

## 1. Description

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

- Mifi, Mifi Division, Banum, Nigeria-Congo

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

- BAX

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- 3°52'N 11°31'E

1.4 Brief history:

- The Bantu immigrated to the region, which is Northern Cameroon, around 200-100 BC. The Mifi area borders Lake Chad and contains Lake Naza, which is now a part of the Naza National park. The water sources create fertile land essential to their subsistence style agriculture. The Bantu forced the 'Pygmie' population out after small conflicts. The Bantu then cultivated the land and began to grow crops on a subsistence need. (7p1) With the development of ports on Lake Chad, the crops available from the Mifi area became more valuable, and production increased as a means of income. Due to the ports and value of Lake Chad, the control of Eastern region of Africa exchanged hands multiple times.

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

- The Portuguese were first to record seeing Mount Cameroon and the Cameroon Mountain Range in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The area was used to find slaves until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Germany took control of the region from 1884 until World War I. After WWI, France controlled 80% of the area, while England only 20% (7p2). England controlled the Mifi area through World War II, and then in 1946 Cameroon was allowed to establish a governing body. The region was split between French and British Cameroon, but finally united on May 20, 1972 as the United Republic of Cameroon.
- The long control of Germany and other European powers influenced religion and farming techniques. Christianity is spread through Cameroon as the majority language (6p1). The cash crop style of European agriculture is also seen in the Mifi division, but not to an extreme extent.

1.6 Ecology (natural environment): (6p1)

- The Mifi live in an area referred to as the Mifi division or the Extreme North. The terrain has rolling hills with extremely fertile pockets in the valleys. Outside of the valleys, the soil is farmable during the wet season. The Cameroon Mountain Range extends along the Western border of the Mifi division almost to Lake Chad. The winds off of the lake create a Coastal inland environment about 100km into the Extreme North.

1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density (6p1)

- Population size unknown. More populated areas average 40-100 persons per square kilometer while others 0-15 persons.
- Each village consists of multiple families (8-12) farming and hunting the surrounding territory.

## 2. Economy

2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):

- Rice is the most common carbohydrate. This is farmed along with sugar, but sugar is usually sold or traded. (5p7)

2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: (5p7)

- Mud lobsters (prawns or crawfish) Cameroon is loosely translated as 'camerões' or prawns.
- Ground nuts provide a large source of lipids in the diet.

2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:

- Hunting is mainly for seaborne animals. Nets and 6'-8' spears are used to capture prey. (5p10)
- In warfare or ceremony, decorated bows and arrows are a sign of power. (4p448)

2.4 Food storage:

- Seaborne prey is collected and eaten daily
- Crops to store, eat, or sell are stored in mud huts much like individual houses. Some crops like ground nuts are stored in ground trenches. (6p2)

2.5 Sexual division of production: (5p12)

- Males are in charge of cultivating the land, building houses and storage houses, carving canoes, and hunting larger prey such as fish.
- Females are responsible to taking care of the children, cooking, and collecting food for daily meals. Females often take canoes to find prawns.

2.6 Land tenure: (7p2)

- Land is cultivated and farmed communally.
- Hunting grounds tend to be more family oriented, especially for prawns.

2.7 Ceramics: (6p1)

- No ceramics noted. Wicker baskets replace the need for ceramics. Some western culture has infiltrated the towns from the ports and some plastics are seen.

2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: (4p448)

- Families eat together, usually separate from other families except in ceremonies celebrating the changing of seasons.

2.9 Food taboos:

- Eating raw prawns is seen as a taboo for infertility. (3p14)

2.10 Canoes/watercraft?

- Canoes are sometimes used to navigate the swamps or rivers that contain prawns. (7p3)

### 3. Anthropometry

#### 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):

- No mean for height found. Husbands are described as generally taller than wives, most likely due to difference in age of marriage. (3p22)

#### 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

- No mean for weight recorded. Males are described as 'Tall with an athletic physique.' They do a majority of the labor on the crops and other physical labor suggesting they weigh considerably more. Women are noted to have broader hips. (3p23)

### 4. Life History, mating, marriage

#### 4.1 Age at menarche (f): 12-13 (3p12)

#### 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):

- Unknown, but women typically marry in early teens and pregnancy soon follows. Men are usually further in maturity (18-25)

#### 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):

- Each wife produces between 1-3 children. Size differs depending on number of wives. Number of wives is determined by status. (3p14)

#### 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): Unknown.

- Women have a life expectancy of about 40 years. Given they have their first child at about 15-18 years old, the interval is around 4 years. (3p14)

#### 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f): m 18-25 f 14-16 (3p14)

#### 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: unknown

- Women can leave the marriage with no formal divorce ceremony. (3p18)

#### 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:

- As a polygynous society, most marriages are polygynous if the male can support it. Males that can support multiple women typically have 2-5 wives. (3p17)

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

- Bride service is commonly practice. Either the male will work for the woman's family (first marriage) or he will send a son from a different marriage. (3p16)

#### 4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- Sons inherit responsibilities upon marriage. Each son will take over his father's role in the farming process. (3p16)

#### 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict:

- The children are mentored by their same sex parent. Males learn the more labor induced work while females learn the responsibilities in the house. (3p16)
- Daughters of divorced wives are seen as less attractive. (3p18)

#### 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals: Unknown

#### 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Women always leave the family, and usually stay within the village. (3p14)

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

- Other fathers are not recognized as women usually give birth with one husband at a time. Males are the provider of life and women are simply the carriers. (3p19)

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

- Women are a carrier for the fetus. (3p19)

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

- Not found. But sex is continuous and almost methodical through the pregnancy suggesting it is incremental. (3p20)

#### 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape\

- Women that have not been pregnant for a while are noted to have sex more promiscuously to increase their fertility. (3p18)

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

- Cross cousins are the preferred category. (3p20)

#### 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

- Seldom, but if she has not been given a child by her husband women tend to sleep with other men. (3p18)

#### 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

- None, except between marrying families. (4p449)

#### 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?

- The other mothers of the household take in the children. If there are no other wives the husband immediately seeks another wife. It is noted for husbands to marry much younger women to accommodate their children. (3p21)

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

- Unknown, but the Cameroon region statistics are 48.6% males and 51.4% female. (6p1)

#### 4.22 Evidence for couvades: unknown

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

#### 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Unknown

- Sons typically follow their father, regardless if mother leaves family. (4p451)

#### 4.24 Joking relationships? Unknown

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

- Land, name, and status follows patrilineal descent. (4p451)
- 4.26 Incest avoidance rules
- None. Children of same father do not have sex. (3p21)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
- Yes each family eats a shared dinner and the male works for the family for one season if it's the first marriage. After completing, the woman's family allows the two to live separately. (4p450)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
- Children inherit their fathers name. Divorced women can change their name under a new marriage. (4p451)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
- Marriage is preferred within the community. Women have a larger tendency to leave the community to marry if they have divorced multiple times. (2p19)
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
- Marriages are not arranged. However families of equal statuses tend to marry more frequently. (4p449)
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:
- Unknown

### **Warfare/homicide**

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:
- Very low. The Mifi are typically not a warfare tribe. (2)
- 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):
- Relationships to neighboring societies are usually for trade of food or goods. Women that move between societies can create relationship if married in both societies. (2p34)
- 4.18 Cannibalism?
- None found.

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

- 5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:
- Each village has 8-12 families consisting of 5 or more individuals (4p444)
- 5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):
- The valleys and plains are planted and harvested almost year round while the hilltops are only seasonal. (6p1) Therefore, no cultures are nomadic but the changing of seasons changes crop patterns.
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
- Political system based on relation to the chief's family. The closer to the family, the higher the status. (4p443)
- 5.4 Post marital residence:
- A new pair normally builds a new house with help of the families. In some instances the two live with the husband's family for an extended period of time. (4p445)
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): unknown
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):
- Typically none, the entire family lives together and works the same crop.
  - Older men have higher status, and children outside of the family do not associate themselves with them. (4p450)
- 5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships: Unknown
- 5.8 Village and house organization: Unknown
- 5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):
- Food storage in huts that are similar in structure to homes, but much smaller. (6p1)
  - As a family grows, it is common for males to build more onto the existing house. (4p449)
- 5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?
- Families sleep on a bed of grass. (6p1)
  - Western culture has influenced this a little from the port cities, and small mattresses are sometimes found. (7p2)
- 5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc:
- Social organization is based on lineages. (4p443)
- 5.12 Trade:
- The Mifi commonly trade surplus goods with the port cities for Western good or fishing material. (7p2)
- 5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?
- Yes, there is a head family. That family is typically the largest of the group and has many generations in the area. (4p444)

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

### 6.0 Time allocation to RCR:

- Ceremonies are conducted at the change of seasons and most marriages (5p17)
- Christianity is spread through the area. The tribes that have had the German and British influence have subdued versions of these rituals. (5p2)

### 6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- The older women of the family tend over the sick, pregnant, and dying. (6p2)

### 6.2 Stimulants: None found naturally

- Alcohol occasionally introduced but not involved in any ritual. (6p2)

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

- On birth there is a naming ceremony by the father. The family shares a ceremonial meal and the child's crib is covered with indigenous flowers. (4p449)
- On the changing of seasons the tribe shares a massive feast with chants to ensure the coming rain or promise of good crop. Children do not participate in the ritual. (4p449)

### 6.4 Other rituals:

- Families often honor their past relatives during birth ceremonies. Death ceremonies honor all the past ancestors. (5p18)

### 6.5 Myths (Creation): Unknown

### 6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- Ritualistic clothing is worn in birth, death, and seasonal ceremonies. The clothing is usually laced with grasses and sometimes bones. (5p18)

### 6.7 Sex differences in RCR:

- Only men name children. (4p451)

### 6.8 Missionary effect:

- Many Mifi tribes have phased out of traditional tribal lifestyles and adopted more western lifestyles. Cameroon as a whole, to include the Mifi division find Western influence from the port cities. (6p1)

### 6.9 RCR revival:

### 6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: unknown

- Tribes that have seen Christian missionaries have generally accepted God and Christian religious moral. (6p1)

### 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? Unknown

### 6.12 Is there tekonymy? None

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

- For tribes that have not moved to some form of Christianity, there is ancestor worship within households. (6p1)

## **7. Adornment**

### 7.1 Body paint: Not used

### 7.2 Piercings: Piercings of ears, eyebrows, and lips are very common amongst females. Males also have pierced ears. (4p447)

### 7.3 Haircut: young men have short hair, while women and older men have much longer hair that is often braided. (4p447)

### 7.4 Scarification: None

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

- Younger men and women are not noted to wear anything specific unless able to marry. If young adults are able to marry they will wear more formal attire and have more piercings. (4p447)

### 7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- In ceremonies feathers, decorated leathers, and clothing lined with grasses and colorful plants are often worn. (6p1)

### 7.7 Sex differences in adornment:

- There is very little difference. Women have more facial piercings and tend to wear more colorful clothing. (6p1)

### 7.8 Missionary effect:

- It seems the European influence has subdued many of the rituals, adornments, and ceremonies of the Mifi. Only a few tribes show any ritual away from ordinary. (6p1)

### 7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

### 8.1 Sibling classification system:

- All people in same generation are called brother or sister. (1p47)

### 8.2 Sororate, levirate: Levirate

- If a man dies, his brother takes the wife to increase his (and his family's status) (4p447)

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

- Hawaiian. (1p47)

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

- Interesting to see a culture influenced by European colonialism. Many of the tribes seemed dull while only a couple showed variation in rituals or ceremonies that was unique to the Mifi.

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