



“African Cultural Values in the making of African Civilisation. The Case of the Banyang People in the Cross River Region of Cameroon, from Pre-Colonial Times to Present”

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Abstract: This paper investigates and examines African cultural values in the making of Africa civilization; the case of the Banyang people of the Cross River Region of Cameroon. The forgotten Banyang cultural values such as *Ekpe*, *Obassi-Njom* and *Mawo* over the years have been relevant in the promotion of Banyang cultures and an imprint to Banyang civilization. However, it is observed that these cultural values are fast fading away and losing their potency, thus erasing the Banyang civilization. Therefore, a re-awakening in the functions of these Banyang values will not only put the Banyang Country into the limelight of civilized societies but will project the African civilization as a whole. The main objective for this study therefore is to situate the geography and cultural values in the Banyang Country and the image making of Banyang civilisation. In the course to realise this study, both primary and secondary sources were made use of. On the whole, the study reveals that the *Ekpe*, *Obassi-Njom* and *Mawo* cults are the key Banyang cultural traits that imprinted the Banyang civilisation.

Keywords: Banyang, *Ekpe*, *Obassi-Njom*, *Mawo*, Culture, Civilisation.

INTRODUCTION

In recent past, the aspect of culture and civilisation have often been interpreted and misrepresented differently by different scholars especially Africa versus the western dichotomy. But the representation of these concepts according to the African context significantly represents what is Africa. Many people quite often ask those engage in the study of African culture and civilization to tell them the benefits derived from such study. The benefits they ask for not only for the student but also to the society or the nation as a whole. African cultural values and civilization has been maligned in many ways. Many overzealous western scholars, Christians and Muslim enthusiasts have branded it as barbaric, primitive,

unprogressive and unrevealed.

Many western scholars who are engrossed in the influence of science and technology believed that African cultural values and civilization are dead and useless which should be discarded from the ‘books’ and thrown over-board. African cultural values and civilization embraces all aspects of African life. It involves people’s history, philosophy, poetry, psychology, medicine and health care delivery, ecology, various arms of the traditional government, ethics, economic and social activities, education, military strategies, mathematics (especially numerology) astrology, arts in its various forms and even including science and technology.

Therefore, in order to debunk western and at times derogatory notions about African cultural values and civilization, African fanatics have derived approaches to present the significant contributions of African cultural values in the maintenance of African civilization. In view of this development, in the study of African cultural values and civilization, fanatics should guide against glorifying the dead past of these African cultures and civilization, but instead advertise these contemporary values as a weapons to African civilization. This paper therefore is aimed at finding out how African cultural values inspired their civilization and moulded their culture generally. Interestingly, African tradition in this new millennium is not a final product, stereotyped and fixed; therefore, it is to be reinvented every day by Africans. In order to set the bearing right, conceptual clarifications of the keywords such as: culture, civilization and the Banyang Country are defined.

The Conceptual Framework of the Study

For clarity and easy understanding, concepts such as culture, civilization and the Banyang Country will be properly conceptualized. Culture is a concept that is acknowledged universally and its phenomenal relevance varies from society to society. This view derives from the fact that culture is an all embracing concept as far as man is concerned. It

encompasses every bit of man's life and experience and thus, a contribution to African civilization. This is perhaps why the concept has attracted various definitions from different scholars, but these definitions revolve round a similar meaning. Tylor explicates culture as; "a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral, law, custom any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (Tylor Burnett, 1958).

Malinowski on his part says "culture is a functioning, active, efficient, well organized unity, which must be analyzed into component institutions in relations to one another, in relation to the needs of human organism, and in relation to the environment, man-made as well as natural (Malinowski, 1969). Drawing an inference from the above, culture is an all embracing concept having a broad interpretation. Culture embraces religious beliefs, languages, dresses, style of living, political organization and all other aspects of life. In the context of this paper, culture is used as the totality of the way of life of the Banyang people especially their intangible products which have contributed in their image making and civilization (Awoniyi, 2015).

Civilization refers to both a process and a destination. It describes the process of a social collective becoming civilized, or progressing from a state of nature, savagery, to a state of civilization. It describes a state of human society marked by significant and progressive urbanization, social and professional stratification, the luxury of leisure time, and corresponding advancements in the arts and sciences. The capacity for reasonably complex socio-political organization and self-government according to prevailing standards has long been thought of as a central requirement of civilization. R.G. Collingwood has outlined three aspects of civilization; economic, social, and legal¹.

Generally, civilization relates to a 'complex society' with moral and legal systems to govern human conduct, government to establish justice and protect individuals' rights, food surplus to sustain the growing population, and an established cultural value. A society is complex when its individuals live in groups of settled dwellings and engage in specialized activities. civilization includes the aspect to show the superiority of a particular race or ethnicity over other races or ethnicities. Civilization signifies the totality of a community's achievements and encompasses political, social, economic, religious, moral and technical aspects of development. A description of civilization will not be complete without briefly expounding some of the things that make it up. They comprise, among others; people with their cultures, the state or centralized government, writing or literacy, religion, moral traits that are praiseworthy and technology (Sulaiman, 2016).

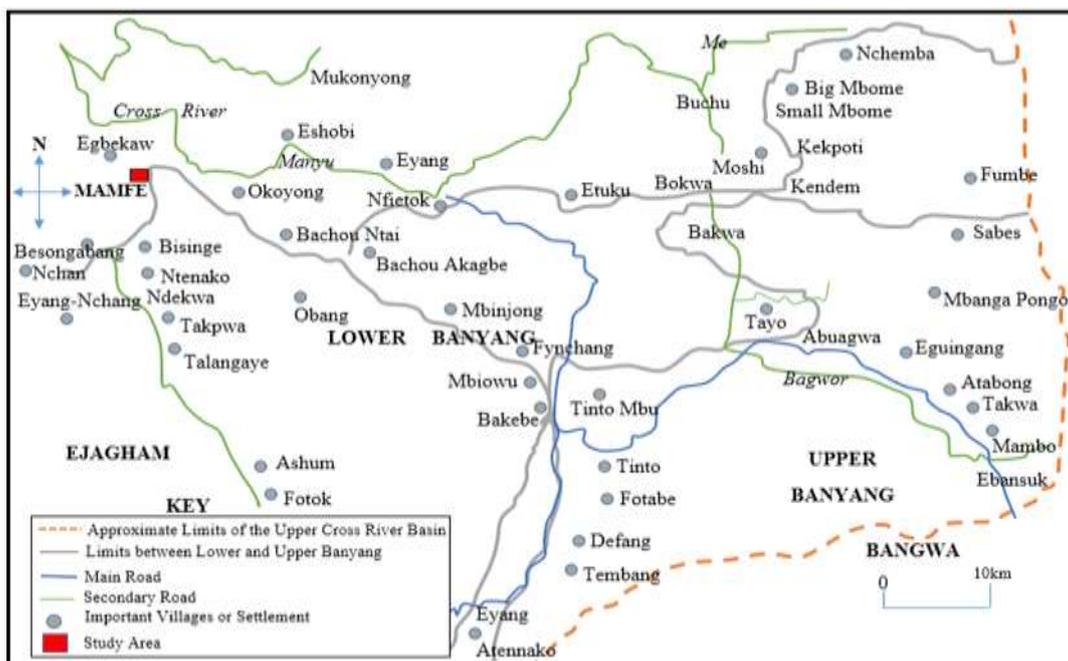
The Banyang people are found in the Banyang Country² which is situated in the Cross River Basin of Cameroon, particularly in a geographical carved out area in the South West portion of the Cameroon Equatorial Rainforest.³ The Banyang Country as seen on the map below is sub divided into upper and lower Banyang. It occupies an area of approximately 1025 square miles and lies between latitude 5⁰ 27 and 9⁰ 56 North and longitude 9⁰ 11 and 9⁰ 51 East of the equator.⁴ It shares common boundaries with the Menka clan in the North, Ejagham Nation in the South, Widikum and Fontem in the East, Mbo and Obang clans in the South-East, Boki and Anyang countries on the West. The Banyang Country is easily accessed through four angles; the Kumba-Mamfe corridor Mamfe-Ekok corridor, Mamfe-Bamenda corridor, and the Mamfe-Akwaya road. The longest length to cross the Banyang Country is from Eyanchang in the West to Sabes in the East, a distance of approximately 61 miles or 64.5km by road (Ojong, ANJA and TAMBI, 2010).

¹ Economic civilization is marked not simply by the pursuit of riches-which might actually be inimical to economic civilization-but by "the civilized pursuit of wealth.; The realm of "social civilization" is the forum in which humankind's sociability is satisfied by "the idea of joint action," or what we might call community"; The final mark of civilization is "a society governed by law," and not so much by criminal law as by civil law. "the law in which claims are adjusted between its members in particular".

² An extended social group having a distinctive cultural and economic organization or A formal association of people with similar interests.

³ N.A.B File No. 63/29, A Preliminary Assessment Report on the Banyang clan area, H.C. Anderson, Resident Officer Buea, 1929, 1.

⁴ N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, Mamfe Division, Cameroons Province, M.E.A Gorges, Assistant District Officer, 1930, 5-9.



Map 1.1: Showing the Geographical Positioning of the Banyang Country

Source: Kennedy Eyong Tabe “Banyang socio-cultural history: from the pre-colonial period to the development of Banyang Quarters” post graduate Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1991.

Historically, before the Banyang people became subject to colonial rule, the communities were scattered through the forest in separate small settlements and in two big distinctions; the Upper and the Lower Banyangs. The largest recognised political grouping at that time was about 2000 people and in some cases lesser. According to oral testimonies, (Orockarah, 2019). What united them, and distinguished them from other Bantu migratory groups and made them an organised people with a unique civilisation were cultural traits such as language (*Kenyang*)⁵, food types (*Evai ne Eru*, *Nnoko Tanchot ne Ebvai*), regulatory societies (*Mgbe*, *Mawo* and *Obassi Njom*) and their dressing habit (Chinyere, and Lequome, 2010; Kah, 2013).

Administratively, the Banyang Country was initially placed under the German administrative umbrella as part of the then Ossindinge Division from 1885 to 1921. The demolition of the Ossindinge Division and the eventual creation of the Mamfe Division between 1921 to 1969 saw the country supervised as part of Mamfe Division.⁶ In 1969, the name of the Division host to the Banyang Country was again changed from Mamfe Division to Cross River Division and today the Banyang Country is an integral part of Manyu Division.⁷

The Upper Banyang is found in the upper course of River Manyu or in the North of the River towards Mount Cameroon while the Lower Banyang is found in the South of River Manyu or the lower course of the river especially the tributaries in Mamfe as the river flows down to the boundaries with the Ejagham Nation and Boki Nations. According to Talbot both the Upper and Lower Banyang communities share Mamfe as their cultural headquarter while local griots affirms that, Tinto is the vice cultural head quarter of the Banyang people (Ruel, 1974).

As a civilised society, the Banyang Country was not an acephalous society as some writers projected but rather had a well organised administrative set up with the *Mfor* as the head of each community and *moh nti nereket* as the head of the family. One glaring uniqueness in their institution is that the Banyang people have a system of democratic government at the community level. The communities in the Banyang country consists of many lineage structures which were represented in the formal community council by the lineage head (Willie, 2013). There also existed clans with clan councils, made up of the various community heads who doubled as the head of the council with collective and accumulated knowledge of the clan (Pemunta, Tabenyang and Alubafi, 2014).

⁵ The language they spoke and the culture they followed.

⁶ N.A.B File No 315/21, Memorandum for the change of name of Ossindinge Division to Mamfe Division, 1921, 8.

⁷ In February 1969 the names of Divisions in West Cameroon were changed, Mamfe Division became Cross River Division with Mamfe as its head quarter, Victoria Division was renamed Fako, and Kumba Division was renamed Meme Division.

Banyang Cultural Values in the Making of Banyang Civilisation

Africa from time immemorial believed in the powers and identity of its cultural and traditional institutions. These institutions it should be noted made the people distinct from those of other continents as they were not only used for entertainment but also to imprint African civilisation. In the Banyang Country, the people believed in the presence of strong Banyang traditional institutions that overshadowed and regulated the political as well as the social spheres of the people. Henry Kah and Ivo Mila for example describes them as the “peacekeeping force of the communities”, while some griots described them as “the identity and image of the people” (Kah, 2012; Ubink, and Amore, 2008). This part of the study therefore examines some Banyang cultural values such as *Ekpe*, *Obassi Njom* and *Mawu* in the making of Banyang civilisation.

The *Ekpe* (*Mgbe*) Cult

The *Ekpe* cult was the main and most renowned regulatory cult in the Banyang Country. Eyong John Arrey, an ardent believer and member of the *Ekpe* cult holds that, “the *Mgbe* or *Ekpe* cult was a dreaded regulatory cult, that censored the entire political, economic as well as socio-cultural spheres and protected the Banyang civilisation.” The powers of *Ekpe* and its dreaded totem and mascot came as a result of the fact that the cult was spiritually linked to a leopard.⁸

It was believed that, disrespecting the orders of the *Ekpe* cult or any act of undermining the authorities of its members invited the dreaded spirit of its totem towards such individual. The cult believed that, in case such a person was visited by the spirit of the leopard, his internal organs were eaten by the leopard. For fear of getting involved in such circumstances, every individual was bound to respect the verdicts and orders of *Ekpe* especially in the maintenance of order and the preservation of the Banyang civilisation (Miller and Ojong, 2012).

This *Ekpe* cult was regarded by traditional Banyang people in the entire forest belt as a symbol of “strength, tenacity, agility and vitality”, an evidence of Banyang culture and civilisation. A member of the *Ekpe* cult could transform into a leopard and could manifest accordingly when faced in difficult challenges. In such circumstances, for such a person to be brought back to his normal nature, a goat was killed and the blood sprinkled on him. This virtue was the reason why *Ekpe* was most feared and respected in the entire Banyang Country. The virtues of *Ekpe* were considered necessary for any well-organised and civilised society that aspired for order, peace and stability (Agbor, 2010). But then, the Banyang civilisation was not only maintained and protected by the *Ekpe* cult but also the *Obassi Njom* cult as well.

The *Obassi-Njom* Cult

According to oral sources and eyewitness accounts, the *Obassi-Njom* cult was the second most dreaded cult in the Banyang Country after the *Ekpe* cult. This cult also regulated political, economic and social aspects of Banyang life and at times, even went metaphysical just to protect Banyang traditional values. Through its totem which is the crocodile, the personalities of the society were endowed with supernatural powers and functions with the express duty of protecting members of the community from evil, witchcraft practices, maintaining peace, social disorder and the protection of Banyang civilisation.

It was derived from the Ejagham word *Obassi* and *Njom*⁹ and had as its motto *seeh nche vetage njoh* (Let us give the *Obassi-Njom* power again). The cult was founded by the Efik people of Nigeria and through trading ties, it was brought into the Kembong community by Ashu Elias Tanyi an Ejagham and Efik trader. From Kembong, it later spread to the entire Ejagham communities and by 1889, it was all over the Banyang Country.¹⁰ However, since its arrival, this cult recorded remarkable successes and spread beyond the Banyang Country as the Banyang themselves attempted selling it to the Bakweri and Mundani communities.¹¹ Its name in the Ejagham language means “cult agency of god”, its main belief was in the spirit of *Ma-Ndem*¹² through the ancestors, to do a useful service or cause harm. Thus, it was very risky for an unauthorised person to temper with *njom*, or even wander aimlessly closer to its shrine (Bernard, 1979).

⁸ A wild cat feared by many in the entire forest region and the Banyang Country in particular.

⁹ *Obassi*; meaning god and ‘*Njom*’ meaning medicine.

¹⁰ NAB, File No 17, Af/ 1920, Juju and witchcraft 1925, Confidential report., Rosenthaler. *Purchasing Culture*, 473.

¹¹ NAB, file No V2596/1955, Ag 45, *Obassi-Njom* Juju society, intelligence report on the District Office Victoria, Southern Cameroons.

¹² god.

As a symbol of Banyang culture and civilisation, the three main grades are; *Atemambi*,¹³ *Ebhunjom*,¹⁴ and the *Esanenjom*.¹⁵ The *Esanenjom* which was the most senior grade was subdivided into the *Ebanainjom*¹⁶ and *Esenenjom*.¹⁷ The *Esenenjom* is the head of any lodge of the association, and it was believed that whoever rose to such a position, must have been a very brave man. To gain access into any grade, series of initiation rituals were performed as members acquired further knowledge of its secret procedures and unending respect to its totem.¹⁸

As an arm to protect Banyang civilisation, the *Obassi Njom* was also responsible in conflict resolution, spiritism and transcend into the metaphysical. In the course of conflict, parties were forced to take an oath by touching the totem called *Nti-njo*. According to the *neyor njo*, any defaulter or a non-adherer of the resolutions, such could face attacks from the crocodile depending on the gravity of the situation. This example and many others, were significant reasons why this traditional cult uphold and protected the Banyang culture and civilisation.

The Mawo Cult

The *Ekpe* and *Obassi-Njom* cults were mostly male dominated that represented Banyang cultures and civilisation in the entire Banyang Country. This cult had an insignificant number of female representation. The main objective of this cult was to preserve the Banyang culture and Banyang civilisation especially in the female wings. The society settled female conflicts, organised other female institutions and represented the community during female dance displays. It was a dreaded cult and members believed in the powers of its totem called *njom-ekpa*.

According to Rosenthaler, the *Mawo* cult an Ejagham word meaning “the private parts of a woman”. As a culture and a civilisation, the role of *Mawo* was to stand up for women’s rights in the Banyang Country. Certain regulatory arms of *Mawo* performed some political, and social functions to maintain peace and scare away diabolical practices in the communities. They included, *Egba* and *Monikim* (Pemunta, Tabenyang, and Alubafi, 2014). Contrary to what some Eurocentric African scholars like Ronald Cohen, argue that;

African Queen mothers were simply ceremonial characters like political leaders without executive judicial or legislative functions... African status and kingdoms were male dominated and gender inequality was very pronounced (Bernard, 1979).

However, Cheik Anta Diop oppose the conclusions of Cohen when he says that; “women played a great role just like the men in many of the Africans states and kingdoms” (Diop, 1989). These Afrocentric scholars therefore conclude that, “women were as important as men in the administration of their states” and the maintenance of their civilisation. This witnessed a significant contribution of women to the political, economic and socio-cultural development of Africa. It was not limited to some women in some parts of Africa rather, it was extended to the women in Cameroon as well as those in the Banyang Country in particular (Ayuketta, 2018).

The Impacts of Banyang Cultural Values on Banyang Civilisation

In the ancient African Kingdoms like the civilised empires such as the Empire of Ghana, Mali and the Sao civilisation, there existed standardised structures that were put in place to maintain the status quo of its civilisation. The Banyang cultural values in the foster of Banyang civilisation were not left back as they played significant function to maintain the integrity of the state. In this light, the *Ekpe*, *Obassi Njom* and *Mawu* cults negotiated and mitigated on issues that could bring down the integrity of the states.

In the domain of discipline, maintenance of peace and order, the *Ekpe* cult for example had the powers to discipline and as a measure of punishment, to confiscate the property of a community member who disobeyed the laws of the civilised Banyang communities (Leib and Renee, 1984). The *Ekpe* cult also regulated the extraction of forest resources and so was the judiciary arm of a typical Banyang society (Ardener, 2002; Jimoh, Emmanuel, A. Abiodun, *et al.*, 2012; Fenton, 2012). The *Ekpe* cult was dreaded because its members had the spiritual ability to transform into a leopard and could harm or kill any person that interfered in their activities negatively or disrespected the laws of the cult and the community.

Ekpe cult also as a regulatory cult instituted laws and everybody in the community was bound to respect these laws. It was believed by the people that, an individual could face attacks from a leopard for contradicting the orders of *Ekpe*.

¹³ The most junior grade of njo.

¹⁴ Wearers of the Obassi-Njom mask.

¹⁵ Trumpet bearer of the Obassi-Njom dance.

¹⁶ Touch bearer and main interpreter of the Obassi-Njom message.

¹⁷ Leader of an Obassi-Njom lodge.

¹⁸ Banyang socio-cosmological cosmopolitan believes.

In the case of land conflict resolutions, the parties were forced to take an oath by touching the *moijor* (The command staff of *Ekpe*) to respect the verdict at the end of the settlements. After touching the *moijor*, failure to respect its verdicts by both or any of the parties, such risk to be attacked by the *Ekpe* totem and such a person risk losing his internal organs. Since individuals feared of leopard attacks, they were bound to respect the verdict in case of conflict resolution (Rosenthaler, 1996).

Moreover, the *Ekpe* cult as a law enforcement culture in a civilised Banyang Country, carried out hall mark social activities as it regulated actions of premarital sex and promiscuity. The cult upheld respect for the norms of marriage and sex and the fear of being victims of the *Ekpe* spell, prevented young people from indulging into premarital sex (Egbe, 2014). As a social duty, the *Ekpe* cult provided security to women who lost their husbands and in conflict over family property with in-laws and women whose husbands no longer desire them and were at the verge of losing their marriage with nothing as property to go with.

Lastly, *Ekpe* controlled local and the national politics in the Banyang Country. Non Banyang indigenes used their initiation into *Ekpe* as a stepping stone for proper recognition in the communities as they bought big titles to command respect and to equate themselves to freeborn. *Ekpe* commensalism and potlatch provided a social safety net of wealth distribution and redistribution. Here, the wealthier members in the Banyang Country recycled wealth into the community through buying elite titles as well as providing occasions for entertainment, amusements and community gathering as a way to valorise the Banyang civilisation.

The *Obassi-Njom* cult on its part was to detect, expose and settle potential cases of witchcraft practices in the Banyang Country. In fact, the cult was like the Jesus Christ of the Banyang people and its adherents were the disciples or priests and the population were the Christians. These values, actions and reactions of the *Obassi-Njom* cult depicted examples of a civilised nation. Part of its successes relate to the prohibition of older methods of witchcraft exposure, notably by oral ordeal. The pristine methods of witchcraft exposure were that a suspected witch or wizard proved his innocence by eating the poisonous fruits known as, *Esaire*. The *Obassi-Njom* society manifested its self once a member got inspired and was engulfed by a powerful spirit that automatically made him see beyond the physical and flows freely in the metaphysical world. In that case, all its ardent followers, sympathiser and other members of the community assembled in the *Eket-njo* to receive fresh message from the ancestors or to discover the strange spirit and other misfortunes plaguing the community.

Detection of witches or wizards was done through a dance performed by the dance fugue wearing mask head. On such occasions, the people referred to it as *njo-aka*, or *njo asep amek*.¹⁹ The *Obassi-Njom* however acted upon invitation as explained by Bernard;

When a misfortune befalls a family, they may invite the *Obassi-Njom* to dictate the cause of the misfortune. In the past, the invitation was done when the victim offered an egg but in the contemporary, some money has been added to it. The dance also takes place when the leaders of the community feel that the community has been ravaged by witchcraft or untold illness (Bernard, 1979).

Several authors have written on the different ways of detecting witchcraft activities in the civilised African societies. To Richard Talla;

The commonest method ... witches use to ensnare their human victims is through ... "imitative magic" or simulation and less through contagious magic. They prepare a humanlike object into which the soul of the victim is mystically extracted and put. This object thereafter is mistreated probably by sticking pins or a knife into its various parts; beating or burning it with fire; exposing it to excessive cold or heat; or twisting it (Talla, 2004). The conviction here is that whatsoever is done to the object will happen or is happening to the intended victim.

Another area that the *Obassi-Njom* cult orchestrated itself as a culture to effectuate the Banyang civilisation was in the domain of oath taking. More often than not, parties in agitation, conflict and act of theft were called upon to take an oath holding the *Nti-Njo* as a sign to prove their innocence. In this case, the guilty party often fall back, may die or is affected by an illness. This weapon was judiciously used by the *Obassi-Njom* cult as a regulatory mechanism to stop all unwanted behaviours in the Banyang Country and to enforce the Banyang civilisation.

¹⁹ Meaning the cult has come down on earth to meet the people.



Plate 1: Obassi-Njom Masquerade in performance to detect evil
Source: Field Pictures by the researcher, 2019.

Lastly, the *Mawu* cult played the role of the ministry of women empowerment in the traditional civilised Banyang Country. The *Mawo* cult on its part organised and encouraged the Banyang women, especially, young girls to work hard in order to improve on their output as well as their economic wellbeing. This was done especially at the beginning of each farming season as the cult members distributed seeds to other women as a booster to their new farming season. Through the transition, women were also encouraged to cultivate large farms for high yields as this could enable them sell some of the produce and support their families.

Mawo was more focused on the regulation of female-related issues in the communities and also helped to maintain peace and order. According to Ekie, the house of *Mawo* was a court to adjudicate issues related to women conflicts (Roschenthaler, 2006). If anyone violated their rules, the president or the head of the community sent a messenger with a convocation letter bearing the name, date and place of the accused to answer. On a stated date, the concerned women appeared before the court along with their witnesses. Before commencing with the case, the witnesses were sent out of the house and the plaintiff or complainant was asked to start explaining what happened. Later, the accused was called to explain her own version of the story. Their witnesses were then allowed to come in for questioning in a bid to verify the veracity of their statements (Bessong, 2018).

During this session of questioning, wise and elderly women in the house brought up tricky and prickly questions to make sure that the witnesses were genuine. In the course of the interrogation process, a false witness was seriously penalised and the type and punishment ranged according to the crime. After deliberation among the executive members, the president then drew a conclusive statement that finalised the case. The guilty woman was asked to kneel before the other woman and apologise. Fines which sometimes included bottles of hot drinks commonly called *afofob*, two bottles of perfume, water and soap, depending on the gravity of the offence were also requested (Oben Abang, 2018). The hot drink would be drunk by all who were present in the court house. The concerned women drank from the same glass as a symbol of peace and unity.

To Ayuketta, the items mentioned above were very important because according to the women, water was used to wash the dirty or smelling woman, while the perfume was sprayed on her so that she could smell good. The Soap was used to wash her private parts properly (Ojong, 2018). Every Banyang woman and strangers who resided in any Banyang community was compelled to respect these laws.



Plate 2: Mawo Women in Traditional Attire in Display of its Dreaded Totem call njom-ekpa
Source: Field Pictures by the Researcher, 2019.

Challenges Faced by Banyang Regulatory Societies

Despite the fact that these Banyang institutions fought tooth and nail to project the Banyang cultures and maintained the Banyang civilisation, yet all did not happen without challenges. In the first place, the continuous suppression of their activities by government administrative authorities has been a call for concern. These traditional institutions were the local administrative bodies of the Banyang communities. therefore, they constantly touse with government instituted authorities over the admiration of local communities.

Also, the continues adulteration of these societies by some of its members sparked off controversies regarding their true nature. Most members at the ‘crossroad between these societies and Christianity’ often divulged inner circle matters to the public, ate and even dined with non-adherents of their values. For example, one of the elders of the Apostolic Church in Nchang and another in Bachuo Ntai were strong members of the *Ekpe* cult and constantly spoke against it as an evil and lies telling cult (Efunde, 2018).

Equally, the lack of interest from contemporary generation to be members of these cults dealt a big blow not only to the cult but the Banyang civilisation as well. The infiltration of Christianity into the nooks and crannies of the Banyang Country threatened the very civilisation that these cults were built on. This has made membership and popularity of the cult to reduced tremendously, thus has affected the growing civilisation of the Banyang Country.

The unlawful use of *Mawo* medicine for evil intentions was another challenged faced by these societies. Some *Mawo* members practiced witchcraft and used *Mawo* deadly medicines mixed with other medicines to kill their opponents. In an interview with Ojong Lucy, it was noted that “*Mawo* medicine mixed with other herbs was capable of making a man to become sexually inactive and a lady to keep bedwetting or become enuretic until mercy was shown onto her” (Ayuketta Ojong, 2018). Though it was just to sanction individuals for violating their laws, some of the *Mawo* members used the cult medicine as a source of power, intimidating anyone who crossed their path knowingly or unknowingly.

CONCLUSION

The growth of African cultures did not only act in isolation but contributed to the growth of African civilization. Amongst the Banyang people of the Cross River Region of Cameroon, their cultural values significantly contributed to the development of their identity, image making and civilization. Some of these Banyang values which included the *Ekpe*, *Obassi-Njom* and *Mawo* cults were indelible cultural traits that imprinted an image, identity and pronounced a civilization. These cults did not only carry out social responsibilities but also acted as the peace and justice body of the communities. Their totems, mascots, and seductive dance styles animated and advertised the Banyang culture and civilization. Such cultural practices among the Banyang community democracy and cross-cultural extended family tradition as in Yoruba, Tiv and Nupe could be incorporated into the conduct of politics to instill discipline, re-enact integrity, respect and such other virtues as could promote peaceful coexistence and encouraged Banyang civilization. These can provide the basis for sustainable development in democratic governance unlike the present wholesale

adoption of the costly western system of civilization which is not entirely suitable for African needs and peculiarity. Therefore, the re-ignition of these Banyang cultural values in the making of Banyang civilisation will encourage African historiography and put African civilization back into the lamplight.

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