

THE BAKA AS “CHAMPIONS” OF WITCHCRAFT: REPRESENTATIONS IN THE AMBIVALENT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BAKA AND THE BAKWELE IN SOUTHEASTERN CAMEROON

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ABSTRACT This paper investigates the relationship between the Baka hunter-gatherers and the Bakwele farmers in southeastern Cameroon, focusing on their narratives about witchcraft. It has been suggested that Baka witchcraft was borrowed from the Bantu farmers. However, the Bakwele people assume that Baka witchcraft is more powerful than their own. The focus of this study is on representations of witchcraft in both societies; *kiti* in the Bakwele and *mokilakila* in the Baka. They appear to be similar on a superficial level; however, major differences exist. From a Bakwele perspective, even *jengi*, the most important and powerful spirit among the Baka, and its associated members, are related to witchcraft. Associations with *jengi* and notions about witchcraft are a combination of historical, economic and political relationships between the Baka and the Bakwele under the “multiple-game situation.” The complex interrelations of their self- and other-representations in this multiple-game situation are discussed.

Key Words: Witchcraft; Representation; Multiple-game situation; Baka; Bakwele; Cameroon.

INTRODUCTION

“...For example, when you are eating a meal in your house, he is also eating, next to you. You can’t see him. You eat, he eats from the same dishes. You don’t know about it. One morning, a Pygmy from a camp downstream came to me. He said, ‘You ate this last night, didn’t you?’ He guessed correctly! Furthermore, he took out a small piece of meat from a cloth, and said ‘well, this is a part of the meat that you ate last night...’ Ah! Baka people are...” (A Bakwele man in his 80s, Adjala Village, February 2012.)

Among the Bakwele, an ethnic group living near the border between Cameroon and Congo-Brazzaville, there is a stereotype narrative of the Baka hunter-gatherers: They possess much stronger witchcraft than the Bakwele. They even call the Baka people “*le champion de la sorcellerie* (champion of witchcraft).” They frequently refer to it in everyday situations, as described in the example above.

Another example of this would be if a Baka man came across an accident, he would most probably shout, “*E jengi!*” According to Tsuru, this is to ask *jengi* for protection, as *jengi* is seen as the most powerful spirit of the Baka (Tsuru, 1998: 63). This is not unusual, but for the Bakwele, this is evidence of witchcraft. One Bakwele man said:

“Imagine you are walking with a Pygmy in the forest. When you come across an accident, he shouts ‘*E jengi!*’, and then he disappears. You can’t find him. That is a kind of witchcraft. They cry out ‘*E jengi!*’ to hide the fact that it is a kind of witchcraft.” (A Bakwele man in his 30s, Adjala Village, February 2012.)

To the Bakwele, the Baka witchcraft involving *jengi* is perceived as being quite dangerous. The Bakwele elder (who was quoted above), also recounted the death of his first wife:

Yamaguchi asked him, “So, is there witchcraft among the Baka people?,” and he answered “Yes! They are witches. And they killed my first wife. I went to the camp in the forest with my wife and some Baka men. I had my rifle for hunting. One day, I asked some Baka men to go hunting with my rifle. I went to tend to my snare traps. They killed a forest hog and a monkey with my rifle and came back to the camp. I was absent because I had many traps to check. They wanted to cut the meat and cook it there and then, my wife refused. They used my rifle and my cartridges. My wife asked them to wait until I came back. They accepted. But deep in their hearts, they became angry with her. They attacked my wife with witchcraft in the night, and then my wife passed away because of their witchcraft.” (A Bakwele man in his 80s, Adjala Village, February 2012.)

However, the topic of Baka witchcraft has not attracted the attention of researchers into hunter-gatherer societies. This is due mainly to a widespread stereotype about hunter-gatherer religions. For example, Turnbull’s description (1961) of the Mbuti Pygmies in the Ituri Forest, described a completely opposite scenario, the villages where the farmers lived were filled with witchcraft, but the Mbuti in the forest were free from distrust and malice. Harako (1984) pointed out that the Mbuti Pygmies and the Bila farmers had developed a social and religious symbiosis. He gave some examples of their witchcraft. One example occurred when the Mbuti attended the funeral of a Bila farmer as protection against witches, and also to expose other witches. He also wrote about the case of a Mbuti man who was accused of being a witch by his fellow Mbutis. However, He indicated that witchcraft had recently been brought to Mbuti society by the farmers (Harako, 1984: 163).

Despite these descriptions, the Bakwele have never claimed that the Baka adopted witchcraft from them, or any other farmer groups. They insist that the Baka have more powerful witchcraft than they do. Thus, the narratives of the Bakwele about Baka witchcraft, and the analyses carried out by researchers of hunter-gatherers, are inconsistent.

This paper focuses on Bakwele narratives of Baka witchcraft.

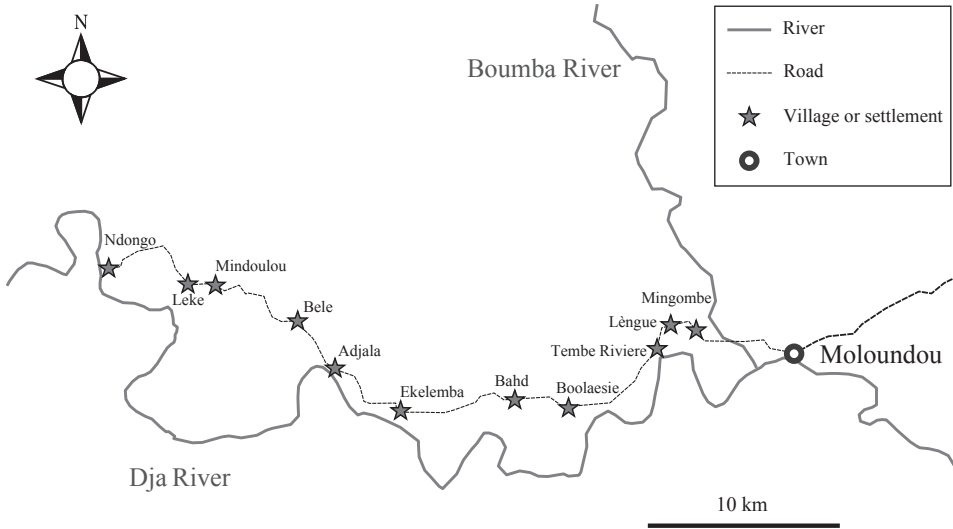


Fig. 1. Map of the Bakwele region in southeastern Cameroon.

RESEARCH AREA AND PEOPLE

This research was conducted in the Boumba-Ngoko Department, East Region, in the Republic of Cameroon. The Bakwele people live along the Dja River, westward to Moloundou (Fig. 1). There are almost 10 Bakwele villages alongside the route, constructed in the 1970s by a logging company. The Baka live side by side with the Bakwele. This research was conducted in Adjala Village from April–August 2010, November 2011–March 2012 and January–February 2013. The informations below were acquired by interviews and conversations with Bakwele people mainly in Adjala and Ekelemba Village.

The Bakwele are Bantu-speaking farmers, and the Baka are Ubangian-speaking hunter-gatherers. Geographically and historically, the Bakwele in Cameroon are divided into 2 groups; the Esel, who live downstream of Dja,⁽¹⁾ and the Djako, who live upstream of Dja⁽²⁾ (Fig. 1).

The Esel formerly lived around the Bek River, 100 km north of their present location, up until the end of the 19th century (Joiris, 1998). During the First World War, Cameroon became a battleground between Germany and France. According to the Esel, their grandparents left the village to avoid the war. They crossed the Dja River into French Congo. In the 1920s, French Congo constructed a railway between Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire, and gathered laborers by force, from all over the Congo. To avoid forced labor, the Esel crossed the Dja River again and travelled north to the place where they now live.

Meanwhile the Konabembe people, who lived around the Ngato Ancien Village (see Preface, in this volume), travelled south between the late 19th and early 20th

centuries. They met the Ebaa people, a branch of the Bakwele, and integrated, becoming the Djako⁽³⁾ (Joiris, 1998; Robillard, 2011: 35). Both the Esel and the Djako currently identify as Bakwele.

Ancestors of the Baka had contact with the Esel and the Djako in the regions they occupied, and they moved together (Joiris, 1998). Thus they have had an ongoing relationship for over 100 years. During the colonial situation, the Bakwele leaders needed elephant tusks to show off their prestige, and asked the Baka to hunt elephants for them. The Bakwele leaders gave their female relatives to the best Baka hunters as wives, and built houses for them to live in. The Bakwele and the Baka both practiced circumcision, which strengthened their relationships. They were also initiated into *jengi* association of the Baka (Joiris, 1998).

After the 1950s, the Baka sedentarized under the guidance of administration, and started to take up cultivation of crops (Althabe, 1965). Today, most of the Baka in this region own their own cacao fields, and work part-time for Muslim merchants to earn cash during the cacao season (Kitanishi, 2006; Oishi, 2012a).

WITCHCRAFT AMONG THE BAKWELE AND THE BAKA

Bakwele Witchcraft

In the Bakwele language, “witchcraft” in English, or “*sorcellerie*” in French, is known as “*elieeb*” (Siroto, 1969; Oishi, 2008). They say that *elieeb* is a substance found in the human stomach. The person who has it is “*mot elieeb*” (a person of *elieeb*), which corresponds to “witch.” *Elieeb* issues orders to its host, and he/she cannot disobey it. Only *mot elieeb* can see the acts of *elieeb* in another person. They are said to have “other eyes”; having one set of eyes for the ordinary world and another set of eyes to see the *elieeb*.

Elieeb is not inherited. It is like an infection or a sickness. It is transmitted when someone with *elieeb* touches or looks at a newborn. It gives the host mystical powers, such as clairvoyance. Industriousness or cleverness are also attributed to *elieeb*. On the other hand, it causes evil powers to harm or to “eat” other people. Thus *elieeb* has ambiguous powers (Siroto, 1969), but in daily conversations, its harmful aspects are emphasized. For example, there is a story of *mot elieeb* who gather to “eat” victims in the night. Each member of this group has to take turns sacrificing their relatives; if they refuse, they must take their own lives instead.⁽⁴⁾

When *elieeb* “eats (*ede*)” someone, it causes victim’s death. However, there is another explanation of death concerning *elieeb*. For example, a witch (*mot elieeb*) can fight with another witch in the night. If he/she is beaten, then his/her *elieeb* is injured. During the day, that witch becomes ill. There is no way to cure him/her, except for treatment by traditional healers. If they are not treated, he/she will die. In this case, the illness and death of this person is caused by his/her action with *elieeb*.

Baka Witchcraft

According to Joiris (1996), the Baka in possession of knowledge of the rituals is called *nganga*. The *nganga* role is ambiguous, as they not only act as diviner-healers, but sometimes also as witches, known as *wa-mbu* (Joiris, 1996: 251–252). Joiris wrote: “The Baka say that the *nganga* specialist initiates become *wa-mbu* witches when they spill human blood instead of animal blood” (Joiris, 1993: 57). *Mbu* means stomach in the Baka language, so *wa-mbu* means someone who has something special in his/her stomach⁽⁵⁾ (Joiris, 1998: 84; Köhler, 2000: 64–65). Joiris wrote about something called *ndambu* in the human stomach, and those with it can track animals in hunting. He/she can even use its power to identify other witches (Joiris, 1998: 179). Joiris also reported a Baka narrative about a battle in the night, “*la lutte de la nuit*” between 2 *ngangas*. They fought each other for guardianship of the spirit, and finally one died (Joiris, 1998: 77–80). This narrative closely resembles the Bakwele’s *mot elieeb*.

There are 2 opposing views of the *nganga* character and Baka witchcraft. One states that these concepts were borrowed from Bantu farmers during the process of sedentarization, and the other suggests that there were originally concepts corresponding to witchcraft among the Baka themselves. Joiris (1998) took the latter stance, because the ambiguities of *nganga* seemed to be widespread among the Baka culture. On the other hand, Tsuru (1998) insisted that the *nganga* rituals were completely different from *be* (the Baka singing and dance performances), and therefore that *nganga* originated in the Bantu farmers. Tsuru suggested that *nganga* was a marginal person, and that they did not play an important role in Baka society, such as a camp chief or master hunter (*tuma*) (Tsuru, 1998: 53–54).

METAMORPHOSIS AND WITCHCRAFT

Kiti among the Bakwele

Among the Bakwele, *elizaliza* means the metamorphosis into animals (Oishi, 2012b). *Elizaliza* derived from the verb “*eliza*,” meaning “to turn something” (e.g., “*keliza koolu*” means “turn the plantain banana”). He described a gorilla with a human soul, called *djil-elizaliza*. He classified this type of gorilla into 2 categories; “living witches” who metamorphose into gorillas to harm people, and “dead witches” who are incarnated into gorillas. The former is called *kiti*, and is very much feared by the Bakwele people (Oishi, 2012b).

The *kiti* witch also metamorphose into animals other than gorillas. According to Joiris, *kiti* was a secret society of the Bakwele (Djako), and its members had the ability to transform into a panther, hippopotamus or a colobus monkey (Joiris, 1998: 257).

It is also said that the *kiti* witch catches people in the forest or drags them into the river to kill and eat them. These images are widespread in southeastern Cameroon. For example, Pierre Ichac, an ethnographer who traveled around

Moloundou in the 1930s, recorded the following account, told to him by his Sanga-sanga⁽⁶⁾ guide:

“... and there is *kiti*... they are also in the river, but you can't see them. They are enemies of the fishermen. They drag fishermen into the river to kill them, and then eat them. I have seen many corpses taken from the Ngoko River. They had no noses, ears or even private parts. That was done by *kiti*. Boatmen and fishermen should make offerings. Ask the boatmen when you get to the Boumba River!” (Ichac, 1957)

Kiti is also explained as the ability to kill and enslave someone to work in the cacao plantations. For example, a Bakwele (Djako) man explained to me:

“*Kiti* is a kind of witchcraft. It is for the Bantu people, like Bakwele... It is witchcraft to capture or kill someone. If a man has *kiti*, he kills someone in a mysterious way, and the dead man is forced to work in the witch's plantation. So, it is witchcraft. For the man with *kiti*, it is a kind of “development,” because he kills people to make them work in his plantation. He also kills to “eat”... It is a kind of witchcraft. They are very rich. If you had *kiti*, you could have a large plantation. You have workers who do jobs on your plantation in mythical ways at night. You can have all the things you need. Everything... You become a big man. There are some people who use it only for bad purposes. There also are some people who profit from it.” (A Bakwele man in his 40s, Leke Village, February 2013.)

In this account, the image of the “undead laborer” is clear. Geschiere (1997) described images of “zombie labor” that are widespread in Cameroon as “the nouveaux riches supposedly owe their success to the exploitation of this zombie labor.” It is possible that these zombie labor images are related to the memory of slave trading (Shaw, 1997). The Bakwele also subscribe to the idea that *kiti* witches own larger cacao plantations than other people. Thus that person grows more cacao and earns more money.⁽⁷⁾ Robillard (2011) described this type of *kiti*. She indicated that Bakwele people who achieved economic or political success were deemed to have it. The elites are thought to “eat hungrily” (*bouffer* in French) their affines to get better political positions (Robillard, 2011: 395–397).

We can therefore summarize the more common aspects of *kiti* as follows: A kind of *elizaliza* (animal metamorphosis), killing someone in the forest or river, being able to make others work for you in the cacao plantations.

Mokilakila among the Baka

Mokilakila (or *mokelakela*, *mokela*, *mokila*) is one of the magical arts of the Baka. According to Joiris (1998), members of the *mokela* ritual society have the ability to metamorphose into animals, and when they die, their souls (*me*) incarnate into animals. All animals can be a *mokela* animal, but especially elephants, gorillas and panthers, and these *mokela* animals are aggressive (Joiris, 1998: 67, 84, 166–

167, 175). *Mokela* elephants are also involved in witchcraft (Joiris, 1998: 147).

Köhler (2000) wrote about *mokila* narratives among the Baka people living around Souanke City, northwestern Congo-Brazzaville. In Cameroon, *mokila* is a kind of secret society of the Baka, who are thought to have the ability to metamorphose into elephants⁽⁸⁾ (Köhler, 2000: 50). *Mokila* elephants appear to be ordinary to non-members of the secret society, but their faces and scent are human. They kill elephant hunters for revenge for fellow *mokila* that were killed, and kidnap adult women and children into the forest, and force them to become members of the *mokila* society (Köhler, 2000: 50–52). Joiris described a similar story about the *mokela* among the Baka in Cameroon, where *mokela* elephants gathered in groups to attack other camps, and to abduct children and courageous hunters (Joiris, 1998: 166).

We can therefore summarize the more common aspects of *mokilakila* as; metamorphosis into animals, kidnapping, and the killing of others.

Mokilakila from the Bakwele Perspective

The Bakwele have a different concept of *mokilakila*. They say that the Baka, especially the elders, practice *mokilakila* and usually metamorphose into elephants. The Bakwele consider the Baka elders to be the most powerful witches. For example, a Bakwele recalled an episode about Baka elders who had transformed into elephants. They helped a Bakwele (Esel) man, who was captive in French Congo at the beginning of the 20th century, to escape from his enemies.⁽⁹⁾

According to the Bakwele, the *mokilakila* elephants are aggressive and dangerous. They appear to be normal elephants, but have no mercy and kill people. To avoid encountering them in the forest, the Bakwele wear a kind of bracelet made of special grasses called a *jebabi*. If a hunter kills a *mokilakila* elephant, the corpse soon disappears, and when he returns to his village or camp, he will hear news that someone has died. The deceased person will be the one who transformed into a *mokilakila* elephant.

Sometimes the Bakwele talk about *mokilakila* as elephants or gorillas that devastate the fields. There are 2 scenarios: One is of someone who has metamorphosed and maliciously destroys the fields, the other is of a witch who controls the elephants or gorillas and makes them destroy the fields or houses. However, the latter is rare. Oishi reported that, according to the Bakwele, the Baka transform into rats or monkeys to steal the crops. That type of Baka witchcraft is known as *elizaliza*, not *mokilakila* (Oishi, 2012b).

Similarities and Differences between *Kiti* and *Mokilakila*

Both *kiti* in Bakwele and *mokilakila* in Baka have common aspects (Table 1); both involve the transformation into an animal, and the disappearance of people in the forest. However, there are significant differences. *Kiti* is regarded as a kind of witchcraft (*elieeb*), and *kiti* witches kill other people to “eat” them, or to make them work in the cacao plantation. *Mokilakila* is also a kind of witchcraft (*mbu*) to metamorphose into elephants. On the other hand, kill hunters for vengeance,

Table 1. Classification of animal metamorphosis in the Bakwele and the Baka

| <i>elizaliza, kiti</i> (Bakwele) | <i>mokilakila</i> (Baka) |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A kind of witchcraft⁽¹⁾ (<i>elieeb</i>) •Metamorphose into animals⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ •Kill someone in the forest⁽¹⁾ or river (specially called <i>kiti</i>) •Related to zombification and forced labor⁽⁴⁾ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A kind of witchcraft⁽²⁾ (<i>mbu</i>) •Metamorphose into animals such as elephants, panthers, colobus monkeys⁽²⁾ •Having ritual associations⁽²⁾⁽³⁾ •Kidnapping people to join the association⁽²⁾⁽³⁾ |
| <i>Mokilakila</i> (from the Bakwele perspective) | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Almost the same as Bakwele's <i>elizaliza</i> (especially <i>kiti</i>) •Metamorphose into animals such as elephants or small animals to devastate the fields | |

(1) Oishi (2013)

(2) Joiris (1998)

(3) Köhler (2000)

(4) Geschiere (1997)

and kidnap children and women to join their group.

The similarities and differences in *mokilakila* are clear in the narratives of Bakwele people. They consider *mokilakila* to be almost the same as *elizaliza*. However, they do differ in some aspects. The Bakwele link the Baka *mokilakila* with a means of stealing crops from the fields. As Oishi (2012b) indicated, this image of *mokilakila* is related to the Bakwele's stereotypical image of the Baka: They steal crops from fields. Thus, in other words, these images of *mokilakila* are the Bakwele's other-representation. How do the Bakwele view themselves? The answer can be found in narratives about *kiti* among the Bakwele. Images of zombification and forced labor come from *kiti*, but are not found in their interpretations of *mokilakila*. The idea of *elizaliza* is linked to another stereotyped representation. Witches "eat" their relatives to obtain economic or political success (Robillard, 2011).

EXAMPLE CASES OF WITCHCRAFT

In this section, 3 cases of *kiti* and *mokilakila* witchcraft, involving the Baka and the Bakwele, are described. Through these cases, the characteristics of the witchcraft representations are clarified.

Case 1: Kidnapping and witchcraft

A Baka family living in the outskirts of Adjala Village comprises BKM, a man in his early 60s, his son (called NDY), and NDY's wife and their children. In November 2011, NDY's wife went into the forest, but she did not return to the village after sunset. Her Bakwele neighbors searched for her till midnight, but

were unable to find her.

2 days later, she returned to village by herself, but she seemed to be confused. She was naked although she was wearing clothes when she went into the forest. Moreover, she had lost her memory during her disappearance, and was mentally disturbed. NDY decided to leave his village with his wife to take her back to her home village, and to get away from any danger.

My main informant, NKS explained that this was a case of witchcraft. A witch attempted to kidnap NDY’s wife to “eat” her. It was not clear whether the witch was a Bakwele or a Baka. According to NKS, it is not uncommon for the Baka to kill his/her fellows by witchcraft, as they are more powerful than Bakwele witches.

In December 2011, when NDY returned to the village, I inquired about his wife. He explained that she was being treated by a traditional healer, and was getting better. I also inquired whether his wife’s disappearance had been caused by witchcraft. He replied, “Yes, the villagers want to kill my wife! I don’t know why. But I will be back with my all family when she gets well.” The next morning NDY left the village for the house of a traditional healer where his wife was waiting for him.

Case 2: Kidnapped or kidnapper?

The same day that NDY left, another Baka man, BAB, became lost in the forest. He was at a camp with his family around a cacao plantation belonging to a Muslim merchant. My informant NKS, connected this case to that of the kidnap of NDY’s wife. He said that the witch had failed to kill NDY’s wife, so he/she targeted BAB instead. The next day, BAB did not return to the village. On visiting a neighboring village, the people gave the same explanation as NKS: A witch had tried to kidnap NDY’s wife, caught BAB instead. They referred to *kiti* of the Bakwele, and *mokilakila* of the Baka as being the abductor.

BAB returned to his camp after 3 days. The chief of the Canton⁽¹⁰⁾ in Adjala Village carried out an investigation. According to those who attended, BAB explained that he had drunk too much, and simply took a rest in the forest. He insisted that this was not a case of *kiti*. NKS did not trust this to be true, and queried who could stay drunk for almost 2 days? NKS had his own hypothesis, and suggested that BAB was the witch and he had attempted to kidnap NDY’s wife to sacrifice her. However, he failed and thus he was in danger of being sacrificed in her place, by his fellow witches.

The next morning, BAB and his wife went to the hospital in Moloundou town with his Muslim employer. The villagers said that before he left, he explained to chief of the Canton that during his disappearance he had been caught by someone, and that he flew away in the air.

The rumors of this soon spread around Adjala Village. Both the Bakwele and the Baka talked about it. For example, when NKS was chatting with a young Baka man, NKS jokingly asked him, “So, you are the *kiti* man, aren’t you?” The young Baka replied with a laugh, “It’s not me! It is BKM, or a Congolese!⁽¹¹⁾” BKM is NDY’s father.

About 1 week later, a Muslim man said that BAB and his wife had returned

to their camp. According to him, the doctor at the Moloundou hospital had diagnosed that BAB drank too much and was suffering from malnutrition. When NKS's wife heard this, she frowned and said, "It was all down to Fighter (a cheap alcoholic drink, see also Oishi & Hayashi, 2014, in this volume) anyway."

Case 3: Another Bakwele death

About 1 week later, a Bakwele man called GIT, died on New Year's day, 2012. Witchcraft was implicated in the cause of his death (Yamaguchi, 2012). Many people suspected GIT's maternal uncle of being the witch. If this was the case, it was a family affair. However a certain number of the villagers were also associated the death with the Baka disappearances in Cases 1 and 2. The witch who tried to kidnap the Baka had started to target Bakwele people, and had finally found a victim in GIT. Thus, GIT's maternal uncle was also suspected of being the witch that had caused the disappearances of the Baka in Cases 1 and 2.⁽¹²⁾

Analysis of Cases 1–3

Focusing on the complex processes of Cases 1–3, the following characteristics can be identified:

- The potential "witch candidate" changed frequently.
- The victim easily became the assailant (i.e., the witch).
- There was no ethnic distinction (Bakwele or Baka) in the witch candidate, and the type of magical art (*kiti* in Bakwele or *mokilakila* in Baka). In other words, in these cases, the Bakwele and the Baka were exchangeable.
- The image of the witch is a stereotype: They get together to "eat" victims in the night. Each member should sacrifice their relatives, and if not their own lives will be taken instead.

It should be noted that these are mainly the views of the Bakwele. In future research, the Baka interpretation of these incidents will be examined. However, from a Bakwele standpoint, their own images of witches are projected onto the Baka.

JENGIAS "AN ASSOCIATION OF WITCHCRAFT"

The case described in this section concerns the initiation ceremony into the *jengi* association of the Baka. The association, however, also has many Bakwele members, and the Bakwele descriptions are very different from those of the Baka and also from previous research analyses.

Jengi is one of the most popular and powerful spirits (*me*) among the Baka (Tsuru, 1998). It is also the name of its ritualistic association. Joiris described the main functions of a *jengi* ritual association as establishing protection from the danger of the forest, and to contribute to the preservation of peace and harmony in the community (Joiris, 1996: 250). Tsuru described how a *jengi* spirit performance was performed at circumcision rites of young men, funeral rites, or

sometimes simply for amusement (Tsuru, 1998: 54–57).

Here follows a description of an initiation ritual of a *jengi* association that was observed in Bele (a small settlement of the Baka and some merchants, 3 km westward from Adjala Village) on 31 May 2010. Being initiated into a *jengi* association is part of the process of becoming an adult Baka male (Bahuchet, 1992). However, according to Joiris (1998) and Rupp (2003), many Bantu people, such as Mboman, Bangando and Bakwele farmers have also been initiated into this association for many generations. In the past, only people of high status were able to join the *jengi* association (Joiris, 1998: 256), but nowadays there are no restrictions on age or social status.

Initiation into the *Jengi* Association

An initiation into the *jengi* association was held in Bele on 31 May 2010. It was observed by a crowd of over 100 people, including Baka and Bakwele. Women were present, selling *ngolongolo* (the local alcohol) and cigarettes. A path for the *jengi* had been constructed behind the Baka camp.

At approximately 15:00, a group of Baka and Bakwele men holding plants, walked around, beating the earth. 2 men stripped to the waist, and there was also 1 child with his grandfather. One of the men was a Bakwele man in 40s, and the other man was also a Bakwele, in his 20s. The child initiate was also a Bakwele, and appeared to be approximately 2 years old. A Bakwele traditional healer (*gaa*, in the Bakwele language) led them into the bush. After about 10 minutes, they returned, and then they were roughly pushed into a small *mongulu* hut in front of the *jengi*'s path. Drums were beating and women were singing, and then the *jengi* came out onto the path. It turned towards the voices of the members when it heard them shout, “hoo!” The *jengi* went into a passageway with some members and after few minutes it came out. This was repeated several times. After a few minutes, something approached in the distance on the path. Its body was almost like that of the *jengi*, but it had a large red mask on its head. It suddenly became smaller, and the members stopped it by shaking their arms and shouting, “It’s finished! It’s finished!” Then, the people who were outside the passage split up. The mask that appeared was called a *djabango*. A Bakwele man said to me, “That is the king of the forest!”⁽¹³⁾ It is very strong!”

The Bakwele Interpretation of the *Jengi* Association and Its Members

The day after the *jengi* initiation, I checked my field notes with my Bakwele friend. He began to reveal “the secret information” behind the *jengi* association:

“You know, the *jengi* is not a spirit. There is a person inside it. That is why the members hide the *jengi* with leaves. If not, the man inside it would be exposed when they dance in the daylight. In a similar way, there is a person inside the *djabango* spirit. A face of an animal is attached to the face of the *djabango*. Members only let us see it from afar. If we could approach to it, we would understand that it was a mask with an animal

skin. Of course we can't take pictures of it because a picture will clearly show you that it is not a spirit, and that it is a fake. They said that the blood daubed on the stick was the blood of the initiate. That's not true! It was the blood of chickens!"

He was told these secrets by his friend who is a member of the *jengi* association. However, despite this knowledge, he did not say that the *jengi* was a trick; instead, he said that *jengi* was actually an association of witches. According to him, each member of the *jengi* association has witchcraft in their stomach. Before the *jengi* performance, the members take the witchcraft out of their body, and lend it temporarily to the *jengi* dancer. Thus the *jengi* dancer has a lot of witchcraft in his body and becomes very dangerous and powerful. That is why the *jengi* can dance in a superhuman way, as if there is no one inside the costume.

Another Bakwele man described the place beyond the *jengi* path. When the *jengi* performance is going to be held, they prepare 3 places in the forest. The closest place to the *jengi*'s passage is for new and young members. The second place is for senior members. And the third place, deepest in the forest, is for the oldest members. The Bakwele members are restricted to the first and second places. Only the Baka elders can enter the deepest place, and they give their witchcraft to the *jengi* dancer. However, both Baka and Bakwele members can become the dancer. There are 2 types of *jengi* dance; one is the normal dance where the *jengi* rotates and reduces in size, and another is the "disappearing dance." In the latter, when the *jengi* dances, it reduces in size and its cloth finally falls to the ground. Then, a member picks it up and shakes it and there is no one there. The dancer has disappeared somewhere. After people have confirmed that there is no one inside the cloth, a member puts it on the ground. Drumming and singing start up again, and then the *jengi* rises up with its cloth and begins to dance once more.

INTERRELATIONS BETWEEN REPRESENTATIONS

As can be seen, the representations among the Baka and the Bakwele are highly complex. To analyze them, a matrix, as seen in Table 2, was used. In these matrices, the "Representer" (the one who makes the representation) and the "Representee" (the one who is represented), are distinguished. Top left and bottom right are the Bakwele's and Baka's self-representations (i.e. how the Bakwele and Baka represent themselves), respectively. Bottom left is the Bakwele's other-representation of the Baka, and top right is the Baka's other-representation of the Bakwele.

Other-representations as Animals

Issues surrounding the Pygmy-farmer relationship have provoked a great deal of controversy. The Pygmy-farmer relationships are a type of "ambivalent symbiosis" (Terashima, 1997; Takeuchi, 2005). Although they depend on each other at a

Table 2. Matrix of self -and other-representations

| Representer Representee | Bakwele | Baka |
|----------------------------|--|--|
| Bakwele | Bakwele’s self-representation | Baka’s other-representation of the Bakwele |
| Baka | Bakwele’s other-representation of the Baka | Baka’s self-representation |

Table 3. Other-representation as animals

| Representer Representee | Bakwele | Baka |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Bakwele | No evident representation? | Bakwele are arrogant gorillas (<i>ebobo</i>). |
| Baka | Baka are small animals (<i>titt</i>). Robbing crops from the fields. A sort of derogation. | No evident representation? |

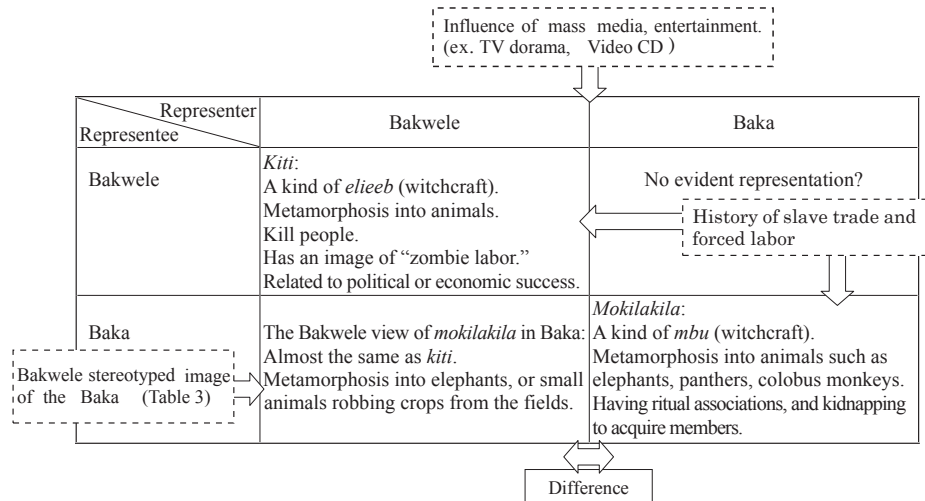


Fig. 2. Representations of *kiti* and *mokilakila*.

subsistence level, relations between them are strained. For example, the Aka people in northern Congo-Brazzaville call the farmers “gorillas,” and the farmers call the Aka “chimpanzees” (Takeuchi, 2005). Hanawa (2004) also showed how the Bobanda farmers in northern Congo-Brazzaville call the Aka “animals,” and the Aka call the Bobanda “witches.”

This is similar to the situation between the Bakwele and the Baka. According to Oishi (2012b), the Bakwele call the Baka “animals” (*titt* in Bakwele), who steal the crops in the fields, and the Baka call the Bakwele “gorillas” (*ebobo* in Baka), because they are quite arrogant⁽¹⁴⁾ (Table 3). Thus they are insulting each other using representations of animals.

Representations of *Kiti* and *Mokilakila*

Here the dichotomic perspective is expanded to consider *kiti* among the Bakwele, and *mokilakila* among the Baka (Fig. 2). This forms a complex matrix of representation, compared with the simple, mutual depreciation matrix shown in Table 3.

The Bakwele *kiti* (top left) is a type of witchcraft (*elieeb*). *Kiti* is a living witch, who metamorphoses into an animal, such as a gorilla. They catch people in the forest or in the rivers, and force them to work in the cacao plantations.

The Baka *mokilakila* (bottom right) has similar characteristics. They metamorphose into animals such as elephants, panthers, or colobus monkeys. They belong to a ritual association, and kidnap people to be affiliated with it.

The Bakwele representation of *mokilakila* (bottom left) is basically same as *kiti*. From a Bakwele perspective, in Cases 1–3 described above, there is no ethnic distinction of the witch candidate, and the type of magical art (*kiti* or *mokilakila*). However, influences are seen in the Bakwele representation of the Baka. The stereotyped images of the *mokilakila* animals among the Bakwele are paralleled by the Baka: They steal crops from the fields, and the *mokilakila* animals destroy the fields of the Bakwele. In contrast, the Bakwele representation of *kiti* (top left) contains images of zombification and forced labor in the cacao fields. It is possible that the idea of zombie labor has been transferred into *kiti* along with the spread of cacao cultivation in this area.

These stereotypes exist not only among the Bakwele and the Baka themselves, they also extend into the political situation, which is also reflected in *kiti/mokilakila* representations. Bakwele people say that the political elites possess *kiti* witchcraft, which is responsible for their success (Robillard, 2011). They “eat” their relatives to obtain a political and economic advantage. This idea is an expanded interpretation of the zombie labor scenarios in the cacao plantations, where the *kiti* witches kill others and force them to work. Here, the *kiti* witch exploits their victims’ labor force, and they profit from it. However, this process seems to fall short of “eating” their victims. In contrast, the Bakwele typically stereotypes the Baka as poor. For this reason, the Bakwele do not relate *mokilakila* with elitist power: “*Kiti* is a kind of witchcraft. It is for the Bantu people, the Bakwele.” [See the explanation of *kiti* by a Bakwele (Djako) man, above].

As can be seen, the Baka representation of *mokilakila* transferred onto a Bakwele concept of the Baka people, and was combined with their stereotyped ideas of

the Baka. Together, this comprises the Bakwele representation of *mokilakila*. It provides a contrasting image to the Bakwele’s self-representation of *kiti* in the framework of cacao cultivation and the current political situation in Cameroon.

It is clear that this transference and combining of images is ongoing. For example, the power of mass media and entertainment such as videos CDs and DVDs seem to be highly influential. Even in remote villages, people are able to watch recorded videos or satellite TV shows, with the aid of generators they bought using the money from cacao plantations. The Baka and the Bakwele like to watch films⁽¹⁵⁾ about witchcraft among African people: Such as the story of witches who kill their affine to get money and success. These images can easily be transferred and adapted into their own representations of witchcraft.

Representations of *Jengi* and Its Members

The matrix chart of *jengi* representation is shown in Figuer 3. Self-representation of *jengi* among the Baka (bottom right) has been the subject of much controversy. *Jengi* and initiation into it is a rite of passage for young men into the social world of adults, the techniques for surviving in the forest and the spirits (Bahuchet, 1992; Tsuru, 1998); it also offers protection against the forest (Joiris, 1996). *Jengi* is also strongly linked to elephant hunting (Joiris, 1996; Yasuoka, 2012).

The Bakwele have also been initiated into the *jengi* association for many generations (top left). People of influence among the Bakwele attempted to strengthen their relationships with the Baka by undergoing circumcision rites together, and developing pseudo-familial relationships. Being initiated into the *jengi* association is also a part of this (Joiris, 1998). They even seek to access the mystical powers of the Baka. As described above, even infants⁽¹⁶⁾ can now be initiated into the *jengi* association, and the Bakwele traditional healer (*gaa*) is involved in this initiation.

As far as the Bakwele are concerned, the *jengi* (bottom left) of the Baka and its association purely concerns witchcraft. They assume that the power of *jengi* and of its members comes from witchcraft. One Bakwele man explained that

| Representer \ Representee | Bakwele | Baka |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Bakwele | Members have mystical powers, and strong ties with the Baka. | Baka accept the Bakwele members of <i>jengi</i> ? |
| Baka | Not a true “forest spirit.” Some Bakwele also perform the dance. Thought to have powerful witchcraft. | Affiliated through a rite of passage. Having knowledge of the forest, especially elephant hunting. |

Fig. 3. Representations of *jengi* and its members.

many Baka people die after the *jengi* dance. This notion indicates that they take the *jengi* association and its members as witches who eat others. The human-eating witch is also a stereotypical image of the Bakwele witch (*mot elieeb*). Here it can be seen that the Bakwele witchcraft (*elieeb*) is transferred onto their representations of *jengi*.

The Bakwele representations of *jengi* also indicate their sense of distance from the Baka (bottom left). They know that there is a dancer in the *jengi* spirit but there is something beyond their understanding in the cloth and the dancer. Moreover, there is the space where only the Baka elders can go and the Bakwele cannot, even if they are members of *jengi*. At the same time, this is one reason why the Bakwele are fascinated with *jengi*. Even though they have strong ties with the Baka, there remain some uncertainties and secrets for the Bakwele, and they are in an inferior position in the *jengi* association. This is why they say the Baka people are the “champions” of witchcraft.

It is the Bakwele themselves who see *jengi* as an association of powerful witches. And if this is true, then it seems difficult for them to justify being initiated into the *jengi*. Some Bakwele even blame this association for involving witchcraft in some situations. But *elieeb* is an ambiguous entity. Both human-eating witches and traditional healers have it in their stomachs. It depends on the character of the *elieeb* they have, as to whether it is dangerous. This ambiguity of *elieeb* is also transferred into the Bakwele idea of *jengi*. Within this framework, the *jengi* association offers its members protection and secret knowledge of the forest on the one hand, but it could cost a human life on the other. Similar to the ambiguity of *jengi*, the Baka are powerful witchcraft bearers on the one hand, but they are also good healers on the other. The Bakwele have both negative and positive images of the Baka (see the narrative of elder Bakwele man in the introduction).

DISCUSSION: THE BAKWELE-BAKA WITCHCRAFT UNDER THE “MULTIPLE-GAME SITUATION”

Considering the similarities and differences of the Bakwele and the Baka concepts of witchcraft, it appears to be impossible to separate them. It is not clear whether Pygmy groups such as the Baka originally had witchcraft-like concepts (Harako, 1984; Joiris, 1998; Tsuru, 1998). In this paper, I cannot discuss about this problem in detail because I have only limited data on Baka witchcraft. But it is clear that nowadays both peoples have developed a process of making representations. In such a situation, “projections of representation” are observed in various forms. For example, the Bakwele project their own stereotyped image of the Baka (small animals stealing crops from the fields) onto *mokilakila*. They also project their concept of witchcraft (*elieeb*) onto the Baka’s *jengi*, and subsequently re-project *jengi*’s strong powers onto the Bakwele members of the *jengi* society. From a historical viewpoint, memories of the slave trade and forced labor in plantations have cast a shadow on the witchcraft representations of *kiti* in the Bakwele and *mokilakila* in the Baka.

These projections often lead to contradictions in the representations of the Bakwele and the Baka. As the title of this paper states, the Bakwele consider the Baka as the “champions” of witchcraft. Consequently, the representation of the Baka by the Bakwele is divided: The Baka are socially lower than the Bakwele, but they have higher powers of witchcraft.

Another contradicting representation is seen in the Bakwele concept of *kiti*. This is evil witchcraft that sometimes kills people. On the other hand, *kiti* can also bring about success to those that have it. Also in the cases of witchcraft described above, the “candidate witch” frequently changed, and the victim can easily become the assailant (i.e., the witch). However, there remain discrepancies, as described in Douglas’s (1957) example of the symbolism of pangolin in the Lele, where concepts that are contradictory are more likely to be represented.

These processes cannot be described by the terms such as “borrowing” or “sharing.” The concept of “borrowing” immediately evokes a question: What is the “original” concept? As described above, it is difficult to point out who had, and even what was, the “original” concept. Instead, Bakwele witchcraft such as *kiti* is ever-changing concept influenced by dynamics of an economy and politics. “Sharing” is also unsuitable. The case of *jengi* is a good example. Both the Baka and the Bakwele take part in the *jengi* association and its ritual, but they represent *jengi* in quite different way. The representation of *jengi* as an association of witchcraft is not “shared” by both of the Bakwele and the Baka. They have different opinions on *jengi*, although they act together.

Sugishima (2008) calls such case as “multiple-game⁽¹⁷⁾ situation,” in which 2 or more un-concomitant rules/beliefs go side by side. In the case of the Bakwele and the Baka, this situation is clear in the representation of *mokilakila* and *jengi*. The Bakwele have different representations of *mokilakila* and *jengi* from those of the Baka. But these representations themselves do not conflict with Bakwele’s concept on witchcraft (*elieeb*).

This picture is incompatible with prior descriptions of a mutual view of farmers and hunter-gatherers, such as the simple dichotomy of the “village realm” and the “forest realm” (Turnbull, 1961), or mutual segregation by zoomorphism (Hanawa, 2004; Takeuchi, 2005; Oishi, 2012b).

It is an issue in the future to clarify this representation and projection process from the Baka side. It is possible that the Baka themselves have shown and proven their abilities to the Bakwele; for example, in using their knowledge of medicinal plants in the forest, and in the power of their spiritual performances. They also provide evidence of the power of their witchcraft to the Bakwele, although not intentionally. This is also another kind of multiple-game situation. And the reproduction process of stereotypical, even discriminating images toward Baka people is another question in the future.

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NOTES

- (1) “Downstream of Dja” is called *Djache* or *Dja'ache* in Bakwele.
- (2) “Upstream of Dja” is called *Djako* or *Dja'ako* in the Bakwele language. The Djako group were named after the place where they lived.
- (3) People from the Esel group claimed that the Djako were not true Bakwele. The Esel people call the Djako people Bakwele, because they live in the same region and have close relationships with them, such as marriage alliances. Both the Esel and the Djako explained that their relationships were “mixed up.” There is a need for more detailed statistical data of the marriage dynamics of them, and also other Bakwele groups in Congo-Brazzaville.
- (4) This image conflicts with the image that witches are commanded by witchcraft substances in their stomachs. If so, the actions of witches are not of free-will. But when people discuss witchcraft, they talk as if witches act intentionally. On the other hand, magical medicines are used willingly (known as *met* in the Bakwele language). There is a clear distinction between *met* and *elieeb*. In Bakwele, it is difficult to distinguish “witchcraft” from “sorcery” with actor’s intension.
- (5) It is uncertain how *mbu* is acquired and transmitted to the next generation. Lewis reported the case of the Mbendjele Pygmies living in northern Congo-Brazzaville. Among the Mbendjele, there is *gundu* which is in the human stomach and gives its host mystical powers (Lewis, 2002: 31). It is transmitted from mother to daughter, and father to son. The witch who “eats” someone will reincarnate into a forest animal, such as a duiker (Lewis, 2002: 93).
- (6) The Sanga-sanga are a Bantu-speaking people. They are part of the same language family with the Bakwele.
- (7) According to this Bakwele (Djako) man, the first person to cultivate cacao in a plantation had taken cacao seeds from around Djoum, in southern Cameroon. “When he went to Djoum for work, he found large plantations there. So he brought the seeds to his home village, and planted them. He came back from a far place, and had large cacao plantations, so people rumored that he was a *kiti* (witch). When they passed his plantation, they ran because they often came across a gorilla.”
- (8) We can find similar statements in Lewis’ (2002) report of the Mbendjele people living in the Sanga region of Congo-Brazzaville. According to him, the Ngombe Yaka (Baka Pygmy) are the masters of metamorphosis into elephants, which is known as *mokidwa* or *mokidwakidwa*, and they come to the Mbendjele forest to kill men and kidnap women and children (Lewis, 2002: 57–58, 296).
- (9) “...Congolese had taken Tolobu as a prisoner. They planted plantain bananas near the place they kept him prisoner, and when it produced bananas, they would eat him. Living as a captive, Tolobu made friendships with the Pygmies. He said to Eliya, a Pygmy

leader, ‘This plantain will be ripe soon. Then, they will kill me. Please take me to Mindjam Village.’ Eliya replied, ‘After they fall asleep, come to me.’ Tolobu escaped at midnight just as Eliya had told him, and went to his camp. Eliya said, ‘You should leave here with women and children. I will follow you with the elders.’ Tolobu left and soon he felt rumbling on the ground and heard the sound of elephants. Then he understood that Eliya and the Baka elders had transformed into elephants, and they were destroying their camp and routes to avoid to be chased. Thanks to them, they arrived at Mindjam Village safely.” [A Bakwele (Esel) man in his 50s, Ekelemba Village, March 2013].

- (10) A “canton” is the administrative unit just above the “village” of Cameroon.
- (11) This is a kind of stereotypes toward Congolese.
- (12) This assumption is possible. According to the half-sister of the deceased, when all the relatives were sleeping in the room the night before the burial, her maternal uncle spoke in his sleep and said, “You have all eaten very well! He is my sister’s son. You are satisfied, aren’t you?” She told me that she should go to the diviner to verify this account.
- (13) When I asked the Baka living in Ndongo Village about *djabango*, they replied, “*Djabango* is the king of the forest, the father of all *jengi* spirits. We should not speak its name loudly.” Then they said no more.
- (14) But I am not sure whether other-representations of the Baka are derogatory or not. Köhler & Lewis (2002) pointed out that the Mbendjele (Yaka) people and their neighboring farmers (Bilo) call each other animal names such as “chimpanzees,” “gorillas” or simply “animals.” But an animal nickname is common among the Mbendjele, and it does not imply negativity or cause offence. For farmers, it is a simple term of abuse. “Even use of a similar metaphor can imply a very different meaning,” (Köhler & Lewis, 2002: 294). There were incidents where the Baka called the Bakwele “gorillas,” but it often continued like this, “Farmers are gorillas. Baka are chimpanzees.” However, I do not have any further information on this.
- (15) In the main, these are pirated discs of Nigerian TV programs.
- (16) Rupp (2003: 49) pointed out that there is a radical reduction in the age of initiates among the Baka.
- (17) This “game” is derived from Wittgenstein’s (1953) “language game.”

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