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**A Re-Think of a True Identity in Embracing and
Practicing Western Culture(s) and Religion as Typical
Bakweri, Manyu and Ugare people of the Anglophone
Cameroon**

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A Re-Think of a True Identity in Embracing and Practicing Western Culture(s) and Religion as Typical Bakweri, Manyu and Ugare people of the Anglophone Cameroon

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Abstract

Purpose: Western Education and Christian religion foundations and developments in Africa in general and Cameroon in Particular were laid and developed on African traditional education and religious practices and beliefs. Unfortunately, African traditional education, religious belief system and practices were brandished by colonial masters and Missionaries who introduced western education and Christian religious practices as fetish, uncivilized and paganistic. All these allegations were from the stranger's perspectives. Regrettably, those who engaged into the study of western education and practices of western religion were forced to upgrade foreign education and religious practices and beliefs over against African education and religious beliefs and practices. All these led to a false identity, religious practices, educational norms and values development on those who practice the western system of education and religious development. Consequently, some of the cherished Cameroonian cultural practices, religious beliefs and traditional education are fast dying out. It is for this reasons that this paper sought to address and revisit cultural beliefs and religious practices of some tribes of the Anglophone Cameroon. The purpose of this paper is to present some of the cultural practices that are educative, promote cherish values and norms and demonstrate the strength of the Bakweri, Manyu and Ugare cultural practices and belief for today's children of the Anglophone Cameroon who have embraced western education and western religion over against

our valued education and informative cultures and religion.

Materials and Methods: The methodology is qualitative with the use of ethnography as design. Data were collected interviews, primary and secondary sources. and interviews.

Findings: From the content analysis, the conclusion arrived at is that because the Bakweri Manyu and Ugere traditional education and cultural practices and beliefs are unique, other religions and educations should learn from the richness of these indigenous practices.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Though western education is good, Christianity, western education and cultural traditional beliefs and practices should work hand in glove for a better society. Before the coming of Christianity, the cultural beliefs and practices of the Bakweri, Manyu and Ugere had long existed. The people were aware of the existence of the Supreme Being and Christian religion should not consider them as fetish and paganistic. The study suggests a model of educating the young generation on the traditional education and cultural practices of the Bakeri, Manyu and Ugere people. The home is the center whereby, cultural values should disseminated to the churches, schools and community.

Keywords: *Re-Think, True Identity, Embracing, Practicing, Western Culture, Religion Anglophone Cameroon*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Western Education and Christian religion foundations and developments in Africa in general and Cameroon in Particular were laid and developed on African traditional education and religious practices and beliefs. Unfortunately, African traditional education, religious belief system and practices were brandished by western education and Christian religious practices as fetish, uncivilized and paganistic. All these allegations were from the stranger's perspectives. Regrettably, those who engaged into the study of western education and practices of western religion were forced to upgrade foreign education and religious practices and beliefs over against African education and religious beliefs and practices. All these led to false identity, religious practices, educational norms and values development on those who practice western system of education and religious development.

Some of the cherished Cameroonian cultural practices, religious beliefs and traditional education are fast dying out. It is for this reasons that this paper sought to address and revisit cultural beliefs and religious practices of some tribes of the Anglophone Cameroon. The purpose of this paper is to present some of the cultural practices of the Bakweri, Manyu and Ugere People that are educative, promote cherish values and norms and demonstrate the strength of the Anglophone-Cameroon cultural practices and belief for today's Christians/Muslims who have embraced western education and western religion over against our valued education and informative cultures and religion. We are going to present the Bakweri culture first and then, the Manyu and ugere and conclude by producing a model whereby indigenes of these tribes can effectively embrace western education and Christian religion without doing away with their cultural practices and beliefs

BACKGROUND

Brief History of the Bakweri, Manyu and Ugere People of the Anglophone- Cameroon

History of the Bakweri People

Just as it is typical of most African communities, there are always stories, especially myths, forming the background of the origin of tribes. The Bakweri Tribe is no exception and actually, there are so many versions of stories hovering around the origin of the Bakweri people - The Bakweri tribe occupies the whole of the southern section of the South West province of the Republic of Cameroon it falls within the language family group known as Bantu; and in that light, has many characteristics common to the Bantu world.

The Bakweris are a homogenous ethnic group of semi-Bantu stock who inhabit the South-western region of Cameroon at the foot of the Fako or Cameroon Mountain, Buea coordinates: 4°09'09" N, 9°14'27"E. They are part of more than 230 tribe groups that make up the modern state of Cameroon in Central Africa. With a total population of just over 35,000, the Bakweri occupy about 104 villages in Fako division (Ardener1956:11).

According to Kale (1939), the language of the Bakweri people, being a portion of Western Bantu, qualifies the Bakweri people having a common origin with the Bantu race. Their base of origin is believed to have been the area around the great lakes lying between the Nile and Congo. Due to this desire for setting up independent communities, this young race had to break up into series of emigrant groups that spread throughout Southern Africa, East Africa and Cameroon.

The Kpe (Bakweri) generally claim the same ancestor as the Duala though they originated from the Mboko country (Womboko), through the northern side of the Cameroon mountain. The

tradition of the Buea (Gbea) states that one Eye Njie used to come from womboko to hunt on the eastward side of the mountain with the friend, Nakande. Nakande used to hunt near the site of present day Wonkanda, while Eye moved on to the Mosole stream near the present Gbea. There he built a shelter in which he slept and dried meat of the animals he had killed which he carried back to womboko a few days later. Eye Njie referred to his new settlement as *ligbea* (place where work is in hand) later on called *Gbea* (Buea). While Nakande's settlement also became *Wonakanda* (Bonakanda).

The genealogy of the chief's family of Buea gives only four generations between Kuva who died in 1894 and Eye Njie from womboko. The bakweri expansion was an individual affair, in which men with their relatives and friends moved to new settlements, recognized a leader and the settlement was later named after the founder as *wonya* {children of} (Ardener 1956:24). The Bakweri people speak the *Mokpe* language which is classed with the Duala group.

The Bakweri are made up of three major clans: the Kpes, the Isuwas, and the Woveas, divided into two main groups, namely Vakpe va Lelu (Upper Bakweri) and Vakpe wa Mbenge (Lower Bakweri). The Upper Bakweri are closer to the base of the Cameroon Mountain stretching from Mafanja in the West and to Ekona in the East. The Lower Bakweri inhabit the area along the Atlantic coast and include the villages of Ewota, Kie, Bimbia, Batoke, Bakingili, Bomboko, and Sanje (in the West Coast), Bonjongo, and Mokunda1. (ibid)

Brief Presentation of the Manyu People

The people of Manyu are from the Manyu division in the South West Region of Cameroon. The Division has a rich cultural heritage, which cannot be passed by. Its richness in diversity ranges from its popular traditional dish, to the traditional regalia and the customary dances and songs, to the peculiarity of its secret societies amongst others. These all are culminated in the perceptions that others have of the people of Manyu.

The Manyu people belong to the South West of Cameroon and together hold a population of over 300,000 individuals. Though many often refer to the Manyu as one tribe, the division consists of three main tribes: the Ejagham, the Bayangi and the Boki. Archaeological evidence suggests the Manyu people first settled in their present day land during 170 A.D. The Ikom monoliths of the cross river regions which were built between 270 B.C to 170 A.D suggest the Manyu by that time were able to develop the Nsibidi script. First originated by the Ejagham people. The capital of the sub-division is the village of Eyumojock. In ancient times the government was the Mgbe or leopards club. Only ran by men.

It helped to keep the villages together and scholars believe they invented the Nsibidi script judging that of the over 500 characters unknown to scientist the Mgbe use them in secret. Such clubs/associations were once a big part of a man's upbringing. The Manyu have a rich culture and history as well that is still fully acknowledged today. The indigenous population of the Manyu Division who today constitute the tribes like the Banyang, Keakaas, Anyangs and Bokis all originated eastward from Ekoi in South Eastern Nigeria. The real factors responsible for their movements remain clouded because it is based on speculation.

However, Ejagham and Banyang oral traditions hold that inter-tribal wars, the escape from slave raiders and the desire by some Efik fishermen to do fishing at the Manyu River were the three fundamental factors responsible for the people's migration (source).

Another Ethnic group found in the Manyu Division of the South West Region of Cameroon is the Enjoov People in Akwaya Sub-Division of the Manyu. According to Joseph (2001), it was difficult to trace the origins of the Enjoov people. This was because no one appears to be quite sure of how they came to be where they are today. However, in the early 1920s an attempt was made. Thus, reaching completely from information from oral traditions, historical and archeological sources, the general history, the Njoov people were people who once inhabited the Central African Continent.

The Ugare People of the Messaga Ekol Clan

According to Ikye (1991:1) Messaga Ekol clan is located in the Northern part of Akwaya Sub-Division in Manyu Division of the then South West Region of Cameroon. It is made up of six villages namely: Ballin, Bagundu, Bakinjaw, Enjawbaw, Bombe and Assaka. The clan shares common boundaries with the Essimbi people of the North West Region; in the North, to the east by Momo Division, to the South by Assombo clan and to the west by an international boundary with the Tiv clan of Nigeria. To him, the people of Messaga Ekol originated from a small hill called Chika. The founding ancestor name was Ugare Chika whose wife name was long forgotten, given that the position of women wasn't considered very important as it was the case in many African settings.

Ugare Chika had three sons namely Matiah, Allin and Ikinjaw. The first three villages mentioned above are named Ugare after these three sons of Ugare Chika respectively. Again, oral traditions holds that the current name Messaga Ekol Clan was introduced by the first European Missionaries who came to the area for exploration. The white man whose names are unknown to the natives is said to have come from the then North West province. While passing through the clan, he met Ugare Chika and enquired of the Clan's name, but Ugare Chika without understanding what the white man said in his language, started shivering, shouting and crying for help using the words "Me nsha keh ikol" meaning I am lost in the forest. The white man too, without understanding took the name of the clan to be Messaga Ekol which has been documented and accepted today as one of the court areas in Akwaya Sub-Division (Ikye 1991:4).

For the purpose of the paper, some of the cultural practices of the three selected areas will be presented systematically, while some of the misconceptions and conceptions of the western education and missionaries in relation to religious practices will be highlighted.

Statement of the Problem

In Africa in general and Cameroon in particular, western (foreign) religions practitioners are systematically castigating cultural practices and beliefs system in the teachings of Christian and Muslim doctrines to Africans and Cameroonians. This has been consistent from the coming of missionaries of these foreign religions and the introduction of western (formal) education to Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. The colonialist mentality especially in religious matters is still gaining grounds in Cameroon and Africa in general. People of Cameroon rich cultural heritage and beliefs system are gradually being eroded from these cherished values and embracing foreign teachings. These western cultural practices and beliefs introduced in Africa are gaining grounds over the peoples values and beliefs. Children are no longer introduced to Cameroon cultural practices and beliefs at homes and in schools through informal and formal education. Marriages, medicines practitioners, dressing etc are gradually shifting towards the western styles. This paper

seeks to present Anglophone cultural practices and beliefs which can equally inform Christianity and Islamic religion practitioners (faithfuls) good moral values and practices which are timeless.

Objectives

- To present some cultural practices and beliefs of three tribes of the Anglophone Cameroon.
- To formulate a model that could be used to teach Christians and Muslims faithful the importance of Anglophone cultural practices and beliefs

Research Questions

- What are some of the cultural practices of the Bakweri, Manyu and Ugare people of The Anglophone Cameroon?
- What model can be used to educate Christian and Muslim faithful on the importance of some Anglophone cultural practices and beliefs of the Bakweri, Manyu and Ugare people of The Anglophone Cameroon

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is qualitative with the use of the use of ethnography as design. Data were collected through interviews with the use of research assistant. These research assistance were very knowledgeable students of theology of the Presbyterian Theological seminary Kumba. Data was also collected from primary and secondary sources.

3.0 FINDINGS

a. Cultural Practices and Beliefs

Cultural Practices of the Bakweri people of the Anglophone Cameroon

Among the Bakweri, the natural and supernatural worlds interact constantly in all aspects of life. In this regard, they have a three-dimensional view of the cosmos in which the supernatural world, the world of the ancestors, and the world of the living are in frequent interaction. Bakweri ancestors, 'velimo', act as mediators between the living and Maek'a Lowhe, the High God. They are contacted through divinations, during libations, in dreams, visions, and during quiet moments of meditation. Clan, village, and family ancestors are consulted differently depending on the circumstances. While clan ancestors are invoked during epidemics, famine, war, or the eruption of the Fako Mountain, village ancestors are invoked when there is a high mortality rate, sickness, and poor harvest. Family ancestors are consulted during births, deaths, marriages, successes, sickness, Coronation of Chiefs, family meetings etc.

i. Marriage

The process of acquiring a wife has some procedures which begin with the inventory. This means investigation carried out by both families. This investigation takes time and matters to be investigated include fertility, history of disease which is peculiar in some families and practice of witchcraft.

Knock door: The taking of list of the possible items to be paid for the would be bride from the bride's family.

Inono: This is a process whereby part of the dowry is given to the bride's father without the concern of the mother.

Ewanda: This is the introduction of the bride and groom to the public and this can only be possible if both families have come to an agreement.

Efeyo: This is done in two ways with the killing of two pigs. In the morning a pig is first killed whereby the bride's family goes to the groom compound. The pig is killed and eaten by the members present. The second pig is killed in the night and it is called Efeyo yi Itote. The bride's family is entertained with a middle size pig commonly called ngowa with rich food and reasonable quantity of palm wine.

Argument is done with banana of plantain leafs on the amount to be paid as dowry and this can last till morning. The number of leafs shared or cut will determined the amount to be paid.

Kumo: This is a process where the groom gives a certain amount to the bride's father and the money shared among the witness present in the ceremony

Moombi: This is the evacuation of the girl from her parents' house with the replacement of a female goat with no offspring; this signifies that the girl is expected to bring forth children just as the female goat.

Beliefs or significance of the Marriage Practices

The goat is believed to take the place of the girl in the house.

The leaves during the efeyo is said to be the final sealing of the contract.

The pig shows that the both families have become one.

ii. Death/ Ancestral Beliefs

The pre colonial Bakweri society had its own vision of the cosmic world. They believed in life after death and attached themselves to traditional religious groups. These groups were usually linked to the ancestral cult. Here the ancestors were believed to play an intermediary role between the gods and those living on earth. In the world of the living, family head presided over rituals and sacrifices on behalf of the family or the village clan. This practice is still going on today despite colonial and missionaries labels. Libation is poured to the dead, burn offerings offered, rituals made on the grave (grinding of pepper on the grave) and the "sasa" celebrated on the 3rd day, where animals are sacrificed to appease the dead if anyone has offence them. Also, sacred incantations are made usually by the elders, to consult the dead.

For example, if your son or daughter is going out of the country, you are expected to go on the grave of an ancestor and pour wine on the grave and call their name. As for the "sasa", when somebody dies there is what is call 3 days of traditional celebration "sasa". After 3 days a pig is killed (or a chicken in case you don't have money), food is cooked and put it in a certain place a the bush for people to take it and eat.

While eating, they have to throw part of the food, and come and check on the next days if the food is still there or it has been eaten. If the food is eaten by animals, it means that the dead have made peace with you. Nevertheless, if the food is not eaten and you still find it there, it means the sacrifice was not acceptable, and you have to re do it. During this period, if anybody sees you killing a pig, you must share at least a piece of the pig with that person. This is because, many people are witches, and if you do not share with such a person, he/she might harm you or even kill you (Etonde 1994).

iii. Secret Societies Beliefs and Practices

Secret societies such as the “maale”, “Molova” which was a female group known as wild pigs, Nganya, Liengu and host of others played the role of regulatory societies and custodians of the Bakweri community.

- a. **Liengu:** The Liengu rites clearly belong to the *yowo* pattern. It is the most active and important women’s society. (Ardener 1956:70). There are distinguished into three types: *liengu la vefea*(the girl becomes sick and has to be given *eso* and *wosongi*), *liengu la ndiva*(appears to retain closest connection with water spirits) *liengu la momgbango*(Girl disappearing into the bush as if attracted by spirits).

It stated that every daughter was put through Liengu at about 8-10 years of age so that she would be fertile. It should be noted that despite the fact that Liengu is a woman’s rite, men are not immune from the sickness, especially if there are no women left in a man’s family.

- b. **Nganya:** In this society, the gods and demi-gods played vital role according to the African traditional beliefs. This society, had gods such as: Maelalova, and Ouas’alova, all referred to god, creator of the universe.

Meanwhile “IwondaLova”, was literally translated as everybody (Ardener 1956:2). Stone (1929) states that among these gods “Mbabalova” was believed to be the grandmother of the sky god mostly attributed to the moon. Cultural practices include mingna, Nganya (it is like a dance which is the symbol of the people) moves only in the night from 11-12pm. One is not allowed to see them when they move.

It is the Nganya who delivers the maale, they are another very strong society, they process elephants. They can eat what the normal people can’t eat because they are initiated. For example, they can eat raw cocoyams.

This is because, they are usually initiated using animals like monkeys and chimpanzees, which represent and protect them from all harm. These totems further give them strength when wrestling during the “Palapala fight”.

- c. **Maale (Animal Possession):** it is believed that persons can have animal doubles (Ittmann 1953). It is believed that senior members of the *maale* association claim that senior members possess elephants doubles. Others are said to have leopards, gorilla doubles.

The “Maale” society sometimes referred to as the elephant dance originated from womboko village. Oral tradition holds that a hunter from this village went for hunting and stayed in the forest for a very long time until it was believed that he was death. To the greatest surprise of everybody, he returned to the village. His arrival was made known to the entire village when he started playing a drum while his son danced (Matute 1988).

This called for the attention of the village elders who convoked him an explanation. During this event, he told the elders that he was tired and decides to rest before returning home and it was during that interval that ancestral spirit visited him. He was introduced to some secrets of the forest, on how to transform into an elephant and a host of others. After these declarations, the elders consulted the ancestral spirit and his declarations were confirmed.

He initiated the elders into this society and the other hunters were equally initiated. As a result of these declarations, among the numerous activities of this society which was opened

only to men was that, they provided entertainment during important ceremonies in the Bakweri villages.

Furthermore, they were believed to have totems such as elephants and extract strength to protect the villages from external aggression. Thus this society embodied the strength of the Bakweri man and his cultural values.

These values were most often demonstrated during their official outings in a dance called “ueambeé”. In this situation, they demonstrated masquerades such as “Moseke” which was a popular clown, “Ekang’ateka” which puts order during dancing and “Njuku”, the most senior in rank representing the elephant (Etonde 1994).

iv. Folklore

- a. EFASA MOTO: The God of the Fako Mountain:** Apart from the above mentioned names of the Bakweri clan’s gods, the traditional Bakweri society believed in other demi-gods such as the god of the mountain called efasa Moto. He was believed to be half human and half rock.

The main function of this demi-god was to protect the Bakweri people during eruption of the Mt Fako which was an active volcanic mountain. He is the protector of the Bakweri people and at first albinos were been offered to him as sacrifice to seek for his protection and guidance which was a practice done yearly but the sacrifices of albino was replace with animals like goats instead of humans.

Myths affirms that ‘efasàmoto’ owned a large sugar cane plantation in the mountain, where people who visited the mountain ate as much as possible but could not carry any back home and it is said that there are consequences of taken it out which may cause your disappearance in the mountain with thick cloud. The importance of that plantation was a sign of conservation.

Central core of traditional religion is centered on Efasa moto, half man, and half stone. In any tragedy like earthquake, volcanic eruption or any other natural disaster, sacrifices are offered to the deity. It is believed that the deity loves albinos, so albinos were offered to their deity as sacrifices. If no albino was found, a yellow Endeley was offered to him, or someone who is very fair in complexion.

According to oral sources, there is a belief that for more than three hundred years now the Bakweri people have been in possession of scientific knowledge that they use;

- To suspend rainfall,
- To cause rainfall and
- To cause whirlwinds and hurricanes to occur (source).

v. Birth

a. Traditional rites during pregnancy

Bakweri pregnancy rituals are done to prevent abortions, premature deliveries, stillbirths, and to ensure safe delivery and protect her during gestation and the baby. Hence, they are intended to keep the pregnant woman healthy throughout her gestation period (Mutia 2005:218-237). Four main kinds of pregnancy rituals can be distinguished among the Bakweri. They are the lilale (smashing) ritual, the mesuma na mavengo (bending) ritual, mcndo (ring or bangle) ritual, and the isasa (chain) ritual.

b. Practices done before and After Birth of a Child

When a lady is pregnant, her husband is expected to kill a pig for celebration. She has to leave either with her mother or mother-in-law for series of pregnancies medicine to be performed on her.

The first stage Lilale is done with a small pot. The lady visits a traditional doctor who prepares a bundle of leafs and rubs on the woman's stomach.

Next, we have the "wosongi" which is to prevent sickness and is purged either by the husband or another woman. It is done with the use of a goat, fowl whose blood is mixed with the medicine before they are cooked.

In addition, two to three months before delivery, she has to wear an amulet known as "isasa" consisting of her hair, nails which is wrapped with leaves and wire and sprinkled with fowl blood. This is worn round her neck (Ekalle 1947).

The Importance of the Rituals

- To prevent miscarriages
- To avoid difficult birth
- To avoid the production of twins (before)
- To avoid sickness

Practical Beliefs of the Rituals

- It is believed that if the fire is touched, the medicine in the clay pot will lose its potency. The wosongi is allowed to boil over the clay pot for about twenty minutes; if it does not boil over, it is regarded as a bad omen and the pregnant woman will have to repeat the ritual in another session. They believe that the sticks she uses to clean herself after using the wosongi protects her from misfortune (Ekalle 1947).
- It is also believed that the pregnant woman has to throw cold water on one of the three stones before it is used again so it can not affect the next person using the fire.
- After a child is being born, the umbilical cord is cut off with a sharpened splinter of the mid rib of a leaf of a raphia palm.

The placenta is buried at the back of the house and a plantain is planted on it. When it is ready it is not eaten by any member of the family rather it is sold. It was also believed that after the birth of a child the husband kills a pig where the head, hindquarter and one leg is given to the doctor (Ekalle 1947).

The Birth of twins in the Bakweri Land

Twins usually called 'maerze' are a blessing to every family. In the past, these children were terribly maltreated and killed or abandoned in evil forest in other cultures. The Bakweris had since refrained from regarding the birth of twins as a taboo. Even though they still believe that children have supernatural powers most of them have come to stay (Etonde 1994). In the Bakweri culture, the parents of twin are highly respected though no name stands to distinguish them from other members of the society. Some tribes in grass field called them Tanyi (male) and Manyi "female".

There are so many things associated with twins for example, some are said to possess snakes and other totems which could enable them bewitch anyone who tries to hurt them. They are also noticed

for being connected with traditional medicine and have certain powers to cure illnesses like stiff necks, mumps, and headaches. A man who refuses to satisfy any of their requests might develop a stiff neck at night. Despite their belief, the Mokpes generally respect twins, as they regard them as reincarnation of certain ancestors who had long died. In the case of identical twins, they are masked to avoid the confusion of identification.

Circumcision of the Child

A man is not considered a full Bakweri or Mokpe unless he is circumcised. This process can sometimes begin at child birth after eight days. This process in the past used to be carried out at the age of twelve and above. Items used are scissors, towels, razor blade, Vaseline, engine oil etc. It was done either by a native doctor or specialized woman with good records. There is no point getting someone who causes extreme loss of blood or too much pain. The older boys are compelled to tie loin cloths so as to allow enough air in between their legs. It is common to find the bigger boys walking in funny style after the process. The native doctor is usually paid some money for the services; meanwhile items used such as blades, towels, cotton, swabs are usually buried. If for one reason or another a Mokpe man is not circumcised during childhood, he must do so before marriage, hence it is difficult for an uncircumcised Mokpe to get married (Ardener 1956:85).

Sickness

Supernatural Sickness: All sicknesses are believed to be of supernatural origin, either through witchcraft or through the action of spirits, but some, naturally are regarded as more trivial than others. In such circumstances, certain rites are to be performed to cure or avert them.

The treatments are commonly undergone in the company of relatives. In case of sickness the *you'a mondo* is where a bangle is given to the patient by the native doctor for protection (Ardener 1956:96). Also, during sickness, the native doctor mixes water with some herbs and other things which are then given to the patient to also rub on the body for protection.

Libation

Libation is a sign of communication between the living and their ancestors. This is mostly done by chiefs and/or head of families. It is usually done during marriages, Coronation of Chiefs, death celebration or when there is an important event in the community. Libation has its elements which can either be water or palm wine (Oral source).

Nevertheless, remnants of pre-Christian ancestor worship persist. Traditional Bakweri belief states that the ancestors live in a parallel world and act as mediators between the living and God. As might be expected for coastal peoples, the sea also plays an important role in this faith. Spirits live in the forests and the sea, and many Bakweri believe that traditional practices hold a malign influence on everyday life. Traditional festivals held each year serve as the most visible expression of these traditional beliefs in modern times (Etonde 1994).

Rites

- When a woman is pregnant you don't access any dowry because she doesn't belong to you until she delivers.
- **Public Ritual (*Liundo and mbando rites*).** Certain rituals are performed to restore the fortunes of the village. This is performed under the direction of the chief and elders. Most villages have stones beneath which medicines are buried they are set up by mbando doctors.

Hence, subsequent rites were normally confined to the pouring of libations with prayers to recent ancestors or to god, by the elders on special occasions. This would be done to consecrate the village, if not continuous strife, series of misfortunes and bad omens will be witnessed. The mbando doctor would be called by the oldest man in the village to perform the ritual (Ardener 1956).

- When a native doctor dies the people don't cry until you do certain rites. Otherwise the weather can even change.
- When somebody dies after a year there is a celebration.

2. Cultural Practices of Manyu People

The traditional regalia of the Manyu people is one rich in colour and diversity. For the males, it is a white shirt, worn over a nicely threaded wrapper, all tied by the side. Beads usually accompany, hung on the neck and usually of a red colour. Interesting of all these is the accompanying hat.

Either of a red colour accompanied by feathers that signify the person's titles, or they are adorned with an assortment of cowries and other traditional ornaments that give the wear its splendor.

The ladies are decently simple in their big gowns, commonly called in Cameroon "Kaba", with a gracious headscarf well intertwined on the head.

Eru is a traditional dish well known in Cameroon and in neighboring Nigeria; a delicacy of the Manyu people. Eaten with its complement made of fermented cassava paste, commonly known as "water fufu" or "Akpu", the dish widely satisfies the cravings of both national and international appetites as well as markets.

Manyu traditional dances are a sight to behold. The popular "Moninkim" features a lady with a mirrored basket, with "cha-chas" on her legs. These produce a melody that even non-Manyu tend to move with unconsciously.

The "Ekpe" and "Obasinjom" secret societies are amongst the most glaring in Manyu, where title holders are often referred to as "Sesseku", and chiefs called "Nfor". The Manyu culture is actually an interesting one, that most should have a feel of, whenever they set foot in Cameroon.

Rich Cultural Diversity

These groups of people are rich in cultural heritage in terms of language, traditional dish, traditional dances, regalia, traditional dish festival like; marriages, celebration of a new born baby, installation of a traditional ruler like the chief amongst others. In respect to the Njoov culture, a day called the Cultural day of the Njoov Day is celebrated every 2nd January each year whereby several activities are displaced on this great day called "The Njoov Day" all cultural activities like the traditional dances, jokes and rhythms, sack race, egg race, bottle race, not leaving story telling.

It should be noted that, this great occasion often begins with arrival of the Chief, followed by the singing of the cultural anthem which is further preceded with other activities to spice out the day. This Njoov people are blessed with rich cultural heritages as seen above. These cultural heritages as well used in the contemporary society today.

Traditional Regalia

According to Peter (1993), the traditional looks of the Njoov people are not just spectacular but also stylish in many forms. The Njoov people have traditional unique attire known as "A'nger U

Tiv” which is translated to white and black stripes. The white and black stripes of the Njoov wrapper are a perfect definition of the classic in nature. This attire is Zebra-like in nature is worn during a traditional marriage. The marriage attire is normally made from the tribe’s nature wear known as “A’nger”.

It is as well difficult to find any couple in Njoov land that does not put on an outfit with black and white patterns. The male attire is made up of a wrapper tied on a singlet worn with a cap, a bag, a staff in hand, a calabash cup and a black shoes meanwhile, the female attires comprises of the a wrapper worn on a white T-Shirt, with a headscarf tied on the head.

Looking at this in the contemporary society and the church today whereby the traditional attires are used in the church by the congregational choir where the black tripe indicates the darkness of the world of its evil nature meanwhile the white indicates the light that has overcome the darkness of the world.

Traditional Marriage in Njoov land

Before becoming westernized, the Njoov people have engaged themselves in exchange marriage whereby two men from two separate families or the ancestral fathers of the Njoov land would exchange their daughter or sister in exchanged as wives to the men. Before arriving at the Courtship or dating in Njoov land, the man would visit her home and present gifts like; palm oil, salt, bush meat just to name a few to her family and if they accept such, the man then pays the woman bride’s price and they get married afterwards or in some rare cases the woman may elopes with her lover. In the African society today these practices still prevail as most African countries Cameroon inclusive do carried out. This is done before Court marriage and finally the presentation of the Bride and the Bridegroom are presented in church where the couples now weds before the Lord and the Church commonly known as the white wedding.

3. The Cultural Symbols of the Ugare People.

There are eight main cultural symbols of the Ugare people. Details are presented as follows: **Gong:** There is a messenger who is always in charge of it. In the Ugarl dialect it is called “Nel-Uyone” who passes information from the palace in case of emergency. When he strikes this gong, he uses words such as “kene-utor alon u-nyor na ukpam ushon beh I va ashi imadeh” which is translated as, pay attention, the chief says all should gather at his palace on Monday. Upon hearing, everyone stops what he or she is doing and pays attention to the messenger. On the set Monday, all the subjects gather at the palace and the chief addresses them base on the issue at stake.

The Talking Drum: It is called “Igor” which is used in times of emergencies like the dead of a noble, chief, or in case of any inter-tribal conflicts. Here, those in charge are elders who know how to communicate through the talking drum. There are others who are trained on how to interpret the message from the talking drum. These drums are of two types: the one used in the spiritual realm and the physical. The former is used only when there is an emergency of war where by the echoes are used to assemble the shrine’s priests, diviners, seers, and witches and wizards. During their meeting, they deliberate and find out whether if they go in for a war they will win or not. In case the war won’t be won, foot soldiers and the vibrant youths are told to remain calm and not to go for war. The latter is used to inform the villagers of a sudden dead of an important noble, marriage celebrations, cultural festivals. Concerning talking drum, Ikye (1991:26) holds that when a patient of an important personality dies, the general public is informed by the sound of the talking drum, which is played repeatedly after an interval of twenty minutes. He further narrates that, if the

deceased is a man, his names, titles, and the important animals such as lion, tiger, buffalo etc. he had killed during his life time are mentioned when drumming.

Dressing: The traditional regalia is called “ugere” commonly used by men and women. The men can either wear the stitch type or the unstitch type which is tied from the shoulders right down to the waist with a head cap and a traditional chain or bracelet made up of cowries. While the women tie the loin type with blouse lace. The traditional meaning is to identify ugare man from the Tiv extracts of Nigeria. This traditional regalia symbolizes the hardworking nature of the Ugare people who are hospitable, determined. However, Ikye (2010:4) asserts that there is the infiltration of foreign cultural dressings from the Tiv of Nigeria, other Anglophone people of the grass field and the Europeans.

Food: The traditional dish of an of the Ugare people is “akpo” which means water fufu. According to an Ugare man if he skips eating akpo for a day, he considers that he has not eaten anything at all irrespective of any other meal he/she must have eaten. This akpo is either pounded or paddled. It is always prepared in large quantities that can be eaten in the morning, afternoon and evening with yellow soup, jama-jama (vegetables), okro, paw-paw cabbage. The yellow soup is prepared in a clay pot called “kpadeh armyi” with ingredients like pepper, dawa-dawa (locust beans), salt, oil, maggi and water. The taste of this soup is enjoyable indeed. Meanwhile the stale food commonly called “abacha” is always eaten as breakfast the next day after it has been warmed. There are other *fufu* of different varieties such as corn fufu, gari fufu, and okpe mondod (cocoa yam fufu) which are occasionally eaten. This cocoa yam fufu is mostly eaten during the dry season. Food is served in calabash by a woman or a girl while stooping.

Traditional Dance: The dancing style of an Ugare man is that of a snake which originated from Congo. This dance is of two types; traditional and Christian. During the traditional dance, songs signifying what great heroes or nobles contributed in consolidation of Ugare cultural heritages are sung indifferent occasions like memorial “Ityunyum” and wake-keep. While the Christians compose Christian songs using “Uzor abenagere” (i.e. Ugare language). Ikye (2010:5) purports that the Ugare people have no mask dance nor the popular juju dances like in other parts of Cameroon and that there are dances meant for men, women and children only.

Language: The Ugare language has not been developed into any written form though there is an alphabet. The means of communication of the Ugare people is the spoken Uzor abenagere. Oral traditions according to Ikye (2010:2) holds that, “The language itself originated from a descent of Nyianbem hill, who happened to settled three kilometers away from Ballin village in that particular area called Chickar”. However, there are different ways by which an Ugare man transmits information from one person to another either through verbal or non-verbal actions. The verbal goes with exclamations like “me nsa ke ikol (I am lost in the forest) which is used when someone is being attacked by a wild animal or an enemy. We also have situations of joy where one exclaims as “Beh iwondeh” meaning let us jubilate. We also have urgent exclamations like “Ukokhuhu” which means calling for someone to come and intervene in an unpleasant situation like a sudden death of loved one or one is about to be raped. Meanwhile the non-verbal exclamations ranging from motion of hands, waving, beckoning, renouncing and intimidating.

Housing

Ikye (2010:4) notes that since in ancient times, Ugare people lived in rounded traditional houses built with mud and roofed with grass. These houses are similar to those of the Tiv people of the

middle belt of Nigeria. But as a result of modernism, modern structures are roofed with zinc. Presently, the people live in bungalow, round houses and modern houses.

1. A Brief History of the Oroko People

The Oroko's also called Bareka's or batakars are an ethnic group in Cameroon that belongs to the Coastal Bantu group widely known as SAWA occupying the Ndian and Meme Divisions of the South West region of Cameroon. The people predominantly speak the Oroko, English, and Cameroon Pidgin English. They are related to several ethnic groups or tribes in Cameroon's Coastal areas with whom they share a common tradition, culture, origin, and history. Such ethnic group include; the Kwe's (Bakweri), Bakole, Duala, Bamboko, Isubu, Limbia, Mungo, and Wovea (Friesen 1990:13). In this paper, the geographical location, religion, dressing, food, marriage, and death celebration of the Oroko people will be presented as follows:

Geographical Location: According to Michael (2012:23), the Oroko people occupy the Ndian and Meme mangrove plains as well as most part of the rumpy hills toward the Bakossi mountains in Libialem to the North East and the Ejagham forest in Manyu Division. The Ndian and meme rivers together with the Masaka and Makunge rivers form the major water sheds of the Cameroonian coast, North West of the Cameroon's river. All these rivers play significant roles in the migration and settlement of the Oroko people. There are currently 250 known Oroko towns and villages in Cameroon precisely in the South West region of the country.

Religion: Interms of religion, there are Christians who practice the African Traditional religion like those involved in Molimi, Ekpe etc. For a true Oroko worship, it must take place in the etana which is like their church and didondo (which is a sacred stone at the centre of the village).

Dressing: (Befafe); For the men, they put on sanja and white shirt long sleef, plus a black or red long tail cap, woven bag, broom and a sleem shoe. The women put on kaba, headtie or rapa to communicate modesty, descency and loyalty.

The Sanja worn by the men is normally of three fadon in this modern day and is usually a big white shirt indicating hospitality for the Oroko people and that is why the name Oroko means 'Welcome'. The white shirt also signifies brightness in general or the welcoming nature of the tribe. During the ancient times, plantain leaves and palm fronts on the body for both male and female (memborani) was the most decent dressing. On the aspect of the cap, those that put on the red caps belongs to cults like; Nganya, Malle, and Mabuno. The Maley cult put the red tail of their cap towards the front because they believe that the elephant tusk is in front while the Nganya people and the Mabunos put theirs to the right and left respectively.

For the black cap, it is worn with cowries on it and the position and number of cowries in each indicate the person wearing it. It could be a chief priest (3 cowries plus one at the center), a chief (8 cowries, that is; 3 in front and behind and one each at the left and right) plus a porcupine chuk on the right but incase the chuk is on the left, it means the person is a family head. Normal messengers have 4 cowries that is, one in each of the positions. For the woven bag, it is made from ratan (mulongoh) with animal skin been attached to it. This bag is used by the men to keep their cups made of Indian bamboo, calabash or coconut. The rattan symbolizes greatness and the indestructible nature of the person. Great hunters are identified via the various animal skin attached to the bag. Incase when the whole section of the bag is sealed with the skin of a lion or tiger, it means that person is a chief. The broom used is extracted from raffia (matutu) and is used by

family heads, village heads and chief priest to communicate authority. For a chief, he uses both the broom and an elephant tusk to greet people.

Food (morori): The Oroko people are known for the consumption of food stuffs such as: plantain (mekere which is an indication of fertility for the male and female), yellow yam (akpana), cocoyam (mbende), mabetete ; vegetables like: Karabaje, berembi (coco leaves), bitter leaf, ndonga (pepper), yobeh (bush pepper), siam leaf, hoku berry and bush meat. The oroko women are identified for their *Ikalala* consumption which is a very rich pepper soup consumed by nursing mothers during breast feeding to stimulate breast milk production. Michael (2012:23), even report that a white woman was reported dead in Ngenye village after imitating an oroko woman on this aspect thinking that this pepper soup contain too much pepper as the main spices not knowing that there are certain technical traditional spices put in it.

Marriage (boruka): The Oroko people are very liberal, friendly and welcoming in terms of marriage. Their marriage must begin with the introductory rite or knock door (dikumbua muna) before entering into the marriage proper depending on the interpretation of the broken colanut.

Death Celebration (DUH): Generally, the Oroko people are known for their kindness and cordiality whereby, if someone is bereaved, the people around ties loin (epape) on the waist of their friend in the bereaved family. When coming to the funeral ground, each comes with a gift (either foodstuffs-moreri or drinks-mimba) to condole with the bereave family. Also, the Oroko people generally have some important days after burial which are taken seriously. We have four days celebration (mokanya), eight days, twenty days , and forty days celebration. The climax is seen in four days celebration whereby, family members have their hair cut (crubo) and they are taken to the stream for cleansing and purification. That is, to wash away the bad locks of the family. If the deceased person was a female, only a group of women will carry out the rite and vice versa. This cleansing rite begins at the grave of the deceased person whereby the tribe leaders clean the deceased person's grave by removing all the stones, dirt, and wood ash is thrown all over the grave before sweeping. This signifies that, the mourning aspect of the deceased family is over. This rite is characterized by drinking especially at the grave and at the stream. By the evening, the entire tribe assembles at the funeral ground to crown the day with merriment. Worthy of note is the fact that, each person eat food to satisfaction especially meat since the deceased person did the same to others.

It is worthy to note that all these four tribes (clans) have similar traditional and cultural practices and beliefs.

Some western misconception of the cultural practices and beliefs of the people.

- For the Bakweri as well as the Manyu, Ugere and Oroko people, their cultural practices on sicknesses, marriage, naming of children did not pose any problem to them. Healing in particular was considered their own way of healing and curing the sick and afflicted. But it is rather unfortunate that when the missionaries came with Christianity and western education (formal education) they looked at these practices as primitive and barbaric. It is observed that in some Christian and Muslim places of worship and doctrines, most of the peoples cultural practices and beliefs are not accepted.
- It is understood that the practice of “sasa” by the Bakweri people is of dark power stating the living are communing with the death thereby being seen as fetish and paganism. The people only have the feeling of continuous connection with their love ones even after death.

B. Model

Using the Cultural Practices of the South West People in Christianity

Bakweri Cultures in Christianity

As unique as the Bakweri culture stands, some recommendations should be respected for it existed side by side Christianity such as; Christianity and tradition should work hand in glove because before the coming of Christianity, the Bakweri people tradition has long existed and they were aware of the existence of the Supreme Being and because of this, Christianity should not view the Bakweri people tradition as evil.

- Mbando can be incorporated into Christianity, it would be helpful for the cleansing of church, town or nation whenever they realise that they have sinned against God for the restoration of their land.
- The Bakweri have been largely Christianised since the 1970s. Evangelical denominations have cultural groups which sing in their dialect as a means of communication with God which is one of the ways of worship as we could see with the “Nganya” people. Therefore some cultural aspects can still be entertained in Christianity.
- None the less, with the Western misconception on the cultural practices of the Bakweri clan, it has and can still be copied and used in the church today because we find most Pentecostal churches using bangles and chains and even some kind of mixture calling it holy oil or holy water which are used for protection against the enemy as popularly called wrist bands.
- To educate the Christendom, the Bakweri man can use the “sasa” practice demonstrating it as a way of fellowship just as Christ had instituted the Celebration of the Holy Communion.
- Christianity can be enforced with the Bakweri man’s cultural practice of libation which involves the people also talking to God (who is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). Christianity therefore can be enjoyed with this by calling on Christ who had died for him to help us each time libation is performed.

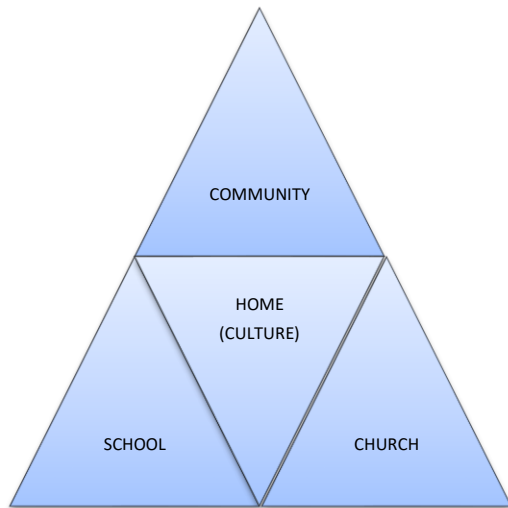


Figure 1: Model to Educate Christians Using Some the Peoples Cultural Practices

Model: Culture should leave from home to the society; for it to continue and be understood, for it not to be extinct; it should be taught in schools, it should be used in Christianity, be used socially and politically.

Many Cultures in Christianity

The Expensive Religion of the Njoov People and their Beliefs

According to Moses 2005, the Njoov man belief in ancestral worship whereby he recognizes an otiose god called Aonde (sky) who created the universe, but they do not postulate that he has any current interest in them. They acknowledge ancestral spirits and, sometimes, make offerings to them and pray to them, offer sacrifices and regard them as a mediator between man and their god (Akombo).

Like today's society, the Njoov Community recognizes diviners. They also come to be masters of at least some akombo, a few of many akombo. A man who has mastered an akombo carries out rites when that akombo is implicated in a curing ceremony. However, it should be noted that, today the Christian Religion of the Njoov People have been converted to Christianity though a few of them still based their emphasis traditional religion which many focuses on the manipulation of forces entrusted to human by a greater god, remains strong. The akombo are manifested in certain a symbol or emblems like; animal, sticks, stones, gong, and just to name a few. So many people today have hold to that, the akombo is not a God and many have turned in worshiping the only one and true God.

3.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this regard, life among the Bakweri and Manyu people is meaningless if ancestral power and presence are absent. The people believe that their ancestors can bless and assist them in times of difficulties and can also punish vices in the community. It is for this reason that some Bakweri cultural practices like rituals and incantations (as part of Bakweri traditional religious and social obligations) to supplicate the ancestors to guide and protect the community.

Therefore the people of Bakweri were traditional, religious before the coming of Christianity. They did not see the existence and all other things that existed in the world has come being by chance.

They knew that it was through the hard work of a supreme being of his creation such as extraordinary phenomena like deep points in rivers, rocks, the sunshine, and moonlight. This Supreme Being was known among the people as “Lowa” meaning God. Cultural practices and beliefs of the people of the Anglophone Cameroon are similar and cut across the area, thus, the same Model is recommended for the education of the people of this area in Cameroon

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