

# Anthropological History of the Upper Banyang People in the Banyang Country, from Pre-Colonial Times to 2022

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## ABSTRACT

The Upper Banyang people just like their Lower Banyang and Ejagham neighbours have the Bantu ancestry and migratory history. They migrated in waves and settled in the Cross-River Region of Cameroon. Before unification subject to colonial rule, they were scattered through the forest in separate settlements. Despite their disintegration, they had a common anthropological and binding factor; their *Kenyang* language. They remained *Manyang* with a defined settlement pattern, lineage structure and clans. The main objective for this study therefore is to bring out the geography, settlement pattern, lineage structure and clans in Upper Banyang. This paper employs qualitative historical analysis developed from primary and secondary data. The study reveals that the Upper Banyang people despite their migratory and complex colonial history, maintained a common anthropological ancestry, settlement pattern, lineage structure and clans.

**Keywords:** Upper Banyang, Settlement Pattern, Lineage, Clans

## INTRODUCTION

Upper Banyang is one of the distinct sub groups that makes up the Banyang Country.<sup>[1]</sup> It lies in the central area of the Upper Cross River Basin and was administered by the Germans under the then Ossindinge Division between 1885 to 1921. From 1921, the Upper Banyang people were placed under the newly created Mamfe Division by the British administration. The people enjoyed this administrative status quo up till 1969 when they were again placed under the Cross-River Division<sup>[2]</sup> and today they have been placed under the Manyu Division.<sup>[3]</sup>

Before the Upper Banyang people became subject to colonial rule, the clans and communities were scattered through the forest in separate small settlements and hamlets. The largest recognised political grouping at the time with about 2000 people (Tali) and in some cases less. Orockarah holds that, despite their scattered nature, they believed in their ancestry, lineage structure and know their clans.<sup>[4]</sup> What united and distinguished them from other Bantu migratory groups was the quality of their *Kenyang*<sup>[5]</sup> language, *Evai ne Eru*<sup>[6]</sup>, *Nnoko Tanchot ne Evai*<sup>[7]</sup>, *Mgbe*<sup>[8]</sup> and *Mawo*.<sup>[9]</sup>

But due to the numerous historic turnarounds of the communities, the people maintained their settlement pattern, lineage structure and clans. In total, there are ten clans that makeup the Upper Banyang communities in about 45 communities excluding slave settlements and “stranger quarters”[\[10\]](#). These clans are; Awanchi, Bauchi (Ndifaw), Debe Ngui (Mbinjong), Mbang, Nchumbere, Nkokenok I, Nkokenok II, Tanyi-Eyong, Tanyi-Nkogho, and Tinto. In the contemporary, these clans and communities share Tinto as their cultural, administrative and economic headquarter.[\[11\]](#) Some of these communities had strong cultural affinity with their neighbours of Bali and Moghamo (for communities that share boundaries with these grassfield communities), Nguti (which in itself has a strong *Kenyang* folks), Bangwa-Mondani brothers, the Mbo group, the people of Manyemen[\[12\]](#) and their Lower *Kenyang* brothers.[\[13\]](#)

During the course of this study, extensive literature was reviewed to enhance the understanding and significance of the research. Ngambouk[\[14\]](#) states that the rainforest of Central Africa serves as the habitat for the Pygmies, a group of people residing in Central Africa. He highlights that their natural environment has been negatively affected by the forces of globalization, leading to the threat of extinction for their community. Furthermore, the exclusion of the Pygmies from various developmental projects has marginalized them in the context of post-modern development.

Bitouga[\[15\]](#), on the other hand, explains that the Bakola/Bagyelli people inhabit the westernmost regions of southern Cameroon and certain areas in Equatorial Guinea. They predominantly reside in the Ntem and Nyong rivers, with significant population concentrations. Bitouga suggests that the Bakola/Bagyelli have undergone sedentarisation and have formed sentimental and matrimonial alliances with their Bantu neighbours, resulting in a shift in their way of life and abandoning some aspects of their traditional morphology.

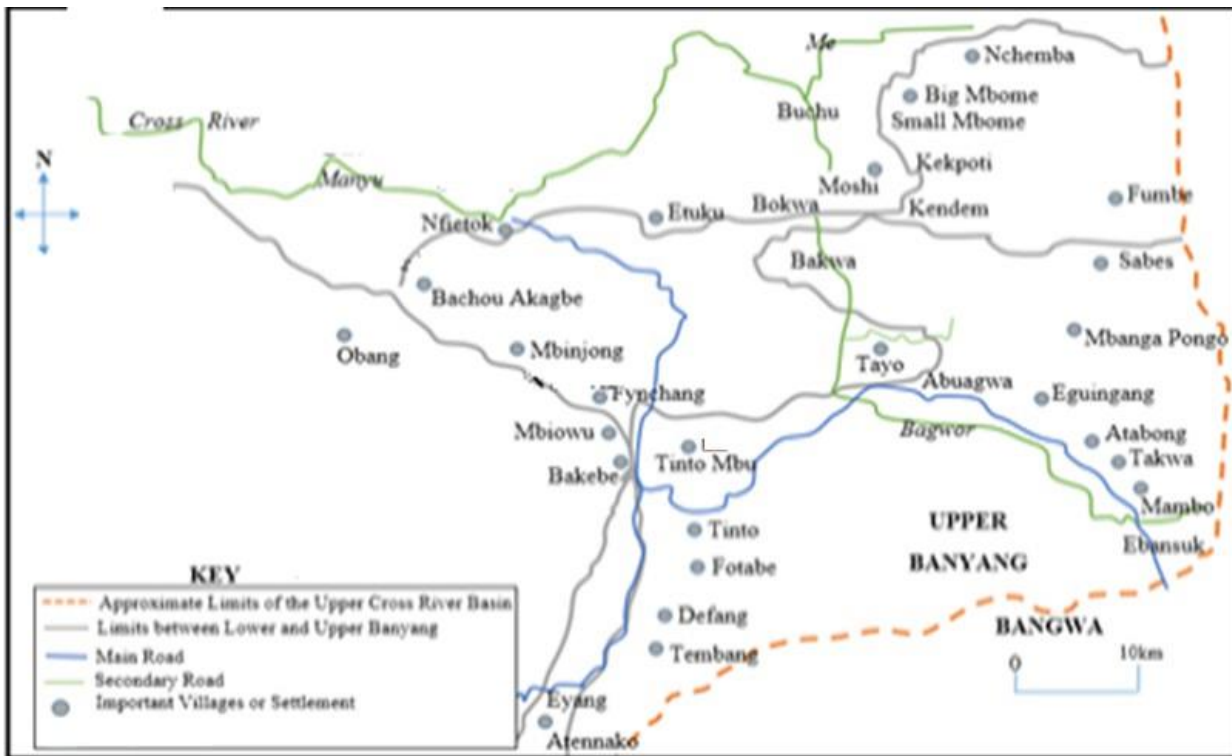
The works of both Ngambouk and Bitouga have contributed to the understanding of this study. They both convey that the Pygmies were the original inhabitants of Cameroon and due to continuous encroachment and interference in their natural habitat, their cultural authenticity is gradually diminishing. However, the current study differs from the ones conducted by Ngambouk and Bitouga, as it aims to examine the anthropological history of the Upper Banyang people. The primary objective of this study is to shed light on the anthropological context of the Upper Banyang people within the Banyang Country. The aim of this study therefore is to bring to the limelight the anthropological setting of the Upper Banyang people in the Banyang Country.

### **The Geographical Setting of the Upper Banyang**

Upper Banyang is found in the upper course of River Manyu or in the North of the River Manyu towards Mount Cameroon and the Grassfield.[\[16\]](#) It is located in the South West portion of the Cameroon Equatorial Rainforest, precisely in the Cross-River Basin.[\[17\]](#) Its strategic location in the rainforest gave room for an influx of population migration and settlement into the area. It occupies an area between latitude  $5^{\circ} 27'$  and  $9^{\circ} 56'$  North and longitude  $9^{\circ} 11'$  and  $9^{\circ} 51'$  East of the equator.[\[18\]](#) This geographical positioning is the reason for its temperate climate, rich vegetation and soil which favours the growth of forest products such as *Irvingia gabonensis*,[\[19\]](#) *Ricinodendron heudelotii*,[\[20\]](#) and *Gnetum africana*,[\[21\]](#).

and Timber-forest products such as *Milicia exelsa*,[\[22\]](#) *Triplochiton Scleroxylon*,[\[23\]](#) *Chlorophora exelsa*,[\[24\]](#) and Baobab.[\[25\]](#) This geographical advantage was the reason they settled and formed dispersed settlements within the forest.

The Upper Banyang area is easily accessed through three angles such as the Kumba-Mamfe road, Mamfe-Bachuo Akakbe road and Mamfe-Bamenda road. The longest length to cross the Upper Banyang area is from Bachuo Akagbe in the West to Sabes in the East, a distance of approximately 45 miles by road.[\[26\]](#)



Map 1: The Geographical Positioning of the Banyang Country with Upper Banyang Communities.

**Source:** Kennedy Eyong Tabe “Banyang socio-cultural history: from the pre-colonial period to the development of Banyang Quarters” post graduate Dissertation in History, university of Yaounde, 1991.

### The Upper Banyang Settlement Pattern

Upper Banyang has a unique characteristics and style especially in the display of its cultural values and believe system. The people believed in the nuclear family called *Etok* which is a group of families, a settlement or place of common residence, especially where the settlement stood by itself.

Closely related to this primary meaning of the term, *Etok* in its most general sense is a community or residential community. In this second sense of the term, *Etok* is not limited to a single settlement but any residentially based group which its members share common identities and some solidarity as a group. In the Upper Banyang traditional society, such communities numbered at most one to two thousand persons and occupy an area of ten to forty square miles. [27]

In the Banyang language, there is indeed no other word in *Kenyang* that describes a political or territorial grouping. The whiteman’s country is called *Etok-Barek*, the land of the dead is called *Etok-Barem*. Therefore, the term *Etok* is used in a more restrictive sense to describe a body or group of persons who collectively represents a residential community and each of these communities has its own carved out land either for settlement or for cultivation. [28]

Initially, the pre-colonial Upper Banyang settlements were dispersed in nature, [29] but the visit of Alfred Mansfeld, the German colonial officer in the area in 1904 saw him take his first action as an administrator. [30] He advised and encouraged the communities to form new compact settlements along the main paths and major highways. The reasons for this was to ease his administration and economic advantages such as tax collection. This move by Mansfeld pressured the people as they were forced to abandon their old settlements and created new ones which remained till date. [31] Even though they were forced to create new

settlements, they however respected their lineage structures and clans to remain as a family.

### **The Upper Banyang Clans**

A clan according to Bettina Beer is a group of people or communities related by blood or marriage.[\[32\]](#) In the Upper Banyang area, these clans were identified and grouped in 1904 by Alfred Mansfeld the first German administrator in the area. According to their lineage structure and migratory history, the ten clans as already mentioned carved out from the Upper Banyang area were; Awanchi, Bauchi (Ndifaw), Debe Ngui, Mbang, Nchumbere, Nkockenock I, Nkokenok II, Tanyi-Eyong, Tanyi-Nkongho, and Tinto.

#### **Awanchi Clan**

The original home of this clan was at Kendem. It was founded by the eponymous ancestors, Efu who got married to Tambe Ndi the daughter of Njok Ashu (founder of Fumbe) who was the son of Debe Ngui (founder of Debe Ngui clan).[\[33\]](#) According to archival reports and oral testimonies, early in the clan history, a man called Akeakem from the Upper Banyang community near Bali migrated to this district and was given land on which his three sons founded the communities of Bokwa, Mbeme, Kepoti and Moshi while Kendem remained the original home of Efu. Originally, the two families of Efu and Akeakem constantly inter married, and Akeakem lineage were later fused by Efu as part of the clan by adoption.[\[34\]](#)

The first clan head was Asukem who after his death was succeeded by his brother Eta Akung who was blind and was the sole surviving son of Defang.[\[35\]](#) In Kendem, the first community head was Eyong-Ga who was appointed by the Germans. He ruled the community from the period of the Germans through the British era where he was maintained by the British administration. According to some oral testimonies, this clan was said to be closely related to the Baliben group of villages in Bamenda Grassfield and it was hoped that the full relationship may be acquired into a conjunctly by Mamfe and Bamenda administrative officers before the final assessment report was submitted.[\[36\]](#)

#### **Bauchi (Ndifaw) Clan**

This was one of the most powerful and largest clans in the Banyang Country with a total population of 4108.[\[37\]](#) It was founded by the eponymous ancestor called Ndifaw. The clan included communities such as Ebeagwa, Eguingang and Tali. Tali was the clan capital with a population of over 2108 people spread in 12 quarters in three miles. Egbemba the chief of Tali was appointed by the Germans as the first clan head and president of the Tali native court.[\[38\]](#) According to archival reports, the original home of the clan was at Ebeagwa home to the eldest son of the eponymous ancestor called Ndifaw. The other son migrated from Ebeagwa and founded Eguingang while two other sons founded Tali.[\[39\]](#)

With the departure of Egbemba, the British appointed Mayang of Ebeagwa as the new clan head. But due to his old age and infirmness, he was succeeded by Nkwayon his brother. Due to constant disrespect and opposition to the British administration Nkwayon was dismissed by A. E. Tweed the then Divisional Officer. To that effect, Taku-nchi of Tali was appointed as the new clan head and was handed the responsibility to oversee the tranquillity of all inhabitants in the clan. The clans looked up to him as their leader and intermediary to the colonial government, Taku-nchi was given the powers to appoint his successor as the new clan head in case of his resignation or incapacity.[\[40\]](#)

#### **Debe Ngui Clan**

This clan is made up of communities of Mfainchang, Mbinjong and Fumbe and their eponymous ancestor was Debe Ngui who lived on the Ntaire mountain with his family. Several years later his two sons called Tanyi Ashu and Njok Ashu quarrelled amongst themselves and had to migrate to other areas.[\[41\]](#) Tanyi

Ashu moved and founded Fainchang on the present site to which Mbinjong is situated today while his younger brother Njok Ashu moved with his followers up the River Mak into Kendem and founded the Fumbe community. The 1930 report on the area has it that, Njok Ashu's daughter got married to Efu the eponymous ancestor of Kendem and later Njok Ashu left Fumbe and moved to the foot of the Bamenda escarpment two hours from Sabes, where he finally settled with his family till date. [\[42\]](#)

Tanyi Ashu who had moved to Fainchang settled there alongside his Mbinjong brothers, who through forceful migration by the Germans settled alongside Tanyi Ashu with him as their leader. It should be noted that the Mbinjong people were not originally from the Banyang ancestry. Their original settlement was in the Ejagham forest near the bushes of Talangaie, but were brought to the Banyang Country by the Germans following the construction of the Mamfe-Kumba road. [\[43\]](#) In the course of Tanyi Ashu's leadership, he at one time became power drunk and refused to take orders from Alfred Mansfeld and was deposed and sent to prison near Calabar. To that effect, the chief of Mbinjong was appointed to take over the administration of the two communities. [\[44\]](#)

Several years later, Tanyi Ashu returned to Mbinjong at the time of the British administration and rallied his following to the Divisional Officer in Mamfe called A. E. Tweed and complained that his land and stool be handed back to him. But after observation, Tweed re-settled them on the unoccupied ground between Mbinjong and Mbiowu where they lived till date. [\[45\]](#)

### **Mbang Clan**

This clan was founded by Mbang who came from Dschang now in the French speaking part of Cameroon and settled on a site which became known as Nten-mbang with Afumbe as the eponymous ancestor. [\[46\]](#) The communities that make up the clan were; Defang, Sumbe, Nten-mbang, Akiriwa and Fotabe. Afumbe had three children who spread and founded the communities of Nten-mbang, Defang and Fotabe. In the course of their leaving together, both Defang and Fotabe quarrelled over land in their respective quarters.

Due to this misunderstanding, they moved and founded Sumbe and Akiriwa communities along the Mamfe-Buea road near Nguti. Despite their movement, they paid allegiance to their ancestral brothers and often communed during ancestral festivals such as the installation of a new chief and cultural weeks. [\[47\]](#)

### **Nchumbere Clan**

This clan was made up of only one community called Bachuo Akagbe. This community stayed till date and never divided. The eponymous ancestor of the clan was called Tanyi Eyong Eta a Banyang man who up till date no oral nor satisfactory archival information was forth coming about him. Tanyi Eyong Eta got married to a *Keaka* woman called Agbor-wa of Aiyiwawa. They both had two children called Ekong and Nchumbere and the family lived on the road between Bachuo Akakbe and Fatok. [\[48\]](#)

Ekong later took over the leadership and appointed his brother Nchumbere his deputy and successor. When Ekong died, the community was taken over by Nchumbere and the community has always been one known as Nchumbere's descendants. [\[49\]](#) The clan was later moved to its present site along the Mamfe-Tali road by the Germans for easy administration and tax collection. [\[50\]](#)

### **Nkockenock I Clan**

This clan together with their neighbours of the same name each descended from the eponymous ancestor called Nkokenok. Though with a similar ancestral name, yet each denies any relationship with the other following oral interviews collected. Both say the only thing common with them is the fact that they shared the same eponymous ancestor and if there ever was any family bon between them, all trace of it has been

lost.[\[51\]](#)

The clan head of Nkokenok I was called Eyang Mbok of Bakebe who was succeeded by Bate Esing of Eyang. Enow Ashu of Bakebe represented the communities of Bakebe while Mbuben represented Eyang at the Bachuo Akagbe native court. It should be noted that Eyang Mbok had three sons namely Bakebe, Dice and Nfawtanyi. These children later expanded and founded the communities of Bakebe, Faitok and Ashum. In total there are four communities in the clan and these communities are; Bakebe, Eyang, Mfaitock, and Ashum.

According to oral sources, the original home of Nkokenok I clan was Eyang where they lived. The original home of the clan was round Apyum, a 1500 feet cone shaped hill to the East of Ntaire adjoining the land of the Mbang clan. From there the four communities of Eyang, Bakebe, Ashum and Faitok developed. [\[52\]](#) These communities were later moved by the Germans and placed along the major highways for easy administration. Eyang was placed along the Tinto-Kumba road, Ashum and Faitok placed along the Mamfe-Kumba road, while Bakebe was placed along the Mamfe-Tali road on the left bank of River Mbu. [\[53\]](#)

### **Nkokenok II Clan**

The eponymous ancestor of this “somewhat scattered” clan founded the community of Etuku and in total there are seven communities that make up the clan. These communities are; Etuku, Nchemba, Mbatop, Kapelle, Ekpaw, Taiyo and Mbiowu. After Etuku was founded, his eldest son moved and founded the communities of Nchemba and Mbatop while the younger sons founded Ekpaw, Taiyo, Kapelle and Mbiowu. [\[54\]](#) Etuku, Nchemba and Mbatop lie to the North of Manyu River. The former is eighteen miles from Mamfe on the Mamfe-Kendem-Bamenda road and with the completion of the Manyu bridge the communities had an all year-round relationship with Bachuo Akakbe and Mamfe native courts.

These communities were linked by a bush path which passed through Kapelle linking Tali. Ekpaw and Taiyo which adjoined each other on the Tali-Bamenda road between Tali and Mbanga Pongo. Ekpaw’s original side have been near Kepoti in the Awanchi clan. Mbiowu was moved onto the Mamfe-Tali road by the Germans. On assessment, all Mbatop insisted that Defang was the rightful chief, and not Enow Atu as always considered in the past. Enow Atu agreed that he was junior to the Defang and was only his representative. [\[55\]](#)

The elders of Kapelle community stated to Mr Denton, Divisional Officer in 1929 that Akum Asik was the rightful community head, and should be a member in the seat of *Nemnya*. [\[56\]](#) Akum Asik was the rightful chief and he was appointed as a member of the Bachuo Akakbe native court by Mr Denton. Mangeb of Etuku was community and clan head as well as the president of the Bachuo Akakbe native court, a position which he was recommended by the colonial administrator to retain because of his hard work and dedication to service. [\[57\]](#)

### **Tanyi-Eyong Clan**

The clan consist of the five communities of Sabes, (founded by Njok Ashu), Mbanga Pongo, Atibong Wire (old and new) and Ebuensuk (Fomum Bisuk). Amongst the Eastern Banyang clans, this clan is ranked second in importance after the Bauchi (Ndifaw) clan. The first clan head was Akuriwa of Ebuensuk, his successors were Sabis and Nyong of Mbanga Pongo. This clan was famous with its many slave markets during the slave trade era. Akuriwa was the uncle of Arong Takem who was the first chief of Ebuensuk. These two family heads according to oral sources were never in talking terms and it was purported that it was the fault of Akuriwa. Akuriwa came to the limelight in 1927 when his griot knowledge of the history of the community as utilised by Mr Denton in a neighbouring boundary dispute. After that he made several attempts to have himself acknowledged as chief. But he never had a large following only his son and one

small quarter in the community recognised him as their Chief.[\[58\]](#)

Arong Takem, proved that he was the rightful Chief by exposing the Chief regalia left for him by his father. Akuriwa was warned several times that he was the Clan head only and not Chief of Ebuensuk. In spite of this, he attempted several times through his small following to secure tax disc of Ebuensuk where they were issued in Atebong court. One of his followers was imprisoned for his part in the resulting fight at Atebong court. After Akuriwa secured the tax, he caused no more open trouble even though Arong Takem remained nervous of him. In effect therefore, Takem guarded against in the future that Akuriwa's son will not make an attempt to declare himself Chief after his death.[\[59\]](#)

Akuriwa was later recognised as president of the Atebong court as he undoubtedly as clan head demonstrated his skilfulness by assisting considerably in the Banga pongo-Atebong land conflict. A doubtless president he was advised to realise his responsibilities and cease to make unnecessary trouble with Arong Takem.[\[60\]](#)

### **Tanyi-Nkogho Clan**

This clan was composed of the three communities of Takwai, Mambo and Bara. Takwa and Bara figured prominently in the Mbo wars, since they shared boundaries with the Mbo clan.[\[61\]](#) The clan originally lived South of the present site of Takwa and Mambo, which is on the Tali-Fontem road. Mambo fled there during the fighting while Takwa stayed where it was. Bara on its part was cut off by the Mbos while some others fled to Tali for protection.[\[62\]](#) The clan was left with two communities of Takwa and Mambo.

The people of Mambo were made up of some dotted inhabitants of Nshoho. It is worth mentioning that the people of Nshoho in their hamlet were at the time of this archival and oral report made up of 21 tax payers of Banyang origin who for four generations had lived on Bangwa ground to the East of the River Bage.[\[63\]](#) Fifteen of them paid their taxes to Fontem and six who lived to the North of the others, paid taxes to Fotabong I.

Even though the Nshoho people were very much related to the Tanyi Nkonwo lineage (though all trace of this has been lost), they were divided into two. One went to Ebuensuk and the other to Mambo. The reason for this division was fear of being submerged or mistaken for Bangwas during the German-Bangwa war against Fontem.[\[64\]](#) Despite their complicated migratory and settlement history, they recognised their ancestral and clan heads and often came together for a common meal during festivals.

### **Tinto Clan**

This clan is composed of the three communities of Tinto I, Tinto II and Tinto Mbu all situated between River Mbu and Tali, and separating the latter from the Mbang clan to the south. The eponymous ancestor of the clan was Nfawkwa who settled at Tinto I, and his younger sons founded Tinto II and Tinto Mbu. Tinto I and Tinto II are on the junction of the Kumba-Bamenda and Mamfe roads and a small trading settlement of strangers mostly Hausas and ex-slaves.[\[65\]](#)

Tinto I was made the first German station in 1898, and to that effect a military post was stationed there alongside as the German telegraphic headquarter for the entire region.[\[66\]](#) At the beginning of the English occupation Tinto I was made a post office centre which existed till the end of the British mandate in Cameroon.[\[67\]](#) This privileged position earns the community the name "Tinto Wire"[\[68\]](#), a name that has existed till date.[\[69\]](#) None of the Tinto communities were moved by the Germans and all occupied their original sites.

The clan council was founded by the three community heads and their respective community councillors

and Akarak was named a member of the Tali native court.[70] Separated by geography but conglomerated by culture, these clans were closely related in culture, language and believe system. They spoke the same language, ate similar traditional meals such as *evai ne eru* and had the same dressing habits and believed in the powers of key regulatory societies such as *Ekpe and Mfam*.

Table 1: Clan division of the communities in the Upper Banyang

Ethnic Group	The People	Clans	Clan Capital	Eponymous Ancestors	First Clan Head
Banyang People	Upper Banyang	Awanchi Clan	Kendem	Efu	Asukem
		Bauchi (Ndifaw) Clan	Tali	Ndifaw	Egbemba
		Debe Ngui Clan	Fainchang	Debe Ngui	Tanyi Ashu
		Mbang Clan	Mbang	Mbang	Tambe Eyang
		Nchumbere Clan	Bachuo Akakbe	Tanyi Eyong Eta	Ekong
		Nkokenok I Clan	Eyang	Nkokenok	Eyang Mbok
		Nkokenok II Clan	Etuku	Nkokenok	Akum Asik
		Tanyi-Eyong Clan	Ebuensuk	Tanyi-Eyong	Akuriwa
		Tanyi-Nkogho Clan	Takwa	Tanyi-Nkogho	Nfawnten
Tinto Clan	Tinto I	Nfawkwa	Ako N dang		

Source: Authors' conception 2019 and compilation from interviews and related literature.

### The Upper Banyang Lineage Structure

Throughout the Upper Banyang history, the communities have been unique in their lineage structure. Common descent and common residence were the two basic principles of lineage structure within them. None of these principles was exclusive of the other, and the values upon which each was based interpenetrated with each other. The agnatic kin (*Bo-chi*) usually lived together, and this feature distinguished them from those related from the mothers' side (*Bo-nnoh*)[71]

The people who together formed a residential unit were referred to as *Etok-e-mot*, usually recognised the solidarity of common kinship. In this wise, a spokesman of such a residential unit normally referred to his fellows as *Bo-Ta-Ya*. [72] It was noted that, this occurred at the same level of corporate grouping. [73] In such a case, the descent name was that by which the community group was known, for example; *Bo-Tanyi-Eyong*, [74] *Bo-Tanyi-Nkongho* [75].

A lineage (*Nnereket*) normally maintained a corporate identity in its collective conduct of kinship affairs and its members mutual support and collective representation within a wider residential group. Some overlapping however, did occur between descents and residential groupings. The difference between two types of grouping and the norms defining them was explicit and clear to the people at any rate. To this effect, the Upper Banyang axiom which supported this difference stated categorically, that lineage group matters were different, while community matters were also different. The implication of this distinction was both of private affairs of kin (group of people related by blood or marriage) on one hand and on the other hand, political sections of a Banyang community. [76]



According to oral sources, if a young man lived in a community of a man to whom he looked forward for protection, he addressed such a person as *Eta-ya*[77]. In such a case, the child became that man's child and the man referred to the child as *Mo-wah*. [78] According to Radcliff-Brown,

kinship therefore resulted from the recognition of a social relationship between parents and children, which was not the same thing as the physical relation and never coincided with it. Where the term descent was used, it was referred to social relationships. Thus, the son of an adopted person was said to be traced from the adopted grandparents. [79]

The Upper Banyang anthropological lineage was thus composed of people who were normally agnatic kin to each other. It also composed of a group which was corporately organised, with a bounded membership and specific identity. As a corporate group, each lineage structure recognised firstly a senior elder called *Mu-Nsensi*, who was a moral head and ritual leader. This title was conferred to the eldest member of the family who was from that lineage. In solving family issues, such a person addressed the dead from the eldest to the latest while pouring libation on the ground which could be palm wine or whiskey. [80] In any occasion in the community like the enthronement of a new chief and clan head, the various community heads that make up the clan must be present. Just like other traditional African societies, the Upper Banyang people viewed death and hereafter like their brothers of the Lower Banyang, Ejagham, Ekoi and Anyang communities in the Cross-River region of Cameroon and Nigeria.

### **Death and Hereafter in the Upper Banyang Communities**

In the Banyang Country, particularly in the Upper Banyang communities, as the individual gets older, he was in effect moving gradually from the state of life (*nepem*) to the state of death (*newu'h*). His birth was a slow process finalized long after the person was physically born. In the Upper Banyang communities, a person was not considered a full human being until he has gone through the whole process of physical birth, naming ceremonies, puberty and initiation rites, marriage and procreation. When the person had gone through these stages, such was referred to as *etangti mbakanem* or *etangti ngore* or he is fully 'born', he was a complete person. [81]

Similarly, death in the Upper Banyang communities was a process which removed a person gradually from *nepem* to *newu'h*. According to the Banyang belief system, after the physical death of a person, the individual continued to exist in the spirit world and was referred to as *ngu'h-menem*. Such an individual could be seen in the community if the family desired but in most circumstances the dead person was advised and conducted with spiritual herbs to move to a distant town or city to make money for the family. [82]

During this period, the dead person was remembered by relatives and friends who knew him in this life and who have survived him. They recalled him by name, though not necessarily mentioning it, they remembered his personality, his character, his words and incidents of his life. According to the Banyang belief system, if he 'appeared', he was recognized by name. The departed appeared mainly to the older members of their surviving families, and rarely or never to children. [83]

This recognition by name was extremely important and the appearance of the departed, and his being recognized by name continued for up to four or five generations, so long as someone was alive who once knew the departed personally and by name. When, however, the last person who knew the departed also died, then the former passed out of the horizon of the leaving period; and in effect he became completely dead as far as family ties were concerned.

So long as the living dead was thus remembered, he was in the state of personal immortality. This personal immortality was externalized in the physical continuation of the individual through procreation, so that the

children bear the traits of their parents or progenitors. From the point of view of the survivors, personal immortality was expressed or externalized in acts like respecting the dead, giving bits of food to them, pouring out libation and carrying out instructions given by them either while they lived or when they appeared.

This concept of personal immortality helped everyone to get married and if a man had no children or only daughters, he was compelled to get another wife so that through her, sons may be born who would survive him and keep him in personal immortality. Procreation was the absolute way of ensuring that a person was not cut off from personal immortality.

In the Upper Banyang communities, the death of a person proclaimed the formal conflict between the forces of life and death. As soon as a person dies, he became a living-dead. He became a “spirit” in the sense that he is no longer in the body, and yet he retained features which described him in physical terms. He still retained his personal name, so that when he appears to human members of his family, they recognize him as Agbor, Enow or Ashu.[\[84\]](#)

When the living dead appeared as was often the case in some communities, it was to those within his household or family, and rarely if ever, to people not immediately related to him. Most often when the living dead appeared to a family member, there was no exchange of greetings. In most cases, the living dead appeared to demand for something or pass instructions, or enquire about the family, or make requests to be given something, and may even threaten to punish members of the family for not carrying out particular instructions or for not caring-sufficiently for the living-dead.[\[85\]](#)

In the Banyang Country in general and the Upper Banyang communities in particular, people were keen to do their ‘best’ for the living-dead, chiefly because these were in a position of need just as little children had to be cared for by adults. At the same time, the living-dead was in the intermediary position between man and God, and between man and the spirits. People in the Upper Banyang communities therefore keep the relationship going between them and their living-dead,

## CONCLUSION

The Upper Banyang people despite their complicated Bantu Migratory history, colonial and post-colonial shake-ups instead Fast-track their anthropological evolution. The communities had a defined settlement patterns, lineage structure and well-structured clans. According to findings, the people believe in the strength of the nucleus family called *Etok* which has been the source of foundation, solidarity, tenacity and agility for the people in the communities. The *Etok* according to findings also represented a people who shared common identities and some solidarity. This study clearly reveals that the Upper Banyang people also had the *Kenyang* language as their major force of unity. It was of utmost importance to understand that the Upper Banyang people also had common descent and common residence which were the basic principles of lineage structure within them. From oral testimonies it was also revealed that the Upper Banyang communities were an agnatic kin (*Bo-chi*) who lived together, and this feature distinguished them from those related from the mothers’ side (*Bo-nnoh*).[\[86\]](#) Also, the people who formed a residential unit called *Etok-e-mot*, usually recognised the solidarity of common kinship. For a good settlement pattern and lineage structure to be maintained till date, the people grouped themselves in clans which was the factor for their unity. Through their settlement pattern, they held tight to their eponymous ancestors, believed in the powers of the first community head and the clan capital. These factors were the reason for their enormous expansion and solidarity. The principal submission for this paper is that, the Upper Banyang people through their common anthropological relationship made them one people with a common ancestry and way of life.

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3. Interview with Ndip Ako, Traditional Elder at the Tanyi-Eyong community, age 66, Mamfe, September, 2019.
4. Interview with Achare Akondip, women elder at the Ekemaya women council, Age 70 years, Mamfe, 23 August 2019.
5. Interview with Pa Divine Nso, age 70, retired civil servant and a member from the Eshobi community, 21 December 2018.

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## FOOTNOTE

[1] An extended social group having a distinctive cultural and economic organization or A formal association of people with similar interests

[2] N.A.B File No 315/21, Memorandum for the change of name of Ossindinge Division to Mamfe Division, 1921, 8.

[3] In February 1969 the names of Divisions in West Cameroon were changed, Mamfe Division became Cross River Division with Mamfe as its head quarter. Victoria Division was renamed Fako, and Rumba Division was renamed Meme Division.

[4] Interview with Egbe Orockarah, Traditional chief of Tali, age 67, Tali community, July, 2019.

[5] The language they spoke and the culture they followed.

[6] This is a traditional African food, commonly eaten in West and Central Africa. The food contains pounding cassava and eaten with cooked eru leaves with ingredients like meat, fish palm oil and other spices to create flavourful and nutritious food.

[7] This is a traditional food, commonly eaten by the people of Manyu Division, South West Region of Cameroon. It contains soup and pounded cassava with ingredients like meat, fish palm oil and other spices to create flavourful and nutritious food.

[8] A male dominated traditional regulatory society commonly responsible for peace keeping and order within the men’s circle.

[9] A female dominated traditional regulatory society commonly responsible for peace keeping and order within the women’s circle.

[10] These are settlements reserved for non-indigenes of the community.

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- [18] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, Mamfe Division, Cameroons Province, M.E.A Gorges, Assistant District Officer, 1930, 5-9.
- [19] Bush Mango.
- [20] Njangsa.
- [21] Eru.
- [22] Iroko.
- [23] Obeche.
- [24] Mahogany.
- [25] Cross River State Forestry Commission, 4.
- [26] E.E. Ojong, S. N. ANJA, J.T. TAMBI, et al, “Manyu Economic Development world conference” *Monograph of Articles*, (2010), 12.
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- [28] Ruel, *Leopards and Leaders*, 19.
- [29] Ibid.
- [30] Ibid.
- [31] Patrick, “Banyang Socio-Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change”, 50.

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[34] Ibid.

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[41] N.A.B File No. 63/29, A Preliminary Assessment Report on the Banyang clan area.

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[44] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 22.

[45] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 22.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid.

[49] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 23.

[50] Ibid.

[51] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, Mamfe Division, Cameroons Province, M.E.A Gorges, Assistant District Officer, 1930, 26.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid.

[54] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 27.

[55] Ibid.

[56] An elite to the family

[57] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 27.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid.

[60] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 18.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Interview with Ndip Ako, 66 years elder at the Tanyi-Eyong community, Mamfe, September, 2019.

[64] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 18.

[65] N.A.B File No. Af 19, Assessment report on the Banyang clan, 18.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] This community was called Tinto Wire because during the German colonial reign they installed their communication wires in the area to enable communication with the host country Germany.

[69] Ibid.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Members from the same village community.

[72] Fellow members of the same residential group.

[73] Robin. Fox, *Kinship and Marriage; An Anthropological Perspective*, (Pelican: Pelican Publishers, 1967), 56.

[74] Children of Tanyi-Eyong. (Bo, in Kenyang language refer to children and Bo-Tanyi-Eyong as used in the paper refer to the children of Tanyi-Eyong and also meant those of Tanyi-Eyong family. Children of the genealogy of Tanyi Eyong)

[75] Children of Tanyi-Nkogho

[76] Patrick, "Banyang Socio-Cosmological Beliefs and Institutions in the Process of Change", 50.

[77] My Father.

[78] My Son.

[79] Radcliff-Brown, *Introduction to African system of Kinship and Marriage*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950), 4.

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Members from the same village community.