



**Universal Impact
Factor 0.9285**

**Index Copernicus
IC 5.09**

**NAAS Rating
1.3**

**Received on:
11th June 2013**

**Accepted on:
14th June 2013**

**Revised on:
25th August 2013**

**Published on:
1st Oct 2013**

**Volume No.
Online & Print
10(2013)**

**Page No.
35 to 40**

Life Sciences Leaflets is an international open access print & e journal, peer reviewed, worldwide abstract listed, published every month with ISSN, RNI Free-membership, downloads and access.

‘FAMILY ANIMALS’ VERSUS ‘VILLAGE ANIMALS’ USED FOR TRADITIONAL RITES IN THE KORUP AREA, SOUTHWEST CAMEROON

**K. SERGE BOBO*, M. F. FLORENCE AGHOMO AND
C. BONITO NTUMWEL**

**DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FACULTY OF AGRONOMY
AND AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF
DSCHANG, CAMEROON.**

Corresponding author's e-mail: bobokadiris@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT:

The present paper aimed at documenting on “family animals” and “village animals” used for traditional rites in the Korup area, South-west Cameroon. Structured interviews were addressed to 371 randomly chosen household respondents (HRs) in 22 villages representing six ethnic groups: Oroko (30.2%), Ngunnchang (20.5%), Bakossi (17.8%), Obang (13.5%), Bayangi (11.3%) and Bassossi (6.7%). From sampled HRs, 80.3% confirmed the existence of traditional rites in the use of wildlife among which “family animals” and “village animals”. From the traditional rites reported on the use of wildlife, 34.0% and 65.6% concerned nine “family animals” and 12 “village animals” respectively. It is urgent that knowledge on traditional rites be documented for as many ethnic groups as possible.

KEY WORD: Cameroon, “Family animals”, Korup Area, Traditional rites, “Village animals”.

INTRODUCTION:

Animals are valuable to people not only because they provide economic benefits, but because they have also been incorporated into our sense and are enshrined in long-standing cultural practices (Shepard, 1996; Bobo *et al.*, 2013). The cultural importance of animals has been reflected in art, literature, beliefs, mythology and religion, among other important cultural aspects of humanity (Alves, 2012). Also, traditional ideas and practices revealed that

animals are playing key roles in the identity construction of individuals, clans and ethnic groups (Olupona, 1993). Throughout history, animals have been used to reflect the nature of humanity, symbolising societal and individual human characteristics (Alves, 2012). For long in the Korup Area (KA), local communities have developed beliefs and traditional rites on the uses of natural resources. Consequently, forest resources have defined the ritual environment of communities in the area throughout the time, for e.g. the existence of “village” and “family” animals. But with the increased level of loss of cultural practices and the low level of respect of rules that have long governed traditional practices notably by the youths (Bobo *et al.*, 2011), traditional and cultural practices are threatened and are bound to disappear. In this sense, the present paper aims at documenting on the existing traditional rites on “village” and “family” animals used in the KA.

STUDY AREA:

KA is located in the South-west region of Cameroon, from 520000 m to 620000 m latitude North and from 468134 m to 580000 m of longitude East in UTM Zone 32N. Five protected areas (PAs) are found in the KA namely Korup National Park (KNP), Bayang-Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary (BMWS) Nkwende Hills (NHFR), Rumpi Hills (RHFR) and Nta-ali (NAFR) Forest Reserves. The 22 studied villages are located at the vicinity of these PAs. Details on climate, geological conditions, topography, vegetation and fauna are found in management plans of these PAs (MINEF, 2001; 2002a,b; Ndeh *et al.*, 2002; MINFOF, 2008). The social organisation of these villages is constituted of a chief, regent chief (traditional) and other community-based structures (traditional council and the juju society locally called “Ekpe”). The study area is inhabited by the Oroko, Bakossi, Bayangi, Bassossi, Obang and Ngunnchang communities. The common language in KA is the pidgin english.

METHOD:

The study was carried out in 22 villages representing six ethnic groups located at the periphery of five PAs in KA. A questionnaire survey was addressed to 371 household respondents (HRs) willing to participate in the study. The sampled households in each village ranged between 25 to 100%. HRs were any adult family member met at home. Preference was given to the family head who was considered to be the eldest, originating from the village, member of the traditional council, and suggested to have better knowledge concerning cultural and traditional practices in relation to wildlife. In case of his absence, preference was given to the eldest child. In each household, questions were asked to assess their awareness about the existence of traditional rites on wildlife uses in their area. Furthermore, self-observations and discussions with villagers of all age and sex during meetings and community works helped for cross checking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

About 80.3% of HRs confirmed the existence of traditional rites in relation to the use of wildlife in the study area. These were confirmed by the Obang (96.0%), Oroko (84.7%), Ngunnchang (81.6%), Bayangi (80.9%), Bakossi (65.7%) and Bassossi (64.0%). From the traditional rites reported on the use of wildlife, 34.0% and 65.6% concerned “family animals” and “village animals” respectively. According to HRs, “family animals” are those when hunted, are to be brought and shared within men of the family, whereas “village animals” are those when hunted, are to be brought and shared among family heads of the village. It is to be mentioned that women are excluded during the sharing of both “village” and “family animals”. This is a practice inherited from the ancestors. Among the 17 species for which traditional rites exist, mammals, birds and reptiles represented respectively 88.2%, 5.9% and 5.9%. Traditional rites practiced per species are presented in table 1.

It should be mentioned that the giant pangoline is considered as a “family animal” by the Obang whereas it is a “village animal” in the Ngunnchang ethnic group. Similarly, the crowned eagle is a “family animal” in the Obang and Ngunnchang ethnic groups whereas it is considered as a “village animal” by the Bayangi. The chimpanzee is a “family animal” in the Obang and Ngunnchang ethnic groups whereas it is considered as a “village animal” by the Oroko. The sitatunga is a “family animal” in the Bayangi ethnic group whereas it is considered as a “village animal” by the Oroko (see table 1).

Apart from traditional rites discussed in table 1, others traditional rites (0.4%) are practiced by hunters. For e.g., the heart and neck of Ogyilbi's duiker *Cephalophus ogyilbi* are not consumed by the hunter who shot the animal. It is believed that if he consumes these parts, he will lose his hunting skills.

CONCLUSION:

Traditional rites on wildlife are still somehow respected in the KA. Species are honoured and respected by local communities because of the roles they have been playing for centuries in maintaining local culture and traditions viable. However, many of such species are threatened by poaching, thus are getting scarcer daily with the consequences on erosion of traditional practices (as in Lohani, 2010). It is urgent that suitable conservation measures be adopted for the concerned species and that knowledge on traditional rites be documented for as many ethnic groups as possible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

We are grateful for financial support from the Volkswagen Foundation, under the “Africa initiative - Knowledge for Tomorrow: Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa”, through the project «Managing Forest wildlife for Human Livelihoods in the Korup-Obang Hills region, West-Central Africa». We also address special thanks to local chiefs, traditional societies and local populations of the study area

REFERENCES:

- Aghomo, F.F.M. 2011.** *Perception des populations riveraines sur la contribution des traditions a la conservation de la faune sauvage chez les Ngunnchang et les Obangs*. Student's report- level 4, FASA/University of Dschang. 76p.
- Alves, R.R.N. 2012.** Relationships between fauna and people and the role of Ethnozoology in animal conservation . *Ethnobiology and Conservation*, 1: 2-69.
- Bobo, K.S., Ntumwel, B.C. and Aghomo, F.F.M. 2013.** Local perception on wildlife uses and related loss of cultural values around the Nkwende hills forest reserve, South-west Cameroon. *Life sciences Leaflets*, 5: 01-08.
- Bobo, K.S., Nganmegne, N.F., Fosso, L.C., Ntumwel, B.C. and Ghotsa, M.C. 2011.** Taboos and tradition beliefs in the Batoufam and Bansoa communities, West Cameroon. *Life sciences Leaflets*, 20: 876 –882.
- Lohani, U. 2010.** Man-animal relationships in central Nepal. *Journal of ethnobiology and ethnomedicine*, 6:31.
- Ministry of Forest and Wildlife (MINFOF). 2008.** *Management Plan for the Korup National Park and its Peripheral Zone (2009-2013)*. 138p.
- Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF). 2002a.** *The Rumpi Hills wildlife sanctuary draft management plan, 2003-2008*.GTZ, Cameroon. 69p.
- Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF). 2002b.** *A Management Plan for Korup National Park and its Peripheral Zone 2002-2007*. WWF/EU/GTZ.
- Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF). 2001.** *Management plan of the Nta-ali forest reserve*. 110p.
- Ndeh, A.D., Mbah, B.R. and Dzikouk, G. 2002.** Ornithological surveys of Nkwende Hills, Bakossi Mt. UFA (11-001 and 11-002); for biodiversity conservation and priority settings in the Cameroon-Nigeria Transboundary. *Birdlife international*. 44p.
- Olupona, J.K. 1993.** Some notes on animal symbolism in African religion and culture. *Anthropology and Humanism*, 18: 3-12.
- Shepard, P. 1996.** *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*. 1ed. Island Press, Washington (DC).

Table 1: Traditional rites practiced per species, ethnic groups and reasons attributed

Family animal	Ethnic group	Traditional rite practiced	Reason
Red river hog <i>Potamochoerus porcus</i>	Bayangi	The entire animal is shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	It is a large animal
	Ngunnchang	The chest, head and limbs are shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
	Obang	The chest, head, intestines and limbs are shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
	Oroko	The chest is given to the father of the hunter as a sign of respect	Inherited traditional practice
African palm civet <i>Nandinia binotata</i>	Bayangi	The limbs are shared by the family	Inherited traditional practice
	Ngunnchang and Obang	The meat is shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
Drill <i>Mandrillus leucophaeus</i>	Ngunnchang and Obang	The head and four limbs are shared among the men of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
Chimpanzee <i>Pan troglodytes</i>	Ngunnchang and Obang	The neck, intestines and limbs are shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
Crowned Eagle <i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>	Obang, and Ngunnchang	The meat is shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
Gorilla <i>Gorilla gorilla</i>	Obang	The meat is shared among the heads of the entire family	Inherited traditional practice
Giant pangoline <i>Smutsia gigantea</i>	Obang	The meat is shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
Sitatunga <i>Tragelaphus spekei</i>	Bayangi	The meat is shared among males of the entire family of the hunter	Inherited traditional practice
Village animal	Ethnic group	Traditional rite practiced	Reason
Python <i>Python sebae</i>	Obang, Ngunnchang, Oroko, Bassossi and Bakossi	When found dead or killed by a hunter, the entire village is alerted. The hunter presents the carcass in the village and the bile is extracted in the presence of all villagers. This is thrown into the latrine or burst in large rivers. The meat is shared among heads of families in the village	This is done because the bile is very poisonous and can be used to kill people. If the bile is not found in the snake, the hunter is banned from the village
	Bayangi	Same as in the other studied ethnic groups except that the meat is not shared among heads of families in the village but only a piece is given to the chief	Same as above
Leopard <i>Panthera pardus</i>	Obang, Ngunnchang,	Half of the animal is brought to the village together with the head; this head is covered with a cloth because women are not allowed to see it. The 14 beards,	The beards are poisonous and can be used to kill people and the skin is used by the chief

		located seven on each side of the mouth, are removed and destroyed in the presence of all family heads. Women do not participate in this event	
	Bayangi, Oroko, Bassossi and Bakossi	The entire animal is shared to villagers after the beards have been removed and destroyed	The beards are poisonous and can be used to kill people. The skin is also used by the chief during traditional ceremonies for authority and protection
Elephant <i>Loxodonta africana cyclotis</i>	Obang, Ngunnchang, Oroko, Bassossi, Bayangi and Bakossi	The entire meat is shared in the village by family heads	This animal is large and cannot be consumed by one man
African Civet <i>Civettictis civetta</i>	Ngunnchang and Oroko	The meat is consumed only by elders of the village (segment taboo)	Inherited traditional practice
Buffalo <i>Syncerus caffer nanus</i>	Obang, Ngunnchang, Oroko, Bassossi and Bayangi	The meat is shared in the village by family heads	Inherited traditional practice
Giant pangoline <i>Smutsia gigantea</i>	Ngunnchang	The meat is shared in the village by family heads	Inherited traditional practice.
Water chevrotain <i>Hyemoschus aquaticus</i>	Ngunnchang	The meat is shared in the village by family heads	Inherited traditional practice
Crowned eagle <i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>	Bayangi	The head is eaten by the chief of the village	The species is considered as a royal bird
Chimpanzee <i>Pan troglodytes</i>	Oroko	The meat is shared in the village by family heads	Inherited traditional practice
Sitatunga <i>Tragelaphus spekei</i>	Oroko	The meat is shared in the village by family heads	Important parts like the skin is collected and handed to members of Ekpe society
Bay duiker <i>Cephalophus dorsalis</i>	Oroko	The meat is shared in the village by family heads	Inherited traditional practice
Dwarf crocodile <i>Osteolaemus tetraspis</i>	Obang	The meat is shared in the village by family heads	Inherited traditional practice