

## **1. Description**

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

Ambele, Cameroon

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

AEL

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

6.95/9.55

1.4 Brief history:

The people of Ambele live in the North West Province in the Momo Division and the western Widikum-Menka Subdivision. They speak a language called Ambele and are part of the Benue people cluster. Eleven villages use the Ambele language. Villagers can move from village to village by foot, but during the rainy season, the villages may be unreachable to the outside world. The men support their families by hunting, gathering, and small-scale farming.

88% percent of the population are Christians. 12% practice traditional ethnic religions. Of those Christians 55% are Roman Catholics and 25% belong to other types of Christian groups. The remaining 20% are Protestants. The Bible has not been translated into the Ambele language, but gospel recordings can be found.

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

English is taught at school, but teachers use Ambele for subjects related to nature. Some churches use Ambele for songs, prayers, and sermons; English for songs and prayers; and Pidgin for doctrine classes, prayers, and songs.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

The Ambele people and the other villages nearby live in deep valleys separated by high mountains and streams. The majority of the villages do not have roads, making the villages isolated. There is one road that runs northward from Widikum, the principal town of the Widikum-Menka Subdivision to the other side of the villages. This road does not reach any of the Ambele, Atong, or Menka villages.

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

Population size - 3,500

Mean village size – 11 villages 300 to 350 per village

Home range size –

Density – 109/mi squared

## **2. Economy**

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): yam, rice, plantain, potato, maize

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: fish, poultry, meat

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Bow and arrow

2.4 Food storage: Unknown

2.5 Sexual division of production: Yes, men do the hunting and farming, while women take care of the household and children

2.6 Land tenure: up until the 1960s, Africa was colonised by Europe and they owned the land of Cameroon

2.7 Ceramics: Low-fire pottery that is both functional and sculptural has a long history in Cameroon and Ambele.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: men and guests eat before women and children.

2.9 Food taboos: A gourmet dish of viper steaks in a sauce is prepared, but only the oldest males may eat viper.

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Canoes

### **3. Anthropometry**

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): 5 ft 7 in male, 5 ft 3 in female

3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

### **4. Life History, mating, marriage**

4.1 Age at menarche (f): 14.27 years

4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): Males do not marry or have children until they are able to support a family, Females as soon as she has her first period she is ready to be married and have children

4.3 Completed family size (m and f): 10 people. This includes: husband, wives, and children

4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Unknown

4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): Males do not marry or have children until they are able to support a family, Females as soon as she has her first period she is ready to be married and have children

4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: almost as many as marriages

4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: 71% of males are married to 2 woman

4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: first marriage is arranged but the bride is not always sold

4.9 Inheritance patterns: women are supposed to receive the same share of an inheritance as a man of the same relation to the deceased. However, few women are aware of this law and custom does not allow women to inherit.

4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Weaning from breastfeeding is a complex process that involved nutritive and social changes for children.

4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Same-sex sexual acts are banned with a penalty of 5 years imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 francs.

4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): The people of Ambele and Cameroon practice endogamy. They do not marry outside their culture.

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized? The role of the male is thought to be the main part of conception. The woman is there to carry the child. Having multiple fathers is not a culture considered in Ambele.

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”) The role of the Ambele woman is mostly for child bearing. The male is the most important of the household

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

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape- Yes, according to World Health Organization 37% of woman were forced into have sex their first time

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

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? No they are not allowed to

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring. No

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? If the mother dies, the father would marry a close relative to the mother and the newly wife would raise the child, or the child would become an orphan

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: 15-64 years: 1.01 male(s)/female

4.22 Evidence for couvades- No

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older) The females parents set up the marriage. An older man is thought to be more favorable because he can support her better

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Unknown

4.24 Joking relationships? Unknown

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

4.26 Incest avoidance rules. Yes, but because Ambele people do not marry outside of their culture, it is hard for them to not marry a distant relative. But they do not marry cousins/brothers/sisters

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes, there are three steps, see the bride's parents; second, organize the traditional wedding and third plan the formal wedding

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? When the female marries her husband her name changes. If there is a divorce her name will change once she is married again

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

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Yes, the females parents arrange the married with the male

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: No. The parents of the female decide the best partner, i.e. most money, best offer,

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: Unknown

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: Unknown

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: Unknown

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

4.18 Cannibalism? No

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

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

- 5.4 Post marital residence:
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense):
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:
- 5.8 Village and house organization:
- 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:
- 5.12 Trade:
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

## **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):
- 6.4 Other rituals:
- 6.5 Myths (Creation):
- 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):
- 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:
- 6.8 Missionary effect:
- 6.9 RCR revival:
- 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy?
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)

## **7. Adornment**

- 7.1 Body paint: Woman of the ruling class paint their bodies
- 7.2 Piercings: Done in certain parts of Cameroon to enhance beauty and social status. Ambele Unknown
- 7.3 Haircut: Braids and head wraps
- 7.4 Scarification: Done by the Bangwa of Cameroon to enhance beauty and to indicate social status
- 7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Done in certain parts of Cameroon to enhance beauty and social status. Ambele Unknown
- 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment: Masks carved out of wood are used
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: Unknown
- 7.8 Missionary effect: Unknown
- 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: Unknown

## **8. Kinship systems**

- 8.1 Sibling classification system: The first born son is thought to be the highest
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate: Yes, if the husband or wife dies and the couple has children then the living spouse will marry a close relative of the deceased
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.): Unknown

## **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

The main type of music is Makossa.

Manioc leaves are one of the best ingredients used in many foods

### **Numbered references**

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