

UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I

THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I

*CENTRE DE RECHERCHE DE FORMATION
DOCTORALE EN SCIENCES HUMAINES
« SOCIALES ET EDUCATIVES »*

POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR
SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES

*UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN SCIENCES
HUMAINES ET SOCIALES*

DOCTORAL RESEARCH UNIT FOR
SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTEMENT D'HISTOIRE



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGION

17TH_c - 1952

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of a Master
of Arts (M.A) degree in History

Specialization: History of International Relations

By

SWARTZ ETENGENENG Etchutabot

B.A.History

University of Yaounde I

Supervised by

Prof. EDOUARD BETOBO Bokagne

Associate Professor



MAY 2023

To

My beloved mother, late Tabi BELTHA ARREY ENOW who left us too early. May her soul
rest in perfect peace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the spirit of the Almighty God and the positive contributions of several people in the realization of this work. In this connection, I am profoundly indebted first to my supervisor Pr. Edouard Betobo Bokagne for his relentless efforts in making this work a success. His suggestions, contributions and constructive criticism were very resourceful. Moreover, I would like to thank some lecturers of the History Department notably Professors like Philippe Blaise Essomba, Moussa II, Willibroad Dze-Ngwa, Virginie Wanyaka, Gabriel Dong Mognol, Idrissou Allioum, Alexis Tague, Faustin Kenne, Stephen Efeutnkeng Fomin, associate professors: David Nchinda Keming, Christian Tsala Tsala, Robert Kwang Kwang and Drs: Allassa Fouapon, Nenkam Chamberlin, Evelyne Apisia, Ndo Abe, Ndo'o Rose, Anderson Enowkenwa for their mentorship and inspiration during my academic courses. It was indeed a great privileged to study under their tutelage.

Special appreciation goes to my parents, Tabi Etchutabot Elvis and Etchutabot Pauline Orang for their moral, deep interest and tireless support they have been giving me from birth to this age in all my endeavors. My sincere gratitude goes to Mr and Mrs Esakenong James Enow, Mr and Mrs Ayuk Felix Bechem for their parental, spiritual and financial care and support. I also cease this opportunity to heartily thank my brothers, Etchutabot Batte Voltaire Mitterrand, Etchutabot Eyongnyor Bismarck, Etchutabot Ndiepnku Stucki Stein Junior, Etchutabot Okienso Jefferson, Etchutabot Eja-Ayuk and sisters, Etchutabot Mankongho Agbornyor Quinnacoria and Etchutabot Manyi Enow Nicolyste. Not forgetting the Tabi Ache and Esakenong family. To them, I owe a lot of gratitude and deep rooted love.

Finally, my immense appreciation goes to some of my classmates and friends notably, Ngemita Valere, Wilson Chick Fanso, Rene Eyong Tyga, Betekatong Blek Ayuk, Braint Ebai Ako, Tabe Walters, Bikai and a host of others whose names have not been mentioned here for their advice and inputs in one way or the other to see into it that this work comes to a successful end. To my informants, I say thanks for their assistance they all gave me during my research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICACE.....	i
ACKNOWLEDEMENTS.....	i
SUMMARY.....	Erreur ! Signet non défini.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS	vii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
RESUME	x
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
I- Background of the study	2
II- Motivation of the choice of topic.....	5
III- Conceptual Framework.....	6
IV- Research objectives	8
V- Interest of study	9
VI- Scope and time delimitation	10
a. Time frame	10
b. Spatial delimitation.....	11
VII- Literature Review	12
VIII-Statement of the Problem	18
IX- Methodology	19
a) Sources	20
i. Primary sources.....	20
ii. Secondary sources	20
X- Difficulties encountered	21
CHAPTER ONE: GENERALITIES ON THE BANYANG TRIBE.....	26
I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	27
A. Myths of origin and migration.....	28
1. Myths and tales	29
2. Migration	32
B. Settlement and Organization.....	33
1. Settlement	34

2. Organisation.....	38
II. GENERAL ORGANISATION	40
A. Socio- political organisation.....	40
1. The society	40
2. Administrative rule of the Banyang tribe	48
B. Economic and foreign affairs.....	51
1. The economy.....	52
2. The external gaze.....	54
Conclusion	56
CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLY RELIGION OF THE BANYANG	57
I. BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHIES	57
A. Banyang Weltanschauung	58
1. The immaterial and invisible	58
2. The material and visible	64
B. Relation to religiosity.....	66
1. The Banyang man and nature	67
2. Laws and Taboos.....	67
II. BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES	69
A. The common ground.....	70
1. Tribal cult practices.....	71
a. <i>Ngbe</i>	71
b. <i>Obasinjom</i>	74
c. <i>Nkim</i>	76
d. Perception of <i>Nkim</i> ritual in the Banyang tribe.	77
e. <i>Ndem</i> Traditional Society	79
f. <i>Mfam</i>	80
2. Clanic and family cult practices.....	82
a. <i>Mma-awu</i>	82
b. <i>Angbu</i>	83
c. <i>Ndoh</i>	85
d. <i>Barem</i>	86
B. Spirits: Ancestral and Non ancestral spirits.	88

1. Ancestral Spirits	88
2. Non Ancestral Spirits – <i>Nya-Nyen/Obanje</i>	88
Conclusion	89
CHAPTER THREE: THE PRACTICAL WORLDVIEW OF BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGION	90
I. THE MANIFESTATION OF BANYANG TRADITIONAL BELIEFS	90
A. Practical religious philosophies.....	90
1. Relation with the Supernatural world	90
2. Relation with the world of the living.....	93
B. Connection with the Environment	94
1. Medicines.....	94
2. Shrines	96
II. THE BANYANG PRACTICE OF HIS CULT	101
A. Rites and ritual practices from a general perspectives	102
1. Tribal rites and ritual practices	103
2. Clanic and family rites and ritual practices.....	111
B. Elements and Actors of Banyang traditional religious practices	121
1. Elements	121
a. Prayers and offerings.....	121
b. Sacrifice and High places.....	123
2. Actors	126
a. Shrine Priests	126
b. Diviners and healers	126
Conclusion	128
CHAPTER FOUR: CHALLENGES FACED BY BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.....	129
I. BANAYANGRELIGIOUS BELIEVES FACED WITH OTHER WORLDVIEWS AND CULTURES.	129
A. The advent of Christianity and it impact on the Banyang traditional believes.....	129
1. The advent of Christianity in Banyang	130
2. The impact of Christianity on the Banyang traditional religion	131
B. External Culture Effect	133
1. Theoretical analysis	134

2. Effects of external contacts	135
II. THE ROLE OF ACTORS IN THE DISMANTLING OF THE BANYANG TRADITIONAL BELIEVE, THE OUTCOME OF INTER RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTER IN BANYANG AND IT SHORTCOMINGS	138
A. Role of actors in the dismantling of Banyang traditional believes	138
1. Elders, Women and the Youths	138
2. The middle- age group	141
B. The outcome of inter religious and cultural encounter in Banyang tribe and it shortcomings	143
1. Inculturation in the Banyang tribe	144
2. Shortcomings of Inculturation in the Banyang tribe	148
Conclusion.....	149
GENERAL CONCLUSION	150
SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES	154
APPENDICES.....	161
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ii

GLOSSERY

Terms and expressions in Banyang dialet (*Kenyang*)

- Akpa*..... a traditional rite for the removal of sadcloth used for mourning by the deceased's family member
- Amonewu*.....a rite performed seven days after the burial of a deceased Banyang indigene
- Asoo-Ngbe*.....trational rites performed on deceased *Ngbe* members
- Barem/ Bortah*.....ancestors
- Barem-verjuwe*.....a ritual of feeding the ancestors
- Eburukpabvi*..... the sky goddess
- Efim*.....diety of insanity
- Efongo/ ngu*.....pirit/ ghost
- Eja*.....goddess of war
- Ekpa-atu*.....a nocturnal/ mysterious dance perform at night by Mma-awu cult
- Epém*.....witchcraft
- Esop- Ndem*.....secret language of Ndem cult
- Etak*a ritual to drive away a deceased spirit
- Kenyang*.....Banyang dialet
- Mambep/ ntorebana* leave.....special medicinal leaves used during rituals
- Mandem*.....Supreme Being (God Almighty)
- Mfam*a secret juju in the form of concoctions
- Ndem*.....god of fertility
- Nya-Nyen/Obanje*.....a word use for children who are claimed to be reincarnated.
- Sekok*.....Camwood

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A. List of abbreviations

A.T.R.	:	African Traditional Religion
B.T.R	:	Banyang Traditional Religion
C. D. C.	:	Cameroon Development Coporation
DI.P.E.S. II	:	<i>Dilôme des Professeurs d'Enseignement Secondaire Deuxième Grade</i>
E. N. S	:	Ecole Normale Superieure
Ed.	:	Editor
FALSS	:	Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences
INC	:	<i>Institute National de la Cartographie</i>
NAB	:	National Archives Buea
P. C.	:	Presbyterian Church

B. List of acronyms

ORSTOM	:	<i>Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer</i>
---------------	---	---

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MAPS

1: Location of Banyang Tribe in the map of Cameroon.	11
2: Location of Banyang Tribe in the SouthWest Region.....	28
3: Location of Banyang Tribe in Manyu Division.....	31

TABLES

1: Clans and villages in the Banyang Tribe	39
--	----

PLATES

1: The display of <i>Ngbe</i> masquerade (<i>Emanyankpe</i>)	73
2: An <i>Obasinjom</i> masquerade (<i>ngokonjom</i>).	75
3: Members of <i>Nkim</i> in action.....	77
4: A statue of late Bessem <i>Ngboko-ndem</i> of Eyang-nchang village.....	80
5: Procession of <i>Mma-awu</i> members	83
6: A picture of <i>Angbu</i> masquerade.....	84
7: A family communing with the ancestors behind their house.....	86
8: A picture of <i>Barem</i>	87
9: The masquerade found in a leopardshrine	97
10: A picture of <i>Mfam</i> shrine	99
11: A picture of <i>Barrem</i> shrine in Eshobi village	100
12: A king maker pouring the bottom wine to the ancestors	102
13: The initiate (the member without a shirt) feeding the ancestors with <i>mambep</i> leaves.....	105
14: The first outing of a member of <i>Ndem</i> after initiation.....	109
15: Demonstrating the rubbing of squeezed <i>ntorebana</i> leaves, mud, whisky and spittle on a woman's chest.	115
16: Portraying how the head whisky is being poured by the door.....	116
17: The process of mixing blood, whisky and mud (communion with the ancestors)	118
18: Ancestral veneration at the <i>Mfam</i> shrine.	125
19: A New Testament (εκάτι ΝΚΥ ΝΚΩ) <i>Kenyang</i> Bible	145
20: Temple Choir group, P. C. Bonaberi – Douala in a typical <i>Moninkim</i> outfit.....	146

ABSTRACT

This work entitled "Banyang Traditional Religion 17thc – 1952" seeks to investigate the traditional beliefs of the Banyang people from pre- colonial to colonial times. It establishes that Banyang cosmology was monotheistic in nature, that is, the worship of one Supreme Being designated as *God-Mandem*, though there equally existed other entities or intermediaries between God and the people such as *Barem, Eja, Ndem, Eburukpabvi* just to name a few which the people venerated often when need arise. The B.T.R. was discerned in terms of beliefs, certain ceremonies, rituals, rites and religious officiants. Equally, how the people with regards to their worldview relates with the immaterial and invisible, material and visible, nature, in both the theoretical and practical standpoints were examined. The study further reveals that the practice of Banyang religious cults was carried out by the people through secret societies characterize by rites and rituals which went a long way to mediate their relationship with the ancestors - *Bortah*. All these traditional religious practices and the beliefs the people attached to it according to our findings were much more active during the pre-colonial era. After this period, the traditional beliefs of the people began facing counter challenges as a result of it coming in contact with other belief systems and cultures, which ended up destroying, adultrating and transforming certain Banyang traditional religious practices. But unfortunately, Christianity on it part failed to completely eclipse the B.T.R. Notwithstanding this fact, this religious blend in the tribe gave rise to what this study team as inculturation, adopted by Christian Missions. Though it gained steem in the tribe by incorporating both the traditional and modern beliefs, more efforts need to be done in order to blend every aspect of the beliefs and culture of the people for it to receive the expected results. Though it may take time for any change to occur, taking into consideration the fact that conversion of a whole people is tantamount to upsetting their culture.

RESUME

Ce mémoire intitulé "Religion traditionnelle Banyang 17ème siècle - 1952" cherche à étudier les croyances traditionnelles du peuple Banyang depuis l'époque précoloniale jusqu'à l'époque coloniale. Il établit que la cosmologie Banyang était de nature monothéiste, c'est-à-dire l'adoration d'un Être suprême désigné comme Dieu - mandem, bien qu'il existât également d'autres entités ou intermédiaires entre Dieu et le peuple tels que Barem, Eja, Ndem, Eburukpabvi, pour n'en citer que quelques-uns, que le peuple vénérât souvent lorsque le besoin s'en faisait sentir. Le B. T. R. a été discerné en termes de croyances, de certaines cérémonies, de rituels, de rites et d'officiants religieux. L'étude a également porté sur la façon dont les gens, dans leur vision du monde, se rapportent à la nature immatérielle et invisible, matérielle et visible, à la fois d'un point de vue théorique et d'un point de vue pratique. L'étude révèle en outre que les cultes religieux Banyang étaient pratiqués par des sociétés secrètes caractérisées par des rites et des rituels qui contribuaient largement à médiatiser leur relation avec les ancêtres - Bortah. Toutes ces pratiques religieuses traditionnelles et les croyances que les gens y attachaient, d'après nos résultats, étaient beaucoup plus actives à l'époque précoloniale. Après cette période, les croyances traditionnelles de la population ont commencé à être confrontées à d'autres défis en raison de leur contact avec d'autres systèmes de croyance et d'autres cultures, qui ont fini par détruire, dénaturer et transformer les pratiques religieuses des Banyang. Malheureusement, le christianisme n'a pas réussi à éclipser complètement le B.T.R. Malgré cela, ce mélange religieux dans la tribu a donné lieu à ce que cette étude appelle l'inculturation, adoptée par les missions chrétiennes. Bien que l'inculturation ait gagné du terrain dans la tribu en incorporant à la fois les croyances traditionnelles et modernes, des efforts supplémentaires doivent être faits afin de mélanger tous les aspects des croyances et de la culture du peuple pour obtenir les résultats escomptés. Le changement peut prendre du temps, mais il faut tenir compte du fait que la conversion d'un peuple entier équivaut à bouleverser sa culture.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I- Background of the study

There seem to be no universally accepted definition on what constitutes the concept of religion. A fairly accepted aspect of most definitions is that religious belief implies a belief in the supernatural, expressed in the form of both animate and abstract forces. Religion can be look upon from different backgrounds, multiple dimensions. This explains why its virtually difficult to detect which an individual adheres to simply because some will take religion and focus on Christianity, Islam, Hinduism as well as Judaism, while others look into it on the bases of magic, sorcery, witchcraft etc.

Religion is an aspect of the superstructure of a society. This is simply because religion embraces all aspects of life. Equally, among all the human institutions of knowledge, religion is the only one which concentrates on the future of humanity, its salvation. Though humanity seems not to notice as they focus more on political, economic and social values, which according to them are the key to a more promising life or future. According to J. Oliver¹, religion is a set of beliefs, attitudes and practice which indicates and express the feeling or conviction of a group of persons that are bound fast to something which is supreme to them. Emile Durkheim² on his part conceived religion as a solidarity system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things, that are separated, prohibited and unites under the same moral community known as the church, by bringing together all its adherents or followers and believers.

Generally, religion is concern with beliefs and practices associated with the Supernatural, the absolute and the ultimate being that is believed to be in charged of the universe. Every society has and believes in a religious system. A religious system provides man with an explanation about his origin, a rule of conduct governing his relationship with the dead, with intangible and in themselves explicable forces, with the eternal Being, as well as an answer to the questions of man's existence on earth and its ultimate purpose.³

No religion is generally accepted and practiced by all. People in different parts of the world have their own religions, which has evolved with their culture.⁴ In Asia for instance, there exist Confucianism, Shintoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Christianity with its roots in

¹ J. O. Buswell Jr., *A systematic theology of the Christian religion*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan publishing house, 1971, pp.1-13.

² E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Form of Religious life*, New York, Free Press, 1965, p.40.

³ T. Mulu, *Thinking Through the Issues: An Introduction to the Problem Centred Approach in Systematic Philosophy*, (Unpublished).

⁴ O. E. Ngemasong, "The Impact of Christianity on the M'mock Traditional Religion 1954- 1985", Master's dissertation in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 2003, p.1.

Palestine moved to engulf Europe and other part of the world. Islam dominates everywhere in the Middle East and the Arab world while in Africa, there are traditional religions and other beliefs of sacrifice and libation.⁵

African cosmology is basically religious and as such, African traditional religions is the title given to the religion which Africans had and practiced long before the introduction of other new religions in the continent.⁶ Equally, the conception of the world which recognizes a multitude of spiritual beings, attributes mystical powers to objects and embraces all the domain of African life is what is referred today as African traditional religions.

This term commonly abbreviated as A.T.R. was first mentioned in the year 1945 by E. G. Parrinder⁷. Later on, it was adopted subsequently by other scholars, those of African and non-African origin. One of these scholars who has developed this term is E. I. Bolaji.⁸ He defines African traditional religions consisting of five elements characterise by the belief in God, divinities, spirits, ancestors and the practice of magic and medicines with each having it own consequent and attendant cult. It is equally referred to as the aggregate of indigenous belief systems and practices which existed in Africa prior to the coming of the new religions such as Christianity and Islam, and to which millions of Africans still adhere covertly.⁹ This religion is express in the plural form base on the numerous types of religious practices among different tribes. As Mbiti¹⁰ puts it, "we speak of African traditional religions because there are about one thousand African people (tribes) and each has its own religious system".

Within African States, there are groups with specific traditional beliefs. It is in this context that we find the Banyang people who practice their own form of African traditional religion. The Banyangs are Africans because they form part of the African community and as such, they possess a religion which can be term traditional. This religion is the centre where social and cultural life revolves. The first and most fundamental cultural aspect of the pre-colonial Banyang society was its religion which plays a central and important role in the life of a Banyang man. This is because almost every single activity of his daily life is shaped by what perception and interpretation he has about phenomena and the environment. B.T.R.

⁵ Ngemasong, "The Impact of...", p.1.

⁶ S. G. Kibicho, "Earlier Studies of African Religion", in J.N.K Mugambi (ed). *A Comparative Study of Religions*, Nairobi, UNO Press, 1990.

⁷ E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religions*, London, Sheldon, 1962, p.36.

⁸ E. I. Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion: A definition*, London: SCM Press, Ltd, 1973, p. 104.

⁹ D. K. Nkonge and B. N. Gechiko, "The Role of African Traditional Religion in the Formation of Policies used in Civil and Political Leadership in Africa", *Research in Humanitarian and Social Sciences*, Vol.4, No.8, pp. 30-36.

¹⁰J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p.1.

gave the bases for moral and ethical values. That is, most values of conduct in secular and spiritual life were derived from it with the ultimate aim to keep the life of the tribe intact.

The Banyang traditional religion was monotheistic, which implies that the people believed and worshipped one God designated as *Mandem*. They equally have the existence of several entities or functionalities of gods such as *Eja*- goddess of war, *Ndem*-the goddess of fertility, *Eburukpabvi*- the sky goddess, *Barem*-ancestors which they often address when need arise. Banyang religious belief made a clear distinction between these intermediaries and the Supreme God. Mbiti¹¹ discussed this point of view in the practice of traditional religions in Africa when he says "every African people recognized one God, according to the cosmology of some, there are beside him, other divinities and spiritual beings, some of which are closely associated with him. These divinities are mainly the personification of God's activities, natural phenomenon and objects are defied national heroes and some are said to have been created as such by God. But where other spiritual beings are recognized, people do not lose sight of the Supreme God who is regarded in a class of his own".

The Banyangs are a group of semi Bantu who migrated from the Equatorial forest of West Africa about six hundred years ago and settled in the South Eastern Region of Nigeria before moving to the lower forest of the Cross River. Due to internal disputes between them, they later moved eastward with some settling in the low-lying part of the Cross River known today as lower Banyang, while others moved further eastward to settle at the upper part of the Cross River known as Upper Banyang.¹² These groups of people have lived together for long and are traditionally and historically linked. These are the people our research is focused on.

The essence of this piece of work duels on the perspective of African traditional religions. Hence, this study on B.T.R. is no doubt a good subject within African traditional religions in the history of the Banyang tribe. Suppose this work stands within religion, culture and tradition, civilization and religious advancement, we then ask, can all these contributes to development? or what aspect all of these strengthen, transformed and structured the Banyang tribe to feel a taste of religious history in the modernization and progress of the state and nation. We therefore will begin by explaining the inspiration behind this topic.

¹¹J. S. Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, London, SCP, 1970, p.29.

¹² N. J. Egbe, "A Socio – Artistic Study of Banyang Legend", Master's dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, p. 13.

II- Motivation of the choice of topic

Several reasons prompted the decision to work on this topic: "Banyang Traditional religion 17thc - 1952". The first is personal. It is my earnest desire to write on the history of the Banyang tribe. I'm a native of the tribe, convinced that it will be of essence and easy for me to be able to collect and interpret facts in relation to my area of study. Having been formed and shaped to a greater extent by the religious and cultural environment of the place, makes it some how possible for me to undertake this study as an insider. Equally as a Master's student indebted to produce an academic dissertation at the end of the training, it is my responsibility to contribute to the network of social sciences. This quota of contribution to the restitution or reconstruction of previously established knowledge on the Banyang cosmology is the motivation behind this subject.

Secondly, academic reasons accounts for the motivation of this topic. Many studies relating to the history of the Banyang tribe by scholars, authors, historians, majority centres on elements such as Christian Missionary activities, chieftaincy disputes, trading activities just to name a few, but little has been documented so far with regards to the traditional beliefs of the people. This implies that only oral sources remain a veritable source of the traditional worldview of the Banyangs. Though few writers like N. J. Egbe, P. A. Ayuk and many others try to give their insights on this subject in their books and articles, it still lays on a limited scope. Moreover, this over time has become less relevant in the service of a changing society. This thus makes the enhancement of science slidely impossible if there is no new contribution from researchers. We are therefore inspired by the initiatives of the aforementioned scholars and want to give more impetus on the Banyang traditional belief extensively.

Last but not the least, the failure to acknowledge with seriousness the historical and religious practices of the African people as a whole and the Banyang (decribed as pagan, idol worship, feitish etc) by some European scholars¹³ and Christian Missionaries militated the choice of this topic. According to Fynn¹⁴, some of them did not even think that Africa had any important history or religion to reckon with before their arrival. Equally, our findings proved that they were not objective and patient enough to document and educates us on our own history. Contrary to these opinions, our investigations in the field reveals that these practices such as traditional rites and rituals are the bedrock of harmony, preservation of their originality and peace that keeps the people, God and nature together. Thus, we were

¹³ E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1920, pp.1-424

¹⁴ J. K. Fynn, *A Junior History of Ghana*, Accra, Sedco publishing, 1975, p. 1.

encouraged to investigate deeply and technically on this subject in order to eradicate and challenge these western prejudices about our society.

III- Conceptual Framework

This section of our work focuses on bringing out keywords, etymologies and their meaning as seen in our research topic. Among the keywords, we have: Banyang, Traditional, Religion,.

To begin, "Banyang" is a word that has a prefix "ba". Its original appellation is Banyang, a divided word which etymologically comes from two words designed as "ba" and "nyang". "BA" in Bantu language signifies "come, originated from", or "belong to".¹⁵ Banyang means "Son of Nyang", who hails from the Bantu clan.¹⁶ How this appellation came about, my informant¹⁷ had this to say; "during the pre- colonial era, most clans and villages were found by an individual who identified himself with the clan of his forbearer -*Boh* (the people of), an expansion within the clan, tribe or village. Due to break ups (disputes over land, living space, security, etc) amongst individuals during this period, each called themselves by the name of their leader while trying to maintain their relationship to the main clan by adding the prefix "Ba". It is therefore under this banner that *Nyang*, son of Chief Tanyi Mbi, founder of Ntenako separated from his father alongside his followers (the people speaking *Kenyang*) to a different vicinity and called themselves Banyang, meaning son or children of Nyang".

The second term to be defined "traditional" stems from the word "tradition". It is the handing down of knowledge, information, practices, beliefs and customs by words of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instructions.¹⁸ According to Bolaji¹⁹, the word traditional means native, indigenous, that which is of foundational, handed down from generation to generation. That is, what is inherited from previous generation is then renewed or revised by those who live and practice it, making a connection between the past and present, as well as eternity. Equally, the word traditional signifies being part of a

¹⁵ "Bantu" is a linguistic term that denotes plural forms of people while "Muntu" is the singular connotation. Anthropologist brought forth the term "semi-bantu" which refers to those related to Bantu. In the studies of ethnic groups, it is however important to use the word Bantu, referred to those of the forested areas. In Cameroon precisely, Bantu is one of the major ethnic group just like the Pygmies and Sao. This group of people is spread all over Africa and Cameroon in particular. The Banyang tribe in Cameroon that falls within the framework of the forest Zone (Bantu) possesses similar characteristics to those Bantu of the Congo, Niger and Coastal areas in Cameroon. These characteristics fall within linguistic traits, cultural belief, socialization and traditional political systems..

¹⁶ G. Courade, *Dictionnaire des Village de la Manyu*, Yaoundé, ORSTOM, 1973, p.46.

¹⁷ Interview with Pascal James Tanyi, 73 Years, Village Notable, Yaoundé, August 20th 2021.

¹⁸ N. Webster, *Webster's Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary*, Encyclopedic edition, Chicago, J. G. Ferguson Publishing Company, 1987, p. 781.

¹⁹ Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion...*, p.10.

believe system, custom or way of life of a particular group of people inherited from forefathers dating back from generation to generation.²⁰ Thus, the traditional religion of the Banyang people portrayed in various aspects constitute part of their systems of believes, customs that shapes or designs their livelihood.

Lastly, we have the term "religion". Over the world, religion is the first element that intercepts society, countries and cultures, and therefore religion within international relations is an important element of diplomacy. Religion etymologically comes from a Greek and Latin word *religare* and *religere* respectively.²¹ This means "connected" or "linked to".²² I. Bolaji²³, defines religion from it etymology *religio* in Latin as a European word that has come to embrace a reference to the transcendental reality of faith, the inner reality of faith, rituals and ceremonies, which are basically a means of communion and communication with deity. Thus it carries the unmistakable reference to faith and the way of worship which may aptly be described as divine service". To add, the belief in the existence of a God, gods or deity and their activities that are connected with the worship of them can be term the word religion.

From the above definitions, we have observed here that religion deals with man's relationship with the sacred. Since it deals with certain rites, rituals and ceremonies, an indication that religion grows and developed with culture, in as much as it is not bound to any existing culture. It is therefore an independent reality without any disregard for culture that it reflects a complex cluster of ideas, linking the cosmos, man and his total existence to the sacred or divine.

It is of importance to state here that, the concept of religion at the centre of our work should not be toiled or misunderstood upon because religion here is not mere denomination or church but an assembly of beliefs and practice of associations with certain implications. They include a relational belief as a doctrine, cult or services rendered to a divinity or divinities and a personal moral conform to faith.²⁴ We therefore draw a conclusion that

²⁰ A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, 9th Edition, London, Oxford University Press, 2015, p.1662.

²¹ M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1963, p.47.

²² Connected to or linked to the word religion supposes a double link (horizontal and vertical). The first link or connection unites Man among themselves at the level of a community known as the church while the second link unites the church which constitutes an absolute or Supreme Being who can be gods, God, the laws of Nature, ancestors, or the cosmic laws of truth. T. Levine and R. Luneau, supports this view in *La Terre Africaine et ses religions*, p. 5 and in *Les religions d'Afrique noire* respectively.

²³ Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion...*, p.32.

²⁴ E. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious life*, New York, Free Press, 1965, p. 40.

religion is not all about church but rather the mannerism or perception of man in relation to the universe and wonders in life.

IV- Research objectives

Every research activity has one or more goals that are fixed at the conception phase. Objectives here are an expression of what we intend to achieve at the end of our research. Our research objective dwells on two parts. The first centres on the main objective while the second tackles the secondary objectives.

To begin with the main objectives of this study, it seeks to investigate the existence of pre – colonial traditional religious beliefs systems in the Banyang tribe. That is, if the people did practice a system of beliefs which could be term traditional. This question is what preoccupies the core or backbone of this piece of work.

As to what concerns the secondary objectives, it will tackle key elements that each chapter and other aspect of this study focus on.

Firstly, a historical review of the Banyang tribe which constitutes it evolution base on myth, tales migration, its settlement and the general organisation of the tribe will be a preoccupation for this work to investigate on.

Secondly, the early traditional religious philosophies of the people based on their worldview, in relation to the immaterial and material, their religiosity, nature, laws and taboos. Still in this analysis, we seek to examine the traditional practices of the people on a common ground, tribal, clanic and family level, not forgetting it spiritual organisation.

Thirdly, we will discuss on the manifestation of the traditional belief system of the people in connection to divinity, the universe and the environment with the use of medicine-*njo* and shrines. Enquiries on elements and actors of these practices will equally be a task for this study to discuss.

The fourth, sets out to examine the challenges encountered by the indigenous believes of the people. Through Christianity, the colonial history of any people usually shows that the evangelising message of the Christian church often plays a very dominant role in influencing the traditional beliefs of the people who had come under the control of colonisation. In the case of the Banyang, how this religious faith came about, it impact, and how culture contact affected their traditional religious values, the position of elders, the middle class, youths and women in the light of the teaching of the new faith. Equally, inculturation adopted by

Christian Missions as a means of co-existing with B.T.R., its shortcomings and possible remedies for it to gain more grounds in the tribe will be highlighted.

Generally, this work seeks to educate the church-oriented minds or Christians to discover and understand the other side of life in traditional religions. A call for us to have a mastery of the existence of non-dominant religion in traditional religions such as magic, sorcery, witchcraft, just to name a few away from Christianity, introduced by the colonial masters and inculcated by us through evangelism.

V- Interest of study

Generally, this survey catches interest to the religious study of the Banyang people in particular and African customs and traditions in general. But in a more concise manner, it is of interest to the scientific, educational and administrative domains.

To begin with the first (scientific domain), it is a domain which constitutes a discipline with a precise method and objectives. As such, this work serves as a contribution to the understanding of traditional religions, customs and cultures of pre-colonial and colonial African communities and the Banyang in particular. Here, traditional religions are worth studying and teaching in our schools and colleges to better impart the knowledge of our indigenous beliefs, customs and traditions. It examines Banyang historical evolution (some based on myths) and tales, migratory history, settlement, ancient beliefs and practices, traditional religious institutions put in place and how it functions during the early days right up to its adulteration and transformation by other religions and cultures.

The second field of interest (educational milieu) deals with the study of concepts in relation to academics. Educationally, A.T.R. constitutes a subject in state universities and philosophy in secondary and high schools. It is thus a plea that this work will enhance this domain in the sense that the concept of religion falls in line with human sociology and history in their various curricula. Equally, studies on traditional religions linger as a discipline within religious studies in our colleges, moral education as well as some religious dominations are being taught as a doctrine. Non-dominant religions such as magic, rites, witchcraft, still centres in the educational milieu with religious historians such as in the case of civilization and anthropologist study these cultures but believing in it is a debate that stands in the center of man. To add, this work is hoped would help the Banyang people who make up the target population of this study in understanding their pre-colonial and colonial religious history.

Lastly, on the administrative sector, it focuses on the implementation of policies by policy makers and administrators. Consequently, the researcher believes this academic piece of work will enhance the consideration of religion in the field of academics by policy makers and administrators so that religious studies in the society will not only be regarded as a subject but rather vital in the job market. Moreover, the government will not neglect the place of African traditional medicine in the society but also consider it as a driving force in the healing process through medicine, magic etc.²⁵

VI- Scope and time delimitation

Our scope and time delimitation will be discussed from two angles: time and space. This is to demonstrate how time and space contributes in the evolution of a people's traditional belief systems as the case of the Banyang tribe.

a. Time frame

This study spans from the 17thc - 1952. The period 17thc was motivated because it is estimated as the period which marked the settlement of the Banyang people in the Ejaghams of Eyumojock sub-division.²⁶ This century equally marked a turning point in the live of the people which saw a split between the upper and lower part of Banyang.²⁷ The date 1952 which is the terminal period of this study saw the banning of *Obasinjom*, a major traditional cult in the Banyang land by missionaries after an attempted wrestle incident.²⁸ Although this incident took place in Besongabang (a community in lower Banyang), news about it later spread to other Banyang communities and created fear among other Christian Missions who responded to it by renouncing or banning it practice and many other cults at the centre of the traditional beliefs of the people.

²⁵T. Njoya, *The Divine Tag on Modern Democracy*, Yaounde, CIPCRE, 2003, p.40.

²⁶ N. J. Egbe, "A Socio- Artistic Study of Banyang Legend", M. A. dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, p. 13.

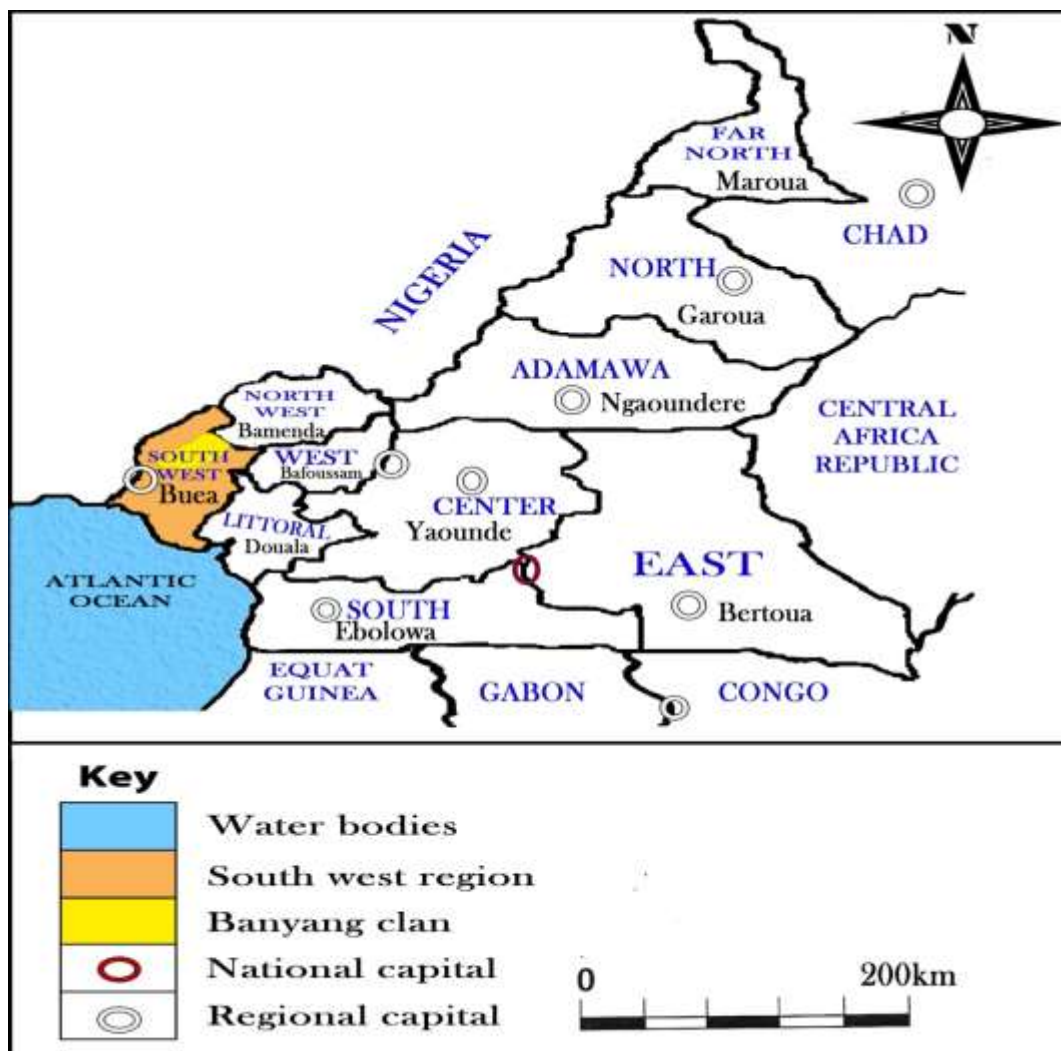
²⁷*Ibid.*, p.14.

²⁸ This incident took place in Besongabang on a Sunday morning when Pastor Sango Meyer, a Swiss-born was stunned with dismay when he found the church building virtually empty at the time he was to conduct church service. After asking for their whereabouts, he was told that all the Christians were gathered in a ceremonial ground where *Obasinjom* was staging a dance. On reaching the area, Pastor Meyer angrily seized the ritual trumpet (*erutu*) from the *Esane-njom* and attempted using it in beating up the masked figure. But failed because he could neither walk forward nor backward from the spot he was standing holding the *erutu* at the point of death if not of Pa Enow (mass servant) who came to his rescue.

b. Spatial delimitation

The study area Banyang tribe is found in the South East portion of Manyu Division of the SouthWest Region of the Republic of Cameroon²⁹ as illustrated below.

Map 1: Location of Banyang Tribe in the map of Cameroon.



Source: B. E. Ako, "Banyang Clan: A History of Traditional Institutions and Culture: Precolonial times to 1961", M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2017, p.17.

It lies between Longitude 9⁰11 and 9⁰55 East and Latitude 5⁰27 and 5⁰56 North.³⁰ The length between Nchang in the West and Sabes in the East happens to be the greatest length

²⁹ During the German era, this Division was known as Ossidinge. With the coming of the British, the name was changed to Mamfe Division in 1920. After independence, it was later changed to the Cross River Division in 1969 and then in 1972, it was named Manyu Division.

across the Banyang tribe covering a distance of 68.4km on air and approximately 97.6km by road. The area of land inhabited by the Banyang is estimated to 1024km², Mamfe which is the divisional headquarters has a total area of 4.093km². The total population of the division according to 2010 census is estimated at 426,000 inhabitants with more women than men, and a significant number of infant populations.³¹ Banyang area is bounded in the East by the Bangwa land, to the Northeast by the Metta ethnic group in the NorthWest Region, to the Southeast by the Mbo, South and South West by the Boki and to the North by the Anyang.³²

With regards to the soil type, Banyang area has a dual soil type: the central basalt plains favorable for the cultivation of cash crops like cocoa, coffee in communities like Batchuo Ntai and Bakebe and the lateritic soil in communities like Besongabang and Egbekaw, which is equally fertile.³³ In addition, the Banyang area is characterised with a network of large and small streams that runs very fast especially during the rainy season. Among these river bodies, we could cite the river Manyu which serves as habitats for creatures like fishes, hippopotamus etc.³⁴

VII- Literature Review

History cannot be written void of sources. In order to provide an overview of our study designated by a review of literature, we have been able to explore sources through works, specific to our research topic to support our argument. The construction of our literature review is a synthetic analysis from the collection of exploited materials. Areas of interest to dwell on are traditional religions and philosophy, institutions, rites, rituals and Christianity, which will enable us to pick out the main ideas of different authors, arrange, analyse, compare and categorize them in terms of their conceptions and themes defended in their works. We however take a stand towards each author's central idea and merge it to our fundamental research question centred on traditional religion in the Banyang tribe. We will also, explain what differ our research work from other authors presented in this literature review by regrouping them with similar ideas, objectives, critics and possibly a synthesis from their philosophy and opinions. Lets begin by looking at the writings of African authors.

³⁰ NAB, AF/ 20, File N°123/1934, "Banyang Clan Reassessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", p.6, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

³¹ www.lucy.uke.ac/Chilver/Paidema/Setting.html, September, 2010, p.25.

³² NAB, File N°.158/159, E. H. F. Georges, "Assessment Report on Banyang tribal area", 1930, p. 5, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

³³ R. B. Epey, "A Geographical Assessment of the Economy of the Southern Banyang: Studies in Rural Geography", Maitrise dissertation in Geography, University of Yaounde, 1979, p.5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Firstly, E. G. Parrinder³⁵ in his book entitle *African Traditional Religion* focuses on its significance, the notion of a spiritual universe, the existence of a Supreme Being and gods by nature. The homogeneity of African religion is demonstrated by the manner in which many Africans perceive the idea of rituals. His work equally brings out a comparison of religious elements such as the ancestors, divine rulers, communal and personal rituals and spiritual forces which describes beliefs in magic and sorcery, witchcraft, the soul and its destiny. To him, whatever notion anyone holds about the African religion, the majority of Africans still holds to the traditional beliefs of their forefathers. Equally, behind the veneer of the new beliefs of most educated people lies older ideas that will not disappear for a long time yet. These aspects are true to the traditional beliefs of the Banyang people.

Secondly, M. H. Tatah's³⁶ philosophy of traditional religion has facilitated the writing of this piece of work. He considers it as truly an African way of manifesting belief in God. Like any other region, this religion is both conceptual and practical. It constitutes the belief of a people, manifested in a way that is particularly African. It is important to note here that traditional African religion as it is sometimes called has no founder, no sacred texts or books that bind its adherents. It is centered on the day to day spiritual activities of the Africans, evident in ritual, sacrifices and festivities to which an African considers himself bound by the virtues of his belief. For Tatah, it is called a traditional religion not because it is inextricably linked with the customs and traditions of African peoples but also because it is the indigenous religion of the African people. In our work, we share the author's opinion on the characteristics of African beliefs which is not different from that of a Banyang man.

Thirdly, R. Gehmen³⁷ and J. S. Mbiti³⁸ works have greatly inspired this review. The former illustrates the African traditional religion globally without paying much attention to micro-communities like the Banyang tribe. The latter deals absolutely with the concept of tradition and the religious practices in Africa before the colonial era. Most of the concepts he raised still form the essential background of many African people. Though their approach fails to give room for an in-depth treatment of the individual religions of different African people, their general idea on African religions has enhanced the writing of this piece of work.

³⁵ E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London, Sheldon, 1962, p.33.

³⁶ M. H. Tatah, *African Traditional Religion*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 1997, p.49.

³⁷ R. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical perspectives*, Nairobi, Evangelical Publication House, 1975.

³⁸ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969.

Fourthly, reading from Mbiti's³⁹ *Concept of God in Africa*, his works mostly dwells on the basic philosophy of African theology which seems to be on the pre-supposition that African traditional religions like the case of the Banyang tribe is a well-structured system. He writes about his strong belief on the indigenous African communities when he affirms that "traditional religions neither send Missionaries nor make proselytes; their strength lies in being fully integrated in all department of human existence. As such, they cannot and need not be completely wiped out, so long as those who follow them are still alive". In advocating for the existence of traditional beliefs systems, the researcher is of the opinion that Mbiti is striving to see that both Christian and traditional religions are valuable and deserve co-existence. This aspect of co-existence mentioned by Mbiti coincide with a section in the last chapter of this study (inculturation).

To add, the philosophy of creation is raise by the same author when he affirms the fact and nature of African beliefs in creation as "over the whole of Africa, creation is the most widely knowledge work of God. This concept is expressed through says that God created all things through, giving Him the name Creator, Molder, Maker".⁴⁰ Banyang traditional religious philosophy on creation shares this same attribute on God being the creator of heaven and Earth (*Madem nfai ne Mmek*) though the author's interpretation of God in African traditional religions makes little or no reference to evil. Every thought about God to him seems pure and genuine including practitioners (actors in B.T.R.) like medicine men when he says "the medicine men are the greatest friends of African society and each community has one or two of them".⁴¹ This assertion is to a greater extend true to their healing ability but to refute the fact that this same medicine men more often than not appears to be monsters causing chaos, stir trouble, separates homes and the societies apart through their revelations is a weakness to this write up.

Also, E. I. Bolaji⁴² examines the idea on the beliefs of the African people consisting of five principal elements characterised under the unbrellar of belief. The belief in God, ancestors, divinities, spirits, the practice of magic and medicine, with each having its own consequent and attendant cult. These aspects highlighted by Bolaji as belief in the African perspective is not different from that of the Banyang people. This people, mindful of the consciousness of God's existence are firmly attached to their traditional beliefs inherited from

³⁹ Mbiti, *Concept of God in Africa*, London, SPCK, 1970.

⁴⁰ Mbiti, *African Religions and...*, p.39.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.224.

⁴² E. I. Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion: A definition*, London, SCM Press, Ltd, 1973.

their forefathers through veneration of ancestors (*barem*), divinities, spirits, medicine (*njo*), and sorcery (*vabu*), manifested through cults like *Obasinjom*, *Ngbe*, *Mfam*, *Angbu* etc. Though he treats the religion of the African people on a larger scope (Africa) as opposed to this study on a precise and concise scope (Banyang tribe), what is important to note here is that his work is a reference and a window through which the characteristics of Banyang traditional beliefs can be seen.

Another theme this study zooms into under the literature review is the cosmology of the Banyang people. P. B. Ayuk⁴³ in his post graduate diploma (D.E.S.) dwells principally on the cosmology of the Banyang people. A chapter of his book handled the different worldview of the people beginning with the universe, ancestral cults, and spirits (ancestral and non ancestral). Each of these domains have been detailly dish out by the author to portray a vivid picture of the indigenous beliefs of the people. Though his writes up was limited only at the level of two cult agencies (*Obasinjom* and *Mfam*), failing to bring out other cults that exist in the land which are all what sums of the Banyang worldview. He gives one especially a non native of the land the impression that the Banyang cosmological beliefs rest only on two cults which is not true. A portion of our study seeks to expansiate more on other cult agencies which represent the beliefs of the people. Nevertheless, irrespective of these setbacks, Ayuk's work has added more flesh in the writing of this study.

Equally, Egbe⁴⁴ in his discourse on "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective" categorise the Banyang cosmological world into three namely the supernatural world dominated by a Supreme Being (*God-Mandem*) who reigns in heaven, maker of heaven and earth and everything that dwells in it. The animate world, that of the living characterised by a system of undefined beliefs, exhibited through superstition, ill omens and prophesies and the inanimate dominated by a mystery that can not be perceive by the physical eyes. In other words, this is the zone of local evil spirits and men in double fold. This write up is very instrumental in the maturation of this work though the field of studies here differs in the sense that Egbe centres more on women in a cultural and ethnological backgrounds while ours on traditional beliefs is examine from a historical perspective.

⁴³ P. B. Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change", Post Graduate Diploma (D.E.S) in Sociology, University of Yaounde 1, 2000.

⁴⁴ N. J. Egbe, "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective", Post graduate degree (D.E.A) Diplome in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2009.

Moreover, Ako⁴⁵ narrated on birth and dead customs in the Banyang clan. His conception of life after dead is a reality as common nouns such as "ghost" and "devil" is evident in Banyang land. He analyze this concept but failed to mention how ghost come about and the rites and rituals involved in attaining afterlife, what we are going to throw more light on. His insights has chip in a lot in mapping out the history of the Banyang tribe from migration till date, it structural organisation, socio-cultural institutions with emphasis on pre-colonial institutions like *Ngbe* secret societies among others. Rites, rituals, ceremonies just to name a few are given a touch in an explicit manner in his work. Commenting on *Ngbe*, Egbe⁴⁶ on *Ekpe* society unveils to us the inside of the *Ekpe* cult which affirms to us that *Ekpe* is characterised with the worshipping of animals known as Lycanthropy. The vitality of these works cannot be undermined in laying the ground work of our study. Though both treated the history of traditional institutions and culture of pre-colonial Banyang people from a general perspective, we simple focus on a segment of their social life, their believe systems.

In addition, Wach⁴⁷ commenting on cults or associations, a theme in our study categorises cults into clan, natural groups, religious societies, medicine groups and semi-permanent organisation among the Winnerbago Indians. For him, they are well developed with well defined practices and rites. In clan or natural groups, he reiterates that only members can take part in their ceremonies and is limited to those who obtain blessings of a special spirit. To medicine groups, only the initiated are allowed membership. This expression by Wach gives a vivid description on how Banyang secret cults are structured (tribal, clanic and family) and functions. Though our reseach does not attempt to categorise secret cults like that of the author. It rather attempts to depict the belief imbedded in these secret cults, which the people so much adheres to.

Again, Talbot⁴⁸ handles the socio-cultural organisation of the people of the Cross River including the Banyang and other tribes in Southern Nigeria. According to him, there exist several institutions and cults such as the *Mfam* juju, a very dreadful oracle used by the people as a form of deity, very instrumental in the lives of the people in the Cross River basin. He further tells us how this deity was used to taste one's innocence in cases where he/she is

⁴⁵ B. E. Ako, "Banyang Clan: A History of Traditional Institutions and Culture, Pre-colonial times to 1961", Master's dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2017, pp.119-122.

⁴⁶ D. A. Egbe, "Ngbe Secret Society in Banyang Land, Manyu Division 1922- 1992", M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2006.

⁴⁷ W. Joachim, *Sociology of Religion*, Illinois, University of Chicago Press, 1958, p .112.

⁴⁸ P. A. Talbot, *The people of Southern Nigeria; A Sketch of their History, Ethnology and Language with an abstract of the 1921 Census*, Vol 4, London, Frack Cass and co.ltd, 1969.

accused of a gravious act such as murder, stealing, adultery etc. Our study is of great similarity with that of Talbot because both talks on cults, be it at the tribe, clan or family level, burial rites and traditional believes, in the Banyang tribe though ours goes a step further to examine the transformation and possible dismantling of these traditional practices to a greater extend.

Furthermore, Grace⁴⁹ and Beatrice⁵⁰ have enhanced our knowledge in this review on Banyang belief systems manifested through secret cults. Both examines *Ekpa* or *Njomekpa* women secret cult at the angle of it ritual performance and activities such as the *Ekpa- atu* nocturnal dance. During this nocturnal dance, the people belief it is a moment where the land is being cleansed from evil, there is absolute and direct communion with the gods of the land, call for good harvest, protection and guidance from external powers. The core of their dissertation was principally to investigate the stylistic device, nature of the Banyang and Ejagham secret cults *Ekpa* or *Njomekpa* with the aim of bringing out it content and form of songs, incantations which expresses the belief surrounding the Banyang cosmology. Our study thus connects with this opinion of theirs, as both stands to showcase the belief systems of the people manifested in the *Ekpa* or *Njomekpa* secret cult. Though we differ with their context, their ideas on *Ekpa* have help us in fishing out the belief embedded in it activities such as songs and incantations.

The contributions from Ebot⁵¹ and Assanga⁵² on *Nkim* secret cults also inspired our work. Though both authors dwelled on *Nkim*, their angle of discussion went on separate ways. The formal treats *Moninkim* as a ritual performance in theatre act and the latter as a rite of passage, to womanhood in the Boki community. Both dissertations give us an idea on the various stages involve in the *Nkim* ritual (female genital multilation) and the belief behind it. As noted by both writers, this practice aims at preserving girls virginty till marriage, prevents extra marital relationships among women, cutailing or reduction of sexual desires and men's perception on uncircumcised women or girl in the society. These books have ease our understanding onthe belief of the people manifested through the practice of *Nkim* rituals.

⁴⁹ N. B. Grace, "Orature in Ritual Performance: A Stylistic Device on the Nature of Banyang Female Secret Societies", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma (D.I.P E.S. II) in English, Higher Teacher Training College Yaounde 1, 1999.

⁵⁰ N. D. Beatrice, "The *Njomekpa* Women Secret Society in the Ejagham land 1800- 2002", Master's dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2007.

⁵¹ M. N. Ebot Etchi, "Theatricalites in the *Moninkim* Ritual Performance", Master's dissertation in Performing Art and Cinematography, University of Yaounde 1, 2012.

⁵² C. N. Assanga, "*Moninkim*, A Rite of Passage to Womenhood in the Boki Community, SouthWest Region of Cameroon: A Contribution to Medical Anthropology", Master's dissertation in Medical Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2017.

However, we differ with their context in which *Moninkim* has been analysed. They laid more emphasis on the form, anthropological and cinematographic context while ours focus on the belief from a historical stand point.

In the same light, Stephen⁵³ in "The *Obhasi- Njom* Institution of the Ejagham people, A Case study of the Mbakem Village" examines the role of *Obasinjom*. He argues that this institution act as a link between the people and the ancestors through whom they have solutions to their problems. They belief that the spirit of the ancestors through the mouthpiece of *Obasinjom* tell them the truth, eradicates witchcraft, barrenness, protects persons and purifiesthe community. We share this understanding with Stephen on the activities of *Obasinjom* secret cult and the belief surrounding it. Still in his analyses, the author talks about *Obasinjom*'s ability to detect and prevent witchcraft and barrenness, but failed to show us how and the process of doing it, the link between these secret cults and the medical plants used by *Obasinjom* to perform the tasks he listed. These loopholes will be filled with detail analyses in our work.

Lastly, Tabe's⁵⁴ analysis on "The Banyang socio-cultural History from Pre-colonial to the development of Banyangi quarters" has been instrumental to support our study. His ideas are base on the Banyang culture, religion and deity of the people and how colonisation and social change affected these aspects. His idea on pre-colonial Banyang migration and the impact of colonialism on their indigenouse belief system compliments with that of Tambe⁵⁵. On his part, he brings out a detail analysis on the structural set up of pre-colonial Banyang clan, and how colonialism through Christianity greatly impeded the socio-cultural lives of the people with that of their traditional practices more devastating. Both write ups thus orientate the researcher on the historical background of Banyang pre-historic times and also connects with a portion of our work in the last chapter.

VIII- Statement of the Problem

Studies carried on Banyang tribe are often focused on political decentralised system of administration, the economic set up based on agriculture, with cocoa and coffee being the principal crops cultivated and the socio-cultural trends characterised by traditional believes,

⁵³ O. E. Stephen, "The *Obhasi- Njom* Institution of the Ejagham people, A Case study of the Mbakem Village", Master's dissertation in Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2004.

⁵⁴K. E. Tabe, "The Banyang socio-cultural History from Pre-colonial to the development of Banyangi quarters", Maîtres dissertation in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 1991.

⁵⁵ T. E. Etamba, "The impact of Colonization on the Banyang clan 1888-1961", Maîtres dissertation in history, University of Yaoundé 1, 2000.

cults and institutions. But believing in the existence of these traditional belief systems often possess a threat to some history books, Africanists and Eurocentrics (Africans who wrote about African historiography and European scholars who about African historiography). This conception be it in the Banyang tribe or Africa often encounter challenges and criticisms for its existence and effectiveness.

Thus, to better understand and give a response to these prejudices, it is of essence to note here that in pre-colonial Africa, the question of belief either in God or supernatural forces is not being posed. Africans from the origin of history had no idea on the existence of a superior or invisible being designated as God, Allah, and Dieu. In the same vein, religion and morality in the Banyang tribe became part and parcel of every aspect of life in each community, guarded by its own ethical and moral code attached to oaths which it adhered and was respected. The life of the people was regarded as sacred and each community used it rituals, rites and sacrifices to protect and safeguard it. Rituals, rites and sacrifices were often made and offered by each family or lineage to plead the innocence of its members, protection from evil and danger by the gods and ancestors, welfare, fertility in children and crops in the community.⁵⁶

From this background knowledge gathered so far, the questions that arouse our curiosity is; who are the Banyangs and what is their traditional beliefs all about? Does it really exist? Other subsidiary questions that guide our work are: Does the Banyang man like any other African belief in traditional religion? And how was it practice? Did these traditional form of believe system of the people last and what account for it adultration? It is the interest of this dissertation to provide answers to the aforementioned questions centred on traditional believes in the Banyang tribe.

IX- Methodology

The collection and classification of relevant literature on traditional religion in the Banyang tribe is base particularly on primary sources. As writing technique, after a careful collection and classification of data, the use of a historical method was employed. This method involved laying emphasis on the chronological and descriptive approaches. This will enable us to find perfect harmony between descriptive developments and evolution in time and space. Equally, due to the variance in sources, we are guided by objectivity and scrutiny in order to best ensure historical credibility.

⁵⁶Etamba, "The impact of...", p. 7.

a) Sources

To effectively attain the goal of our research, we used two methods for our data collection: cumulative bibliographical study and the systematic research method. The formal consist on searching for most recent and past articles and books concerning our research question while the later consist on visiting documentation centers, libraries and carefully going through all possible files and book related to our research question. At this juncture, data collection in this study is more oriented towards the exploration of both primary and secondary sources as seen below.

i. Primary sources

Here, observations and interviews are the two main sources of data collection employed in our field of study to access the required information. Observations deals with some events such as cultural displays or manifestations, rituals and rites of the people through marriages, funerals etc. These were some of the events that made it possible to observe how the people, accompanied by other elements of faith in traditions in my study area gave expression to their belief systems and religious practices in concrete situation.

On the part of interviews, it was carried out individually and sometimes in focus groups. We targeted and selected members from various traditional cults and associations to get their views. In this light, chiefs, elders, notables and other persons in the community were contacted in order to explain the essence and relevance of our study. In doing this, questionnaires were dished out to those willing to participate. Participants who could not read and write, the content of the form was read and translated to them in the mother tongue for proper understanding. Sex and age participation was equally taken into consideration in the course of this exercise to get fairly representative views of the elderly men, women and the young whom the future of traditional religious practices in the tribe depends on. But majority of the interviewees were the elderly of estimated age from 60 and above.

These two means of data collection was to enable the researcher to ask pertinent questions for explicit explanation and clarity so that understanding and significance can be made out of it with respect to the religious and cultural expression of the people.

ii. Secondary sources

In history, a single source is not a source unless it is confronted with other sources. Consequently secondary sources consist of specialised works on the history and religious background of the Banyangs were exploited and critically analyzed in the light to attain the

objectives of our study. These sources are made up of books, scientific journals, thesis, dissertations, dictionaries and articles exploited in the following; libraries in the university of Yaounde 1 (FALSS), University of Buea, Manyu divisional library and archives (Buea and Yaounde national archives). To add, some private libraries with abundant reading on writings enable us to have a general view on what already existed, divergent views, themes, approaches taken by other researchers and scholars on the history of the Banyang tribe. The internet, as a facilitator of research was an indispensable asset which we explored.

X- Difficulties encountered

A scientific work of this magnitude could not be void of challenges and obstacles while in the field. One very strenuous condition amidst the realization of this study was the location of information. Given the present dispensation of things on the ground in my area of study, the Banyang tribe situated in Manyu division, SouthWest Region of Cameroon, was an uphill task for the researcher. In the midst of the crisis in this area, the collection of data in the field was often characterised by recurrent gun battles, panic and the fear of the unknown. This acted as a hindrance to the completion of this study, but with determination and courage, we were able to undergo all the difficult moments.

Equally, lack of statistical information on aspects of Banyang socio-cultural values that have been investigated upon was a major weakness in this study. To satisfactorily carry out a research on the social and cultural values particularly on traditional religious practices of the Banyangs, statistical data would have been very useful when analysing notes on the traditional society before (pre-colonial) and after (colonial). That is, after contact had been made with other people with different religious background.

Another obstacle worth mentioning was the absence and inaccessibility of sources. Some secondary source of information such as documents, published and unpublished books and articles, journals in some libraries, archives and shelves were not available on time. Some were missing, mishandled and invisible to glance through especially assessment reports, while access to some documentations and libraries was quite a nightmare owing to the fact that some of the books available are inscribed on the index card but not found on the shelves. A situation which sounds frustrating. But with the kind intervention of some librarians and personnels found in these centres, the situation was overcome.

Moreover, poor road network equally retarded the realization of this piece of work. The vast nature of the Banyang tribe to cover in the course of gathering primary data such as interviews did pose a huge financial problem on the part of the researcher. Given the fact

that the Banyang tribe harbors over 70 communities, the researcher is compelled to cover a cross-section of some of these interior communities in order to have access to quality information coupled with the poor road networks linking some of these villages. As such, all these acted as a barrier in coming out with this piece of literature. Nevertheless, financial assistance from family, friends and relatives help to curb down the financial constraints.

Lastly, the receptive and unwillingness of some informants was a difficult task for the success of this study. Some had no knowledge on the concept they themselves use most especially issues around spirited beings and the conception of afterlife. Equally the extraction of data from some was very difficult especially with the present hostilities surrounding my area of studies. Sensitive or pertinent information that digs deep into some of the mechanisms and secrets behind aspects in the spiritual realm, life after dead, cults, were reluctant to get for fear of the unknown. Others mistook us for spies, with some questioning the purpose, motives behind our findings which we defended with consistency that it was for mere scientific and educative objectives. To combat this situation, we derived strategies to persuade or woo them through administrative and traditional permits obtained in some areas in the field to fish out information for the accomplishment of this scientific work.

XI. Organization of study

Our study is structured in four chapters. Each chapter comprises of two main parts, with each carrying a title and sub titles. It begins with a general introduction composed of key elements such as the motivation of topic, followed by a conceptual review of our key terms, the objectives as well as the interest of study. The research questions posed, the scope and delimitation, the problematic, literature review, methodology and sources, difficulties encountered, are all what this introductory part represents.

Chapter one, generalities on the Banyang tribe begins with an introduction, structured in two sections. The first section treats the historical background of the tribe with interest on the origin of the tribe base on myths, tales and the migration of the people. Also attached to this section is the settlement and organisation of the tribe. The second section give an account on the general set up of the tribe based on the socio- political organisation. Here, the society as well as the administrative rule of the tribe is a point of focus. The economic and foreign affair which centers on the economy and external gaze of the people alongside a conclusion brings this chapter to a close.

Chapter two, the early religion of the Banyang people is equally shared into two phases. The first phase focuses on traditional religious philosophies. Attention here is geared towards the Banyang religious worldview. That is, their perception on traditional believes faced with

their interaction with the immaterial and invisible elements like spirit, soul, ancestors and gods. Equally, how the people relate with the material and visible aspects such as secret grounds, stones, forest, their religiosity vis a vis nature and taboo aspects is of essence here. The second phase anchors on the early traditional believe and practices of the people on a common ground, tribal, clanic and family level. This phase draws to an end the various traditional cults, with a conclusion to sum it up.

Chapter three centres on Banyang traditional religion in a practical perspective. Area of interest in this chapter dwells on two parts. The first, handles the manifestation of traditional cult, rites and rituals of a Banyang man in his day to day life, how he connects with the divine and the universe. This same connectivity will be seen with regards to his environment that is with medicine and shrines. The second part of this chapter takes interest in the elements and actors involved in Banyang traditional belief practices. Elements such as prayers and offerings, sacrifice and high places will be analysed. Actors on the other hand will be examined on priest, diviners and healers, with a conclusive remark to bring the chapter to an end.

The last chapter of this study tackles the challenges faced by Banyang traditional religious beliefs. Partitioned in two fractions, the first seeks to concentrate on the advent of Christianity and its impact as a catalyst to the indigenous beliefs of the people. Also involved is the external culture effect which has hampered the original belief systems in the tribe. The second fraction in this chapter treats the position of actors in the Banyang society in the light of the teachings of the new faith in the reign of traditional beliefs. In this light, efforts have been made in grouping these actors into two segments: elders, the youths, women and the middle age group, with each having its own quota of contribution. Added to this section, is a cross examination of inculturation adopted by Christian missions in order to incorporate both the indigenous and foreign beliefs in the tribe, its shortcomings, proposed solutions and a conclusive remark.

Finally, this study draws to an end with a general conclusion summarising all the aforementioned chapters through a cross section of the research problem. The main idea here is to adhere to the fact that, despite the challenges faced by the indigenous beliefs of the Banyang people (some of its values declined, abandoned, others modernised or transformed), the incorporation of both traditional and modern religious practices (inculturation) which had its own limitations, a large part of the population still holds tight to their traditional religion. With this said, let us now dive into the first chapter of our work.

CHAPTER ONE: GENERALITIES ON THE BANYANG TRIBE

In this opening chapter, we shall explore the historical background of the Banyang people particularly on their origin, based on myths, tales, migration and settlement, and the general organisation of the tribe in the socio-economic and political domain. It is important if not imperatives to know the origin of the Banyang people though there is immersed confusion as to where they originated. But from several viewpoints, falling under the linguistic and historical sources, we tried to come out with something about their early history as will be seen subsequently. The Banyang people are known to be an old people in the Upper Cross River who do not have any tradition of common descent or any history of a common origin.⁵⁷ What unites and distinguishes them from other people are the qualities and attributes of *Kenyang*, the language they speak as well as their culture⁵⁸.

Among the Banyang, there exist a general distinction between the lower and upper Banyang.⁵⁹ The attribution of the adjectives lower and upper is for two reasons:

Firstly, upper Banyang is situated at the upper part of the Cross River, nearer to its tributary while lower Banyang constitute the low-lying part of the river. To add, upper Banyang is situated eastward of the division towards the hilly savanna region of Lebialem Division which contrasts with the low-lying geographical regions of lower Banyang. According to Georges⁶⁰, the upper Banyang (Banyang *Nfai*) settles in the Eastern part of the area close to Bangwa and Bamenda while lower Banyang (Banyang *Nten*) occupies the Western part closer to the Ejagham of the West. The East came in contact with the hilly people of Eastern escapement while the West came in contact with the forest people of Keaka of the West.⁶¹

Secondly, the distinction between the lower and upper Banyang follows the nature of topography. Upper Banyang occupies the depression around the Cross River basin. Also, the orientation of the flow of major rivers and streams which drains the area have the upper

⁵⁷ M. Ruel, *Leopalds and leaders: Constitutional Politics among a Cross River people*, London, Tavistock publications, 1969, p. 68.

⁵⁸ B. Chem-langhëë and E. S. D. Fomin, "The Banyang Slave System; Social differentiation and citizenship", *Annals de la faculte des letter et science humaine*, Vol. 1, 1985, p.165.

⁵⁹ I. Fowler and V.G. Fanson, *Encounter, Transformation and Identity: People of the Western Cameroon borderline, 1891-2000*, Berghahn books, New York, Oxford, 2009, p .171.

⁶⁰ NAB, File N°.158/159, E. H. F. Georges, "Assessment Report on Banyang tribal area", 1930, p. 5, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

⁶¹ NAB, AF13, File N°.120/122, "Banyang clan Reassessment Report", 1930, p. 9, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

course in upper Banyang while lower Banyang is situated around the lower course of the Manyu river.⁶²

In addition, T. Eyongetah and R. A. Brian⁶³ affirms the slight variation between the cultures lying beyond the borders of upper and lower Banyang area. Lower Banyang cultural practices are closely linked to those of Eastern Ejagham whom the Banyangs finds delight or pleasure in and as a result, acquired some of their institutions especially secret cults like *Ngbe*, *Abhon*, *Obasinjom* and *Mfam*. Due to this cultural affiliation, it becomes difficult to curve out areas of pure Banyang and those of pure Keaka culture in this zone because the people here understands both *Kenyang* and *Keaka* dialects.⁶⁴ Moreover, slight variation in certain words and expressions in both the *Kenyang* and *Keaka* language differs.

The explanations above will go a long way to provide possible answers to any doubt in the use of both upper and lower Banyang throughout this work. Our intention will now be focus on the historical background of the people.

I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Each and every human settlement has a record of details concerning the origin and possible movement of the group. Whether written or oral, these details are passed on to every new generation, generally as a means to teach or inculcate the values that saw the creation of the community such as love, bravery, conflict or war etc. Eventhough as time elapse, the event may undergo change but the main facts however remain and are confirmed by oral traditions which indicate the socio- economic and even political activities of their group at various point of their history.

This is the case with the indigenous people of the Banyang tribe who originated eastward from the Ekio in South Eastern Nigeria. The real factors responsible for their movement remains clouded because it is based on speculations. However, Banyang oral traditions holds that inter- tribal wars and the desire by some Efik fishermen who were doing fishing at the Manyu River were the two fundamental factors responsible for the displacement.

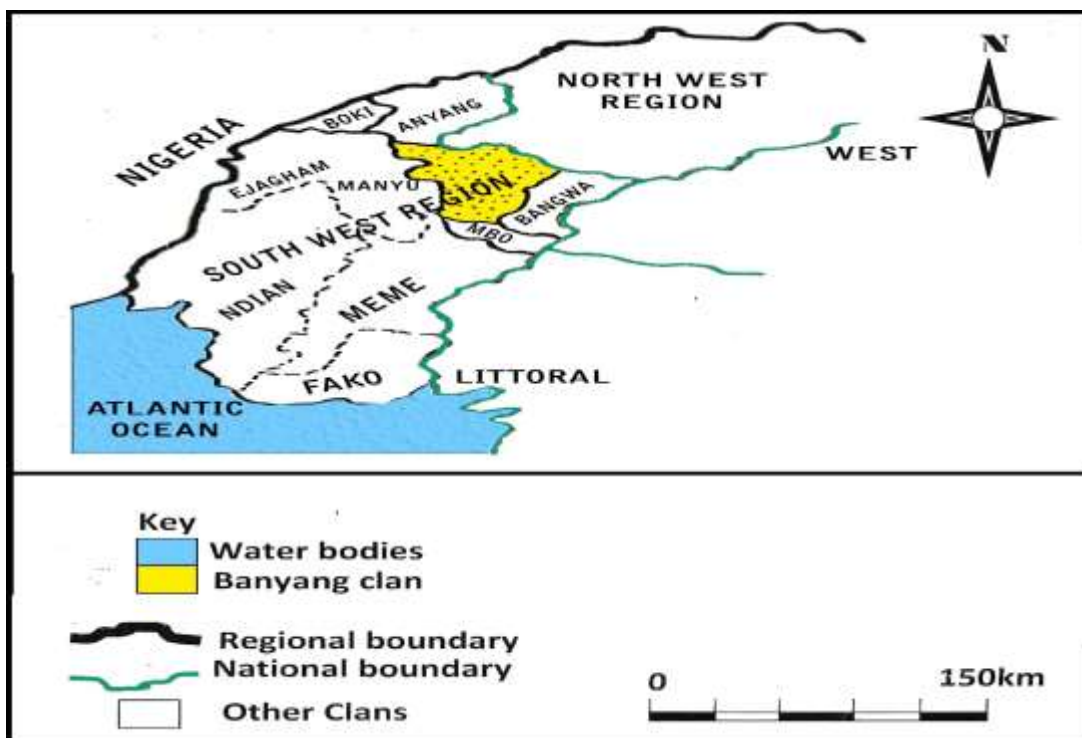
The Banyang people are one of the principal ethnic groups that make up the Manyu Division, Southwest region of the republic of Cameroon.

⁶² NAB, File N°.158/159, E. H. F.Georges, "Assessment Report on Banyang tribal area", 1930, p. 5, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

⁶³ T. Eyongetah and R. A. Brian, *A History of the Cameroons*, London, Longman, 1974, p .33.

⁶⁴ Interview with Takang Puis, 68Years, Farmer, Ebam, November 22th 2020.

Map 2: Location of Banyang Tribe in the South West Region.



Source: Ako, "Banyang Clan: A...", p.17.

This uncertainty on Banyang history has prompted various authors, scholars to advance varied assertions with regards to the Banyang origin, with some classifying them as Bantu speaking, Semi Bantu who migrated from the South of the Congo forest or East Africa. Our interest here is to situate the Banyang origin on the bases of migration and linguistic point of view. This will be diagnosed through myths of origin, tales and migration.

A. Myths of origin and migration

According to Eliade⁶⁵ myth narrates history, relates events that took place in primordial and fable time of the beginnings. In other words, myths tell how, through the deeds of the supernatural beings, a reality came into existence, be it the world of reality, the cosmos, or only a fragment of reality, an island, species of plant, a particular kind of human behavior or an institution. For Beltha⁶⁶, myths are intimately connected with religious beliefs and practices of the people. They may be essentially heroes, legends or etiological stories, but they are systematised and given religious significance.

⁶⁵ M. Eliade, *Myth, Rites and Symbols*, New York, Harper and Row Publishers, 1976, p.51.

⁶⁶ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 60 years, Retired Lecturer, Nfaiok, August 20th 2020.

Thus in Banyang like other African communities, myths are used to explain cosmogony and cosmology as the vagaries of nature.⁶⁷As concern this study, some oral tradition on the origin of the Banyang people is backed by myths. To add, part of this work while in the field is complimented by myths collected from our informants as a support information to bring out a clear picture of pre-colonial Banyang traditional religious practices and its migratory history. Migration on its part depicts the displacement of people from one place to another for one reason or another.

1. Myths and tales

Banyang myths to begin with, attest with regards to their origin that they originated from *Nyang*, one of the offspring of Chief Tanyi Mbi. According to Tanyi⁶⁸, most clans during this period notably the pre-colonial were on their fourth to fifth migration before history was recorded. As such, there was little or no record before the written history of this people. Villages during this period were founded by an individual who identified himself with the clan of his forbearers. As time went on, there existed break ups amongst individuals for expansion during this period. Each called themselves by the name of their leader while trying to maintain their relationship to the main clan by adding the prefix "Ba" (the children of). Based on this pattern, it is alleged that Chief Tanyi Mbi, founder of Ntenako had a son called *Nyang* whom as a result of this break up tussle, separated from his father alongside his followers who today are the people speaking *Kenyang/Keaka* in that vicinity, called themselves Banyang, meaning son or children of *Nyang*.

Banyang tales on the other hand traced the origin of the people from the waterside areas. Sources here explained clearly that some Efik fishermen who for long have been carrying out fishing activities in the Nigerian Cross River came in contact with the famous Manyu river during one of their downward fishing sessions. Realising how their fishing activities were very lucrative in the Virgin River (Manyu river), they saw no need going back to Nigeria where there were a lot of fishing competition. Having got this revelation, they began erecting permanent structures for settlement. With time, other fishermen migrated downward towards the River Manyu and their number kept increasing. As such, new sites were cleared for settlement. Most of the other tribes notably the Anyang and Boki speakers traced their history from this migratory trend.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ K. T. Ibrahim, "Demystifying African Myths", Yaounde, BET and Co. Ltd Publishers, 1989, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Interview with Pascal James Tanyi, 73 Years, Village Notable, Yaounde, August 20th 2021.

⁶⁹ NAB, File No. A1918/24, "Natives in British Sphere", 1924, p. 12, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

Another point worth mentioning with regards to the origin of the Banyang people is based on linguistic considerations. P. A. Talbot⁷⁰ in his elaborate study on the people of Southern Nigeria classified the Banyang and their neighbors the Ejagham under Semi Bantu stock of the "Ekiod tribe" and identified both of them as separate "sub tribes". *Kenyang* according to him which is the language of one of the sub tribes of the Ekiod backed his claim on the semi-Bantu origin of the Banyang people.⁷¹ T. Eyongetah and R. A. Brian⁷² share this view as they similarly classified the Banyang among the Ekiod people of semi-Bantu. But the uncertainty of the Banyang origin is supported by M. Ruel⁷³. To him, there is no concrete proof on the classification of the Banyang language.

Based on ethnic, cultural and geographical characteristics, Crabb⁷⁴ has sought to demonstrate that these languages can be classified under the Bantu speaking people by re-establishing the relationship between "*kenyang*" and "*Ejagham*" within a wider category. Greenburg⁷⁵ in the last edition of his classic monograph on the language of Africa found adequate evidence to classify 730 languages which to him, *kenyang* is not an exception under the Bantu speaking language of the Niger-Kordofanian.

Though with little or no legitimate claims on the origin of the Banyang is clear, what is obvious however is that within the group of the Bantoids of the forest, linguistic indications suggest a relationship between the Boki, Ejagham, the Tiv of the Benue, and the Efik of Eastern Nigeria. According to this interpretation, the Banyang like their neighbors⁷⁶, came from the West (around the Nigeria- Cameroon borders) before settling in the Gulf of Mamfe and its environs.⁷⁷ Other claims attest that the Banyang just like their neighbors the Ejagham originated from the Cameroon-Nigeria borders, somewhere situated around Calabar, Cross river state in the federal republic of Nigeria, which falls within the framework of linguistic and cultural origin.⁷⁸ Takor⁷⁹ argues that the Banyang migrated from the plateau

⁷⁰ A Sub tribe is described by P. A. Talbot as a group speaking the same language, having common customs, religion and state of civilization living in the same geographical location.

⁷¹ P. A. Talbot, *The people of Southern Nigeria, A Sketch of their History, Ethnology and Language with an abstract of the 1921 Census, Vol. 4*, London, Frank Cass and Co.ltd, 1969, p.42.

⁷² T. Eyongetah and R. A. Brian, *A history of the Cameroons*, London, Longman, 1973, p.5.

⁷³ M. Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional politics among a Cross River people*, London, Tavistock Publication, 1969, p.1.

⁷⁴ D. W. Crabb, *Ekiod Bantu language of Ogoja Eastern Nigeria*, Cambridge University Press, 1965, p.3.

⁷⁵ J. Greenburg, *Classic Monograph on Languages of Africa*, London, Longman, 1976, p.102.

⁷⁶ When we talk of the Banyang and their neighbor the Ejagham, we are making reference to the similarities between them when one looks at the appellations of certain things. For instance a cup in Ejagham is called "*Ncup*" while in Kenyang is "*Ncup*", Knife "*Ngak*" in both languages.

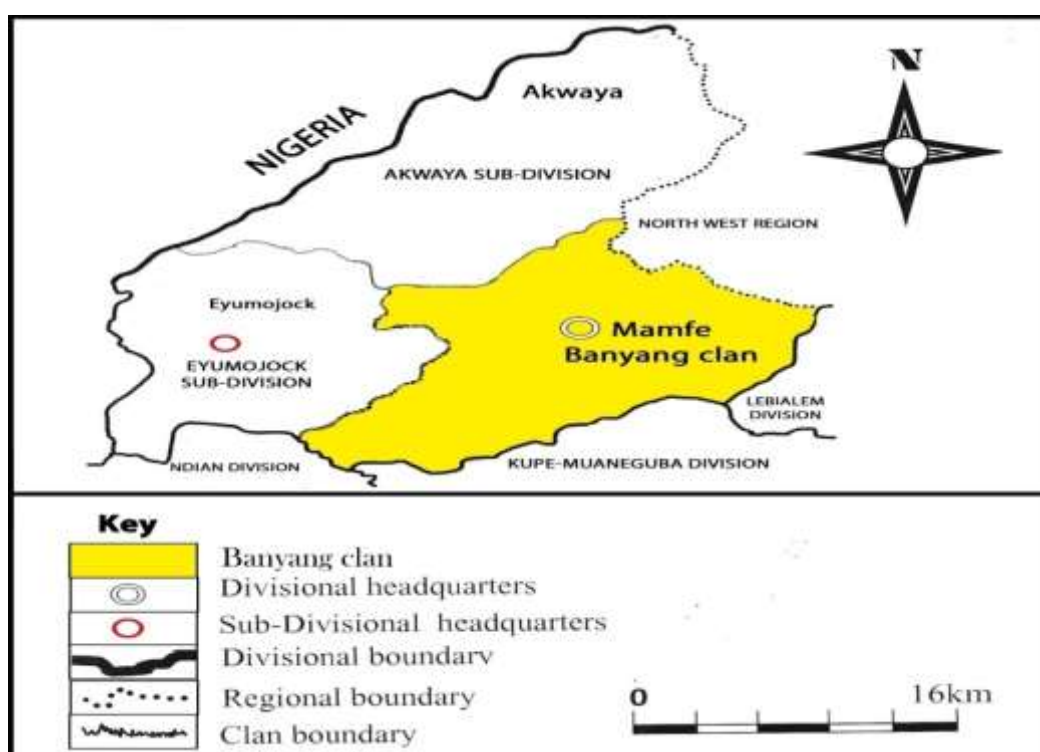
⁷⁷ Interview with Tabi Manaseh Batte, 75years, Village Notable, Mfaiok I, November 19th 2020.

⁷⁸ Talbot, *The people of...*, p.41.

area of Nigeria with the migrants moving Southward first, and later to the Eastward towards the area they now occupy. H. O. Anderson⁸⁰ in his preliminary assessment report on the Banyang area attests that they are the aborigines of their land.

To add, Bongfen Chem-langhëë and Fomin⁸¹ attest that those authors who have sort to place the Banyang under their southern Bantu neighbors and dissociate them from their Eastern neighbors Ejagham and Northern Anyang neighbors with whom they claim close cultural ties or affinities has classified them as Bantu. Nonetheless, Fanso⁸² on his part holds that the Banyang and Ejagham main ethnic groups in the region traced their origin to a place called Emat, somewhere North- East of Lake Ejagham in Eyumojock Sub Division.

Map 3: Location of Banyang Tribe in Manyu Division.



Source: Ako, "Banyang Clan: A...", p.21.

⁷⁹ J. T. Takor, "Chieftaincy Succession in the Banyang and Ejagham Tribe of the Manyu Division, SouthWest Province, 1961-2002", Post graduate dissertation (DEA) in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 2007, p.18.

⁸⁰ NAB, File 16, No.65/ 1929, H. O. Anderson, "Preliminary Assessment report on the Banyang tribal area, Mamfe, 1929", pp .3 – 5, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

⁸¹ B. Chem-langhëë and E. S. D. Fomin, "The Banyang Slave System; Social differentiation and citizenship", *Annals de la faculte des letter et science humaine*, Vol. 1, 1985, p.165.

⁸² V. G. Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges Vol, From Prehistoric Times to the Nineteenth Century*, Hong Kong, Macmillan Publishers, 1989. p.53.

Moreover, recent studies carried out along the Banyang area demonstrates that all languages around Manyu division are of Bantu speaking people. Thus Banyang just like their neighbors the Ejagham migrated from the West, somewhere around the Nigeria-Cameroon boarders to colonise the sedimentary gulf of Mamfe and its environs.⁸³

Drawing from the above analysis with regards to the various stand points of authors on Banyang origin, it still remains controversial and unclear. However, for academic convenience of our study, what we should note with regards to the origin of the Banyang people is that it dwells within the ambits of traditions today referred to as legends, myths and oral traditions.

2. Migration

With regards to the migratory history of the Banyang tribe from a broad base, history makes us to understand that the people of the Republic of Cameroon (where Banyang tribe is located) are made up of diverse ethnic and racial groups because Cameroon has been a meeting place of people who migrated from the North, Western and Central geographical regions of Africa. For this reason, Cameroon is a confluence of three great African cultural areas namely the Guinea Coast, Western Sudanic and the Equatorial forest of the Congo.⁸⁴ Through intermingling of people due to racial and linguistic pattern, some of these people migrated to the Southern regions of Chad. Those who remained in Cameroon were divided into the Bantu speaking people, the Semi-bantu peoples, the Kirdis and the Fulanis as stated by Greenberg⁸⁵.

The Bantu speaking people are known as Bantu proper, spoken in the South and South Eastern forest plains of Cameroon (Douala, Fang, Bakweri) while the Semi- Bantu or Bantiod language are spoken in the Western regions bordering Nigeria and part of the central highlands (Bamileke) in Cameroon. The people of the Western regions bordering Nigeria migrated from West Africa, moved southward and eastward then settled in north eastern Nigeria where some went and settled in the Congo basin.⁸⁶ Those who settled in Eastern Nigeria spent many years migrating eastward, moving from one area to another. This group included the Banyang (Ekio group), Bakoko, Balundu, Bakundu, Balong, Bassosi and Mbo in the present day Meme Division in Cameroon. This Eastward move took more than two

⁸³ G. Courade, *Commentary of Maps of Regional Atlas West I*, Yaoundé, ORSTOM, 1974, p.93.

⁸⁴ N. J. Egbe, "A Socio- Artistic Study of Banyang Legend", M. A. dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, p. 12.

⁸⁵ J. Greenberg, *Classic Monograph on Languages of Africa*, London, Longman, 1976, p.101.

⁸⁶ Egbe, "A Socio- Artistic ...", p.13.

centuries and led to the scattering of this population into several ethnic groups now found in Cameroon.⁸⁷

The Banyang people were a mixture of the Ekio, Efik and the Ejagham of eastern Nigeria. At that time, major and minor groups were in search of favorable conditions such as living space, security for habitat. Subsequently, discontent between them further forced their migration from Eastern Nigeria to the lower part of the Cross River forest⁸⁸. While there, constant quarrels soon erupted between themselves and this led to the disintegration of the group. The Banyang people then left the lower part of the Cross River to the Ejaghams and moved eastward. After staying together for some time, family problems sprang up and again this set in disagreement which witnessed another break off, leading to the formation of upper Banyang villages. This settlement was in isolated patches in the forest along the upper part of the Cross River.⁸⁹ This situation has so far produced what is known today as lower and upper Banyang.

Nevertheless, in spite of this controversy about the origin and migration of the Banyang tribe, a large majority of my informants held tied to the fact that, the history of the people generally came from two migratory trends or routes; the border of Ekok in quest for space and the waterside of Manyu for fishing adventures.⁹⁰ That is, those who came through the border (*Keaka* speakers) later on trekked to join their brothers (Banyang, Anyang and Boki) who had settled along the banks of the river carrying out fishing. Hence both sources are quite substantial in explaining the people's history. The manner in which this people settled and how the society was set up accounts for our next preoccupation.

B. Settlement and Organisation

Settlement is any form of human habitation where the inhabitants carry on variety of activities such as agriculture, trade, manufacturing, defence etc. This range from a lone building (single isolated farmstead), to the largest cities and conurbation of the world.⁹¹ It varies in types, forms, patterns, distributions, size, functions, status, range and facilities, stage of development and even physical setting and complexity. The pattern of settlement that a community assume, takes into consideration aspects such as security, accessibility and communication amongst others. As such, it remains the centre for human activities.

⁸⁷ Egbe, "A Socio- Artistic ...", p.13.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹⁰ Interview with Tabi Manaseh Batte, 75 Years, Village Notable, Mamfe, November 19th 2020.

⁹¹ N. Martin, *Advanced Integrated Human Geography, Concepts and Techniques*, Connecticut, Greenwood Publishing Company, 2nd Edition, p .165.

Organisation on the otherhand simply refers to the structure or set up of an ethnic group, clan, and tribe in diverse trends (politico- economic and soicio- religious) of the society. How the Banyang settlement was arranged can be envisaged below,

1. Settlement

With regards to the settlement pattern of the Banyang people, this study found out that before they became subject to colonial rule, they were not united politically as a people. They were scattered all over the forest in various separate small settlements (farmsteads). These farmsteads were the residential structure of the tribe. E. H. F. Georges⁹² in his work states that, "the Germans upon their arrival found that the villages consisted of scattered hamlets and compounds". P. A. Talbot⁹³ working on the people of Southern Nigeria noticed that the whole area from the Niger to Rio- del- Rey Rivers is composed of people living in independent unconsolidated and small groups.

To add, Mansfield⁹⁴ and Zintgraff's⁹⁵ contemporary account on the Banyang area supports this view. According to the former, there was a complex of six to ten houses closely followed by ten(10) minutes distance of farms, then two single huts after which farms followed again by six houses and so on and so forth. The latter on his part noted similarly the smallness of the settlement which often comprised of two or three and sometimes ten to fifteen houses. In most cases, each of these units was separated from the other though they all could recognise their common origin.

Generally, each of these residential units though affiliated with a superior residential community (clan), had a certain degree of independence. Each unit was a corporate residential community identified separately from the other as it had sovereignty over its own built up space, farms, warriors and apparatus of government. In addition, each identified itself with its own name called *Etok*.⁹⁶ This form of Banyang settlement pattern could be explained by inter connected and overlapping set of geographical, economic and socio-cultural factors which were mutually reinforcing.

⁹² NAB, File No. A/F 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, p .5, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

⁹³ P. A. Talbot, *The People of Southern Nigeria, A Sketch of their History, Ethnology and Language with an abstract of the 1921 Census, Vol. 4*, London, Frack Cass and Co.ltd, 1969, p .567.

⁹⁴ Ruel, *Leopards and leaders: ...*,p .27.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁶ V. O. Enoh, "Politics, Power and Authority among stateless societies of Manyu Division, The case of Banyang and Keaka under German rule", Maitrise dissertation in history, University of Yaounde, 1987, p .25.

Again, the environmental settlement of the Banyang people was characterised as: a thick Equatorial forest which acted as a physical barrier to the expansion and growth of the small settlement units into large compact villages. The people during those days lacked sufficient and adequate tools to clear a vast area which could harbor thousands of people with enough farming space. As a result of these, it was practically difficult for the units to expand on the same spot. Mbu⁹⁷ attests to this when he says "our fathers evidently clear the bush to live and farm. But the tools they used were not like those we have today". As such, the time that could have taken a family to cut off large trees in such a vast land of forest in order to support a big family for generations to come, was by far longer than the time that could have taken the descendants of two of his sons to move nearby where large trees were relatively fewer to establish their own homes and farms.⁹⁸

Equally, the choice of accommodating, building and farming space was determined by the nature of the relief, availability of building materials and water supply. These considerations thus influenced the size, distance and distribution of the settlement units.⁹⁹ It's worth noting here that even when such family members dispersed, they never lived in isolation. They maintained economic and social contacts with the land of their parents. As such, they had to return to the home of their father from time to time. Manaseh¹⁰⁰ affirms to this when he says "even though the descendants of a father's son moved, they still owe allegiance and respect to their father whose authority was overall. His representative, being usually their eldest brother at that moment come for consultation, on health, marriage problems and also to venerate the ancestors (*Barem*), to report on aggressions and ask for military assistance".¹⁰¹

In addition, farming also accounts for the settlement unit of the Banyangs since the prime economic activity of the area was subsistent agriculture. It was essentially based on the cultivation of traditional staples for local consumption. With the soil relatively fertile, the territory was vast and agriculture was purely extensive. Equally, the environment was quite harsh for the development of pastoral economy due to the humidity of the area, the presence of diseases from insects and lack of grass for pasture. In this agricultural society which was extensively based on crop cultivation, the family provided the agricultural labour force. The

⁹⁷ Interview with Mbu Oru Sampson, 70 Years, Farmer, Nfairock, January 15th 2020.

⁹⁸ Interview with Bechem Henry, 76 Years, Farmer, Nfairock, January 15th 2020.

⁹⁹ Enoch, "Politics, power and...", p .26.

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Tabi Manaseh Batte, 75 Years, Village Notable, Mamfe, November 19th 2020

¹⁰¹ *Idem*.

result then was for each family to locate its residence in the centre of its farm.¹⁰² These residences were farmsteads distant from one another, small in size and population.

Therefore, the physical environment or the ecology as well as the purely subsistence agriculture favoured the dispersed settlement pattern. The yield was used to sustain only the family members, giving rise to small, dispersed and semi-independent settlement units. In explaining this, Fortes and Evans- Pritchard¹⁰³ wrote "in a general sense, modes of livelihood, together with environmental conditions which always impose effective limits on modes of livelihood, determined the dominant values of the people and strongly influenced their organisation". The most important factor which account for the phenomenon of social fragmentation of the Banyang is the socio- cultural aspect. As semi- Bantus, sharing Manyu characteristics, they had their own socio- cultural values which condition their activities and organisation or the codes to which they lived in their societies. This was their creativity and inventiveness which was influenced to a great extent by the ecology.

To add, Banyang settlement pattern was dictated by social considerations. When a family established on its own farm and the population expanded with generations, more land for farming and residence was put under use. These small agricultural communities grew into lineages consisting of large and extended families. As a result of this increasing population, there was the exhaustion of the available natural resources. This became a push factor to expansive migration.¹⁰⁴

Consequently, the children of the founder begins to migrate from the home of their parents and establish adjacent settlement of their own which eventually grew to new and separate settlements units.¹⁰⁵ The distance and size of the settlement was particularly determined by the physical environment which prevented the migrants from opening up new lands nearby. R. Horton¹⁰⁶ writing on stateless societies in the history of West African states "where there are gross inequalities in the peripheral land supply, some segments becomes almost totally blocked in the process of expansion. In these circumstances, migration becomes the order of the day".

¹⁰² R. Horton, "Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa", in A. F. Ajayi and M. Crowder, *History of west Africa*, eds., Vol.12, London, Longman, 1971, p .84.

¹⁰³ F. Mayer and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *African Political systems*, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, p .8.

¹⁰⁴ Though land was a vast resource, it was limited because it was difficult to clear the forest and put the land into use. Also in primitive time, a continuous decline in harvest could be interpreted as an exhaustion of resource (soil). This spurred migration as it happened in Fotabe, a community in the Banyang tribe.

¹⁰⁵ Enoh, "Politics, power and...", p .28.

¹⁰⁶ Horton, "Stateless Societies in...", p. 85.

Throughout the Banyang tribe, whenever children become mature, they always wanted to acquire, accumulate and control their wealth.¹⁰⁷ In this connection, R. Horton¹⁰⁸ says "where the pressure on land is at all great, of course the younger generation may be neither willing nor able to spend their days helping their seniors on their farms and waiting to take over when they die. Rather they will try to expand into new lands". In some cases, when children get of age they refuse to subject themselves to their elder brothers. In practical sense in the Banyang tribe, the eldest son of the founder inherits family headship and control from their father. Thus for the junior sons to avoid losing their identity, the tendency was for them to establish their own settlements with their descendants, where they evidently become heads or leader. These settlements then grew to lineages and eventually semi- independent communities.¹⁰⁹ A glaring example of this type of settlement was the Ndifaw village group which constitutes communities in Upper Banyang like Tali, Ebeagwa and Ejwengang.

In some case, stubborn children were often asked by their parents to settle apart when they become mature or sent on exile. Also, when such children were judged strong by their worriorout- look, they were sent to establish their own settlement where they could check the aggression of aggressive groups into the area.¹¹⁰ Among groups with this settlement patternisthe Ayuketayuk clan comprising communities like Ibekaw (Egbekaw) Besongabang, Small Mamfe and Okoyong.

In addition, certain families decided to split and settled separately because of health reasons. Before the arrival of the Europeans, the spread of disease, epidemics, plaques and witchcraft accusations led to several deaths. Thus certain families encouraged separate settlements so as to reduce the death rate in that family¹¹¹. For instance some lineages from the same clan could be free from a desease spread as a result of their distance.The separate settlement units of each members of the same family also encouraged decimation of an entire family inter-group feud.¹¹²

With the arrival of the Europeans, nearly all the segments were regrouped into larger residential communities. However, when the settlement were regrouped, the fragmentary pattern was still obvious for each lineage maintained its identity within the wilder community. The name of the eponymous ancestor became the name of the clan and each lineage group

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Tabi Manaseh Batte, 75 Years, Village Notable, Mamfe, November 19th 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Horton, "Stateless Societies in...", p. 85.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Tabi Manaseh Batte.

¹¹⁰ *Idem.*

¹¹¹ *Idem.*

¹¹² *Idem.*

identified itself with the name of its founder.¹¹³ Each tiny residential unit was therefore the basic political community and with the regrouping of settlement, the residential community increased in size and numbers, widening the new political community. It is thus safe to conclude that the territorial fragmentation of resident pattern in Banyang tribe was due to the inter-play of geographical, economic and socio-cultural forces though the geographical was primordial because it determined the mood of the people's livelihood. Let's now pay attention to the organisation of the tribe.

2. Organisation

Generally, Banyang communities were founded on the basis of a clan. A clan was composed of a number of villages, with each being divided into neighborhoods or families. The term clan here is identified with the family or a group of families not necessarily related by blood. These families are divided by habitations into one or more village groups and are in the main blood relations tracing from a common ancestor.¹¹⁴

After the regrouping of lineages by the Germans, lower and upper Banyang had fourteen (14) clans and fifty-nine (59) villages.¹¹⁵ Among these clans, six (6) of them made up the upper Banyang while eight (8) occupies the lower Banyang.¹¹⁶ The origin of this people is related to the various clan histories of the tribe. The Baku clan claims that Eshobi, a village founded by their ancestor Tabong Eyong, is their place of origin. Nfawtek claims Nchang as their place of origin. Ndifaw clan to Abu Angwa and Ndifaw as their ancestors.¹¹⁷ Mbang clan has Mbang from Nchang settled in Tembong. Awanchi clan from Kendem and Efu their ancestor. Taiyong clan has Tanyi-Njok as their ancestor. The two Nkokenoks claim Nkokenok their ancestor while Nchumbere clan is uncertain of its original ancestor.¹¹⁸ Each of these clans is further divided into villages grouped by virtue of their language, customs, and common ancestral origin. A cross section of the various clans and villages in the Banyang tribe can be illustrated in the table below before looking at its general organisation.

¹¹³ Enoh, "Politics, power and...", p.35.

¹¹⁴ B. E. Ako, "Banyang clan: A History of Traditional Institutions and Culture, Pre-colonial times to 1961", Master's dissertation in history, University of Yaounde 1, 2017, p.24.

¹¹⁵ NAB, File: Af/37, No. 1460/1973, "Intelligence Report on the Kembong Area, Mamfe Division", 1973, p.10, consulted on the 04th of February 2022.

¹¹⁶ C. E. Tabi, "Native Courts in Mamfe Division 1922-1961", M.A dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2005, p.12.

¹¹⁷ NAB, File No: Af/23b 4655, LG, Federation of Banyang, Bangwa, Mundani and Mbo clans, Mamfe Division, 1950, pp. 10- 14, consulted on the 04th of February 2022.

¹¹⁸ Interview with Tabi Manaseh Bate, 75 Years, Village Notable, Mamfe, November 19th 2020.

Table 1: Clans and villages in the Banyang tribe

Upper Banyang	Lower Banyang
1) Ndifaw clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tali • Eguingang • Ebeagwa 	1). Nchumbere clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachuo Akagbe
2) Tanyi-Nkongho <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takwai • Mambo • Bara 	2. Nfawtek clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachuo-Ntai • Ebegkaw • Nchang
3) Tainyong clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sabes • Mbanga pongo • Atebong • Ebuensuk 	3). Nkokenok I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bakebe • Eyang • Faitok • Ashum
4. Tinto clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tinto I • Tinto II • Tinto Mbu 	4). Nkokenok II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Etoko • Nchemba • Mbatop • Kepelle • Ekpaw • Taiyo • Mbio
5. Awanchi clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kendem • Bokwa • Mbome • Kepoti • Moshi 	5) Bekang clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyang-nchang
6. Mbang clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defang • Ntenmbang • Fotabe 	6). Ayuketayuk clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Besongabang • Okoyong • Small Mamfe • Etemetek
	7). Baku clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eshobi • Eyang • Faitok • Mokonyong
	8). Dede Ngui clan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nfainchang • Fumbe • Mbinjong

Source: NAB, File No. A/f 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, p.3, consulted on the 04th of February 2022.

II. GENERAL ORGANISATION

In this portion, we will dwell on the general set up of the tribe. Banyang community is a cosmopolitan society made up of people from diverse linguistic and cultural background living a communal life style. With regards to their lineage system, Banyang lineage is entirely patrilineal. The family head is the father and is through him that succession is made. On the part of inheritance, the family head before his death is supposed to distribute his inheritance among his children with the oldest son having the greatest authority over the others. He also doubles as the custodian of the father's properties. On to succession, the heir must not necessarily be the immediate children of the father. It can be his nephew or grandson. The organisation of this people principally under the social and political trend takes us to our next sub topic.

A. Socio- political organisation

Socio-politically, the Banyang people do not practice a centralised, established and recognised chieftom. They live in scattered and independent villages on the central basin of the Cross River with each village being an independent political group. From a functional perspective, power is the ability to govern and maintain order within a group. In the Banyang community, power is a traditional authority based on habits and acceptance of the group's customs. Banyang political system has been organised to respond to some basic needs of human survival. That is, the need for internal order and defence against external enemies. With this said, lets now analyse the Banyang society base on it social look.

1. The society

The social set up of the Banyang people is a blend of their activities and customs manifested through cultural festivities like marriages, birth and death celebrations, witchcraft and lycanthropy. Pre-colonial Banyang society was cohesive in structure though the villages were separated and dispersed in the forest. This society was strictly stratified into two main classes; the privileged class - "*boh etok*" (aborigines) included personalities like, the chief, lineage heads, "*Nnem moh*"¹¹⁹ and the under privileged class - "*boh ndem*" (nonentities) included the poor and the lepers.¹²⁰

Another difference during this era was between slaves and free born. Since slavery was a common social institution in the community, slaves lived in segregated quarters away from

¹¹⁹ "*Nnem muh*" were men who supported their leader, acquired their status through their own efforts and represented section of wider groups.

¹²⁰ Interview with Agbor Jacob Agbor, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Mfaitock, March 29th 2020.

the free born (*Boh mek*).¹²¹ Slaves (*Bassem*)¹²² settlements were generally at the entrance of each village or terminus as traditional Banyang tenet required.¹²³ Some of these slave quarters (*Kessem*) were often named after the villages of slave owners. For instance *kessem* Eshobi, *kessem* Besongabang, *kessem* Okoyong, and *kessem* Batchuo Akagbe.¹²⁴

The sole reason behind the location of slave settlement either at the entrance or terminus as earlier mentioned was due to the search for security and the desire to distinct slaves (*bassem*) from free borns (*boh nmek*), since they were believed to be sorcerers. Thus, by settling them at both ends of the village, the Banyang believed that they would use their magical powers to drive away evil spirits, invaders and enemies from entering the village and also to be the receivers of the first blow or attack from any invader. This distinction between slaves and free born was strictly followed and respected right up to the level of inter-marriages between both groups which was forbidden.¹²⁵

In addition, pre-colonial Banyang society was characterized by secret cult agencies with numerous functions and activities. Membership for instance into some of these secret societies like *Ngbe*, was open only to free borns as a way of preserving their nobility. Other secret cults included *Obasingjom*, *Enok*, *Mfam* for the men and *Ndem*, *Nkim*, *Ekpah*, for the women.¹²⁶ Memberships into these cults required items like gifts or payment of a goat, tobacco, jugs of palm wine, kola nuts, bottle of gins, a piece of cloths, and coconut fruits. These cults played a pivotal role in the socio-political, economic and religious trends in the society. For instance, cases in pre-colonial Banyang community such as witchcraft, stealing etc were handled by these cults to guarantee peace and stability in the community.¹²⁷

Marriage in pre-colonial Banyang society was not an exception. It was both endogamy and exogamy, contracted according to customary laws and practices through exchanged of gifts between families. E. G. Parrinder¹²⁸ shares this view when he says "marriage in Africa is a social affair, concern as much with the contracting families as with husband and wife". There were five types of marriages in pre-colonial Banyang society namely marriage by betrothal, through debts, age marriage, levirate marriage and exchange marriage, with that of

¹²¹ *Boh mek* are legitimate children or free born children of the land in which non of their parent was a slave.

¹²² *Bassem* are children considered as illegitimate which one of or all the parent were slaves, they were considered as strangers to the land and had nothing to do with the political and economic association.

¹²³ The singular form of slave in *Kenyang* is known as *Nsem* while the plural form is refers to as *Bassem*.

¹²⁴ E. S. D. Fomin and V. J. Ngoh, *Slave settlement in the Banyang country 1800 - 1950*, Buea, University of Buea Publication, 1967, p.17.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.17.

¹²⁶ Interview with Victor Enow Besong, 65 Years, Farmer, Mfaitock, March 12th 2020.

¹²⁷ *Idem*.

¹²⁸ E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London, Sheldon, 1962, p.97.

betrothal being the most common.¹²⁹ Polygamous marriage was widespread as well.¹³⁰ Banyang people marry third cousins or from immediate neighbours. It is partly due to this inter- marriage that has cause the belief system of the people to be identical.

According to them, marriage transactions passes through betrothal phase before getting to the marriage proper. As soon as a girl child is delivered, she is betrothed few years later.¹³¹ The betrothal process is characterized by the fiancé giving a present or gift to the girl's parents or guardian before witnesses as a sign of prior notification, accompanied with a jug of palm wine which is shared by all.¹³² This customary marriage was essentially an agreement between the partners in marriage.¹³³ As a token of sealing the contract of marriage and establishing a close bond between the families, the bride price was given by the groom's family to the bride's family. The items of bride price which were in kind in pre-colonial Banyang society included sheep, salt, stockfish, tobacco, a red cap, a goat, jugs of palm wine or anything decided upon by the bride's family.¹³⁴

In the domain of health, traditional doctors or herbalists were in charge of the people's health. This was a sector where pre-colonial Banyang made significant scientific progress through medicines.¹³⁵ Things like bark of tress and herbs of different categories, liquid concoctions and incantations were used to treat diseases like dysentery, compound fracture, infertility in women and mental disorder by traditional medicine men.¹³⁶ Fees for treatment during this period were mostly a cork, hen, and in serious cases like mental disorder, the fees would range from two goats to three sheep.¹³⁷ It is worth noting here that pre-colonial traditional medicines were capable of treating illnesses which modern scientific medicines has not been able to cure today.

Birth celebrations in Banyang tribe are occasions for merry making because it is seen as a means of re-incarnation and a blessing to the family. When a woman is pregnant, she smears camwood all over her body. This symbolizes the renewing of blood supply. Immediately a child is born, he or she is wrapped with large leaves *-njelako* belief to protect the child. The

¹²⁹ E. E. Nicoline, "The Evolution of Kinship and Marriage Customs among the Banyang Since the late Nineteenth Century", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma (D.I.P.E.S. II) in History, E.N.S. Yaounde, 1999, p. 12.

¹³⁰ NAB, AF/24, File No.159/160, D. C. Tovey, "Banyang Clan: Reassessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area, 1930", p .44, consulted on the 04th of February 2022.

¹³¹ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 60 Years, Lecturer, Buea, January 5th 2020.

¹³² *Idem*.

¹³³ Nicoline, "The Evolution of...", p. 12.

¹³⁴ Interview with Tangie Tanyi, 75 years, Village Notable, Tinto I, January 8th 2020.

¹³⁵ Interview with Anderson Achou, 66 Years, Traditional healer, Ashum, December 13th 2020.

¹³⁶ Interview with Elias Tabi, 81 Years, Herbalist, Fotabe, January 10th 2020.

¹³⁷ Interview with Stanley Achuo Eta, 77 Years, Herbalist, Besongabang, December 10th 2020.

placenta (*Ebuh*) and the umbilical cord are buried under a plantain tree.¹³⁸ The belief behind this practice holds that the child would grow as the plantains grow and when it is ready for consumption, it was harvested and prepared for the child to eat. For if this process is not done this way or properly handled, maybe thrown away carelessly, it is belief the child will become abnormal.

The mother of the child remained at home for fourteen days if the new born was a boy and seven days if the child is a girl.¹³⁹ A week later, a male child was circumcised but the operation is usually postponed until boyhood in certain families where such an operation had once resulted in infant death. In recent times, this act of circumcision on a male child is carried out when the baby is seven days old.¹⁴⁰ Circumcision was also carried out on the girls in lower Banyang by cutting off their clitoris.¹⁴¹ While feeding her baby, the mother of the child sits on a special stool.¹⁴² This stool was preserve jealousy because it was believed if a young girl sits on it and have intercourse with a man, she will get pregnant. The baby born was presented to the ancestors and during such occasions, the concern prepares food and invites friends and neighbors to share and feast with them.¹⁴³

The naming ceremony of a child is very significant in Banyang believes. A child is usually named after a deceased paternal or maternal family member, a belief that their ancestors will be pleased to be remembered by renaming them in the land of the living. J. S. Mbiti¹⁴⁴ affirms this when he says "names given to children may come from the living-dead who might be thought to have been partially reincarnated in the child especially if the family observes certain traits in common between the child and a particular living dead". A child could equally be named by an outsider who usually accompanies his request with a gift of tobacco for the father and a deer skin made for the child.¹⁴⁵

Child naming is a ceremony that requires a lot of consideration. A child is not named immediately after delivery. Time is given while observation takes places whether the child

¹³⁸ Noline, "The Evolution of...", p. 13.

¹³⁹ K. E. Tabe, "Banyang socio-cultural History from pre-colonial to the development of Banyangi Quarters", Maitrise dissertation in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 1991, p. 25.

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Mary Bessem Manyi, 66 Years, Farmer, Eyangatemako, June 30th 2020.

¹⁴¹ V. O. Enoh, "Politics, power and Authority Among the Stateless societies of Manyu Division. The case of the Banyang and Keaka under German and British rule", Post graduate Diploma in History, University of Yaounde, 1987, p.10.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ NAB, File No. A/F 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, p .25, consulted on the 03th of February 2022.

¹⁴⁴ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p.118.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.90-91.

has come with its name or not. A child comes with a name by showing signs and portraying similar characteristics of the person who already had the name. The name of the first child of the family is usually from the father's family. A woman can only name a child after the husband has done so, except the case where the child is gotten out of wedlock. The Banyangs do not have separate names for male and female. Any child can bear any name no matter the sex. Typical Banyang names include Bessem, Agbor, Ashu, Egbe, Ebot, Enow, Ayuk etc. While parents of twins adopt the name "*Tanyi*" and "*Manyi*" respectively.¹⁴⁶

Naming of babies does not only individualise the child but also suggest the circumstances under which the child was born. Usually, a child wrongly named will exhibit continuous ill health until the name is changed, accompanied by rituals performed. Twins, "*Befak*" are very popular believed to be a token of fertility, purported to bring good luck.¹⁴⁷ They bear special names that identify them like *Manyor*, *Enownyor*, *Agbornyor*, *Etengeneng*, *Ayamba* etc while that of their followers includes *Nkongho-nyor*. A child who comes out with the legs during delivery is name *Etengeneng*, a child who survives after the mother has buried two or more children before- *Nyakwa* and *Abe-amaka* for a child whose mother or father dies during, few days or weeks before delivery. But nowadays, the trend has changed as we now see children being named without considering the circumstances in which they are born.¹⁴⁸

There is equally a water ceremony where the first time the mother leaves with the baby, water is poured on the zinc and allowed to fall on the baby. It is emblematic to be a blessing from the gods (*Eburukpabvi*) in the sky.¹⁴⁹

As to what concerns death customs in the Banyang tribe, death is viewed by the people as a bad reaper since it deprives them from their loved ones. It is also seen as a vehicle through which they can convey their messages to their ancestors.¹⁵⁰ It is for this reason that whenever a family member dies, the corpse while still in state is asked by those crying to greet all those related to them when they meet in the world beyond and to send them blessings and good luck. Death rituals among the Banyangs vary with age, status and circumstance. Emphasis on the status of the deceased has made the ritual to be both simple and complex. Simple rituals are performed for ordinary people and elaborate rituals for a member of a cult.

¹⁴⁶ Interview with Mary Bessem Manyi, 66 Years, Farmer, Eyangatemako, June 30th 2020.

¹⁴⁷ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁸ *Idem*.

¹⁴⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Mbi Irene, 55 Years, Teacher, Yaounde, May 4th 2021.

When a person dies, the corpse is washed with hot water, salt and kerosene to prevent smelling.¹⁵¹ Relatives, most especially women sit on the floor around the corpse, cry and keep away flies. At the appropriate time for burial usually sunset (4pm- 5pm), the corpse is wrapped in a mat and taken to the grave site where relatives are called upon to make speeches.¹⁵² During the speech, each speaker throws earth on the deceased while lowered inside the grave three times incantating to the ancestors to receive the departed and at the same time requesting the dead to have a peaceful journey. After this, the mat is covered with earth. If the deceased was a man, his gun, spear, cutlass, and bags are placed in the grave but the bulk of his other belongings all broken and laid on the side of the road.¹⁵³

Child death was announced immediately and the corpse was buried shortly after death. At the death of a partner, be it wife or husband, the concern is bath in a stream with special herbs in order to cleanse the shadow of the deceased partner from the living one.¹⁵⁴ As customs requires, when a woman loses her husband, other women gather around her, sit her on a mat on the floor and her hair is shaved down to earth. Banyangs refers to such a widow as *kenkwesse* before her husband's name. For instance *kenkwesse* Ashu (literally Ashu's widow).

On the occasion of the death of a woman of importance, her body is washed with hot water, dressed with new clothes, her hair well arranged, she is taken out of the house accompanied by wailing women while the men dig the graves (1.8metres), six feet for burial.¹⁵⁵ If she was a member of any association or cult like *Nkim*, *Ndem* as is very common with women, the association takes charge of the burial rites.¹⁵⁶ The spouse of the deceased is forbidden to shake hands with anybody. Relatives shave their hair and wear only sack clothes as a sign of mourning. The deceased is usually buried in front, behind or inside the house (her sitting or bed room).¹⁵⁷ Widows are to wait a year or two in case of a chief's wife before remarry or inherit by the successor of the deceased.

On the part of a prominent or titled man in the society such as a leader of *Ngbe* cult, he is laid in the open just for few hours and very few people are allowed to see him. The occurrence of his death is immediately followed by weeping from women and children. Other

¹⁵¹Interview with Mbi Irene, 55 Years, Teacher, Yaounde, May 4th 2021.

¹⁵²*Idem*.

¹⁵³ Tabe, "Banyang socio-cultural...", p .26.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Ebot Frida Orock, 67 Years, Farmer, Nfaitock, March 16th 2020.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Eyong Judith Eyong, 66 Years, Councilor, Tinto Mbu, February 6th 2020.

¹⁵⁶*Idem*.

¹⁵⁷*Idem*.

members of *Ngbe* retire to the *Ngbe* bush (*Ebe Ngbe*) after which they return with *Ngbe* inside the room where the corpse is laid to perform burial rites on the deceased known as "*Asoo Ngbe*". During this period, weeping and crying is forbidden but after the exercise exclusively for members only, the *Ngbe* masquerade (*Emanyankpe*) makes one or two wails of mourning as a symbol for general mourning.¹⁵⁸

If the deceased was a chief, the message of his demise was then passed across the entire village by a town cryer. Thereafter, people gathered in front of the deceased chief's house but nobody cries until he is buried. While elders of the village remain with the deceased in his room, the rest of the village stays outside waiting. Only those present inside the room know what happens inside the room as the activities are kept secret. The chief is secretly taken out at night into the bush or inside his room for burial. In pre-colonial times, two or four slaves were placed at the bottom of the grave and buried alive to accompany the chief and continue serving him in the life beyond.¹⁵⁹ After this, the rest of the village is now informed that the chief had gone on a journey. His death ceremony which lasts for two to three months is crowned by "*Etokobi-atu* or *Batem-ambi*," a secret dance.¹⁶⁰

In the death of a stranger, he is buried on the road by which he entered the village so his spirit may find path back to his home land.¹⁶¹ According to the Banyang believe, strange death which appears suspicious, the deceased residence is sealed for seven days immediately the corpse is buried. On the seventh day, the *Angbu* masquerade comes out and performs rites before the resident is unveiled. The conception of this rite holds that the spirit of the deceased may not have rest and in effect, it will keep looming around. To avoid such a perturbing situation, the presence of *Angbu* masquerade is needed to drive away the spirit (ghost) from the village.¹⁶²

In the same vein, bad death such as accident, suicide or attack by any cult such as *Mfam*, is seen as a curse and treated with caution. Some rituals and incantations are performed asking the ancestors to clean the family of such a curse and to prevent future occurrence. Usually mourning is forbidden and the deceased is buried almost immediately. They believe if

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Bate Robert Epey, 75 Years, Traditional ruler, Nfairock, March 15th 2020.

¹⁵⁹ Enoh, "Politics, power and...", p. 10.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Talbot, *The people of...*, p. 526.

¹⁶² Interview with Lucas Eyong Esi, 61 Years, Commissioner of Police, Yaoundé, April 26th 2020.

mourning takes place, it will annoy the ancestors of the land and such death would be rampant in that said family.¹⁶³

A pregnant woman who dies during pregnancy is operated upon and the foetus extracted from her womb. In Banyang tradition, two people can not be buried in one grave. As such, the death child removed from the deceased stomach is buried in a separate grave. On the part of the woman, she is buried with a plantain stem on her arm for to feel the presence of the child. In the absence of this practice, it is believed her ghost would trouble her family and might even carry away any child.¹⁶⁴

Generally, at the end of a burial ceremony in irrespective of the status of an individual, a rite is held seven days after the day of burial called "*Amonewu*". It involves members of the deceased family, friends and sympathizers. They eat, drink and dance from dusk to dawn. After a year, the person/persons wearing sack cloths performs a sack cloth removal ceremony called "*Akpa*". From then on, he/she can now wear ordinary clothes.¹⁶⁵

Witchcraft is another major characteristic of the Banyang society. Witchcraft according to Banyang cosmology is in two folds or purpose: good and bad. The formal is believed to be an ambivalent power used by chiefs and traditional doctors. Chiefs uses it to rule and protect their subjects from enemies while traditional doctors, herbalists, priest, seers and dibias, it enables them to discover herbs for healing. According to J. S. Mbiti¹⁶⁶, witchcraft is employed by these fellows. The later purpose (bad) of witchcraft holds that it is a substance in one's stomach whose soul can go out at night and cause harm to people.¹⁶⁷ Through the notorious activities of witches and wizards, E. I. Bolaji¹⁶⁸ says "African concept about witchcraft consist in the belief that the spirit of the living human beings can be sent out of the body on errand of doing havoc to other persons in body, mind or estate. Witches have guides or operate singly and the spirit sent out of the human body can act either invisibly or through a lower creature, an animal or bird".

My informant T. Tanyi¹⁶⁹ added "jealousy comes first and witchcraft follows after". J. S. Mbiti¹⁷⁰ commenting on this assertion states "great deal of believe here is based or derives

¹⁶³ Interview with Lucas Eyong Esi, 61 Years, Commissioner of Police, Yaoundé, April 26th 2020.

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Ebot Frida Orock, 67 Years, Farmer, Nfaitock, March 16th 2020.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Micheal Oru Takang, 60 Years, Mechanic, Yaoundé, May 4th 2021.

¹⁶⁶ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University, 1969, p. 44.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Micheal Oru Takang.

¹⁶⁸ E. I. Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion*, London, SCM Press Ltd, p .18.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Tangie Tanyi, 75 years, Village Notable, Tinto I, January 8th 2020.

¹⁷⁰ Mbiti, *African Religions and...*, p. 198.

from fear, suspicion, jealousy, ignorance of false accusation which go on in African villages. People fear around to leave their hair, nails, clothes which they are normally in direct contact, in case their enemies will use and work evil magic against them". At times, when a witch or wizard confesses his misdeeds and atrocities for instance, an attack in the night and is wounded while in his animal kind, a traditional doctor is invited upon to treat him or her (through application of herbs or changing his animal kind) while on a sick bed. Otherwise no amount of drugs will provide a cure. Banyang beliefs in witchcraft explain why particular persons at particular time and place suffer particular misfortunes, accidents, diseases and so forth. In sum, witchcraft in Banyang is a theory of causation, concern with the singularity of misfortune.¹⁷¹

In addition, Banyangs equally believed in lycanthropy that is, the existence of a human soul in common with certain animals. Equally through metamorphosis, a person is believed to be capable of changing his soul in another form totally to that of an animal. Usually, the soul is thought to leave a man's body while he is asleep or in trance and on rare cases, the man's actual body is transformed. Consequently, whatever happens to the animals, affects the human counterpart. In other words, the death of an animal is followed by that of his human kinsmen who shares a soul with it in the world of the living though in some cases, he or she can be cured by a specialised healer who handles such cases.¹⁷²

This transformation is usually carried out by witches and those who intend to harm others either by injuring or devouring their crops.¹⁷³ The fact that these animals behaved as commanded remains a mystery. Some of these animals possess by individuals are lions, tigers, elephant, chimpanzees and crocodiles.¹⁷⁴ Communities in the river side of Egbekaw believe some of them have souls in common with Cross River hippopotamus. E. H. F. Georges¹⁷⁵ notes that the village head of Bakebe was killed while he went hunting by an individual who transformed into an elephant after both men had a bitter quarrel on the previous day. The role play by administration under the political structure in this tribe will be examined next.

2. Administrative rule of the Banyang tribe

Our discussion here will focus on how power was structured in this tribe. Banyang political set up was characterised by a stateless society, with a democratic government at the

¹⁷¹ Interview with Mbu Oru Tanyi, 68 Years, Village Notable, Nfaitock, January 7th 2020.

¹⁷² Interview with Achou Ben Enow, 64 Years, Herbalist, Egbekaw, Mamfe, December 22th 2020 .

¹⁷³ Talbot, *The people of...*, p .228.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Mbu Oru Tanyi.

¹⁷⁵ NAB, File No. A/F 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, pp. 76- 77, consulted on the 05th of February 2022.

village level consisted of several lineages which were often represented informally during village councils by lineage heads.¹⁷⁶ There equally existed clans, with clan councils made up of the various village heads in the clan. It is against this back drop that the Banyang people under the pre-colonial and colonial administration was administered as an ethnic group with clans and villages carved out. From this brief insight, let us now take a look on the political role of the tribe.

Pre-colonial Banyang tribe consisted of a segmented society, with a decentralized political system. The traditional authority of the people was based on independent village governments. Each village within a clan was autonomous, able to exercise its own authority as well as possess its own government. There existed little or no centralisation of power in the hands of an individual, no paramount chief to exert control over large areas. P. A. Talbot¹⁷⁷ supports this view when says "the whole region between the Niger and the Rio del Rey was compose of people living in independent, unconsolidated and usually small groups subjected to no central government".

Power and leadership was stratified and shared among the various authorities of the different villages which were equally administrative units. The highest governing body was the clan council and decisions taken were geared towards ameliorating the function of the clan, channel to the clan council for resolutions. The consensus agreed upon was binding on all the people.¹⁷⁸ The clan head also doubles as the head of the council who had the collective accumulated knowledge of the clan and also the fountain head of tradition.¹⁷⁹ Pre-colonial Banyang council was both a legislative and judiciary body while secret cults made up the executive organ. As such, disputes which could not be resolved at the village level were brought forth before the clan council.

At the helm of power in the village was the chief, a colonial appellation introduced into the Banyang vocabulary. Before the coming of the colonialist, Banyang referred to their leaders as "*nfor Etok*" (community head or leader).¹⁸⁰ The chief is directly in charge of the administrative affairs of the village. What is more important about the position of the chief is his dependence for his authority upon those whom he represents. Aspects in the pre-colonial

¹⁷⁶ NAB, File No. A/F 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, p. 66, consulted on the 05th of February 2022.

¹⁷⁷ P. A. Talbot, *The people of Southern Nigeria, a Sketch of their History, ethnology and language with an abstract of the 1921 census, Vol. 4*, London, Franckcass and Co.Itd, 1967, p .31.

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Eta George Oroock, 80 Years, King Maker, Buea, May 5th 2021.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Enownchong David Eyong, 83 Years, Leader of Ngbe, Douala, September, 14th 2020.

¹⁸⁰ *Idem*.

era such as chieftaincy (*Kefo*) were a thing of the community and remained always subject to community control. As M. Ruel¹⁸¹ notes "a leader or chief stands in front, he is the person who has all the people, but remains essentially the representative and should always be aware of this".

The executive and legislative authority of the Banyang community centred on the village councils and secret cults. This institution had the authority for the maintenance of law and order, laying of fines etc. The lowest court was the sub lineage council which handled cases that occurred at the sub lineage level. As such, crime victims were severely punished with fines levied through the provision of palm wine, goats, or chickens. Just in case anyone was not comfortable with the verdict of the sub lineage council, he channels it to the lineage council. The highest court that serves as an appeal court was the village council. Members of this council acquired their positions in varied ways but the most visual qualification was age. Usually, certain persons who are generally eloquent, understanding and popular in the society were entitled to sit in this council as spoke persons.¹⁸²

Community leaders serve as chief judges and presided over the council. Cases tried in the council included murder, theft, assault, slander, sorcery (witchcraft) and adultery.¹⁸³ Formal respect was always shown to a community council meeting judicially directed particularly towards its most senior representatives (senior elders or the community leaders).¹⁸⁴ With regards to the pattern of judicial action, emphasis is laid on the element of arbitration or reconciling disputants and seeking an agreed settlement. In many cases heard by community councils, the element of arbitration was certainly present such as the case of divorce negotiation and inheritance.¹⁸⁵

Pre-colonial Banyang judicial system had fixed penalties for committing crimes like theft. The punishment was the payment of twelve pieces of clothes plus the return of the stolen goods.¹⁸⁶ In western Banyang (Upper Banyang), the thief might have the first finger of his right hand cut off. There equally existed trials by ordeal. That is to say if a person is accused of crimes like witchcraft against another fellow and he or she denies it, the person will be tried by ordeal. By this, he was given a herbal concoction (*Mfam*) to drink and if found

¹⁸¹ M. Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among a cross-river people*, London, Tavistock Production, 1969, p .66

¹⁸² NAB, File: 1930. No. 3441.Vol.1, "Native Courts, General Correspondence" ,1930, p .22, consulted on the 05th of February 2022.

¹⁸³ Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders:...*, p .160.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Adolf Ayuk Esakenong, 74 Years, Vice Principal, Kumba, March 26th 2020.

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Bate Robert Oben, 60Years, Traditional Ruler, Nfaitock, September 29th 2020.

guilty, his belle and feet becomes swollen. Difficult and complicated cases were tried and failure to arrive on a conclusion, the case was adjoin to the next day. This time around is held in an open environment in the presence of the people in the clan as witness to the consensus to be arrived at.¹⁸⁷

Furthermore, there were no fixed native courts that existed in this era. Persons who committed crimes like murder, gave a girl to the decease's family as punishment. In some cases, he was sold as a slave or hanged depending on the circumstances of the murder. Cases of adultery, the adulterer was required to pay with a slave and a goat which was slaughtered and shared among the judges. If the act was done with a chief's wife, he was immediately sold to slavery. Same thing applies to a witch worthy of his or her crime, gave another child in exchange for the dead child or was asked to bring back the child to life.¹⁸⁸ In some cases, problems concerning the women folk were jointly resolved by the women themselves though they owe alliance to *Ngbe*, the supreme body whose decisions could not be altered or disobeyed.¹⁸⁹ The Banyang economy and her relations with other people (tribe) bring us to the next element to be discussed.

B. Economic and foreign affairs

Generally, the backbone of the Banyang economy was agriculture. A. Youdeiwei¹⁹⁰ defines agriculture as the purposeful work through which the elements of nature are harness to meet up human needs. E. E. Evans- Pritchards¹⁹¹ describess agriculture as the first and most important revolution on the earth which transformed the human economy and gave man the control over his own food supply. Following this evolution, man began to plant, cultivate and improve by selection of edible grasses, roots and tress. Foreign affairs on the other hand zoom into the relations that exist between the Banyangs and their neighbors. As a people, they interact or inter- relate for political (diplomacy), economic (trade) and social (cultural values) interest. In this light, the economic trend basically on trade and the social relations between the Banyang and her neighbors notably the Ejagham with whom they maintain social and cultural affinity will be examine.

¹⁸⁷ Interview with Pascal James Tanyi, 73Years, Village Notable, Yaounde, August 20th 2021.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Jacob Ebot Agbor, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Nfaitock, September 29th 2020.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Ayuk Eyong Tommy, 70 Years, Leader of Ngbe, Douala, January 15th 2020.

¹⁹⁰ A. Youdeowei et al, *Introduction to Tropical Agriculture*, London, Longman, 1986, p.32.

¹⁹¹ E. E. Evans- Pritchards, *The Nuen: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of the Nilotic People*, London, Longman, 1940, p .77.

1. The economy

Traditionally, agriculture the main preoccupation in pre-colonial Banyang land was practiced with two principal crops cultivated: cocoyams and plantains. Maize, beans, groundnuts, cassava, pumpkin, melon, pepper, yams and sweet potatoes as subsidiary crops.¹⁹² Equally, palm trees were cultivated and their nuts harvested and processed into cooking oil.¹⁹³ The techniques of cultivation were generally crude and rudimentary. This involved clearing a piece of land mostly done by the men with cutlasses at the beginning of the dry season.¹⁹⁴ M. Ruel¹⁹⁵ describes this system in his words "except for the initial heavy work of clearing, most of the farm works were undertaken by the women. The ideal in farming was to select a large area of land which was either forest or ground that has been abandoned, untouched for a long period of time. To clear this land progressively for new farm plot, it is cultivated for two or three years subsequently before being left to revert to bush as secondary forest".

Shifting cultivation and crop rotation were the two farming methods commonly used in the area and the scarce factor of production was labor rather than land though families constituted the labor force.¹⁹⁶ As soon as clearing is done by the men at times with the help of their hamlet contemporaries, their wife or wives burn the grass and the felled trees most of which remained half charred. Thereafter, they were accompanied by their children in hoeing, planting and weeding. Harvesting was a collective exercise.¹⁹⁷

As a factor of labor, slaves were very instrumental. They performed the riskiest jobs like climbing of tall palm trees. Their usage was preferred because the cost of acquiring and maintaining them was lesser than the cost of hiring labor. With the existence of a large subsistence economy, the produce was mainly used for domestic consumption to satisfy household needs while others were beyond household consumption. That is the surplus produced. The distribution was accompanied by trade by barter.¹⁹⁸ Those with abundant items like salt exchanged it with those who had cocoyam and vice versa. In this light, the community lived happily. No form of money was used during this day as a medium of exchange.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹² NAB, Af 16. File N° 56/29, H.O. Anderson, "A preliminary Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe", 1929, pp.3-5, consulted on the 05th of February 2022.

¹⁹³ Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders*:..., pp.10-11.

¹⁹⁴ K. E. Tabe, "Banyang socio-cultural History from pre-colonial to the development of Banyangi Quarters", Maitres dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1991, p .5.

¹⁹⁵ Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders*: ...,p .10.

¹⁹⁶ Tabe, "Banyang socio-cultural...", p. 6.

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Solomon Atong, 67 Years, Teacher, Eyangatemako, June 30th 2020.

¹⁹⁸ S. J. Epalle, *Plantation and development in Western Cameroon, 1958-1975: A study of Agrain Capitalism*, New York, Vantage press, 1985, pp.4-6.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Mary Bessem Manyi, 66 Years, Farmer, Eyangatemako, June 30th 2020.

Moreover, Trade (long and short distance trade) in items and slaves was equally an integral, normal and indispensable economic activity of the society. Each village had its own local market and its products mostly those for immediate consumption like cassava, garri, cocoyam, salts, oil, pepper, palm oil, kernels, palm wine and variety of local beer and spirits that were exchanged.²⁰⁰ Important markets during this era were in places like Tali, Eyang, and Kembong, each well placed in relation to the cultural boundaries of the area. Much of this trade appears to have been taken up not with subsistence goods but with prestigious items. Slaves, livestock and food for the European markets, ivory, kernels and oil flowed from East to West in return of salt, clothes, guns, and other European products which came in to the area from the West. In these transactions were also involved purchasable institutions such as associations and cult agencies, with the majority coming from the Ejagham to lower and upper Banyang.²⁰¹

Long distance trade took place with non- Banyangs (Ejagham, Boki, Anyang, and people of the Northern grassfield). Traders from the Northern grassfield and the Bangwa for instance bought pigs, goats, sheep, pottery product, just to name a few, to sell in Banyang markets. In return, they acquired palm oil, oranges, *ogbono* and garri from the Banyang market.²⁰² As middlemen in long-distance trade from the Cross River basin, prominent items in this trade were slaves, tobacco, ivory and iron implements. Ebuensuk one of the slave markets was an eight-day market whose average attendance in 1950 was estimated at two thousand (2000) people.²⁰³ As to what concerns short distance trade, it was carried out locally and involved the exchange of foodstuffs, smoke meat, pottery products, drums, baskets, bags, and thatches. Leguminous products like eru, waterleaf, black leaf (*tachot*) were not left aside.²⁰⁴

As slave dealers, Banyangs bought slaves from the grassfield and sold to the people of Calabar in Nigeria. These slaves that were being marketed upon had a particular status in the traditional Banyang society. The purchase of slaves was at different rates, depending on the sex and physical fitness. For instance a male slave was purchased for twelve (12) pieces of clothes and a gun while fourteen (14) pieces of clothes and a gun were levied for a female

²⁰⁰ Interview with Lucas Ebini Njock, 60 Years, Politician, Mamfe, December 20th 2020.

²⁰¹ *Idem*.

²⁰² Interview with Tangie Tanyi, 75 Years, Village Notable, Tinto I, January 8th 2020.

²⁰³ NAB, File No. A/F 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, p. 64, consulted on the 06th of February 2022.

²⁰⁴ Interview with Peter Oru, 67 years, Village Notable, Yaoundé, September 16th 2020.

slave.²⁰⁵ Some prominent slave markets were located at Tali and Ebuensuk in upper Banyang where slave dealers from the grass field and the Calabar area converged. There equally existed another at Besongabang called "*Esie ta mbu*".²⁰⁶

Away from trade, pre-colonial Banyang society was equally engaged in other economic activities such as hunting. Hunting was of particular importance in this area because of abundant forest. Before the advent of Europeans in this land, people used very high techniques of hunting. For instance holes were dug and covered with dry leaves or grass on the path of animals like elephant and by so doing, the elephant could fall inside the hole and could easily be killed.²⁰⁷ Professional hunters as well used all sort of traps, bows and arrows, crude weapons like spears, axes, and other stone sharp object were manufactured and used for this purpose. Rites and purifications intended to maintain the health of the hunter and protect him from danger in the forest were performed at the beginning of every hunting season.²⁰⁸

Furthermore, fishing was never left out as an economic occupation of the people. Fishing was carried out in Manyu river by the lower Banyang while the upper Banyang fished in the Cross river near Nigeria. Collective fishing was carried out in communities like Batchuo Akagbe and Ntai, Besongabang and Etoko during the colonial era.²⁰⁹ Some of the fishes caught were distributed to every free born of the village. Villages of the river side such as Ebgekaw was prominent in fishing, with the use of locally made hooks, canoe, nets and locally made traps used by fishermen.²¹⁰ There was equally, the domestication of animals such as dogs preserved mostly for food, goats and sheep as important element in performing sacrifices.²¹¹ The aforementioned activities especially trade, gave room for interaction between the Banyang and other people (tribes), a subject we shall now explore.

2. The external gaze

Banyang tribe is bounded by neighbours. Mindful of the fact that no tribe talkless of a community is self sufficient enough to be independent, the Banyangs enjoyed good neighbourliness from immediate neighbours and various transactions involved with other societies as far distances as possible. One of this neighbours we can cite is the Ejaghams with whom they share a lot in common such as history, language, culture, customs and belief

²⁰⁵ NAB, File 1922/1, No. 868/1922, "Annual Report on Mamfe Division", 1922, p .42, consulted on the 06th of February 2022.

²⁰⁶ Interview with Mbu Paul Ayuk, 62 Years, Village Notable, Ashum, December 13th 2020.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Elvis Nkongho Eta, 67 Years, Hunter, Mfairock, March 16th 2020.

²⁰⁸ *Idem*.

²⁰⁹ *Idem*.

²¹⁰ Interview with Samuel Ebaitong, 68 Years, Fisherman, Ashum, September 5th 2020.

²¹¹ *Idem*.

system as some of the most outstanding manifestation of the close ties that exists between the two. Away from the Ejagham, the Bali, Bangwa, Calaba and Ikom people equally enjoyed a long history of interaction with the Banyangs.²¹²

Relations between the Banyang people and her neighbours will focus principally on the economic and socio-cultural domain. On the economic sector, inter-tribe co-operation centered primordially on trade because Banyang economy was largely subsistence and as such, most products were consumed beyond the household. The distribution of these products out of the tribe was carried out by means of exchange during the early nineteenth century when the Banyangs were mostly engaged in distant trade. That is, westward toward the coastal markets of Calabar and Ikom from where they exchanged slaves, ivory and livestock for European goods.²¹³

At Ebuensuk for instance, slaves were brought mostly by traders from the eastern grassfield. Meanwhile the Bangwa traders brought pigs, goats, sheep, pottery products and provisions like palm oil, plantains, corn, groundnuts and few dogs to sell. These traders in turn exchanged their products for Keaka salts, cloths, tobacco, bangles, beads, garri and soap from Banyang traders.²¹⁴ Before the arrival of Europeans in the Banyang society, the people had made contacts with their Northern neighbours the Bali people for instance who had long acted as middle men in the barter trade system with the Banyangs. The Bali on their part brought to the Banyangs foodstuffs such as groundnuts, maize and took back home particularly palm oil from the Banyang land.²¹⁵

In addition, Banyang traders acted as middlemen between the eastern escapement and central grassfield traders on one hand and the western Ejagham traders on the other hand. Items like guns, gun powder, rum, cloths, mirror which came from the Ejagham traders of Nsanakang and Agbokem were retailed to the Banyang and transported to the escarpment. In return, the Ejagham middlemen obtained slaves, ivory, livestock and iron products like cutlasses, knives, spears and sent them by boat or canoes to Ikom.²¹⁶ Other section of Banyang traders took their trade goods to Kembong, a community in the Ejagham land, where they exchanged their livestock and slaves for Keaka and European products. Some who could

²¹² NAB, File No. A/F 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, p .63, consulted on the 06th of February 2022.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ Interview with Solomon Atong, 67 Years, Teacher, Eyangatemako, June 30th 2020.

²¹⁶ NAB, CE1925/2, File No. 1567/1926, J. W. C. Rutherford, "Annual Report on Mamfe Division", 1926, p. 64, consulted on the 05th of February 2022.

not dispose all their goods in Kembong carried the rest to Calabar where they bartered them for European goods.²¹⁷

These interactions especially the Banyang – Ejagham relations was not all centred on the economic trend but equally on the socio-cultural domain. This can be explain by the fact that a handful of Banyang cult agencies, such as *Ngbe*, *Obasinjom*, *Mfam*, *Nkim* just to name a few all owe their origin from the Ejagham land as a result of this ties. M. Ruel²¹⁸ backs this fact when he writes "there were purchasable institutions as cult-agencies and associations, the majority of these coming into Banyang country from Ejagham and being passed from lower to upper Banyang". Inter-marriages were not excluded from this relationship which became one of the primary reasons why both the culture and belief systems of the people looks similar.

Conclusion

This chapter have analysed the generalities surrounding the Banyangs beginning with the historical background that is, their origin based on some myths and tales, linguistic and migratory history. To add, the residential pattern of settlement and structure of the people was under review. However, though the origin, migration and settlement of the people remains clouded with speculations, Banyang and Ejagham oral traditions as well as linguistic point of views were the most reliable sources used to support this chapter. From the above, we saw that the people lived in a decentralized society characterized by seceret cults and social groups, forms of marriages, laws and taboos, agriculture based on shifting and crop cultivation with the use of rudimentary farm method. In this regard, we also observed that trade was the primary factor that inter-relate the Banyangs with other neighboring tribes. After cross examing the general set up of this tribe, lets now take a kind attention on the early believes of the people, our focus of chapter two.

²¹⁷ NAB, File No. A/F 268/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "An Assessment Report on the Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division", 1930, p .64, consulted on the 06th of February 2022.

²¹⁸ Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders*:...p .12.

CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLY RELIGION OF THE BANYANG

This chapter of our work seeks to explore the pre-colonial beliefs of the people. From a polytheistic background, the Banyang man perceives religion as a man's made relation to a being.²¹⁹ Certain religious objects, arts and symbols, myths, beliefs and customs were a plethora of vehicles used in the acknowledgment of the existence of their gods. This belief for instance gave them a clear understanding on their perception of life after death. As such, they invent their worship to their ancestors through graven images in stones, wood, mud etc. A review of Banyang traditional religious ideas will now be examined.

I. BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHIES

Banyang religious belief was mainly in spirit of local importance and limited ranges. Ancestral veneration was most important either at local or tribal level. Commenting on veneration of gods and ancestors, Kayode²²⁰ says "ancestral worship is central to traditional religion in Nigeria, as well as in Africa as a whole. To the traditional African societies, life has no value at all if ancestral presence and power are not included". Ancestral reverence is a common feature of Banyang traditional religion. These ancestors are interested in the health of men in the family, community, clan, birth, fertility in crops and the ownership of land. They held the belief that in order to attain the Supreme God, there is the need for an intermediary or other spiritual entities.²²¹

These spiritual functionalities acted at the tribal, village, or family levels. They are called upon at times by diviners and priests who interpret instances when needed by their kin.²²² Equally, moments of ill omens, the concern invokes the spirit of these local deities like *Mfam*, *Efim*, *Amok*, *Esongwoh*, *Ekebwem*, *Obasinjom*, *ekun*, *bakundi*, *edimo*, and *epko-nden*, to fight against their enemies. Some of these deities had the following ways to manifest: *Mfam*, through the swollen of stomach and legs, *Efim*, through dancing and singing (attributes of insanity), *Amok* inflicts over weight while *Esongwoh* manifest the contrary and *Ekebwem* causes paralysis (*mbenti*).²²³ The people believed that these local deities could intercede on their behalf with local earthly spirits or particular individuals. Away from Banyang traditional religious philosophies, let us now examine their worldview.

²¹⁹ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 74 Years, Retired Lecturer, Nfaiok, March 20th 2020.

²²⁰ J. O. Kayode, *Understanding Africa Traditional Religion*, Ile-Ife, University of Ife, 1984, p .33.

²²¹ Interview with Bate Manaseh Tabi, 74Years, Village Notable, Nfaiok, November 20th 2020.

²²² *Idem*.

²²³ *Idem*.

A. Banyang Weltanschauung

Weltanschauung, a keyword in this study is of German origin. It etymologically comes from two words: "welt", which means "world" and "anschauung" which signifies "view". Literally, weltanschauung means worldview.²²⁴ Banyang belief systems are demonstrated through their daily activities and interactions with each other and through cult agencies. They do not distinguish between religion and culture, thereby making religion the very essence of their life. Banyang religion therefore permeates the life of the people affecting their general worldview and values. Her socio- political and economic organisations have a direct link with religious presentations. It is therefore with this in mind that some scholars describe Africans as notoriously religious. As E. G. Parrinder²²⁵ puts it "incurable religious". This situation implies that a study of the Banyang religious identity must necessarily entail a study of their worldview with regards to the immaterial and invisible aspects as seen below.

1. The immaterial and invisible

When we talk of the immaterial and invisible, we are making reference to the inanimate world. According to the Banyang perception, this world is dominated by a mystery that cannot be perceived by the physical human eyes.²²⁶ In this light, we will cross examine their worldview in relation to God, ancestors, spirits, man and the human soul. That is how these elements interconnect with the beliefs of the people.

Firstly with God, they hold the view that the Supreme Being (God) *Mandem* reigns in heaven, maker of heaven and earth and everything that dwells in it. He controls the sessions, lighting, thunder and the rain from heaven his home. The moon, the sun and the stars are representatives of his body.²²⁷ The sun and moon that shines during the day and night respectively are belief as God's eye that watches over mankind and all living things. Reasons why it is common for a Banyang man to call upon the sun and swear for anything accused of. In such occasions, you will hear saying like; "if I did what you people are accusing me of, let this shining sun sees me".²²⁸ This according to their beliefs is a serious oath because though it may delay, but the reaction must surely come. Banyang cosmology equally holds that, God's

²²⁴ Interview with Edouard Betobo Bokagne, 57Years, Associat professor, Yaounde, March 21th 2021.

²²⁵ E. G. Parrinder, *Religion in Africa*, Mddlesex Eng, Penguin Books Ltd, 1968, p .235.

²²⁶ N. J. Egbe, "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective", DEA dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2009, p. 20.

²²⁷ P. B. Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change", Post graduate Diploma (D.E.S) in Sociology, University of Yaounde 1, 2000, p.18.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

angels "*boh Mandem*" are his messengers whom he sends whenever and wherever he wants.²²⁹

Secondly, another element of Banyang world view is the ancestors. They believe that there is another world underneath the earth called *Barem* (ancestors).²³⁰ It is an abstract world, which becomes real to the people through the deeds of *Barem* whom they give offerings or appease on regular basis. The dead are considered as part and parcel of the living. As an essential dimension when it comes to their traditional beliefs they hold a firm conviction that their family or community leaders who had died are actually not dead per se but gone to a different world where they still relate with the living.²³¹ Despite the fact that the livings do not see them physically, they believe these ancestors are still with them either in the family or community as a whole. This believe also holds that they monitored all that takes place here on earth and can easily be consulted, when need be especially in times of problem so they can intercede with the Supreme Being, *Mandem*.²³²

Communication with *Barem* is done through dreams, visions, invocation and incantations specifically at midnight by showing special signs or conversation, a kind of solution to problems or cure to illnesses.²³³ Talking to them at first entails one going to the grave (since most of the Banyangs are buried behind their houses) to channel one problem to another. And since they are the closest link that men have with the spirit world, their problems are solved through an experience of psychological relief.²³⁴

According to Banyang belief, not everyone who dies is considered an ancestor.²³⁵ In this context, ancestors are looked upon as benevolent and protective men who have lived an exemplary life while on earth. In this vain, women no matter their status are not considered in the land as ancestors but what is however certain with them is their tongue. For instance, they can bewitch to someone while alive and if the victim does not reconcile whatever the differences maybe, such ill luck will hunt him or her until he or she goes to the decease and plead for forgiveness through ritual performance. The general believe here is to highlight the fact that all the dead hear although they all are not considered as ancestors.²³⁶

²²⁹ Egbe, "The Woman in...", p. 20.

²³⁰ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 20.

²³¹ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 74Years, Retired Lecturer, Buea, August 20th 2020.

²³² T. N. O. Quacoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan University Press, 1987, p. 43.

²³³ E. G. Parrinder Geoffrey, *African Traditional Religion*, London, Sheldon, 1962, p. 58.

²³⁴ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 22.

²³⁵ Egbe, "The Woman in...", p.19.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

To add, Banyang belief on man holds that when a man dies, the body merely discards while the spirit- *efongo* his suiviving personality goes to the land of the dead - *Barem*.²³⁷ In order to enter this new country, a rite known as *Etak* has to be performed by the most senior elder of the village group to enable the deceased to gain access. This rite usually includes offering of a special meat, soup and fufu meal in the decease's compound. It usually takes place four days after the commencement of the funeral ceremonies for a man and three days for a woman.²³⁸

To deny a person the performance of this rite is tantamount to condemning his spirit (*efongo*) to remain on earth, and thus be hunted by the ancestors. In the words of J. S. Mbiti²³⁹, "if they have been improperly buried, or were offended before they die, it is feared by the relatives or the offenders that the living- dead would make revenge. This will be in the form of misfortune, especially illness or disturbing, frequent appearances of the living- dead". This act of respect to the living dead is evident even among educated and Christian fellows where the pouring of libation to honour the ancestors usually precedes activities on social occasions.²⁴⁰ On such occasions, the *befongo* (plural of *efongo*) of all known *Barems* are invited to assist those present to preserve and perform their jobs well, good health and fertility in birth and crop production.²⁴¹

The life cycle of an individual Banyang ancestor usually lasts as long as the deceased person is remembered.²⁴² This however varies within the social and political status of each person. It is necessary however to distinguish between the rites of *etak* or *mbak* on the one hand, and the psychological side of remembrance. In the past, an ancestral ceremony might be performed simply to indicate to the community that the family concerned was in position to offer such sacrifice of remembrance to their ancestors.²⁴³ But sometimes, personal factors transcended ritual bonds. Feeling of affection that the living have for the deceased probably also helps to explain why the appearance of ancestral spirits usually in dreams is not feared but even sought for by loved ones still living.²⁴⁴

²³⁷ K. E. Tabe, "The Banyang socio-cultural History from Pre-colonial to the development of Banyangi quarters", Maîtres dissertation in History, University of Yaoundé, 1991, p. 18.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University, 1969, p.84.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 74 Years, Lecturer, Buea, March 20th 2020.

²⁴¹ *Idem.*

²⁴² Tabe, "The Banyang socio-cultural...", p. 18.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

According to the Banyangs such visits are part of the tutelary role that the ancestors play as protectors of the family and its individual members. In this capacity, they offer guidance and counseling and are regarded, addressed by the junior lineage member in the same way as the living members of the group. In the words of J. S. Mbiti²⁴⁵, "they know and have interest in what is going on in the family. They are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities".

A misfortune suffered personally or corporately is seen as a sign of ancestral displeasure. The interpretation of such misfortune is believed generally to take the forms of a warning that the people concerned have wronged the ancestors by not fulfilling certain obligations. They would be required to examine very closely their recent conducts towards their relatives and towards the spirits themselves. It may also be due to quarrels among family members which have plunged the ancestors to anger causing them to withdraw their protection.²⁴⁶ Often than not, witches take advantage of such situation to inflict misfortune on the prosperity of the afflicted family.

Thirdly, the soul is equally an aspect in relation to Banyang cosmology. Banyang beliefs hold that after the death of an individual, his soul lingers around till the celebration of the deceased's funeral. During this occasion, pieces of cooked food with dry meat are mixed together and thrown on the ground. Palm wine is then used to pour libation beside the food. In the process, the spirits of the departed ancestors are invoked by the most elderly in the village so they can admit the soul of the newly departed in the kingdom of the dead.²⁴⁷ At such moments, there is total solemnity as great communication is taking place between the living and the dead. The performer appeals to those deaths not to turn their eyes from the living and ends the ritual by greeting the people around him in a special way.²⁴⁸

Reincarnation, a belief in the Banyang tribe supports this view on the Banyang cosmology. It is manifested in the sense that when a person dies and with the completion of burial rites, the soul which is the immaterial part roams around temporarily and selects a womb to which it will go for rebirth.²⁴⁹ T. N. O. Quacoopome²⁵⁰ commenting on this says "reincarnation is the birth of an ancestor in the family". In Awanchi clan (Upper Banyang) for instance, there is the belief in the existence of a pool (*Aten*) where the spirits of the departed

²⁴⁵ Mbiti, *African Religions and...*, p.84.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 74 Years, Lecturer, Buea, March 20th 2020.

²⁴⁷ *Idem*.

²⁴⁸ *Idem*.

²⁴⁹ Interview with Tabi Manaseh Batte, 74 Years, Village Notable, Nfaietock, November 20th 2020.

²⁵⁰ T. N. O. Quacoopome, *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan, African Universities Press, 1987, p. 102.

and those waiting to be reborn resides. When chanting incantations on behalf of a barren woman, it is belief that these spirits hear these prayers and come to her rescue by providing her with a child. J. O. Awolalu²⁵¹ commenting on reincarnation says "the Yoruba strongly believe that the death have different means of coming back to the earth in human form". Be it the Banyang or Yoruba people, reincarnation is deeply rooted in the African traditional belief systems.

More over, the fourth element to explore on Banyang beliefs is spirits (good and evil). This is the milieu of local evil spirits and double men. By double men we are making reference to men with the ability to transform themselves into wild creatures like elephant, buffalos, hippopotamus, apes, and pythons just to name a few (lycanthropy). In the transformed state, they are capable of doing whatever they want. Some of these spirits transforms to do thing that are beneficial while others transform purposely to do evil by inflicting pains and misery to others in the society.²⁵²

At such moments of transformation, the evil spirit in them leaves the body while it is still in bed into a different space or environment. A. T. Sube²⁵³ in his dissertation on "Religion in Bakossi Traditional Society" says "the continuous or permanent presence of spirits in man is not necessary for his existence in the world. In other words, it is possible for the spirit to quit the body for a short time and stand alone as a separate entity, while the body is still living at a different place". This assertion ties with the worldview of the Banyang tribe on spirits and it is a testimony to prove that God, the creator of heaven and earth is a spirit and man whom he has created also has a spirit in him which is low and directed towards doing good and bad.²⁵⁴

To add, the fifth element in connection with Banyang religious world is the concept of life after death, an age-old belief that exists in the tribe. Traditionally, the Banyangs belief that death is not the end of life. Based on their perception, life is too worthy or precious enough to exist just here on earth and now. The motive behind life to them may seem to be described as if there exists only a birth- death- birth cycle as reincarnation would suggest.²⁵⁵ While still living on earth, they begin to ponder over the life beyond after their departure

²⁵¹ J. O. Awolalu, *The Concept of Death and Hereafter in Yoruba Traditional Religion*, Ibadan, Onibonjo Press and Book Ltd, Vol.18, 1979, p .66.

²⁵² P. B. Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change", Post graduate Diploma (D.E.S) in Sociology, University of Yaounde 1, 2000, p. 22.

²⁵³ A. T. Sube, "Religion in Bakossi Traditional Society", Department of African Literature, University of Yaounde, 1976, p.12

²⁵⁴ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 22.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

on the surface of the Earth. As such, they prepare themselves with charms and fortifications on their body (cuts, marks, dots with the use of blades) so when they die, they can live again elsewhere.²⁵⁶ Some cases of these fortifications occur in stances where it is observed that the circumstances surrounding one's death is not natural or genuine.

Consequently, the deceased is prepared to take revenge on anyone suspected to have a hand or involve in his/her demise.²⁵⁷ In the death of a youth, it is wished that his ghost should rise and go to a different locality to continue life which according to the people was shortened. In this case, the deceased is buried with herbs to facilitate this mission (resurrection). The Banyang way or method of burial very much reflects this belief. Before a deceased is lowered down the grave, words are spoken, objects such as knife, machetes, valuable items, the deceased possessions are buried along with him or her.²⁵⁸

Evidence of this belief is observed when a deceased is buried, few days later, a check on the grave is done to see if there are little holes or small fragments on the grave. If that is the case, they automatically affirm that the deceased has risen to either join the ancestors or continued with life elsewhere.²⁵⁹ We are made to understand that when this purpose of life after death is achieved, the ghost of the deceased begins to loom around. To E. G. Parrinder²⁶⁰, a ghost (*efónó ngu*) is an appellation of dead persons. In the Banyang tribe, there is the belief that a spirit becomes a ghost when the deceased has not received proper burial rites and as such, it turns to wander about between this world and the one beyond. Ghosts here are often harmless but notorious for stalking and harassing their targets until something is done to appease them in the form of burial rites.²⁶¹

At this juncture, there exist specialists in this act with fore eyes who capture the ghost's spirit and cage it inside a room for a long duration. While in this confinement, the ghost is being fed with food and enough pepper. The pepper is believed to stimulate the sensitive organs, the reasoning capacity and to improve the voice.²⁶² After being cared upon secretly in the village for a long time till when the ghost has regained its sensitivity, he or she is then given a huge sum of money to go in a faraway place or country where he or she is not recognized.

²⁵⁶ Interview with Agbor Nchong Agbor, 65 Years, Leader of Ngbe, Tinto Kerieh, December 19th 2020.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Peter Oru, 67 years, Village Notable, Yaoundé, September 16th 2020.

²⁵⁸ *Idem*.

²⁵⁹ *Idem*.

²⁶⁰ E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religion*, London, Sheldon, 1962, p. 37.

²⁶¹ Interview with Peter Oru.

²⁶² Interview with Tambe Abel Tobias, 57 Years, Teacher, Nfaitock, December 17th 2020.

Often, some easily changes their identity and start a new beginning in their new area.²⁶³ As a result of this practice, it was evident to discover relatives or friends of Banyang origin who had passed away (died) years back but still living especially in countries like Gabon and Equatorial Guinea (Panya) as it was referred to in the past.²⁶⁴

In some cases, the ghost often lingers around the village, appearing in both night and day before persons. Reasons maybe to cause fright, demand for something, or to pass across a message to his or her love ones.²⁶⁵ It is based on this stalking and harassing habits of the living that ghost in the Banyang tribe are sometimes considered to be evil spirits. More often than not, when the said wish of the ghost is accomplished, he or she vanishes and cease to exist in that said community. However, for fear that a dead person should not appear in the form of a ghost, exorcising rites are performed during the burial. This may take the form of herbs or charms. While in the field, the researcher was made to understand that some great structures that we see today incertain villages like Ossing, Ndewai, Kembong, Afab, just to name a few were far back constructed from monies sent by these fellows who are well to do in their new destination and more often than not, some still visits their villages of origin though in disguise.²⁶⁶ Away from the immaterial and invisible worldview of the Banyang people, let us now take a look at their material and visible worldview below.

2. The material and visible

Banyang material and visible world can best be express in terms of their flora and fauna. These are crucial aspects which play a significant role in their belief system. Among the flora and fauna are special leaves and creatures such as *Ndoagiri*, *Ntorebana*, *Mambep*, chicken, goat, tortoise, just to name a few use to perform rites and ritual.²⁶⁷ During moments like this, the animal killed symbolises sacrifice while the blood signifies giving back to God. These rites and rituals, accomplishes a two way transaction: man's world and the spiritual world of God. In this way, the animal victim is a mediating symbol because it partakes in both worlds. It lives in the human world, but belongs to the spiritual world.²⁶⁸

To add, the Banyang belief in the animate or visible world is equally characterised by a system of unidentified beliefs exhibited through superstition, ill omen, and revelations.

²⁶³Interview with Tambe Abel Tobias, 57 Years, Teacher, Nfaitock, December 17th 2020.

²⁶⁴*Idem*.

²⁶⁵*Idem*.

²⁶⁶ Interview with Frida Tabi, 70 Years, Housewife, Nfaitock, January 5th 2020.

²⁶⁷*Idem*.

²⁶⁸ N. J. Egbe, "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective", DEA dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2009, p. 19.

Among these material and visible elements of Banyang cosmology, we have: man, animals, and secret grounds.²⁶⁹ We will begin looking at each of them simultaneously beginning with man as the first element.

Firstly, man that is the human body according to Banyang belief is of two natures: the physical body and the soul (good or bad). This philosophy is explain in the sense that when a man dies, his spirit (good) goes to a spiritual realm mid- way to God as intermediaries between the living and God while the bad spirit comes out as ghost.²⁷⁰ This explains why in funeral celebrations, food is often scattered on the surface of the earth and wine poured on it (libation). At such moment, there is total communion between the living and the dead. The one pouring this libation invokes the spirits of the dead to accept their offer in the other world and eat with their great grandparents who departed from this world many years back.²⁷¹ This ceremony is refer to as "*Barem- verjuwe*".

Secondy, Banyang believes in the material and visible world is portrayed in animals. This is a system of undefined beliefs on birds and animals, often manifested through superstition, revelations, bad or awful signs and symptoms.²⁷² In it practical sense, it is believed that if an owl hoots besides someone's house at night, it signifies an ill omen. Meaning the bird is threatening to suck out blood from an occupant in the house, thus a symbol of dead.²⁷³ This now will plunch the family head of that particular house to visit his ancestors for consultation by invoking their spirits in the grave or visit a family priest to find out whose blood the owl is after.

In the same light, the seeing of a chameleon changing into colours is a sort of premonition to warn for future happening like death of a family member.²⁷⁴ Also, once a dog barks ceaselessly at night, it signifies the presence of an evil spirit. Reason being that dogs have the ability to scent evil. To add, the meowing of a cat is a harbinger of death. In effect, once it meows in a compound for long especially during odd hours (night), it is automatically believe that danger looms around.²⁷⁵ Equally, when a Banyang man or woman is in the farm and hears the chattering of a monkey around, he or she immediately believes that someone is dead in the village, the reason why its announce by the monkey. This also happens to hunters

²⁶⁹ N. J. Egbe, "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective", DEA dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2009, p. 19.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ Interview with Frida Tabi, 70 Years, Housewife, Nfaitock, January 5th 2020.

²⁷² Egbe, "The Woman in", p. 19.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Interview with Frida Tabi.

²⁷⁵ *Idem.*

who go deep into the forest for hunting. At times, it announces a serious event happening in the village. On the contrary, the visit of a bee is believed to be an announcement for a guest.²⁷⁶

In addition, the belief when encounter with a twin snake (a snake bearing two heads) is an indication for the arrival of twins from the victim or someone related to the family.²⁷⁷ Generally, Banyang believes here states that nothing is actually useless or taken for granted. That is, everything has one or two things to say that is attached to their belief. For instance stones too have their own believes they possess. In the past, pregnant women some times hold it in their hands or handbags and walk along as a symbol of protection from evil spirit. These stone is believe renders them powerless.²⁷⁸ Some special ones are also used in shrines like that of *Barem*. Streams or riversides too are believed to be homes for water spirits like the sea goddess and gods.²⁷⁹ How this people relate religiously will now be of interest to examine.

B. Relation to religiosity

The Banyang belief and worship God as the Supreme though they still explore the religion of their forefathers.²⁸⁰ This religion is the veneration of lesser gods or deities which serves as emissaries and intermediaries between them and God. These gods are represented by masquerades, shrines and emblems. They are generally relied onto discipline, witches, crime perpetrators and evil doers. M. Kunene commenting on the role of gods says "the gods are not worshipped in Africa but revered. They are participants in man's life as allies. They themselves may sometimes enlist the services of special men and women to convey their will. Man equally has the right to appeal to them on issues affecting his welfare".

Each of these diety has it own role to play in the live of the people. *Mfam* protects the people against witchcraft, *Obasinjom* against misfortunes, illness, and detect witchcraft, *Anbu* drives away dead spirits etc.²⁸¹ Since God does not interact directly with them (Banyangs), they pass through these lesser gods to know the cause of misfortunes.²⁸² God creates these divinities in the category of the spirits. This explains why a visit to the grave of ancestors is always made before a family member leaves for a long journey or took part in any business.

²⁷⁶Interview with Frida Tabi, 70 Years, Housewife, Nfaitock, January 5th 2020..

²⁷⁷ Interview with Beltha Grace Nkwa, 65 Years, Farmer, Yaounde, April 22th 2021.

²⁷⁸ *Idem*.

²⁷⁹ *Idem*.

²⁸⁰ N. J. Egbe, "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective", DEA dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2009, p. 19.

²⁸¹ *Ibid*.

²⁸² *Ibid*.

This is usually done in order to cleanse the person, in case of a family curse.²⁸³ Contrary to what the missionaries thought about tradition, this people greatly honored their ancestors. This belief is what the people have lived and died with it, and has been handed down from generation to generation. The connection between this people and nature will be seen next.

1. The Banyang man and nature

The worldview of the Banaynag society is holistic and its spiritual ways of life does not distinguish between sacred and ordinary experiences. For everything is connected to nature. Natural phenomena are buried with varieties of significance when interpreted upon. That is, nothing happens without a lesson, message or a secret that is passed across in each of the happenings. One of such natural phenomena in the Banyang land often experienced is the reaction of blood in the human flesh. It symbolizes a lot of things or meaning to a Banyang man. When blood for instance shakes continuously on one's lips, it is believed he or she will eat something palatable while in the position of one's palm, it is believed something good awaits him or her.²⁸⁴

But in case on one's biceps or the left eyes, it is believed as ill luck. Such as losing a dear one that will result to mourning or something catastrophic. In addition, the kicking of one's feet on a journey carries a message.²⁸⁵ The right foot signifies a fruitful journey while the left foot indicates a bad one. Same thing applies when a rat crosses on one's path. From left to right signifies something positive while negative tells the contrary.²⁸⁶ As a characteristic of African communities, there exist norms, taboos or forbidden aspects which guide the society as explained below.

2. Laws and Taboos

Laws are stipulated regulations that govern the way of life in a community. Jurists and advocates of law see law as a rule established by the authority to govern the lives of people in a particular community or country.²⁸⁷ Law in our context refers to principles that regulate the behavior of people in the Banyang society. Taboo on its part, are things or acts that are not welcomed, forbidden, unacceptable and prohibited in the society.²⁸⁸ Acts like this necessitates

²⁸³ Interview with Beltha Grace Nkwa, 65 Years, Farmer, Yaounde, April 22th 2021.

²⁸⁴ Interview with Agbor Chi-Agbor Ndakor, 71 Years, Traditional ruler, Mamfe, December 20th 2020.

²⁸⁵ *Idem.*

²⁸⁶ *Idem.*

²⁸⁷ Interview with Ebini Patience Oneke, 52 Years, Advocate, Buea, February 10th 2021.

²⁸⁸ *Idem.*

that the culprit be punished without delay. With respect to norms in the Banyang land, the following will be enumerated;

Firstly, the killing of a python. Anyone who kills a python in the Banyang land must present it poisonous bile unburst to the entire community.²⁸⁹ This according to the belief of the people is to avoid the poisoning of innocent people or people hated by their peers. In the same light, the tasting of palm wine by the provider, which has become an ethnic practice, was not left out. This palm wine when being consumed in a gathering, a little portion of it must be left in the container for it to be handed to an elderly person for libation.²⁹⁰ While drinking, sometime is found bees roving in and out of the container or glass which must not be removed while drinking with any object except with a finger. If otherwise, it is believed the victim will suffer from a swollen lip.²⁹¹ It is equally lawful for a junior person to neither collect something from an elderly person with the left hand nor extend a handshake with the elderly first.²⁹²

Secondly, we have a law on theft which is a minor offence. In this scenario, the thief is asked to refund the stolen property or pay the value. But if the stolen article is of great value, the thief was sold as a slave.²⁹³ However, no matter the circumstances surrounding such an act, the face of the thief is painted black with charcoal and mandated to walk naked around the village. Despite his predicaments, it was forbidden for him to be injured upon by onlookers.²⁹⁴ This law equally states that, the first finger of the right hand of the thief was cut off and in case he or she continues to steal, the subsequent fingers will follow suit.²⁹⁵ In case of murder, the murderer is asked to pay a fine of a girl from his or her family to that of the deceased family with an additional fee of one girl equivalent to the value of £3.10 pounds paid to the village council.²⁹⁶

As to what concerns taboo in the Banyang tribe, that which will be discussed in this study are those that were very prominent, centered on two domains: marriage and sex.²⁹⁷

To begin with marriage, Banyang tradition holds that marriage is permitted only between parties with no blood relation.²⁹⁸ After thorough investigations prior to marriage

²⁸⁹ Interview with Beltha Grace Nkwa, 65 Years, Farmer, Yaounde, April 22th 2021.

²⁹⁰ The first glass or cup of palm wine poured is referred to as *ñti ñmem* while the last is called *nñere mñe*.

²⁹¹ Interview with Njang Tambe Abel, 71 Years, Commissioner, Yaounde, May 13th 2022.

²⁹² *Idem*.

²⁹³ Interview with Beltha Grace Njock.

²⁹⁴ *Idem*.

²⁹⁵ *Idem*.

²⁹⁶ *Idem*.

²⁹⁷ *Idem*.

acceptance and the results proven that both parties are not in any way blood linked, not prone to diseases like leprosy or witchcraft resuscitation before the marriage rites can proceed. However, if later discovered that both parties are related by blood, the marriage was annulled immediately.²⁹⁹

On the sexual aspects, intercourse between brothers, sisters, half-sisters, half-brothers, and the wife of one's father or brother is forbidden. In case of occurrence, the punishment for the male partner is death or he is sold as a slave while that of a female is banishment.³⁰⁰ In some cases, a public sacrifice is offered to the goddess of the earth or ancestors.³⁰¹ Equally, an adulterous woman is not allowed to cook food for her husband, regarded as a very gravious and "heinous" crime. If such does happens, it was believed that the husband of such a woman will probably die after eating the food.³⁰² This aspects of laws and taboos has been implemented into the Banyang society from time immemorial till date and the fact that some are still active today, is an indication that they are worthy in the society. The examination of Banyang traditional religious practices will now be our next objective.

II. BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

The historical narratives of any culture or belief is viewed with certain landmarks reminding them of the past events that have given rise to the present as well as guiding the future direction. Amongst the Banyang people of pre-colonial era, landmarks were manifested through traditional practices so as to preserve and pass on these important aspects of their religious heritage from one generation to another. This segment explores some religious cults practices which were and are today still carried out by the Banyang people as part of their belief systems. It focuses on cultural institutions and practices. Our motive behind this is to examine those traditional and cultural practices where the religious belief of the people is visualised. J. Pobe³⁰³ rightly observed that "African cultures are through and through religious".

On their cultural life in particular, it represents a passage through which one can catch a glimpse of their religious universe. Culture is generally seen as being dynamic and this

²⁹⁸ E. E. Noline, "The Evolution of Kinship and Marriage Customs among the Banyang Since the late Nineteenth Century", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma (D.I.P.E.S. II) in History, E.N.S. Yaounde, 1999, p. 15.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ Interview with Agbor Chi-Agbor Ndakor, 71 Years, Traditional ruler, Mamfe, December 20th 2020.

³⁰² K. E. Tabe, "The Banyang socio-cultural History from Pre-colonial to the development of Banyangi quarters", Maitres dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1998, p.18.

³⁰³ J. Pobe, *West Africa: Christ Would be on Africa Too*, Geneva, WCC publications, 1998, p .5.

implies that religion being one of the key elements of culture cannot remain static. As a matter of necessity, it co-exist with culture.³⁰⁴ In as much as customs are not always religious, many contains religious ideas that helps to strengthen and perpetuate some customs and in turn, appear to be some sort of a religion. In the course of our discussion, we acknowledge the fact that all practices have a cultural significance, but not all cultural practices are religious.³⁰⁵ Thus, we are interested in cultural practices specifically to show that some are religious in the worldview of the Banyang people. These religious cultural practices can be discussed from a common background.

A. The common ground

The phrase common ground here makes reference to the various cultural practices which portrays the cosmology of the people, generally or commonly practiced by all in the tribe (family, village or clan) void of any barrier.

Among the Banyangs, communal practices are performed for and on behalf of the entire village, tribe or clan in circumstances like scarcity in human and crop production, the enthronement and dead of a leader, when threatened by an epidemic in rare occasions, droughts, war expedition etc.³⁰⁶ Generally, rites of this magnitude are performed by specially ordained persons (priest) trained for such. In most cases, these rituals takes place at a shrine, a palace ground, a stream or under a particular tree based on it significance. The principle behind each practice is that of communion with the ancestors through offerings and sacrifices.³⁰⁷ These sacrifices may consist of libations with water, whisky or palm wine and food given. It may also take the form of spilling the blood of an animal such as goats, chicken etc. These sacrifices according to the cosmology of the people establish a covenant between them and their ancestors.

Often, in the demise of a prominent man in the society for instance a chief, a small shrine is erected outside the village and a medly of his personal possessions partially broken and placed inside. After this, his descendants gather at the shrine, dig a small hole on the ground and offer libation of water calling his name at the same time. The belief behind this

³⁰⁴ Interview with Belth Arrey Enow, 74 Years, Retired Lecturer, Nfairock, March 20th 2020.

³⁰⁵ *Idem*.

³⁰⁶ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, p. 58.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow.

practice is to show the deceased that he has not been forgotten by his family here on earth. This rite is done once only after death.³⁰⁸

Furthermore, during periods of scarcity, the whole village assembles in the chief's compound, some times in the village street in a place is often referred to as *Nkem* or *acha*. This ceremony consists of sprinkling water, food and palm wine on the ground by elders who at the same time invoke the ancestors- *Barem*. The objective of this invocation is to secure fertility both in women and crops. Formaly, there was a similar ceremony which *Eja*- goddess of war was invoked during war expeditions.³⁰⁹ The practice of this ritual was done in a shrine consist of large circle of stones called *Batioja* prior to a war- like expedition. During this ceremony prior to their exit, all the fighters adorned themselves with a mystical white chalk which has the power of warding- off harm.

When severe casualties were recorded in the battle field, slaves who were the weapon carriers would similarly be decorated and become active fighters. And if the expedition lasted for long, an elder or the clan head on rare occasions when clans fought together, beats the *Eja* drum from the start of the expedition until their return.³¹⁰ All these conditions were believed to have come from their ancestors. Away from the general religious practices of the people, there were others which were limited specifically to certain tribes, as examined below.

1. Tribal cult practices

Tribal practices in the context of this study refer to the various religious cult practices performed in the Banyang tribe as a belief system. These practices cuts across particularly those carried out by cults. They act as a vechicle which transmit the beliefs of the people in different worlds. In this vain, cults in the light of *Ngbe*, *Obasinjom*, *Nkim*, *Ndem* and *Mfam* will all be examined respectively.

a. Ngbe

The word *Ngbe* according to the Banyang language literally means "Tiger". The tiger here is being regarded as a powerful and the most violent animal in the forest.³¹¹ *Ngbe* is the most prominent, influential and authoritative socio-cultural and political institution among the

³⁰⁸ Tabe, "The Banyang socio-cultural...", p. 6.

³⁰⁹ NAB, File AB 19. No. 11380 vol I, E. H. E. Georges Assessment Report on Banyang Clan, 1930, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ There is a dialectical variation of *Ngbe*. The Banyang call it *Nyampke*, *Niankpe* or *Ngbe*, the Ejagham call it *Mgbe*, and Efik call it *Ekpe*. The use of these appellations will be used in this work especially in quotations.

Banyangs.³¹² *Ngbe* cult originated from the Calabar region around the 18th and 19th centuries when Calabar was still one of the major centres of West African trade and a prominent trade route that traders used in the Efik region.³¹³ In the course of this trade, the Ejagham bought *Ngbe* and was later borrowed by their neighbours, the Banyangs.

Membership in *Ngbe* is open to all male free born, young or old but slaves are not generally admitted and even if admitted, they are not allowed to attain higher ranks in the cult.³¹⁴ Besides slave beings, women are not allowed to be members. The only exception was women mostly of old known as "*Manyaneroh*".³¹⁵ To gain admission in this cult, an aspirant has to contact first the leaders (*Sessekou*) with a jug of palm wine and kola nuts to declare his intentions. It is after drinking this palm wine with fellow members that the aspirant is informed on the fees generally composed of items like yellow powder (*sekok*) to be place on the forehead of a new initiate, a jug of palm wine and food (plantains), tobacco, five kola nuts, a goat, sixteen jugs of wine, a bunch of plantains, palm oil, a bowl of beans (*bako*), a bowl of melon seeds (*Nkwai*), a bowl of pepper (*bayh*), salt (*ngang*), sixteen maize and a bowl of groundnuts (*ngegisi*).³¹⁶ In addition to these basic fees, other articles like loincloth and sleeping mats were bought³¹⁷.

After the provision of the aforementioned requirements, the aspirant is taken into the *Ngbe* bush (*Ebe Ngbe*) where he is then initiated into the cult. From then on, he is admitted into the lower ranks of *Ngbe* from where he could progress into higher ranks. *Ngbe* has junior ranks or grades like (*Ekat, Bakundi, Esen, Ebe Ngbe, Mboko, Mutanda, Ntae Ngbe*) and senior grades like (*Dikaba, ntēm̄etēm̄h̄t̄iri* and *Sessekou*). Progress through it is purchased, with the leader (often the village head) or the highest purchaser known as *Sessekou*.³¹⁸ This title is regarded in two folds; those bought refer in *Ngbe* as honorable because it is not by merit but rather was given to persons of influence, positions or often lobbied for. On the hierarchical or hereditary point of view, it is obtain in instances when one's father or relative who was once a leader (*Sessekou*) in *Ngbe* passes away, the son or his assistant (*ntēm̄etēm̄h̄t̄iri*) takes over the title.

³¹² Interview with Enowmanyi Solomong Atong, 65 Years, Leader of *Ngbe*, Yaounde, May 27th 2020.

³¹³ M. Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among a cross-river people*, London, Tavistock Production, 1969, p. 250.

³¹⁴ T. Ekule, "The evolution of the Banyang culture: Ekpe Association, A Historical Analyses 1960s -90s", M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2005, p. 28.

³¹⁵ Interview with Lydia Besong Malie, 68 Years, *Manyaneroh*, Yaounde, February 19th 2020.

³¹⁶ Ekule, "The evolution of...", p. 29.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

³¹⁸ Interview with Meshack Tabi Ebini, 75 Years, Member of *Ngbe*, Nfaietock, January 5th 2020.

Plate 1: The display of *Ngbe* masquerade (*Emanyankpe*)



Source: Retrieved from *Sessekou* Enow Manyi's private album in Eyangatemako, March 12th 2019.

This plate depicts the display of *Emanyankpe* before its members during the coronation of *Sessekou* Enow Manyi as leader of *Ngbe*. In the plate, we can also see the *Emanyankpe* holding a tree branch, a wipe used to beat widows as a symbol of casting or driving away ill luck, a two-sided shield on its back attached with mirrors and a bell used to fine tune the melody of songs when dancing.

The effective organisation of *Ngbe* made it possible for the cult to perform a wide range of functions in the Banyang tribe. According to M. Ruel,³¹⁹ "the one association which has become dominant is *Ngbe*. It is sometime described as being the government before the European arrived and part of its success almost certainly lays in its more effective fulfillment of a political role, notable that of promulgating the law". G. I. Jones³²⁰ describing *Ekpe*, an Efik version of *Ngbe* says "the basic organ of government in the village council was headed by a village head (*Nfor*) but all decisions that were taken were enforced by *Ngbe*". L.L. Cattle a British colonial administrator notes "in most part of the decisions, *Niankpe* appeared to be closely related to the executive authority of native administration. Apart from its social aspects, the association appeared to aim at strengthening the authority of the chiefs and elders. It has been observed that a chief who desired an order to be promptly obeyed by his people or subjects, announce it in public by an official of this association".³²¹

³¹⁹ Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders*;..., pp. 202-203.

³²⁰ G. I. Jones, "The Political Organization of Old Calabar in Efik Traders of Old Calabar", London, Oxford University Press, 1956, p. 41.

³²¹ NAB, File AB 19. No. 14381, "Juju Society", p. 13, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

Ngbe possesses signs which constitute its insignia called *bereng Ngbe*.³²² With regards to its burial rites which seem more religiously manifested in rituals, the dead and burial of a member, leader or chief is usually the exclusive right of *Ngbe* and non-members not even family members of the deceased are allowed to witness it at night, characterised by multiple graves.³²³ During this occasion, the *Ngbe* shrine is temporarily transferred to the deceased residence where it remained till the end of the funeral ceremony.³²⁴

b. *Obasinjom*

Obasinjom from its etymology is an Ejagham word which means "agent of god".³²⁵ This cult bought by the Banyang from the Ejagham people is regarded as the "god of medicines". It was, as Sam Orock³²⁶ put it "a spiritually revealed cult capable to apprehend evil-doers".³²⁷ Membership into this cult is open to all men capable to pay the required admission fees composed mostly of food items and drinks such as five jugs of palm wine, two bunches of plantains, a goat, salt, oil, a fowl, tobacco, pepper and kola nuts etc.³²⁸ Due to special activities related to the set up of this cult, people considered in the society as mystically responsive are preferably granted admission with ease since one of its objectives is to forecast present and future happenings or events.³²⁹

The division of *Obasinjom*'s initiation procedure into stages reflects directly to the highly stratified level of the cult composed of three main grades. The first (*Aboh Atemambi* also known as *abune njom*) is a grade exclusively reserved for novices with main offices such as *Ekogo njom* (singers and drummers) and *Ebune njom* (hunters who dance around with guns). The second grade *Ebunjom* consists of those trained to wear the black gown of the cult's masquerade *Ngokonjom*. Other members with titles within this grade include *Osame njom* (interpreter) and *atu njom*, (those concerned with herbs needed for the performance of the cult's rituals). The third and highest grade called *Echi-njom* is composed of two main office-bearers: *Esene-njom* (custodian of the cult's paraphernalia and medicine) and *Ebani-njom* (leader of the

³²² A number of *Ngbe* signs. It includes: a plaited and spliced loop of fibre cord, fixed to the top of a stick, a square lattice woven from palm fronds and finally two joined horns of a goat.

³²³ J. T. Takor, "The Chieftaincy Institution Among the Banyang and Ejagham of Manyu Division 1922- 2011: An Intersection of Tradition and Politics in Cameroon", PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, p.66.

³²⁴ Interview with Robinson Mbu Tanyi, 69 Years, Village leader, Douala, February 17th 2021.

³²⁵ M. N. Odu, "An evaluation of *Obasinjom* as a Traditional Dramatic Art of the Ejagham people", Bachelor of Arts dissertation, University of Calabar, 1986, p.18.

³²⁶ Interview with Sam Orock, 72 Years, Leader of *Obasinjom*, Tinto I, December 27th 2020.

³²⁷ O. E. Stephen, "The *Obhasi- Njom* Institution of the Ejagham people, A Case study of the Mbakem Village", Master's dissertation in Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2004, p. 43.

³²⁸ Interview with Stanislas Betek Tabi, 60 Years, Interpreter of *Obasinjom*, Obang, December 17th 2020.

³²⁹ Odu, "An Evaluation of...", p.19.

cult). The hierarchy of these grades in ascending order includes: *Aboh atemambi*, *Ebunjom* and *Echi njom*.³³⁰

Obasinjom functions are purely religious, performed during a dance. Its principal role includes: detection of witchcraft, ensure women fertility, protection of the village from all sort of pestilence, ill luck, epidemics, directs cults like *Mfam*,³³¹ *amok* etc.³³² With regards to its manifestation, the *Obasinjom* dance usually starts with an unknown act of screaming and shouting by a member of the cult. The cult's powers hold him spell bound as he moves towards the mask, lift it up and throw on his body by wearing while other players accompany him to the avenue of display.³³³

Plate 2: An *Obasinjom* masquerade (*ngokonjom*).



Source: Retrieved from the private album of Pa Sam Orock, custodian of the *Obasinjom* mask, Tinto I, June 25th 2020.

The above plate is a representation of an *Obasinjom* masquerade during the disappearance of Tarh Tobias in Tinto I village. On it, is a carved mask (*Echi-njom*) on its head, feathers of birds which represent memory, wisdom and intelligence and a long black gown used as a tool to combat witches and wizards, holding a machete matching toward its arena of display.

³³⁰ Interview with Taku Tommy Eyong, 76 Years, Member of *Obasinjom*, Ntenmbang, January 18th 2020.

³³¹ *Mfam* is a cult agency, meant to check witchcraft. It was prepared by special witch doctors from various parts of plants, animals and often human parts. People often swear by *Mfam* to prove their innocence and if found guilty, they were sold as slaves according to the beliefs of the people.

³³² Interview with Epey Andrew Tabi, 66 Years, Member of *Obasinjom*, Obang, May 8th 2021.

³³³ Interview with Taku Tommy Eyong.

³³³ *Idem*.

Usually at the end of the year, little children at the age of four to ten (4- 10) years gathers inside the *Obasinjom's* black gown and chants are repeated on them before they were taken out. This practice according to the Banyang cosmology signifies that the children have been immunized from witchcraft or any malice.³³⁴ Our next cult to be examined is *Nkim*.

c. *Nkim*

The name *Moninkim* comes from the word *Nkim*, meaning "circumcision".³³⁵ *Moninkim* is an Ejagham word which signifies "first born girl" or "circumcised girl or woman". Contrary to *Moninkim*, *nkim* refers to the ritual a girl goes through at the stage of puberty, before being qualified to dance the *Moninkim* dance.³³⁶ E. G. Parrinder³³⁷ commenting on puberty rites states "the essential principle throughout is to make the child into an adult, a full person and to introduce him or her into sex life". *Moninkim* originated from the Efik who form part of the Ejagham speaking people before extending to the Banyang.³³⁸

The process of enrolment into this age-old cult begins when parents most often the father of a girl decides to dedicate her at an early age as a member of the cult with the presentation of items such as a jug of palm wine, tobacco, some kola nuts and cowries to an elderly woman of the cult who intend passes the items to others. Such a girl who has been presented to *Nkim* is invited to dance whenever the *moninkim* dance was organised until she has attained the age of ten. On account of the various dances she has taken part in, she is then secluded into the *Nkim* house (*Njunkim*) for a period of one to five years depending on the financial status of her parents.³³⁹

The course of *Nkim* activities is dominated by a leader (eldest member). Each village possesses its own *Nkim* with very few members. In this women cult, members mostly of age are excluded from certain activities like dancing with elegance and dexterity but sings for the young ones to dance while others play less strenuous instruments like the hand rattles.³⁴⁰ Members specialise to a particular dance step and display to it songs, regardless of the occasion. This cult is well organised with music and dance as it main occupation. It possesses

³³⁴ NAB, J. M. R. Smith, "Report on Local Customs", p .12, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

³³⁵ Interview with Tabi Sarah Tiku, 60 Years, *Nkim* dancer, Nfairock, January 5th 2020.

³³⁶ *Idem*.

³³⁷ E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religions*, London, Sheldon, 1962, p .58.

³³⁸ M. N. Ebot Etchi, "Theatricalites in the *Moninkim* Ritual Performance" , Master's dissertation in Performing Art and Cinematography, University of Yaounde 1, 2012, p. 64.

³³⁹ *Ibid*.

³³⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

secrets, signs and symbols which members undertake as vows never to divulge any secret or rituals related to their cults to non-members.³⁴¹

Plate 3: Members of *Nkim* in action



Source: Courtesy with the researcher on the occasion of Tali I cultural week celebration, August 13th 2021.

This plate is an illustration of members of *Nkim* performing during an annual cultural week festival in Tali I. Dressed in a red skirt above a yellow blouse, heads tied with a headscarf, rattles and belts on their waist, legs and across their body made up of fibre with an elastic band to enable them dance freely. They adorn themselves with scarification of beauty by dotting their body, holding white piece of clothes to wipe out sweat.

Nkim performs ritual functions similar to that of a mortuary attendant and assists in funeral preparations of its member. During such scenario, its members are all invited in the house of the deceased member throughout the period of the funeral and are responsible to bath, dress and lay the deceased. This duty is assigned to them because it is believed *Nkim* is a cult meant to display beauty. In effect, members make sure their deceased comrade remained as beautiful through make ups that will highlight her beauty in death as she was while alive.³⁴²

d. Perception of *Nkim* ritual in the Banyang tribe.

The *Nkim* ritual is pregnant with varied religious philosophies or ideas hidden behind its practice. This ritual is perceived as a belief system of the people for the following:

³⁴¹ C. N. Assanga, "*Moninkim*, A Rite of Passage to Womenhood in the Boki Community, SouthWest Region of Cameroon: A Contribution to Medical Anthropology", Master's dissertation in Medical Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2017, p. 85.

³⁴² Interview with Agbornyor Quinnacoria, 60 Years, *Moninkim* Dancer, Douala, September 14th 2020.

Firstly, it signifies the passage of a girl child into adulthood (womanhood), which facilitates acceptance and belonging in the society.³⁴³ Going by this explanation, the *Nkim* ritual is regarded in the land as a preservation of virginity until marriage, an integral part of the Banyang culture where authority and control of female sexuality is done by men. Consequently, a girl's virginity is considered essential in her family's ability to receive bride price and honor in the community.³⁴⁴

Secondly, this belief holds that female excision must be done early to prevent immorality. In an interview with an informant, she laments that the dying of *Nkim* ritual is a major cause of teenage pregnancies today in the Banyang communities. According to her, girls whose clitorise are not circumcised are bound to be promiscuous. Thus, the decline of *Nkim* ritual promotes promiscuity among young girls which make it difficult to prove a girl's virginity.³⁴⁵

Lastly, the prevention of extra marital relationship among women accounts for the practice of this ritual. To ensure a successful marriage in the land, men have been thought that only circumcised woman makes a good wife, ensures marital faithfulness because her sexual feelings have been lessened.³⁴⁶ In our findings, we discovered that the curtailing of sexual desires accounts for this practice. Girls who go about with their clitoris are sexually active, demanding and uncontrollable.³⁴⁷ Thus, without the *Nkim* ritual, brides cannot be faithful in their marital house because they have no control over their sexual desires.

Away from the *Nkim* ritual, we can also cite other cultural or genital mutilation practices in the Banyang tribe as a believe system. Among them is breast ironing among teenage girls. The belief behind this practice is geared towards the prevention of teenage girls from becoming promiscuous at an early stage.³⁴⁸ T. D. Besong³⁴⁹ giving an account to this practice says "when we realized that our daughters have begun experiencing the adolescence stage through developments in the breast, we simple take a wooden spoon (*efufa*), place it on

³⁴³ A. V. Gennep in *The Rites of Passage* says "every change in a person's life involves rections and rections between sacred and profane actions and reactions, to be regulated and guarded so that society as a whole will suffer no discomfort or injury. Transition from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to higher class, occupational specialisation, and death", p . 3.

³⁴⁴ Assanga, "*Moninkim*, A Rite...", p. 85.

³⁴⁵ Interview with Susan Tabi Ncha, 71 Years, *Nkim* dancer, Ashum, January 8th 2020.

³⁴⁶ Assanga, "*Moninkim*, A Rite...", p. 85.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ N. B. Grace, "Orature in Ritual Performance: A Stylistic Device on the Nature of Banyang Female Secret Societies", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma (DIP E.S. II) in English, E.N.S. Yaounde 1, 1999, p. 52.

³⁴⁹ Interview with Tarh Diana Besong 63 year, Member of *Nkim*, Nfaitock, January 8th 2020.

the fire to get warm then use it to stamp out (send away) the newly develop breasts still to mature by tapping both side of the breast with the wooden spoon". In a nutshell, mutilation be it genital or cultural is a true reflection of Banyang cosmology.

e. *Ndem* Traditional Society

The word *Ndem* in *kenyang*, means spirit or soul of the death.³⁵⁰ Ejagham oral tradition confirms that *Ndem* is a gift their ancestors sent to them from the gods (*Akeku*) of their land for the sacrifice they offered to them.³⁵¹ It is the most important, influential and highly constituted women cult joined by young privileged girls who successfully went through it initiation procedure before marriage. Members in this cult are referred to as *Ngboko-ndem* or *Mbokk-ndem*.³⁵²

Membership in this cult is opened to young girls between the age of twelve to fifteen (12- 15) years.³⁵³ A man (father of the girl) is allowed to initiate only one girl except he was polygamous. The process of enrolment begins with the dedication of his daughter at an early age as a future member of the cult. Such a girl child was invited to dance whenever the *Ndem* dance was organized.³⁵⁴ Membership and initiation fees includes: food, drinks, and cash provided by the parents of the girl.³⁵⁵ *Ndem* has no well-defined grades but its activities are piloted by the leader of a lodge (*Nyei Ndem*), usually the oldest member.³⁵⁶

Nboko-ndems are usually beautiful women with very long hair and goes by names like *Eyere*, *Ebangha*, *Ebob* who after dead, are remembered through effigies. As such, it was common to find a statue of a lady in front of a Banyang man's compound like the one below. They have a very strong message to tell to the younger generations. The function of *Ndem* is associated with procreation, protection of its members and the community from all sort of pestilence, acted as a watch dog and was able to forecast disasters or epidemics.³⁵⁷

In addition, *Ndem* also provides a medium through which cults could be appeased and performs burial rites on deceased members.³⁵⁸ Such ceremony entails varieties of rituals in order to appease and prepare the soul of the deceased to be received by ancestors in the other

³⁵⁰ There are dialectical variations of *Ndem*. The Ejagham call it *Okum*, while Efik call it *Nkih*.

³⁵¹ Interview with Lucy Mbi Ayah, 64 Years, Member of *Ndem*, Okoyong, December 19th 2020.

³⁵² Interview with Taku Francisca, 61 years, Member of *Ndem*, Nfai tock, January 8th 2020.

³⁵³ Grace, "Orature in Ritual", p. 47.

³⁵⁴ Interview with Bate Blandine, 64 Years, Member of *Ndem*, Eyangatemako, July 19th 2020.

³⁵⁵ M. Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among a cross River People*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1969, p. 203-204.

³⁵⁶ Grace, "Orature in Ritual...", p. 47.

³⁵⁷ Interview with Bate Blandine, 64 Years, Member of *Ndem*, Eyangatemako, July 19th 2020.

³⁵⁸ NAB file No. (Af/30) 1937, J. M. R. Smith, "Report on Local Customs", p. 10, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

world. The presence of *Ngboko-ndems* gave additional pageantry to funerals.³⁵⁹ At the end of a funeral, an effigy or monument is build front of her house to commemorate the deceased member.³⁶⁰ Some of the effigies that were constructed in the past with cement can still be found today in most Banyang communities. Other tribal cults which exists in pre-colonial Banyang but was short lived is *Mfam*, our next preoccupations.

Plate 4: A statue of late Bessem *Ngboko-ndem* of Eyang-nchang village.



Source: Retrieved from the residence of late Ma Eyere, member of *Ndem* in Eyang-nchange village, May18th 2020.

In this plate is a monument of late Bessem *Ngboko-ndem* constructed with cement infront her compound to commemorate her demise as a symbol of remembrance, such that anyone who sees it will quickly understand her value and place in the *Ndem* secret society.

f. *Mfam*

Mfam is a cult agency that existed principally during the pre-colonial era which acted more often as an oath taking between the ancestors and the living. Banyangs purchased it from the *Keakas* around the 1880 believed to have supernatural powers which when manipulated upon, can bring untold punishment. One of the greatest sources of protection against witches, wizards and other wrong- doers in the community was *Mfam*.³⁶¹ This juju takes the form of two long thin shrubes growing in the ground, planted in a special compound of mashed wood. Behind these shrubs is a shrine, a stone, a vessel containing the blood of a goat and food as offering to it (*Mfam*).

³⁵⁹ NAB file No. (Af/30) 1937, J. M. R. Smith, "Report on Local Customs", p .10, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

³⁶⁰ Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders:...*, p .204.

³⁶¹ NAB, J. M. R. Smith, "Report on Local Customs", p . 87, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

The custodian of this cult is a senior elder in the village while others are mere members. Conditions to become a curator (priest) in this cult entails that the aspirant must be pure in conduct, morally upright, void of vices such as theft, adultery, capable of consuming a full flesh fowl at night during gatherings and barred from eating certain species of flat-river fish.³⁶² Membership entails the provision of a goat. Apart from the curator, other members have similar prohibitions laid upon them but in the case of eating a full flesh chicken on their part, they are allowed to share with each other.³⁶³ Components of this juju consist principally of various vegetable ingredients and remains of dead animals stored in two animal horns.³⁶⁴ In this shrine stands a big pot under a tree, both ritually dedicated to *Mandem*. Inside the pot is found other concoctions.

As it modus operandis, a curator consults it on behalf of people, individuals who often feel bewitched. *Mfam* could also be employed against act of theft.³⁶⁵ In this case, a thief with the stolen properties in his possession will be destroyed and at the same time can be saved from impending death if he restitutes such stolen property to its owner. This can only be possible a day after *Mfam* had been sworn.³⁶⁶ Failure to do so on time in order to be ritually cleansed and cured, he will become anaemic with swollen stomach and limps.

When this eventually happens, for one to appease the gods, you are expected to visit the *Mfam* shrine with items such as a goat, a bunch of plantains and a bottle of palm oil.³⁶⁷ The curator then goes to the forest, harvest herbs which causes watery stool, boils and administer to the victim for a number of days to pass out the substance. After feeling relief, the victim is then ask to go home but failure to visit the shrine after the oath swearing, the result is instant death. The corpse of a deceased person suspected to have been inflicted by *Mfam*, is usually disposed from the village quickly and buried unceremoniously far into the forest so as not to pollute the society.³⁶⁸ Away from general and tribal practices in the guise of cults, we equally have clanic and family cult practices, our next subject of discussion.

³⁶² In the course of my discussion with Ebini Lucas Eyong, the son of late Eyong Takor Charlse who was once a curator of the *Mfam* shrine in Sabes, a community in Upper Banyang, I was curious to know the reasons and implications of this criteria. I was told that in every cult that exist in the Banyang tribe, each has its rules and regulations that governs it. As such, theirs is simply to strengthen and preserve the effectiveness of the juju because if these conditions are not followed or disobeyed, the victim is plagued with a dreaded disease which if nothing is done, he dies after few days.

³⁶³ Interview with Besong Grace Tanyi, 63 Years, *Moninkim* Dancer, Tali II, April 26th 2020.

³⁶⁴ *Idem*.

³⁶⁵ *Idem*.

³⁶⁶ *Idem*.

³⁶⁷ *Idem*.

³⁶⁸ Traditional autopsy is a common practice among the Banyangs, but it is dying out gradually because of the advent of foreign religions and cultures. This account for the fact that there are few native doctors who are

2. Clan and family cult practices

Clanic cults practice refers to practices carried out by cults within different clans of the Banyang tribe. Here, rituals and rites often takes place where it is believe the founder of such clan took shelter during wars, died and was buried. As such, it is belief their ancestors still resides there. These places are equally instrumental based on the belief that their predecessors did same to their ancestors. In effect, the tradition must continue. In this vain, we are going to examine two prominent cults practiced by some Banyang clans. Among them we have *Mma-awu* and *Angbu*.

a. *Mma-awu*

Mma-awu which means "*Mat*" originates from the Ejagham land.³⁶⁹ Oral sources with regards to it origin are connected to that which surrounds the birth place of *Ngbe* among the Banyang people. It is among the most organised and influential women cult in the Banyang tribe.³⁷⁰ Within this tribe, just seven (7) out of the fourteen (14) clans practice *Mma-awu* cult. Among these seven clans, three (3): Tinto, Mbang and Ndifaw comes from upper Banyang while four (4): Nkokenok I and II, Bekang and Baku comes from the lower part. Irrespective of this division in clans, their modus operandis still remains the same.

Membership into this women cult is opened to all women in the village with the minimum age level being from ten (10) years and above.³⁷¹ Priority is often granted to women who have attained puberty since the secrets of the cult are in the hands of the elderly. It procedure for admission commence with the presentation of items such as four bunches of plantains, five fowls, five jugs of palm wine, kola nuts and tobacco to the leader of the lodge.³⁷²

Equally, *Mma-awu* cult members are bound by an oath of secrecy such that members who have seen it symbol (python), drinks a concoction and takes an oath never to reveal it secrets even to members who have not attain such stage. Most of these secrets as we are told are associated with witchcraft and consequently, any attempt to reveal them will give an opportunity for witchcraft manifestation.³⁷³ From bottom to top, there exist four principal

willing to perform such operations. Beside, very few people nowadays would be willing to submit the corpse of their deceased relatives for this purpose.

³⁶⁹ Interview with Anthony Agines, 68 Years, Member of *Mma-awu*, Buea, May 5th 2021.

³⁷⁰ *Idem*.

³⁷¹ *Idem*.

³⁷² S. T. Besong, "Ejagham Migration, Settlement and Resettlement: A culture History", Post Graduate Diploma dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 1986, pp.16-17.

³⁷³ *Ibid*.

ranks in *Mma-awu* namely *Akpune-Ekpah*, *Ekph-awu*, *Nkem-Ekpah* and *Ebune-Ekpah*. *Apune-Ekpah* and *Ekpah-awu* are junior ranks reserved for new members of the cult.³⁷⁴

The religious nature of this cult is manifested through ritual performances displayed in a nocturnal dance called *Ekpah-atu*.³⁷⁵ Occasions of such performance are very rare mostly in instances of impending danger. As M. G. Enyang³⁷⁶ puts it: "we dance *Mma-awu* during the period of prolonged drought, poor harvest, an epidemic and at times when we notice the presence of an evil one amongst us. During this performance, we ask for all what we want and for those we denounce, we dance to send them away". Added to this cult practice is *Angbu*, our next field of interest.

Plate 5: Procession of *Mma-awu* members



Source: Retrieved from chief Defang's palace, Defang, January 10th 2020.

The above plate describes a procession scene by *Mma-awu* members. On it is a member carrying a basket with a purported python on it and the various symbols implanted on it. It equally shows a young initiate in front of the main dancer holding a small mat called *ekpa* framed to remind the women where the men should sleep.

b. *Angbu*

The practice of this cult in the Banyang tribe owes its origin from the Keaka and Balundu area. It is practiced particularly in nine (9) out of the fourteen (14) Banyang clans namely Awanchi, Mbang, Tinto, Tainyong and Tanyi- nkongho in upper Banyang while Nkokenok I

³⁷⁴S. T. Besong, "Ejagham Migration, Settlement and Resettlement: A culture History", Post Graduate Diploma dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 1986, pp.16-17.

³⁷⁵ N. D. Beatrice, "The *Njomekpa* Women Secret Society in the Ejagham land, 1800- 2002", M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, p. 66.

³⁷⁶ Interview with Martha Grace Enyang, 66 Years, Member of *Mma-awu*, Nchang, November 22th 2020.

and II, Ayuketayuk and Dedengui in lower Banyang. During the display of this cult, the person carrying the masquerade is covered with newly grown palm shoots, a black mask from charred wood on his face and head with ropes sewn into a cap. He carries in his mouth specie of hollow sticks made in a form of whistle emitting noise and a staff he uses to beat the ground in the dancing process.³⁷⁷

Angbu is belief to take care of unpleasant happenings, restores order, wards off evil powers sent to individuals though it fundamental duty is to exhume and burn recalcitrant corpses of ghost which are a menace to the society.³⁷⁸ Banyang cosmology holds that the existence of ghost is a reality in the land cause by the remains of rejected spirits from the ancestors which goes deep in the red and unfertile soils. It is these spirits that lateron comes back as ghost, hovers around and by the time it becomes a nuisance in the community, it is caught and burnt by *Angbu*. In addition, *Angbu* was charged with the task of conducting autopsies in the past. That is, examines dead bodies to know the source of such death³⁷⁹ and mitigates the depredation of annual attacks by diseases like chicken or small pox.

Plate: 6: A picture of *Angbu* masquerade



Source: Courtesy with the researcher during the opening of late Mbu Samuel's funeral house after a week of his demise in Tali, April 12th 2021.

The above plate portrays an *Angbu* masquerade marching towards it arena of display accompanied by members. This mask is covered with newly grown palm shoots, foot beatles, a black mask produced from charred wood on his face and head with ropes sewn into a cap carrying a specie of hollow sticks made in the form of a whistle emitting noise in it mouth and a staff held by a member uses to beat the ground.

³⁷⁷ Interview with Njock Abanda Arrey, 55 Years, *Angbu* Dancer, Ntenmbang, June 18th 2020

³⁷⁸ *Idem*.

³⁷⁹ M. Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among a cross River People*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1969, p. 206.

Furthermore, there also exist family cult practices. That is, those performed at a limited scope (within the family), a common feature of their beliefs till present. Certain rites and ritual ceremonies here are performed exclusively by family heads. Among these cults we have *Ndoh* and *Barem* as examine below.

c. *Ndoh*

Ndoh is a ritual exercise widely practice in pre-colonial Banyang society as compared to present day, geared towards the protection and binding of families together both in spirit and physical (ancestors and the living beings).³⁸⁰ Ancestral veneration in this society is not limited to the community at large but is more accentuated at the level of the family with each having its own gods and ancestors which it interceds to. These ancestors sometimes referred to as family gods are believed cater for family needs in every aspect in life. Family rites and rituals are performed for and on behalf of an individual, immediate and extended families.³⁸¹

One characteristic with these type of rites is that they are very common and can be performed at any given time. At time in instances like illness, infertility, birth, marriage and dead celebrations, travelling or success recorded in the family. Consultation to ancestors is performed by family heads behind or inside the house in an uncimented spot where a hole is dug for rites and rituals to commune with ancestors.³⁸² Instances of malice suffered by a family member and on the grounds of suspicion within members as perpetrators of such, each and every member present is mandated to come and swear with a touch of the finger inside this said hole comprised of whisky, spittle, animal blood all mixed and speak out to vindicate themselves.³⁸³

³⁸⁰ Interview with Hans Enow Nkongho, 65 Years, *Ndoh* practitioner, Ntenmbang, June 20th 2020.

³⁸¹ *Idem*.

³⁸² Interview with Agbor Chi-Agbor Ndakor, 71 Years, Traditional Ruler, Mamfe, December 20th 2020.

³⁸³ *Idem*.

Plate 7: A family communing with the ancestors behind their house.



Source: An end of year thanks giving ceremony carried out by the Eyong Nchong family, Nfairock, January 1th 2020.

This plate represents an annual family thanks giving occasion taking place behind a hut, conducted by the eldest members (those seated) as we can see the one with the red regalia throwing kola nuts (salutation) as he communicates with their ancestors while his children remains standing, quite and observant. Alongside the participants is food on a bowl and a bottle of palm wine to accompany the rite as food for the ancestors while the remaining part will be shared among members at the end.

d. *Barem*

Barem is a cult-object in the form of special stones (*Ntae*) found on river bed, possibly meteorites, having a large spherically shaped mass with numerous small pockmarks, a Y- shape stick erected in the middle and a rope hung on it³⁸⁴ as illustrated below.

³⁸⁴ Interview with Johnson Nso Njock, 58 Years, Teacher, Eshobi, July 21th2020.

Plate 8: A picture of *Barem*.



Source: Retrieved from *Sessekou* Jacob Agbor's family residence in Nfairock, March 15th 2019.

The above plate is a view of a typical *Barem* shrine made up of special stones found on river bed, retrieved and preserve in a particular corner in the sitting room. This position is believed as the dwelling place of ancestors, venerated often when need arise.

Previously, it was regarded as a community thing or leadership owned only by a leader who kept it at the corner of his house (*Aca*), where he makes regular offerings of food, drinks, request for good fortune on behalf of the village and his family.³⁸⁵ Later on, each household lead by it eldest member was able to commune with the ancestors within the family sphere through *barem*.³⁸⁶ Enquiries made by the researcher for the choice of this twist in this practice from communal to family level was made to understand that it was an inspiration from the ancestors to be venerated within the family sphere.

Added to regular offerings to *Barem* is kola nuts (*nepai*) broken and thrown down, then picked up by the performer (the eldest family member) who chews it and while airing out his wishes or worries, spits the kola nuts on the stones in the process of talking.³⁸⁷ These *Barem* at times was accredited with the ability to flee or disappear from households until they are appeased.³⁸⁸ As concerns it function, *Barem* protects, averts danger, showers it living kind with blessings, fertility and increase in both human and crop production.

³⁸⁵ Interview with Johnson Nso Njock, 58 Years, Teacher, Eshobi, July 21th2020.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Interview with Bate Robert Oben, 60 Years, Traditional Ruler, Nfairock, March 26th 2020.

³⁸⁸ P. A. Talbot ,*The people of Southern Nigeria, a Sketch of their History, ethnology and language with an abstract of the 1921 census, Vol. 4*, London, Franckcass and Co.Itd, 1967, p.224.

B. Spirits: Ancestral and Non ancestral spirits.

The Banyangs acknowledge the existence of invisible, unpredictable spirits capable of self propagation. Though some (non ancestral) are dangerous, capable of causing destruction, death and illnesses, others (ancestral) are protective, resourceful and kind to the people. It is against this background that our discussion on spirits in the Banyang tribe will be treated into two categories: ancestral and non ancestral spirits below.

1. Ancestral Spirits

The placement of Banyang ancestral spirits lies in the ancestors who occupy a position in the cosmos nearer to the creator *Mandem*. In other words, the ancestors form a conceptual link between the living members and the final source of supernatural power.³⁸⁹ This point is implied rather than the explicit in the indigenous belief. Nevertheless, it seems to be sufficiently borne out by the fact that prayers offered directly to these spirits are intended for transmission to *Mandem*. For instance, when the *Etak* rite is being offered, the eldest member prays by calling on all ancestral spirits to accept the most recent deceased relative, guide the living and protect them from any impending evils.³⁹⁰ Since it is believed *Madem* himself is long way off, the Banyangs consequently implore these spirits who are nearer to him to beg *Mandem* to assist their living kin.

Religiously, the proximity of ancestral spirits, *Barem* to *Mandem* and their role as media communication with him, is very significant. It provides an obvious sanction on relations with the living family and on the relationship that individuals, members have with each other. Such a sanction adds not only greater importance to the system of formal duties which the living are expected to perform on the ancestor's behalf but also a deeper meaning to the rights and obligations of kinship.³⁹¹ Instance of frequent and protracted illnesses occurrence in any family group, members come together to find out the cause of this misfortune by consulting diviners.

2. Non Ancestral Spirits –*Nya-Nyen/Obanje*

As earlier mentioned on the belief of the people on life after death, when someone dies, his spirit-*Efongo* especially that of a child goes to join the ancestors but does not become an ancestor per say.³⁹² However, within these deceased children, there is a class generally

³⁸⁹ Interview with Bate Robert 60 Years, Traditional Ruler, Nfaitock, March 26th 2020.

³⁹⁰ *Idem*.

³⁹¹ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 30.

³⁹² *Ibid*.

regarded as evil spirits. In pre-colonial Banyang society, a child who from birth remained constantly ill, failed to respond to any form of treatment, was believed to be an evil spirit, known in Kenyang as *Nya-nyen* (literally - water beef).³⁹³ In such case, the child's mother will undergo some ritual purification like the sworing of *Mfam* to ward off such spirits which might attempt to return to the community in this form (*Nya-nyen*).³⁹⁴

Lastly, early infant death is another belief attributed to child evil spirit. Instances where the cause of such death is connected with witchcraft, the Banyangs sought explanations from other evil forces. It is believed women could give birth to evil spirits in the form of children who never lived above the age of three (3) years.³⁹⁵ Such a woman who keeps giving birth to such children who never become adults, consults a diviner and in case of reoccurrence, the corpse is ritually marked on the forehead before burial. In the light of further delivery, a priest, elders are immediately called for examination followed by cleansing on the baby.³⁹⁶ After this, the baby is now believed to become a normal child who can live to maturity.

Conclusion

This chapter provides highlights on the early beliefs of the people in two folds: Banyang traditional religious philosophies and practices. In the formal, the chapter established that the traditional belief of the people was manifested in relation to the spiritual and physical part. Equally, there was need to focus on the religiosity of the people based on their beliefs in connection with cosmic element and stones, laws and taboos. The later have explored the indigenous worldviews of the Banyangs with some of its underlying religious beliefs on a common ground, tribal, clanic and family level. We were made to understand that most of these tribal, clanic and family religious practices discussed above are what forms the core foundation of the Banyang religious universe. Spirits (ancestral and non ancestral) as a component of Banyang cosmology was never left out in this discussion. Some acts for the good of the people while others act the contrary. Our discussion in this chapter was centred on a sketch analyses on Banyang traditional beliefs which we find not substantial enough unless it is complimented with a practical touch. This will constitute the epicenter of our next chapter.

³⁹³ Interview with Ayuk Jacob Bate, 62 Years, Traditional Healer/Seer, Mamfe, July 15th 2021.

³⁹⁴ *Idem*.

³⁹⁵ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p.37

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

CHAPTER THREE: BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVES

In our previous chapter, we were able to highlight a literary view of the Banyang religious universe. In other words, our analyses were based on a theoretical view point. This discussion appears insufficient enough to actually depict the cosmology of a people. It is against this backdrop that we decided to dedicate this chapter on the practical perspective of Banyang traditional practices in order to blend both the theoretical and practical ideas. That is, how visible their beliefs are manifested.

I. THE MANIFESTATION OF BANYANG TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

The manifestation of traditional beliefs in the Banyang tribe have a great role to play in the nature of its rites and ritual performance. These manifestations will be closely examined on their practical religious philosophies and traditional practices. The former reflects on their worldview on creation of the universe by God and their relationship with the living. The latter on its part seeks to illustrate how the various traditional religious practices of the people is manifested at different segments (tribal, clan and family) of the tribe. Their practical religious ideologies can thus be examined below.

A. Practical religious philosophies

Banyang cosmology on the practical sense can better be appreciated against the backdrop of their interaction with the Supernatural and the living world. This cosmic set up influences their beliefs in the following ways:

1. Relation with the Supernatural world

The view held by the Banyang on the creation of the world is closely linked with their belief in God- *Mandem*, the creator of both the world and man.³⁹⁷ This belief holds that before *Mandem* created the world with everything in it, He first of all made his abode in heaven- *Nebu*, far away up in the high sky. This is evident in the day to day life of a Banyang when you see him point at the sky and says "whatever we do here on earth, it's only God- *Madem* in heaven who watches over us knows best".³⁹⁸ From this assertion, heaven the dwelling place of God is found above the sky. To prevent his abode from falling, He supports

³⁹⁷ P. B. Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change", Post graduate Diploma (D.E.S) in Sociology, University of Yaounde 1, 2000, p. 54.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

it with invisible pillars just as the roof of a hut is propped up by the pillars. After the creation of heaven, *Mandem* decided to include other things in it.

Firstly, He made the moon- *Ntang* and the sun- *Nmok* and places them into the sky. The formal possesses the night while the latter shines in the day.³⁹⁹ This classification by God-*Madem* according to Banyang belief is backed by the fact that the sun- *Nmok* possesses a hot ray of light and as such, it is able to frighten as well as prevent certain diabolic practices like witchcraft and sorcery from taking place during the day.

This belief attached to the sun is so firm such that it is common to hear a Banyang man call upon the sun and swear for any crime accused of.⁴⁰⁰ A case in hand is that which concerns theft accusation. At this juncture, you will hear the victim saying "if am guilty of the crime labeled on me, let this sun sees me". This according to the Banyang is a serious oath because the reaction may delay but it must be fulfilled. Consequently, witches, sorcerers, thieves and other class of evildoers who feared the hotness of the sun ray take advantage to operate only at night under the cool light of the moon which harbours such nocturnal acts.⁴⁰¹

In addition, *Mandem* then made the clouds, put them into the sky and made a chart from which lightening- *Nefang* originated. This lightening chart is of reddish colour and hides among the clouds. Whenever it shakes its wings, there is lightening- *Nefang* and whenever it crows there is thunder.⁴⁰² More often in the Banyang land, this same thunder- *Nefang* is invoked, manipulated upon by witches and wizards, dibais, traditional doctors, just to name a few and sent to inflict individuals in the guise of a stroke that often leads to constant death or paralyses. An incident of this magnitude occurred in Ebeagwa village where a boy of 12 years was stroked to death while in a football field by a medicine (*nkayak*), specially made with the combination of the forces of nature. This strike came in the guise of thunder sent by their neighbor whose plum was stolen by this said boy.⁴⁰³ Thus the forces of nature can be employed when need arises.

To assist the sun and the moon, *Mandem* created the stars (*Ma- mbae*) and place into the cloud, rain which becomes the source of water (*Ma-nyep*). To prevent rain from falling all the time, he created the rainbow followed the air we breathe.⁴⁰⁴ In order not to have a vast empty

³⁹⁹ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 54.

⁴⁰⁰ N. J. Egbe, "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective", DEA dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2009, p. 61.

⁴⁰¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*

⁴⁰³ Interview with George Tambe, 45 Years, Councilor, Tali, April 13th 2020.

⁴⁰⁴ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p.54.

space beside heaven, *Madem* then created the earth mysteriously with the provision of huge mountains, valleys, and large depressions.⁴⁰⁵ This earth in the Banyang cosmology has a direct link with an individual. Just like the sun, the earth (mud to be precise) can be used to swear upon by carrying it with the hand or with the used of any objects (silpers and shoes) that one uses to access or walk through the earth. Consequently, in the event of bewitching someone, his or her footprint on the ground is very instrumental to do so. Same earth (mud) is used during ritual or rite practices such as *Ndoh*.⁴⁰⁶

With all the splendor of the universe, God- *Madem* is believed to have created next the first man and woman from whom all the Banyangs descended from.⁴⁰⁷ To provide water for this two, He then released water from the sky which filled all the valleys and large depressions on earth, forming large rivers like the river Manyu, Lake Ejagham and other large streams in Banyang land. To provide food for the people, *Madem* then made plants, animals, birds and other living creatures on land, rivers and seas to serve as food.⁴⁰⁸

My informant could not indicate how long it took God- *Madem* to create the world. He is believed to have created all things at the same time. This is to reinforce the notion that *Mandem* has a certain chain that links everything that exists to him. This logic is just simple. Since a Banyang man does not know when he will die, how can he then know when he was created? Nonetheless, Banyang elders often place a lot of emphasis on celestial beings, but they are not regarded as divinities as the creation narrative shows.⁴⁰⁹ God is regarded by the people as omnipresent though we are taught he is particularly in the sky.⁴¹⁰

Moreover, God- *Mandem* is conceived by this people as the Father of all men- *Eta- ye-sei* (the giver and sustainer of life).⁴¹¹ By virtue of this, He is looked upon as protector and friend, just as a human father is a protector and friend to his children. *Mandem* and man according to Banyang believe are not entirely separated. *Madem* usually takes the soul-*efongo* of those who have died to dwell near him and from there, they protect their living kinsmen.⁴¹² He equally participates in the affairs of men through the ancestors, who also haunt the atmosphere between heaven and earth. In nutshell, there is a link between this

⁴⁰⁵ Egbe, "The Woman in...", p.61.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Batte Manaseh Tabi, 74 Years, Village Notable, Nfaitock, November 20th 2020.

⁴⁰⁹ *Idem.*

⁴¹⁰ *Idem.*

⁴¹¹ This Banyang notion of God is similar with that of the Mande of Sierra Leone, who also refer to God as "God is Judge", "He has the last word". C. F. W.T. Harris, *The idea of God among the Mende, In African Ideas of God*, Edwin Smith, London, 1950, pp. 277- 297.

⁴¹² Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p, 54.

people on earth and the Supreme God in heaven. Mazama⁴¹³ stresses here that "the fundamental principle of African philosophy is the unity of being". This unity is perceived through the conception established between God and the Banyangs. God can equally be communicated with through prayer and sacrifice. But in spite of these communications and contacts, the average *Manyang* saw the distance between heaven and earth as too great to be bridged by man, hence the reason behind the several systems of ancestral reverence.⁴¹⁴

2. Relation with the world of the living

The people believe that the home of the living is here on earth (*mmek*) made up of water and land and it is on this earth that they will be buried. Apart from man as the living being on earth, there are other living creatures like animals, insects, fishes and other creatures but man remains at the centre to control everything. Banyang people believe that man is both a physical and spiritual being. The physical part determines his ancestry and right of inheritance while the spiritual part links him with God and the ancestors. It is for this reason that the Banyang believes that life on earth is like a journey, a transitory period between life and death.⁴¹⁵

In effect, a Banyang man at the centre of his world and other living things under his control, has the right to use them the way he likes for his own well-being on earth and do the best things that will perpetuate his immortality.⁴¹⁶ So while alive, they prepare for death by carrying out positive exploits like marrying, bearing children, building houses and opening of farms to sustain their children in their absence, create and maintain links with the departed who forms part of the family. Libation (drinks) and feeding (food) of the departed are tokens of fellowship, hospitality, respect, believed as symbols of family continuity and contact.⁴¹⁷

Moreso, the people holds that man is made up of body, soul and spirit. While the soul and spirit are immortal, the body is mortal and death is inevitable. As such, when a person dies and is buried, the spirit is separated from the body. The good spirit joins the ancestors in the world beyond to live another life. Later on, this good spirit is reborn into the human world by another woman. T. Walters⁴¹⁸ shares this reasoning with us as he says; "when a baby is born we quickly know if it is a person who died has reincarnated. We know this if the reborn

⁴¹³ A. Mazama, *L'impératif Afrocentric*, Paris, MENIBUC, 2003, p. 178.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁵ N. S. Ebah, "Orature in Ritual: A Literary Analysis of Ejagham Incarnations", Post Graduate Teacher's Diploma (D.I.P E.S. II) in English, E.N.S. Yaounde I, 1999, p. 31.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p.54.

⁴¹⁸ Interview with Tabe Walters Enow, 62 Years, Teacher, Yaounde, July 24th 2021.

baby possesses some or all similar characteristics of the deceased in the family. In effect, the former is given the name bore by the later."

On the part of the bad spirit which has no access to the ancestral world, joins it body and comes out of the grave in the form of a ghost. It roams the human world until it degenerates into an animal which is later killed and consumed, putting an end to its existence. Banyangs believe in witchcraft is against *Mandem*. This witchcraft is more active when a human being transforms into an animal, bird or insect either spiritually or physically.⁴¹⁹ This transformation is either for good or evil but God accepts neither of the reasons.

B. Connection with the Environment

Banyang worldview is also linked with their environment. That is their immediate surrounding composed of flora and fauna. Both play an active role in the conception of their cosmology though their frequent exchange with plants is more vibrantly put to use. For purpose of specificity, this study will emphasize more on how these plants are transformed into medicines and put to use to serve their needs. These plants have varied uses such as healing of disease, antidote for poison, ritual purposes, protection of epidemic and witchcraft.⁴²⁰ Nowadays, most of these herbs or medicines are very scarce but what is worth mentioning here is the belief this people attach in them, capable of solving their problems as analysed below.

1. Medicines

The general word for medicine is *Njo* and in a rather limited meaning of the concept, *Njo* is simply any physical object or instrument which is believed to have magical powers.⁴²¹ Such objects range in physical form from vegetable materials to feathers, animal remains, cowrie, and shells which are generally stored in animal horns. Subjectively, *Njo* in the Banyang land is something more than mere object itself. It represents a special kind of supernatural powers or quality which becomes attached to the object through the influence of *Madem* because a connection with Him is implied in the notion of *Njo*.⁴²²

Thus, in the frequent use of medicine - *Njo* by the Banyangs, the name of God – *Mandem* is invoked so as to render it effective. In every Banyang community, one is likely to come in contact with *Obasinjom* or *Mfam*, the two being the most spread cult agencies.⁴²³

⁴¹⁹ Interview with Tabe Walters Enow, 62 Years, Teacher, Yaounde, July 24th 2021.

⁴²⁰ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p.38.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p.40

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

Banyang cosmology holds that *Mandem* decided after due consultation with the ancestors to give men the power and ability to make medicines, which when properly employed could effectively punish those in persistent evil practices such as witchcraft. Evidence to backed the fact that Banyang medicines were God given, my informant time and again always draw my attention to the meaning of the names of some cult agencies, which inferred an attachment to *Mandem*.⁴²⁴ They also stressed on the fact that at various stages of their ritual invocations, *Madem* is beseeched to search and destroy all evil spirits in a community and brings peace and tranquility.

In addition, Banyang secret cults seem to involve a some what different notion of an approach to the supernatural. Spiritual beings (*Obasinjom* for instance) are impersonated by means of carved wood masks and other accoutrements worn by certain grades of the cult agencies when occasions do arise. On such occasion, the spirits leaves their secret abode and while making themselves public, there is the strictest prohibition on non members coming into contact with the more sacred of them.

These spirits personalize supernatural power, but they are not in themselves the apparent object of cult activity. Their role is to impress initiants and creat the necessary condition of awe among the general public.⁴²⁵ This aspect is made apparent when medicines are used to detect witches or criminals, protects property from thieves and even to check the veracity of witnesses in traditional courts. The cult priests when taking out their medicines for whatever purpose usually would implore their medicines in the name of *Mandem*.⁴²⁶

The implication here is that the medicine will serve as an instrument of justice. In this way, a curse is placed on the malefactor, which can be removed equally by direct process. What happens here is that the person who employed the medicine shall reverse the original injunction. This, however is done only after the aggrieved person has been duly compensated and the ingredients set down for the reversal process of the curse have been met. The priest would then inform the medicine that the wrong had been righted and will command the medicine not to inflict the various penalties and misfortune with which the culprit had been threatened with.⁴²⁷ The malefactor is then ritually cleansed and restored to normal life. As such we can draw a conclusion here that medicine for the Banyang is believe as a means of maintaining a sense of moral equilibrium within a community.

⁴²⁴ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 43.

⁴²⁵ Interview with Batte Manaseh Tabi, 74 Years, Village Notable, Nfaitock, November 20th 2020.

⁴²⁶ *Idem*.

⁴²⁷ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 45.

Theoretically, any grown up man in the Banyang society is capable of using medicine but the practical conditions require only people who are specialists in the production and employment of it. *Njo* is potentially dangerous and helpful but mishandling it may bring down untold calamities on its manipulator and those associated with him.⁴²⁸ Banyang medicine men see the power of medicines in comparison to electric batteries of very high voltage charged with energy from *Mandem* through their ancestors to do useful or harmful services. The reason why my informant stressed that it is very risky for an unauthorized person to temper with *Njo* or even wonder aimlessly near to where it is stored.

In any way, the operation of *Njo* is believed to be quite automatic, depending on the point of view of the person using it and from that of anyone falling foul of it. As is often the case, a protective medicine left hanging on the door-way is believed to be capable of stabbing a witch or someone with evil intentions the moment he or she enters such a house. Equally, a thief stealing properties with protective medicine-*Njo* on it is believed to be afflicted immediately with injury or pain.⁴²⁹ Although such actions maybe delayed in some cases, it is generally believed by the people to be very mechanically.

At the same time, the Banyang believe that knowledge and skill are useful both to obtain the best results from medicine and to avoid its consequences. Any powerful medicine has to be nurtured as carefully as a child and part of the techniques in the case of specific medicines consist in talking to them in a certain way very often. The more powerful the medicine, the more harm is able to cause. But it also capable of greater benefits to the community as a whole.⁴³⁰ Hence, the need for properly qualified and responsible people to look after it in shrines.

2. Shrines

A shrine in this context refers to a sanctuary where rites and ritual activities take place. Many Banyang communities have shrines where war charms for instance during the pre-colonial days were prepared and the warrior tasted. At Bachuo Akagbe for instance, there was a huge twin tree about 2km from the town where rituals of this magnitude was performed. This war charms were often prepared with the use of human blood and parts especially the heart and sex organs, capable of enabling them to determine which warrior is likely to survive in a war. As such, when the charms were applied, they could change the weaklings and

⁴²⁸ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 45.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*

unfortunate ones to white colours who were dropped from the selected warrior because they were not likely to return alive while the strong and fortunate ones turned dark.⁴³¹ Although warfare was not an important part of Banyang history, occasional feuds took place between families or lineages, often over women.⁴³² Among shrines in the Banyang is the leopard, Mfam and Barem shrines as examine below.

Our first shrine to be analysed is the leopard shrine. The killing of a leopard with regards to Banyang believes is a sign of great rejoicing, which is given significance by the ceremony attached to it. In the event of this magnitude, the hunter reports the news to the village head who alongside the elders of his village and proceeds to a spot in the bush near the house of the clan head.⁴³³ When the leopard has been laid out, a shrine is built over it and a path that cut to the house of the clan head. In this said shrine, seven palm tree arches are placed at intervals, along this path, pepper, alligator pepper (*kesu*), cutlass and mud are among the objects used in this shrine.⁴³⁴

Plate 9: The masquerade found in a leopard shrine



Source: Retrieved from Chief Eyong Ntui's palace in Eyang, July 19th 2021.

The masquerade in the above plate is venerated more often than not as a clan god, which saw the assembly of clan heads during such occasion to celebrate and communing with their ancestors. Though no particular clan possessed it, it was placed under the custody of the chief

⁴³¹ Interview with Manaseh Bate, 74 Years, Village Notable, Nfaitock, November 20th 2020.

⁴³² *Idem*.

⁴³³ Usually in some communities like the case of Defang, this clan head is usually the favourite son of the former clan head, though this law is unconstituted because it is strictly not in accordance with the norms and tradition of the people.

⁴³⁴ Interview Ebai Dickson Nkongho, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Bachuo-Akagbe, July 10th 2020.

celebrant. Each of the feathers on it heads represents the number of celebrants from different clans.

As tradition demands, all male borns in such clan, descendants of the original clan families accompany their fathers to the shrine carrying palm fronds. While at the spot, the clan head forms a chain of hands with him at the head, goes into the shrine and skins the leopard with a special ivory- handled knife.⁴³⁵ The body of the leopard is then taken away by the clan head and elders at the ensuing feast. The clan head then covers his body with camwood and goes into retreat in his house for fourteen days. Strangers who live in the clan may be allowed the right to visit the shrine to have a look at the leopard's skin after the cutting operation, but is allowed no other part in the ceremony.⁴³⁶ This ceremony provides a bond between clans and their leaders.⁴³⁷

Secondly, we have the *Mfam* shrine. This shrine is built with palm fronds, stones place round it as seats and the components of the *juju* place on a table covered with a white loin, a gong, white feathers tight with red stripes, a sword, two horns of a goat, boiled water, blood from the slaughtering of a sheep (no other animal except a sheep is used as a sacrifice) by the chief priest, wool and herbs for spiritual purposes all mixed inside a pot. When all this is done, the horn is placed on the table giving the people the impression that the gods are please with their act of veneration and sacrifice.⁴³⁸

To know how this god (*Mfam*) exist inside the shrine especially in matters when consulted upon, the chief priest employs witchcraft at night as a sense of judgement to a victim by plaquing him or her with a swollen stomach. This will be concluded that one have been attacked by *Mfam*.⁴³⁹ During the days of native courts, this shrine was very effective as the *juju* was taken to court for swearing then brought back and hung in the shrine. A man afflicted by *Mfam* is required to bring a sheep, one leg of beef, two fathoms cloth, two leaves of tobacco, two kola nuts, one calabash of palm wine and hand it to the priest and in return, he hands the victim herbs from the bush, which when applied, *Mfam* will be deactivated.⁴⁴⁰

The researcher learnt of a story in Bachuo-ntai where Pa Agbor Stephen was charged of bewitching and killing his neighbor Pa Takang Ebai's child and the case was tried exclusively

⁴³⁵ Interview Ebai Dickson Nkongho, 70Years, Regent Chief, Bachuo-Akagbe, July 10th 2020.

⁴³⁶ *Idem*.

⁴³⁷ *Idem*.

⁴³⁸ Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p. 40

⁴³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with Ayuk Jacob Bate, 62Years, Village Notable, Nfaitock, September 29th 2020.

in the *Mfam* shrine. The accused when asked to swear in the shrine before the *Mfam juju*, he was found guilty but due to the timely intervention of the village priest, he was asked to pay a fine of the above mentioned items required to conduct a cleansing ritual on him. A goat was killed and the blood sprayed around the shrine while the rest of the items were cooked and shared among members of the shrine.⁴⁴¹

People visited this shrine during the early days to recover their debts by carrying it to the house of their debtors and threaten death in default of immediate payment.⁴⁴² As far as it can be ascertained, no medicine (antidote) is used in this shrine, but it is held in this tribe in great dread.

Plate 10: A picture of *Mfam* shrine



Source: Retrieved from *Sessekou* Jacob Agbor' family residence in Nfairock, March 15th 2019.

This plate shows a typical setting position of *Barem* shrine beginning with the table covered with a white piece of clothes and feathers representing holiness. A gong for enchanting, sword lined beside for slaughtering of sheep for sacrifice, two horns of a goat place beside and tiger skin

Thirdly, is the *Barrem* shrine. This shrine was instrumental in the veneration of ancestors during the pre-colonial era. In Eshobi a community under the Baku clan, it is believed as the sacred place where the entire village gathers to appease their ancestors, appeal for good harvest, avert danger etc.⁴⁴³ The ceremony entails pouring of whisky (libation),

⁴⁴¹ Interview with Ayuk Jacob Bate, 62Years, Village Notable, Nfairock, September 29th 2020.

⁴⁴² *Mfam* here takes the form of one of the horns hung around it shrine.

⁴⁴³ J. Agbor, "The Culture of the Manyu people", Limbe, Pressbook, 1986, p. 51.

sprinkling water, and food (kola nuts, roasted plantains, red oil, fowl and palm oil) in the shrine by elders of the village.⁴⁴⁴

Plate 11: A picture of *Barrem* shrine in Eshobi village



Source: Retrieved from Chief Eyong Ntui's palace in Eyang, July 19th 2021.

This plate depicts a replica of the *Barrem* shrine placed in an isolated area, built with two sticks planted down and a white net to cover it so as not to be exposed randomly except in instances where the entire community gathers to commune with them. This position of *Barrem* outside existed before for its veneration by the entire community until it was later switched to homes reserved for family barremes.

This exercise is accompanied by chants of words (incantation) with kola nuts in their mouth chewed as they spit on it.⁴⁴⁵ As mandated by their beliefs, villagers throw food in the shrine when passing so as to appease the gods and to seek for increase in productivity. The day the entire community visits this shrine, no one is expected to go to the farm or travel that same day and on their way back from the shrine, no one is expected to look back or pick anything within the premises.⁴⁴⁶

Lastly, we also have the *tonkong* shrine. It is found about four kilometers away from Besongabang village characterized by a virgin forest, tall trees, thick canopies, animals and birds like elephants, monkeys, deer, eagles and parrots.⁴⁴⁷ The forest surrounding this shrine is prohibited from the local population and intrusion. Thus no hunting or fishing is allowed with the sole belief that it is the dwelling place for the gods and ancestors while the animals and

⁴⁴⁴ Interview with Besong Mantah, 65 Years, Fisherman, Eshobi, July 21st 2021

⁴⁴⁵ Interview with Johnson Nso Njock, 60 Years, Teacher, Eshobi, July 21st 2021

⁴⁴⁶ *Idem*.

⁴⁴⁷ K. Besong, *The Cultural Activities of the Besongabang clan*, Limbe, Pressbook, 1990.

birds are considered to be the incarnate of the ancestors.⁴⁴⁸ E. S. Besong⁴⁴⁹ trying to paint a vivid picture of this shrine says "in fact just a sight on the environment tells you that you are on a holy ground, goose pimple will manifest all over your body".

This shrine is surrounded by a river of about half a kilometer square with its banks vegetated by shrubs like water lilies etc. According to the beliefs of the people, without a degree of purity in you, one can not stay or even dare to look at the banks of this river even for few minutes. This belief holds that the gods and ancestors will chastise.⁴⁵⁰ In this river still, their ancestors are venerated once a year during normal circumstances such as chieftaincy celebration, death of a kinsman and during exceptional periods of general negativity in the village ranging from strangedeath, famine, epidemics, droughts, poor harvest, conflicts etc.⁴⁵¹ Situations like this calls on kinsmen, quarter and family heads to consult a priest to discuss issues of spiritual values of the community that will lead to harmony and prosperity. In all these, how the Banyangs put their believe in work (practical) will now be our principal focus.

II. THE BANYANG PRACTICE OF HIS CULT

The connection between the Banyang man and his ancestors is bind by the practice of rituals and rites practices. According to R. Cohen⁴⁵² ritual is a traditional, cultural practice usually religious, involving precise movements, music, spoken text or gestures that serve to communicate with deities. However, not all rituals are religious in nature. As such, what is considered a ritual in a society may not be considered in that manner by another society. This is because a set of people may look at the situation to be ordinary while others will focus their attention on the secrecy of the ritual expressions. Rites on the otherhand is defined by M. J. Shujaa⁴⁵³ as a set form or prescribed procedure for carrying out religious actions or solemn ceremonies. The belief behind these practices according to a Banyang man is that of uniting him with his ancestors. Worthy of their performances, rituals and rites occupies a prominent place in their life because in every aspect, there exist rituals and rites for every commomeration.

⁴⁴⁸ K. Besong, *The Cultural Activities of the Besongabang clan*, Limbe, Press book, 1990.

⁴⁴⁹ Interview with Etchunjang Simon Besong, 65 years, Farmer, Mamfe, July 15th 2021.

⁴⁵⁰ *Idem*

⁴⁵¹ Interview with Ayuk Rapheal Ayukotang, 57 years, Cultural researcher of the Besongabang community, Mamfe, July 18th 2021..

⁴⁵² R. Cohen, *Theatre*, Boston, McGraw Hills Higher Education, 2003.

⁴⁵³ M. J. Shujaa, "African Religion", in *Encyclopaedia*, Ed. By M. K. Asante and A. Mazama, USA, SAGE, 2009, pp. 575-579.

Rite and ritual practices in this portion of our study will be examined as the principal medium of communion between the people and their world of spirits (ancestors). In this like, instances of the manifestation of Banyang religious believes can be seen from a general perspective below.

A. Rites and ritual practices from a general perspectives

Generally, instances of Banyang traditional worldview are employed during the enthronement of a chief. This ritual exercise is performed by the most eldest king maker. He presents the occasion to the ancestors on who the new chief is and requests them to grant him power, wisdom, long life, a sense of judgment and administration to lead them. This communication is accompanied by a jug of palm wine poured in a glass and given to the new chief. He drinks and hands it back to the eldest king maker who then uses both hands to pour the bottom part of it on the ground as a means of sharing with the ancestors.⁴⁵⁴

Plate 12: A king maker pouring the bottom wine to the ancestors



Source: Courtesy with the researcher during an enthronement ceremony of Batte Robert Oben as Chief of Nfaitock, March 15th 2019.

This plate represents the gathering of villagers, king makers and quarter heads surrounded by the chief seating before the council accompanied by his two servants. It pictures the action whereby the elderst king maker (the one with a white tower on the nect and a red cap) bendsdown holding a glass of palm wine with both hands as he pours the bottom of it on the floor closely watched by his peers.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with Eta George Orock, 66Years, King Maker, Defang, September 16th 2020.

Dressed in a special way, the newly installed chief is rubbed with cam- wood, yellow wood powder, palm oil and places his feet on a tiger skin.⁴⁵⁵ All these have significance with regards to the beliefs of the people. Yellow powder signifies peace, cam- wood symbolizes a driven force to scare away witches and wizards, palm wine, blend with two black powder stands for unity and the tiger skin for supremacy. During this process, raw food, palm oil, salt, cam- wood or yellow wood are sliced and thrown on the road at the entrance of the village, believed to deter any evil person from entering the village. At the end of this ritual, a traditional cap (symbol of authority) is won on him and presented to the entire population. In this ritual, there is a moral twist in the sense that for fear of what the ancestors might do, nobody dare challenge the authority of the chief.⁴⁵⁶

1. Tribal rites and ritual practices

Certain rites and rituals that portray the Banyang cosmology at the level of the tribe are those performed during initiations, taking up a new title and burial by cults or the community as a whole. Among these cults involved in rituals and initiation rites we have *Ngbe*, *Obasinjom*, *Ndem* and *Mma-awu* while that of burials we can cite the *Etak* rite.

To begin with, the initiation process of *Ngbe* rituals performed in it cult are treated based on a broad generalisation, purely because of the unwillingness by informants to delue into the crux of the ritual performances. This act further explains why in the dead of a chief or leader (*sessekou*) in this cult, he is buried at midnight and several tombs are dug inorder not to disclosed the actual tomb to non- members.

On the part of initiation or obtaining a title, this ceremony takes place once every year during the month of March and lasted for one week. It begins on a Saturday with the presentation of items such as a piece of loin cloth of 6yards (*nden*), a white towel use for wiping of sweat and tears of the initiate, a goat (*mein*), plantains (*ekwa*), cutlass (*ewat*), palm wine (*meime bagiep*), tobacco (*esikong*) and ends on a Saturday.⁴⁵⁷ The ceremony has two phases. The first takes place in the house (*ekat ngbe*),⁴⁵⁸ consists of taking the initiate to a secret area reserved for this purpose. On this day, nobody goes to the farm and it begins very

⁴⁵⁵ Interview with Eta George Oroock, 66Years, King Maker, Defang, September 16th 2020.

⁴⁵⁶ *Idem*.

⁴⁵⁷ Interview with Enowmanyi Solomong Atong, 65Years, Leader of *Ngbe*, Bakebe, November 10th 2020.

⁴⁵⁸ In every Banyang village, there exist a particular piece of land marked by a virgin forest exclusively reserved for *Ngbe* activities. Such a piece of land is usually not far from the village itself and is referred to as *Ebe Ngbe* (*Ngbe* bush). Equally, this forest is believed to be the abode of all departed ancestors who had been initiated.

early in the morning with a strange sound or noise from the *Ekat ngbe* while the initiate is dressed bare footed and body, with plantain leaves tied round his waist and mouth.⁴⁵⁹

Rituals here are done inside a place called "*Ekat*", a private sanctuary where the tiger (*Ngbe*) is kept, often separated from the rest of the *Ngbe* house by a large curtain tied across the wall. As initiation procedure, the initiate taken into this sanctuary is believed to have come in contact with the tiger with scratches on his back indicating the claws of *Ngbe* that have touched him while in the sanctuary.⁴⁶⁰ Later, the initiate is then given a special cutlass to hold as he proceed for the second phase in the forest accompanied with dancing.

During this second phase inside the forest (*Ebe Ngbe*), the novice is taught the songs, dancing styles, mysteries, signs and salutation among members of the cults. The secrets taught here are those about the name and importance of emblems such as the tortoise (*newen*) placed on the meeting mat signifying that *Ngbe* meeting is in progress, *Ngbe* stone (*ntae Ngbe*), gestures and their significance in the sign language of *Ngbe* (*Eringe Ngbe*).⁴⁶¹ Other secrets involve names (*Kenong Ngbe*) members use to call themselves. For instance *Ekiamorima*, which implies a member who is very good in craftsmanship and the building of masks. Within these names, a leader (*Sessekou*) has fourteen calls, next to him (*ntemetemntui*) nine calls, *Tata* seven calls and *Esenewar* two calls.⁴⁶²

In addition, the aspirant's body is rubbed with camwood and he is placed in a cave for three days. Camwood here symbolizes a way of binding witches and wizards believed to be lurking around. It is only when he must have come out from the cave after these three days that he is said to have been initiated. Outside the cave, he sits on a special stool bare chested, rubbed with a substance called *betook*, believed to build strength and courage to undergo other procedures.⁴⁶³ He then uses the *mambep* leaves as a plate to feed the ancestors first with special food and wine (plantains, goat meat and palm wine) before the initiation process continues.

⁴⁵⁹ Interview with Agbor Jacob Agbor, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Nfaitock, September 29th 2020.

⁴⁶⁰ *Idem*.

⁴⁶¹ *Idem*.

⁴⁶² Interview with Enowmanyi Solomong Atong, 65Years, Leader of *Ngbe*, Bakebe, November 10th 2020.

⁴⁶³ J. A. Mbi, "A Literary Analysis of Upper Banyang Incantations", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma (D.I.P.E.S. II) in English, E. N. S. Yaounde, 1999, p. 45.

Plate 13: The initiate (the member without a shirt) feeding the ancestors with *mambep* leaves



Source: Courtesy with the researcher during the enthronement ceremony of *Sessekou* Egbe Arrey Eyong in Bara, May 29th 2019.

This plate illustrates the communion between the living and the dead as food is offered to the ancestors by an initiate (the one bare chested with dotted cam-wood, a red and white cap, tying a white piece of clothes on the waist) holding a leaf facing downward as he takes the title "*Sessekou*" before the secret staff of authority (*monyor*).

Worthy of note here is the fact that all what takes place in the cave is never released to anyone, regarded as a secret which no one is mandated to speak it out in order not to dare the wrath and anger of the ancestors.⁴⁶⁴ But from further enquiries, the researcher learnt that while in this cave during the initiation process, it is alleged that the initiate clearly see and even converse with the ancestors as though they were alive but communicate only with the language of the cult. Rules and regulations are given to him which failure to keep will result to sanctions from the ancestors. Sources affirmed that nobody, even the mad or drunk has ever revealed the secret behind this cult to non-members. This further explains why whenever *Ngbe* is to be transported from the bush to the house at night, women and non members are ordered to stay in doors.⁴⁶⁵ During his stay in the forest, the initiate feeds on plantains peeled with his teeth, meat, palm wine and consumes the blood of the first goat slaughtered by the *Sessekou*.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴ This explains why my informants could not give out any information regarding this process.

⁴⁶⁵ NAB, File N°. 1137, "Report on Secret Societies", p .8, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

⁴⁶⁶ Mbi, "A Literary Analysis...", p.45.

At the end of the ritual, the initiated member is bathed in a special stream by cult members and dressed in a loin cloth tied round his waist, a white shirt, red cap, feather of an eagle and a towel hung one sided on his neck bare feeted. It is said to be this day that the *Ngbe* masquerade comes out from its lodge (*ekat*).⁴⁶⁷ As the ceremony begins on a Saturday, the next Saturday which ends it is characterized by a procession back home, marked by the presence of *achui-Ngbe* (a large carved structure representing an elephant), a virgin (purity) girl expert in dancing who sits on it holding a bred fowl and a short cutlass on both hands dancing. This fowl is used to fan the *achui- Ngbe* as it majestically moved from the *Ngbe* forest (*Ebe Ngbe*) to the village (*Ekat Ngbe*) as feasting and dancing continues marking the end of the ritual.⁴⁶⁸

Furthermore the *Obasinjom* cult ritual is another tribal ritual manifestation of the Banyang cosmology. As concerning this initiation ritual, the researcher could not be given more insights regarding the procedures carried out simultaneously on the grounds that *Obasinjom* ritual is surrounded with the mystery of witchcraft and as such, can not be disclosed to an outsider. So far, the little information gathered in the field stipulates that this ritual takes place in the *Obasinjom* bush-*Ebe-njom*. A particular grove near the village, excluded from non-members which comprise of all the trees and grass needed for the initiation process. There is a common belief here that any non-member who enters inside the grove will automatically go blind and will never find his or her way out.⁴⁶⁹

This initiation ritual is divided into two main parts. The first part takes place in a section of the cult's grove called "*Ebah ekpenon*", with the initiation of "*Aboh atemambi*". That is, those made up of novices in the cult and is limited to basic facts related to the general knowledge regarding the cult's insignia and procedures. All these can be termed the introductory stage of the *Obasinjom* initiation rites.⁴⁷⁰

In addition, the second part of this initiation ritual is performed in another section of the bush called *Ebah eyantim*, with the initiation of "*Aboh ebunjom*". Here, further knowledge and teachings of the mysteries and signs of the cult is imparted to all those who have qualified for this stage.⁴⁷¹ Items needed for this exercise are 48 jugs of palm wine, 24 bowls of food mostly meat (each shared into four equal parts), gun powder and two gun cartridges for the

⁴⁶⁷ J. A. Mbi, "A Literary Analysis of Upper Banyang Incantations", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma (D.I.P.E.S. II) in English, E. N. S. Yaounde, 1999, p.45.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Sam Oroch Tikou, 71 Years, Leader of *Obasinjom*, Yaounde, May 4th 2021.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Andrew Tabi Epey, 66 Years, Member of *Obasinjom*, Nchemba, December 11th 2020.

⁴⁷¹ *Idem.*

shooting of new members on the final day of initiation.⁴⁷² While in this bush, the initiates are fed with meals strictly prepared with herbs believed to strengthen their spiritual powers while members stay with them or comes home once in a while. *Obasinjom* is not limited only to its place of origin but sees evil spirits and the intention of evil doers faraway.

While in the initiation process, the *Ewu-njom* sees more than his colleagues depending on the level of witchcraft he possess, reasons why some villages are more apt than others.⁴⁷³ On the last day of initiation, the initiates are shot with a gun using the cartridges they bought. During this exercise, elders in the cults chant words like "*the fox must be chased away first after that, the hen might be warned against wandering into the bush*". This literary implies that when an initiated member sees a witch, he first chased it away before warning the one possessing it. Once a member is shot, he takes out all the bullets from his flesh but if in the course of doing it and one remains in him, it is believed he must have hidden a certain witchcraft he possessed from the family. The bullet will only come out unless he reveals it.⁴⁷⁴

Worthy of notes in this ritual is the fact that newly initiated members are always very apt to depict future events because their spirits of searching out evil doers is still very active and are never usually allowed to leave the village or only authorized to be within neighbouring villages. The reason for this ban is because they can call for the mask at any time through the traditional method of shouting which is unique only to a category of members.⁴⁷⁵ Thus if he shouts in a strange or far away place, he might be regarded as an insane person since the only person (*Esane-njom*) to call it off is scarcely found outside the lodge not to talk about the herbs needed. This further explains why before an *Ewu-njom* (carrier of *Obasinjom* mask) leaves his village, series of rites are carried out on him in order to prevent him from calling the mask even if he foresees evil.⁴⁷⁶ On the final day of the initiation rituals, the *Ewu-njom* carries the masquerade and dance with it for the first time accompanied by an interpreter (*Osane-njom*) and gun carriers (*Ebune-njom*). The services of an *Osane-njom* imply that *Obasinjom* does not speak in common language but in spiritual one. Once the *Ewu-njom* is out of the mask, he loses memory on all what he has been talking about.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷² O. E. Stephen, "The *Obhasi- Njom* Institution of the Ejagham people, A Case study of the Mbakem Village", M. A. dissertation in Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2003, p.50.

⁴⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with Sam Oroch Tiku, 71 Years, Leader of *Obasinjom*, Yaounde, May 4th 2021.

⁴⁷⁶ *Idem.*

⁴⁷⁷ Stephen, "The *Obhasi- Njom* Institution...", p.50.

In addition, the initiation rite of *Ndem* was not excluded as a landmark of the manifestation of the people's believed. At puberty and on account of a girl's performance in the various *Ndem* dances she had taken part, she is secluded in the *Ndem* house (*Nju ndem*) and taught the secret language of *Ndem* (*Esop ndem*)⁴⁷⁸ for seven days. While at the *Nju ndem*, she is dressed with a glass necklace, bracelet and anklets on each arm made up of an antelope skin and taken out for few hours after which she returns inside the house for another seven days during which she is taught how to make chants.⁴⁷⁹ These costumes are believed as a symbol of protection to her against any form of witchcraft targeted on her. Thus, in a sum total, the girl spends fourteen days inside the *Ndem* house. Within these fourteen days, she is not allowed to bath or eat any food of her choice with the exception of plantains and smoke or dry meat prepared by fellow members.⁴⁸⁰

The first part of this initiation rite is carried out at sunset (about 5: 30pm) when the sun is settle in order to prevent her from excessive bleeding.⁴⁸¹ The process begins whereby dry pepper (*bayah*) or *Nsunsu* (used to test the strength and resistance of the initiate) is place on the fire inside the secluded room where the girl is kept and exposed to sneeze within the shortest time. Without this sneeze, she is rejected.⁴⁸² But if she does, she is free to precede to the last stage of initiation which concerns the marking of small wounds on her arm, chest, back and legs. The blood that comes out during this process is not washed or wiped but rather allowed to dry off. This blood oozing out is believed as a sign of covenant binding the ancestors and the initiate.

Equally, the girl is not expected to express any sign of difficulty or pain unless she will be rejected.⁴⁸³ After these fourteen days, she is dressed in the *Ndem* costume and stays in the village for two years without going to the farm while being taught the *Ndem* dance, a period which marks the complete initiation rites.

⁴⁷⁸ This language had its special vocabulary which differed from the Banyang dialect per se. A boy for instance in Kenyang is called *moh- mbaghanem* while in *Esop Ndem* is known as *ego-nyoge*.

⁴⁷⁹ Interview with Bate Blandine, 64 Years, Member of *Ndem*, Eyangatemako, July 19th 2020.

⁴⁸⁰ NAB, J. M. R. Smith, "Report on Local Customs", p .4, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

⁴⁸¹ C. N. Assanga, "*Moninkim*, A Rite of Passage to Womenhood in the Boki Community, South West Region of Cameroon: A Contribution to Medical Anthropology", Master's dissertation in Medical Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2017, p. 87.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*

⁴⁸³ *Ibid.*

Plate 14: The first outing of a member of *Ndem* after initiation



Source: Retrieved from Chief Robert Oben's palace, Nfaitock, March 15th 2019.

Here in this plate, we have the *Ndem* women secret society in Fotabe village in procession during the presentation of a newly initiated member to the public. The initiate in the plate is seen carrying the main mask and other sub organs on it, accompanied by the eldest member holding a mystical staff.

Furthermore, the practice of *Mma-awu* cult in times of general negativity ranging from strange death, famine, epidemics, droughts, poor harvest, and anger of the gods in the village is another arena of the manifestation of Banyang beliefs. When this was realized, *Mma-awu* women assembled by the oldest member of the cult *Njoh-Ekpah*, conducts a number of rituals accompanied by sacrifices to appease the ancestors. This belief is manifested through a dance (*Ekpah-atu*) during which women (members) parades themselves at night within the main paths of the village in nude (naked). In this process, they purify the village through shouting and dragging of objects on the ground.⁴⁸⁴ The conception behind their attire is based on the fact that the female body has a strong and special healing power.

It is a taboo for any male whether young or old to be allowed outside the walls of his house during the manifestation of this nocturnal dance. Any act by men contrary to this is believe will be plaque with calamity, ill luck, malice, disaster from the gods and the victim's manhood will disappear immediately.⁴⁸⁵ Equally, members especially pregnant ones and those

⁴⁸⁴ N. B. Grace, "Orature in Ritual Performance: A Stylistic Device on the Nature of Banyang Female Secret Societies", Post graduate Teacher's diploma in English (D.I.P.E.S. II), E.N.S. Yaounde, 1999, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Mbi Irene Lucy, 57 Years, Member of *Ndem*, Okoyong, December 19th 2020.

nursing male children are not allowed to participate during this dance. As recounted by M. I. Lucy,⁴⁸⁶ "the items used for the ritual which I will not disclose it to you are capable of rendering a male impotent". Consequently, a pregnant woman was not permitted to participate because the child in her womb maybe amale as well as nursing mothers of male children if dance and suckle their children, itis belief will have an adverse affect on the children.⁴⁸⁷

The songs and incantations during this dance is related to the context in which they are sung. For instance, the non-verbal act of dragging broken things on the ground is done when dancing to send away evil or epidemic. This differs when they dance for rain to fall. In this course, they mix various concoctions in a calabash of water, dip the small end of a fresh palm branch in the calabash of water and splashes along the road and on members as they dance along chanting. In the context for good harvest, they carry along samples of crops to be planted and farm implements they want to bless to the gods for good harvest. These seedlings and farm implements are used almost at the end of the dance after several rituals conducted.⁴⁸⁸ After the ritual, the women retires to their homes without looking behind and are expected to bath themselves before sleeping with their husbands, else they can contaminate them.

As concerns burial rites which manifest a practical picture of Banyang cosmology, we can cite the *Etak* rite, deeply rooted on the people's belief in spirit. This rite takes place four days after the commencement of a funeral ceremony for a man and three days for a woman.⁴⁸⁹ When offering this rite, the eldest member in the community first purifies his hands by washing with water so as not to offer the ancestors food with dirty and impure hands. After doing so, he places on the ground a muscle of meat and a quantity of fufu and meat. As prayers to the gods are offered, he calls on all the previous deceased lineage members to accept the most recent deceased and guide the liviing. The remaining part of the meal is then shared and eaten by all those who assisted in the ceremony.⁴⁹⁰

The *etak* rite is usually regarded as successfully performed and accepted by the ancestors when a cock or a hen starts eating that part of the meal which had been offered to

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with Mbi Irene Lucy, 57 Years, Member of *Ndem*, Okoyong, December 19th 2020

⁴⁸⁷ N .D. Beatrice, "The *Njomekpa* Women Secret Society in the Ejagham land 1800- 2002", Master's dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2007, p. 37.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴⁸⁹ P. B. Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change", Post graduate Diploma (D.E.S), in Sociology, Yaounde 1, 2000, p.65.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

them (ancestors) on the ground.⁴⁹¹ But if, on the other hand a pig or a dog starts eating it, the Banyang saw this as a sign of rejection of the rite by the ancestors. Immediately, actions are taken to consult a cult- agency so as to find out the reason for the rejection. This believe equally holds that for the ancestors to reject the *etak* rite meant that the spirit of the recent deceased relative can not rectify any fault committed against the ancestors so they may be pleased to receive him or her.⁴⁹²

At the end of the *etak* rite, the personal properties of the deceased believed to provide him or her with spiritual presents for the other spirits he will meet "on the other side" are deposited on the grave. It is worth noting here that if this rite is not performed immediately, a simpler one known as *Mbak* will be performed⁴⁹³ but failure to perform both, we are told will bring untold suffering and calamity from the ancestors to the decess family. J. S. Mbiti⁴⁹⁴ commenting on this view says "if people neglect to give food and libation where this is otherwise the normal practice or if they fail to observe instructions that the living- dead may have given before dying, the misfortune and suffering would be interpreted as resulting from the anger of the living- dead". Aside from tribal practices, we also have those at the clan and family.

2. Clanic and family rites and ritual practices

Rites and rituals practices here as a manifestation of Banyang cosmology will be examine on two axes: clan and family. To begin with those centered on the clan, we have rituals carried out during scarcity in food and human production. Among the upper Banyangs, the Betieku clan is noted for such annual ritual performed periodically (usually in the month of May believed as a period of scarcity) on behalf of the clan.⁴⁹⁵

This ritual takes place at sunset when it is believed the ancestors can respond to them, characterized by a cross-section of the population from villages in the clan as partakers in the ritual, accompanied with food carried to the scene of action.⁴⁹⁶ Before the ritual commences, the chief celebrant specially ordained to divine for the clan during this occasion gathers the items such as a goat, a jug of palm wine, a cock, kola nuts, *mambep* leaves, drum (*enok*) and

⁴⁹¹ Cocks and hens are seen by the Banyang as animals of the birdes family so associated with God. They are regarded as pure and clean. Other animals like pigs and dogs on the otherhand are animals of the earth and as such, seen as unclean and impure.

⁴⁹² Ayuk, "Banyang Socio- Cosmological...", p.65.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p.84.

⁴⁹⁵ Mbi, "A Literary Analysis...", p. 17.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

water carried in a basket (*ekai*), all kept in a sacred calabash. During procession to the scene (usually believed to be the home of the clan ancestors), the ritual specialist leads the entire population followed by his assistant carrying the ritual items, then chiefs and elders of each community that makes up the clan.

The diviner is bare footed, dressed in a loin cloth tied round his waist bare chested with rubs and draws cam-wood, yellow powder on his chest in stripes, *mambep* leave tied round his head.⁴⁹⁷ He holds a stick on his right hand and stays silent during the long walk to the ritual ground. The rest of the population each ties a loin cloth and remain bare chested. As they move along, they chant and hit the gong (*akan kan*) believed to send away ill luck. At the ritual ground, the population forms a semi circle by a tree and remains silent while one of the assistants beats a drum (*enok*) to set the scene for the ritual. The priest then proceeds with a throw of kola nuts under the tree, pour water and chants words of incantation.⁴⁹⁸ This act of pouring water is believed as a sign to cool down the thirst of ancestors who have been thirsty and hungry causing scarcity.

Palm wine is given next to the ancestors while the diviner moves round the tree and present the problem of the clan that is scarcity in food and human production. He stands still talking to them as a sign of supplication from the living then kills a chicken and allows the blood drain where water, palm wine and oil had been poured.⁴⁹⁹ The chicken is let loose as he watches it wriggles. This wriggling is believed the ancestors are grappling with the idea of accepting or rejecting the sacrifice offered. As he moves round the chicken, he watches it attentively and once it about to stop, he observes it closely to see the position it will lay. As soon as the wriggling stops he jumps, raising his right hand and leg up and down three times.⁵⁰⁰ This jump is triggered by the fact that the chicken lies with its right wing up, a sign of acceptance from the ancestors. One of the assistants is then instructed to open the kidneys of the chicken. It is belief if one of the kidneys is coloured instead of maintaining its original white colour, then the sacrifice has been accepted but if proven otherwise, the reverse is true.⁵⁰¹

After this, the chief priest now takes four kola nuts, removes the cotyledons and throws on the ground. If three pieces face down and one up, it has been rejected by the

⁴⁹⁷J. A. Mbi, "A Literary Analysis of Upper Banyang Incantations", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma (DI.P.E.S. II) in English, E. N. S. Yaounde, 1999, P.17.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ Interview with Bate Robert Oben, 60 Years, Traditional Ruler, Nfaitock, March 26th 2020.

⁵⁰⁰ *Idem.*

⁵⁰¹ *Idem.*

ancestors but in case two faces down and two faces up is believed they are laughing at the living and if three face up and one down, it has been accepted.⁵⁰² The priest now selects a particular piece and gives the rest to the village heads present. The *mambep* leaves is equally done same like the kola nuts and after all have shown acceptance, there is great satisfaction from the population. Finally, a goat is killed and the blood spilled where that of the chicken was spilt. A bit of everything that is cooked was brought and served to the ancestors first by throwing some under the tree in the *mambep* leaves. The left over is then shared among the population according to the villages, including drinks. Eating by this tree is belief as a symbol of communion and friendship between the living and the dead (ancestors). As they all go back home, no one is expected to look behind.⁵⁰³

Next to our ritual practices at clan level is the *tonkorong* ritual within the Ayuketayuk clan.⁵⁰⁴ This ritual takes place early in the morning at about 4:00 - 4:30am beginning with a ritual procession to the site (river) through a single path that has been properly cleared by selected individuals in the clan. The walk is so solemn that one can only hear the sound of bangles or tiny bells on their legs believed as a call to the gods and ancestors for blessings and protection.⁵⁰⁵ The priest dressed in a white loin cloth tied around his waist and head, bare feet with leaves (*mambep*) on his mouth. His body decorated with a calabash in his hands followed directly by his assistant dressed same with a sacred machet use to clear the way for those behind accompanied by chiefs, kinsmen, quarter heads each holding brooms with specific parts of their body decorated with a sacred soil.

While at the ritual site, the priest and his assistant position themselves at specific angles, he then offers a calabash gift to the river, kola nuts and cowries, takes off the *mambep* leaves from his mouth and chants words of incarnations informing the ancestors and gods on their arrival. He then slaughters a goat and offer it to the gods. As the goat is being submerged into the river alongside roasted plantains mixed with oil, salt, kola nuts and *mambep* leaves, the volume of the drumming increases on a high pitch as each member ties a fresh palm frond on the arm. During this process, it is believed there is a direct connection with deities through signs like bubbling of the river, a sign of positive response.⁵⁰⁶ After this confirmation, the priest now presents what (food) is meant for the mortals (people) served on smoked plantain

⁵⁰²Interview with Bate Robert Oben, 60 Years, Traditional Ruler, Nfairock, March 26th 2020.

⁵⁰³*Idem*.

⁵⁰⁴ K. Besong, *The Cultural Activities of the Besongabang clan*, Limbe, Press book, 1990, p.14.

⁵⁰⁵ Interview with Ayuk Rapheal Ayukotang, 63 Years, Cultural Researcher, Bakebe, July, 18th 2021.

⁵⁰⁶*Idem*.

leaves and consumed in a communal manner.⁵⁰⁷ Their return to the village is characterised by feasting headed by the priest, chiefs, kinsmen and a host of others. At the entrance to the village, they are received by women and children willing to tap blessings, water from the land of ancestors.⁵⁰⁸

Family rites and rituals manifesting the beliefs of the people on it part are practice on a limited scope (immediate and extended family). Here, the pronouncing and requesting of formal blessings play an important role in the religious life of a Banyang man. Formal blessings are another aspect of prayer and as a rule, the person who pronounces it is often older or of higher status than the one who receives it. As such, this rite is generally simple and maybe accompanied with spitting, rubbing mud on one's chest or sprinkling water. In Banyang tribe, these rites and rituals are perform during moments of joy (marriage, birthceremonies, success recorded), supplications, (protection, seeking for journey mercies, sickness, hardship, bareness, cleansing etc) and retribution (theft, death, witchcraft). All these will be examined below respectively.

To begin with joyous moment for instance marriage rites among the Banyang, the process of a girl child to attain puberty is often accompanied with rites to prepare her for marriage. Among these rites is the puberty rites believe as a rite of passage. This rite to E. G. Parrinder⁵⁰⁹ marks the stages in the live of the common people, indicate the life circle of a girl child from one stage to another that is birth, puberty, marriage and death. On the appointed day of such occassion, the girl's family gets up early by 6.00 am and takes her behind the house accompanied with items like roasted plantains mixed with red oil, water etc. Her father digs a hole on the earth, squeezes *ntorebana* leaves, whisky, his spittle and mixes after which he then rubs it on the girl's chest and chants words of incarntations such as "the dead, you people had said that when a mother cocoyam gets rotten, it leaves the seeds, the seeds remains and continue the family".⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁷Interview with Ayuk Rapheal Ayukotang, 63 Years, Cultural Researcher, Bakebe, July, 18th 2021.

⁵⁰⁸*Idem*.

⁵⁰⁹ E. G. Parrinder, *African Traditional Religions*, London, Sheldon, 1962, p. 90.

⁵¹⁰ Interview with Tabi Florence Eyong, 56 Years, Nurse, Yaounde, 12th May 2021.

Plate 15: Demonstrating the rubbing of squeezed *ntorebana* leaves, mud, whisky and spittle on a woman's chest.



Source: Courtesy with the researcher during a traditional marriage rite conducted between Mr. and Mrs Oben Mpey Orock, Fotabe, 18th December 2020.

This plate illustrate how a father (the man with a cap placing his hand on a lady's chest) is applying chanted mud (ground) mixed squeezed *ntorebana* leaves, whisky, blood and his spittle on the daughter's chest during her traditional marriage in the presence of family relatives holding bottles of the remaining whisky.

The cocoyam mentioned above symbolizes a mother and the seeds are the children. In effect, the girl's father is saying that when a mother dies, she lives children behind who in future should have their own children and continue the lineage.⁵¹¹ These words of incarnation are believed to wish her good luck as she unlocks another stage (marriage) in her life. This further portrays the people's concern for the values of their community, one of which is to have children which can only be through marriage. After the exercise, he spits still on her chest and her mother follows suits with the rite. Finally, a bowl of water is brought forth before the girl's parents, who then washes their hands and the water is poured by the father on her feet. Before heading back, her father throws roasted plantains outside where he is certain fowls and birds will feed on, believing that the ancestors have eaten and heard their prayers.

⁵¹¹ Interview with Tabi Florence Eyong, 56 Years, Nurse, Yaounde, 12th May 2021.

On the contrary, if another creature such as ducks, cats or dogs eats it, is belief as a bad omen (rejected by the ancestors).⁵¹²

To add, this rite is not different when conducting other stages of traditional marriages in the land. Here, on the day of the marriage, the supposed girl to be married hands a bottle of whisky to her father as a sign of marriage acceptance. He opens it and offers some to the ancestors by pouring the head whisky (*nti-mmem*) by the door post believe as a sign of thanks, happiness and appreciation to the gods for the gift of marriage. After this, he churns the area with the whisky, spittle, mud, and does the same thing.⁵¹³

Plate 16: Portraying how the head whisky is being poured by the door.



Source: Courtesy with the researcher during a traditional marriage rite conducted between Mr. and Mrs Oben Mpey Orock, Fotabe, 18th December 2020.

From the plate above, is a demonstration of the pouring of whisky beside the door post believe to be the dwelling place of *barems*, during a traditional marriage rite in the presence of the bride (the first lady on the right) and other family relatives

In addition to happy moments, success or achievements recorded by families are never neglected upon by the people who believe it is through the intervention and guidance of their ancestors that their success comes from. In this light, a family gathers in the morning or evening behind the house with cooked food and palm wine,⁵¹⁴ offers them to the ancestors who are called one after the other beginning from the youngest, expected to take the offering

⁵¹² Interview with Tabi Florence Eyong, 56 Years, Nurse, Yaounde, 12th May 2021.

⁵¹³ *Idem*.

⁵¹⁴ J. A. Mbi, "A Literary Analysis of Upper Banyang Incantations", Post graduate Teacher's diploma (DI.P.E.S. II) in English, E.N.S. Yaounde, 1999, p.51.

to the eldest. They also request for pardon in their wrong doings, more success and prosperity in all their undertakings.⁵¹⁵ At the end of the ceremony, only cocks and hens were allowed to eat the sacrifice. Ducks are excluded because they are seen as stingy who refuses to share even with their young.⁵¹⁶

The aforementioned rite is not different with that of child birth. Child bearing is the primary purpose of marriage among the people. They regard someone with many children as wealthy especially female ones from whom more dowries are expected. Usually, birth rites are performed during ceremonies (*ebou*) either on the same day or week the woman leaves the hospital. Before the ceremony begins, an elder in the family first pours libation to the ancestors expressing their joy and thanking them for the gift of a child, while then the woman is rubbed with palm oil on her chest as a symbol of fertility.⁵¹⁷ In the event of twins, presents are offered in duplicate since they are regarded differently from single children. The belief here holds that these children (twins, triplets etc) are endowed with supernatural powers (fore eyes). Thus, the birth of a child according to Banyang cosmology enhances continuity through reincarnation.⁵¹⁸

Moreover, in events for supplications, the Banyang believes firmly in the protective power of the ancestors. Consequently, they feel that any misfortune is as a result of the ancestors abandoning them. In this vain, once a family member aims at traveling in or out of the community or country, the family head calls on the ancestors in the evening preceding the departure, pours whisky on the earth specifically with the left hand by the door step believe to be the resting place for ancestor taking part in the ritual.⁵¹⁹ To symbolize this connection between the ancestors and their living kin, the father pours the whisky this time around with the right hand as he chants words of protection, journey mercies. Finally, a chicken is killed and the blood poured on the ancestral site. Rituals of this purpose are done without the use of any charm because the incarnation carried out by the family head have inherent magical potentials which go beyond physical charms and amulets.

Furthermore, instances of misfortune or suffering ranging from sickness, hardship etc, is believed as ancestral displeasure and thus, needs to be appeased. To do this, a family head

⁵¹⁵ Mbi, "A Literary Analysis", p.51.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ Palm oil was predominantly used during the pre- colonial era for this purpose but with the changing times, baby powder is what is applied this days but this time around on both the man and a woman for more births.

⁵¹⁸ Mbi, "A Literary Analysis...", p. 51.

⁵¹⁹ This reinforces the belief that the ancestors are omnipresent and as such, have no borders as far as protecting their relatives is concerned

after consulting a dibia, diviner or priest, resorts to the supernatural. While in the family alter or shrine, he presents a chicken to the ancestors, slaughters it and spills the blood, mixes it with mud from a hole dug and rubs it with the finger, indicating that the living has reached the dead hence communion is apparent. Then follows the application of the mixture on the concern's chest. Cooked food and drinks are also given to the ancestors to appease them so as to lift the ill luck meted on the victim. Immediately the head of the family leaves the scene followed by the victim then the others follow.⁵²⁰

In addition, cases of infertility or bareness also perpetuate a similar practice. Childlessness is one of the greatest curses to the people, often ascribed to the anger of the ancestors. It is seen as blocking the channel of reincarnation, one of the pillars of Banyang cosmological universe. As such, barrenness is put down rather to the account of witches or to some inscrutable deity. In such circumstance, propitiation rituals are needed to be performed for fertility purpose. This ritual is done very early in the morning before anyone talks to the other lead by the family head with the slaughtering of a goat, its spilt blood, whisky, mixes it with mud and cooked food for the entire family to appease the ancestors.⁵²¹

Plate 17: The process of mixing blood, whisky and mud (communion with the ancestors)



Source: Courtesy with the researcher during a traditional marriage rite conducted between Mr. and Mrs Oben Mpey Orock, Fotabe, 18th December 2020.

As seen in the plate above, it portrays the chanting of mud (ground) mixed with blood, whisky and spittle by a father (the one bending down with a cap on the head) before his daughter (the first lady by the right) during her traditional marriage, accompanied by relatives. One of them stubbing with a bottle of whisky in the hand while the others observe kindly.

⁵²⁰ Interview with Etah Claudia Afonembeng, 55 Years, Trader, Yaounde, 19th August 2021.

⁵²¹ *Idem*.

Members of the family stands in a long line and when each comes closer, he or she touches the mixture with two fingers (thumbs) and rub on the chest of the said barren woman while chanting words of procreation. After all have done so, the eldest member of the family then rubs it on her waist believed to be the sitting position of a child. Finally, water is then brought in a bowl for washing of hand and is used by the family head in most cases to throw on her feet. Food and drinks (whisky and palm wine) is also served to the ancestors as the family awaits their response (pregnancy).⁵²² He leaves the scene followed by the victim, her parents then the others.

In the same light on cleansing rites, we also have those related to dead. Within this people, suicide is regarded as bad death and a curse (*ebhe*) to the family. Such deaths often inherited in most cases includes death by hanging, poisoning, drowning, death caused by a falling tree on someone, death through epileptic attack, accident and instances of disappearance are given un-rubric burials and consequently, the deceased cannot be venerated as an ancestor. As such, the Banyang believes a cleansing rite is therefore needed to be done to avoid the reoccurrence of such dead.⁵²³ This rite is done as follows:

At 6.00am in the morning, family members of the deceased are taken to a stream by a family priest, or the most elderly woman or man accompanied by hitting of specially designed clappers believed as a way of sending the curse away. While in the stream, a cock is killed and the blood spilt inside the stream,⁵²⁴ kola nuts broken and thrown on the floor. Depending on what the kola nuts read through their posture, the family head then picks up two pieces, chews them combined with whisky in his mouth, spits it out (on the chest) on each family member as he chants words like "Manyi Ashu died of a curse, that is why we are here to clean away the curse, our fathers, we call on you people to watch away this ill luck from this family and may it never return ever".⁵²⁵

Immediately this is done, each family member dressed in a tied loin cloth and an inner wear one after the other steps inside the stream and are submerged to bath into the stream with the use of special green and red leaves (*ndoh ageri* and *mambep*) and a type of soap (black) used only for this purpose. Any left over or used material for the rite is equally thrown into the running stream. In their departure, the priest leaves followed by the deceased family

⁵²² Interview with Etah Claudia Afonembeng, 55 Years, Trader, Yaounde, 19th August 2021.

⁵²³ *Idem*.

⁵²⁴ The downward flow of this blood is believed washes away the curse to reinstate peace within the family and avoid subsequent eventuality in future.

⁵²⁵ Interview with Etah Claudia Afonembeng.

members and others follow. This rite follows suits for widows and widowers two days after their spouse burial. It can only take place by a running stream because it is believed that it carries away all the ill luck.⁵²⁶ In case of the dead of someone (a close relative) related to twins, the hair of their mother (*manyi*) is tied with a grass (bahama grass) while on the part of the twins (*befack*), a loincloth owned by the decease is tied each on their waist, neck or body.⁵²⁷ This act is belief as a way of cooling down the anger through collapsing (*a sek emue*) and erasing the spirit of the decease away.

Lastly, the manifestation of Banyang believes can be seen through rites and rituals for retributive justice sorted in the leopard shrine in cases of theft, death and witchcraft. This ritual is manifested by seeking for justice where injustice has been committed since the people do not believe in natural death. This belief is due to their superstitious tendencies which go beyond natural reason. For example in the dead of someone considered suspicious or mystical, the decease is brought before this shrine, laid down and the family is requested to present pepper, alligator pepper (*kesu*), cutlass and mud as objects used in the shrine by the priest to carry out incarnations.⁵²⁸ While chanting, he is in a way confessing, exonerating himself and seeking vengeance for the guilty person. He urges the ancestors to raise their eyes and look at the decease, spit pepper and alligator pepper into the eyes of anyone responsible⁵²⁹ and let blood comes out of his or her nose (with the use of the cutlass) so within seven days, he or she dies.

He ritualized the items and hand it back to the deceased family. During the burial process, the items are lowed down the grave along with the decease. The principal logic at work in this curse performed at the leopard shrine is that the good use of the cutlass, alligator pepper and pepper should avenge the evil doer to facilitate his or her departure from the world of the living. The belief behind this objects used and the invocations carried out with them helps the family psychologically from depression. Above all, it consoles them to know that

⁵²⁶ Interview with Etah Claudia Afonembeng, 55Years, Trader, Yaounde, 19th August 2021.

⁵²⁷ The researcher himself happens to be a victim of this rite performed on him during the passing away of his grand parents and uncle.

⁵²⁸ Mbi, "A Literary Analysis", p.62..

⁵²⁹ This same effect is implored in the event of theft for instance in a household for instant results. Here, a bowl of water is brought before members of the household gathered and seven eyes of alligator pepper is chewed and spitted inside. Each member comes forward while facing the bowl of water, swears that if he or she is the one responsible for the missing item or money, let the allegator pepper deal with him or her. The reaction of this mixture is by entering the victim's eyes in the form of pepper instantly.

while the dead leaves in the world of the ancestors, appropriate actions are taken to avenge the evil doer.⁵³⁰

In a nutshell, what we should note here as far as these rites and rituals are concerned is the fact that it accomplishes a two-way transaction: man's world and the spiritual world. The animal victim here is a mediating symbol because it partakes on both worlds, lives in the human world but belongs to the spiritual world. Hence, it helps a Banyang man to mediate his relationship with the ancestors. For instance the manner⁵³¹ in which a chicken or kidneys used for sacrifice lies after slaughtering determines whether the sacrifice has been accepted or not. This ties the bond between the living and the dead and when this solidarity is maintained, the living become prosperous.

B. Elements and Actors of Banyang traditional religious practices

A religious practice such as that of the Banyangs necessitates the presence of facets that accompany it in order to ensure a smooth functioning. These facets are indispensable because they constitute the physical as well as the spiritual characteristics of that said beliefs. The traditional religious practices of a Banyang man are accompanied by components and those piloting it as frontliners. These components and pilots here are those we term as elements and actors of B.T.R. Let us now proceed with the examination of elements that characterised the traditional religious practices of the people.

1. Elements

In African traditional religion, ancestral veneration has a number of elements that vary according to the types of belief and the circumstances in which they are performed. In the case of the Banyang, we can distinguish among some of these elements of veneration such as prayers and offerings, sacrifices and high places as examine below.

a. Prayers and offerings

Prayer is a religious act by which one addresses God, a divinity to implore or adore him.⁵³² In Banyang traditional religious practices, the meeting point between God, the ancestors and man is at the level of prayers. These prayers necessitate the use of words which according to the Banyang speaks power, one of the reasons to qualify the incarnation and initiation process of the people as magic. There are several types of prayer involved in Banyang

⁵³⁰ J. A. Mbi, "A Literary Analysis of Upper Banyang Incantations", Post graduate Teacher's diploma (DI.P.E.S. II) in English, E.N.S. Yaounde, 1999, p. 60.

⁵³¹ When it settles with the right wing up, it is believed the sacrifice has been accepted by the ancestors.

⁵³² Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 74 Years, Retired Lecturer, Nfaietock, August 20th 2020.

belief practices: the prayer of adoration and praise for the recognition of the greatness of *Mandem*, *Barem* and other dieties, prayer of thanksgiving to thank them for his blessings and prayer of request or supplications.

These prayers are addressed both to God and to intermediaries. Indeed, since each deity has a function relating to its competence, each of them received prayers, thanks and related requests. Prayers (that of a typical traditional religion) as in other traditional African religions have no formal layout, calendar etc. Conversely the Banyangs did not regularly venerate their deities, which amounts to the saying that there was no pre-established prayer book, text made available to the faithful. But this does not in any way mean that they did not address prayers to God. Indeed, faced with any danger that threatened its physical and social life, they did not remain inactive and the most appropriate means by which it preserved itself from danger was the regular organisation of veneration sessions.⁵³³

In their livelihood, the Banyang address prayers to God and other functionalities in a solemn way during important moments of life (birth, initiation, marriages) and in difficult times. But what we should note here is that the posture to adopt during prayers is what varies whether in Banyang tribe or in the rest of the African world. For instance, at the request of a religious leader, we can kneel, stand, cross our arms as a sign of submission, raise our arms and eyes to the sky to express a need as the place of regeneration for all men as well as the seat of life.⁵³⁴ It is important to point out that the length of prayer depends on the importance of the event, but most of the time, the prayers are brief, the formulas belong above all to the ritual sessions. Clearly, we can say that prayer in Banyang occupies a place in the practice of their religion. As such, the latter (prayers) was maintained by offerings and sacrifices made to different deities.

Offerings on its part is a word which stems from the verb "to offer" or better still "give".⁵³⁵ Offering – *Akap* according to the context of B.T.R. is a gesture made to ancestors, dietie or cults comprised of items. Offerings to cults and deities in this society have no defined period. That is, it is difficult to know the exact nature and number of offerings made to deities and cults. However, it should be noted that each dietie or cults required offerings in accordance with its nature. In this regard, T. O. Tarh⁵³⁶ informs us that offerings depends on everyone and are mainly intended for the ancestors. So a participant could bring either a

⁵³³ Interview with Beltha Arrey Enow, 74 Years, Retired Lecturer, Nfaietock, August 20th 2020.

⁵³⁴ *Idem*.

⁵³⁵ Mbi, "A Literary Analysis...", p.34.

⁵³⁶ Interview with Tabi Ochamis Tarh, 75 Years, Village Notable, Nfaietock, March 15th 2020.

handful of kola nuts, a jug of palm wine or whisky (dry gin). But the ancestors receive only a small portion of these offerings thrown to them on the ground. Though the quantity of the offerings is often minimized by the people, it is above all a significant material and privileges gesture.

In addition, offerings as an element of B.T.R. are a means of restoring the broken balance between the spiritual world and the physical world. For example in pre-colonial Banyang society, offerings were addressed to deities, while prayer was responsible for feeding them. During the veneration of these deities, offerings consisted of drinks (palm wine and whisky in rare cases), kola nuts, and animals such as goats, cocks etc. We do not adhere with certainty the motivations that were at the origin of the choice of these items. But nevertheless we can attest that they represent the different circumstances when a visit to a shrine, diety was done by an individual or a group of persons. At this juncture, the situation explains the reduction or increase in the number of offerings.

In view of the above, one can wonder what became of all these offerings provided daily and during periods of feasts or other circumstances. We can think that these offerings were perhaps preserved in tact and used when needed to maintain the servants in shrines. The determination of the nature and quantity of offerings varied and depended on the type of cult or diety, number of people present, place and the celebration. It was quite different with sacrifices and high places.

b. Sacrifice and High places

God in traditional African religion have a concept. He can be recognized under numerous names even within the same tribe. The aspect of deities and spirits is indigenous into African religion. God is always far away but represented by these deities and spirits, reasons why sacrifices are offered to them as God's representative. Just like offerings, sacrifice serves to redress the balance between the Supreme Being and men, between spirits, ancestors and men in case this balance would come to be broken. The mechanism of sacrifice according to T. E. Tabi⁵³⁷ is explained by the possibility of releasing, transmitting and directing the vital force. This is simply because the notion of sacrifice is based on the belief in the existence of a vital force particularly concentrated in the blood of men and animals. Sacrifice therefore constitutes an exchange. As an element of B.T.R. it is portrayed in rites and rituals.

⁵³⁷ Interview with Tabot Elvis Tabi, 64 Years, Pedagogic Inspector, Tinto, June 30th 2020.

In pre-colonial Banyang society, there existed human and animal sacrifices. To begin with the former, deceased chiefs were buried alongside two of their servants alive.⁵³⁸ This practice is rooted on their belief of life after death. Banyang cosmology holds here that when a chief (*Nfor*) dies (travels to the other side of the world) he will need to be served still by his servants. Consequently, the burial of two servants of his alive was to go and serve him.⁵³⁹ It should be noted that this type of sacrifice was exceptional and served for the good of the community. The latter entails the slaughtering of domestic animals and birds such as goats and fowls during rites and ritual ceremonies.⁵⁴⁰

Nowadays, the practice of human sacrifice no more exists since abolished by missionaries who preached against it as an inhuman act against humanity. We can therefore attest that the fear of *Mandem* naturally discouraged this act all in the name of believes practices though the conception behind it still stands. Human life is henceforth considered so precious with God being at the center of it. He is the only one who empowers or renders ultimate justice on the acts of man and the right to take life.

Lastly, high places constitutes another element of B.T.R. Venues in Banyang traditional religion represent cults and sacrificial places. These places can be the act of assemble by men to render their faith to a cultor where men gather to honour their ancestors and dieties. These places serve as sanctuaries for sacrifices destined to ancestors and divinities in what ever event or circumstances that surround the life of a Banyang man. Within these high places, there is a relationship between God, the ancestors and man.

In Banyang society during the pre-colonial times, one could not conceive of these functionalities (deities) without a house (*énebhe*), literally "medicine house or alter". This is where the different deities or ancestors lives, festivals are celebrated and they only come out on ceremonial bases when need arises.⁵⁴¹ High places in Banyang society evolved as their importance grew. That is, from small shades (like that of the *Mfam* shrine), subsequently, they had to make way for more stable and permanent grounds or ares as their importance change⁵⁴².

⁵³⁸ P. A. Talbot, *The people of Southern Nigeria, a Sketch of their History, ethnology and language with an abstract of the 1921 census, Vol. 4*, London, Franckcass and Co.Itd, 1967, p .528.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴⁰ Interview with Stanley Achuo Eta, 60 Years, Herbalist, Tinto II, December 15th 2020.

⁵⁴¹ *Idem*.

⁵⁴² Interview with Elias Tabi, 81 Years, Traditional Doctor, Ebeagwa, May 5th 2021.

Plate 18: Ancestral veneration at the *Mfam* shrine.



Source: Retrieved from *Sessekou* Jacob Agbor's family archives, Nfairock, March 15th 2019.

This plate is a description of persons in the *Mfam* shrine practicing ancestral veneration. The venue in this plate decorated with new palm front branches hung round the shrine and grass surrounding the practitioners shows a transitional period with that of plate 10, indicating how the setting of the shrine later on change with it importance from a faraway isolated farm land to a well reserved sanctuary within the community.

For instance, *Barem* as we earlier mentioned was practices at first behind the house or anywhere outside the house. But as time went on, coupled with it indispensable role and importance in the live of the people, this residence was shifted from outside to inside the house, precisely in one corner in the living room. Apart from these modest residences reserved exclusively for cults and divinities, high place in the context of B.T.R. does not know a fixed place of celebration. This could just as well take place anywhere such as in a public place, village outskirts, family domain as in the case of *Barem*.⁵⁴³ The fact that the people solemnly belief that land held a mystical bond linking them and their ancestors, they are obliged to be in contact with them. The belief in high places adheres that while they occupy the land of their ancestors, they intend play a vital role in their lives. The aforementioned elements of B.T.R. can not function solely on it own to portray the beliefs of the people. As such, the services of persons (specialists) are needed to complete the religious circle. These persons are those we term as actors of B.T.R., as discussed below.

⁵⁴³ Interview with Stanley Achuo Eta, 60 Years, Herbalist, Tinto II, December 15th 2020.

2. Actors

The constant interaction of the Banyang man between the world of the living, ancestral and spirit, animate and inanimate world has given rise to the presence of actors such as priests, diviners, herbalists or healers who are today piloting traditional religious affairs. They are believed to be the go-between for the welfare of man and to avert any danger. In order to analyse this section of our study, an examination of these actors of B.T.R. will permit us to know their conception. Our discussion will focus on priests, diviners and healers. Who are they, how they are formed, operate and the role they play in cult, rites and ritual activities will be our preoccupation.

a. Shrine Priests

A shrine priest is someone who has been trained normally to serve both the visible and invisible world. Often, it goes as a family tradition passed down from father to son that is from one generation to another.⁵⁴⁴ Priests in the context of Banyang tribe are diversified and operate in different spheres of influence. That is, at the family (family priest, usually family head), clan (often members of the eponymous ancestral lineage) and tribe level. This person often is a male of very high moral values with virtues such as compassion, honesty, charity, self control, steady, determination, courageous, forgiveness etc. He has the personality to serve both the mortals and immortals (living and death), understands the wisdom of the gods, ancestors, and himself is wise in his ways dealing with human beings.⁵⁴⁵ What makes these fellows prominent and instrumental in Banyang traditional belief system is the role they play as intermediaries through serving and communication, as chief celebrants, during consultations, incarnations, rites, and rituals.

b. Diviners and healers

For African societies, the world is not frozen, inert and mute, but rather changes meanings, signs carrying messages. Man is in perpetual communication with his surroundings and also knows the messages that the universe continuously sends to him through divination. With this background knowledge, who then is a diviner?

A diviner is a specialist, who sought to diagnose diseases or discover solution to problems by means of inspiration or manipulation of objects through various techniques. In the context of Banyang communities, a diviner (mu énébhe) is someone who can detect divine powers in the elements of nature through very specific techniques.⁵⁴⁶ Based on B.T.R., God,

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with Stanley Achuo Eta, 60 Years, Herbalist, Tinto II, December 15th 2020.

⁵⁴⁵ *Idem.*

⁵⁴⁶ Interview with Elias Tabi, 81 Years, Traditional Doctor, Ebeagwa, May 5th 2021.

ancestors being who they are cannot approach man directly and as such, they therefore have to pass through diviners. In this light, A. M. Mathias⁵⁴⁷ affirms that "to make him (God) realistic or nearer to them, they carve unto themselves images and gave them different names". All these mentioned by the author are imbedded or entrusted in the hands of a diviner as the custodian of this mode of belief.

As per his duties, he divines causes of illness, omens, dreams and uncovers criminals as well as predicts the future. It is for this reason that he is called *mu énébhe'*, that is to say, a man with four eyes. In Banyang, one can become a diviner through heredity or by initiation but must have a natural predisposition to exercise this function. Initiation generally takes place in the framework of secret cults.⁵⁴⁸ It comprises apart from teachings on the myths and the legends of the medium, the knowledge of divinatory objects. After initiation, he presents himself as the teller of hidden things, with the knowledge on how to ask questions and interpret the answers. Diviners and healers, our next actor in B.T.R equally encounters witches and wizards in connection with their activities.

Healers on it part in this study is used as a generalized term to group persons with a sound knowledge of flora and fauna in the treatment of diseases.⁵⁴⁹ They can equally be term as herbalist and traditional doctors because they all fall in the context of African traditional medicines. According to D. N. Lantum,⁵⁵⁰ a healer is a socially recognized individual in a given society who is concerned with sickness, diseases and misfortunes. He has the role of discovering the cause and nature of illnesses, it perpetuator, apply the right treatment and a means of preventing the misfortune from reoccurring.

The term traditional healer in this context defines or denotes the pattern of treatment done, in a traditional manner. He is known in the community as a person competent to provide health care with the use of herbs, animals and parts, mineral substances and other methods based on the socio- cultural and religious background and the knowledge, altitudes and belief that are prevalent in the community.⁵⁵¹ The Banyang tribe considers a healer (*mubabhe*) as someone who heals, feared by ordinary people, respected by those who have

⁵⁴⁷ A. M. Mathias, *A Short History of Ewelle in Manyu Division, 1448-1988*, Bamenda, Unique printers, 1988, p.27.

⁵⁴⁸ Interview with Elias Tabi.

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with Stanley Achuo Eta.

⁵⁵⁰ D. N. Lantum, *The Pros and Cons of traditional medicine in Cameroon*, Abbia Cameroon Cultural Review, No. 35-37, 1978, p.79.

⁵⁵¹ J. M. Atem, "Missionary Activities of the Upper Banyang Region of Manyu division 1912- present", (D.I.P.E.S II) in *History*, E.N.S. Yaoundé, 1999, p. 30.

gotten relief from him and hated by enemies.⁵⁵² They are gifted with the ability of using plants with healing properties for laudable purposes. They use knowledge, instruments that can only be manipulated and understood by themselves as well as capable to explain the cause of misfortunes which can be accepted or rejected by clients. Medical knowledge in the context of African traditional medicine is sometimes referred to as family medicine.

B. A. Ebot⁵⁵³ a prominent traditional healer or herbalist specialized in curing diseases like malaria, typhoid, dysentery, cholera, diarrhoea just to name a few affirms his knowledge on traditional medicine was handed to him by his late father, a professional traditional doctor. As such, it's his endless desire to see that he passes on this great legacy to his children for continuity in the family. The therapy he uses consists of medicinal plants, barks of trees, roots, animal skin, shells, bones, seeds, leaves, liquids, minerals, charcoal etc, the acquisition of which often only requires ritual symbolism.⁵⁵⁴ The complex and varied techniques used by healers include diagnostics and appropriate treatment. His fight against witches and wizards often depends on the techniques and knowledge that he acquires during the initiation process.⁵⁵⁵ Inanutshell, B.T.R. actors are true repositories of knowledge of the religious life of their community. In them rests the continuity and the essence of religious thought and life.

Conclusion

The focus of this chapter was to investigate the practical worldview of the Banyang people. They acknowledged God as the creator of heaven and earth alongside other cosmic forces which they often explore to serve their needs. Man from their cosmology comprised of the physical (body made of mortal) and the spiritual (spirit, soul made up of the immortal). The people's involvement with the environment through medicine-*njoh* used for therapeutic and vindicative purpose, in shrines and high places were avenues for religious practices. Also, the practice of his cult was characterized by rituals and rites performed at different levels accomplished by a double transaction; man's world and the spiritual world with animals used as mediating actors in both worlds. Activities of his cults rested on elements and actors as true repositories of knowledge of the religious life of the society. Despite this rich religious heritage possessed by the Banyangs during the pre-colonial era, it is rather unfortunate that some were short lived, others have undergone modifications as a result of an encounter with foreign cultures and religious traditions. This will constitute the nucleus of our chapter four.

⁵⁵² Interview with Stanley Achuo Eta.

⁵⁵³ Interview with Bate Achou Ebot, 65 Years, Traditional doctor, Nfairock, March 17th 2020.

⁵⁵⁴ *Idem.*

⁵⁵⁵ *Idem.*

CHAPTER FOUR: CHALLENGES FACED BY BANYANG TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The caption "challenges" in this chapter are elements from foreign religious practices and cultures that have influenced in one way or the other that of the Banyang home beliefs. This influence was direct (missionaries) and indirect (traders) contact between different beliefs. But whatever be the case, it did not only bring changes in the complexion of the receiving home-based religion but also modifications in its tenets. The essence of this chapter is to examine the obstacles affecting the Banyang traditional beliefs that plucked the people to abandon some of their indigenous beliefs, thereby making it lose its gravity and effectiveness in their lives and the tribe in particular. Prior to previous chapters, this is equally carved out into two major fractions, subdivided into two. Talking about the first, let us now begin with other religious bodies that came in contact with the Banyang traditional beliefs system, as examined below.

I. BANYANG RELIGIOUS BELIEFS FACED WITH OTHER WORLD RELIGION AND CULTURES.

When Christianity first set foot in Banyang land, the people welcomed it by creating a favourable atmosphere for it to relate with their livelihood. This was evident with the support (provision of land for Mission works and buildings) and collaboration (Mission workers) they showed towards the different Missionaries at the time as a sign of good faith with them though in due time, this relationship later on deteriorated subsequently. Islam on its part later came as a religion, but was practiced on a limited scope particularly in Mamfe -main street (lower Banyang) and was equally given a red carpet reception prior to its arrival. The limited or insignificant practice and influence of Islam in this tribe explains why this worldview has no place in this study though it exists. As such, Christianity will thus be the main actor of discussion on worldviews encountered by the people.

A. The advent of Christianity and its impact on the Banyang traditional beliefs

Just like other tribes in Cameroon, Christianity in Banyang came as a civilizing agent before and alongside colonialism. The advent of Christianity in Banyang land was as early as the 1800 with the aim of bringing the gospel of Christ to the people and to lead them to salvation.⁵⁵⁶ Through their efforts of colonisation, the Missionaries inevitably spread their

⁵⁵⁶ NAB, File sd (1923) 6. N°. 37/1923, "A Report on Protestant Christianity in the Mamfe Division", 1923, p. 1, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

culture and religion as well.⁵⁵⁷ Christian missions visited many villages in the Banyang tribe and established mission stations in areas like Ossing in 1907, Besongabang and Okoyong in 1912.⁵⁵⁸ Through these main stations in effect, a lot was done in the killing, transformation of the traditional believes systems of the indigens. But first, how did Christianity come about in the tribe?

1. The advent of Christianity in Banyang

Christianity in the Banyang soil was introduced through the Protestant and Catholic faith. Protestantism was implanted in 1800 through the Basel mission. During the German era, their missionary activities were confined to the Basel mission until 1912 when a branch and a mission was established at Bombe and Besongabang respectively under Herrstoltz, his wife and a third missionary as his assistant.⁵⁵⁹ Two years later, other missions were established in other communities that make up the Bako clan for instance. Through their mission of evangelisation, they converted most villages into Protestantism especially Besongabang made up of Protestants. Following the outbreak of the First World War and the defeat of the Germans in Cameroon in 1914, a few months after the establishment of Protestantism in the Banyang land, the Basel mission disappeared.⁵⁶⁰

Catholicism on its part took place between 1896 and 1913 under the Pallotine Fathers, a German based mission. Their first visit to Mamfe was around 1908 but it was a kind of exploration which lacked personnel to set up a station at that time. After setting up a mission at Mbetta in 1910, they finally arrived the Banyang soil around 1912 and settled at Ossing, a village 23.4 kilometres west of Mamfe.⁵⁶¹ There, another mission was opened with Father Hoegh as the first parish Priest. They finally left the Banyang area on the 13th of July 1913.⁵⁶²

Under the lineage of Catholicism was the Sacred Heart Fathers who took over from the Pallotine Fathers. Arriving in the Banyang soil in 1912, they co-operated with the Pallotine Fathers to carry out the works of the Catholic faith into the interior and finally took over the

⁵⁵⁷ According to Le Vine, missionary society came not only to affect Cameroon, but to provide the "civilized" content within which the varied values of Christianity (as interpreted by each sect) could best be propagated. The missionary effort was and is devoted not simply to encourage people to act like Christians but to give Christians an orientation that involves a whole new set of behavior patterns that might include a range of activities, V. T. Le Vine, *The Cameroons From mandate to independence*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1964, pp 69-70.

⁵⁵⁸ A. J. Arrey, "Missionary Activities in the Upper Cross Basin: The case of Basel Mission", DIPES II dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 1991, p.30.

⁵⁵⁹ NAB, File sd (1923) 6. N° 34/1923, "A Report on Protestant Christianity in the Mamfe Division", 1923, p.1, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 2- 3.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶² R. J. O'Neil, *Mission to the British Cameroon's*, London, Billings and Sons Ltd, 1991, p. 40.

Ossing- Mamfe stations from the Pallotine Fathers in July 1913.⁵⁶³ They were later succeeded by the Mill Hill missionaries in 1926 that established still at Ossing but later reopened only in 1933 with the creation of the Mamfe- Okoyong missionary station in 1934 which was an important centre for the indigens around the environs of Mamfe.⁵⁶⁴ With the presence of all these missions in the Banyang land, how did it impact the home believes of the people? Our next preoccupation.

2. The impact of Christianity on the Banyang traditional religion

The growth and implantation of Christianity in the Banyang tribe never favoured the indigenous traditional believe practices of the people. To this effect, our analyses will center on aspects of Christianity that have gone a long way to shatter the well structured traditional believes systems of the Banyang society which they (missionaries) met upon their arrival.

To begin with ancestral veneration, one of the pillars of Banyang cosmological universe, Christianity was more diverstating on it practice through divination, condermned by missionaries and associated to paganism, witchcraft, fetish, and sorcery.⁵⁶⁵ They saw B.T.R. as a system of beliefs that adore the cosmic body.⁵⁶⁶ In other words, it was that type of belief system that belonged to the category of those things which have somehow been left behind in the race of cultural sophistication as primitive.⁵⁶⁷ Consequently, sacrifices intended to remove evil or ill luck, avert danger and obtain blessings, traditional rite, rituals directed against cases of sickness, barrenness, quarrels, droughts and disruption of normal lifewere all relegated. The belief behind these rituals of growth or productivity was to ensure the fertility of women, land and increase production.⁵⁶⁸ Libations, also suffered same as dieties and Barems were regarded as idol worship. Missionaries failed to think of ancestors in the same way as they think of saints in Christianity.

Among a people who traditionally maintained an intimate relationship with the departed, communicating and honouring them with sacrifices, offerings depending upon their guidance and reckoning on their presence spiritually, the teaching of the Christian faith against ancestral reverence brought distress to many Banyang families. This was because family members who turn their backs on their traditional religious practices, ancestors to

⁵⁶³ R. J. O'Neil, *Mission to the British Cameroon's*, London, Billings and Sons Ltd, 1991, p. 40., pp. 45- 47.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.40.

⁵⁶⁵ NAB, File sd (1923) 6. N°. 37/1923, p. 5, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

⁵⁶⁶ Mc Grarand, Donald. Ed., *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Africa: Crucial Issues on Missions Tomorrow*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1972, p. 108.

⁵⁶⁷ E. I. Bolaji, *African Traditional Religion*, London, SCM Press Ltd, p.124.

⁵⁶⁸ Interview with Agbor Jacob Agbor, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Nfaitock, September 29th 2020.

become Christians seriously threatened the unity of the group. Early converts threatened the bond that existed in Banyang families though subsequently, a large portion of them began to come back to their traditional practices regarding ancestral spirits, despite the teaching of their churches. In any event, they remained outside the fellowship of churches because of their commitment to their ancestors.

Furthermore, the propagators of the Christian religion also denounced secret societies though most of them had as main objectives for the restoration, balance and wellbeing of the entire community, maintenance of law and order through cults etc. Natives were advised to desist from these belief practices as being devil inclined.⁵⁶⁹ Cults like *Obasinjom* and *Mfam* which acted as the watch dog in the community over evil deeds like witchcraft and sorcery were all rejected by the Christian faith. As a result, these cults could no more go out to display when needed and often, Christians despised cult members and made them laughing stock in the eyes of the villagers.⁵⁷⁰ Members of *Ngbe* cult for instance who had exclusive rights to inflict serious punishment like banishment and execution in village councils were sometime victims of this circumstance.⁵⁷¹

In addition, missionaries opposed the swearing of oaths in cult agencies like *Mfam*, *Amock* or *Efim* more than any other form of the people's traditional religious practices. In pre-colonial Banyang land, it was a constant practice in local constituted courts for elders to have *Mfam* oaths administered to litigents before they began testifying. In 1950, a local government was instituted in Mamfe Division alongside native courts which missionaries did everything possible to abolish the traditional judiciary system characterized by oath swearing. Most cases tried locally through this medium of judgement in order to arrive at the truth were now brought before magistrates courts.⁵⁷² Besides these oaths, men in various occupations could elect to swear on weapons or tools which they were in constant touch with during their daily activities. In effect, a farmer could swear on his cutlass, a hunter on his gun or a woman on her hoe which were very binding.⁵⁷³ Christianity led to the substitution of this traditional oath form to swearing only on the Bible though this substitution had its consequences.⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Agbor Jacob Agbor, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Nfaiok, September 29th 2020.

⁵⁷⁰ It was during this period that Sango Meyer, a Swiss missionary resident at Besong-abang was reported to have attempted to wrestle with the *Obasinjom*.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Agbor Jacob Agbor.

⁵⁷² Interview with Frida Besong, 66 Years, Trader, Mamfe, December 20th 2020.

⁵⁷³ Interview with Pauline Assam Manyi, 63 Years, Nurse, Yaounde, April 21th 2021.

⁵⁷⁴ *Idem*.

Moreover, the Christian faith equally preached against all forms of traditional medicine and considered traditional priests, healers as witch doctors going as far as discouraging most of the younger generation from practicing and using traditional medicines. As a result of this hatred on traditional medicine, most of the herbalist and diviners died without handing down the act of posterity. Some of the few youths who were opportune to learn these methods of healing soon became money minded, untrustworthy and gave traditional medicines a fast decline. Land disputes cases handle by cults⁵⁷⁵ with objectives to punish defaulters on crimes committed against the community lost its grip over the people and the society was weakened as judgements were now passed by catechists or church priests. This atmosphere void of the people's traditional belief systems rendered the society lawless and anarchy was the order of the day.

However, in as much as not all what Christianity brought on the impact of traditional beliefs of the people was a curse, it also appeared very beneficial to them and the society. For example, before the arrival of Christianity, the people paid more allegiance to ancestral veneration through local gods, deities and ancestors with a solemn belief that land held a mystical bond that linked the tribe and its ancestors. Sacrifices that were often carried out during wars, poor harvest, prolonged droughts, misfortunes in the family interpreted as the anger of the gods or ancestors were performed at times through human sacrifices to appease them and the use of human blood, body organs to prepare charms. Equally, the burial of slaves alive to accompany a deceased chief based on their belief on life after death was all abolished, with the establishment of cemeteries and graveyards. Aside Christianity, culture contact between the Banyangs and her neighbours was another challenge faced by Banyang traditional beliefs.

B. External Culture Effect

In the beginning of this study, we earlier mentioned the fact that there exist no religion in the world which has not been influenced or adulterated either positively or negatively by another. This influence on belief systems can be enforced through forceful or impossible means such as the case of colonisation or through friendly ties as in the case of trading adventures in the Banyang tribe. Irrespective of whatever medium used, the outcome of it all will always be a change in the religious and cultural facets of that society. This effect

⁵⁷⁵ These decisions are often effectuated with the use of the *Ngbe* insignia (*ereng Ngbe*) planted in such land indicating no trespassing, all these acts were bound by their belief systems.

on cultural blend will thus be examined below from a theoretical and practical (trade links) angle subsequently.

1. Theoretical analysis

Religion is what distinguishes man from the rest of the biological world. It varies from group to group and from one period of time to another within any single group. Hence, what has been learned can be modified through further learning, habits, customs, beliefs and institutions can change. As far as Africa in general is concerned, there is no African religion which has not been affected in some way by contacts made and none has entirely given way before it.⁵⁷⁶ Through diffusion, cultural elements from outside have been adapted to traditional African patterns.⁵⁷⁷

Religious acculturation in the society of Africa cannot be seen differently from others. Talking about religious acculturation, Hervoskovits⁵⁷⁸ had this to say about African religion "despite the intensity of Christian missionary effort and the thousand years of Muslim proselytizing which have marked the history of various parts of Africa, African religions continues to manifest vitality everywhere. This is seen in the worship of African deities, homage to the ancestors, the recourse to divination, magic and other rituals. A growing number of Africans to be sure have been taught to regard the religion of their forefathers as superstitious and to reject other beliefs and customs as outmoded. But there is no evidence which supports the assumption that so often underlies thinking about Africa's future that its culture, whether in its religious or other aspects, will shortly and inevitably disappear".

Another influencing factor of cultural change is that of literacy and schooling. Literacy and schooling stands out among the many things of European origin which affect African culture because they are so widely desired by Africans. They actually illustrate both selective and additive characters of the acculturative process. The African's eagerness for a European type education, as we are going to see in the case of the Banyang, does not necessarily mean their customs and beliefs such as ancestral veneration is equally accepted. The techniques of

⁵⁷⁶ R. W. Bascom and M. J. Herskovits, *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1969, p.1.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁵⁷⁸ M. J. Herskovits, *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1959, p.3.

reading and writing in this wise, do not compete with the established traditions in non- literate society.⁵⁷⁹

This desire for literacy is a response to a need which can be satisfied without inducing cultural conflict. In religion, where substitution has clearly been the end of evangelization, this principle clarifies an otherwise puzzling situation. For whatever the argument, most Africans have by no means given over their allegiances to traditional belief forces when they have accepted the deity of another people. Rather, the new deity is added to the totality of the supernatural resources on which they can all call for aid. From this theoretical standpoint, let us now explicate on the practical influence of external contacts on Banyang traditional beliefs.

2. Effects of external contacts

By virtue of commercial activities carried out by the Banyangs, gave them exposure to other tribes. This interaction is what we term as external contact effect which has played a significant role in curbing the traditional worldview of the people. As middlemen in trade around their Northern borders particularly with the Bali through Ejagham land to Nigeria,⁵⁸⁰ affected their perception on certain practices before the arrival of Christian faiths. Though this trade became more efficient following the initial contacts made by Zintgraff with the Banyangs in 1892 with the establishment of a trading post in Tinto.⁵⁸¹

The first wave in the religio - cultural change is reported to have come around 1920, when Banyangs started experiencing something contrary to their beliefs. Besides the traditional practice of killing or burying slaves to accompany a deceased master or strangers to the grave, there was also the practice of depositing most of his property by the grave.⁵⁸² Initially, these articles deposited on the grave, according to their belief were to be taken away spiritually to the abode of the ancestors. With the increase of trading activities, traders from the hilly grassfield country around the Northern border of the Banyang did not practice this

⁵⁷⁹ R. Brown and C. D. Forde, *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, Taylor and Francis Ltd, Oxford, 1950, p.26.

⁵⁸⁰ NAB, A/17, N^o 158/1930, E. H. F.Georges , "Assessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area", 1930, p .63, consulted on the 05th of February 2022.

⁵⁸¹ NAB, AF24, File N^o 233, 1934, D. C. Tovey, "Banyang clan area: Reassessment reports", p. 119, consulted on the 06th of February 2022.

⁵⁸² The most eldest member of any family was usually buried rightly in the compound while for strangers at the outskirts. In this case, these properties were left on a cleared spot at the end village. Those not buried in the compound had their property deposited on their graves.

type of belief.⁵⁸³ While surprised and frightened at first, they later came to regard this practice as unreasonable and waste of property.

Gradually, they started stealing what they found by these Banyang graves since it fetched them good price in their home markets and the desire to come for more became great. The tale of the cheap source of these durable items of trade, soon led to an increase in the number of traders from the North. The main desire of these new traders was to be fortunate some days to find these abandoned goods by the Banyang graves as they passed to and from the markets towns of Calabar, Aba and Onitsha in Nigeria.⁵⁸⁴

Soon, the story of the disappearance of these articles left on the graves was spreading like wild fire in all Banyang villages with traditional priests and elders giving vivid descriptions on how these articles had actually been physically carried away to the abode of *Mandem*. With this, they believe *Mandem* has indeed manifested himself to his children and by taking away these prestigious articles, their ancestors could assess their recent dead kins.⁵⁸⁵ They equally held that this was indeed proof of the peace God had for his acceptance of the recently dead to the company of the ancestors-*Barem*.

By these manifestations, the affines and cognates of those who had just died were in jubilant moods believing that *Mandem* had honoured their beloved kinsmen. On such occasion, rituals, offerings were made to propitiate ancestors while old men spend hours sitting in verandas of their huts marveling and praising the righteous ways of God- *Mandem*. At the same time, they stressed on the young ones how pious the departed were during their life on earth.

Banyang children attending Government Schools in Mamfe town by 1930 precisely the Roman Catholic and Basel Mission Schools at Okoyong and Besongabang respectively, started learning the truth about the disappearance of these articles deposited on graves from their colleagues of the Grassfields. Consequently, they started pointing out what they regard as the falsehood in the traditional ways of their parents. At the same time, they began trying to teach their parents some elements of the doctrines of the Christian Church which they themselves had learnt at school.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸³ NAB, A/17, N^o 158/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "Assessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area", 1930, p. 63, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

⁵⁸⁴ Interview with Robinson Tanyi Mbu, 70 Years, Traditional Ruler/ Trader, Tinto Mbu, December 19th 2020.

⁵⁸⁵ *Idem*.

⁵⁸⁶ *Idem*.

The efforts of these youths were usually unrewarded as their parents disbelieved all what they were told apparently out of fear of impending punishment from cult agencies. Traditional priests and elders on their part, mounted fierce campaigns to discredit the children and particularly the ways of the whiteman's God. Faced with the threats of being refused the fees to enable them continue with their education, these children became less active at home in their efforts to spread the gospel to their parents. Meanwhile, the Northern traders continued their trade, picking up these valuable articles.⁵⁸⁷ Around 1935, it was reported that some youths finally apprehended some of these traders between Nchang and Besongabang villages in the course of stealing these articles. Consequently, the beliefs long encouraged by traditional priests and elders about the disappearance of these articles physically to the ancestors began crumbling after this incident⁵⁸⁸.

This incident while giving the youths further evidence to enable them denounce the traditional religious teachings of their parents, caught the traditional priests and elders completely off-guard. Quietly, they conceded that they had indeed been deceived by the clever grassland traders. But publicly, they called for the offering of a series of ritual sacrifices because according to them, the rejection of the articles by the ancestors must have led evil spirits to lure the Grassfield traders to collect these attractive articles.⁵⁸⁹

At this juncture, the ancestors had to be appeased otherwise great tribulation would befall the community. On the other hand, these priests and elders counseled that future articles to be deposited on graves should be made useless so as not to attract the interest of humans. At this stage therefore, it would not be premature if one draws a conclusion to the effect that the elders and priests for their frantic actions to reassure the people, had themselves remained firm in their beliefs. But this incident still did not change their former views.⁵⁹⁰ Consequently, Banyang young men who had watched traders from the North make what they considered to be good business clandestinely stealing these articles started venturing into it themselves. While the elders and priests remained steadfast in their traditional beliefs, they however came to admire some of the whiteman's ways but nothing intrigued and captured their interest more than the whiteman's art of learning- *Ekati*. Thus relapsing from their original practices. In the

⁵⁸⁷ NAB, A/17, N^o 158/1930, E. H. F. Georges, "Assessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area", 1930, p. 62, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

⁵⁸⁸ Interview with Robinson Tanyi Mbu.

⁵⁸⁹ NAB, File:Af 19.N^o EP11380A. E. H. F. Georges, "Assessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area", 1930, p. 64, consulted on the 07th of February 2022.

⁵⁹⁰ Interview with Robinson Tanyi Mbu.

guise of these happenings, what quota did each group that makes up the Banyang society contribute in demolishing their indigenous believes.

II. REACTION OF THE BANYANGS IN THE REIGN OF OTHER RELIGION , CULTURE, IT RESULTS AND SHORTCOMINGS

With the implantation of Christianity through protestanism and Catholicism, these denominations made some degree of success in gaining converts though it had some vices too. But the degree of the reception of Christian teachings, destructive to traditional believes in the midst of the people (elderly, youths, women and middle class) will thus be examined below.

A. Role of actors in the dismantling of Banyang traditional believes

In this portion of our work, the researcher has decided to divide the Banyang into two arbitrary age groups, that is, the elders, youths, women and the middle age group. The idea behind this division is to have a balance sheet on the different ways in which each of these groups reacted to the religious evangelisation by missionary groups that established in the area. We shall take our first group to be that which comprised the men (elders) and women who passed middle age around 1920. That is, the period when the missionaries had gain grounds in the Banyang tribe. Still in this group comprise those who were born after the initial contact had been made, those young people growing up to find schools to attend. Our last group will represent those who were young adults that is, the middle age group by the time the missionaries started gaining contact with the Banyang tribe.

1. Elders, Women and the Youths

The story of Christianity could hardly have taken a different shape in Banyang tribe than else where. As earlier mentioned, the elders were the ones who formed the very hard core of the various religious offices. It could not have been any group but this for the most part that resisted the spread of Christianity during the first decades of missionary endeavour.

It is in this group that we find the diviners, oath swears, patrilineages and village heads. They were the priests in charge of shrines, cult agencies, serving members of social and political units.⁵⁹¹ Their resistance no doubt was based upon the desire to maintain their positions of religious authority. It was they who held strong views as to the orthodoxy of Banyang religion. They believed that the acceptance of any elements of the alien religion would anger *Barem* and provoke his punishment, thus remained unpersuaded. They, living at

⁵⁹¹ Interview with Agbor Jacob Agbor, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Nfaiatock, September 29th 2020.

the time of the spread of Christianity remained either antagonistic or indifferent towards its encroachment. Almost without exception, they are the ones still making efforts to preserve their traditional beliefs.⁵⁹²

Youths and women on their part were not left out in the society. This group did comprise of the men and women who were children when Christianity was introduced and those born since then. Actually, the former formed the hard core supporters of the new faith. Education in the Banyang land by this time was mainly in the hands of missionary bodies with only one Government school in Mamfe town and one local Government school in each of the local Government areas.⁵⁹³ Consequently, many of the youths were reared as Christians and educated in mission schools. Some of them did claim to be Christians whether or not they actually belong to a denomination.⁵⁹⁴ Most importantly, teachers in these mission and government schools were known to inculcate Christian doctrines to the children, at the same time denouncing their own domestic beliefs. Consequently, youths who were not receiving formal education were often ridiculed by their fortunate colleagues whenever they, the uneducated ones tried to manifest interest in their traditional ways in the presence of the educated age-mates.⁵⁹⁵

The end result was that the opinions of the educated children did strongly influence or overshadowed the views of the uneducated. In effect, an increasing number of these young men started cutting themselves off from the traditional way of their parents because they felt shame. Equally, a number of them left home to seek employment either in Government or the C.D.C. plantations quite early in their youthful age. As such, they did not receive sufficient traditional religious indoctrination. In their return, they delivered children who grew up without sufficient or solid contact and background of the Banyang tribe. These new offsprings were usually completely naïve in traditional believe practices. Thus, they had no moral obligations to acquire even the modest rudiments of these believes.⁵⁹⁶

The latter (women) in all age groups as has been noted were very receptive to Christianity, particularly those born when Christianity had been established. It was this group which generally militated against having their children taught what they considered to be false doctrines. Church services were often attended by children in their numbers since their

⁵⁹² Interview with Agbor Jacob Agbor, 70 Years, Regent Chief, Nfaitock, September 29th 2020.

⁵⁹³ *Idem.*

⁵⁹⁴ *Idem.*

⁵⁹⁵ Interview with Bate Manaseh Tabi, 74 Years, Village Notable, Nfaitock, November 20th 2020.

⁵⁹⁶ *Idem.*

mothers were generally eager to give them religious instructions quite in their early age.⁵⁹⁷ Equally, with the decline of their political authority, old men were no longer in position to command the obedience and respect of the youths. As a result, they were unable to impact religious knowledge and conviction to the youths.⁵⁹⁸

Furthermore, most young people though accepting Christian dogmas in most cases still maintained their traditional beliefs concerning malevolent forces despite efforts by missionaries to discount their reality. Some even after acquiring European culture through education, never completely rejected the idea of witchcraft and ghost. It was this group which was often ready to recite the Banyang rationale for the existence of witchcraft and ghost. Those who had traveled out of the country in search of employment particularly in the C. D. C. plantations acquired new techniques of magic. The employment of these new techniques was said to attain scholastic success, gain desired promotions and so on.⁵⁹⁹ The tenacity of religious belief in this area has remained a constant source of irritation and frustration to the missionaries.

Moreover, Christianity would have certainly not overshadow the traditional beliefs of the people if the youths for instance did not lose confidence in themselves. They were made to believe the advent of Christianity came with some sort of liberation from some obnoxious practices such as idol worship, female circumcision etc. Even though the official colonial text or regulation did not prohibit all these practices such as traditional baptism, the people themselves stopped it.⁶⁰⁰ Indeed, how then do we explain the eradication of traditional baptism, the attribution of names which determines the personality and destiny of being within the framework of Christian baptism and other rites or rituals left out.

Lastly, this group did everything humanly possible to preserve the foreign religion putting aside or almost neglecting the beliefs inherited from their forefathers. Of course, there were resistances opposing missionaries but these resistances were easily crushed and rapidly dealt with by missionaries who relied on the division of the autochtones. According to B. F. Ayuk,⁶⁰¹ many elders and village heads rejected Christianity and denied their children from attending mission schools. Even after evangelization, the youths still did not let go of this foreign religion. Worst of all, they portrayed shameful attitudes regarding their culture.

⁵⁹⁷ Interview with Frida Besong, 66 Years, Trader, Mamfe, December 20th 2020.

⁵⁹⁸ *Idem.*

⁵⁹⁹ *Idem.*

⁶⁰⁰ Interview with Bechem Felix Ayuk. 67 Years, Delegate (MINJEC), Yaounde, January 10th 2020.

⁶⁰¹ *Idem.*

Evident of this is the fact that many could not trace their roots or simply express themselves in their language.⁶⁰² This refusal of their beliefs could be felt even in higher authorities in the Banyang society thereby shattering their religious heritage.

2. The middle- age group

While the very old men have been doing their very best to preserve their traditional religious mandates, the reaction of men and women in the middle- age group that is, those who were young when the missionary activities started, as well as women in the oldest age group has been much susceptible to Christian proselytizing. One thing to note here is that, this group of people was often very vocal in declaring themselves Christians, no wonder a reasonable percentage of them could be termed "true believers" judging from the standards laid down by the missionary bodies. From my informant account⁶⁰³, these Christians while interpreting Banyang and Christian beliefs, many of them clandestinely clung to other forms of indigenous religious worships.

To add, we can how ever explain the reception of Christianity by the middle- age people to the fact that they had not been subjected to a long period of their life on religious enculturation, which would have led to religious conservation as far as traditional believes was concerned. Beside, most of these people had either their father or older relatives still living and acting as the custodians of their traditional beliefs. It was thus not possible for them to become traditional religious specialists or priests of shrines before they were introduced to Christianity.⁶⁰⁴

In addition, these men choose to join any of the new religious denominations because it cost them far less than the services offered by traditional practices. For instance the oath swearers of *Mfam* or other cult agency would demand fairly high fees before they could offer their professional services. This was not the case with the new religious denominations of the whiteman. The animals required for sacrifices such as goats, dogs or cocks of specific colours were often difficult to be obtained by the poor ones. Besides, the great expenses involved if one wishes to join any cult and the requirements for funeral rituals of a member were generally very high. Consequently, perspective candidates and their families had to think twice before taking the final decision to join any of the cult agencies.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² Interview with Bechem Felix Ayuk. 67 Years, Delegate (MINJEC), Yaounde, January 10th 2020.

⁶⁰³ *Idem*.

⁶⁰⁴ Interview with Orang Pauline, 53 years, Housewife, Douala, May 18th2021.

⁶⁰⁵ *Idem*.

On the contrary, there were almost no prohibitive fees required before joining any sect of the new faith. The small offerings made by Christians at their weekly church services, was seen as being less burdensome as the demands of traditional religious offerings. Thus the newly converted Christians found in the Christian *Mandem* superior to cope with evil magic, witchcraft and ghost. Besides, these new Christians saw the advantage which only formal education could offer and were thus interested in having their children obtain knowledge which only schools could offer them. In order to prepare the grounds for this, they were quite willing to discard their traditional beliefs for the new. In this way, they were able to avoid the embarrassment children faced at school when they were described by their colleagues as "children from pagan families".⁶⁰⁶

Equally, with the decline of most traditional religious specialist fast moving out of the scene as a result of death, the middle-age men who in the traditional society would have been eager to succeed their parents as priests, turned their attention to other economic pursuits such as trade, opening up of palms, cocoa or coffee, while others moved out of the villages to towns for greener pastures. Consequently, no continuity from the old to the younger generation was guaranteed.⁶⁰⁷

Beside, many of the traditional specialists themselves started abandoning their old practices as they were moved by the new evangelizing messages.⁶⁰⁸ The behaviors of these men was economically oriented and are so Christian in their beliefs that the thought of becoming specialists in the old religion was completely out of the question for them.⁶⁰⁹ No doubt therefore, given the trend of events, various traditional religious practices of the Banyang is on the verge of complete extinction.

Women in this group in their turn provided the greatest number of converts to Christianity in Banyang tribe. In B.T.R, the manipulation of the supernatural rested largely in the hands of the men, with the elders holding all if not most of the priestly offices. Being a Christian therefore, afforded Banyang women some opportunity for religious expression which the traditional religion had denied them. Thus, women possessing no shrines and only occasionally allowed to take part in ritual ceremonies, found their salvation in the mission

⁶⁰⁶ Interview with Orang Pauline, 53 years, Housewife, Douala, May 18th2021.

⁶⁰⁷ Interview with Anderson Achou Ben, 66 Years, Traditional Healer, Ashum, December 13th 2020.

⁶⁰⁸ My informant who is also a family friend Samuel Eta Manga was long ago very active in cult agencies such as *Mfam* and *Obasinjom*. But suddenly, he has abandoned all these traditional religious practices and is now a Christian of the Presbyterian Church. When I enquired from him the reason behind his sudden changed of faith, he told me, he is now a born again and a new creature who have accepted Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Saviour. A junior brother of his Eta Manyi Manga, has now replaced him in the Obasinjom cult agency.

⁶⁰⁹ Interview with Anderson Achou Ben.

churches. In these churches, both men and women could worship together, and were capable of equally receiving God's grace if only they kept the commandments of God and the church.⁶¹⁰ Thus, a blow to the destruction of their indigenous believes.

Furthermore, women in this group supported Christianity in order to gain protection from attacks by malevolent supernatural beings to which women were particularly vulnerable. They are the ones who normally becomes pregnant and bear babies, suffer the burden of miscarriages, and infant deaths. When these innocent children were killed by witches, mothers are invariably exposed to danger also. Hence it was believed at the time that the power of the Christian God (different from their gods or deities) would give them courage to perform successfully these most important female functions. To add, Christian teachings concerning Mary as the mother of Christ, the son of God, gave the Banyang women more confidence in themselves. The notion that God did honour one of them by making her the mother of His son made many to embrace the new faith with ever more zeal, abandoning their traditional practices.⁶¹¹

B. The outcome of inter religious and cultural encounter in Banyang tribe and its shortcomings

Prior to our discussion on Christianity and external culture effect on the indigenous beliefs of the people, we came to understand that the outcome of this inter religious and cultural encounter is what has given rise to inculturation. Many Banyangs soon later embraced Christ though a handful of them still regarded it as a foreign doctrine especially those belonging to secret cults and actors of its practices. In view of this common problem of Christians yielding to traditional pressures and resorting to traditional religious practices, was necessary for the Christian Churches to try to understand the appeal of the B.T.R. and to evaluate it in biblical perspectives. As a partial solution, the Church adopted the practice of inculturation. But before we analyse this development in the Banyang tribe, it is of essence to explain what is meant by inculturation as far as Christianity and culture is concerned.

P. Schineller⁶¹² defines inculturation as "the incarnation of Christian life and Christian message in a particular cultural context in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it to bring about a new creation."

⁶¹⁰ Interview with Anderson Achou Ben, 66 Years, Traditional Healer, Ashum, December 13th 2020.

⁶¹¹ Interview with Pauline Assam Manyi, 63 years, Nurse, Yaounde, April 21th 2021.

⁶¹² P. Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York, Paulist Press, 1984, p .6.

According to J. S. Mbiti⁶¹³, inculturation is "taking into consideration both the cultural heritage and the temporal situation within the total African context". To add, inculturation denotes the process by which the Church becomes inserted in a given culture⁶¹⁴. The inculturation of Christianity and B.T.R. in this context simply means incorporating aspects of Banyang believes systems that are not a threat or harmful to the Christian faith.

The essence here is to ensure that the Gospel message should not monopolized a particular belief or cultures. The message of the Kingdom and the Gospel should be based on the beliefs or culture which the people are deeply rooted in. In other words, the explanation of the Gospel of Christ to any people in borrowed cultures can not be anticipated to fully surpass, assimilate or appreciated because religion and culture are two inseparable fact of the human reality. As faith portrays and illuminates culture, culture on the other hand gives flesh to faith. Equally, as culture incarnates faith, faith in turn redeems and gives savour to culture.

1. Inculturation in the Banyang tribe

Owing to the fact that the cultures of different people in the past were used to spread the Gospel message, there is no doubt about the fact that any culture can be instrumental in spreading the Gospel message. Consequently, the Gospel message can always have a place in the society such as the Banyang in any culture. Pope John Paul VI attests in this same light of reasoning when he said "the church respects and esteems these non Christian religions because they are living expression of the soul of vast groups of people. They carry with them the echo of thousands of years of searching for God, a quest which is incomplete but often made sincere and righteous in heart. They possess an impressive patrimony of deeply religious texts and have taught generations of people how to pray. They are impregnated with innumerable seeds of the world and can constitute a true preparation for the Gospel".⁶¹⁵ In this context, we now have a blend or moribund of Christianity and B.T.R. as Churches began to embrace some aspects of B.T.R. which are suitable for illustrating the Christian mysteries.

To begin, B.T.R. possess some basic tenets which are valuable for the spread of the Christian message. These values include the spiritual aspects of life, human life in relation to after life, the knowledge of God, respect for the dignity of man, the sense of link between the

⁶¹³ J. S. Mbiti, *African Religion and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p . 226.

⁶¹⁴ A. R. Crollius, "What is so new about inculturation", *Gregorianum*, Pontificia University of Gregoriana, 1978, pp. 722-725.

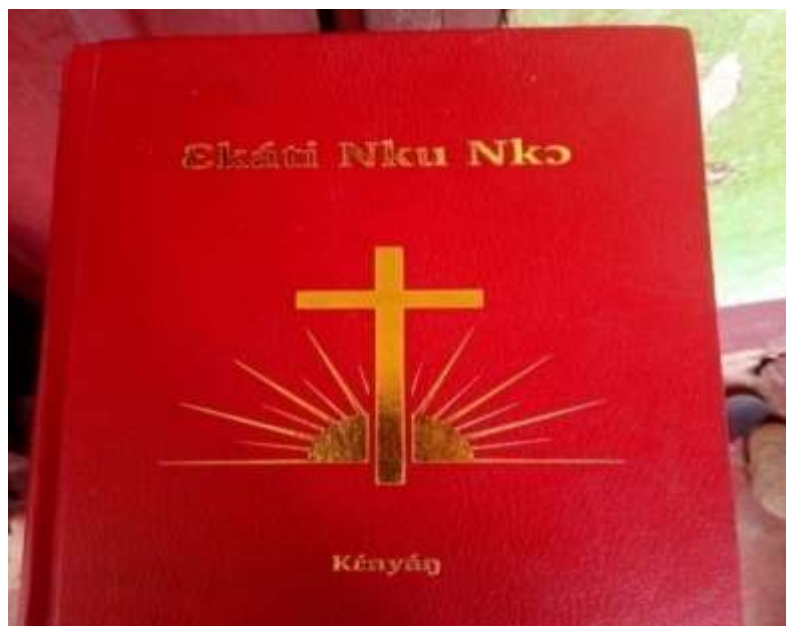
⁶¹⁵ Schineller, Quoting Pope John Paul VI in, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York, Paulist Press, 1984, p .17.

family and reverence to the ancestors. These values though not fully utilized have made the assimilation of the Christian faith in this land easier.

The first and most common values which constitutes the bedrock for inculturation includes common beliefs. Most of the non-Christian religions including the B.T.R. believe in one God-*Mandem* who is the creator of all things, whom man has respect and honour to. Just like Christianity, B.T.R. knows prayers and man knows that he can turn up to God asking him to let the dawn well, to pour upon the people His medicine of health and to drive away evil divinity. Furthermore, both religions have a certain moral code, such as do no bad to anybody, the belief in life after death and a final judgement when the good people are rewarded and the bad ones punished.

Another characteristic of inculturation in the Banyang tribe is the use of the vernacular in liturgy, songs and dances. The Christian doctrine is better taught to the people through the use of their vernacular. Sunday liturgy and sermons are preached today in *Kenyang* during Church service in order to ensure maximum comprehension. Many groups such as the Temple choir in the case of the Presbyterian Church compose songs in *Kenyang* according to traditional rhythms, often accompanied by traditional musical instruments. The theology imbedded in these songs brings a typical Banyang form of expression including the use of proverbs and myths. Aside from songs, we equally have a translated version of the New Testament (εκάτι νκυ νκω) in *Kenyang* read in Church during lessons and sermons. All these are as a result of the religious blend in the area.

Plate 19: A New Testament (εκάτι νκυ νκω) Kenyang Bible



Source: Retrived from Rev. Tarh Maurice's family library, Nfaitock, November 20th 2020.

The *Kenyang* Bible seen in the above plate is a living testimony of the transmission of the word of God to the people in a traditional pattern, with the use of the native language. With it, lessons as well as sermons are taught and preached for the understanding of God.

In addition, singing and dancing are two realities which characterised the Banyang way of life. Though it is obvious that there are moments of contemplative silence, Banyang people generally manifest their religious sentiments principally by means of singing and dancing. The scenario is not different today especially during the offertory or thanks giving procession in Churches accompanied by traditional songs. Often, the dancers or groups would dress in traditional regalias.⁶¹⁶ We equally find instances where the Holy Bible is carried inside traditional bags by spiritual leaders and Christians. Though this aspect has helped to bring people to Church especially die-hard traditionalists.

Plate 20: Temple Choir group, P. C. Bonaberi – Douala in a typical *Moninkim* outfit.



Source: Courtesy with the researcher during the annual temple choir rally, P. C. Bonaberi, Douala, September 14th 2020.

This plate is a representation of a choir (temple choir) in the Presbyterian Church in typical moninkim attire during the commomeration of an annual rally. Away from singing gospel songs in *kenyang*, they also display dancing steps similar to that of the *Nkim* cult.

⁶¹⁶ Moments in this magnitude are often observed during feasting or evangelizing missions such as come togethers, annual rallies, mini rallies, golden or silver jubilee commomeration in the case of the Presbyterian churches. Here, we find congregated groups in the church singing and animating like that of *Moninkim* as a way of incorporating the traditional fabrics of the people with that of Christianity within the context of inculturation.

Furthermore, another religious value which have been adopted and used by Christian Churches in this area is the peace plant *Mambep* (special plants used during rites and rituals) which according to the Banyang beliefs is used to transmit peace or a sign of peace, is today used by Churches during important occasions. Let's take the case of the Catholic Church where on most feast days, the congregation enters the Church in a procession with two mass servants carrying the peace plant. This scenario is not different with regards to the use of this plant during ritual processions to shrines and high places in the case of Banyang traditional religion.

Moreover, on the part of the Christian belief, it illustrate that the Church is essentially out to preach love for one another and peace throughout the land. As a symbol of peace, this explains why it has been adopted by the Church. Added to the use of a traditional olive branch (peace plant), traditional dresses are used equally. According to H. Ebini⁶¹⁷ it is believe that through the wearing of these traditional regalias in Church, the Church henceforth has a local outlook and will no longer be considered foreign but adapted to the local needs. Equally, it is hope that through this, perhaps some die-hard traditionalists could still embraced Christ. To add, the people are now allowed to organize choir groups and dances in churches using locally made instruments such as drums, offertory baskets and gongs during procession, producing local tunes. This gongs for instance in the past was used most often for announcements by town cryers or in shrine durng enchantments. It is used in churches especially the Catholic during singing and other animations.⁶¹⁸

Concerning health matters, Banyang traditional medical specialists are facing great competition from the European or scientific medicines. That is, they often treat diesaese like jaundice regarded as a diseases caused as a result of an oath on *Mfam* in the traditional society. Irrespective of the introduction of imported western drugs, some Banyangs have continued to depend on traditional medicines and it methods of treatment. And since many can not afford the expensive imported drugs, neither can they pay for hospital bills and laboratory test fees, they therefore have clinch to the traditional method at home which is affordable.⁶¹⁹

Lastly, many believe that certain diseases cannot be cured in the hospital such as yellow fever, convulsion, poison, epilepsy, compound fracture, catera etc. This school of thoughts believes that the only sickness which can not be healed at home is perhaps surgical operation.

⁶¹⁷ Interview with Ebini Hope, 63 years, Reverend Pastor P.C. Takwai, Tali II, August 20th 2020.

⁶¹⁸ O. E. Ngemasong, "The Impact of Christianity on the M'mock Traditional Religion 1954- 1985", Master's dissertation in History, University of Yaoundé 1, 2003, p.87.

⁶¹⁹ Interview with Anderson Achou Ben, 66 Years, Traditional Healer, Ashum, December 13th 2020.

Contrary to this school of thoughts, others cling mainly on imported or chemically prepared drugs or others produced in national pharmaceutical industries such as paracetamol, aspirin, just to name a few. This group discards the traditional methods of healing and medicines for being ineffective and dealing with mystical ideas and services.⁶²⁰

2. Shortcomings of Inculturation in the Banyang tribe

Though inculturation has to an extent harmonize or incorporate foreign beliefs with that of the indigenous Banyang people, let's not fail to mention here that it weakened some of the fundamental pillars on which the B.T.R. was based on. At the same time, it reduced the popularity and strength of Christianity. Inculturation was accepted in the Banyang society as a medium to make the Gospel of Christ and its message of salvation better understood by the people but was soon faced with a negative setbacks in its evangelical mission.⁶²¹ The essence of this portion of our work is to examine some flaws of inculturation in the Banyang tribe and give possible solutions to it so as to double more efforts needed to attract more staunch B.T.R. practitioners.

Firstly, efforts made by Christian mission such as evangelization is not widespread in the Banyang tribe because Christianity has failed to seriously take into consideration every aspect of the culture of the people. The Banyangs are very religious that is, religion permeates into all the strata of their life, making it impossible to detach them from it. As a solution to this problem, we propose that inculturation should also include the traditional system of marriage and ancestral reverence for example. If this is done, many Banyang polygamists and serious practitioners of traditional religion like diviners, shrine priests, medicine men and chiefs would surely accept conversion. This may take some time though for any changes to occur, conversion of a whole people is tantamount to upsetting their culture.

Secondly, inculturation is yet to make a wonderful progress in converting many Banyang to Christians because the the people believe that to be human, one has to belong to the whole community and to do so, it involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rites, rituals and festivals of that community. In this light, a person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, foundation, context of security, kinship, and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence. Due to this philosophical thinking, the Banyangs considered any person without the

⁶²⁰ Interview with Anderson Achou Ben, 66 Years, Traditional Healer, Ashum, December 13th 2020.

⁶²¹ Interview with Mbong Francis Ekwen, 65 Years, Mass Servant, Tinto I, March 18th 2019.

traditional religion tantamount to a self-excommunication from the entire life of society and most people don't know how to exist without religion.

Lastly, inculturation in the Banyang tribe is yet to receive the expected results because the traditional beliefs of the people is a very strong arm of government in Banyang traditional politics. This can further be explained by the fact that, traditional rulers in themselves are not simply political leaders but also considered by their people as mystical and religious heads, living symbols of their people between this life and the one hereafter. Through traditional religion, a ruler is defied. By this act, the diviner or sacred ruler is set above the ordinary people and things of this world. These traditional rulers are at the same time the custodians of traditions and seen as an essential element of traditional beliefs, people have found it almost difficult to reject their traditional religious practices. This then calls for the inclusion of these custodians of tradition in the inculturation process.

Conclusion

The main preoccupation of this chapter was to present the challenges faced by Banyang traditional beliefs. Our argument was structured on two parts; the advent of Christianity, its impact and the role of actors in the dismantling of Banyang belief systems. In the first part, this study argued that the coming of different Christian missions in Banyang land was received in good faith by the indigenes though in due time, its outcome was a blow to the traditional religious practices of the people. We equally saw that the inter-connectivity between this people and their neighbours through trade adventures had an adverse effect on their indigenous beliefs. In the midst of this, the elderly as custodians of their beliefs held firm to it, the women and youths on their part easily gave up and quickly embraced Christianity. Along the line, through inter religious and cultural practices in the land, the end result was the practice of inculturation which still needs some level of efforts to produce an expected result in the tribe.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

This is a recapitulation of the work that highlights the main findings of the study. The Banyang tribe which lays my study area is found in the South East portion of Manyu Division of SouthWest Wegion of the Republic of Cameroon. This indigenous group as earlier mention have no tradition of common descent nor any story of a common origin. That which exist dwells within the ambits of traditions, today referred to as legends, myths and oral traditions

Within the Banyang tribe, belief in the Supreme God and the veneration of deities was of essence in the cosmological worldview of the people. Before the year 1952 the Banyang believed in the existence of a Supreme Being, *Mandem* and intermediary gods. There equally existed a strong belief in the living- dead that is the ancestors (*barem*) who acted as intermediaries between the living community and the deities. This was because the people believed in life after death as one of their belief systems.

The Banyangs invoke their gods or deities whenever the need arise depending on the situation. This was done through prayers, sacrifices and offers, ceremonies of different kinds through rites and rituals conducted. Since *Mandem* is invisible, they believed the only way through which they can access him in times of need is through their ancestors, the living-dead. For they are the source of happiness and the main gateway to God. In many occasions, they invoke them to play an intercessory role in their lives. Considering the important role the ancestors played between the living community and God, it was very difficult for this people to totally reject ancestral reverence in favour of Christianity when it arrived the area.

In addition, the early religion of the Banyang people portray how their worldview is related with the immaterial and invisible world, better understood as an inanimate world. This world according to their cosmology is that which is clouded by a mystery which cannot be perceived or comprehended with the physical human eyes such as their belief in God, ancestors, soul, reincarnation, spirits as well as in life after dead. With the material and visible world better known as the animate world, it is viewed by the belief of the people through plants and animals. It is also believed as a world characterised by unidentified belief or superstition, connected with man's physical body and the soul, how animals interact through their countenance in the society. Equally, we have his relation to religiosity, through natural phenomenons, nature, laws and taboos that exist.

Furthermore, Banyang religious practices do manifest through cults that were practiced in the entire tribe, at the level of clans and the family. These cults occupy an important place in the religious world of the people by defining their belief systems. Admission into some of them was generally not opened to individuals of slave descent. Membership into each depends on the payment of fees composed of materials like goats, plantains, palm wine and oil, salt, tobacco, kola nuts, fowl, pepper etc. Usually these fees in most of the cults were paid basically in the form of food and drinks during the pre-colonial era and money in the post-colonial. With regards to their organisation, most of these cults are classified into a network of grade or ranks and access to each dependent upon a number of conditions and requirements involved.

Moreover, the practice of a Banyang man's cult during the pre-Christian times was in such a way that each family had, as some still have today a place where traditional sacrifices and other rites and rituals were performed. The spirit of the ancestors was believed to dwell in such places. Usually a small hut located at the entrance of the compound, behind or in some cases in a corner inside the living room. Offering of raw or uncooked food like cocoyams, plantains, kola nuts, palm wine, palm oil, just to name a few were regularly offered to the ancestors and deities. Sacrifices included the slaughter of goats, fowls etc. These acts were carried out by actors of B.T. R. such as priest, diviners, healers accompanied by elements like shrines, high places where rituals, rites, sacrifices were performed. Animals for rituals were presented in part or a whole to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living dead. In this way, the dead were able to keep close communication with the living, and the sanctions which controlled behavior in both the collective life of the tribe and private lives of its individual members were the approval or disapproval of the ancestral spirits.

Nonetheless, coming to the colonial era, the Banyang tribe attracted the presence of Christian missions which was implanted under the Catholic and Protestant faith. The formal was introduced in the year 1907 by the Pallotine Fathers followed by the Sacred Heart and Mill Hill Missionaries. The later on it part, saw the light of the day in 1800. Christainity in this area never gained steem on it own until the arrival of colonial powers which gave the different missions a stronghold in it implantation. In other to gain converts, missionaries frequently preached against the people's traditional belief systems, ancestral reverence as paganistic, satanic and idol worshipping. Convinced by these attacks, some began to accept conversion to become Christians with majority of it converts being women and pupils.

Though not all that this alien religion brought was bad, the missions were able to abolish some outdated, barbaric and inhuman practices as a believe system. For instance the burial of a deceased chief accompanied by two of his servants buried alive and human sacrifice. This practice it should be noted was base on the people's belief in life after dead and sacrifice to the gods.

Even though some Banyangs become Christians, there is no question about the fact that some at at the back of their mind are still attached to their traditional beliefs. The main problem now in this tribe is the idea of divided loyalties of most of the converts between Christianity and traditional believes. It is a truism that in strictly personal matters relating to life, traditional religious practices is regarded as the final succor by most people. For example, it has been observed in the tribe that some persons known to be practicing Christianity often relapse to seers, diviners and priest for solutions or finding to their problem which they could not get in the Christian way. Some also relies more on medicines-*njo* and herbs prepared by traditional healers to cure certain illnesses like madness considered as spiritual. The reason for this is of course psychological. For such people believed that traditional medicine is still more effective because it is produced with the touch of the divine healer, unlike the European made.

It is however worth mentioning that the challenges faced by the indigenous Banyang believe systems in the land were not exclusively due to missionary influence. There were equally other forces which came into play such the external culture effect. Through trading adventures and interractions, Banyang traditional believes were gradually being influenced by Grassfield tribes like the Bali in the North of their border, who were already trading with them. The practice of depositing flowers on the top of a deceased grave so that in the event of it disappearance, was believe they have been transported spiritually to the abode of the ancestors was subsequently eradicated in the minds of the people especially the young ones. Consequently, this brought disregard to this practice and was discarded and finally came to it declined.

Equally, these setbacks faced by the traditional religious practices of the people resulting to the lost of it key values, modification of it tenets or it almost eradication could not have been possible without the involvement of the people themselves in the midst of Christianity. However, in view of this common problem of Christianity yielding to traditional pressures and resorting to traditional religious practices, Christian missions saw that it will be necessary for them (churches) to try to understand the appeal of the traditional believes of the

people and to evaluate it in biblical perspectives. A partial solution to this problem was for the churches to adopt the practice of inculturation by incorporating both the traditional and modern believes.

Nevertheless, inculturation in Banyang tribe ended up too producing almost what Leopold Sedar Senghor term as "half-casted cultures", partial withholding and partial rejection.⁶²² Some Banyangs as Christians still visits their ancestors during crisis moment like sickness, desperation, emergency, death, tragedy and equally at key moments of their life for instance birth, marriage, funeral practices calls for instant traditional practices. R. Gehem⁶²³ quoting Daidanso Ma Djongwe affirms this indecision of African Christians to choose between A.T.R. and Christianity, they then turn to religion at these occasions, as they do it in their traditional background.

⁶²² J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 268.

⁶²³ Gehem, *African Traditional Religion...*, Pp. 20-21.

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A. Archival Materials

File: A/17, N° 158/159, Georges, E.H.F. Assessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area, 1930, p.134.

File: Ce1925/2, N° /1567/1926, Rutherford, J. W. C., Annual Report on Mamfe Division, 1926.

File: Af/30, N°133/1937, Swabey, M. H. W., Intelligence Report on Mamfe Division, 1937.

File: Af1921/6, N° 27/1927, Smith, J.M., Report on Local Customs: Keaka and Banyang Tribe, Mamfe Division, Cameroon Province, 1921.

File: Af 24, N°233, Tovey, D.C., Banyang Clan Area: Reassessment Report, 1933- 1934.

File: Af12, N°65/1929, Anderson, H.O., Preliminary Assessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe, 1929.

File: Af/20, N° 132/1934, Banyang Clan Reassessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area, Mamfe Division, 1934.

File: Af/19, N° 112/1948, Annual Report on Mamfe Division Cameroon, 1948.

File: Af/37, N° 1460/1973, Intelligence Report on the Kembong Area, Mamfe Division, 1973.

File: Af/23b, N° /14655/1950, LG, Federation of Banyang, Bangwa, Mundani and Mbo Clans, Mamfe Division, 1950.

File: Ma/a 1930, N° 3441. Vol. I., Native Courts, General Correspondence, 1930, pp. 5, 8, 23.

File: Aa/54, N° /1291/1926, Juju Societies: Relation to Native Administration, Mamfe Division, Cameroon Province, 1926.

File: Ao6, N°2656, Nfam Juju, 1929.

File: Sd 1921/4, N°103/1921, Basel Mission General Correspondence, 1921.

File: Af16, N°65/1929, A Preliminary Assessment Report on Banyang Tribal Area, 1929.

File: Sd 1923/6, N°34/1923, Report on Protestant Christianity in Mamfe Division, 1923.

B. List of Informants

Name of Informants	Ages	Occupation	Sex	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
Abanda Arrey Tabi	64	<i>Angbu</i> Dancer	M	Obang	May 8 th , 2020
Adolf Ayuk Esakenong	74	Vice Principal	M	Kumba	March 26 th , 2020
Agbor Chi-Agbor Ndakwor	71	Traditional Ruler	M	Mamfe	December 20 th , 2021
Agbor Jacob Agbor	70	Regent Chief	M	Nfaitock I	September 29 th 2020
Agbor Nchong John	65	Leader of Ngbe	M	Tinto Kerieh	December 15 th , 2020
Agbornyor Quinacoria	60	<i>Moninkim</i> Dancer	F	Douala	September 14 th , 2020
Agnes Esakenong Manyi	73	<i>Moninkim</i> Dancer	F	Tali II	August 29 th , 2020
Anderson Achou Ben	66	Traditional Healer	M	Ashum	December 13 th , 2021
Andrew Tabi Epey	66	Member of <i>Obasinjom</i>	M	Nchemba	December 8 th 2020
Anthony Lucy Agnes	86	Member of <i>Ma-awu</i>	F	Buea	May 5 th , 2021
Ashu Ebini Ashu	61	Member of <i>Ngbe</i>	M	Eyangatemako	January 6 th , 2020
Assam Pauline Manyi	63	Nurse	F	Yaounde	April 21 th , 2021
Ayuk Eyong Tommy Bakia	70	Leader of <i>Ngbe</i>	M	Douala	January 15 th , 2020
Ayuk Rapheal	63	Cultural Researcher	M	Bakebe	July 18 th , 2021
Ayuk Manfred Bakia	68	Pedagogic Inspector	M	Yaounde	March 12 th , 2021
Bakia James Tanyi	73	Member of <i>Ngbe</i>	M	Yaounde	March 15 th , 2021
Bate Blandine	64	Member Of <i>Ndem</i>	F	Eyangatemako	July 19 th , 2020
Bate Manaseh	74	Village Notable	M	Nfaitock	November 20 th , 2020
Bate Robert Oben	60	Traditional Ruler	M	Nfaitock	November 26 th , 2020
Beltha Arrey Enow	74	Lecturer	F	Nfaitock	November 23 th , 2020
Besong Grace Tanyi	63	<i>Moninkim</i> Dancer	F	Tali II	April 26 th , 2020
Bokagne Betobo Edouard	70	Associate Professor	M	Yaounde	March 21 th , 2021
Ebai Dickson Nkongho	70	Regent Chief	M	Bachuo- Akagbe	July 10 th , 2020
Elias Tabi	81	Herbalist	M	Ebeagwa	May 5 th , 2021

Elvis Nkongho Eta	63	Hunter	M	Mbinjong	September 14 th 2020
Enowmanyi Solomon	65	Leader of <i>Ngbe</i>	M	Bakebe	November 10 th ,2020
Eta Claudia Afonembeng	85	Trader	F	Okoroba	August 19 th , 2021
Etah George Orock	66	King Maker	M	Defang	September 16 th 2020
Felix Bechem Ayuk	65	Inspector (MINJEC)	M	Yaounde	January 10 th , 2020
Lucy Mbi- Aya	70	Farmer	F	Nfaitock	June 22 nd , 2020
Lydia Besong	55	<i>Manyangeroh</i>	F	Yaounde	June 22 nd , 2021
Manga Catherine	82	<i>Ma- njong</i>	F	Tinto Wire	January 5 th , 2020
Manyi Enow Nicolynne	68	Lecturer	F	Buea	May 3 rd ,2021
Mbi Irene Lucy	57	Member of <i>Ndem</i>	F	Okoyong	December 19 th ,2020
Micheal Oru Takang	68	Merchanic	M	Besongabang	January 10 th ,2020
Mitterand Batte- Anyor	66	Business man	M	Yaounde	December 20 th ,2021
Njang Ebini	65	Quarter Head	M	Douala	January 15 th , 2020
Pauline Etchu Orang	55	House Wife	F	Tinto I	December 27 th ,2020
Robinson Tanyi Mbu	70	Traditional Ruler	M	Tinto Mbu	December 19 th ,2020
Sam Orock Tiku	71	Leader of <i>Obasinjom</i>	M	Yaounde	May 4 th , 2021
Samuel Ebaitong	67	Fisherman	M	Nfaitock	September15 th ,2020
Standley Achou Eta	60	Herbalist	M	Tinto I	December 15 th ,2020
Tabot Elvis Tabot	67	Pedagogic Inspector	M	Tinto	March 16 th , 2020
Tiku Emman Cecilia	67	Leader of <i>Mma-awu</i>	F	Nfaitock	November 10 th 2020
Tiku Emmanuel Agbor	75	Business man	M	Sabes	January 15 th , 2021

SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Published Works

- Bohannon, P. and Curtin,** *Africa and Africans, 3rd ed, Illinors*, Waveland Press Inc, 1988.
- Bolaji, E. I.**, *African Traditional Religion: A Defination*, London, SCM Press Ltd, 1973.
- Cannolly, P.**, *Introduction, Approaches to the study of Religion*, London, Cassel, 1999.
- Conrade, G.**, *Commentary of Maps of Regional Atlas West I*, Yaounde, ORSTOM, 1974.
- Dah, J. N.**, *Missionary Motivation and Methods: A Critical Examination of the Basel Mission in Cameroon 1886- 1914*, Basel, PhD Thesis, Published, 1983.
- Durkheim, E.**, *The Elementary Form of Religious Life*, New York, Free Press, 1965.
- Evans- Pritcard, E. E.**, *The Nuen : A Description of the Mode of Livelihood and Political institutions of the Nilotic People*, London, Longman, 1940.
-, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1937.
- Eyongetah, T. and Brian, R. A.**, *A History of the Cameroons*, London, Longman, 1974.
- Fanso, V. G.**, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schoools and Colleges Vol.1: from Pre-colonial Times to the 19th Century*, London, Macmillan, 1989.
- Gavrand, D. Mg. ed.**, *Christianity and Traditional Religion in Africa: Crucial Issues on Missions Tomorrow*, Chicago, Moody Press, 1972.
- Gehman, R.**, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspectives*, Nairobi, Evangelical Publication House, 1975.
- Greenberg, J.**, *Classic Monograph on Language of Africa*, London, Longman, 1976.
- Kayode, J. O.**, *Understanding African Traditional Religion*, Ile-Ife, University of Ife Press, 1984.
- Le Vine Victor, T.**, *The Cameroons from Mandate to Independence*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1964.
- Mathias, A. M.**, *A Short History of Ewelle in Manyu Division, 1448- 1988*, Bamenda, Unique printers, 1988.
- Mayer, F. and Evans- Pritcard, E. E.**, *African Political Systems*, London, Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Mazama, A.**, *L'impératif Afrocentric*, Paris, MENIBUC, 2003.
- Mbiti, J. S.**, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Oxford University Press, SCP.11, 1969.
-, *Concept of God in Africa*, New York, Frederick A, Praeger, 1970.
- Metuh- Ikeng, E.**, *God and Man in African Religion*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1981.

- Neba, M.**, *Advanced Integrated Human Geography, Concepts and Techniques*, Connecticut, Greenwood Publishing, 2020.
- Ngoh, V. J.**, Cameroon 1884- 1985, *A Hundred Years of History*, Navy- Group Publications, 1989.
- Oliver, B. J. Jr.**, *A Sytematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publishing house, 1971.
- O'Neil, R. J.**, *Mission to the British Cameroon's*, London, Billings and Sons Ltd, 1991.
- Parrinder, E. G.**, *African Traditional Religions*, London, Hutchinson's University library, 1954.
- Quacoopome, T. N. O.**, *West African Traditional Religion*, Ibadan, African University Press, 1987.
- Ruel, M.**, *Leopards and Leaders: Constitutional Politics among a Cross River people*, London, Tavistock Publications, 1969.
- Schineller, P.**, *A Handbook on Inculturation*, New York, Paulist Press, 1984.
- Talbot, P. A.**, *The people of Southern Nigerian, a Sketch of their history, ethnology and language with an abstract of the 1921 census*, Vol. 4, London, Frackcass and Co.Ltd, 1967.
- William B. R. and Herskovits, M. J.**, *Continuity and Change in African Cultures*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1959.
- Youdeowe, A. et all**, *Introduction to Tropical Agriculture*, London, Longman, 1986.

B. Unpublished Works

I. Thesis and Dissertaions

- Ako, B. E.**, "Banyang clan: A history of traditional Institutions culture, pre-colonial times to 1961". M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2017.
- Assanga, C.N.**, "*Moninkim*, A Rite of passage to Womanhood in thwe Boki community, Southwest Region of Cameroon: A Contribution to medical Anthropology", M.A. dissertation in Medical Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2017.
- Ayuk, P. B.**, "Banyangng Socio- Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change", Post graduate dissertatioin (D.E.S.) in Sociology, Yaounde 1, 2000.
- Beatrice, N. D.**, "The *Njomekpa* women secret society in the Ejagham land, 1800- 2002", M. A. dissertation in History, Yaounde 1, 2007.
- Ebot Etchi, M. N.**, "Theatricalites in *Moninkim* Ritual Performance", M. A. dissertation in Performing Art and Cinematography, University of Yaounde 1, 2012.

- Ekule, T.**, "The Evolution of the Banyang Culture: *Ekpe* Association, A historical Analysis 1960- 90st", M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2005.
- Enoh, V. O.**, "Politics, Power and Authority Among the Stateless Societies of Manyu Division. The case of the Banyang and Keaka under German and British rule", Post graduate Diploma in History, University of Yaounde, 1987.
- Etamba, T. E.**, "The impact of Colonization on the Banyang clan 1888- 1961", Maitrise dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2000.
- Etchu, J. A.**, "Christian Missions in Mamfe 1916- 1932, The case of Banyang- Ejagham People", M A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 1999.
- Grace, N. B.**, "Orature in Ritual Performance: A Stylistic Device on the nature of Banyang female secret societies", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma in English (D.I.P.E.S. II) dissertation, E.N.S. Yaounde, 1999.
- Mbi, A. J.**, "A Literary Analysis of Upper Banyang Incantations", Post graduate Teacher's Diploma in English (D.I.P.E.S. II) dissertation, E.N.S.Yaounde, 1999.
- Ngemasong, O. E.**, "The Impact of Christianity on the M'mock Traditional Religion 1945-1985", M. A. dissertation in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2003.
- Njie, J. E.**, "The Woman in Banyang Narrative: A Cultural and Ethnological Perspective", DEA Diploma in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2009.
-, "A Socio- Artistic Study of Banyang Legend", M. A. dissertation in African Literature, University of Yaounde 1, 2007.
- Odu, M. N.**, "An Evaluation of *Obasinjom* as a Traditional Dramatic Art of the Ejagham People", B. A. dissertation, Univeristy of Calabar, 1986.
- Stephen, O. E.**, "The *Obhasi- njom* Institution of the Ejagham People, A case of the Mbakem village", M.A. dissertation in Anthropology, University of Yaounde 1, 2017.
- Sube, A. T.**, "Religion in Bakossi Traditional Society", Department of African Literature, University of Yaounde I, 1976.
- Tabe, K. E.**, "The Banyang Socio- Cultural History from Pre-colonial to the Development of Banyangi Quarters", Maitrise dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1991.
- Tabe, T. J.**, "The Chieftaincy Institution Among the Banyang and Ejagham of Manyu Division, 1922- 2011: An Intersection of Tradition and Politics in Cameroon", PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015.

II. Articles

- Agbor, J.**, "The Culture of the Manyu people", Limbe, Pressbook, 1986.

Awolalu, J. O.,"The Concept of Death and Hereafter in Yoruba Traditional Religion", Ibadan, University of Ibadan Press, 1997.

Bassey, E. O., "Ekpe Society", Heritage I, 1978.

Besong, K., "The Cultural Activities of the Besongabang Clan", Limbe, Pressbook, 1990.

Chem- Langheé and Fomin, E. S. D., "The Banyang Slave System: Social Differentiation and Citizenship", *Annals de la faculte des letter et science humaine*, Buea, University of Buea Publications, 1985.

Crollius, A. R.,"What is so new about Inculturation", Gregorianum, Pontificia University Gregoriana, 1978.

Horton, R.," Stateless Societies in the History of West Africa", in A. F. Ajayi and .M. Crowder, *History of West Africa*, eds, Vol. 12, London, Longman, 1971.

Ibrahim, T. K., "Demystifying African Myths", Yaounde, BET and Co Publisher Ltd, 1989.

Joachim, W., "Sociology of Religion", Illinois, University of Chicago Press, 1958.

Lantum, D. N., "The Pros and Cons of Traditional Medicine in Cameroon", Abbia Cameroon Cultural Review, No. 35-37, 1978.

Mbuy, H. T., "African Traditional Religion", Bamenda, Unique Printers, 1994.

Robert, C., *Theatre*, Boston, McGraw Hills Higher Education, 2003.

Rosenthaler, U., "Honoring Ejagham Woman", Mishawaka, African Arts, 1998.

Shujaa, M. J., "African Religion", in *Encyclopaedia*, Ed. By M. K. Asante and A. Mazama, USA, SAGE, 2009, pp. 575-579.

Thompson W. and Hickey, J., "Society in Focus: An introduction to Sociology", Boston, Harper Collins Publishers, 1996.

Weber, M., *The Sociology of Religion*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1963.

III. DICTIONARIES

Conrade, G., *Dictionnaire des villages de la Manyu*, Yaounde, ORSTOM, 1973.

Hornby, A. S., Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, 9th Edition, London, Oxford University Press, 2015.

Webster, N., *Webster's Illustrated Contemporary Dictionary*, Encyclopedia edition, J G. Ferguson Publishing Company, Chicago, 1987.

IV. WEBOGRAPHICAL

www.lucy.uke.ac/Chilver/Paidema/Setting.html, September, 2010, p.25.

APPENDICE

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE (A question guide for the collection of data in view of investigating the existence and practice of Banyang traditional religion)

A. IDENTIFICATION

NAME.....

SURNAME.....

OCCUPATION.....

AGE.....

B. QUESTIONS

Q1. Who are the Banyang people?.....

a. Where does the name Banyang comes from?.....

b. How and where did they come from before settling in their present site?.....

c. How was the general organization of the tribe like?.....

d. What were the main characteristics of the livelihood of the people?.....

Q2. Do the Banyangs have a system of belief which can be term traditional?.....

a. If Yes, what was the early system of belief practiced by the people prior to the arrival of Europeans as Missionaries, Explorers and Colonizers?.....

b. How was this belief of the people practiced?.....

c. What are the characteristics of the early belief of the people?.....

d. Away from cults where there other avenues of practiced?.....

Q3. How was the Banyang traditional religion perceive in relation to the following world:.....

a. Animate and Inanimate.....

b. Material and immaterial.....

c. Nature.....

d. Laws and taboo.....

Q4. What were some of those cults that showcased the belief of the people practice from the following level:.....

a. General or common background

- b. Tribe
- c. Clan
- d. Family

Q5. How was the Banyang belief practice in relation with the following:.....

- a. Supernatural and the world of the living.....
- b. Environment.....
- c. General, Tribal and family rites and rituals.....
- d. What are the elements and actors that accompanied the Banyang traditional religious practices?.....

Q6. What were some of the difficulties encountered by the indigenous belief of the Banyang people?.....

- a. What was the stand of the indigenous population in the midst of the teaching and practices of other religions and culture?.....
- b. How did the religious atmosphere of the Banyang later become?.....
- c. Did the religious and cultural blend in the Banyang tribe proved successful?...
- d. Did the coming of other religions in the Banyang tribe strengthen or devalued Banyang religious practices?.....
- e. What is the state of traditional religion in the Banyang tribe today?.....