

Questionnaire (put reference #:page # after each entry)

1. Description

1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:

Mafa, "Matakam", Mofa, Natakan, Bula, Bulahai, "Matakam", Natakan

There are three different Mafa dialects:

- Central Mafa
(Koza, Ldamtsai, Mokola, Mokolo, Ouzal),
- East Mafa
(Roua, Soulede),
- West Mafa
(Magoumaz, Mavoumay).

1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com)

maf

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

10° 51' 15" N and 13° 43' 3" E." (3)

1.4 Brief history:

Mafa expansion and Islamic warring and trading had varying effects upon the smaller groups, as is seen very clearly in the contrasting cases of the Hide and Mabas, speakers of closely related Wandala-group languages. The former, relatively secure from cavalry attack in their rocky hills, threw in their lot with the Mafa (5,95)

The Mafa, numbering over 140,000 and extending across the border of Nigeria... However, Mafa settlements or clusters of settlements were formerly independent political entities. Before market towns and administrative center sprang up in the colonial period most montagnards (Mountain peoples) lived in un-clustered settlements." (6,3)

1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

The Mafa were very affected by the slave trade. "Surrounding foothills and plains had been scene of slave raiding in various forms since at least the 16th century AD, but until the early 20th century the mountains themselves had been relatively little affected," (3) and "According to the diary Hamman Yaji had made two raids on Mokola in 1913, obtaining 54 slaves." (3,6)

Another outside influence has come more with the modernization of civilizations. The Mafa have traditions but, "their claim is presently of course being strongly and successfully challenged by younger, modernizing Mafa, the product of the school and of world religions, who are coming more and more to control the springs of power, wealth and influence." (5,96)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

The Mafa are considered mountain people because they "occupy the centre of the Northern Mandaras, consisting of the whole of the northern parts of the plateau of Mokolo and the mountain ranges north of Mokolo, leading down to the plain of Koza and reaching as far as the Moskota hills northwest of Koza." (2)

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density

"A village or ward located on the Moisel Dikwa map 10.4 km ESE of Madagali, just east of the modern Nigeria-Cameroon border." (3)

Far North Region, Mayo-Tsanaga division from Mokolo town north; also in Nigeria.

2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

"They cultivate sorghum, and pearl millet as staples and a considerable variety of other cereals (e.g., eleusine) leguminous (e.g., Vigna unguiculata) and root (e.g., sweet potatoes) crops, besides leafy vegetables, peppers, and fruits (limes and mangoes)." (6,3)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:

"They also keep cattle, sheep and goats (and more recently pigs)... and some poultry, mainly chickens but also ducks and occasional guinea fowl." (6,3)

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

2.4 Food storage:

2.5 Sexual division of production:

The statement that, "After about seven months of pregnancy she cannot be involved in harvesting, grinding or cooking sorghum." Leads me to believe that both men and women are involved in the labor of producing the food. But, beyond this I was not able to find specific divisions. (7,152)

2.6 Land tenure:

"The sowing, hoeing and harvesting of sorghum is an intricate activity in religious terms and needs to take place in a ritually unified regional context. Sowing and harvesting still begins today at the highest level, which is Ziver, but we can only speculate whether this has to do with the fact that rainfall often starts earlier and ends later on the top of the mountains. Mafa would possibly express this by saying that "freshness" enters Mafa land in Ziver, because this is where the rain should begin to fall. Rain itself is n@ya'a and, as such, possesses the mysterious force to germinate sorghum so that it can grow. The mysterious forces of rain are regionally controlled by the biy Mudukwa (biy yam of Moudoukwa) who is seen by Mafa of Gouzda as responsible for the timing of the rain." (7,181)

"The fertility of land is a result of the intensive farming techniques Mafa apply, not just farming alone but also of successful rearing of cattle and the application of the manure produced." (7,200)

2.7 Ceramics:

One of my sources compared the knowledge of Mafa pottery they found through excavations to that of pottery found at DGB sites. The Mafa pottery was:

- Lower percentage of tall rim jars and an absence of rustication
- Much higher percentages of short rim jars with averted rims
- Presence of substantial number of short rim jars with exteriorly thickened lips
- Proportionately fewer black and red ware bowls, and more D-handles and a probable absence of the horn type handle (6,87)

Another interesting thing I found was the presence of iron working in the Mafa culture. One source tells us how the Mafa's smelting process is unique from others:

"The most striking feature of Mafa iron working is the vertical tuyre, through which the air is forced down into the smelting furnace. Its vertical position confines the oxidizing zone to the very centre of the furnace, allowing the use of very high-grade, little slag producing ore. Part of the tuyre melts during the smelt, fluxing and contributing to the slag. The Mafa smelting was recorded in the 1950's by P. Hinderling and Ren Gardi, and reconstructed at the end of the 1980's by Nicholas David, Robert Heimann, David Killick and Michael Wayman, both on film and in publications." (1)

Another unique thing about the Mafa's iron working is "this is the first documented case of an indirect iron smelting process from Africa." (4)

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:

"Egalitarian agricultural societies" (5,79)

2.9 Food taboos:

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

4. Life History, mating, marriage

4.1 Age at menarche (f):

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f):

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:

I wasn't able to find any percentages of divorce, but I did find some reasons for divorce. Including that "sterility is a serious issue for a woman and often leads to divorce and a repayment of the bride wealth by the father." (7,150)

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

Again I wasn't able to find percents of polygamous marriages, but I was able to locate evidence for its existence in the Mafa culture and reasons for it:

"Since personal gods are the divine mirror image of living humans and look after them in their "heavenly bag", we can certainly assume that male personal gods have several wives." (7,84)

"The first wife has certain privileges not shared by her co-wives." (7,126)

"In the case of a man being sterile they will have a second wife because "the wish to have children is of course central and if a man can afford it he will soon marry a second wife so as to increase the size of his family." (7,150)

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:

"The day a man marries he gives nine goats or whatever the father of his bride asks him as bridewealth. Even in case of poverty, a man would be obliged to pay this to his future father-in-law." (7,81)

"In the past, the bridewealth for a primary marriage consisted of at least nine goats. Today money is becoming more and more important as a means for marriage payments. Negotiating marriage payments was and still is a matter between the father of the bride and the bridegroom. A bride will only find out what exactly was given when she wants to marry someone else and her new husband is then obliged to compensate her former husband.⁸⁰ The obligatory nine goats had not always been paid and often more than nine goats had been given, depending on how favourable the possible marriage was considered to be. Often other goods, preferably made of iron, were also added. Iron has now been replaced by money payments but goats are still considered as the main preference in marriage payment, although, even here, money is increasingly becoming an alternative." (7,137)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

"When a man is the oldest among a group of collateral brothers and his father and father's father are deceased he will be the elder of a joint family. Each of his collateral brothers and their married sons possess their own family homes but are at the same time interlinked by ties of patrilocality and patrilineal descent." (7,126)

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):

"Since Mafa practice clan exogamy it is likely that the girl comes from a neighbouring clan settlement." (7,137)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?

The male isn't thought to contribute to conception, but instead spirits.

"Mafa do not believe that sexual intercourse is the only cause of conception. If the personal gods of husband and spouse do not have children the couple will not have children. The personal god of a human (zhigilé ndo) is as a male or female deity and as such a "child" of God and his wife. If the personal god is sterile how could the person this god is there for have children? This means that it is God who decides beforehand whether a baby is going to be conceived through sexual intercourse or not. Mafa express this procreation belief by saying that God himself slept with the woman." (7,150)

Examples of this belief: "when a woman who walks by a river and afterwards becomes pregnant, it is believed that the water spirit slept with her. If a woman gives birth to twins it is a certain belief for traditional Mafa that the water spirit has made love to this mother." (7,150)

4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")

A woman's menstruation is very important because "Mafa believe that a woman is most fertile during menstruation because it is the blood which forms the child. A woman who does not menstruate cannot conceive." (7,151)

This belief stems from the idea that a "pre-pubertal girl or a postmenopausal woman which is seen as proof that menstruation is a sign of fertility." (7,151)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

Not that I found anywhere. The most information I found on the conception process is that a god himself had sex with the woman. (7)

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin)

A "son of a man's sister settles in the neighborhood of his matrilineal uncle even before he gets married. He might eventually marry a girl from the gwaliy (The expression gwaliy not only refers to direct relatives but is also the word for clan.) of his mother, so long as she is at least three generations removed from her mother's brother's lineage." (7,127)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

It was said that in burial "wives married only once receiving more favorable placement" which maybe gives the impression that women's discretion was promoted. (5,83)

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?

As I mention later "Mafa men are not allowed to marry their clan sisters" which would lead me to believe that incest is not allowed because they are not even able to marry within their own clan. (7)

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations

"Rights to land are held primarily by virtue of inheritance. It is therefore not surprising that the principles of male superiority over females and of seniority by age and genealogical position are cornerstones of the value system." (5,80)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

I stated this before but "Mafa men are not allowed to marry their clan sisters" which would lead me to believe that incest is not allowed because they are not even able to marry within their own clan. (7)

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?

"As soon as the marriage is announced the actual marriage ceremony has to be completed within six days. These best friends play a very important role in the preparations as well as being ceremonial assistants at the first consummation of their marriage." (7,138)

"...the bridegroom and his best man have prepared a large ceremonial sickle made of iron...the best man starts to beat his drum, signalling that he is ready to leave the house together with the bridegroom...they start to stroll through the local community. They stop at neighbourhood boundaries where they sit down for a rest. On their journey they visit the houses of some elders where they are given tobacco and a chicken. This goes on until the evening. During the following six days the bridegroom and bride remain physically separated." (7,139)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?

Here is the process of naming a baby:

"The naming day the baby is taken out of the house. If it is a girl the family has to wait till sunset. A meal is shared between the visitors (neighbors, friends and relatives) with sesame, if it is a girl, and with okra, if it is a boy. The umbilical cord is placed with some of the food and ochre on a piece of calabash. The midwife pierces the placenta pot with an iron sickle and places the cord in the resulted hole.⁹⁰ No-one other than the mother has been allowed to touch the umbilical cord. Next the mother comes out of the house together with the baby. Then the father gives the first name followed by the mother of the mother and father's mother, who give the second and third names respectively. After that, neighbors and friends can also join in and give names. The father often consults the stones (pebble divination) before he decides which name he wants to give." (7,153-154)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)

In the information that I found that it is common and often promoted for a daughter to marry outside of her own clan.

"Because Mafa men are not allowed to marry their clan sisters, fathers are obliged to give their daughters into marriage outside their own clan group." (7,275)

"Women are exchanged under the rule of neighboring patrilineal groups controlling not only the fertility of the land but also that of women. However, the women are not completely under the physical and ritual control of the patrilineal group although the land is. They still have ties with their patrilineal relations and often benefit from ritual occasions there and Mafa often remark that they marry the daughters of their enemies." (7,157)

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?

"A young man and a young woman who get married for the first time in their life might have already been promised to each other in childhood by their fathers." (7,137)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

"In the past this could lead to combat with a neighboring settlement, often one with which marriage relationships also existed." (7,156)

Warfare/homicide

4.31 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

Didn't find a percentage but "there is not much space between neighboring settlements and the densely populated hillsides have been the scene of much warfare over land." (7,200)

4.32 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.33 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

4.34 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):

4.35 Cannibalism?

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

Cameroon: 136,000

Populations total all Countries: 140,910

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

"It is difficult to set relative chronologies of Mafa and other migrations in an absolute time frame." (6,117)

Migratory traditions are important to the Mafa and are recapitulated in ritual behavior." (6,117)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):

"While chiefs existed, their power, spiritual rather than temporal, was and remains extremely limited and often divided between a chief, in Mafa bi dza, responsible on behalf of the community for the cult of the mountain, and another, the bi yam for rain- making and other cults associated with the crops. There is also a chief of the transformers, bi ngwaz1a, with other ritual responsibilities." (5,80)

"Often described as egalitarian or acephalous, their societies were most frequently governed by a combination of pretty chiefs or priest-chiefs, title holders and clan elders." (6)

5.4 Post-marital residence:

"Due to the virilocal rule of post marital residence those females who are already married no longer reside in his neighborhood and are therefore members of their husband's joint family. However, in the case of a marriage break-down, the daughter of a man might temporarily return home to her father's neighborhood or she might live at her brother's place when she is old and has no son to take care of her." (7,127)

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):

"Chiefly and other land-holding clans would always have emphasized the importance of cemeteries as proofs of ancestral rights. Indeed "strangers", landless immigrants, are customarily denied room in cemeteries and buried on the road leading towards their settlements of origin." (5,82)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

When I found information related to the marriage rituals, I found this statement: "In order to establish such a promise it is necessary that the girl's gwaëa (female best friend) and the boy's maslay (male best friend) guide the girl from the house of her father to the house of the father of the boy." This leads me to believe that there are close friendships since they had established names and roles for best friends.

5.8 Village and house organization:

Every house has:

- front court
- foyer
- room where the father of the house sleeps and keeps his belongings. (Some men have a second one immediately attached to the first.)
- sacrifice room
- main granary of the father
- Kitchen.

"All these rooms are interconnected and one can walk right through from the foyer to the kitchen. Other rooms are built onto the main string of rooms over time." (7, 129-130)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:

"Lavergne (1944:22f) informs us that the Mafa (Matakam) consist of two tribal sections: the 'Mafa proper' referred to as Maf-Mafa or 'Mafahai', and the 'Bulahai'. Muller-Kosack (1997:409) informs us that 'Bulahay' is the name of a variety of beans, and that it is used metaphorically to refer to the hardheadedness of the Bulahay. The expression Bulahay has a derogatory connotation and they are better referred to as 'Kokwarhay', meaning montagnards (ibid:675). According to Lavergne (ibid) the 'Bulahai' spread from Cuvok (west of Mofu-Gudur). While the Mafahay migrated from the Roua and Sulede area, which is west of Durum (Mofu proper), in northwesterly direction, the Bulahay (see page Bulahay) migrated westwards alongside the southern borders of the Mafa land of today. The Bulahay also eventually moved northwards where they merged with the Mafahay and thus become Mafa." (2)

5.12 Trade:

"Peanuts and cotton are the primary cash crops." (6,3)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

Society is organized by exogamous patrilineal clans and into two exogamous castes... the cultivators and the "transformers" or "specialists" (ironworkers, potters, undertakers, etc.)." (5,79)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

Death

"Funerals are directed by male transformers, though women transformers may sometimes be called in to bury small children, and infants, as probably elsewhere, are often buried by their parents." (5,82)

"There is also a concern with covering the face of the deceased either with a skin...Special treatment is accorded transformers, twins, and sometimes parents of twins among the Mafa, in that sheepskin is substituted for goatskin in wrapping the head." (5, 84)

6.4 Other rituals:

Bull festival

"The Mafa word for sacred bull¹⁰⁷ and for the festival of its consecration is maray. The bull festival does not take place every year, but either every second, third, or fourth year, where a triennial cycle seems to be the way the majority of Mafa celebrate it, although no listing exists so far which would attribute the cycle of years to single communities." (7, 210)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

We have seen earlier that the inhabitants of the celestial world consist of the great God (zhigilé m@biya'a) and his wife (ngwaz biy zhigilé) joined by the gods of humans and the envoys of God. All the different gods are the children of God. Like him and his wife they have a sexual identity, are also married and have children. Since personal gods are the divine mirror image of living humans and look after them in their "heavenly bag", we can certainly assume that male personal gods have several wives. Being the divine counterparts of humans also exposes them to good or bad actions, although they do not seem to suffer the same physical death like the human beings they are born with. (7,84)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

Sorghum is used in a lot of rituals. (7,282)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

The same as the rest of the time "he male principle enjoys ontological superiority over the female one." (7,280)

However, the author of resource (7) believes that some of the rituals—like "ritual counting during the wedding night in order to establish whether the first-born child of the father of a man was a male or a female. Mafa in the area of Gouzda count "two" plus an invisible "one" which makes it "three" and, therefore, odd for a girl. If it was a boy they count "three" and add an invisible "one" in order to make it even. They argue that they cannot accept a higher number being allocated to a female than to a male. Since the first possible even number is "two" and the second possible one is "four", they cannot use the "two" for male. Therefore an invisible "one" is added to "three" in order to count for male superiority in the process of symbolic procreation. However, their ritual counting also displays the underlying idea of the metaphysical unity of male and female in their concept of the invisible "one" which they tend to add in order to make odd numbers even." – "has a unifying rather than a separating function." (7,280)

6.8 Missionary effect:

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

"Traditional Mafa believe that the ancestors of a man appear intermittently in his dreams some time before death and that they arrive again immediately before death to lead the way into the world beyond." (7,155)

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy?

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

An interesting aspect of their beliefs is their belief in the divinity of crabs, "First of all the crab originates from the water. She lives in rivers and her capacity to "know" what sorcerers are about to do to their fellow humans is seen to have been received from the water spirit. Mafa express this by saying that the water spirit gives the crab the intelligence to speak only the truth and nothing but the truth." (7,116)

Though they believe "Life is not an abstract thing" the idea of transformation is not irrational. Which brings us to "the idea of the spirit of a person being contained in his physical body. Somebody can temporarily leave his physical body, but doing so proves dangerous because it puts the unity of body and mind at serious risk. The idea of the spirit as a shadow and its connection with the personal spirit pot protecting the spirit from injury also facilitates treatment in case the spirit gets lost. To re-establish the unity of body and mind the person is supposed to take his personal spirit pot and to catch the shadow of a bird soaring over the surface of the earth and then to close his spirit pot firmly and take it home. He is then supposed to keep his personal spirit pot closed until he has regained his full physical and mental strength." (7, 97-98)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint:

7.2 Piercings:

7.3 Haircut:

There was some information on a haircut for "about a month after birth the heads of the mother and baby are shaved." But, that is about the extent of what I found actually written.

Pictures I found show everyone with short hair. (7)

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.):

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

I found that during their bull ritual they "apply intestinal contents from a sacrificed ram over their bodies." (7,232)

"The fact that only the representatives of the chief, but not the chief himself, were allowed to wear cotton clothes during the bull festival demonstrates that they were considered to be very powerful symbols but at the same time remained of external significance." (7,264)

They "often wear wooden masks over the backs of their heads and are dressed in a mixture of cotton and traditional clothing." (7,266)

7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

7.8 Missionary effect:

7.9 Types of clothing:

"Today cotton clothes (western and oriental types) are worn by almost everybody in Mafa land, whereas traditional costumes are only worn by very old people or in ritual contexts. The fact that in some villages biy gwala still wear their traditional costumes when they release the sacred bull and that the chief still remains separated from the rest of the community during that time emphasizes the religious character of the bull festival." (7, 264)

8. Kinship systems

8.1 Sibling classification system:

"If a father dies his oldest son inherits those sections of his father's inner fields which contain a sacred site and all his father's goods. It is the youngest son of a group of full-brothers who inherits all the goods of his mother, which mainly consist of chickens and goats. He does not necessarily retain them but distributes them among his brothers. However, it is his right to decide who gets what from his mother. With regard to a father's goods, which also include the father's house, it is the oldest son who has the right to distribute these among his 3.2 Home 149 brothers. However, he will always give the first share to his most senior half-brother. A father normally distributes land to his son." (7)

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

Children and Childbirth

"Gehard Muller-Kosack (pers.comm 2007) informed us that the Mafa associate fertility with fog, which is much appreciated following communal purification and reproduction rituals. For example, foggy weather on the days after bull festival (maray) is seen as very auspicious." (6,113)

"In case the first born child is a girl two corn stalks are left uncut near the house and if it is a boy three corn stalks remain. Mafa...want to prevent the sorghum from mysteriously disappearing. Another way of preventing the disappearance of the sorghum is to bind two (for a girl) and three (for a boy) strings of sorghum fiber around the tree which functions as the house shrine. These can only be removed after the sorghum has safely entered the father's main granary. Since the number "one" remains invisible in Mafa ritual counting the end result comes always out to be odd for female and even for male." (7,150)

"Although female menstruation is seen as a sign of fertility a man is not permitted to have sexual intercourse during this time since a menstruating woman is seen as being impure. However, pregnancy is thought to be most likely to come about if intercourse takes place immediately after menstruation. Mafa say that due to the fact that there is always menstrual blood remaining in the body of a woman conception is also possible at other times between the periods. It appears to be a contradiction in terms that Mafa see women as being most fertile during menstruation but also consider them to be impure at this time and therefore, at the same time, avoid them."(7,151)

"If the baby kicks the mother on her 'right' side it will be a boy, but if this happens on the left it will be a girl' (op.cit.). If a woman gives birth during full moon it will be a girl." (7,153)

The Mafa distinguish between three personal spirit pots: spirit pot of a man, spirit pot of a Woman, spirit pots of children (7,155)

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