

Review Article

The Place of “Black Magic” and “Juju” In the Cameroon Anglophone Crisis: A Truncated Narrative 2017-2020

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Abstract: Magic and “juju” have been practices which are embedded in the religion, culture and beliefs of the African and remain an indelible development in any crisis in Africa. In 2016, the Teachers and Common Law Lawyers Trade Unions of the Anglophone extraction surprised the State of Cameroon in their demand for the return of the Anglo-Saxon culture and values of education and common law as well as the discontinuation of their marginalisation. The situation became complex when the Anglophone Civil Society Consortium which was formed as an umbrella organisation of the different Teachers’ Trade Unions and Common Law groupings merged to fight for the Anglophone plight. This was because the Consortium failed in their negotiations for the return to a two state federation. This happened as the process was marred by mistrust, greed and absence of genuine dialogue, all of which impacted the events of the day. On Friday 13 January 2017, violence broke out in Bamenda and led to deadly encounters between the forces of law and order and the population (a people who were already angry). The conflict resulted to an armed struggle between the separatists and the regular army as the Consortium called on all and sundry to defend their territory. The diaspora formed militias to fight protect their land but since they could not easily match the regular army, elements of these militias exploited all existing traditional, religious and mystical means teleguided by fear, life experiences for the hope to protect themselves. Threats and physical attacks, likewise fear, became unmanaged and the African spirituality, magic and juju became the order of the day among the main armed militias in the Anglophone zones and the military. Magic and juju were effectively used in the struggle with charms worn by military and separatists who moved in the localities. Thus, living evidence that mysticism and juju exist. The major instrument used for data collection was interviews and a multidisciplinary approach to present the facts. The Cameroonian indigenes talked to attested that magic exists in the crisis. Others believed it was a matter of chance while the “gods” of the land protected the soldiers and separatists. On the basis of these findings, this paper debates on confirming the extent to which magic, juju or mysticism had been part of the Anglophone struggle. Interestingly, the crisis has not ended and many would understand or misinterpret the historiographical context of magic or juju.

Keywords: Magic, juju and Anglophone crisis.

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INTRODUCTION

The search for protection was authentic evidence in the African society both in pre- colonial and modern Africa to use magic and juju. Religious belief webbed in a mystical belief system had been part of African culture and those of Cameroon in particular. In Tanganyika between 1905 and 1907, the natives resisted colonial rule by developing a counter warfare [1] through the use of African magic called “Maji Maji” (transforming bullets into water). In some conflicts like the Bali Nyonga conflict with the Bawocks which occurred on 3 March 2007, it was testified by Bobga E.

that, magic was involved to an extent [2] In the African society, the use of magic was for good and bad reasons and was believed by Nyambwari and Kagema that the good mystical powers were for “protection” [3] and the bad one was to plan evil. For some societies, the use of juju or magic has been the spiritual bedrock of their existence and such societies were suffocated in juju rituals which became relevant to them especially those

² Eric Bobga, 49years a traditionalist and indigene of Bali Nyonga interviewed in Bamenda, 05/01/2020.

³ Nyabbwari G.B. and Kagema N. Dickson, “The Impact of magic and Witchcraft in the Social, Economic, Political and Spiritual Life of African Communities” *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, Volume 1, Issue5, (May 2014):10

¹ Gewald Jan-Bart, *Colonial Warfare: Hehe and World War One, the wars besides Maji Maji in South-Western Tanzania ASC Working Paper 63*, (Leiden, African Studies Centre, 2005),p.12.

areas that supported the separatists. Most communities in Anglophone Cameroon took advantage of the crisis to invoke an almost forgotten spiritual exercise (due to modernity) in pretext of protecting the people and “land” (as opined by haters of the tradition) to equip the separatists in the struggle. It should therefore not be forgotten that Cameroon, with its rich cultural and religious heritage, had a formidable force in charms, amulets and magic used in protecting communities against diseases and enemies.

The main argument of this paper in context and circumstance is that juju and magic were elements of the struggle. It also exposes the fact that by natural instincts both the separatists and military protected themselves because they all feared to die. To many, it was a means to reconstitute the Cameroonian societal component of “thoughts” or belief in direct communication with ancestors or divinity. However, resilient separatists groups and individuals exposed the dominant use of juju and magic in the crisis. The paper from this perspective and narratives “unsilences” the use of magic and experience in the present dispensation. The paper argues that magic and mysticism failed both the regular soldiers and the separatists, though magic was not addressed with the naked eyes but juju was not muted because it was carried around in the crisis theatres by actors with specific desires and agendas.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The notion of magic and juju has been variedly approached by different minds to situate and fit particular instances and manifestation with dangerous results. The term “magic” in the African context has hardly been defined without it being linked to religion. To this end, Bolaji Idowa holds that magic was a desire which man seeks to reach the goal of achievements of self-effort and independent devices [4]. He went further to say it was the divine power of communication between the elemental forces and man with man attempting to tap and control the super natural resources of the environment and universe to satisfy his ego. Jevon said magic was the belief in the supernatural which was linked to religion and magic became degraded as religion evolved [5] Magic, in itself, controlled nature by sheer force and means of spell and enchantments. Fraud on his part said magic thus disregards spirits and it was used in dealing with spirits and subjugating natural forces to man’s control for the protection of individuals from enemies [6]. Some

scholars believed that man from creation never doubted power of magic through human rights and ceremonies. Byrne believed magic worked in the invisible realm⁷ and is a gratitude hidden in the bible [8].

Even though during the crisis, one could not recognise facts and attitudes in the physical, the techniques and prevailed situation of the war showed prove of magic, juju and mysticism. These three could not be separated as magimages accompanied the fighters on both sides with charms, fetish or amulets on their necks which could not be misjudged as “protector” which to the fighters “smelled enemies when approaching an enemy” [9].

Cameroonian social thought became a task to show that traditional medicine could still be further investigated and ethnographers of the age had to reconnect with their community and Cameroonian past to access the happenings. Magic and juju as a clear articulation of the diverse practices in Cameroon was performed in the rituals carried out such as war dance what Widlok called “trance dance” [10] and it was embedded in occult to make the “separatists fighters or military have courage and extra power in their attacks. West and Sander argued that, virtual war involved the use of magic, witchcraft and spirit warriors [11]. Juju as articulated by Cynthia Duncan meant evil spirit or fetish and came from the Hausa word “djudju” [12]. Gehm equally posits that the word came from West African religious rituals and super natural power often associated with the use of charms and amulets. To him, it became widely used even in the Western hemisphere through slave trade as Africans were taken to these areas by European imperialists [13]. In another dimension, Adlington-De’Ath C. viewed juju as “part

(London: George Routledge and Sons Limited, 1919), p.14.

⁷ Rhonda Byrne, *The Secret- The Magic* (USA: Atria Books, 2012), p.26.

⁸ Ibid, 58.

⁹ J.O, Clayton, *The Magic Wars World Book 3* (USA: DAW, 1993), p.1.

¹⁰ Thomas Widlok, “From Individual Act to Social Agency in San Trance rituals” in *African Dynamics Strength Beyond Structure Social and Historical Trajectories of agency in Africa ed* (Leiden: Boston 2007) p. 165.

¹¹ Todd Sanders and West G.Harry, “Power Revealed and Concealed in the New World Order”. In *Transparency and Conspiracy: Ethnographics of Suspicion in the New World Order*, edited by Harry G. West and Todd Sanders (Durham: Duke University press, 2003), p.1.

¹² Cynthia Duncan <http://www.quora.com> accessed 09/04/2020

¹³ Barry Gehm “Where did the phrase “bad juju” originate? <https://www.quora.com> accessed 09/04/2020.

⁴ E.Boloji Idowu, *African Traditional Religion A Definition* (Nigeria: Fountain publications, 1973), p.189.

⁵ F.B Jevons, “Anthropomorphism” *Encyclopadia of Religion and Ethics* vol.1, p 596.

⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo: Resemblances between the Psychic Lives of Savages and Neurotics*

of witchcraft performed in West Africa” [14]. Therefore, juju constituted the magical as well as supernatural powers used in charms and fetish expressed in African (West) religion and tradition.

Historical research has therefore understood in ethnographic participation in crisis that, magic, juju and mystic imaginary issues only created meaning in the crisis because there was no separate line to distinguish physical battles and spiritual confrontations as witnessed either in Ebunji, Bangem, Kwakwa, Batibo, Bafut, Mamfe, Nso or Fundong in the case of the Anglophone crisis. Whitehead and Finnstrom cited Jeffrey A. Sluka by saying that “enemies in tribal societies were killed at a distance by occult through magic [15] which was an element in the Anglophone crisis. Theodore Mayi Matip in his book, “L’Universe de la Parole” said that; “the more the initiated remained in connection with animal, plant and mineral, the more his esoteric medicine...”[16]. The practical reality was that the separatists and the military in secret used mystical means to fight each other. Bame Bame while talking to a journalist in 1984 after a week-long seminar on Theology and Witchcraft said; “we cannot dismiss belief in witchcraft [juju] or sorcery [17] from the Cameroonian people and this was supported by Ngally former Dean of Yaounde Faculty of Protestant Theology in a conference when he said ‘witchcraft and sorcery existed because evil existed, injustice as well as quarrelling’ [18]. This possibly favoured the use of magic and juju in the course of fighting because culture, religion, and medicine were endowed with some super natural and supreme force that only diviners could explain.

From their points of view, magico-primitive and techno-sophisticated perspective as well as magical and juju technology challenged modern military warfare [19]. These two aspects blended well in relation to the Anglophone crisis and as a self defence mechanism on both parties, magic and juju became survival strategies on the field. One could hardly under estimate an enemy but there was need for serious body fortification and magical preparedness in the event of even surprise

attacks. According to Bruno Latour, there is a correlation between modern practice and the traditional world of war. Modern practice has never been modern and the “primitive” world of war using magic, juju shamanic attacks and sorcery has often prevailed [20] Caught up in indiscriminate assaults by the military, the separatists turned to the use of “traditional thoughts” which was complex and new in the struggle in a modern time. The modern standards of the Cameroonian army especially the Battalion Intervention Rapid (BIR) shaded in military formulae, experience, recognition and power to the fire arm was entangled and put to test through “juju” of the separatists in the early stages of the crisis.

The crisis exacerbated with much sufferings and high threats of life by the military presence in the two regions was no doubt one element that pushed the militia of these regions to go in for juju. Some uniform men and locals testified that, the separatists as well as military used magic and juju shrouded in mystery [21] to contain the opponent. This paper queue up from the other studies to contribute to the discourse by indicating that through the narratives magic, juju and mysticism were used in the Anglophone crisis. It documents the complex reality of war in a crisis situation and further signalled that a war against a people you don’t see and know becomes even more complex in the face of fear. The crisis and its magico-juju tendencies offered a great opportunity for communities to revisit their cultural and traditional values and for the nation to look at its tenets of unity. Interesting enough, the interest of individuals intertwined in their dynamic vision was what epitomised the Cameroonian society which was being ravaged by war.

At the very beginning of the armed conflict, Ngoh writes that, there were two main armed groups, the Ambazonian Defense Forces (ADF) [22] controlled by Lucas Ayaba Cho and Benedict Nwana Kuah and operated in the South West Region [23]. The second was the Southern Cameroon Defense Force (SCADEF) led by Ebenezer Akwanga and functioned in the South West Region [24]. The extremist position of these first

¹⁴ Colin Adlington- De’Ath; where did the phrase “bad juju” originate? <https://www.quora.com> accessed 01/04/2020

¹⁵ Whitehead L Neil and Finnstrom, *Virtual war and magical Death. Technologies and Imaginaries for Terror and killing* (ed) (USA: Duke University press, 2003), p. 2

¹⁶ MayiMatip Theodore, *L’universe de la parole-Etudes et documents africains* (Yaounde: Edition CLE, 1983), p.46.

¹⁷ Cameroon Tribune, Seminar Report by Fondong Bekong, March, 1983,p.5.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Whitehead L. Neilet al, *Visual War...*p.3.

²⁰ Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge Mass: Havard University Press, 1993),p.50.

²¹ Simeon Mesaki, “The Evolution and Essence of Witchcraft in Pre-Colonial African Societies” *Trans African Journal of History* Vol.24 (1995): 162.

²² Ambazonian Defense Force was a Separatist force formed to defend the territorial integrity and secure the independence of Ambazonia and was controlled from the diaspora by a Cameroonian born Lucas Ayaba Cho and Nwana Kuah.

²³ V.JNgoh, *Cameroon 1884- Present (2018) The History of a People* (Limbe: Design House, 2019), p. 403.

²⁴ Ibid

groups bore others such as Red Dragons which was led by Tapan Ivo and operated in Lebialem under Oliver Lekeaka “Field Marshall”. There was also the Manyu Ghost Warriors, the Tigers of Ambazonia found in Manyu and Meme Divisions of the South West Region of Cameroon as well as Ambazonia Self-Defense Restoration Army under the patronage of Agbor Paxon a former Cameroonian police officer [25]. These groups had other smaller groups spread all over former British Southern Cameroons in areas like Ekondo Titi, Kumba, Muyuka, Kwakwa, Oshie, Mbengwi, Bali, Batibo, Chomba, Kom, Bambui, Bambili, Ndop, Nso, Mamfe, Wum, Babanki, Santa, Bafut, Bangem, Nkwen and others. These areas became centers of action and a show of supernatural powers and control of the areas. The North West and South West Regions were in distress, arbitrary arrest common, rape and as quoted in a message letter by Bishop Nkou; there were extrajudicial killings, burning down of villages and homes as well as unjustified use of fire arms [26]. Some say the situation was over looked and it provoked the separatist groups to reconnect with their culture and ancestors. And as Ferguson and Whitehead put it, “magic was connected with modernity” [27]. The diaspora activists mobilised and raised funds to train, equip and fortify the various militias.

Rationale for the use of Black magic and juju in the crisis

The high incidence of pain and violence and the in despicable situation in the two English speaking regions was well captured by the Human Right Watch Central African director, Lewis Mudge. According to his report, civilians were attacked by armed separatists as well as military and with over 170 deaths [28] And according to other investigations the village of Abuh in the North West Region in November 2018 was erased to ashes by the military [29]. In the face of this, young men of the areas in self-defense and in a fulfilment had to consult the non-human entity through medicine and magic like the case of Kembong where the use of juju began. Thus the need for self defense caused magic to be used across the two regions from Mamfe area to Bafut in North West, to Kwakwa, Ebonji, Bangem, Nkwen, Nso, Fundong and even in the Menchum

valley. Although they used different magic and juju, it was for the same purpose.

As Cameroonians who traced their descend from the Bantu group, belief in the life of ancestors in the ‘after life’ was real. The belief that ancestors ought to rest and live in peace was disrupted by the separatists who in their fear of being wiped out, reconnected with the dead to reincarnate them to defend their land, children and people. Just like Alice W. posited, “Ghost go on living when remembered” [30] and called to manifest in the course of trouble like the situation in the two regions. The unending relation with ancestors and their call for preservation of their land evoked the use of ancestral spirit, occult and juju in the fighting in many localities. According to Ngwa R. “we had to visit our shrines to beg our ancestral spirit to shield us when the village was under serious military attack” [31]. Bafaws of Kumba, Nso’s, the Bakossi’s and those of Mamfe invoked ancestral spirits. Some communities in Mamfe area in the face of arrest, torture and suppression with the use of fire arm consulted the “Obasinjom” a powerful masquerade of the people for protection [32].

The use of magic in the crisis was due to egocentrism and too many of those who used magic and juju, it was a means to have “spiritual bliss” and this has been shaded by many people as need for dominance in the new era. J.B Pratt a scholar in religion as cited by Idowa described their position as a means to use of supernatural devices employed in mysticism to gain one’s end...” [33]. He went further to argue that “man needed some powers to assist him meet up with some inadequacies in life... for his own interest and purpose” [34]. For obvious technical reasons, some individuals used magico spiritual devices in the struggle to make a name for themselves which developed into what became known in the course of the crisis as private and group magic as used by the various groups and self-acclaimed and community projected “generals” and “commanders”. Meanwhile on the other hand, military personnel also wanted to be seen as heroes of the crisis. As one military official Usman (the only name he gave) puts it; “I feared to die in a battle where the entire population starred at you in the face and don’t say a

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Bishop G. Nkou, “Message to all the Faithful of the Diocese of kumbo on the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed virgin Mary: A prayer Day for peace”, 8 August 2018.

²⁷ Brian, R. Ferguson and Whitehead L. Neil. *War in the Tribal Zone: Expanding States and Indigenous Warfare*, Rev. (ed) (Santa Fe: School of American Research press, 2000), p

²⁸ <https://www.africannews.com> HRW report says at least 170 civilians killed in Anglophone Cameroon Since October accessed 30/03/2020.

²⁹ The Voice, No 155 April 09, 2019,2.

³⁰ Werner Alice, *Myth and Legends of the Bantu* (Harrap, 1993), p.67.

³¹ Ngwa R. Neba 76 years, traditionalist and custodian of the tradition of the Bafuts, interviewed in Bamenda, 11/11/2018.

³² Judith Fon, “Southern Cameroon crisis: Understanding the Manyu Resistance and the return of Odeshi” Cameroonconcordnews, 27 December 2017.

³³ Idowa, *African Traditional Religion...* p. 190.

³⁴ Ibid, 193.

thing. So I had to protect myself so that I should not die young” [35].

Manifestation of magic and use of juju in some of the areas in the crisis in Cameroon

Throughout the early stage of the crisis, the struggle was dominated by military surveillance and control and then came a dramatic turnaround in Mamfe, Kumba and Bamenda and other areas when the administrators used the power of the gun with impunity as posited by many indigenes. Young men in some areas went into invoking juju spirit commonly known as “Odeshi” (in Nigeria, Ibo language).

According to many respondents, the use of *Odeshi* began in Manyu Division when the Senior Divisional Officer and the Cameroon military teamed up against the unarmed protesters and the youths went into initiation by going to Nigeria for fortification and by evoking the “Obasinjom” to overpower the military which they did with the use of medicine or charm or amulets. The army in return ferried witch doctors from the East (pygmies) into Manyu [36]. This was intended to neutralise the power of the *odeshi* which failed and the struggle in the area became more spiritual with open use of juju, mysticism, occult and open witchcraft became an aspect of the struggle with both separatist fighters and military seen with red clothes (pieces) tied to their guns, some even carried cowries which were tied on their heads. Others had amulets tied on their hands (wrists and arms) and waist. A case was reported of a boy killed by the military at Badi River entrance to Mamfe Town and the separatists “boys” retaliated some weeks later when two soldiers mysteriously got drowned in the Manyu River. Some inhabitants reported that it was done by the special “river forces” called “ekeh” [37]. According to Bate Manyor, “when the gods of the River Manyu get angry, even the finest marine in the world can be drowned in the “River” and when the people of Egbekoh village get angry, even a cup of water could drown an enemy” [38].

In another narration by Egbe Oroch who paints a picture of his life after the murder of his only brother we may come to the reason that traditional mythology became a reality as he said;

³⁵Usman, 36years a soldier with the Cameroon military (BIR) Interviewed in Bamenda 12/12/2019.

³⁶Fon, Cameroonconcordnews.com

³⁷Ekeh is a special mystical river force in the Manyu area in kenyang language which can swallow up an entire community and its properties if the gods of the river got angry. It might manifest itself in the form of a whirlwind but in a water body be it shallow or deep and the havoc is caused.

³⁸Bate Manyor 70years “esong-eribo” of the Ekpe society and a custodian of the Manyu culture, interviewed in Mamfe town 20/12/2019.

I had to invoke my family totem and pick up other charms to protect myself and my family against stray bullets from military and that of separatists which killed indiscriminately. I could transform into any cat. For other families they could change to anything around the area just like some of our fighters [39].

According to Winans, tigers, leopards and dragons were considered wild and in African cosmologies, it meant they had power and vitality. Furthermore, they depict darkness, danger and death and above all embodied mysticism and witchcraft [40]. These were the animals separatists of the Manyu transformed into according to many respondents. In an interview on foreign media, Donatien Melingui asserted that the crisis had gone asymmetric and there was use of super natural powers by the fighters [41]. He went further to say that; “soldiers were frightened with the strength of the ‘separatists’ in Mamfe and other areas and some of them ran” [42].

To many, the above statement demoralised the soldiers who were struggling to fight for the unity of the nation. Magic, juju and witchcraft were used in this case. According to Bronislaw M, magic was the expected and generally to be used to unbridge the gap of knowledge and practical control in man pursuit. The separatists wanted to control as well as the military and they met at cross road and magic became a reality [43]. From early 2017, and in many other occasions, the Red Dragons of Lebialem under Oliver Lekeaka “Field Marshal” were said to be using juju power. Magic and juju that took the central stage in the Anglophone crisis and presented a scenario of fear which only came to buttress the fact that Cameroonian knowledge of supernatural powers and belief in occult and spirits was unlimited. The dragon that the Red Dragons represented in African ethnography was always linked to magic and witchcraft. Some people have refused to understand why “Field Marshal” until 1st October 2019 reappeared

³⁹AgborNdip 60years retired police officer interviewed in Mamfe 18/01/2020.

⁴⁰Edgar Winans, *Hyenas on the Border. In the paths of Domination, Resistance and Terror* edited by Carolyn Nordstrom and J.O. Ann Martin (Berkeley: University of California press, 1992), p. 110.

⁴¹Donatien Milingui Noam, one time commander of the 21st Motorised Infantry Battalion in charge of the South West Region during the crisis and who was sacked for leaking military secrets and for burning houses in the South West Region in 2017.

⁴²Panorama Papers lite
<https://www.panoramapaper.com> accessed 09/04/2020.

⁴³Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Role of magic and Religion. In Reader...* p.43.

in his Azi village in Lebialem ^[44] after several reports from government bench that he was long killed. To Basiru, the separatist leader of the Red Dragon “was not a human being but a super invisible individual” ^[45]. Many locals of the area to their end saw him as “a human but who could change at any moment in the face of danger” ^[46].

Undoubtedly, the use of magic in connection with mysticism provoked a situation that caused the emergence of warlords or “commanders” or “generals” who led the various separatist groups found in the two Anglophone regions. In kwakwa the separatists were introduced to the use of magic and juju which was popularly called *Odeshi*. According to Okha C. Naseri,

The diaspora manipulated us and we took the *Odeshi* called “Omili Kpwo” to protect us from deaths from the military bullets and sudden deaths but we saw our leaders put in confusion and our leaders died... but Akangwa Ebenezer and Ayaba Cho who contacted the witch doctor in Nigeria told us we went against the rules of the *Odeshi*^[47].

Picture of some separatists with amulets and juju on them



Source: From YouTube,
<https://images.app.goo.gl/GfHQb3TT2cN7qRe96>
accessed 25/04/2020

From the above pictures, amulets were used by separatists and carried on various parts of their bodies for the above mentioned reasons. A close look at the charms revealed that, there were multiple charms and definitely came from different places and witch doctors. Many charms on a person according to a respondent had their role to play.

In another narrative along the Bamenda-Mamfe corridor, many who travelled along the road shared their experiences and worries concerning their day to day embarrassment with confrontations between the military and the separatists after the arrest of Agbor

Balla and Co^[48]. Many had refused that *odeshi* existed until some saw for real as narrated by this business woman Ayuketang D. Ayuk in the following words;

On 11 March 2018 around Widikum area, at a check point mounted by the separatists, a mystical cutlass was placed on our car; a ten seater mini bus and the leader told us there was a passenger with a Cameroon voter’s card and asked the person to step down. Nobody accepted and the machete was placed on us and the person was sorted out without him offering a word. I then concluded that magic worked in the fight ^[49].

In the same vein, another business man ^[50] recounted that a similar situation occurred to them and this time the machete was used to beat a man suspected to be a uniform person and were told that if he is one, then he will die in a few days but if not he will be healed. From the above individuals’ narratives, it could be asserted that magic was used and existed in the crises. To many respondents, the cutlass magic was a Cameroonian quick scanner which scanned the human mystically and extracted truth and whatever was needed from the individual especially as blacklegs, gossipers, those with bloody past and haters of the struggle.

The various actors on stage in the crisis came to an understanding that *Odeshi* was a component of the crisis and the force of magic created its own power as seers, witches, wizards were consulted like in other parts of Africa where war had been fought like in Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, Sudan, Senegal, South Africa, Rwanda, Congo, Tanzania and other places. Guns and other technologies became useless and juju technology came into play with the use of herbs and other concoctions. In the Batibo area, the separatists are said to have used the *Odeshi* called “Angel of Darkness”. In 2017, in Batibo, it was said that a bike rider was seen approaching the police check point around Presbyterian High School Batibo but a few meters to the police control, the bike was seen with no one on it. In a similar story still in Batibo at a check point, the sound of a bike was heard at close range and when the rope was raised for it to stop, those at the control did not notice a bike pass but only saw it descend the hill with its two passengers (motor bikes were used in the course of the fighting due to its flexibility and the fact the cost of maintenance was

⁴⁴The Voice Issue 180, Wednesday, October 9, 2019, 7.

⁴⁵Basiru 35 years Gendarme with the Cameroon Arm Force interviewed at Commercial Avenue Bamenda 21/12/2019.

⁴⁶idem

⁴⁷Okha C.Naseri, an ex- separatist fighter who dropped his weapon <https://m.facebook.com,>DDR Cameroon and on pigin news Canal 2 English>.

⁴⁸The Post, No 01790, Friday, January 20, 2017, 3.

⁴⁹ Ayuketang D. Ayuk 48 years business woman interviewed at Bamenda, 12/11/2019.

⁵⁰ An anonymous source who has been a business man on this stretch of road Bamenda Ekok for over twenty years, interviewed in Bamenda ,12/11/2019.

cheap) [⁵¹]. In Meta, Moghamo, Bui and Bafut areas, all sorts of medicines were used such as leaves that once put on your head, the individual became invisible. Backs of trees were also used and applied on the body. Just like was used in Japan (omamori) those in Cuba, Haiti, and Brazil put their cultural identity and religious pageantry as embodied in amulets, so too did the military and separatists. Juju was carried around and at times it hypnotised and confused the opponent.

Another eye witness who narrated a gun battle between the separatists and military around Alanki area in Mankon along the Mbengwi road on 5 December 2018 attested that supernatural power existed.

The distance between the two parties was not above four meters and the bullets fell like rain on us lying on the floor in between two cars and for ten minutes, I could not hear a thing but for gun noise above us. At the end we got up thinking we would see corpses, nobody was killed and I had to say *Odeshi* was certainty at work [⁵²].

On 9 March 2020, the military searched Ntamulung quarter in relation to rumours that a Nigerian witch doctor had entered town to fortify the separatists and was the person who came in with the guns that were used to attack police stations in town. A soldier recounted that, the sounds from the guns heard in Bamenda that evening were strange and with closed borders, how these weapons got to Bamenda town was still a mystery [⁵³].

The use of juju had been expressed in several ways especially along the Bamenda Bambui road axis. On several occasions, a coffin, a calabash tied with red cloth and 'peace plant' on it had been kept for days at the center of the road and nobody even the military dared to remove. The natives said, the "Ngremba" (Medicine) could kill instantly anyone who touched it especially an enemy. Same scenario occurred in Fundong and Nso areas. Some city dwellers of Bamenda said, the 8 December 2016 incident where the crowd at Commercial Avenue Bamenda marched forward towards a crowd of heavily equipped police force also had some aspects of magic because those at the front line of the crowd told the others to follow them and not to move ahead and when shooting started, they were not touched.

With skulls of animals on the chest and other charms, both the military and separatist fighters had brandished their new acquired *odeshi* in the open and even experimented it. As recounted by many locals, many of the separatists and military had special rings, bangles, chains and small calabashes ordered from Nigeria as well as India. According to an eye witness at Government Teachers Training College (GTTC) Bamenda entrance, two separatist fighters attacked by the military resisted bullets for over ten minutes before one was shot dead; Ernest (alliasTanyi) a former worker with Amour Mezam transport agency in March 2019. But the elderly separatist disappeared in the face of the other military men who were shooting at him. It thus depicts failure of black magic in the crisis. According to a bike rider 'Shey', "Cameroonian, magic was to be our own weapon to cause development but was used wrongly. Both the military and the separatists did update their charms as internet soft wares are being updated because of what he has seen while doing his work as a bike rider" [⁵⁴].

One inhabitant of the city of Bamenda recounted that, on the 1 October 2017, a separatist holding the Ambazonian flag on both hands around Top star hotel was shot with about one hundred bullet and nothing happened to him but finally entered the quarter and disappeared. On the same day, at mobile Nkwen, another separatist got into a tyre in front of the Total Petrol filling station and the Gendarmerie van shot at the separatist with the flag on both hands and when they decided to run over him, he moved out and disappeared. He then told his friend "we are at a wrong place and we were not spiritually fortified as the two boys we have just seen lets go home we were not to be out here these were transformed individuals [⁵⁵].

According to Joseph Ayolo, "the separatist's fighters were not normal people". He had a confrontation with a group at Tanka in 2019 and the separatists were instead advancing as they exchanged bullets and were chanting "water na water" but he finally retreated [⁵⁶]. The gravity and the use of magic on both sides to many were super sensible and according to many, it was God that kept them not juju or magical forces. Their meditation worked for them just like juju power did for others. That although they were restricted in doing so much; such as not sleep with women, eat red oil, receive money, not to take alcohol, and not to fight back your opponent, most of the separatists and military were killed because they did not

⁵¹Atude 50 years farmer interviewed at Bamenda food market 14/04/2020.

⁵²Funong. 33 years self employed Bamenda inhabitant interviewed at Bamenda 15/03/2020.

⁵³Mesumbe 36 years Gendermarie officer interviewed at Sonac Street Bamenda, 16/03/2020.

⁵⁴ Shey52years motorcycle rider, interviewed at commercial Avenue Bamenda, 23/02/2020.

⁵⁵Funong 33years,self employed Bamenda inhabitant interviewed at Bamenda 16/08/2020

⁵⁶ Joseph Ayolo, GendermarieCommander of the Gendermarie des Research who was later raised to the rank of a Sub-Lieutenant in 2018.

follow the many rules to the letter because some had many charms on them with many rules that could not be easily kept. Note should be taken that some of the strongest persons in the struggle on the side of the separatists have been women amongst them as mentioned by locals, were “Queens mother” of Bali, “No mercy in the South West Region, “Bullet” of travellers and many others. Some witches, female diviners and herbalists were alleged to have connection with the struggle providing charms and concoctions to the military as well as separatists [57].

The challenges for the use of black magic

The crisis brought much into play and caused problems of misunderstanding, power and arrogance. The too many laws to follow and keep were not easy to go by especially as there were too many temptations associated with the use of charms in the crisis. According to Mallam Kakah, some of the juju used by separatists and military for personal protection warrant that they become hygienically clean and usage was often as they went out just because enemies could surprise them. For example, the use of powder blown before they left the camp and concoctions rubbed on bodies and weapons within the day at particular hours only added to their many worries or else the charms were rendered powerless[58].

Magic and women do not blend well and most of the time, this social relation weakened jujus and the danger of death always loomed. The realities with juju are that you follow the instructions to the letter. Like Okha Clovis narrated, as a one-time separatist, they moved bear feet and were not to have any iron on the body or be shot dead [59]. General ‘Fire’ of small Babanki was said to have been killed because he failed to heed to the laws of his juju that when out no turning back but he went back to rescue his wife after his successful escape. The talismans and amulets worn either of skulls of animals, animal bone, turtle shell and cowries carried around in the society by many was to ward off fear which was a great challenge to many though they were seen as protected with magical powers.

Envy and blackmail were great challenges to the use of magic in the crisis and caused failures and other setbacks. Many on both sides had leaked out the secrets of others and with greed for money had sold their friends out. It was rumoured that some of the chiefs of Cameroons two English regions had exposed the weakness of some of the charms and juju used by

the separatists. For example in Noni area in 2019, the villagers reported that two wizards were killed for releasing the separatists’ strategies to the military. It was also told that, the separatists fighting each other were as a result of dominion and envy. For example “General” Chacha of Bui Division was blackmailed and killed on 25 January 2020 by the military [60]. Locals of Bui held that Fon another separatist “General” a good friend of Chacha was tipped to eliminate Chacha since he had the antidote of the charms Chacha used. Fon was shot by Chacha in a confrontation and he in return shot Chacha since he too used the same charms like Chacha (it was separatists against separatists) before the military came to the scene.

Ramification of the place of black magic in the crisis

The cost of war and magic in the crisis has been so great. During the various confrontations, many separatists as well as military were killed with reports that they failed one of the laws of the jujus or charms. This has threatened and frightened many but due to acts of revenge; life has not meant a thing to many. Wizards too had been killed for leaking out secrets or those accused for giving juju to military or separatists. Gunmen killed a traditional doctor at Church Center Mankon area in January 2020 whom inhabitants claimed to be giving out charms for protection to whoever contacted him. And in Kumbo in 2020, a military man who also doubled as juju man for military, Musa was killed by separatists [61].

The use of juju and magic in some cases led to very high recruitment both voluntary and involuntary because of *odeshi* usage especially the youths. In a report released by government cited by Ngoh, “many minors were recruited by militia groups as combatants”[62]. He continued to say “they were given drugs and forced into magical and occultist rituals, *odeshi*...”[63]. It should be noted that it was a report and many families had reported that their children on their own had gone to join, despite refusal.

To successfully manage a crisis, exercise power at a height, it was at a cost as Michel Foucault puts it in his book “Power/ Knowledge”[64]. It was an economic cost because *Odeshi* had to be renewed, witch doctors paid and money kept for other transactions. These economic pressures, pushed some of the groups to resort to abduction for ransom (though rumoured that

⁵⁷ Nna Emeka Orkereke in an interview with British Broadcasting Center (BBC) Africa 18/08/2018.

⁵⁸ MallamKakah66years, traditional practitioner and fortune teller, interviewed in Bamenda 12/04/2020.

⁵⁹ Clovis Nasiri Okha, Ex-separatist fighter <https://m.facebook.com>DDR Cameroon>.

⁶⁰ <https://www.journalducameroun.com> Cameroon:Dreaded Ambazonia General killed in Bui accessed 28/01/2020.

⁶¹ Mimi Memfo <http://www.mimimemfo.info> 11-04-2020 accessed 14/04/2020.

⁶² Ngoh, *Cameroon 1884- Present* (2018)...p.413.

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1972),p.154.

the diaspora and communities supported financially) an act that was condemned in several quarters. The Secretary General of the Common Wealth, H.E Patricia Scotland, Marie-Pierre P. the Director for West and Central Africa of the United Nations International children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) [⁶⁵], Samira Daoud, the Deputy Regional Director of Amnesty International for West and Central Africa, Heather Nauert, The US government State Departmental statesman said; Students, teachers, priests and businessmen were picked up 2018 in the North West and South West regions by ADF and SOCADEF. General “Babeh” in 2019 along the Bambui Bambili stretch abducted some University of Bamenda lecturers and students including some business men and women and other well-to-do individuals in the community for ransom. It was alleged from “Ground Zero”[⁶⁶] that the charms were to be kept active or else they lose power and money was needed for “groundnuts” and “sugar cane” to fight “Ekelebes” (an appellation for the military by the separatists) this to many justified the use of abduction for ransom[⁶⁷].

The situation created a lot of fear to the military, separatists and the population. As was alleged, there were spiritual delivery of weapons and ammunitions passing the rigorous check points unspotted. In some cases, many people on a check point saw persons heavily armed go through a check point with visible guns but unchecked by the officers. Many came to accept that magic was used because they too had heavy tongues and could not offer a word until days after. Fear and panic gripped people when military and separatists shot face to face and nothing happened. According to Abanaw Ashu, he became frightened when he shot a separatist and he just shoke his leg with no sprain or wound on the spot though he shot as a professional soldier [⁶⁸]. Another said, ‘Est que ont combat avec les gens ont ne voir pas et qui sont prêt de mourir?’[⁶⁹]. Can you fight with someone you do not see and who is ready to die? (Translation mine)

The media and communities were soaked in the real politik of the struggle and the historic moments of magic and mysticism were greatly exaggerated thereby poisoning the socio-political atmosphere.

⁶⁵The Guardian Post, No 1530, Wednesday, November 7, 2018, 5.

⁶⁶ Ground Zero was the stage of confrontation it was the area of the North West and South West Regions where action and gun battle took place

⁶⁷ The separatist fighters called bullets “groundnut” guns “sugar cane” and “Ekelebe” was the name used to refer to the military or any uniform person.

⁶⁸A. Abunaw 36years Genderme working in Bamenda interviewed in Bamenda on 02/03/2020.

⁶⁹ M. Serge 38 years Genderme working in Bamenda interviewed in Bamenda 2/03/2020.

Anglophone Cameroon was covered with a virtual cycle of imagination and fear which projected magic as an agency of the struggle. Media outlets presented the situation differently especially the social media and newspapers and propaganda thwarted reality and many extremes were drawn. Some freelance journalists mythically presented and venerated “generals” such as “Generals” Stone of Ndop, Big Number of Batibo, Cause Trouble of big Bekondo, Ayeke of Alou, Animal Pickin of Eyanchang, Bitu Kola of Kosala Kumba, Die Man (Agbor Oscar Nkeng) of Lebialem, Alhadji of Bafut, R.K of Boyo, Bia Bia, Tiger, Ivo, Field Marshal and many others. While on the other hand, Agha Robinson, Elokobi D., Colonel Matiang Charles Alain, Brigadier General Nka Valere and others of the Cameroon army had been immortalised. Some natives of Fundong had it that the road will never pass again and witch doctors were used to divert bullets of the military just with the wave of a juju stick or tail of an animal used for juju. Images of frightful juju were posted and the fear factor became another player in the crisis with a serious setback on the communities.

It caused many individuals to become economically empowered as middlemen who took both the separatists and military to Nigeria for *odeshi* fortification. On the other hand, many were accused for promoting juju usage by ferrying people for fortification to traditional doctors in Nigeria and elsewhere and were rounded up by the forces of law and order and taken to prison with the example of Ayuknkem Frankline Ayuk from Bachuo Akagbe taken to Kondengui Central Prison since 2017.

Some traditional healers attested that some of the medicinal plants with spiritual properties might be extinct or disappear in some areas due of evil usage and spirits that some people have and touched such plants [⁷⁰]. This too had soiled the lands with the fetish buried at all corners in some villages and evil done in the name of protecting the land as well as neutralising juju and magic powers. As recounted by a freelance journalist who for security reasons name is withheld, Governor Lele Lafrique of the North West Region during a meeting to talk on the major National Dialogue in 2019, called on traditional rulers to perform traditional rites to cleanse their respective lands which according to the journalist meant he was aware of village shrines used for protection.

CONCLUSION

This research indicates that the use of magic in the Anglophone crisis was real but survival depended on carefulness during confrontations. Magic was to protect both the separatists and the Cameroon military but it was realised that the *modus operandi* for black

⁷⁰Ali Omarou 50years traditional medicine practitioner and seer, interviewed in Bonaberi, Douala, 20/01/2020.

magic was not fulfilled because there were deaths on both factions. The research found out that there were some tendencies of magico-spirituality as reported in areas of Mamfe, Kwakwa, Kumba, Bangem, Fundong, Nso, Menchum area (Esu), Bali, Tanka, Mbengwi, Bambui and Kedjom Keku (small Babanki). The use of magic was by both the separatists and the regular army and this motivated some young people to join involuntarily or voluntarily. Initiation caused deaths of many youths especially as most were tested with gunshots to know if they were bullet proves (*odeshi* carriers) or not. There were other severe consequences recorded as magic went with drug and alcohol which caused more harm than good on the individuals and society. Witch doctors and others created new jobs for themselves with charlatans coming up with destructive ways of inciting the use of magic. As the crisis continues, there would be more updates of magic and juju to meet the standards of the crisis even though the international communities all over the globe would be battling to end the crisis through a peaceful and genuine dialogue.

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