

The Fate of Witches: Animism and Traditional Healing in Cameroon

Abstract

Traditional culture and religion disappear and assimilate into the dominant cultures around the world. Globalization has affected all ethnic groups in Africa. Cameroonian Grassfield is still among those which have been preserved diverse customs and rituals. In the past, the Fondom Kedjom Keku – today, village Big Babanki became the focus of this anthropological work. The aim is to understand and describe the current state of the traditional religion of the inhabitants of this village. For comparison with the original form of each religious phenomena serves a number of publications, researches and interviews with witnesses. This work is based on my field research, participatory observation, interviews and questionnaires. My attention is fixed on a belief in Kedjom gods, spirits, souls of ancestors and contemporary celebration of death, magic and witchcraft, supernatural power of amulets, spiritual power of twins and secret societies. Considering the frequency of allegations of witchcraft, this theme is also elaborated in general view with regard to the Kedjom Keku people and the whole Grassfield. Since the connection with the supernatural world is not the only domain of wizards and witches, but this power can be considered useful if it is derived from local shamans, this research is also focused on faith and work of traditional healers. In a separate sub-chapter I analyze interviews with traditional healers, their daily practices, their role in a traditional religion in Kedjom Keku and their perspectives for the future. To be able to put mentioned religious phenomena in the broader context of the village, I describe the authority of Fon and the traditional function of the palace, initiation rituals of ordinary residents Kedjom Keku or provision of hereditary rights.

Key words: Kedjom Keku, traditional religion, witchcraft, healers