public praise project. Samaranch once said, "The best stadiums and gymnasiums built in China are not in China, but in Africa". In terms of assistance and financing cooperation, China is the largest source of financing for Cameroon and has participated in the construction of many major projects in Cameroon. Among them, several famous venues were built with China's assistance.

The multi-functional gymnasium located in the golden area of Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon, is the largest project assisted by China in Cameroon in recent years, and it is also the largest multi-functional and comprehensive gymnasium in Cameroon at present. The stadium is designed to have 5400 seats, with a total construction area of nearly 13,000 square meters and an area of nearly 40,000 square meters. It was started in January 2006 and completed and handed over in December 2008, with a total investment of nearly 160 million yuan. Its large-span spatial anisotropic structure, using the industry-leading construction technology at that time, has become a representative outstanding building in Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. During the construction process, it attracted a large number of local employees, promoted the local economic development, and the stadium solved the problem of infrastructure shortage to a great extent. Charles Donggao, head of Cameroonian radio and television, said: "the construction of Yaoundé stadium has increased China's influence among Cameroonian people. Other countries have come to Cameroon to talk about democracy and human rights, but China has made specific help. And the completion of Yaoundé stadium has played an unprecedented role in promoting the development of Cameroonian football" and successfully held the 8th China ambassador table tennis match and the African Cup and other major events.

## 2.3. Assist in the Construction of Bafosam and Limbe Gymnasiums

Cameroon bafusam stadium is located in the east of bafusam in the western province of Cameroon, about 16 km away from the city center. The project includes a 15,000 + 5000 seat standard stadium, surrounding ancillary facilities and a 500 car parking lot. The stadium is mainly used for football matches, giving due consideration to track and field competitions. In bafusam, as a new stadium, the stadium uses a strong sense of muddy soil and a strong sense of rhythm to express the power and rhythm contained in football, while absorbing localized elements and colors. The appearance of the whole stadium is refreshing, with a flat and powerful momentum. As a landmark building, it will drive the development of surrounding economy and improve the cultural life of local people. The construction of sports infrastructure has become an urgent need for

many African countries. The stadiums built by China have undoubtedly promoted the great development of sports in African countries. In short, sports assistance has played an important role in the development path of China's peaceful rise. It has improved the diplomatic situation of new China, safeguarded China's national interests, and shaped China's good national image.

### 3. Introducing Foreign Aid from Cameroon to Improve the Level of China Professional Football League

In the mid-1990s, Chinese football realized the transformation to professionalism, and opened the door to foreign football players. Since 1996, about 20 African professional players have participated in trial training in various football clubs in China [5]. Under the background of the Chinese Super League, which is now the top commercial football team, foreign aid has become a cliché. It can not only improve the league level and appreciation in a short time, but also make up for the team's technical and tactical weaknesses to a certain extent. There are many cases of introducing players from Cameroon (Table 2). The relevant information about the introduction of Cameroonian football players in China through online search is as follows: 1) Christian Bassogo, born in Douala, Cameroon, is a professional football player and forward of Cameroon. He now plays for Shanghai Shenhua Football Club. He joined Henan Jianye in February 2017 and Shanghai Shenhua in February 2021. 2) Frank Ohandeza, a professional striker, once played for Shenzhen Football Club in China Football League. On December 31, 2018, Shenzhen jiazhaoye announced that Frank ohandeza's contract with Shenzhen football team expired and bid farewell to Shenzhen football. On July 1st, 2019, Henan Jianye Club officially announced that it had completed the renewal of its contract with ohandeza. 3) Joseph Marie minara, born in Yaound é, is a Cameroonian football player and midfielder. He now plays for Qingdao Yellow Sea football club. 4) Stephen Mbia, born in Yaound é, Cameroon, is a Cameroonian male football player and now plays for Wuhan football club. 5) Johnmali, a dual national of Nigeria and Cameroon, was born in 1993. He once played for the Thai league team and the Serbian league team. In 2018, he joined the Chinese Football Club Meizhou Hakka football club, making a total of 43 appearances and scoring 36 goals. In November 2018, he won the top scorer of the Chinese Football League, and in 2019, he won the first place in the list of half shot scorers of the Chinese Football League. He transferred to Shenzhen jiazhaoye football club in 2019.

**Table 2.** Statistics of super Cameroon players.

	competition season	games played	goal	Assists	Exit time
Bassogo	2017-2020	87	28	19	7150 min
Ohandeza	2018-2019	44	28	3	
Minara	2020-	13	0	0	1048 min
Mbia	2019-2021	42	0	2	3472 min
JohnMary	2019—	12	9	0	-

In addition to the Chinese Super League men's football team, Changchun women's football team also introduced super strong foreign aid from Cameroon. Cameroon striker Manny, who once dominated the world cup, was the first to join Changchun women's football team, and the two sides signed a one-year contract. Manny is the player with the largest number of appearances and goals of Cameroon national team. The introduction of foreign aid is one of the main ways to improve the level of the team and improve the appreciation of the league. It is important to improve the attention of professional league and competitive level, but now under the guidance of market economy, eyeball economy is also important. However, we should not blindly pursue foreign aid and ignore the training of local players. We should reasonably coordinate the relationship between foreign aid and local players. The two should complement each other rather than abandon the basics. The following is the introduction of Cameroonian players by CSL. From the data point of view, compared with other foreign aid of the same value, the results are also commendable.

#### **4. China Cameroon Football People to People and Cultural Exchanges Promote People to People Communication: Based on Four Cases**

##### **4.1. Sports Star "Uncle Mira"**

Sports diplomacy is a kind of diplomatic activity that the national sports department or sports circle aims to promote the foreign sports exchanges between countries. Among them, sports elites play an extremely important media role in sports exchanges between China and Cameroon, and play an unparalleled role in mutual understanding and mutual promotion between China and Cameroon. The more famous is the famous star of Cameroon, Roger Mira, who is also the familiar uncle Mira. He once appeared in the world cup on behalf of the Cameroon national team three times. At the age of 38, he scored four goals in the 1990 World Cup, helping Cameroon to reach the top eight of the world cup. Sports stars represent the culture of their respective nations. Under the influence of mass media and visual culture, they affect the cultural exchange and infiltration with their distinctive image and great appeal [6]. For example, when Yao Ming entered the NBA, he also played a role in spreading Chinese culture. The cultural exchange linked by sports stars is a common pursuit of mankind that transcends racial and ethnic boundaries. It breaks the gap between language and skin color, not only promotes the development of sports, but also helps all ethnic groups and countries deepen and enhance understanding, and promotes the common development of sports between the two countries [7]. As the elite of the sports industry, sports stars are the idols people worship. Their will and spirit are worth pursuing and learning. As the "living card" of Cameroon, rogermilla's message and attitude of Cameroon have built an important communication bridge for mutual understanding between China and Cameroon.



## 4.2. African Coaches in China

In addition to the well-known sports stars, there are also some little-known people who are also making silent efforts for the friendship between China and Cameroon. Under the framework of the “the Belt and Road” initiative and the Forum on China Africa cooperation, China Cameroon friendship has been constantly given new connotations, and vivid pictures of China Cameroon practical cooperation and friendly exchanges have been recorded in various ways, such as lenses, words, pictures, etc., which are conducive to further promoting cultural exchanges and people to people exchanges between China and Cameroon, For example, Francis is gradually known by people through his “African coach in China” winning the highest prize in the “China and Africa” short video competition. In 2013, Francis came to China to study abroad. During school, he resumed playing football and actively participated in competitions inside and outside the school. After graduation, Francis chose to stay in Jinhua as a full-time football coach out of his love for football. In addition to adapting to life in China, he also had a whim to combine the fabric of his hometown with Chinese clothes, design exotic clothes rich in African style and Chinese elements, and use the Internet to trade between China and Cameroon. In the short video of more than four minutes, there are rich character Stories: the tireless admonition of a strict Cameroonian football coach, the common emotional comfort of the Chinese and Kazakh people, the common persistence of teachers and students in China and Cameroon before setbacks, etc.

## 4.3. Retired Players Go into Campus Football to Promote Football Cultural Exchanges between China and Cameroon

Douere, a foreign teacher of professional football players from Cameroon, should be invited to Limin Road Primary School and Zheshan primary school to teach the children the most practical and basic football technology of Cameroon football in the training demonstration class, and take the children to enjoy the charm and fun of football, which is of great significance to promote the development of campus football. In the “national youth campus football development report (2015-2017)” [8], it is proposed to hire foreign teachers and local coaches with high teaching level to enter the campus, which will further enhance the selection of young people and the consolidation of football technology. It can effectively promote the improvement of students’ interest in football and technology, and can drive the overall football teaching level and concept of school teachers to update and broaden their horizons. Introducing foreign teachers into the campus is also one of the ways of mutual exchange of national cultures. Through the introduction of foreign teachers and close communication, Cameroon’s image in the eyes of students can be enriched. Every move of foreign teachers represents the release of Cameroon’s cultural information, which is conducive to students’ more comprehensive understanding of Cameroon’s football culture and to promoting the mutual exchange of Chinese and Cameroonian cultures.



#### 4.4. Cameroon Football Youth “Drift North” and Want to Go Home to Spread Chinese Culture

Vincent, a young football player from Cameroon, first visited China in 2010, studied at Beijing Sport University, and once represented Beijing University of technology in China. At the age of 13, he was selected into the Cameroon national youth team, but at that time, he had to give up football because of his studies. But because of an opportunity, he entered Beijing University of physical education, so he had the opportunity to play again and won many honors in the Chinese Football League. With his love for football and having lived in China for a certain period of time, he has certain views on Chinese football. He believes that the development of football cannot be separated from the cultivation of teenagers. Vincent said that at present, the Chinese Super League has focused most of its funds and energy on the league and neglected the cultivation of youth training. The problems it will face in the future won't be underestimated, that is, it will cause the disconnection between the old and new players. He believes that the League should increase the cultivation of youth training, and improve the selection, training and competition system, and pointed out that the cultivation of humanistic quality of youth players is also very important. For future training, he believes that returning to Africa will combine theory with practice, so as to drive the development of football in his hometown, so that those children who love football can also receive orthodox education and contribute their modest efforts to realize their football dream. As the link of people to people and cultural exchanges between China and Cameroon, it not only consolidated the friendly relations between China and Cameroon, built a platform for the exchange of football culture between China and Cameroon, but also promoted the dissemination of Chinese football culture in Cameroon and promoted the exchange of people's feelings

#### 5. Conclusion

China and Cameroon have a decisive influence on the world in politics, economy and culture. The stable and healthy development of relations between China and Cameroon has made great contributions to the development of the world. In the middle of the 20th century, with the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Cameroon, the prelude of sports exchanges between China and Cameroon began. After decades, the sports exchanges between China and Cameroon have been continuous, and the sports exchanges from people to officials, from individuals to organizations have shown a prosperous development, which is of great significance to the development of China Cameroon relations. However, at present, the exchanges between China and Cameroon are limited to the exchange of visits by high-level or official delegations, and there is a lack of in-depth exchanges on folk sports [9], which shows that the sports and cultural exchanges between China and Cameroon are not deep enough, For example, in the case of Dalian Shide's introduction of “African lion” mentioned above, cul-

tural differences are an important factor leading to its failure. Therefore, we should give full play to the important media and communication role of folk sports in the sports exchanges between China and Cameroon. Based on this, this paper puts forward the following three suggestions for the development and cooperation of football between China and Cameroon: 1) Further develop the exchange of folk football events: China and Cameroon have formed a normalized mode of folk football projects, regularly hold football events, and carry out folk football cultural exchanges, so as to normalize folk football sports events day by day, and build a platform for cultural exchanges between China and Cameroon. Actively carry out football cultural exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. The two countries regularly hold a series of football cultural exchanges to promote exchanges and cooperation in the field of football between China and Cameroon, deepen mutual understanding between the two countries, enhance the friendship between the two peoples, and enhance the vitality of football cultural exchanges between the two countries. 2) Improve the operation and influence of venues: the venues and events built by China in Cameroon are a window for Cameroon to understand and understand China. At the same time of China's assistance to Cameroon in building stadiums, we should combine the characteristics of Cameroon, take the sports venues in several developed cities as models, and make full use of the functions of the venues. In addition to hosting sports events, we can also train more management staff of the stadiums and gymnasiums, improve the utilization rate of the venues, and hold more cultural activities that are not related to sports football, such as music festivals, concerts, etc; Various exhibitions with national characteristics can be held to enhance the influence of made in China and promote friendly exchanges between China and Cameroon. 3) Make full use of modern media and pay attention to the dissemination of mass sports culture: today, when the era of we media is so developed, the information of sports events can spread all over the world in an instant. Therefore, how to make better use of the media to promote sports exchanges between the two countries will become an important issue in the future, which can expand the influence of sports stars, such as Uncle Mira, by creating a positive image, promoting Cameroonian football, spreading positive energy, and promoting the development and cooperation of football matches between China and Cameroon. The folk sports exchanges between China and Cameroon should also take full account of the important role that traditional sports play in inheriting the civilizations of China and Cameroon, embodying cultural mutual learning and integration, and protecting the diversity of world sports culture.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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