



Sensitive Threats to the Bafut Cultural and Architectural Heritage

Chenwi Obed Louis

Department of Arts and Archaeology, University Of Yaounde I

Abstract: *There are many threats facing the cultural heritage of the Bafut Fondom. There are many other problems and challenges that hinder the full use of the heritage of this Fondom for the benefit of tourism and socio-economic development.*

The dying architectural heritage for instance is a socio-cultural emergency, as traditional architecture remains an indispensable aspect of its history, her cultural heritage-defining who they are as Africans and Cameroonians in particular.

Most of our African countries have little or no stated policy towards the protection and promotion of traditional African architecture. The affordability and ease of construction should ordinarily have made this style of architecture the most appropriate for low-income housing and communal buildings like schools, hospitals and markets in suburban communities. Sadly, architects and designers will typically have a hard time obtaining building permits for these kinds of buildings in the country, because the development control units at the town planning departments are ill-equipped to arbitrate over the approval of building permits for indigenous architecture, because the existing codes donot cover them.

The spaces one lives, works, and plays in are essential to one's overall sense of self, community and well being. In most of our countries there is little research to date on the role of built environment in defining cultural values, largely because it is broadly perceived that great architecture and architectural innovation originates in the developed world - infact this misconception is a serious threat to Architectural heritage in Africa. This paper is dedicated to raising awareness on the dangers and threats rocking the cultural and traditional architectural heritage of the Bafut fondom and beyond. Emphasis is placed on the fact that failure to respect and recognize the Traditional Management Systems of our communities threatens the very survival and existence of architectural heritage in particular and cultural heritage in general. Bafut owns a wealth of tangible and intangible heritage that is not fully exploited and the tourism the fondom receives is not commensurate due to many challenges and threats that face the use of heritage. This paper aims to highlight some of these sensitive threats and challenges.

Keywords: *Bafut, Fondom, Globalization, Threats, Cultural and architectural Heritage, museum, sacred, objects*

Introduction

The Bafut Fondom is located between latitude 6°10'North of the Equator and longitude 10°00'East of the Greenwich Meridian, in the Republic of Cameroon (Nebasina, 1981, Abumbi II 2016). According to Abumbi II (2016), administratively, it is a sub-division with the Mezam division in the North West Region. The official name is Bafut and the settlement covers an area of 425km² with important waterfalls like Nefo'õ in Muchwine, Ntaribang in Mbebali, Nto'ohmunwi



in Niko, Asanje and Akengnsu. Bafut Fondom is bounded to the North by Kom (Boyo Division), to the West by Beba, Okoromanjang, Mukuru, Kutuku and Befang all in the Menchum division; South by Meta in Momo Division and Mundum in Mezam Division; East by KejomKeku or Big Babanki in Mezam Division; and to the South by Bambui, Nkwen and Mankun villages all in the Mezam Division (Abumbi II 2016).

The climate is bracing with day time temperatures of 70° to 85°, at night dropping to between 50° and 60°. Ecologically, it is classified as grass land, although there are still some forested areas, as the older natives of the Fondom state that formerly this was a heavily forested region, but that the constant grass firing has eliminated most of the growth except for remnants occurring mainly in ravines and village areas (Robert and Pat Ritzenthaler 1962, p. 11). Bafut is one of the Tikari tribes which together total over 250 000 and constitute the largest ethnic group in the Bamenda highlands (Ritzenthaler 1962). The Bafut Fondom is geographically and traditionally composed of fifty-eight quarters and nineteen villages with the status of sub-chiefs or Atangcho's for the latter. For the purpose of easy administration, the Bafut Fondom is grouped into five administrative areas, as follows: - Bafut West (Njimuya Area), comprising of Ntaya, Akofunguba, Akwongnembo, Ntieaali, Nkwineba, Adoh and Banji i.e. Adiemukong and Mughie. Bafut East (Mforya area), comprising of Akossia, Mfonta, Asanje, Nibe, Njumbee, Swie and Mforya; Bafut North (lower Bafut or Mbunte area), being Mantaa, Tingoh, Buuri, Okwala, Nchoho, Agoh, Mbakong, Otang, Obang, Ndung, Sokum, Mile 37). Bafut South (upper Bafut or Ntare' area), being Bawum, Mambu, Mbebiti, Mankanikong, Manuwi. Bafut Central (Mumela or Midlands) being Nsem, Agyati, Ntangoh, Ntabuwe, Acheni, Nsem, Njonteh, Njibujang, Niko, Mankaha, Mbebali, BujongNchum, Bunow, Bukari, Buwe, Muchwine, Manji and Mughom (Abumbi II, 2016; see map).

The Bafut Fondom is a typical agricultural environment mostly subsistence with women doing the tilling and planting and the men the clearing. This Fondom also cultivates palms while they mill palm oil and tap both palm and raffia wine, grown over forest, lowlands and mountain slopes. The Bafut people speak Nighæ Ni Bifii, as one of the Ngemba sub-group of Mbam-Nkam sub-division of the grass field Bantu language family and according to Greenberg (1963), the Bafut language can be classified as follows as cited by Abumbi II,

(2016) phylum (Niger Kordofamen) and sub-phylum (Benue-Comgp), family; Bantoide, Group: Ngemba, sub-family: Bantu, Branch: Grass field, sub-branch: Eastern grass fields and language: Bafut).

The Bafut Fondom is the integral part of the Bamenda highlands, in a lovely country Cameroon, one of the beauty spots of the world and it is only four hundred miles from the equator and occupies a plateau averaging 4500 feet above sea level, studded with peaks the highest of which is 8000 feet; with the mountains, waterfalls and crater lakes, which present the rugged beauty of grassland highlands (Rizenthaler, 1962). The lakes have a certain cold and desolate quality about them, for these are the sacred dwelling places of dead chiefs or Fons and no one according to the traditional custodianships no one is allowed to live on the shores or fish and swim in their waters. The Bafut Fondom itself is set in a fertile valley basin, a fairly level and hilly area, well wooded with wooded with raffia and palms. It is a large, vast but rather compact settlement make up of villages and quarters or wards. Within the basin are the six other villages bordering the Fondom, which is Big Babanki, BabankiTungo, Bafreng Bambui, Bamendakwe and Bambili while hitherto in the British colonial administration made up the then Bafut Native Authority Area covering a surface are of 340 square miles.



4.1. GLOBALIZATION AS A POTENTIAL THREAT TO ANCIENT TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Whatever the benefit of globalization, there surely are economic, technological, social and political, not everyone has access to those benefits, and in some areas there are dangers too. Culture is one of them, and our world's cultures are as extraordinarily diverse as they are vulnerable (Koichiro Matsuura, UNESCO 2004). Paradoxically it is precisely in the context of increasing globalization that more and more people and communities of the world have begun to recognize the importance of the cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible, as a contribution to the world's cultural diversity,¹ and in as much importance is placed on its importance, we should not lose sight of its adverse effects on the cultural heritage of indigenous people as most communities in the less developed world, especially Africa, Asia and other communities. The unanimous adopting of the UNESCO universal declaration on cultural diversity by the general conference of UNESCO in November 2001 aims at protecting and preserving the diversity of the world's cultures today at the crossroads of the biggest human endeavours yet endemic in the name of globalization. Globalization is seen in this work as a threat to cultural heritage both tangible and intangible interchangeably. As the rate of globalization continues to rise, especially in the areas of communication and information technologies, as a result, we have greater knowledge and experience of different events, lifestyles, things abroad and also at home, and at the same time, globalization raises many questions; will it homogenize the values and lifestyles of the people of the world?, will it broaden the gap between the rich and the poor?, is it going to destroy traditional society and its harmony?, will it provide new business opportunities?, what does it mean in terms of the dialogue among civilizations?, what are its implications for global issues including that of the environment? And finally what solutions do we need?²

Globalization is neither the panacea that will cure mankind of all problems and conflicts, nor is it the ultimate calamity that strikes down the culture of the world; it has enormous effects on cultural heritage (Hans Dorville UNESCO 2004) such as globalization which poses a major threat to African traditions in general and that of Bafut Fondom in particular, in that African cultures are seemingly assimilated by the more dominant western traditions and cultures as a result of the long standing colonization experienced by African countries. These threats can be seen vividly in areas of governance where traditional powers were shifted from the hands of the Fons or kings to democracies and reduced the former to mere auxiliaries of the administration in their different places of command, and through this, the management of cultural heritage became difficult and bottle necked. Again, more and more preference is given to foreign languages (English for example) at the expense of local language as a matter of policy, for globalization has taken various forms; linguistic, religious and economic, with uncertain and frequently unsearched impacts on the preservation and diversity of cultural heritage. This gradual disappearance of the local languages for western languages through the heavy impact of globalization with negative effects either directly or indirectly on the identities and the intangible cultural heritage of the Bafut Fondom, especially as these languages are vectors of living traditional manifestations and celebration of community life.³

Another heavy negative tool of globalization is the misperception and misconception that African cultural heritage be it tangible or intangible is associated with witchcraft or simply it is demonized. For example, witchcraft and sorcery are practiced in Bafut in many ways and this brings a lot of fear among the people. A sorcerer is a person who uses black magic and medicine against other people while a witch possesses mystical and innate powers within herself and these

¹ Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage; International conference, UNESCO, Japan, 2004.

² Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage; International conference, UNESCO, Japan, 2004.

³ Globalization and Intangible Cultural Heritage; International conference, UNESCO, Japan, 2004.



powers come from spirits or from outside her (Joseph Mfonyam 2010, pp.166-167). I think there is confusion on what I term African traditional science and witchcraft, that many world conventional scientists have not yet studied and understood. For science according to Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary (new edition), “is known as the structure and behavior of the physical world, especially by observing, measuring and experimenting, and the development of theories to describe the results of these activities”. If we have to go by this definition which is not standard, we see that because the science of healing or sending thunder (mbèn) against defaulters and debtors, have not been carefully observed, measured and experimented by the outside world or those who are not initiated or educated on this scientific methods, simply labeled or qualified it Metaphysics, magic and nonscientific or better still witchcraft. Whereas this is scientific patrimony or heritage of a people that warrants promotion and transmission for the benefit of society and posterity.

Many inspiring⁴ examples exist today of community based archaeology that incorporate cultural values alongside scientific practice in collaborative research (Loring 2001, Ferris 2003, Budhwa 2005, Smith and Wobst 2005, Kerber 2006, Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson 2007, Silliman 2008). It’s high time we give credence and authenticity to African science, to be operated and studied within its own rights, context and scientific methodologies and theories, rather than just relegating it or confusing it with witchcraft simply because Western scholarship has not found it winsome enough or have not yet winkle the truth out of African traditional science.

One of the negative fallouts of globalization has been modernization, which is the annihilation and rejection of our traditional and cultural values in pursuit of what is coming from abroad or from the western world to the detriment of our community and common ethical and cultural values. According to Pa Ambe Musanga,⁵ globalization through the so-called “modernization syndrome”, has immensely destroyed the moon festivals in Bafut land wherein traditional performing arts in Bafut (Asém), a typical intangible heritage that was performed every three days after the appearance of every new moon in the land. These moon festivals were carried out at majoh shrines in the respective public squares of every village in the Bafut Fondom. This was an opportunity to sing to the gods and to draw inspiration from their presence especially as these performing arts and music will begin early in the night at appearance of the moon till late in the night at about midnight, where it was believed that spirits will enter into perfect communication and fellowship with the living, as these dancing or performance would usually end with a dismissal song or farewell words “Awa” “Awa”. These moon festivals were great moments and centers for the transmission of values, training of performing artists and the preservation of the traditions and living heritage of the Bafut Fondom. But globalization with its flaws of modernism and insecurity has hampered greatly these moon festivals and theatre shrines.

Another very important negative element of globalization observed here is the decontextualization of cultural objects; a phenomenon where the artifacts are cut off from their principal functions and environment and transported into a new environment (within or without) to play one great function in the name of aesthetism and to feed the eyes of curiosity (Museum) at the expense of its role of function, originality, context and identity. This brings us to the million-dollar question, what is the significant role of museums in African cultural heritage or is it simply a global concept and practice? When an artifact is removed from its place of origin, does it still have its context and meaning? These questions are fundamental especially when we examine the theft and looting of some cultural objects of sovereignty from the Bafut royal palace (Nyst 2005, pp. 57-74), what importance would these stolen objects be to their perpetrators, if for example they were supposedly exposed in a museum somewhere, how would they serve their purpose out of context

⁴ Public Archaeology: Archaeological Ethnographyies (Hallowell, Nicholas, 2009, pp. 141-160), Vol. 8. ⁵Pa Ambe Musanga (Njinteh Bafut).



and function? The achievements⁵ of the world's greatest societies is at risk as, powerful forces of globalization from trade to telecommunications bring new economic opportunities as well as anomie. These forces also give rise to uniformity and standardization which challenge the specificities that make each individual unique and provide an exceptional sense of place in different parts of the world. Oral cultures are disappearing. Rituals are changing, languages are dying. The relentless onslaught of economic growth is threatening culture. All progress requires change and transformation. Some of the past will ineffably disappear. With cultural sensitivity it is however possible for the new to coexist with the old, and for the new to be agents of transformation and renewal rather than one of destruction.

We can have the benefits of globalization without its downside. We can promote wellbeing without abandoning our identities. We can seek progress without destroying our heritage. We can build a future without forgetting our past. We must embrace what the World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD) called "Our Creative Diversity", and protect it like we protect the natural biodiversity which is now protected through international conventions and global actions (Culture and Development at the millennium, world bank 1998)

4.2. INCREASED POPULATION GROWTH AROUND HILLS, INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Before now, it was believed that relatively the villages, rural areas, hinterlands, peripheries and local communities like that of Bafut Fondom were very "safe", in terms of conservation and heritage preservation, but today archaeological heritage found in this historic environment is seriously threatened as a result of the fact that many people have occupied the hills, with settlement as the population increases and there has been a shortage in the supply of thatch (grass) for the roofing of architectural houses in the Bafut royal palace. Major hazards⁶ observed includes changes of the land use (e.g. intensive agriculture, deforestation), intensified use of sensitive heritage areas (e.g. construction of roads, development projects in historic landscapes), environmental degradation (e.g. air, water and soil pollution, deforestation, land erosion), large scale construction (reservoirs or water catchment construction), are a serious threat to archeological heritage. Threats resulting from environmental degradation are divided into categories; natural and human factors. Because of the intensive use of land for cultivation, stock breeding, construction of roads, construction of water catchments has an adverse effect on the cultural landscapes, especially on lands considered as sacred natural sites and territories. And the Bafut Fondom a world of dual religious identities (the monotheistic and the polytheistic) has many of such environments that need to be identified, documented and protected against wanton destruction. On the other hand, are natural factors playing against archeological heritage sites like the recent phenomenon of climate change as a result of global warming seriously affects historic environments?

During road constructions, schools, bridges, in terms of infrastructural development, the rights of communities are not respected let alone recognizing sacred natural sites and the communities' abilities responsibility to protect it. It is possible to prohibit all development only because it could affect archeological resources but archeological heritage management theory gives preference to the preservation in-situ (Karolina 2009), rather than "preservation by record", however, rapid urbanization can be checked if it's going beyond its ecological limits. Preservation of archeological sites in rural areas like the Bafut Fondom requires specific methods of management especially ethnographic methods that are adapted to the context of the sites in question. According

⁵ Public Archaeology: Archaeological Ethnographyies (Hallowell, Nicholas, 2009, pp. 141-160), Vol. 8.

⁶ Theories and Practice of Archaeological Heritage...



to article 13 of the UNESCO's Recommendations Concerning the preservation or salvaging, should be ensured through the following means; Legislation, finance, administrative measures, procedures to preserve and to salvage cultural property, penalties, repairs, awards, advice and educational programs. In view of a rapid loss of cultural property, safeguarding of historic sites and assets threatened by development projects because of the major topics of discussion in the late 1950s and 1960s. Recommendations published by UNESCO in 1968 summarized achievements of archeological and conservation theory in the post-war period, since then, there have been further development in a series of international treaties, charters, and policy guides, leading to the publication of the revised European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta Convention) in 1992, which can still be very useful in the archaeological heritage of our country Cameroon.

4.3. CULTURAL TOURISM AND ITS FLAWS

Around the world tourism is booming well and the United Nations World Tourism Organization announced the arrival of the one billion tourists in 2012 and according to the organization, tourist arrival has climbed remarkably from 674million in 2000 to 980million in 2011. The economic impact of this activity is likewise significant. "Tourism is directly responsible for the 5% of the world's GDP, and the sector employs one out of every twelve people in the advanced and emerging economies alike. According to the "partbers" guide (www.livable.org), the ongoing changes in tourism was simply tourism anymore but it had become a form of developmental, leisure, and family bonding that occurs around the framework of visiting places that are not in your normal neighborhood; it is lifestyles, economic development and family values. It is a discovery of self, both physically and intellectually."

Cultural heritage tourism involves visiting places that are significant to the past or present cultural identity of a particular group of people. Cultural heritage goes deeper than just mere celebration and pleasure. Cultural heritage encompasses what a particular group has in common that makes them different from others. While music, movies and other media help tell some of the stories about different cultures and heritage, there is still much to be learned and discovered about the experiences of many communities. So cultural heritage tourism provides an opportunity for people to experience their culture in depth, whether by visiting attractions, historical or culturally relevant places, or by taking part in cultural activities. Tourists who are interested in cultural heritage would visit or take part in the historical attractions, monuments or land marks, the museums, art galleries, festivals, concerts, performance and the culturally significant communities. Some who are interested in cultural heritage generally want to learn something about the beliefs and practices, and the struggles and successes that shaped the shared identity of a people.

The paradigm shifts in tourism today from relaxation to self-discovery is reflected in the explosion of niche market designations within the tourism industry. The more widely known includes adventure tourism, culinary tourism, religious tourism, ecotourism, and educational tourism. But of course cultural heritage tourism is one of the fastest growing specialty markets in the industry today at the detriment of African heritage. For the business boom around cultural heritage tourism is in the most part beneficial to developed and emerging economies, simply because cultural heritage tourism is more adapted and contextualized within the ambit of western economies. According to Bob McNulty, "tourism is too important a resource to be left to tourism professionals, tourism needs to be part of a community mobilization strategy that can reinvent the role of heritage so that it serves the need of everyone". The popularity of historic sites together with unprecedented volume of tourism traffic often result in erosion, littering, pressure from development of even looting, ironically the growth of interest in cultural places is at the same time a major threat to their survival (Karolina 2009). Multiple examples from all over the world demonstrate that excessive or poorly managed tourism and tourism related development can threaten the physical nature, integrity and significant characteristics of archeological sites and



monuments. Thousands of people or visitors entering archeological sites is a major risk and each passing year, they contribute to a gradual decay, with fragile pavements, floors and walls usually exposed to contact with numerous visitors being worn down on an alarming scale (Cleere 2000).

How are sacred objects managed in cultural heritage tourism? What makes an object sacred and how are sacred objects handled by cultural heritage tourism? For this very sensitive issue and if it is not properly handled by cultural heritage tourism experts, it may serve instead as threat to cultural heritage. For “heritage is not lost and found, stolen and reclaimed, it is the mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past” (B. Kirshenblatt Gimblett). In the elementary forms of religious life (first published in French in 1912), Emile Durkheim remarked that anything could be sacred object (natural objects, pieces of the landscapes, artifacts, people, sounds, words, gestures, etc.), even the most significant or common things. He went into add that the “circle of sacred objects” varied considerably from one society to the next and above all, he wrote that “the sacred character of a thing is not implicit in intrinsic properties of the thing, it is something added. We want to recall these observations at the outset because they bring out some essential points: namely that nothing is excluded a priori from the realm of the sacred, which can use any support, and that what is sacred for the human group is so because of the local representations that ascribed this quality to the object. An object is not defined as hybrid because of indigenous representation but because of properties recognized as inherent in this object by specialists. Likewise, the identification of a technical object, in the sense of an object designed to act on matter, is an affair of technologists and ethnologists. In the case of sacred objects however, identification is not up to the researcher, whose role is simply to echo the beliefs of the population and community under study.

To understand the complexity of the problem, it must be said that the object defined as

“Mestizo”, (or hybrid) by Serge Gruzinski and as “technical” by Pierre Lemonnier (without these being symbolic techniques for all that), can also be regarded as “sacred” by some communities; the scope of the notion of sacred objects varies not only from community to community, as Durkheim remarked, but also within the same community over the course of its history. For the present day members of the community of origin of objects held in a European museum for example or elsewhere could have lost its sacred character or have gained a sacredness that it did not originally possess. This texts referred to here, and which we have obtained on the internet, are varied: for example, an issue of the studies series of the committee for conservation (ICOM-CC) one section of which contain texts by different authors, entitled: “the Conservator’s Approach to Sacred Arts” a series of texts on the same subject appearing in the ICOM EthnographicConservation Newsletter published by the Smithsonian institution; Australian protocol for libraries and national archives, an article on the implications of the internet for native people and the same document placed online by the New Zealand Maori Internet society.

In these texts, the adjective “sacred” use to qualify objects is often associated with the adjective “secret” or sensitive and culturally significant. They are used to describe objects having a particular value to members of the originating community, objects which command respect and therefore require special care, or the observation of prohibitions; in all events, these objects whose treatment by museums, libraries and electronic media requires prior consultation.⁷ We propose to use the all-encompassing expression, “culturally sensitive objects” which is less reminiscent of religion and emphasizes the native people’s value and sensitivities effectively at the heart of the matter. For example there are highly sensitive objects that are surrounded by magical or religious beliefs whose contact and views are restricted to certain individuals or groups in the community such as some of the instruments of ethnographic artifacts used by the ‘Kwifor or chong’, both

⁷ Ethnographic Conservation Newsletter Published by the Smithsonian Institution.



secret societies are exposed in the museum and in books simply because of this ideology of democracy and free access to the database (Drums of Chung society, pp.59, exposed in Cameroon village: “An ethnography of the Bafut” by Robert and Pat Ritzenthaler 1962) and this is certainly working against the issue of “sacred” or “culturally sensitive” objects and traditions of the Bafut community. Objects whose contact and view are seriously restricted to certain individuals or groups in the community; for instance, to the ritual experts who alone is allowed to use it; men to the exclusion of women, adults or the initiated only, the members of the secret society or members of a social group who have exclusive control of the object. When these beliefs are still alive, what should be done, especially for culturally intellectual property rights of some cultural objects that are “culturally sensitive” to the community. What we have said about photos of sacred objects obviously applies to the knowledge that goes with them, and therefore to the historical, anthropological, ethnographical and other information to be provided in a database that has to do with this community. This also applies to audio documents: recordings of songs, chants, music, words, speeches, that are supposed to be heard in certain context and sometimes by certain individuals; or to the photos and scene showing films from rituals or others that certain members of the community are forbidden to see; or forbidden to unauthorized members of their group or to non-native people. We can cite here as an example the case of the Australian “tjurunga”, the recent display of which at the Musée des Art d’Afrique et D’Océanie in Paris (Marc Couturier, “Secrets”, 2001), even under conditions of partial secrecy, unleashed the fury of the Euro-Australian John Stanton, who saw this as more than insulting and a threat to the spiritual and physical well-being not only of aboriginal peoples as a whole but also of anyone who viewed the exhibition (Derlon and Mauzé 1995). The document consulted draws us to the conclusion that any object having a historical and cultural importance for a present day indigenous community can be defined as “sacred or culturally sensitive” (Fiori, p.1999). The display, photographic reproduction and utilization of such objects in electronic media may be forbidden so as to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Bafut Fandom.

Closing architectural sites to the public or even limiting access is rarely a viable option, although tourism is often regarded as a major risk to fragile archaeological heritage, it also has an important educational and social function (Putin 1999) and in many cases brings in money that help finance and improve heritage protection scheme, yet it should not compromise the safety of monuments, sites and noble traditions of the people of Bafut. That is why we believe that sustainable management of heritage places is one of the biggest challenges faced by archaeological heritage management in Cameroon today. This will require improvement of conservation techniques and site management policies, a better integration of heritage issues in the planning process, fostering links with the local community (Bafut Fandom 2009).

International cultural tourism charter of managing tourism at places with heritage significance adopted by ICOMOS in 1999 outlined six principles concerning cultural tourism. Firstly, it was clearly stated that conservation should provide responsible and well managed opportunities for members of the host community and visitors to experience and understand that community’s heritage and culture at first hand. Next, the relationship between heritage places and tourism is dynamic and may involve conflicting values. It should be managed in a sustainable way for present and future generations. The conservation and tourism planning for heritage places should also ensure that the visitors' experience will be worthwhile, satisfying and enjoyable. It equally indicated that host communities and indigenous people should be involved in planning for conservation and tourism and that the tourism and conservation activities should benefit the host community. Lastly, it also indicated that tourism promotion programs should protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage characteristics. It is clear that the main ideas undermining the charter are sustainable development and reconciliation of needs and interests of heritage, local communities and tourists, for example according to the second principle, a long term protection



and conservation of heritage should be an essential component of social, economic, political, legislative as well as cultural and tourism development policies (Karolina 2010) W.T.O (World Tourism Organization) estimates that by 2020, the number of tourist will grow to 1.6 million, an increase of over 250% within 15years, up from 992milloin with an expenditure of 642 Euros (W.T.O 1999 and 2000). This makes cultural tourism one of the world's fastest growing and leading branches of industry, generating considerable revenue (Ploska 2009). One of the recommendations of the UNESCO charter suggests that a significant proportion, conservation and preservation of heritage sites (principle 6).

The charter also underscores the importance of retaining the authenticity of heritage places advising that proper management plans should precede the opening of a site to the public; and all development projects and infrastructures should take account of aesthetic, scientific, social and cultural dimensions of places (such as natural and cultural landscapes). Although there is a need for adequate facilities for the comfort, safety and wellbeing of tourists, these must not affect or have a negative impact on the significant features of the site or monument (principles 3 and 6).

4.4. RELIGIOUS FANATISM AND VANDALISM

Another major threat to cultural heritage is Religious fanaticism and vandalism – religious fanaticism being the consideration of one's religious views or doctrines above other religious or simply imposing one's religious beliefs and philosophies in extremes and beyond reason over all else; while Vandalism,⁸ is crime of intentionally damaging property belonging to other people. According to an abstract of an article written by Asombang, "Monotheist religions in general and Pentecostal churches in particular have the tendency to diabolize culture; they consider traditional objects or heritage as being pagan; therefore, they would not hesitate to destroy such heritage if they had their way. This negative attitude towards heritage is one of the greatest challenges faced by heritage professionals the world over in their conservation efforts."

The Bafut Fondom seems to be typical religious community with the two significant religious – the Monotheistic and polytheistic hearty implanted, the former being the most recent but influential and the latter, the most ancient in all its doctrines and ramifications. These religions seem to be in serious conflict of philosophy and ideologies (the church in Bafut, including the Presbyterian Church, which was started by the Basel Mission about a hundred years ago, seems to be suffering because of a traditional religious revival championed by the traditional leaders (Joseph N. Mfonyam, 2010).

There seem to be a misunderstanding or misperception of cultural heritage, as the Christian churches consider cultural objects or heritage as pagan (Asombang, 2014) and even satanic and therefore its preservation and protection become complicated as members of the indigenous polytheistic religions or traditional African religion also accuses Christian Churches as foreign and imperialistic religions. This religious conflict has created a visceral attitude in some monotheistic churches that has caused the wanton destruction of cultural heritage in the Bafut Fondom. This research draws inspiration from an incident that happened in Bafut on the 31st March 2012, as reported by (Asombang, 2014), concerning a certain "Pentecostal Church, called "Kingship International Ministries", who masterminded the cutting down of the sacred tree on the shrine of Ndeughe-alaa-mbwe, literally known as "one who founded the land but died prematurely." One of the fundamental reasons advanced by the leader of this Pentecostal Church, is that it is a common belief in the Bafut Fondom that this Ndeugh-alaa-mbwe was executed paradoxically for doing good (showing or discovered the present appropriate and conducive site of the Bafut Royal Palace); by so doing, the entire Bafut community was cursed by the gods for this crime. According to this Pentecostal Church, (Kingship Ministries International), the large monumental tree planted

⁸ Cambridge Advanced Level Dictionary, Third Edition.



over the grave of this noble woman should be cut down as a solution to delivering the people from the curse. This writer wonders how physical methods could be used to solve spiritual problems; I feel that spiritual methods could be used to solve both physical and spiritual problems and not the other way round. Here, we see the merger of religious hooliganism and religious ignorance imbued by some of our so called Pentecostal Churches and their prophets nowadays. Monuments, natural and historic places are an integral part of the history of Cameroon. They contribute to the knowledge of folk and traditions of the people; they allow the people to “touch” history and can be seen as a bridge between the past and present of our nation.

The term “Vandalism”⁹ is derived from the name of an ancient German tribe of vandals, as early as 455 the vandals ransacked home and damaged and destroyed many ancient monuments of antique and Christian culture. The criminal code of Cameroon has no special rule that would provide for liability for vandalism, but the most common crimes against cultural heritage sites is destruction, damage to religious structures, desecration of religious and historic sites. These crimes are called vandalism because they are cynically designed to break the peace and to cause outrage of the traditional society.¹⁰ Some historic sites like the one we discussed above (Ndeughe-laa, Bwe), serve as living monuments for the collective memory of the community. In the case of this present site, it is a “negative” heritage of the Bafut Fondom, explaining and reminding the community of the heinous crime committed to a fellow Bafutian and therefore prevent further crimes. This site in question is one of the holiest sites in the history of the Bafut Fondom, as a commemorative sacred site for posterity.

The lofty¹¹ law N°2013/003 of 18 April 2013 for the protection and management of cultural heritage in Cameroon is still legally silent or simply a legal toothless bull-dog because up till now, the text of application of this famous law has not been signed; the consequence of which has been the denigration and wanton destruction of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Cameroon in general and the Bafut Fondom in particular.

Photo 01: The Photo of the Destroyed Site of Ndenghe-Ala’a (*Sacred Tree on the Tomb of Ndeughe Alaa Destroyed*)



Source: Obed, 23/01/2015; (Scale: 10.13cm x 12.64cm)

⁹ Vandalism on Objects of Cultural Heritage, Aleksandienko.

¹⁰ Vandalism on Objects of Cultural Heritage, Aleksandienko.

¹¹ Law N°2013/003 of 18 April 2013 for the protection and management of Cultural Heritage.



Paragraph four of the International Charter for the protection and restoration of monuments and sites (the Venice Charter) emphasizes that the primary requirement of the historical monument protection is ongoing care for them. This research seeks to criticize constructively current legislation and scientific developments, content and legal basis of security and protection of cultural heritage, proposals to fight vandalism, effective activity for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage and prevention of crimes in this sector. Sacred natural sites are remnant cores of sites that were historically considered as the collective memories and representations of the Bafut peoples' identities; the character of separate sites differs in terms of function and the social group that makes use of them (Kamdem, 2008). Significantly in the Bafut Fondom, we have many types of sacred places or shrines used for the worship of "gods". Each village in the Fondom has at least four shrines of ancestral worship (ìdí-gə bi sàà/+d+gə mà'a bínwì), it is estimated that there may be as many as sixty shrines in Bafut now (Mfonyam, 2011). For there are family shrines, quarter shrines, village shrines and communities with many mango, fig, plum trees and others planted at the very centre of every small village. Most of these sacred shrines and places were and still remain centres of traditional institutions for initiations, sacrifices, rituals, cleansing and worship (this would be further discussed detailly in chapter two).

Photo 02: Market Community Shrine



Source: Obed, 23/01/2015; Scale: 10.13cm x 12.64cm

Unfortunately because of ignorance of traditional knowledge and values, crimes are often committed against cultural heritage sites without adequate response of law enforcement bodies; criminal cases against cultural heritage are not opened for various reasons and law breakers get along in impunity. I think to reduce vandalism and preserve cultural heritage sites, the state should actively pursue measures such as revising or amending the law on religious associations in Cameroon or so called "Pentecostal churches", and obliging their pastors or self-proclaim prophets to pursue a three-year theological training in authorized and recognized seminaries affiliated to state universities. By so doing, many of these "new-found" churches and their leaders and gurus would be schooled of the knowledge and importance of heritage in all its facets and ramifications. To reduce vandalism and sacrilege on sacred shrines and historic places, the state should pursue measures such as reducing high unemployment of young people, the revitalization



of civil society organizations in the prevention of general and group offenses, enhancing a practical implementation of the principle of inevitability of punishment for the crime, the fight against impunity and to activate and empower the local government (Aleksandrenko et al., 2014) of the community (the Bafut Fondom) for the improvement of well-being usually positively contributes to the reduction of crime in this sphere. One of the measures by the stake holders to curb vandalism of cultural heritage sites, is the legal recognition of polytheistic religions alongside the familiar and conventional monotheistic religions like Christianity, and Islam; through organizing ecumenical or inter-religious and religious conferences and inter faith dialogues on issues of mutuality and the protection and preservation of archaeological/cultural and natural heritage.

In conclusion, it is necessary to emphasize on the problems that should be addressed immediately through customary laws, for further delays could lead to the loss of irreplaceable cultural heritage sites, the loss of our national history, and memory and as a consequence, the loss of spirituality and universal moral values according to Aleksandrenko et al in vandalism on objects of cultural heritage. Deliver information about the importance of the value and the uniqueness of archaeological heritage, as well as about administrative and criminal penalties for violations of the law to all segments of the population and especially the officials; Emphasize the uniqueness of the place in the areas where historical monuments are located;

Adopt a number of legal acts that would have extended the laws of Cameroon, “On the protection of cultural heritage” and “on the protection of the archaeological heritage”, in accordance with international regulations on the protection of cultural heritage and the land code of Cameroon; Establish agencies for the protection of cultural heritage independent from the regional and national authorities; Establish a special unit in the Ministry of Arts and Culture of Cameroon to monitor compliance of the cultural heritage protection laws; Only professionals with appropriate heritage education should be allowed to work in cultural heritage protection bodies.

Most importantly, customary laws for the protection of cultural heritage be recognized and accorded a special place and public authorities should pay sufficient attention to the field of cultural heritage protection.

4.5. ILLICIT TRADE AND LOOTING OF CULTURAL HERITAGE

One of the major threats to the cultural heritage of the Bafut Fondom is looting, which according to many archaeologists, in some regions is the most significant cause of destruction; all over the world archaeological sites are ruthlessly pillaged to provide antiquities for commercial profits and interests. The illicit, clandestine, unrecorded and unpublished excavation of ancient sites thus causes a massive devastation of monuments, an unmitigated and continuing catastrophe for the world’s archaeological heritage, (Renfew, 2000, p. 15).

In the case of looting, the most disputed topic is the illicit trade in antiquities, a heated debate has been going on for some five decades now, involving archaeologists, art dealers, museum curators, collectors, cultural property lawyers, representatives of tribal minorities and various government officials, the thorniest issues being the loss of cultural property for the country of origin and trade in tainted objects (Karolina, 2010).

According to Nathalie Nyst in her work entitled, “Le Trésor de Chefferie de Bafut”, 1996, she summarized the reasons for the creation of the “Bafut Palace Museum Project put forward by R. N. Asombang in 1994, one of which was (the fifth). To fight against theft and illicit trade or trafficking of cultural objects especially as works of arts of the Region were exposed, especially as the cultural objects of the Bafut Fondom were once prey to wanton looting and theft and some cultural objects of sovereignty lie: Two masks covered with copper, cowries and pearl and were never recovered and the principal problem was that of protecting these mobile objects.



From authentic oral sources,¹² in 1968, after the disappearance of the 10th Fon or King of the Bafut Fondom, there was succession crisis, or better still, conflict arose from among the princes who were aspiring to ascend unto the throne of this prestigious kingdom. The present Fon, the 11th (His Royal Majesty Fon Abumbi II) was crowned at the age of 17 and three days after the presentation of the Fon of Bafut to the population of Bafut at the royal plaza, the royal funeral of Fon Achirimbi II that was in progress was disrupted by rebellion organized by disgruntled princes and princesses supported by their sympathizers (His Royal Majesty Abumbi II, 2016). According to Pa Laberi and Peter Shu, this tensed period of transition of power in the Bafut Fondom was the time that recorded a lot of looting and theft of cultural objects of sovereignty of the Bafut Fondom, and in the midst of this conflict, some king makers conspired to loot the kingdom of its cultural heritage. Attempts to get the culprits to book and to recover the stolen cultural objects were abortive and the Fondom or traditional authorities decided to apply the ethnographic method of using a mystical poison called “ñtsə”, according to Joseph N. Mfonyam is used when something has been stolen or some evil has been done to property or life and the culprit cannot be found in the community, people strongly believe that the tribal gods will show justice for both the guilty and the innocent. In this ritual, “ñtsə”, an animal (dog) is killed and the persons or accused are cursed to die or suffer from a horrible disease like the swelling disease and eventually death. It is believed that in using this ethnographic method of judgment and punishment, a dog was killed and its blood used to sanction the perpetrators of this crime, and finally it paid off because most of those in the nobility, the king makers were victims as a result of their guilt and those accused wrongly were spared from the anger of death.¹³

As a result of the above looting and theft, there is a probability that most of the objects of cultural and historical significance in the Bafut royal Palace are not exposed in the royal palace museum because of the fear of being stolen and lack of confidence among those managing them. Effects of looting are not limited to question of illicit trade; looters hunting for precious artefacts – jewels, golden and deliver “treasures”, etc – often damage objects which they perceive to have less value; sometimes sites are even damaged on purpose, to cover up evidence of clandestine activities (Ploska, 2010).

Another danger to archaeological/cultural heritage is clandestine or illegal excavations which are not followed by recording and publication and looted objects, hidden in private collections especially as much is not known or recorded in archaeological excavations in Bafut but many scholars have exploited this scientific field. Many national and international regulations have been established to facilitate the restitution of looted and smuggled cultural objects, yet though unlawfully removed cultural objects should be theoretically retrievable, in practice as such cases are very few. The responsibility for looting and the illegal export cannot be laid solely on the countries of origin (source countries), victimized by these crimes. For looting had become an international network and racket. One might even argue that richer, more developed countries with flourishing art markets (thus called “market countries”) should bear even more responsibility, having sufficient resources and knowledge (Fechner, 1998). Therefore, under the influence of UNESCO, international community agreed to take measures to improve protection of cultural heritage from looting and theft (Karolina, 2010). For the convention¹⁵ on the means of prohibiting and preventing the illicit import, export and transfer of ownership of cultural property in 1970 has been signed by 118 countries, and the second major breakthrough was the launch of the UNIDROIT convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects in 1995, and enforced by thirty (30) countries (signed by 40).

¹² Pa Labri John, A Great Noble and Fon’s Driver, 24/7/2017.

¹³ Pa Peter Shu, Proprietor of Defunct Zoological Snake Research Centre, Bafut. ¹⁵ Article 13.b of the 1970 UNESCO Convention.



These conventions aim at protecting cultural heritage objects from looting and theft. But the impediment to this convention is that most African countries south of the Sahara are not signatories to it and so implementation and practicability becomes pretty difficult, as cultural objects looters are not captured by crime prevention tools such as the Interpol database and national registers of stolen cultural property. Thus, the main idea of both conventions is an assumption that looting, theft and illicit distribution of cultural property cannot be stopped only by the countries of origin. Prevention must be organized on an international level: adequate actions ought to be taken also by the receiving countries, especially those with a developed art market (Clement, 1995).

According to Article 9 of the 1970 UNESCO Convention, any state party to this agreement whose cultural patrimony is in jeopardy from pillage of archaeological or ethnological materials may call upon other states parties which should undertake and participate in a concerted international effort to determine and carry out the essential measures, including the control of exports and imports and international trade in the specific materials concerned and the scope of both UNESCO and UNIDROIT conventions is limited, as they cover only objects of illicit provenance (theft and illicit export) and are not retroactive (Karolina, 2010). If really we have to place things within their proper context and most importantly archaeological or cultural heritage within its context then every cultural object looted in Africa has no significance being in the Western World, except playing a role of decoration only. For a text without a context is a pretext. Once cultural objects are pullout or removed from their sites of origin they become inconsequential and archaeological objects could not be more important in a strange land than in their countries of origin.

Consequently, UNESCO and UNIDROIT treaties share the definition of cultural property: “the property which, on religious or secular grounds, is specifically designated by each state as being of importance for archaeology, prehistory, history, literature, art, or science and which belongs to twelve listed categories including, inter alia, products of archaeological excavations (licit and clandestine) or of archaeological discoveries, elements of artistic or historical monuments or archaeological sites which have been dismembered and antiquities more than one hundred years old, such as inscriptions, coins and engraved seals.”¹⁴

Art dealers often perceive themselves as agents salvaging antiquities at risk and promoting the cultural heritage: “we believe one of our prime functions as dealers is to participate actively in the preservation of the remains of man’s ancient past” (Ede, 1998), eventually most antiquities in private collections end up in a public museum, where they are preserved, studied, and enjoyed, as the public becomes a participant in the ongoing discovery of the past [...], thus in the long run, private collecting serves the public (Mark, 1998, p. 127). At the same time, archaeologists are criticized for forcing a ban on the trade of antiquities, for obscure and irrational reasons and trying to hoard all artifacts for themselves. The archaeologist’s idea that every object has its unique and important voice, regardless of aesthetic considerations, is a misleading over simplification, as most objects found are duplicates of those already excavated in context and offers no significant new insights. Archaeologists argue that every shard is buried treasure and ought to remain in the ground as a nonrenewable resource until it is discovered. Only by them, that archaeologists like to dig and are slow to publish, it at all, is a common and notorious fact, usually blamed on lack of funding, but which, for whatever reason, has become a part of the culture of the archaeologists’ world (Marks, 1998, p. 123) as quoted by Karolina, 2010.

Many researchers interested in the topic conclude that the practice of individual collecting is to a large extent driven by the same themes as that of the museum collecting for instance, the desire to

¹⁴ Article 1, Letters c-e of 1970 of the UNESCO Convention cited



‘preserve the past’ an expression of a distinctive cultural identity or reevaluation of the daily life and ‘ordinary’ objects (Macdonald, 2006, p. 89).

The purpose of this section has been to present a general overview of the illicit and looting of cultural objects in the Bafut Fondom as one of the major threats of cultural heritage and to present common issues and problems faced by this African Kingdom, alongside other African communities in relation to the protection and management of their cultural environment.

4.6. NON-RECOGNITION OF CUSTOMARY OR ETHNOGRAPHIC LAWS OR TABOOS

One of the issues that constitute one of the problematic of this thesis is to find out how ethnographic methods can help communities articulate and enact their own conceptions of heritage management (discover more in the subsequent chapter).

Here, ethnography is used to articulate local or customary laws and principles to protect, preserve and conserve the cultural heritage of the Bafut people, but however, customary laws have been simply marginalized by state government considering them to like on the lowest level of the legal hierarchy the status of indigenous peoples’ legal systems that is not recognized. To¹⁵ prove this thesis, more attention is given to the traditional status of customary laws, its role in regulating and securing the rights of indigenous peoples (the Bafut) to their lands, territories, resources, traditional knowledge and cultural heritage most importantly.

According to Brandan Tobin, customary law has been described as a body of rules, customs, or traditions, considered binding upon them by the people or community to whom they refer, there is however no universally recognized definition of customary law, a term viewed by many as problematic. To him, Alison et al proposed the use of the term ‘folk law’, saying ‘all folk law’ is customary in the sense that it is traditional, but not all custom is law, John Glenn considered the term folk law as being too close to folklore and suggest instead the term ‘chthonic law’, based on the word autochthonous, the term describes the laws of peoples’ living in close harmony with the earth. Interestingly, Unger distinguishes customary law from positive law describing the latter’s emergence as a consequence of ‘the disintegration of community’ and more over, Perry has utilized the term ‘customary law systems’ to distinguish indigenous peoples’ regimes from mere collections of habits and customers. Interestingly, the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples does not use the term, customary law’ at all but refers instead to the ‘laws, customers and traditions of indigenous peoples.

As used here, the notion of indigenous peoples’ and local communities customary law, refers to that body of customs, norms and associated practices, which have been developed or adopted by indigenous people or local communities, whether maintained in an oral or written format, to regulate their activities and which they consider to be binding upon them, without the need for reference to national and international as quoted by Brendan, a description of Mayun law by Guisela Mayen, for instance states that “Indigenous law consists of a series of unwritten oral principles that are abided by the socially accepted by a specific community. Although these norms may vary from one community to another, they are all based on the idea of recommending appropriate behavior rather than on prohibition. Customary indigenous laws aim to restore the harmony and balance in a community; it is essentially collective in nature, whereas the Western judicial system is based on individualism. Customary law is based on the principle that the wrong

¹⁵ WHY CUSTOMARY LAW MATTERS: The Role of Customary Law in the Protection of Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights, PhD Thesis, Brendan Tobin.



doer must compensate his or her victim for the harm that has been done so that he or she can be re-inserted into the community, whereas the Western system seeks punishment.¹⁶

Although, through comparative analysis of the different authors who have written elaborately on the definition of customary laws, the term customary law itself was not evidently considered sufficiently; all embracing to cover the full range of indigenous law, custom and tradition under the declaration.¹⁷ For instance, within the context of our research and the Bafut Fondom, the customary or ethnographic law is known as ‘Nənsə àla’ à’ in the Bafut language, literally it means “country fashion” in English (Mfonyam, 2011) and there is no great difference between country fashion and traditions and customs of the people. For example, what does the law say about a death person or one who dies especially untimely deaths; a rite is preformed on the corpse to curse whoever is responsible for the death for the deceased and also to protect the corpse (T. N. Mfonyam, 2011).

The customary law is considered as a living code of ethics, morals, traditions and customs of the indigenous or local people (Bafut). It is taught from parents to children, from village to village, quarter to quarter through traditional festivals, funeral services, ritual cleansing, business exchange during worship services in shrines and are transmitted from one generation to the other, even though these customary laws are not codified they are very useful for the protection and preservation of both cultural and natural heritage in the Bafut Fondom.

The United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples in Article 34¹⁸ recognizes indigenous peoples’ rights to promote, develop and maintain... their distinctive customs, spirituality, traditional procedures, practices and in cases where there exist, judicial systems or customs in accordance with international human rights standards. It therefore requires states to give legal recognition and protection to indigenous peoples’ right over their traditional lands, territories and resources.¹⁹ States are obliged to establish in conjunction with indigenous peoples’ fair independent, impartial, open and transparent processes, giving due recognition to customary law in order to adjudicate indigenous peoples’ law and resource rights. In former times, the Fon of Bafut could judge and sentence with the aid of the council and the native authority court (Robert and pat Ritzenthaler, 1962).

4.6.1. Taboos to be Recognized and Respected as a Fundamental Customary or Ethnographic Law, for the Regulation and Management of Cultural Heritage

The purpose of this concept is to recognize and define taboos, providing examples, the way they can be categorized, their role in maintaining social structures of African society and cultural heritage management in the most part. This research is an ethnographic investigation that is interested not so much about studying people but rather in learning from people. Such an investigation takes place in order to understand the way people process their experiences (Spradley, 1979, p. 3) or “to get inside their heads” (Spradley, 1980, p. 10). Worthy of note, is the fact that the Bafut Fondom is a pedantic one, given that traditional authority, autocracy and feudalism remains optimal institutions dictating the syntheses of life in this locality. Taboos and cultural laws are social institutions that govern behavior within communities.

¹⁶ Guisela Mayen, quoted by Brendan Tobin, *Mayan Law still Lacks, Official Recognition*, Latin America Press, October 6, 2006.

¹⁷ WHY CUSTOMARY LAW MATTERS: The Role of Customary Law in the Protection of Indigenous Peoples’ Human Rights, PhD Thesis, Brendan Tobin

¹⁸ The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of indigenous peoples in Article 34, recognizes indigenous people’s rights.

¹⁹ Pa Awantu, a member of the “kwifor” secret society interviewed on the 17th of May 2016



The term “taboo” is derived from the Polynesian term “tabu” which means, “forbidden, taboos regulate the way people interact with the world around them by prohibiting the use of items considered sacred. All human societies ascribe to some form of social taboo, that is maintained as an informal institution by the cultural standards of its members (Colding and Folk, 2001; Negi, 2010). Unlike judicial law and other types of informal institutions, taboos represent unwritten social rules that regulate behavior in humans that are bound together by common obligations to each other and a shared reverence for the sacred (Frend, 1913). Informal institutions such taboos are based on cultural norms that do not require government interventions for proliferation or enforcement (Posner and Rasmusen, 1999).

One respondent²⁰ Pa Awantu defined taboo as a, “prohibition about social life in general, concerning religion, social life, in order to keep peace and harmony and to avoid curse from ancestors or spirits like sickness or famine. Taboos were things and are still things you should not do in front of the people”. It is a law that is strictly prohibited in a given community”. A kind of rule established for the sake of respect of elders and well being of the society” and a system of prohibition against the community, God and Spirits... against acts of that may offend the community. As a complex reality, culture consists of many elements, some of these elements are essential to very nature of that culture and without them such a culture would not have taken the shape at least in the context of the studies, we believe that the notion of taboos has been an essential element of African religion and culture. Taboos do not only constitute a part of African culture heritage but also provide a good and succinct explanation of that heritage.

Before the introduction of Western Conservation methods to Africa, many communities already had established resources management systems based on complex religious and cultural beliefs system that incorporates myths, taboos, totems, and social norms (OSTROM, 1990, Hulme and Murphree, 1999, Roe et al, 2009). These systems originated to protect and promote communal well being, rather than individual interest or that of the preservation of wildlife (Videghe Sho, 2008). In Bafut Fondom for instance, most shrines are maintained as sacred forests that protects and play host to wildlife and great species of flora especially the sacred forest surrounding the royal palace. This sacred forest is haven to biodiversity, sacred wildlife and medical plants to heal the palace and the land. This sacred forest is governed and regulated by traditional laws or taboos prohibiting hunting, harvesting, strolling and even coming towards it.

Photo 03: Photo of the Bafut Royal Palace Sacred Forest



Source: Obed, 29/12/2016; (Scale: 8.9cm x 13.58cm)

²⁰ Pa Awantu, a member of the “kwifor” secret society interviewed on the 17th of May 2016.



According to Jimoh et al (2012) reports that forests are protected for spiritual reasons not directly associated with conservation interests. As observed on a global scale, informal institutions in Africa can thus assist conservation efforts in cases where the cultural norms and community behaviours align with the management goals, even in situations when the norms originate for other reasons.

Intangible values are regulated and transmitted through taboos on age, sex and even gender restrictions, these restrictions are inculcated into society and secrets and myths by elder members of the society and spirits mediums. Traditional leaders and spirits represent lawmakers (Katsamudanga). The role of local institutions in conservation of biological has recently attracted more global attention (Colding and Folks 2001, Riley 2010) with growing amount of literature demonstrating taboos improve conservation efforts and resources management (e.g. Uyeda et al... 2014 Tenge et al 2007). Infringements of these traditional laws were regarded as abomination and appeasement comes in the form of sacrifices. If the appeasement is not done, the offender will remain under a perpetual curse (Anoliefo, Nwokeji, Beckley 2015). Punishment for breaking taboos or traditional laws was sickness, curse, barrenness and even death depending on the gravity of the offense.

Also, sanctions against breaking taboos or traditional laws included corporal punishment, isolation, banishment from the land, paying of huge fines, and seizure of bushes or plantations. This researcher argues that the preservation of intangible heritage in monuments and sites is best left to traditional leadership and communities utilizing these values; they are the ones who know what's important to them from the vast cultural past bequeathed to them by their ancestors and the professional heritage manager should only come in to provide an enabling environment for the continues use and preservation of this heritage (Katsamudanga).

It is quite unfortunate that major historical development has been antithetical to the preservation of traditional cultural values in Africa and the kind of education and the historical legacy left by colonial dogma is still affecting the preservation of itineraries and still continue to undermine and misrecognize taboos as indigenous laws even though not written and coded but have nonetheless been legally binding both for nature and culture from generations to generations.

4.6.2. Types of Taboos or Traditional Laws and their Sanctions

Traditional Management Systems (TMS) are possibly first as old as humans on earth. It is the systematic way of managing social values that are significant to human life. TMS involves known behaviors and practices that have been experienced, tested and accepted. This include the do and the don'ts with a set of rules and regulations that govern human practices and ensure responsible utilization of resources and harmonious coexistence, and the existence of these unwritten rules applicable among people and have a positive effect of minimizing conflicts between individuals (Abungu 2016).

Our aim in this research is to present taboos or traditional laws as effective traditional management systems for the effective management of cultural heritage in the Bafut Fondom and the challenges that go with it. In societies where writing was not practiced, systems were developed that guided behaviors of individual groups as well as communities and societies in their daily interaction with their environment and with each other and these systems clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of each for the common good (AWHF, 2016).

It is a taboo or against traditional laws to sit on cooking stones. According to Tikere Moffor in his article "the symbolic meanings of stones and megaliths among the BamendaTikar of Cameroon", stones and megaliths are diversely located in different places and having several meanings to the people, and they symbolize unity, power, fertility and healing; and food is cooked on stones. These stones are usually three in number and the primary role is to support the pot so that fire



could be fixed under it and as they represent the three members of a nuclear family who are the father, the mother and the child or children, that is, the father stone, the mother stone and obviously the child stone. In some kitchens the stones are differentiated, the major stone faces the door being the father, the pillar or head of the house and it is planted in the ground and it is usually bigger and higher than the two others. He protects the mother and all the other members of the family (the symbol of power). The two other stones with the mother slightly bigger than the child stone are not planted but are placed in a way that they could not be displaced easily. The mother stone is placed facing the barn where food is kept and the mother sits near this mother stone where she can quickly climb to the barn. This is symbolic in that the mother who is the one that cooks for the family and the husband has to sit where she can collect whatever she needs for the kitchen, if she needs to Cook in a small pot, there is always a small stone (called the child stone) which is placed on the father to support the pot. This shows that the father as the head of the family has to support family members, his relations as well as those of his wife. However just like the three (03) stones that help give stability to the pot, the father, mother and child must unit for the stability of the family in particular and the society as a whole (Tikere Moffor 2018).

Photo 04: Three Stone Fire Sites



Source: Tikere Moffor, 2018; (Scale: 11.22cm x 11.94cm)

From the ethnographic point of view and the importance of the cooking stones in the Bafut Fondom, defaulters are considered to have desecrated the land since the family is the nucleus of the land or Fondom, and the sanctions are dreadful disease or barrenness. It is a taboo or contrary to traditional law to take things (food, drinks etc) into the Bafut royal palace and take them back. Once you take things into the palace they cease to be “*njoo*” or things but they become automatically “*njo’o ntoh*”, or palace things and “*njoo ntoh*” constitute on one part (things of the palace) or “*njoo ala’a*” (of the kingdom) (Nyst 1996). The system of feudalism upon which the Bafut Fondom is founded; where it is the people providing for their king or Fon and to their kingdom or Fondom. Therefore one could not go into the palace or before the Fon or king empty handed and these laws reveal the importance of the age-old management systems still in use at heritage places in the Bafut Fondom.

Among the traditional management systems (TMS) governing the sharing of natural and cultural resources, control and distribution of the means of production, graduation from one age



groups to the other, relations between different age groups, gender relations, roles and responsibilities as well as reward and punishment; often, these were embedded in rituals and beliefs that applied to all members of a society (Abungu). Therefore, it is a taboo to steal or involve in covetousness, cheating or embezzlement of what belongs to the community or public. Some taboos are translated or transformed from the invisible to the visible, from the spiritual unseen laws to a physical untouchable symbols known as “*Ajibè*” (Taboo) and according to Mfonyam 2010, p.163 (10.6), a taboo or *Ajibè* is an object or something that has too much power (mana in Polynesia), that one must not touch it or come near to it. With the help of a medicine man, one can make a taboo out of such simple things as palm fronds, snail shells, sticks, leaves, plants etc. This is kept in the garden, farm or under a fruit tree to protect it from thieves or evil people related to taboos, people can plant grass or use other objects that have enough *mana* or *power* to ward off evil spirits or witches or wizards that make the crop not to do well.”

Photo 05: A Picture of a Traditional Law or Taboo in Physical Form



Source: Obed, 31/12/2016; (Scale: 11.05cm x 8.74cm)

It should be noted that these physical taboos or *Ajibè*, represents different diseases as punishment against anyone who steals from where these taboos are placed. These diseases range from madness, epilepsy, elephantiasis, etc.

Photo 06: A Taboo for Madness



Source: Obed, 30/06/2018; (Scale: 9.8cm x 12.77cm)



Before setting up a taboo in a farm, garden, plantation etc to prevent against theft, there are certain pre-conditionalities that needs to be carried out by the owner of the site (garden, farm, plantation) before setting it up such as the taboo or *Ajibè* with the punishment or spell for epilepsy for example; two sticks are planted together with a gap separating each other of 15cm and with sweeping broom tied together but burst at both edges. After planting this on the ground, the owner or the person who has planted it must activate the taboo by urinating on it, excreting around the taboo, spitting on it, shouting around it, all these in a bid to prevent the taboo from harming or attacking the innocent who may urinate, excrete, spit or shout around it without any intention of stealing or transgressing especially where this farms or places of the taboo is around roads where many people use or play. For if these conditions are not met, any culprit or anyone who mistakenly do something around the taboo would automatically contracts the illness or epilepsy disease.

Photo 07: A Schema of the Epilepsy Taboo



Source: Obed, 11/12/2016; (Scale: 11.22cm x 8.25cm)

These examples presented on the bases of their significance, demonstrating the power, effectiveness, traditional and durability of taboos as traditional management of cultural heritage sites. Defaulters of traditional laws or taboos are heavily fined by paying sometimes goats, and sacrifices are made to appease the gods and ancestors and the sins of the culprits forgiven and their diseases or curse is restored or reversed. People reckoned that taboos played a significant and positive role in traditional African societies. They provide a set of rules, serving as moral guidance or a law in the community. If followed, keeping taboos ensured that peace and security were present in the community because bad things or behaviours were always put under control. Taboos were protecting the social hierarchy in the society. They were helping in the upbringing of children and providing rules for marriage. If one was known to keep taboos, it also served as a means of social advancement. They were a means of social control and without them they would be chaos. Keeping of taboos ensured the good harmony between the visible and the invisible world. People seem to be aware that being prohibitive led to the true meaning of taboos, preserving harmony and well-being in and around the community. These taboos or laws were transferred into the physical representing different dreadful diseases in the physical form. Once



you perceive a symbol or taboo placed somewhere you are immediately frightened knowing that touching something around it was tantamount to being infected with the disease that this taboo symbol carries.

In the contemporary society according to respondents (Ta Mbonjum, king maker) taboos play an important role. The impact they exercise however seem to have diminished in comparison with the traditional African society today, due to the influence of Christianity or foreign religions that to a certain extent, took over the role played by taboos (Mfonyam 10.pp. 161, 2010) and to the present style of life where people from various tribes live together. In contrast to the traditional setup whereby people of one tribe use to live in one area. This weakening of the value of taboo on daily life is also due to, mainly oral way of transmitting them from one generation to another. As a result, people living in towns turn to know less about what will be considered their ancestral land and from the elders who played an important role in teaching about taboos or customary laws.

Lack of recognition and use of this established knowledge systems and practice creates key problems facing heritage organization in their effort to preserve the cultural significance of heritage places imbued with local, national or universal values. Despite colonial disputes of the societal organization with the African Continent, including how heritage resources are owned and managed, many parts of the continent in post Colonial period are still rich in traditions and customary practices that influences people's daily lives and how they influence people's daily lives and how they relate to their environment and to one another and traditional management systems (TMS) or custodianship is still widely applicable and governs many people's lives as well as influence the way they manage their resources including their cultural and natural heritage (AWHF 2016).

Although deforestation is also a major threat to cultural heritage preservation, most of the portions of the biosphere known as territories or sacred grooves have survived, and the purpose of our research is to affirm and confirm with intensity and unequivocal terms that adherence to taboos or customary law and the fear of repercussions, including barrenness and even death, plays a role in the continued preservation of sacred groove and archaeological/cultural objects. This research indicated that in spite of modernization; taboos serve useful purposes in the conservation of biodiversity within sacred grooves and conclude that biodiversity conservation is linked with cultural preservation (Rita Barre, Miriam Grant, Dianne Draper, 2008, p. 25-39). Law is the basis of human civilization, without such law, there is no civilization. Many societies across the ages have enacted laws through which their societies have been regulated, protected and better governed. In this case, we have two broad legal systems; the Western standard legal systems practiced by many governments today and the customary legal system that is considered as inferior by mainstream legal systems. Customary law is very valid and significant to the Bafut community as it was many centuries in many ancient societies. Customary law by virtue of its significance and role it plays could be codified and made a written law, to be implemented side by side with legal 'modern legal system'. Even though the role of customary law is significant on the field of international law, but in domestic or national systems it had been abolished or its role drastically diminished in favour of written law. We hereby through this research reject out rightly the Western supremacist philosophy that traditional African societies without written laws were premature and lawless, but to prove in this research that Africans have for several centuries succeeded to preserve her natural and cultural heritage, thanks to the customary or traditional legal systems. These laws were translated into visible and physical symbols stipulating the penal code and regulating the entire community based on their customs and traditions. If there exist a community, it must function according to some rules and these rules are called customary law; the essence of a social organization of this community. The creation, production of wealth, and the demand and supply of market systems, including religious beliefs were masterminded by these customary laws.



Despite the international recognition of customary law and its preservation, such as the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination of October 13,

1966, the international convention on economic, social and cultural rights and the international convention on civil and political rights of December 18, 1972, indigenous customary laws still continue to be stifled and unrecognized by mainstream 'modern' legal systems, probably because of non ratification by some United Nations member states or simply due to ignorance or lack of a political will.

From all indication in the management and protection of both cultural and natural heritage, it is virtuously impossible to separate any society or community from its law, for the law in any form is an absolutely necessary foundation for any given society. Without law there will be anarchy. To conclude, according to Wojciech P. Golec, in "The Significance of indigenous customary law according to the international law on indigenous peoples", to understand the significance of indigenous customary or traditional law in light of international regulations concerning indigenous peoples, it is necessary firstly to explain or understand the idea of customary law itself and significance of this law for indigenous or local communities and to clamour for the recognition of this customary law by other legal systems for the best interest of the protection and management of archaeological (cultural) heritage.

4.6.3. Neglect of Intangible Heritage

Exactly like the architectural buildings that face the threat of deterioration or even destruction, intangible heritage of Bafut is facing the threat of neglect would eventually cause disappearance. The problem with intangible heritage is severe because its disappearance means the disappearance of identity. The intangible heritage fosters the feeling of belonging and continuity and thus plays a vital role in defining the national identity. It is a mentality and way of knowing and seeing, therefore, it includes music, dances, food, oral traditions, skills, knowledge and many other manifestations (L. Smith 2006:48-53). If the traditional songs and dances of the Abinefor or Fon's annual dance with funeral and marriage songs were replaced with modernize western music, if the traditional Bafut cuisine was replaced with fast food, if the Bafut language disappeared, if the traditions and customs were abandoned that means the Bafut people are losing their identity. Up till now, the intangible heritage of the Bafut Fondom is only preserved in the memory of the old generation and only few efforts were done to document this heritage. Even its presentation is only done by those who are still practicing it in their daily lives. That means; if the neglect to that intangible heritage continued and that heritage was not fully documented, we might lose that wealth of intangible heritage and the new generations of the Bafutians will be deprived of their identity.

4.6.4. Insufficient Role of Museums

The Bafut Fondom has about three functioning museums: The Bafut Royal Palace museum, the Savanna Garden gallery museum of Nsoh and the Njinteh Touristic museum. These museums vary in type, collection and managing authority. Amongst these three museums two are privately owned while the Bafut Royal Palace museum is quite larger and owned by the community. The museums of the Bafut Fondom have many problems since most of them focus on preserving and researching the collection, most of them do not have an active website and they generally lack the link with the society. The main barrier and challenge between museums and people is the lack of interactive activities and events that can engage the society. As a result, museums are perceived by common people especially the people of the Bafut Fondom, as places for tourists and specialized historians, archaeologists, artists or atleast highly-intellectuals. These Museums need to enforce their social role, provide interactive activities to various segments of the society and their message as cultural engaging centers. Infact, the museums that are not seen or felt as part the daily life of society will not survive (E. Hooper Greenhill, 2005:1-14). In order to survive, they should play social, cultural



and educational roles to communicate with the society. With the wide variety of collections, the museums of Bafut can play an essential role in the interpretation and presentation of the heritage of the Fondom. The UNESCO highlighted the need to include the intangible heritage as a central component of museums (C. Karp, 2004:45-51).

4.6.5. Lack of Awareness

I believe that lack of awareness is a major challenge facing cultural heritage in the Bafut Fondom. As mentioned, there are many authorities, cultural centers, research, NGOs and initiatives that work in the field of heritage but they could not build awareness among common people of the meaning or importance of heritage. Some of such bodies focus on research rather than the awareness although it is part of their mission. Some others start awareness campaigns as reaction to threats to certain places or buildings rather than acting with a general scope before the threat occurs. A third group of bodies do not consider awareness part of their mission even; such governmental bodies. Sadly, schools and Universities are not playing enough roles at raising the awareness for heritage and its importance. As long as community's do not know their heritage, they would not be able to preserve it or benefit from it (E.J. Bwasiri, 2011:129-135). Even if the government used topdown policies to preserve and use heritage for the development of societies and tourism, the efforts would be useless if awareness in the society was not achieved and if the community inclusion was not created. A participatory approach should be adopted to create awareness and connect communities with professionals in documenting, preserving, presenting and managing heritage.

4.6.6. Lack of Enforced Legislations

There are many laws in Cameroon related to the protection of heritage including: Law N°91/008 of 30th July 1991 for the protection of cultural and natural heritage; law N°2013/003 of 18th April 2013 for the protection of Cultural heritage. Yet we still need strong punishments for those who violate these laws. The governments of Cameroon should enforce those laws and stick to their implementation. Moreover, valuable compensations should be offered to private owners of heritage buildings to persuade them to protect them from destruction. The intangible heritage still needs laws and legalizations to protect them from loss and destruction.

4.6.7. Documentation Challenges

One of the major challenges and problems that hinder the full use of the heritage of Bafut for the benefit of tourism and socio-economic development, is the neglect of authorities to document all aspects of heritage in the Fondom. The registered site is only the Bafut Fon's Palace and is even registered as a world heritage site by UNESCO. But many other significant sites are left out like the Ndiela historic site that was destroyed. The problem with intangible heritage is even worse because of its non-materialistic nature. The Bafut language is gradually being highly influenced the lingua franca, called "pingin English" and other foreign dialects. Though a lot is being done by the Bafut language Committee to preserve and protect the language.

4.6.8. Lack of Collaborative Work to Promote Heritage

Despite the variety of heritage in the Bafut Fondom there is no authority to manage that heritage with institutional organized methodology. Management of community sites and the Fon's Palace is in the hands of the Fon of Bafut, while the management of tourism is by the Ministry of tourism through the regional delegation, the Ministry of arts and culture. Each of these authorities works in its own field not in collaboration with the other authorities. As for cultural heritage in particular, they do not have a collaborative plan to work on and not even have a vision for the future of heritage in the Fondom.

4.7. Some intangible cultural heritage challenges

Colonialism and its ongoing negative philosophies on African societies in general and the Bafut Fondom in particular, especially on Christian missionary activities at important shrines pose new



challenges from science and Christian evangelism has created stiff challenges to the identification and recognition of intangible heritage to preserve; indifference or negative attitudes of local communities towards their heritage (tangible and intangible), today most be understood on the context of the dislocation created by colonialism (S. Katsamudanga). The arrival of tangible and intangible heritage in the Bafut Fondom is running into perennial interreligious conflicts with some Christian churches or doctrines that see this cultural dynamic as pagan and unchristian. These pricks use to interrogate on the well-being of intangible cultural heritage, its sustainable vis-à-vis Christian evangelism and expansion. For instance, death celebrations which use to be ample opportunities and places to show case the intangible cultural heritage pragmatism in the different traditional dances, rituals and cultural displays, are now being altered by Christian teachings, to be unchristian, pagan and death celebration are being carried out after three days immediately after the burial of the deceased according to Christian doctrines, contrary to the hitherto planned death celebrations that took from six months to even one year and above to enable relatives to mobilize more funds and resources for these celebrations. In such circumstances intangible cultural heritage is sacrificed on the platter of religious fundamentalism. Colonial education on the one hand saw traditional African practices and beliefs as a hindrance to political and economic progress in the colonies even though exceptionally the British colonial rule with its policy of indirect rule, to an extend respected traditions in British Cameroons. African beliefs systems especially in spirits mediums played a role in resistance to colonial rule or policies that protected them in wars on the late 19th century and in the 1970s. Some of these African beliefs systems were subjugated with the assistance of Christianity and western education: since much of the colonial education was offered through missionary schools, Africans in these schools gradually lost their traditions and assumed new value systems (Seke). Although not all people could completely discard beliefs, being a believer in African value systems had a social stigma even today with independence there was hope and zeal to restore lost cultural values (Pwiti and Ndoro 1999) through cultural revival programs like traditional dances and drama groups. Western education just as missionary schools continued to be evangelical tools for neocolonialism and Christianity sometimes at the expense of intangible cultural heritage practices. Exposure to new ideas, like the beliefs in sciences and its tenet of concrete evidence that can be proven, all facilitated by mobility between urban and village areas meant that the significance of spiritual beliefs in many societies could be queried (Katsamudanga), also traditional or indigenous knowledge or science was and is still being considered as magic, and witchcraft in prerogative proportions.

Today, with the rapid advance of globalization the loss of intangible cultural heritage once seen in one part of the world can equally be seen in other parts of the world. The threat of extinction to intangible cultural heritage is particularly noticeable in developing countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East today, therefore, while modernization and industrialization remains urgent issues, it is as essential to preserve and transmit these traditional cultures (Shogo Aria 2004). One of the areas where intangible heritage is not recognized due to influence of globalization is medicine. African traditional medicine goes with a lot of rites, incantations, observance of certain customs especially in the treatment of dreadful out terminal diseases but conventional medicine which is western invention seems to be at variance and opposition to the former not because it is not effective but because the process through which patients are treated are considered magical, traditional, and even primitive and not modern; with no regards for African traditional health institutions.

A major challenge for the safeguard and management of cultural heritage in particular is the Anglophone crisis rocking the two English speaking regions of Cameroon. Our research field that is the Bafut Fondom is situated in the North West region. This crisis stemmed from a historic point of view, otherwise known as the Anglophone problem. Although it is generally agreed that there is an Anglophone problem in Cameroon, it is not easy to really define it, and many



Cameroonians do not agree on the definition of the problem. What seems glaring is the fact that the problem revolves around the cultural identity of the minority people in a union whose first right is to exist, Anglophones feel and claim the right to exist as citizens of Cameroon and be treated equally with the other partner, the francophone (Ngoh, 1996). This crisis has been on since October 2016, and has degenerated into an armed conflict between government, military forces and armed separatists' groups. Many lives and property have been lost and destroyed in the course of this conflict. Cultural heritage is under serious threat of destruction. Many private museums have been destroyed and artifacts looted. Some historical and sacred places or territories have been profaned or desecrated, especially as the separatist fighters are camped in these forests and bushes harboring places with aesthetic, historical and scientific values. Apart from the destruction of tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage is still being destroyed on daily basis especially in the Bafut Fondom where its traditions and cultures are still very intact. For two years now the Bafut Fondom is no go zone because of the war, and so traditional dances, rituals, death celebrations, marriage celebrations, birth celebrations, sport events, agricultural exhibitions and most importantly the suspension of the "Abinefor", annual festival, a crowd puller for thousands of tourists who used to stream into the Fondom to enjoy and experience the intangible cultural heritage, is simply not possible today. This conflict has since 2016 triggered rural-rural and rural-urban migration; for many citizens have been moved to the forests and others simple escape to the towns for safety. According to Yaoundé resident report of the united nations for the coordination of humanitarian affairs (OCHA), 437,500 people are internally displaced (IDPs), 500000 people as refugees across the borders with Nigeria, increased insecurity, violence and consequent widespread injury and civilians and military loss of lives have forced thousands of families to flee their homes. Displacement continues to have serious consequence on the livelihood and living conditions of the affected populations (www.unocha.org).

Photo 08: The Ntimako'o Traditional Dance



Source: John Koenig; (Scale: 7.69cm x 14.05cm)

There is no definite solution to the problem in the preservation of intangible values, recommendations from several heritage managers, and academics have been calling for comanagement or community participation (Muringaniza 1998, Ndoro 2001, Mataga 2003, Taruvinga 1995), and this requires the preservation and recognition of the social processes that created them, for intangible values govern the behavior of societies (Seke). Intangible cultural heritage is so structured that it generates a lot from the communities and provide feedback channels into the social, political and economic realms of the society but unfortunately today because of insecurity and rural exodus, this heritage visibility and viability is in a suspense, for enabling free play of these social dynamics ensures the survival of the relevant intangible values of the society.



4.8. CHALLENGES IN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

In recent years, globalization, the integration of people and markets across natural and continental boundaries, and urbanization, the increase of the urban population, have challenged the vernacular building traditions of our countries with an alarming shift of people from rural communities into western styled city centers to the detriment of local architecture. Predictably, rapid urbanization as a result of globalization has created a host of new development challenges for Africans including pressures on the environment, existing infrastructure and when building stock and a storage of both, time and adequate building materials to construct new houses.

Another established but disturbing phenomenon trend in African development is the elevation of non-African architecture above vernacular tradition, formal architectural expression in Africa has long been influenced by European architecture much in the same way Africans were compelled to adopt European languages, governing systems, and aspects of European culture during colonization. The result western ideas of urbanity and building topology are seen as superior to traditional African forms and building culture even when incompatible with the environmental and cultural context.

A similar trend is occurring with building materials, where “modern” materials, such as Concrete Masonry Units (CMU’S), are considered by most Africans south of the Sahara, to be a sign of higher social rank and financial standing in comparison to traditional, local materials, mud and timber, despite the near impracticability of the material-CMU’S, in the tropical sub-Saharan climate and distance from manufacturers. According to Megan et al, the use of traditional materials and methods in contemporary construction is largely seen as a retreat to “stone age” way of living, rather than as materials and methods both effective in their environment and reflective of their physical and cultural surroundings.

A majority of Africans reside in rural areas and build and live in structures constructed with local materials. These structures use techniques that have been utilized for generations. It is architecture that is both sustainable and beautiful.

Sadly, traditional African architecture especially in sub-Saharan, has not profited from this renaissance and has instead steadily lost its appeal across the continent. In spite of its towering influence in the pre-colonial era, it has largely failed to develop beyond the crude earthen walls, reason it has remained unattractive to home owners who often associate it with poverty.

Architectural education on the continent doesn’t equip architects-in-training with knowledge of history of African architecture, nor does it teach them the right skills ET to propagate these styles. At present only a few design schools in Africa teach traditional architecture as a standalone course and even that hasn’t translated into much in terms of brick and mortar. Yet every design school on the continent teaches its students the history and theory of classical European architecture styles like gothic, baroque and even about modernist styles like Bauhaus. For these schools, emphasis is placed entirely on western architecture and architects. The students extensively study the works of Walter Gropius, le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and are often made to see them as infallible idols to be emulated verbatim. No one mentions African local designers, or even contemporary African designers, who are currently pushing the boundaries of traditional craftsmanship, local materials and modern design techniques to create a contemporary African architecture style.

The dying African architectural heritage is a socio-cultural emergency, as traditional architecture remains an indispensable aspect of our history, our cultural heritage defining who we are as Africans.



3.9. CONSERVATION CHALLENGES AND PREVENTIVE MECHANISMS

Artistic heritage²¹ is subject to deterioration: Over time materials lose their ability to respond and adapt to different environmental parameters (natural and manmade damage). Degradation is a cumulative process evolving in a non-linear and irreversible fashion. The same causes may produce different effects depending on the type of object and its previous history. The combination of different comes, past or present, produces synergistic effects. The aging of materials is an irreversible process that cannot be stopped, but only accelerated by inadequate conservation or neglect, or slow by protecting objects or artifacts from the harmful effects of degradation agent.

Prevention begins with knowledge. The aim of this section is to identify very simple steps to achieve preventive conservation addressing increasing difficulties of cultural heritage due to changing environmental social and cultural conditions: prolonged exposure, outdoor and indoor air pollution, and the presence of visitors. The presence of large uncontrolled numbers of visitors in museums, for example is a source of particles, gases and heat affecting the museum environment. One visitor in an exhibition hall produces (Fabbri, 2012):

- 50 – 100g/h of water vapour;
- 100 watt/h of heat ;
- 50 ml/h of carbon dioxide;
- 0.2g/h dust (micro organism, fibres of clothing, organic fragments).

CONCLUSION

The choice of procedures for preventive conservation requires multidisciplinary cooperation between archaeological heritage and chemistry and other disciplines in conservation science. Here in this regard we have borrowed from expertise of “science and conservation for museum”, 2012, given that most of the artifacts found in the Bafut Royal Palace Museum are made of wood carving which developed out of wood working skills common to most men in rural community like the Bafut Fondom our research field, who make many of the things they need in daily life.

Numerous rules and recommendations are available, both at national and international level, concerning the conservation of art works, the literal application of recommendations is and the rules including the procedures to follow must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. In other words, the rules are “indications” that must be interpreted and modeled explicitly to each object, knowing its important decisions regarding the selection of conservation treatment methods for the Bafut Sacred objects can be viewed critically through the following questions or considerations. Should sacred objects be stored or kept in the museum in the first place? If these sacred objects are kept or stored in the museum, should they be displayed or kept in some kind of sacred rooms within the vicinity and precinct of museums? Is there any consideration for the non-physical aspects of sacred objects? Should the treatment of sacred objects not prejudice the future functionalities and the intrinsic values of these objects?

The essence of this paper, is to rethink and to reconsider the circumstances under which sacred objects and cultural heritage and in museums undergo modern and scientific conservation treatment, the very essence of these objects being in the museums and the fundamental process of handling, documentation and treatment of these objects could warrant the interference with the integrity of these sacred objects and may eventually provoke the destruction of their functional and spiritual significance.

²¹ Science and Conservation for museums, edited by Fabbri, 2012.



These above questions further highlight the ethical considerations or worries embedded in the conservation of sacred objects in museums, for even if the treatment of these objects is considered as a matter of principle and necessity certain restrictions, precautions and preconditions according to the traditional knowledge systems must be integrated into the treatment and management of sacred objects in museums.

There is a fundamental issue surrounding these objects which has led to this discussion. First and foremost the unresolved and fundamental questions regarding museums as reservoirs for sacred objects are still unanswered today. The Bafut Fondom ethically has an entrenched system of accepted beliefs which control governance, behavior, religion and behavior; and it becomes pretty difficult to change attitudes that have been enshrined over the years. These issues and above questions are based on the indigenous conflict of value systems between the Bafut customary traditions and the museum community (according to all the museum curators I interviewed sacred objects by virtue of their sacredness are not kept in museums by tradition).

There is also a growing concern that the sacred objects by virtue of their sacredness which makes some of them objects of sovereignty, identity and entity could be seen or exposed only temporarily during grand ritualistic festivals but are prohibited to be exposed to the public view in museums. Moreover, some aspects or facets of sacred objects especially the non-physical aspects of these objects may seriously be overlooked in the museum setting and jurisdiction.

Let us try to attempt a convenient and contextual definition of a sacred object even though it is a very difficult venture because almost every aspect of traditional Bafut life is religiously and ceremoniously permeated and the degree of the quality and quantity of sacredness has engulfed many objects in the Bafut material culture inventory. Sacred objects generally are considered by the Bafut community as frightful, ritualistic and unlawful to touch or to be seen when you are not ethically initiated or permitted to do so by the customary laws or traditions; for touching or seeing sacred objects when you are not supposed to is considered as a breach of ethics with dreadful consequences for defaulters. As a result of this the community dreads museum and its collections that seem to portray national and international ethos rather than upholding the ethos of the Bafut traditional community. As shrines are material vessels and receptacles for deities, ancestors and spirits as well as for offerings that are manifest in the form of sacrifices occurring during particular life events (Dawson, 2009), so too sacred objects are the communication tools through which humans express their feelings, prayers and gratitude to deities and spirits and; they are reserved only for the glorification and worship of the deities of the Fondom and not to be displayed or exhibited or used for any unhallowed purposes. By so doing sacred objects are legally owned by the kingdom or the Fondom because they are like the instruments for the intercession to the deities and spirits.

The cultural heritage of the Bafut Fondom faces many problems and challenges that are threatening the heritage to extinction; especially the intangible heritage. As a result of such problems; the heritage of Bafut is not well preserved, the awareness of the importance of such heritage is not achieved and the development of the heritage to secure socio-economic benefits for the society is not attained. Accordingly; the heritage of the Bafut Fondom is not fully invested for the benefit of tourism. It means that if the above-mentioned problems and challenges were approached and solved, so many benefits for the Fondom, tourism sector and for the heritage itself could be recognized.



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