1. Description

- 1.1 Name(s) of society, language, and language family:
 - Language: Yemba/Bangwa (Macro-Bantu)
 - Classification: Niger-Congo, Atlantic-Congo, Volta-Congo, Benue-Congo, Bantoid, Southern, Wide Grassfields, Narrow Grassfields, Mbam-Nkam, Bamileke (1)

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

• ISO 639-3: ybb (1)

1.3 Location (latitude/longitude):

- 5° 12' 0" North, 10° 29' 0" East
- West Province, Menoua Division, Dschang area

1.4 Brief history:

- "The Cameroon Grasslands is a large cultural area, which is inhabited by a large number of related peoples. These peoples can be divided into three smaller subgroups: Bamileke, Bamum, and Bamenda Tikar. The Bangwa are one of the numerous smaller ethnic groups within the Bamileke complex. They are loosely affiliated with other groups in the complex, sharing many historical and political similarities while retaining their separate identity. All members of this group originally came from an area to the north and migrated in various complex patterns throughout the last several centuries. Fulani traders moving steadily southwards into Cameroon in the 17th century forced the southern drift of most of the current residents. The Bangwa were only officially separated from the Bamileke during colonial administration during the early 20th century." (2 History)
- "All evidence points to the fact that the Bangwa as we now know them are not an ancient people, whose origins are lost in the dim past. Even paramount chiefs, who have the longest pedigrees, only trace their dynasties back seven or eight generations; and from the material evidence of their ancestors' skulls and the strict rule of father-to-son succession it may be surmised that the Bangwa have inhabited the mountain regions for less than two hundred years. Legend tells of the founding of the chiefdoms; both Bangwa and Bamileke accounts have many common elements. Briefly it tells of a hunter who came from the Mbo or Banyang forests with his following (his family and the classic nine servants) where he met the Beketshe, a looselygrouped hunting and gathering people who lived a naked, nomadic existence in the wooded mountains without the advantages of huts or agriculture. The forest hunter, with his guns and through guile, deprived these people of their proprietary rights to the land. These Beketshe, from whom some contemporary Bangwa still claim descent, are described in innumerable stories as brainless, fickle and incredibly gullible, and are a constant source of amusement to sophisticated Bangwa. According to the myth they were taught farming, fire-making, and some elementary facts of life including copulation. The Beketshe ceased to rely on wild plants and game. And the union of these nomads and forest hunters formed the nucleus of the Bangwa people who were now confronted by the Bamileke peoples of the grasslands: agriculturalists who fought with spears and had a very elegant and highly structured political system. The forest hunter and his followers acquired dominance over these scattered political groups through his bravery and his ability to husband the country's resources. A common myth tells how he hoarded leopard skins, ivory tusks, lengths of stencilled blue and white cloth; the possession of these symbols of royalty ranked him immediately and indisputably as chief." (3p6)

1. Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors:

- "Of all the major social changes experienced in the Bangwa area the German colonial period was perhaps the most sudden and violent. The population was conscripted into forced labour both on the plantations and in the building of a road which linked the grasslands and the lower forest area, following the traditional trade route. Many Bangwa died in these ventures. One major change which the Germans wrought on the political system of Bangwa was to define the borders between the various chiefdoms together with those of neighbouring tribes, thereby putting an end to the intermittent warfare which had characterised the area for decades. In fixing the territorial boundaries the Germans also fixed the position of each of the chiefs, relative to one another, confirming the hierarchical system but robbing it of its former fluidity and ability to change through competition. The repercussions of that act of German tidiness still afflict local politics to this day." (5p29-30)
- "Perhaps the most significant change so violently inflicted on Bangwa society and culture during the German occupation was a psychological one. A people used to freedom of opportunity within a closed world suddenly found themselves subject to the power of the wider world beyond their once secure borders. The co-ordinates of power had shifted. Not only were the chiefdoms and their hierarchies destined to remain unchanged ever after but the Bangwa would never be their own masters again, capable of dealing with change in their own fashion. With German colonial rule the chiefs began their subservience to

an outside authority, German, British and Cameroonian, whose agents they would now become, collecting taxes and keeping order, and manipulated for the sake of a 'national' whole. Gone was the invincibility clearly demonstrated in the wars against the Bayang and the Mbo. Gone, too, were many of the royal ancestor statues which formed a link with the past and which were an essential feature of the Lefem. These the Germans looted and today they now stare glumly from their pedestals in the alien Lefems of European and American museums." (5p30)

• "Under the 1919 Trust Mandate of the League of Nations the former German colony of Kamerun was to be administered by the British and French governments. [...] Despite the apparent lack of contact between the British and the Bangwa, colonial rule did affect and change the nature of Bangwa society in four main ways. The first was that it created a stability between the different chiefdoms and between the Bangwa and their neighbours, the Bayang, Mundani and Mbo. [...] The second effect of British rule was a consequence of this greater security and freedom, namely, an increase in economic opportunities. [...] A third consequence of the British colonial period was the arrival of Christianity and education. [...] The fourth way in which the British colonial administration affected the nature of Bangwa society concerned the whole idea of "tradition". [...] The British authorities' use of 'tradition' as a means of ritualising its power and affirming the colonial hierarchy which governed had two curious effects on Bangwa society and culture. The first was the notion that 'tradition' was a social good since it maintained stability by reference to an unchanging set of social doctrines and rituals which had come down tried and tested from the past. [...] Furthermore, given that their own respect for 'tradition' disposed the British colonial officers to look with favour upon what they took to be traditional in Africa (Ranger, 1984:212), an idea which also influenced the whole implementation of Indirect Rule, it is not surprising that traditional rulers felt very much as ease with these beliefs." (5p31-36)

1.6 Ecology (natural environment):

- "the awe-inspiring mountain scenery, with its accompanying steep, sometimes perilous paths, crossed by rushing torrents even in the dry season; high tumbling waterfalls;" (3p1)
- "The path traverses the Banyang forests, passing through their villages strung out on either side of a sandy street; crossing fast-flowing tributaries of the Cross River by means of woven swing-bridges or on the shoulder of a stalwart Banyang, accustomed to the rivers' treacherous currents and deep pools. Steep, boulder-strewn paths indicate one's arrival in Bangwa. Inside the country there is a complicated interlacing of paths and tracks which wind tortuously up and down precipitous slopes or along escarpments. These paths connect the separate chiefdoms, the numerous markets, and the savannah country of the east with the forest country of the west. The main road leads from Biagwa (Banyang) to Fontem, where the chief palace and market stands. But since each of the nine chiefdoms has a boundary with the forest and the savannah a series of parallel paths pass through each chiefdom. From the muggy heat and closed-in feeling of the forests one climbs five thousand feet to the cool, open country of the highlands. Most of the Bangwa inhabit the middle regions (at about three to four thousand feet), where the sparseness of oil palm groves indicates the beginning of a highland climate: but compounds are scattered all over the region, the highest inhabited point being about 7,000 feet, the lowest about 1,500 feet." (3p1)
- "The Bangwa live in a fold of one of a number of volcanic structures which extend from the Atlantic islands of Fernando Po, to Mount Cameroun and the Rumpe, Maneguba and Supe mountains. Volcanic mountain groups form a horseshoe around the Mamfe forest depression and dramatically link these equatorial forests with the Bamenda-Bamileke plateau." (4p1)
- "The Bangwa live somewhat topsy-turvily in the damp valleys of the foot-hills linking these high Bamileke plains and the Mamfe forest." [...] "The Bangwa are astride a changing environment, between the grassy plains and the lowlands of dense tree growths." (4p3)
- "Two seasons determine the Bangwa farming seasons the wet season from April to November-December, with maximum falls in September-October; and a short dry season from December to April which is never completely without rain. The average rainfall for the country as a whole is approximately 110 inches per annum. In general the soil is volcanic, a tenacious red clay of limited fertility. In the highlands the less dense forests have been cleared for intensive agriculture and some areas of grassland provide grazing land for cattle and horses. Climatic variations within each chiefdom are due mostly to sudden altitude changes: a few hours climb and the topography, climate, flora and fauna have undergone a complete change." (3p11)
- "The Bangwa area can be described as a long rectangle running from the Bamileke savannah, the 'grasslands', in the east down to the forests of the low lying Mamfe Basin in the west. Towards the grasslands the mountains rise to 8,000 feet, part of the chain which runs from the Adamawa Plateau down to the coastal region. Mount Cameroon on the coast at Buea, the provincial capital of the south west province, and Fernando Po out in the Bight of Biafra are the only remaining active volcanoes of the range and the last vestiges of the early torment of the continent's birth. As one descends down the steep escarpment from the grasslands to the Bayang forest, oil palm groves give way to dense rain forest a mere 500 feet above sea level. There is, therefore, a varied climate and fauna, all within a mere 600 square miles." (5p9-10)

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

• "The total population was therefore almost 20,000. In the mid-sixties, despite extensive migration to the south, I estimated the

population at roughly 30,000." (4p4)

- "20,000" (2 Population)
- "The nine chiefdoms, the northernmost first, are: Fozimogndi, Fozimombin, Fonjumetor, Fotabong I, Foto Dungatet, Fontem, Foreke Cha Cha and Fotabeng III." [...] "The population figures given below are the official figures of the 1953 census; they should, in my opinion, be almost doubled to give a more exact picture of the present population. It will be noted that females comprise sixty per cent of the figure since an important number of persons, mostly males, are working and living outside Bangwa." [...] (3p2-3)

Fozimogndi and Fozimombin (together)	4,047
Fonjumeter	2,432
Fotabeng	1,909
Foto	1,546
Fossungo	767
Fontem	7,400
Foreke Cha Cha and Fotabong III (together)	1,462

- "Although the population [of a chiefdom] may be small, sometimes only a few hundred [...]" (4p1)
- Home range size: "Living in dispersed compounds, often far inside the forest, the Bangwa only get together in largish roups on market days." (4p16)
- "A Bangwa compound is a cluster of mushroom-shaped houses [...] There are no villages [...] Each Bangwa man, if he is not attached through personal service to a lord, builds his own compound as far as possible from his neighbor." (4p7)

2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s):
 - "[...] cocoyam or taro, and subsidiary crops of sweet potatoes, corn, yams, beans, groundnuts, melons. [...] Plantains were formerly much more important but are now only planted around the compound, exclusively by men." (4p15)
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources:
 - "[...] pigs, goats and chickens [...] The pig is the most important source of protein [...]" (4p15)
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?:
 - "guns" (4p16)
 - "the Bangwa traded [...] guns" (3p14)
 - "The forest hunter, with his guns [...]" (3p6)
- 2.4 Food storage: None found
- 2.5 Sexual division of production:
 - "Subsistence farming is undertaken by women. Each will have half a dozen or more farms [...] Clearing is done by the women themselves, usually in groups." (3p12)
 - "Women have other important activities: such as the making of household articles like pots, mats, rope and bags. In quiet times they collect firewood which is scarce in the highlands. Towards the beginning of the dry season the women form parties to hunt for tadpoles and frogs: there are no fish in most Bangwa rivers. In the past large-scale diversion of rivers was organised by the queenmother (mafwa) to snare tadpoles in dams." (3p12)
 - "Apart from plantains Bangwa men showed little interest in farming. Recently, however, they have been encouraged to grow cashcrops: cocoa in the lowlands and coffee in the highlands." (3p12)
 - "The Bangwa men despise farming but they are far from being laggards. They were, in the past, pre-eminently traders and warriors but they were also producers of oil, capable hunters, rearers of livestock and specialised craftsmen. Livestock rearing has taken on an increased importance within recent years. [...] Specialised activities include those of the smith, carver, diviner, priest and healer; nowadays there are also carpenters and tailors." (3p14)

- "Most of the internal trade is in the hands of women although young men earn money by trading livestock and oil in the Bamileke markets, and wine in the Banyang markets." (3p15)
- "There was a division of labour between the sexes which has seen little change with modern times. Women carry out most of the heavy labour of clearing forest areas, subsistence farming and portering goods to the markets. They would sometimes be helped in these tasks by their children." (5p20)

2.6 Land tenure:

- "[...] all the land within the boundary of a chiefdom belongs to the chief: the mountains, the rivers, the virgin forests, the farms. The chief 'cares for the land' only. He calls together the ku'ngang society to ensure the fertility of the soil through annual sacrifices. He settles disputes. He allocates land for community purposes. And, as far as the unoccupied forest lands are concerned, any subject of the chief may claim usufruct by clearing it. However, within a chiefdom subchiefs also claim to 'own the land', subject to the paramount chief's overriding claims. Within the land of a chiefdom or a subchiefdom a chief has completely private rights only to those gardens immediately attached to the palace. Other farming tracts are controlled by the chief and shared out to his wives and the wives of his subjects. Within a chiefdom a noble or compound head will only own a fenced area attached to his compound: this will be used for garden crops (spinach, garden eggs, etc.), plantains and, today, coffee. Most men's wives depend on a share of the farming tract divided annually by the chiefs. This will be a woman's primary plot for two or three years; it reverts to fallow after the cocoyams and subsidiary crops of maize and groundnuts have been harvested. A woman will also have farms in neighbouring quarters or chiefdoms since certain areas are valued for certain crops; and six or seven farms will prevent the calamity of a crop failure in one area. A woman's rights to her farms are essentially temporary: when they are fallow she loses any rights unless she has planted permanent crops (pear trees or coffee) or has cleared untouched virgin bush herself. In general one can say that land is a 'free good': there are no permanent rights to farm land; no payments are made, even in kind, to the 'owner' of the land.' (3p13)
- "Rights to land and crops are thus multiple; sharing rights in one plot will be the chief as general overlord, the sub-chief in whose country the land is located, the owner of the palm trees, the owner of the coffee bushes under the palm trees, and the woman who is intercropping maize and cocoyams among the coffee." (3p13)

2.7 Ceramics:

- "Women have other important activities: such as the making of household articles like pots [...]" (3p12)
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns:
 - "Rights to land and crops are thus multiple; sharing rights in one plot will be the chief as general overlord, the sub-chief in whose country the land is located, the owner of the palm trees, the owner of the coffee bushes under the palm trees, and the woman who is intercropping maize and cocoyams among the coffee." (3p13)
 - "On a man's death, property is shared among kinsmen and non-kinsmen through oral bequests. Persons who are heirs but not kin include a man's chief, and if he is a retainer, his master. The successor usually takes the bulk of the property, but important and sometimes sizable shares go to a man's other sons, sons' sons, matrikin and his patrigroup head in death duties." (5p22-23)

2.9 Food taboos: None found

2.10 Canoes/watercraft? None found

3. Anthropometry

3.1 Mean adult height (m and f): Not found 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f): Not found

4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f): None found, though many references to being post-10 years old.
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f): None found
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f): None found
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): None found
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):

- "In the past girls were betrothed soon after birth. [...] The Bangwa girl goes to her husband as soon as she is physically mature[...]" (3p29)
- "If they were to stay at home most young men could only expect to marry when they were in their thirties." (5p38)
- 1. Proportion of marriages ending in divorce:
 - Not found, but divorce is not uncommon: "[...] the common way of settling cases arising from divorce and the repayment of bride price [...]" (3p22)
 - "Most husbands are unwilling to sponsor this ceremony since the expense is high and the chances of recovering the outlay, if the girl divorces him, slim." (3p30)
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously:
 - No exact percentage, but: "The polygyny rate is fairly high and is the reason why men marry their first wives late in life. About half the households consist of a man with two or more wives. A paramount chief may have up to fifty at the present time, a subchief up to twenty." (3p30)
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?:
 - "Marriages in Bangwa are legalised by the finalising of the marriage payments and the transfer of a certain goat (the 'marriage goat') to the bride's kin. These payments (called dowry throughout West Cameroon) are very high and going up all the time." (3p30)

4.9 Inheritance patterns:

- "Separate compounds tie in with Bangwa individualism and their system of inheritance whereby most of a man's inheritance goes to his heir: other sons had to seek their fortunes independently." (3p16)
- "The Bangwa trace relationships through both parents. Inheritance of most property and succession to titles is derived through your father. [...] A chief's successor worships a line of male skulls inherited from father to son. [...] Female links are important in the Bangwa kinship system. Ideally a woman's property is inherited by her favourite daughter and her skull becomes the focus of an ancestral cult of which the daughter is priestess. [...] However a woman's skull may also be inherited by her son and passed on to his daughter. It is rarely inherited by her sister's daughter or a distant matrilineal relative. A woman's property which accompanies the inheritance to her skull includes her personal effects and marriage payments due on her daughters and granddaughters." (3p27)
- "All property descends to a man's son; it should not 'go up'. Wills, involving an almost complete freedom of bequest are made to ensure this. Failing a son a man will bequeath his property to a daughter's son, a servant or slave, in preference to a patrilineal collateral. A childless man may instruct his widows to cohabit with a lover in order to produce an heir to the property and a successor to his skull." (3p28)
- "A man on his death bed distributes his wives amongst his sons. The favourite son, not necessarily the oldest, will inherit by far the largest number of wives; the remaining wives will be distributed amongst the other sons; but there is no fixed rule. In the case of children they are all inherited by the favourite son, although the wives may be inherited by different sons." (6p107)
- "The favourite son inheriting the greater part of the property would inherit the hut. The farms go with the women. Debts are inherited. The favourite son (WENDIONGWA) who inherits the greater part of his father's property is responsible for his debts." (6p112)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: None found
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
 - Friendships are exceedingly strong in Bangwa society. However, homosexual practices are "as far as I could make out, and I certainly made enquiries, these practices were unknown between adult men." (7p32)
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy):
 - "A feature of most Bangwa communities is the attempt of their members to marry endogamously as far as possible." (4p38)

- 4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these "other fathers" recognized?
 - "In many ways a father's biological role is not stressed. Bangwa men marry late and continue to marry right into senility. For man years the wives of an old, old chief may have to seek lovers outside the compound in order to bear children. [...] Where women have their own wives the 'father' of the children is the female husband. [...] In the many cases of women taking lovers I found there was little interest shown in the person of the genitor. 'Father', mbe nzo, the lord who sired me, is the person who is head of the compound, your mother's husband, even if that 'husband' is a woman, a senile old man, or a child of six who has succeeded to his father's status and widows." (4p60)
- 4.14 What is the belief of the mother's role in procreation exactly? (e.g., "receptacle in which fetus grows")
 - The woman's role in procreation seems to be on the same level as that of the man: "Women provide the red blood (menstrual fluid) and men the white blood (semen) in the conception of the child. During the first two months of pregnancy the womb shakes and grumbles, mixes up the two bloods of the two parents." (4p59)
 - However, it is also noted: "Men are rarely, if ever, considered sterile: failure to bear children is the woman's fault." (4p59-60)
- 4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?
 - No: "Women provide the red blood (menstrual fluid) and men the white blood (semen) in the conception of the child. During the first two months of pregnancy the womb shakes and grumbles, mixes up the two bloods of the two parents." (4p59)
- 4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape: None found
- 4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin):
 - None found, though almost exclusive exogamy is practiced and kinship taboos abound. See 4.24 Kin avoidance.
- 4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms? None found
- 4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring
- 4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children?
 - "If a man's mother or grandmother was a kinless slave, he will necessarily depend on his father's [lineage]. In the case of a female slave's children, it is the father's matrikin and not the patrikin who incorporate them as members of their group." (4p58)
- 4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females: None found
- 4.22 Evidence for couvades: None found
- 4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older): None found
- 4.24 Kin avoidance and respect?
 - "[...] Relationships between categories are, however, expressed on those rare occasions when men and women dance together. A man may not dance with his mother, his sister, his mother's sister and her daughter, his sibling's wife, the wife of a superior raking man, including his father, his wife's sister and all close kin of a wife and wives of his own close kin (n-laws). A marriage lord may not dance with his wards. A man may dance with his sons or his grandson's wife, but not his daughter or granddaughter." (4p58)
- 4.24 Joking relationships? None found
- 4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations
 - "The Bangwa trace relationships through both parents. Inheritance of most property and succession to titles is derived through your father. Residence is to a large extent patrilocal. A chief's successor worships a line of male skulls inherited from father to son. To this extent then the Bangwa are a "patrilineal people". Nevertheless there are no wide patrilineal groupings, no clans or lineages with common name and marriage taboos, no regular meeting of patrikin for ritual, economic or social purposes. A patriline is primarily important to a man who succeeds his father the chief. Half-brothers, children of one father, have little in common after their father's death. They co-operate in the mourning ceremonies, quarrel over the inheritance and then go their separate ways. Half-brothers own no property in common. [...] Female links are important in the Bangwa kinship system. Ideally a woman's property is inherited by her favourite daughter and her skull becomes the focus of an ancestral cult of which

the daughter is priestess. A female line is sometimes traced back several generations to a founding ancestress or manengo to whom sacrifices are made. However a woman's skull may also be inherited by her son and passed on to his daughter. It is rarely inherited by her sister's daughter or a distant matrilineal relative. A woman's property which accompanies the inheritance to her skull includes her personal effects and marriage payments due on her daughters and granddaughters. [...] Thus the Bangwa may be said to trace descent through male and female lines." (3p27)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules

- "Although atsen'ndia kin may not marry, relations between kinfolk categories are not hedged in by sexual taboos. Brothers and sisters travel together, sleep in the same hut. Youths sleep in their mother's hut until well past puberty. An adult Bengwa staying in his sister's husband's compound shares her one-roomed house. Even between affinal relatives, apart from minor taboos between mother-in-law and son-in-law, such as sharing the same bench, there are no obvious avoidances." (4p58)
- "Incest, on the other hand sexual intercourse between a parent and child has sanctions which affect the guilty pair, not the children. In both cases, the sanctions only operate if the couple marry and are aware of the relationship. Even full siblings would not suffer if they married in ignorance of this close blood relationship. This covers the possibility of a couple marrying who, unknown to themselves, share the same progenitor (as in woman-woman marriage and widow concubinage)." (4p59)
- "Sanctions for the largely hypothetical incestuous act between mother and son and full siblings are supernatural. Incest with the mother results in a kind of idiot Parkinson's disease known as *leka* which also afflicts a man who touches the medicated anklet of a royal wife, a witch affected by a royal anti-witchcraft fetish and a hunter who touches a dead beast believed to have been a human in animal shape." (4p59)
- 4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony?
 - "The marriage ceremonies (apoo) were elaborate festive affairs; today they have been drastically curtailed to a simple blessing of the married pair by an elder." (3p30)
- 4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name?
 - "Children are [...] named ten days or so after birth, usually after an important relative of their father or mother or in memory of the circumstances of their birth. No distinction is made between girls and boys names." (3p28)
- 4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?)
 - Outside the community
- 4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)?
 - "Marriages were arranged before a girl had reached puberty, sometimes even soon after her birth, and were legalised with the payment of the bridewealth which was often high." (5p19)
- 4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who: None found

Warfare/homicide

- 4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare: None found
- 4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death: None found
- 4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing: None found
- 4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations):
 - "The Mundani, who claim to have migrated to their present position from the west are very different in language, social organisation, and material culture from the Bangwa although they have adopted elements of the latter's political organisation: titles, chiefship, secret societies. Bamumbu, the most important of the five independent Mundani chiefdoms, has one or two small Bamileke enclaves and the two languages (Mundani and Bamileke) are spoken along the watershed area. At the time of German penetration Fozimogndi and Fozimombin, the two northern most Banga chiefdoms, were at war with their Mundani neighbours over the ownership of extensive palm groves and there are still Mundani areas within the territory of these two chiefdoms. The Bangwa and Mundani today share a council and treasury, but the two peoples lack basic common interests and there is a good deal of mutual suspicion. To an average Bangwa the Mundani are people who marry young girls of tender years; to an average Mundani the Bangwa are the sort of people who marry their prettiest daughters to the most senile elders." (3p3)

- "The Banyang. The Bangwa have always had vital trading links with the Banyang, in whose markets they bought, or exchanged for slaves, such necessities and luxuries as guns, cloth, currency beads, salt, and miscellaneous European goods. The Bangwa were the middlemen in the savannah slave trade. Consequently, for the sake of smooth economic relations, the Bangwa and Banyang had an uneasy alliance, with occasional disturbances. Legend recalls that the son and heir of Chief of Fontem was captured and enslaved by the Banyang; he was only released through the intervention of the wife of the Chief of Tali to whom a payment of seven slaves was made. This story is used to justify Fontem's annual tribute to the Tali chief, on the other hand it could hardly symbolise Fontem's political subordination to Tali. It may have been a tributary recognition of the importance of the Tali market in Bangwa economy. The Bangwa also remember with bitterness that it was the Banyang who aided the Germans in their punitive expedition against Fontem after Conrau's death" (3p3)
- "The Mbo. To the south of Foreke Cha Cha and Fotabong III live the Mbo sturdy warriors with whom the Bangwa have a long tradition of enmity and warfare, stemming from disputes over boundaries, oil palm groves and the kidnapping of each other nationals for cannibalistic or enslaving purposes. The Bangwa admire the Mbo (they have never admired their allies the Banyang) whom they drove from the lowland areas of Lebang (Fontem) under the generalship of Chief Asunganyi, towards the end of the last century. Since the turn of the century the Mbo have been restricted to the southern banks of the rivers Betse and Betenten, A fig tree in the large Mbo market, Elumbat, is supposed to symbolise the Bangwa victory. According to the Bangwa the Mbo also brought an annual tribute in smoked fish and game to Fontem." (3p4)
- "The Nkingkwa: A small, but interesting people inhabit the mountainous area to the south, between the Bamileke and the lowland Mbo. These are the Nkingkwa, divided into chiefdoms on the Bangwa pattern but with a very different culture and language. They are linguistically related to the Mbo; but they are inter-marrying with the Bangwa and adopting their institutions, They all speak nwe from an early age. Their present chiefs are of Bangwa or Bamileke origin but there is a kind of dual chiefship since their ritual leaders, the traditional 'owners of the land' are Nkingkwa lineage heads who relinquished political overlordship to invading northerners. I believe the Nkingkwa represent an important intermediary stage in a process of Bamileke-isation which has been going on for centuries throughout the area of my study. It eventually involves the loss of a people's original language, the adoption of savannah culture and political institutions, the individuation of compounds etc. They may provide a hint of explanation for much Bangwa history which is lost in the past. The Nkingkwa are therefore half-way along a developmental line which has been completed in the Western Bamileke chiefdoms and the highland Bangwa areas; but not yet completed in the lowlands. Thus Foreke Cha Cha, the southernmost Bangwa chiefdom, borders Mbo and has a dialect laced with Mbo words, and traces dynastic connexions with Mbo lineages." (3p4)
- "The Bamileke: There is no doubt that the Bangwa have closest linguistic, cultural and social affiliations with their eastern neighbours the Bamileke. The name Bamileke, is an administrative term (derived, perhaps, from the Bangwa words mbe m'leku 'people of the Savannah') used by the Germans to describe a very mixed grouping of independent chiefdoms, wellnigh a hundred of them, scattered over a vast fertile plateau and centering on Bafang, Bangangte, Bandjoun, Bafoussam and Dschang. A common language (but with important dialectical variations) and some wide-spread shared cultural elements give them a degree of unity in which the Bangwa share." (3p5)

4.18 Cannibalism?

• None found within the specific culture, though: "[...] the Mbo sturdy warriors with whom the Bangwa have a long tradition of enmity and warfare, stemming from disputes over boundaries, oil palm groves and the kidnapping of each other nationals for cannibalistic or enslaving purposes." (3p4)

5. Socio-Political organization and interaction

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size: None found

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality):

- No mobility, but some seasonal hunting: "Towards the beginning of the dry season the women form parties to hunt for tadpoles and frogs: there are no fish in most Bangwa rivers. In the past large-scale diversion of rivers was organised by the queenmother (mafwa) to snare tadpoles in dams." (3p12)
- 5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes):
 - "Authority among the Bangwa was traditionally instituted as part of the Bamileke political complex. Like most of the western Grasslands people, Babanki political authority is vested in a village chief, who is supported by a council of elders, and is called Fon. The Fon is elected to his position by his predecessor's council and is often an elder member of the most powerful extended family within the community. The chief is recognized as the de facto owner of all the land that belongs to a given village and is seen as the dispenser of supreme justice. Social behavior within the village is further controlled through a series of extensive age-grade associations and secret societies, both of which fall under the auspices of the village chief." (2 Political Systems)

5.4 Post marital residence:

- "Residence is to a large extent patrilocal." (3p27)
- 5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): None found, though borders do exist
- 5.6 Social interaction divisions? (age and sex):
 - "The most obvious difference, perhaps, is between the sexes. Men and women co-operate rarely in daily life. A man has his own interests, his own friends; contact between husband and wife is minimal even travelling together to a funeral ceremony a man walks ahead, his wives behind with their paraphernalia. Women are expected to adopt a subservient mien in the presence of men: they sit only when bidden, rarely eat in a man's presence, and when a woman meets a man on the farm paths she will slightly bow and stamp her foot in greeting. Even today when an important man visits a compound the old ladies come out, bow down and with a swaying motion sweep the ground with their hands. Nevertheless some women achieve positions of importance; and the 'hen-pecked' husband is as common in Bangwa as Europe . Queen mothers and a chief's ranking wives take precedence over men. Old women, especially the mothers of large families receive tremendous respect. Old age, in general, takes precedence over political or social rank. General courtesy, however, between all ranks and sexes is a marked characteristic of Bangwa social life. The poorest woman, the meanest servant, the tiniest child is shown a serious and respectful attention due to any individual." (3p18)

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

• "The Bangwa also have important institutionalised relationships with friends. Friendship is sometimes ascribed, through birth; men and women born at the same time share, throughout their lives, important rights and obligations which rival those shared by atsen'ndia kinsfolk. Friendship may also be acquired. The same term is used for both types of friends although they are distringuished as eshua nso or eshua manze (friends of birth or friends of the road). Two paramount chiefs, or a couple of traders may be known as 'friends of the road'; the intimacy of this relationship may exceed that of kinship since nothing a friend tells his friend may ever be revealed. In the past acquired friendship was solomnised by the couple eating a kola nut dipped in each other's blood." (4p52)

5.8 Village and house organization:

- "The Europeans admired the clean well- kept compounds, the elegant houses, the trim hedges. Each adult Bangwa has his own compound, built away from the main paths; unless it is a modern style house with its shining zinc roof, it is invisible to the passing stranger. When a young man wished to start an independent adult life he was given a length of bamboo from his father, symbolising his consent and limiting the size of the walls of his square house. People did not live in villages, nor even in compounds of extended families. It has been suggested that witchcraft fears sent them off to build their houses in the bush alone. Others say: 'Should we fear our friends and relations to such an extent that we should live on top of them in case they do us harm?' Separate compounds tie in with Bangwa individualism and their system of inheritance whereby most of a man's inheritance goes to his heir: other sons had to seek their fortunes independently." (3p16)
- "The tall solid Bangwa house attracts admiration after the squat oblong houses of the forest peoples. Flat sites are difficult to find for building purposes and areas are laboriously levelled by hand: enormous boulders which can not be shifted are left surrounding the houses. The traditional shape of a Bangwa house is a cube on a shallow circular foundation of stones, surmounted by a conical thatched roof. The size and proportions vary according to the importance of the building but the basic shape of a woman's hut and a large chief's meeting house is the same." (3p17)

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens' houses):

• "In the compound each wife has her own house where she cooks and works and where she and her children sleep. The compound head has his private quarters (if he is a polygynist) usually hidden from view behind a tall fence made of fern poles. Here he keeps his heirlooms, his ancestors skulls etc., and receives his closest friends. He takes his meals and entertains visitors in the Great House." (3p17)

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere?

• "Beds and shelves are built into the walls with bamboos." (3p17)

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

• "The Bangwa trace relationships through both parents, although most property and titles are inherited patrilineally by a patrigroup head who as the heir becomes the custodian of his father's skull. However, there are no wide patrilineal groupings[4]

, no clans or lineages with a common name and marriage taboos." (5p18)

5.12 Trade:

- "The flourishing Bangwa economy has always depended primarily on trade. A geographically advantageous position between the densely populated savannah regions and the forest zones in contact with the Cross River and Calabar has stimulated the Bangwa's role as middlemen. Apart from the always important trade in salt, oil and other local commodities the Bangwa traded slaves, guns, European articles, and prestige objects such as flywhisks, carvings, beadwork and the blue and white stencilled cloth which was valued by chiefs and nobles. Various currencies were in circulation in the past: small multicoloured trade beads, of which the red variety (kpeng) were the most valuable, iron rods, a type of reddish cloth, and to a lesser extent cowries (mbi)." (3p14)
- "Slaves were bought in the east and sold to Banyang or Keaka traders for sale in the Cross River markets; or towards the south where they were sold in Wouri and Mungo markets. The exact slave routes from the east are unknown: some slaves in Bangwa came from as far afield as Fumban. They were captives in war, criminals; some were kidnapped as babies, as 5people still alive in Bangwa can testify. Within Bangwa itself persons convicted of witchcraft, murder, or adultery with the wives of titled men were also sold." (3p14-15)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies?

• "Even today when an important man visits a compound the old ladies come out, bow down and with a swaying motion sweep the ground with their hands. Nevertheless some women achieve positions of importance; and the 'hen-pecked' husband is as common in Bangwa as Europe. Queen mothers and a chief's ranking wives take precedence over men. Old women, especially the mothers of large families receive tremendous respect. Old age, in general, takes precedence over political or social rank. General courtesy, however, between all ranks and sexes is a marked characteristic of Bangwa social life. The poorest woman, the meanest servant, the tiniest child is shown a serious and respectful attention due to any individual." (3p18)

6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)

6.0 Time allocation to RCR: Not found

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine):

- "There are many specialists: bone-menders, experts in the treatment of rheumatics, children's and women's complaints, barrenness and impotence. The general term ngang afu (leaf man) is given to these practicants. Other experts specialise in the exorcisation of spirits, particularly those bedevilling children. Others perform complicated purification rituals after evil deaths (suicide, murder, an accident, death in pregnancy, death from dropsy and elephantiasis.) Others hunt the invisible witch who is haunting a compound bringing bad luck and illness. Ngang ntshep has the secret of the medicine which punishes the children of a man who is backward in his bridewealth payments. In all these activities the medical expert or priest is on close contact with the diviner (Mbo, Banyang, Bamileke, as well as local diviners, are used by the Bangwa). Their roles are all socially approved, directed towards curing illness or punish evil-doers. Morally unjustified 'black magic' is not common in Bangwa, nor even socially recognised." (3p31)
- 6.2 Stimulants: None found
- 6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):
 - "Twins are welcomed with a mixture of pleasure and consternation. They are other-worldly creatures and a series of rituals must be undertaken to persuade them to remain with their parents on earth. 'Single' twins are those children born feet first or with a cawl. A special 29shrine is made by the priest (tanyi: literally 'father of twins', as honorary title) inside their mother's house. The children are medicated and fed with a special chicken while other mothers of twins (anyi) dance outside in the compound. The chief sends precious beads to place around their necks and two mugs to hang above their bed. Some time before puberty twins undergo a further ritual whereby they are secluded in a house for some weeks, rubbed with camwood (a red cosmetic) and given quantities of food in order to 'fatten' them. At the end of this seclusion they leave the house; tanyi sacrifices a cock and goat; and the anyi dance. This final ceremony cuts the twins off from the spirit world definitively." (3p29)
 - "Children grow to adulthood without any rituals associated with puberty. They receive a general training from their mothers and fathers. A girl receives her first hoe when quite young, eight or nine, and a boy his first matchet when he is eleven or twelve." (3p29)

6.4 Other rituals:

• "In the past, betrothal always occurred in infancy, and there was plenty of time to decide whether the couple were in fact too

closely related 'by blood' or affinity to marry. A rite of purification called *so afet* could be carried out to remove any mystical dangers from a close union between *atsen'neia* kin. A ritual expert takes the couple to the river, preferably at the junction of two streams. The couple are told to stand in the water facing up-stream, while they were rubbed with herbs and sprayed with medicines from the man's mouth. The water takes away the danger which results from the union and affect their children with ringworm and scabies (*afet*), rickets or swollen jaws." (4p58-59)

6.5 Myths (Creation):

- "In the beginning, so the story goes, God was making his final touches to the creation of the world when he arrived tired and weary at Nsoko, a Bangwa village just over the river separating the Bayang and Bangwa countries. Since by this time it was getting dark, he asked the people for a lamp so that he might see what he was doing. Somewhat wary of a stranger in the night who wanted to borrow their possessions, they refused. God's tired labours in the darkness, spiced perhaps with a hint of revenge, resulted in a landscape that looks hastily made, magnificently uneven and difficult to inhabit." (5p9)
- "Legend tells of the founding of the chiefdoms; both Bangwa and Bamileke accounts have many common elements. Briefly it tells of a hunter who came from the Mbo or Banyang forests with his following (his family and the classic nine servants) where he met the Beketshe, a loosely-grouped hunting and gathering people who lived a naked, nomadic existence in the wooded mountains without the advantages of huts or agriculture. The forest hunter, with his guns and through guile, deprived these people of their proprietary rights to the land. These Beketshe, from whom some contemporary Bangwa still claim descent, are described in innumerable stories as brainless, fickle and incredibly gullible, and are a constant source of amusement to sophisticated Bangwa. According to the myth they were taught farming, fire-making, and some elementary facts of life including copulation. The Beketshe ceased to rely on wild plants and game. And the union of these nomads and forest hunters formed the nucleus of the Bangwa people who were now confronted by the Bamileke peoples of the grasslands: agriculturalists who fought with spears and had a very elegant and highly structured political system. The forest hunter and his followers acquired dominance over these scattered political groups through his bravery and his ability to husband the country's resources. A common myth tells how he hoarded leopard skins, ivory tusks, lengths of stencilled blue and white cloth; the possession of these symbols of royalty ranked him immediately and indisputably as chief." (3p6)
- "Within each chiefdom component subchiefs, nobles and even commoner families tell varied traditions of their original home. Thus in Fontem we have subchiefs from Mbo, Banyang, Keaka (Ejagham), Mundani, Fotabong I, Foreke Cha Cha, Foto and Bamileke chiefdoms. Yet despite the varied origins, only unearthed through ceaseless enquiry, the chiefdom of Lebang has achieved a high degree of cultural and political homogeneity." (3p7)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

- "Only Fontem was allowed the great fombi a huge seven-foot-high double gong which was brought out only on the greatest occasions and then with strict magical precautions. The music from the gongs is very beautiful both to the African and European ear; lefem is the most popular of the Bangwa societies." (3p26)
- "A chief's Great House is a splendid example of Cameroon house-building with its intricate panelling, tall conical roof, its collections of drums, musical instruments and sculptures;" (3p34)

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: None found

6.8 Missionary effect:

"For many of the plantation workers the spiritual sphere of the white man's world was represented by the missionaries. The spiritual, the 'religious', permeated all aspects of their own culture and society and was integral to its identity and way of functioning. Given this background Christianity was probably viewed by workers as an essential component of the white man's power, his society and his success (Curtin et al. 1978:526). This was perhaps particularly the case with a colonial authority which had its roots in English society where there was a strong tradition of the complimentary relationship between the Church and State. Having become involved in the white man's economics it was an almost logical step to become involved in his religion as well. 'Freed' from the social setting of the Bangwa world and the Bangwa world view the Bangwa workers were also, to some extent, 'freed' from its spiritual order. On the one hand, their beliefs, particularly those regarding witchcraft, did not vanish overnight but these beliefs were no longer subject to the complete control of the Bangwa society from which they sprang and which had given the beliefs a social coherence. Many of the Bangwa men who worked on the plantations during the 1940's and 1950's did become Christians. However, to say that they did so because of a quasi-mechanical social process of 'fitting-in' would be an over simplification and suggest that they had almost no will in the matter. While the European facade of Christianity, its 'newness' and the role of the group were certainly factors in bringing about the conversion of workers to the Christian faith, religious conversion is a complex, indefinite process: continually awaiting moments of affirmation, doubt or rejection, continually expressing as much about the mystery of human nature as it does about the deity[12]. For all its faults, Christianity did represent values which were more universal and wider than European culture." (5p40-41)

• "The effect of the Catholic schools on Bangwa society was similar to the effect produced by Christianity when it had first arrived, namely, that Christians were almost a society within society. In the case of the children it was not quite so dramatic but there was a different mentality between children and their parents. Children existed in a world half-way between the old traditional society and a Christian 'modern' one, believing aspects of both and curiously able to be at peace with a spiritual and cultural schizophrenia." (5p51)

6.9 RCR revival:

• No revival mentioned. Actually, somewhat opposite: "Although the Catholic missionaries had begun to respect the political structure of Bangwa society because of their association with the colonial authorities and because of the fact that without the support of the chiefs they could not open the schools or keep them going, they did undermine the strength of traditional spiritual beliefs. What is strange is that in the post-1940 period so little attempt was made to defend these on the part of traditional society." (5p51)

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs:

- "The Bangwa ascribe natural and unnatural causes to death. They can recite lists of symptoms for various fatal as well as non-fatal illnesses which are diagnosed with skill. Witchcraft is a common cause, but once a confession is induced the cure must be aided by medicinal means. Thus madness results from a man transforming himself into a bush-cow and falling into a hunting pit; but its cure includes psycho-therapy, cupping and shock treatment." (3p31)
- "Since most deaths are ascribed to witchcraft post mortem examinations are regularly carried out on all corpses, including those of tiny babies and senile men. The stomach is operated by an expert. The vital organs are removed and any marks, protuberances or colouring noted to ascertain whether the dead person has been a witch. Each organ examined in the stomach, the chest and throat is associated with a particular transformation. The operator declares, for example, that the man has been 'using' his elephant in the forests near the Mbo Plain where he had been trapped in a swamp, caught pneumonia and died. If none of these signs are discovered it is presumed that the person has been bewitched by a family member and all present took an oath over the dead body, sometimes dipping a kola nut into the bloody water which has been used to wash the dead man's stomach. If the father, 32husband or successor of the dead person is not satisfied he seeks further advice from a diviner as a result of which medicine (nchep) is prepared to hunt down the witch and cause him to become ill. Such an illness is only cured through confession: such confessions even among children, are not uncommon in Bangwa today." (3p32)
- "The dead are buried in oblong graves behind their houses. Special ceremonies accompany the burial of a chief or noble but for a child or commoner it was a simple affair. Children of chiefs are buried in the lefem copse, outside the palace. [...] Beliefs in the afterworld are complex. Dead men's souls go to the Bangwa heaven or hell -the 'good country' and the 'bad country' both of which were below ground. The sky is the abode of witches, not angels, a fact which determined many old Bangwa from accepting Christian doctrines. Ghosts are the dead returned from their graves to haunt members of their family: they are exorcised by a simple lustration ritual." (3p32)
- "A year or two after a man's death his successor makes preparations to exhume the skull. Before the earth is removed, a sapling, planted above the dead man's head, is shaken by the priest concerned and food and wine poured into the grave. [...] It is believed that the skull has been wandering around inside the earth and this sacrifice persuades it to return to the grave in readiness for exhumation. The priest removes the skull, rubs it in oil and special leaves and places it in a clay pot in the ancestral shrine or merely behind the successor's house. A further sacrifice is made by the man's heir with all his atsen ndia present: and if, the next day, the white ants have eaten the oil and melon seeds it is known that the departed ancestor is content." (3p32)
- 6.11 Taboo of naming dead people? None found.
- 6.12 Is there teknonymy? None found.
- 6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.)
 - "Like the Bamileke, the Bangwa recognize a supreme god (Si), but more commonly pay homage to their ancestors. Ancestral spirits are embodied in the skulls of the deceased ancestors. The skulls are in the possession of the eldest living male in each lineage, and all members of an extended family recognize the skulls as common heritage. When a family decides to relocate, a dwelling, which must be first purified by a diviner, is built to house the skulls in the new location. Although not all of the ancestral skulls are in the possession of a family, the memories of all ancestors are honored. The spirits of ancestors whose skulls are not preserved have nowhere to reside and may as a result cause trouble for the family. To compensate when a man's skull is not preserved, a family member must undergo a ceremony in which libations are poured into the ground. Earth gathered from the site of that offering then represents the skull of the deceased. Respect is also paid to female skulls, although details about such practices are largely unrecorded." (2 Religion)

- "Witchcraft (lekang) has an ambivalent position since it may be used for good or evil purposes. It pervades Bangwa beliefs and has many manifestations; basically it is a belief that all men and women have the capacity of changing themselves into animals or natural forces, for the purposes of bewitching their relations, or for the less anti-social activities of chiefship and medical healing. Of course only some people take advantage of the propensity; ability varies and may be inherited or learned. Men, women, tiny children may be witches: elephants, swarms of bees, lightning, aeroplanes: a witch preys on the flesh ofliving people causing their illness and eventual death. Witchcraft also causes crop failure, sterility and barrenness, poor trading-success, failure at examinations. It explains the miracles associated with healing, a chief's power or a young man's brilliance on the football field or the xylophone." (3p31)
- "While the Bangwa consider their ancestors to be their most vital spirits or 'gods' (belem) each adult also worships at a shrine dedicated to a personal spirit guardian, his ndem bo. A man's ndem bo which literally means 'spirit, or god, builder' is the creator of a man's personality. On the diviner's advice the shrine is erected outside the compound by a priest (tanyi). Sacrifices are made there on the same kind of occasions as sacrifices are made tothe skulls. Women sacrifice at the ndem bo of their fathers; only a queen mother who was also a compound head has her own. Most Christians translate ndem bo as God the Creator which is certainly right up to a point. This ndem bo however, creates an individual; he did not create the world and all things on it. Nor is he indivisible." (3p33)

7. Adornment

7.1 Body paint: None found

7.2 Piercings:

• "[...] Girls' ears are pierced and a boy circumcised soon after... [birth]." (3p28)

7.3 Haircut:

• "the men with their hair long, dressed in elaborate styles; the women shaven and naked." (3p16)

7.4 Scarification: None found

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): None found

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

- "On ceremonial occasions both men and women brought out splendid clothes and fantastic masks." (3p16)
- 7.7 Sex differences in adornment: None found

7.8 Missionary effect: None found

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment: None found

8. Kinship systems

- 8.1 Sibling classification system:
 - See 8.3
- 8.2 Sororate, levirate:
 - "The marriage of a man to his wife's sister (sororal polygyny) is particularly forbidden, the Bangwa saying it is harmful to his authority in the compound since sisters, the closest of kin, would join forces against him in a dispute." (4p165)
- 8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):
 - "Bangwa categories are not clearly differentiated terminologically, possibly because there is a frequent mingling of different kinship roles in one person and a degree of conflict between kinship obligations and political rights. There is a single term for child, male and female, and a single term for elder, or younger, male and female sibling. In terms of address sexual differentiation is only made in ascending generations and in two general terms for in-laws." (4p47)

9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):

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