

# THE GOMU / MOO

A collection of ethnographic and historical data from fieldwork 1989-1993

## Series

Ethnographic and Historical Profiles of the Peoples of the Muri Mountains  
- The Southern Groups

by Jörg Adelberger

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# Ethnographic and Historical Profiles of the Peoples of the Muri Mountains - The Southern Groups

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## The Gomu / Moo

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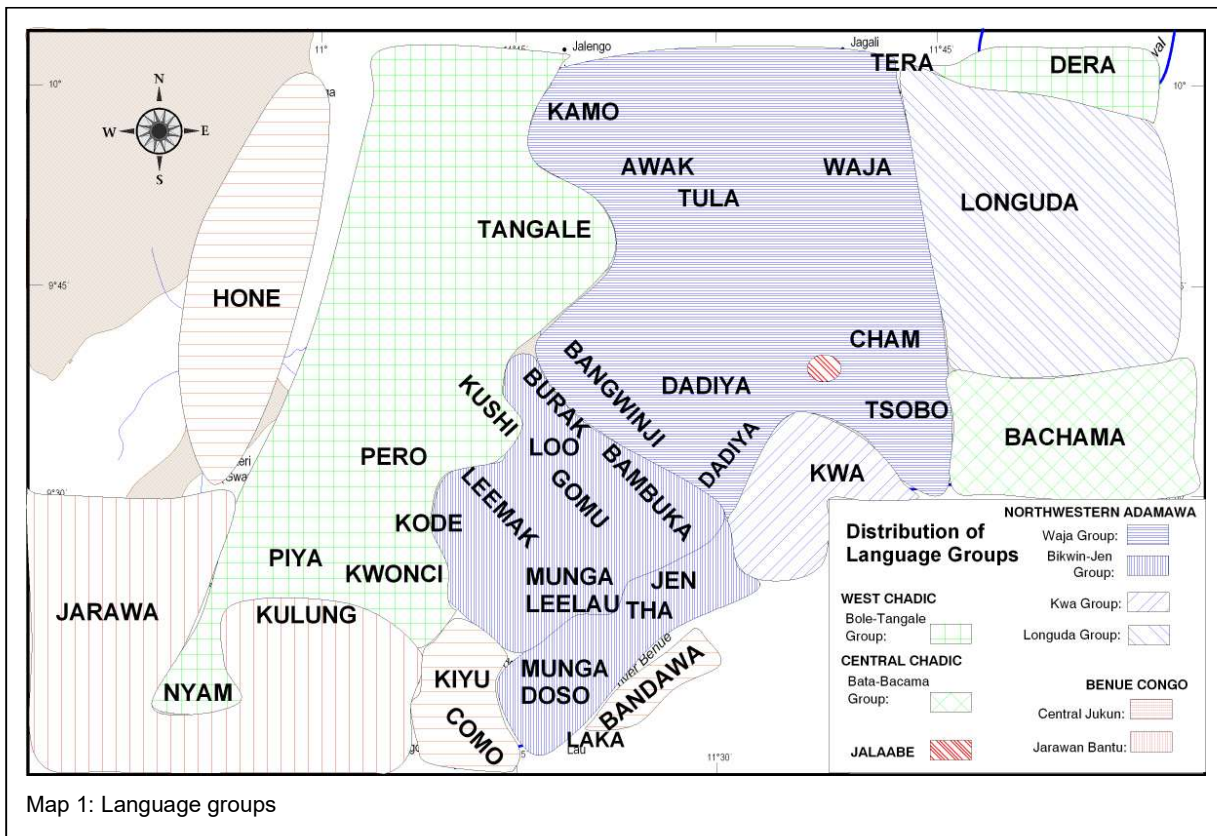
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## Introduction

Ethnographic field research was undertaken within the framework of the interdisciplinary research project "Cultural Development and Language History in the Environment of the West African Savannah" (SFB 268) in the years 1989 to 1993. The information provided below reflects the situation at that time.<sup>1</sup>

The Gomu (or Moo) [gwg] language is part of the Bikwin-Jen sub-group of the North-Western Adamawa languages of the Niger-Congo phylum.<sup>2</sup> Other members of the Bikwin sub-group are the Loo [ldo], Burak [bys], Leemak [pbl], Tala of Kode [gmd], Munga Leelau [ldk] and Bambuka [bka]. The Jen call the Gomu 'Gwomung', meaning 'owner of rain'.

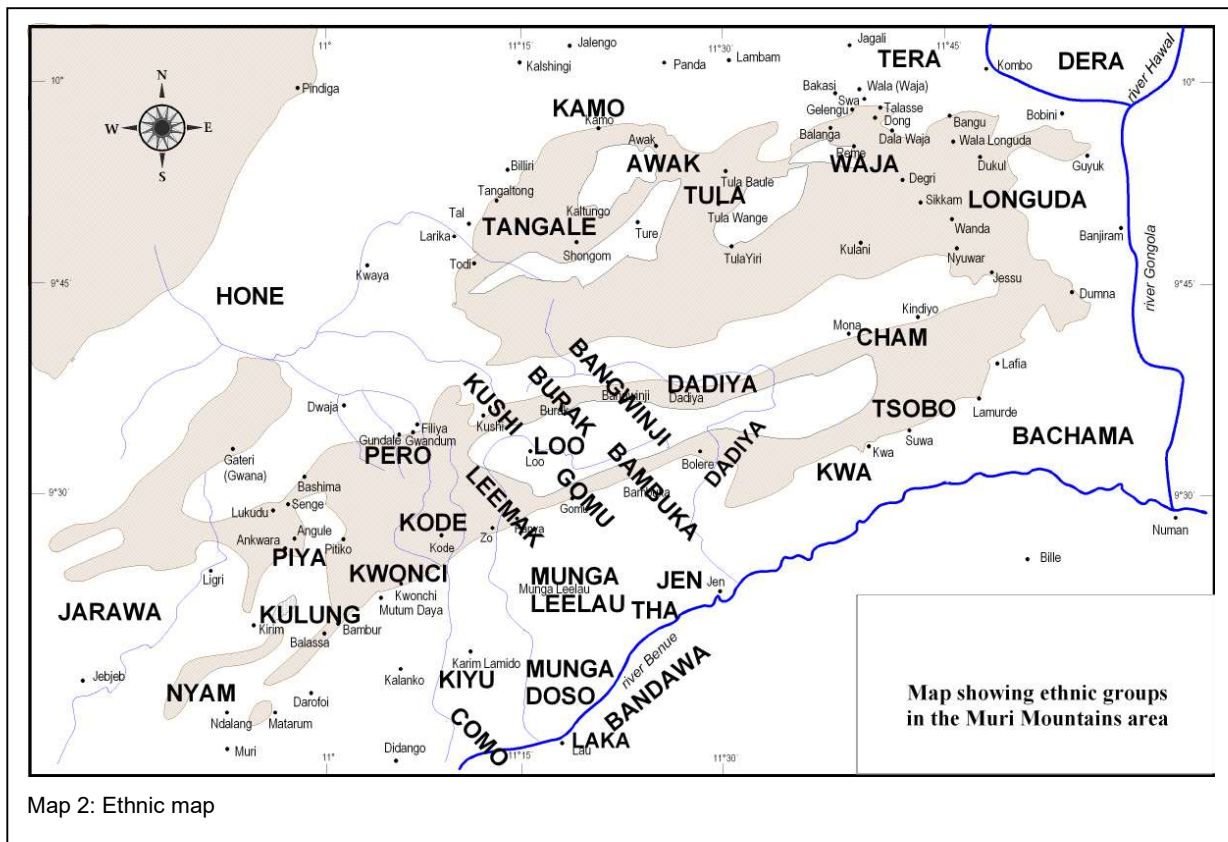


First mention is made by the German traveller Eduard Flegel, who explored the river Benue on board the steamer *Henry Venn* in 1879, and he reported that Gomu is a locality to the east of Muri.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to Brazil Uli, Nathan Joshua and Rev. Simon Sule for their co-operation during my research. My special thanks go to Denis Chiye and Tijani Magaji Shark for their untiring and invaluable assistance. To Pete Eccles I am grateful for correcting my English.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Kleinewillinghöfer 2015, see also Othaniel 2017. In square brackets are the ISO 639 names.

<sup>3</sup> E.Flegel 1880a: 227, K. Flegel 1890: 23. For an overview of Flegel's explorations see Adelberger 2000.



## Settlement area and demography

The Gomu call themselves Moo and they live in the southern part of the Muri Mountains. At the time of research there were 587 taxpayers registered, that may be extrapolated to a population figure of about 4,000 to 5,000 people.<sup>4</sup>

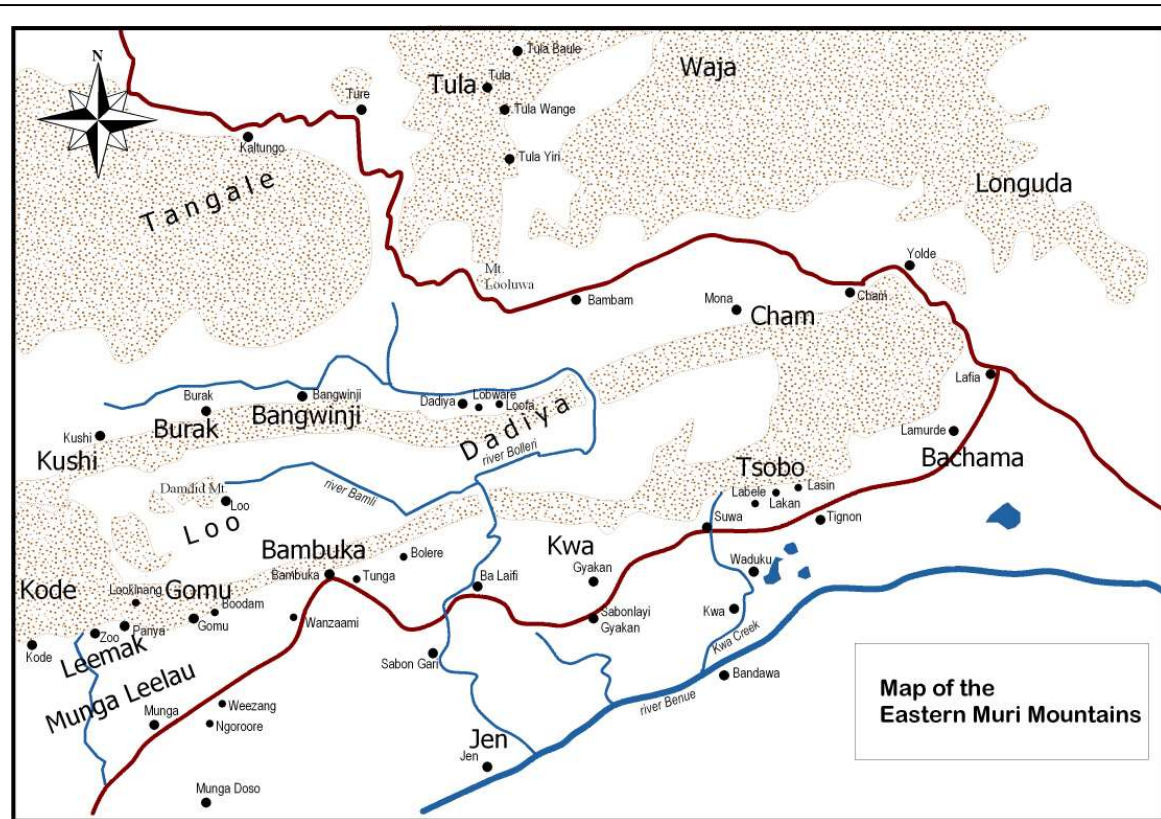
The Gomu are subdivided into two sections: **Nwatal** in the western part of their settlement territory and **Gongwee**, (also called Nwadur), in the eastern part. The Gomu themselves state that there are no dialectical differences between the two sections. Each section consists of several patrilineal descent units or clans.

In more detail, the Gomu live in the following settlements: Gomu, Lookinang, (this was one of their first historical settlements and is still inhabited by the Gomu), Belam, Boodam, Bookongkaa, Booboo, Looswazii, Nwagugdang, Bamli, Bokaw, Wong, Wanzaami, Weesōng, Dugang and Loodwab.

Other Gomu communities may also be found in towns outside of their proper settlement area, in Balaifi, Kunini-Garin Sarki, Lau-Garin Mashi, Lau-Garin Dogo and Lau-Jauro Bakari, Bali and Karim Lamido.

<sup>4</sup> According to the website DBpedia ([https://dbpedia.org/page/Moo\\_language](https://dbpedia.org/page/Moo_language)) they number 5,000 people.





Map 3: Eastern Muri Mountains

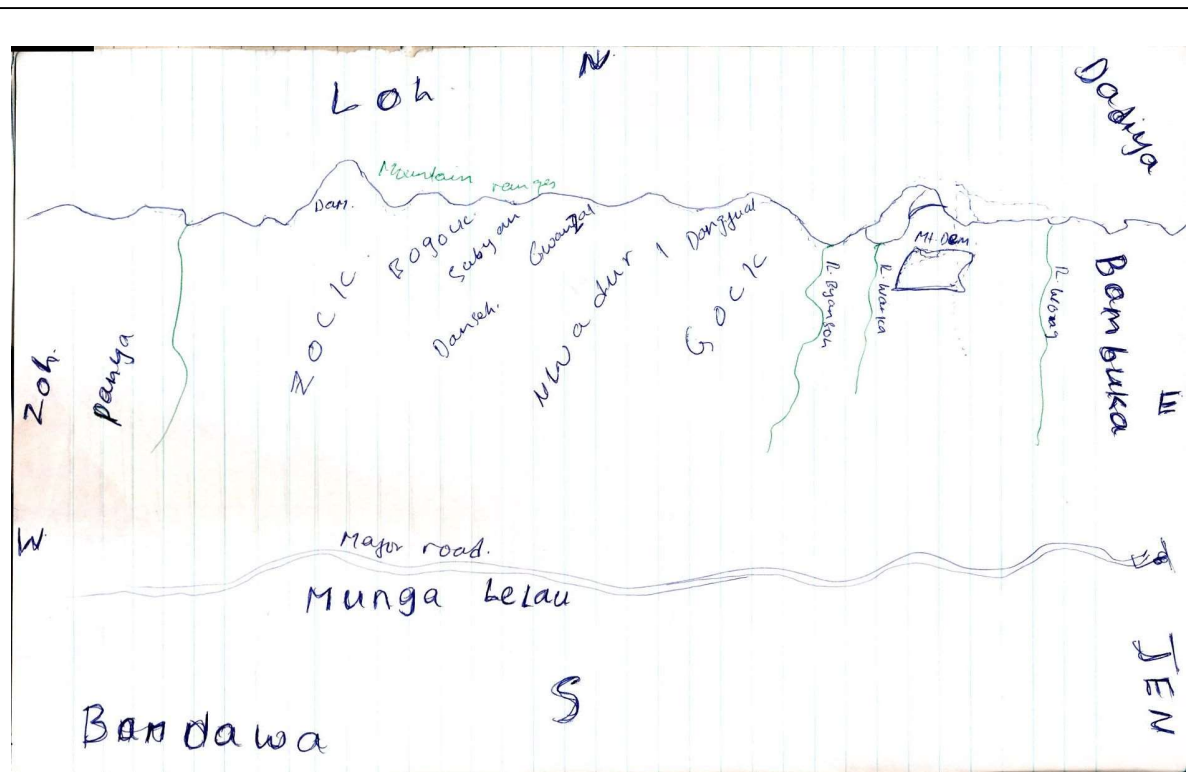


Illustration 1: Sketch map of Gomu country by Tijany Magaji, indicating clan areas

## Interethnic relations

Their neighbours to the north are the Loo, to the northeast the Dadiya, to the east the Bambuka, to the south the Munga Leelau and to the west the Leemak of Zo and Panya.

The Gomu acknowledge that they are part of the supra-ethnic Bikwin cluster, consisting of Leemak of Zoo and Panya, Munga Leelau, Gomu, Bambuka, Loo and the Tunga section of Dadiya. *Bikwin* means "We are one", and the meaning of the term rests on the basis of close linguistic relationship, a shared environment, common interactions and cultural similarities.

Administratively, Bikwin is also a political constituency with representatives in the House of Assembly.

The Loo, Jen and Bandawa are close allies of the Gomu, they intermarried with them and supported each other in times of intertribal conflicts. Their relationship also manifests itself in the joint practice of rituals, in which the Kode also have their part: for the celebration of *mam dangbang* and *loyi* at Gomu, the Loo bring guinea corn, the Bandawa bring fish, the Jen bring a ram and the Kode bring Baobab seeds as sacrificial items.

In pre-colonial times, although there were intermarriages with the Bambuka, the Dadiya and the Leemak of Panya, there were also conflicts with them. Especially with the Leemak of Zo, the Bambuka and the Munga Leelau, the relationships were strained and they fought many skirmishes with them. The Gomu were resentful of the Munga Leelau because these had assisted the Fulani emirate raiders to find their way to Gomu in order to attack them. Nowadays the Gomu have good and partly joking relationships with their former adversaries. With the Kushi they had only a few conflicts, and none with the Burak.

Due to a famine, some of the Gomu people went to Bangwinji, where they were integrated into the clan structure, and in Gomu there is a clan (Bangkorong) which traces its origin from Bangwinji. The Mungok clan of the Leemak of Panya was founded by members of the Nwaadur clan of Gomu.

In the past, the Gomu got their iron from the Loo, and the Kode brought them salt from Bomanda. The Gomu produced potash locally at Loo area.

Table 1: Gomu names for neighbouring ethnic groups

| Ethnic group    | Gomu name  |
|-----------------|------------|
| Bambuka         | Loowop     |
| Bandawa         | Siram      |
| Dadiya          | Kam        |
| Munga Leelau    | Biyak Nwaa |
| Kode            | Yaamagwe   |
| Leemak of Panya | Biyak      |
| Leemak of Zo    | Taamung    |

## History

### Pre-colonial migrations

A core group of the clans that make up the Gomu is said to have come out of a hole or cave called Jingkan in the mountain range. These clans are the **Nwaadur**, **Dangjual**, **Gok**, and **Gwanzal**. In some versions of the tradition, before emerging from the hole, they came from the east and had left because of war and famine. Kamakanga, a site near present day Bambam, is mentioned as a place of settlement, from where they moved through the rocks and then came out through the hole Jingkan.

Although the origin from a hole or cave would suggest a primordial status of these clans, they acknowledge that the **Zok** clan was present prior to them.

The ancestor of the **Zok** clan is said to have stepped down from heaven, leaving his footprints together with those of his dog on the rock of Loodim Mountain. The Zok moved first to a place called Loosep, and from there downhill to the foot of Mt. Dam. They met the Byene clan of the Loo and drove them out.

The **Bogok** clan is attributed with having introduced to the Gomu the use of fire for cooking; about their origin, different versions exist: they are from heaven, or came out of a cave, or out of a Baobab tree. Remarkable is that in any case they are not attributed with an origin from another group. Around these core groups other clans with external origins were attached.

The **Dangse** clan came from Dullum near Numan, the **Taamu** from Zo and the **Jungo** from a place to the northeast of the Muri Mountains.

In a report<sup>5</sup> from 1912 by the British colonial officer Haughton, it is suggested that the ancestors of the Gomu were from Mumuye. We could not record such a tradition among the Gomu, but among the neighbouring Leemak, the Guma clan has its origin from Mumuye. There was a considerable exchange and movement of clans between the Bikwin groups and especially between the Gomu and the Leemak, which, in my view, explains this statement by Haughton.

There was a conflict with the Dadiya in which the Gomu were defeated and they fled to a site called Juijui in the Loo area. Due to a conflict with the Leemak of Zo, the Gomu later left Juijui and moved to their present location (MS Tijani Magaji 1992).

### Relations with the Fulani emirates<sup>6</sup>

As far as oral, archival or published sources can tell, the Gomu were never conquered by the Fulani.

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<sup>5</sup> NAK SNP 10 – 77P/1913, Muri Province, Gwomu District, Lau Division, Assessment Report by T. H. Haughton: Gwomu District Wurkum Country Assessment Report Nov. 1912 by A R T. H. Haughton. The statement is repeated in Fremantle 1972: 27.

<sup>6</sup> The following is largely taken from Adelberger 2009 and Adelberger 2018.



At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Emir Yakubu of Bauchi had launched an attack on the Gomu and the neighbouring Kode, taking slaves and burning the settlements (NAK SNP 10 - 77P/1913), in the following years, however, the Gomu successfully repelled the attempts by the Emirate forces to conquer or enslave them. Preserved in the oral traditions of Gomu and Loo, and recorded in the files of the British colonial administration,<sup>7</sup> but not mentioned in the published histories of the Fulani emirates,<sup>8</sup> is the following event: in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a raiding party from Muri Emirate, which was roaming along the southern fringes of the Muri Mountains, was severely beaten by the Gomu and their allies, and the Emirate raiders suffered the loss of about 150 men. Oral tradition of the Gomu even tells us that the leader of the Fulani, (most probably Muhammadu Nya, Emir of Muri 1874-96), was wounded and could only be successfully treated by washing his wound with water fetched from a source belonging to the Gomu.

The Gomu and the neighbouring Loo and Burak were never forced to pay tribute to the Fulani Emirates. In their oral traditions their undefeated position is well-remembered.

The military strategy of the Fulani emirates was largely based on their cavalry, with noble horsemen leading the attacks (Marjooma 1998:218–19, 232–34, 254–56; Smaldone 1977:29–32).

Mounted warriors could employ their military tactics to great effect on the undulating plains of the Northern Nigerian savannah, but could not exploit their superiority in the craggy and hilly landscape of the Muri Mountains area nor in other mountainous regions. The inhabitants of the plains surrounding the hills, especially in the Tula area, built defensive stone walls and thorn hedges, which were successfully used to check attacks by horsemen. As a protective measure, the villages were strategically well-placed in the steep and rocky hills. Usually, they were protected by stone walls and could only be reached through narrow, winding paths, partly obstructed by gateways. These could be well-defended against emirate raiders, even if they approached armed with rifles.

Firearms were part of the weaponry of the emirate forces, especially since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but since they were of the front-loader musket type and, compared with contemporaneous European standards, few in numbers, their effect was mostly psychological, inducing fear through their loud discharge. The arms of the mountain dwellers consisted of spears with varying, often quite vicious, tips, bows and arrows, the latter often poisoned, daggers, short swords and clubs. For protection, shields made of buffalo hide and elephant ears were used.

Thus, although the different emirates exercised considerable pressure by undertaking frequent raids on the population groups of the wider Muri Mountains area and adjacent regions, their control of the area was rather loose and varied over time. Supported by a suitable terrain, the mountain dwellers could successfully defend themselves or were able to withdraw into even more inac-

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<sup>7</sup> NAK SNP 10 - 77P/1913 "Muri Province, Gwomu District, Lau Division, Assessment Report by T. H. Haughton; NAK SNP 7 - 5093/1907 "Wurkum Patrol 1909: Report on Wurkum Patrol by Resident Lau Division Elphinstone 1<sup>st</sup> July 1909".

<sup>8</sup> Hogben & Kirk-Greene 1966.

cessible regions. The acephalous nature of their societies and the existence of a multitude of factions on the one hand, made it difficult to form alliances for more successful defence, on the other hand, the subjugation of a single community did not entail the conquest of any wider political network.

Mountain dwellers, such as the Awak, Cham, Dadiya or Pero, were able to retain their independence against the Fulani (Temple 1922: 34, 87, 88, 365).

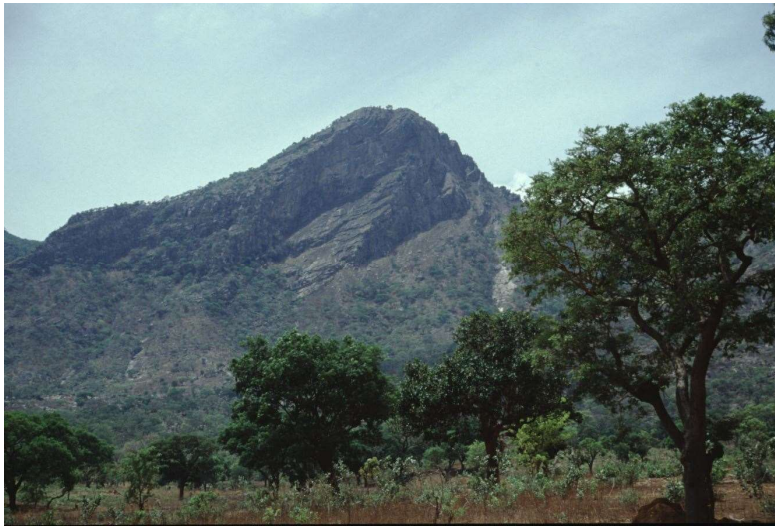


Photo 1: View of Gomu peak from the south

## Colonial encounters<sup>9</sup>

In the early years, the British colonial authorities had a negative attitude towards the Gomu, as well as other groups that had managed to evade subjection by the Fulani Emirates in their mountain retreats, and regarded them as *"savages [who] in their primitive state understand nothing but force."*<sup>10</sup>

In their attempt to subjugate the region, the British colonial power undertook a series of military patrols, and the first encounter with the Gomu people was a violent one.

In **1909** an endeavour by the British colonial administration was started to delineate the borders between the provinces of Gombe and Muri and bring hitherto unvisited areas under administrative control.<sup>11</sup> To this end, two patrols from Gombe and from Muri met at Gateri to the north of the Muri Mountains on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1909. The party from Gombe consisted of Assistant Resident of Gombe T.

<sup>9</sup> See Adelberger 2009 for a fuller account of the various British patrols to subjugate the region. For a detailed account of the patrol of 1909 see especially Adelberger 2018. The following chapter is largely taken from these publications.

<sup>10</sup> Resident J. M. Fremantle in a Quarterly Report on Yola Province, Sept. 1907 (NAK SNP 7 - 4230/1907).

<sup>11</sup> NAK SNP 7 - 147/1911, Boundary Muri - Bauchi: Extract from report on Wurkum Patrol, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1909 by Elphinstone, NAK SNP 7 - 5093/1907, Wurkum Patrol 1909:

- Report by Col. Sergeant C. Bailey 15<sup>th</sup> June 1909
- Report on Wurkum Patrol by Resident Lau Division Elphinstone 1<sup>st</sup> July 1909
- Extract from report from AR Gombe to Resident Bauchi by Lt. Hugh de Putron, OC Nafada.

F. Carlyle and Colour Sergeant Bailey with 22 soldiers; the party from Muri comprised Resident Lau Division K. V. Elphinstone, Assistant Resident Brice-Smith and Lieutenant Feneran with 54 soldiers. From Gateri they first went to the Pero settlements of Gwandum and Filiya, and Elphinstone remarked that he found them to be particularly repellent. The next settlements they reached were those of the Kushi and the Burak. The people of Burak expressed their contentment with the new administration protecting them against the neighbouring Loo and Pero, and they prepared a road to Gomu. The patrol then continued to Loo, Gomu and Bambuka. On reaching the area of Gomu the patrol made camp near a stream. According to local traditions some Gomu blocked the flow of water so that it no longer reached the camp. The patrol moved on to Bambuka where the people, armed with spears and shields, were working in the fields. As was found out, there had recently been a conflict between the Bambuka and the Gomu which had left 7 men dead. To settle the dispute, Resident Elphinstone decided on a fine of spears and shields from both groups, Bambuka was to deliver 30 and Gomu 60, but the Gomu, after having held a counsel, (in which the Loo also participated), resented the fine. After waiting for one day, the patrol marched into Gomu on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1909. Resident Elphinstone (NAK SNP 7 - 5093/1907) in his report tries to justify his harsh action:

"I very much regret to say that I met considerable opposition. I argued and begged them to stay and fall in with my modest demands but the young men carried the day. After the town had been cleared two counter attacks were made on an isolated section which were beaten off in one case only when the leading man was shot at 8 paces; in this case the attack was made from dead ground through the houses."

In the fight, the Gomu were joined by the Loo who were their allies. At the end of the skirmish there were 31 Gomu killed and 19 wounded, and one Loo killed and 9 wounded,<sup>12</sup> with no casualties on the British side. In the oral traditions of Gomu and Loo it is maintained that one man of the British party was killed or wounded by a spear which had instigated the fighting. The contemporary written sources do not support this view and it seems likely that the oral tradition is adjusted to have a convincing explanation for the brutal measures subsequently inflicted upon them.

The patrol continued to Kode, then passed through Panya, Bambur and Kwonchi and continued on to Pitiko, Bashima, Kirim, Balassa, Ankwara and Ligri. On 27<sup>th</sup> May the two parties split and the Gombe party proceeded to Tangale country, arriving at Nafada on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1909.

In the next year, **1915**, there was a patrol in Wurkun country again, leaving five Kwonchi dead and their compounds burnt.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> H. M. Brice-Smith donated, among other items, six spears from Gomu to the British Museum. About one spear the accession records state: "This spear was used by a young warrior in an attack by the pagans of Gwomu, Wurkum Hills, R. Benue, N. Nigeria, on a British patrol in 1909. The shaft was bound with grass by the youth's sweetheart, who instructed him to return it to her steeped in the blood of the enemy. The young warrior was killed in the action." (see Fardon 2019: 19). This is another token of the individual tragedy inflicted on the Loo and Gomu by this incident.

<sup>13</sup> NAK SNP 9 - 778/1919, Report on Wurkum District, Muri Province:

A. Holdsworth Groom "From the District Officer I/C Muri Div. to the Resident Muri Province", 7<sup>th</sup> April 1915, R. Fairfax Ellis "From Major Ellis, Assistant Commissioner of Police to the D.O. in charge Muri Division", 24<sup>th</sup> March 1915.

District Officer Groom left Mutum Biu on 6<sup>th</sup> March 1915 and went via Lau to Karim, where he arrived on 10<sup>th</sup> March. Here he tried to gather information about an incident in which two messengers, who had been sent to Kwonchi to tell them to provide labourers in order to assist a gun convoy, were killed. On the next day there was also a clash between some Kwonchi and some Fulani from Yola, in which three Fulani men were killed and four cattle slaughtered. On 13<sup>th</sup> March, when Major Ellis returned from leave, the patrol, consisting of District Officer Groom, Major Ellis and 24 soldiers, together with the District Head, left Karim for Kwonchi country. Certain quarters of Kwonchi, which were suspected of having been involved in the killing of the messengers, had formed an armed camp two miles north on the road to Kode. When the patrol approached the camp on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> March, however, they fled. Major Ellis followed them and tried to arrest some; in the skirmish five Kwonchi were killed and one wounded. On the next day the compounds of the men found guilty were razed. This led to the submission of the other quarters of Kwonchi. The following day the compounds of the men who had clashed with the Fulani were also destroyed.

The patrol then moved to Angule via Pitiko. On arrival at Angule Lukudu the tax was collected without resistance. At Ankwarra the man who had assaulted the government messengers was arrested. In 1910 ADO Haughton had forbidden a resettlement on Ankwarra Hill, but nevertheless a highway robber had established himself with some followers on the hill overlooking the Bauchi trade route. He escaped, but his houses were destroyed. The patrol then returned to Kwonchi on 20<sup>th</sup> March. On 22<sup>nd</sup> March they proceeded to Zo and arrested two men. They were sentenced to up to two years' imprisonment. Two others from Kode and Gomu were sentenced for resisting Native Authority. It was reported that the Loo had prepared to fight before they learnt about the patrol's dealing with the Kwonchi, and so the Loo brought in their tax without resistance. In the report the Loo and Kode are described as being the least developed groups in the district. Groom then returned to Karim on 24<sup>th</sup> March, left Major Ellis at Lau and proceeded to Mutum Biu on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1915.

## ***Social structure***

The Gomu are subdivided into the two sections: Nwatal in the west and Gonggwee in the east.

The Nwatal-clans are: Dangse, Gwanzal, Subiyang, Boogok, Zok, Jungo.

The Gonggwee-clans are: Nwaadur, (Yaa) Gok, Bangkorong, Danjuwal and Taamu.

### **Clans<sup>14</sup>**

Filiation into a clan is patrilineal.

In the following list the clans of Gomu are presented, with information about which section they belong to and their origin.

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<sup>14</sup> The major part of the information presented here was collected by Tijani Magaji (1992) and Denis Chiye (1991).

Table 2: Gomu clans

| Clan                | Section | Origin  | Comments  |
|---------------------|---------|---|---|
| Bangkorong          | Gongwe  | Bangwinji area  | Brought idol <i>nungbwi</i> with them. Have many healers.   |
| Dangjuwal           | Gongwe  | hole/cave Jingkan   | Emerged from hole together with the Nwaadur, Gok and Gwanzal, leading them with light from their spear. Cief priests of spear and war cult. Do not kill certain snake. Control Gomu peak. Get the head of an animal killed during hunting.                  |
| (Yaa) Gok           | Gongwe  | hole/cave Jingkan   | Emerged from hole Jingkan together with the Nwaadur, Dangjuwal and Gwanzal.   |
| Nwaadur             | Gongwe  | hole/cave Jingkan   | Emerged from hole Jingkan together with the Gok, Dangjuwal & Gwanzal. Have ritual responsibility for rain. Can speak to the spirit of <i>Dam Moo</i> (Gomu peak).   |
| Taamu               | Gongwe  | from Zo   | Before a communal hunt may take place, the Tamu sacrifice to their spirit of hunting. Are under Dangjuwal.  |
| Boogok              | Nwatal  | heaven, or a cave, or a Baobab tree near present settlement | Brought fire to Gomu. Boo Gok means 'near Gok'. Presently settled at Nwatal side. Some went to Munga Leelau and founded the Munziga clan, some to Bambur forming Bajiram clan (?), some to Bandawa.   |
| Dangse              | Nwatal  | from Dulum near Numan                                       | Brought idol <i>nungbwi</i> with them; have medicine against infertility of women.  |
| Gwanzal             | Nwatal  | hole/cave Jingkan   | Their cults are <i>min-fok-min</i> (secures growth of crops) and formerly <i>nungbwi</i> ( <i>dodo</i> ).   |
| (Gwanzal-) Subiyang | Nwatal  | see Gwanzal   | Subiyang is a recent branch of Gwanzal, got <i>nungbwi</i> cult from Gwanzal.   |
| Jungo               | Nwatal  | from the east   | Also called Yakwa. First settled at Bauli to the north of the Muri Mts., then Kaltungo, then Loo, where the major part of the Jungo resides.  |
| Zok                 | Nwatal  | from heaven to the Lodim rock                               | Regarded as owners of Gomu land, custodians of several important rituals in the agricultural annual cycle: <i>banzing</i> , <i>bobsak</i> , <i>yoanang</i> , <i>min fok min</i> . Get the front leg of an animal killed during hunting. Did not know death. |

The **Zok** are considered as traditional owners of the land, as such, they are entitled to receive the right foreleg of a wild animal killed during a hunt, and they are associated with important rituals in the annual agricultural cycle, for instance, they will perform a sacrifice before the first sowing may take place.

The Zok are custodians/owners of several rituals: *kem-zoo* (an oracle to find out the cause of a disease or a disaster), *banzing* (annual agricultural ritual), *bobsak* (thanksgiving after harvest) and *yoanang* (annual ritual before sowing may start).

They also perform *min-fok-min* like the Gwanzal clan, a ritual to ensure crop growth and good yields.

With regard to their origin, it is said that they dropped from heaven onto the Lodim rock, where still the footprints of a human and his dog may be seen. The Zok have four ancestors: Bloh, Khem, Goal and a fourth one whose name is forgotten.

The Zok originally did not know death, but also wanted to receive food items which are given as gifts of condolence by the other clans of Gomu. Therefore, one day the Zok carved a piece of

wood in human shape, (in other accounts it is a dead dog), and wrapped it into a cloth to make believe it was a corpse. The deception was discovered by a Nwaadur man who became annoyed, and from this day the Zok died like their fellows. Since that time, during the funeral of a Zok man, the Nwaadur may jokingly abuse the Zok.

The **Nwaadur** appeared from a hole in the mountains together with the Dangjuwal, Gok and Gwanzal. The Nwaadur have a special relationship with the Bangkurong: after a dispute, the Gok wanted to kill the Bangkurong and Nwaadur protected them. The Nwaadur are the ones to speak to the spirit of the Gomu peak *dam moo*. They have the ritual responsibility to handle rain and act against droughts, and also to address epidemics, such as measles. They have a special rock *tal mung*, on which sacrifices are offered to *Loyi* (god of rain) when in need of rain. The Nwaadur, Gok and Dangjuwal perform the rain rites together. Other ethnic groups like the Jen, Loo or Bandawa come to Gomu for help if they are in need of rain.

The **Bangkurong** are from Bangwinji, from where they migrated due to a famine. They brought the idol *nungbwi* to the Gonggwe section. They are known to have many healers among them and especially can help to cure barrenness in women.

The **Gok** emerged through a hole in the rocks together with the Gwanzal, Nwaadur and Dangjuwal. They are, together with the Nwaadur and Dangjuwal, custodians of the spirit *mam dangbang/dambang* (female, god of harvest) and *loyi* (male, god of rain).

A special relationship exists between the Gok and the Boogok: in the case that an old person, be this man or woman, is ill, nobody from the other clan will visit or greet the person. If the person dies, he/she may only be buried after the other clan has been informed of the death.

The **Boogok** were found and caught in a cave with fire in their hands, and they introduced fire to the Gomu.

The **Dangjuwal** emerged together with Nwaadur, Gok and Gwanzal from a hole/cave. They led the others with the light of their magic spear. They have a spear and war cult *chene* or *le jwa*. Together with the Gok they are the custodians of the cults of *mam dangbang* and *loyi*. For the celebrations, the Gomu are joined by the Loo, Jen and Bandawa. When there is a plague of locusts, the Dangjuwal are responsible for handling it. They will go and block the hole of the locusts, which is near the cave/hole Jingkan, from where the Dangjuwal emerged. The Dangjuwal are entitled to receive the head of a wild animal killed during a hunt. They do not kill a certain snake *biyak muon* ('spear snake').

Before the **Gwanzal** emerged from a hole, they had settled in the east at Kamakanga. After the Dangjuwal and Nwaadur had left, they went off together with the Gok. **Subiyang** is a (recent) branch of them. Originally, the Gwanzal controlled two cults: *min fok min* (a cult addressing the growth of guinea corn) and *wong* ("husk", a dry season cult involving idol *nungbwi*), but handed over *wong* to the Subiyang.

The **Dangse** are from the Bachama area, more specifically from Dulum near Numan. Due to a dispute, they moved away, some as far as Munga Doso, forming the Bada clan there. On arrival



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at Gomu land, they settled by the Byansoh stream. They brought their idol *nungbwi* (*dodon rani* H.: *dodo* of hot season) with them to Nwatal side.

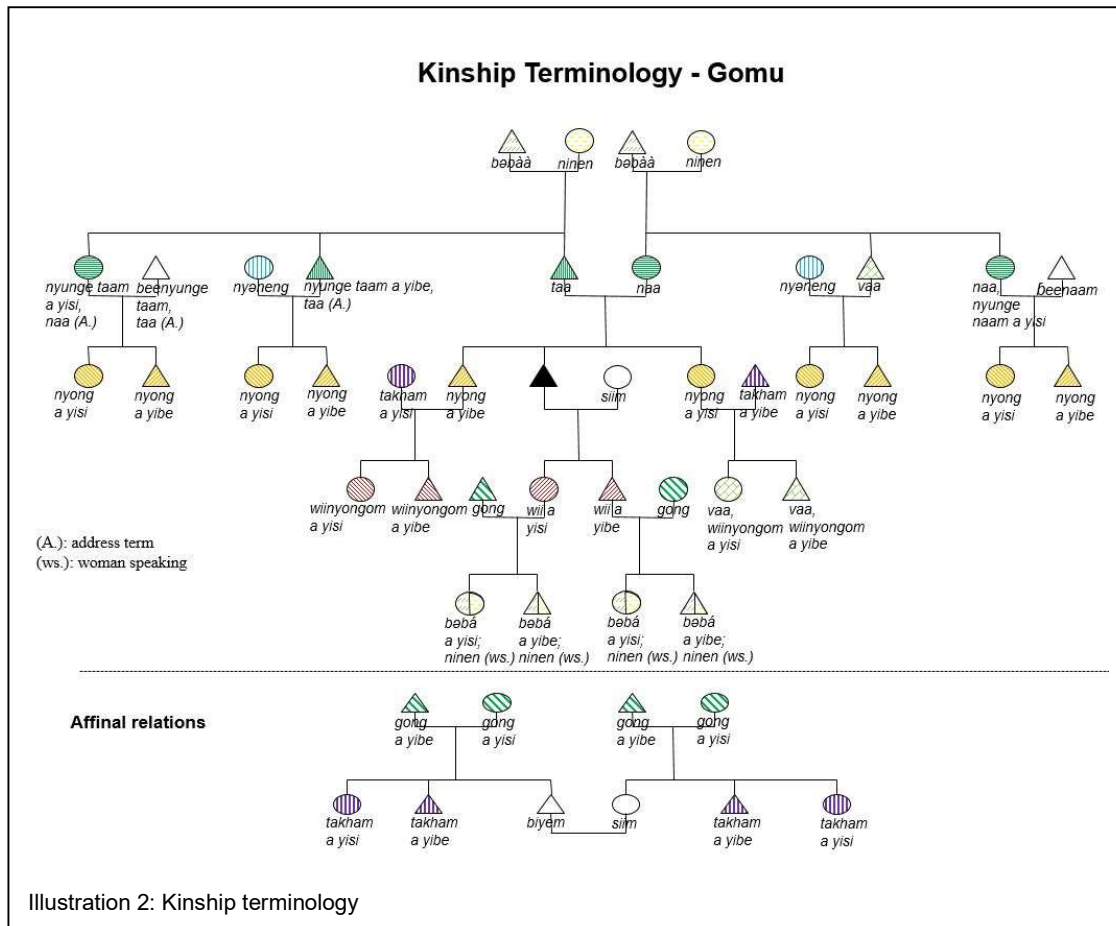
The **Tamu** are from Zo, where they left after a dispute. They are under the Dangjuwal clan. Before a communal hunt may take place, the Tamu will perform a sacrifice to their spirit of hunting.

The **Jungo**, (also called Yakwa), are from the east, they first settled at Bauli in the Kaltungo area, from where they migrated and merged with the Loo. The majority of them settled in the Loo area and pay their taxes there. They are not considered to be a proper Gomu clan.

## Kinship terminology

The kinship terminology of the Gomu is a Hawaii system, where in ego's generation all cousins are equated with siblings, only differentiated by gender.

In the first ascending generation, the terminology defies easy classification, for it would be bifurcate merging (Mo=MoSi≠FaSi, Fa= FaBr≠MoBr) if we include the address terms on the patrilineal side. By only considering the reference terms, it is bifurcate merging on the matrilineal side only.



## Family

Goods are inherited from father to his sons, the property of a woman is also inherited by her sons.

The father's brother will take care of an orphan.

Post-marital residence is viri-patrilocal.

Women are not considered to be permanent members of the family because they marry away.

## Birth

After having given birth, the umbilical cord and placenta are buried in the bathroom of the mother.

The frequent application of hot water on the bathroom floor will prevent ants from destroying the tissue, and thus prevent the baby from developing cough or rashes.

A child is only given its name when it starts walking. Twins are regarded with scepticism because they may be evil spirits. If one of them dies, the mother will hide with the surviving child at an unknown place until the child can walk in order to protect it from being attacked by its dead twin (Denis Chiye MS 1991, Tijani Magaji MS 1992).

### **Marriage**

Traditionally there was sister exchange. This has changed since the coming of Europeans and a man has to perform bride service at the house and farms of the girl's relatives.

Levirate is practised as a brother may propose to marry the widow of his deceased brother.

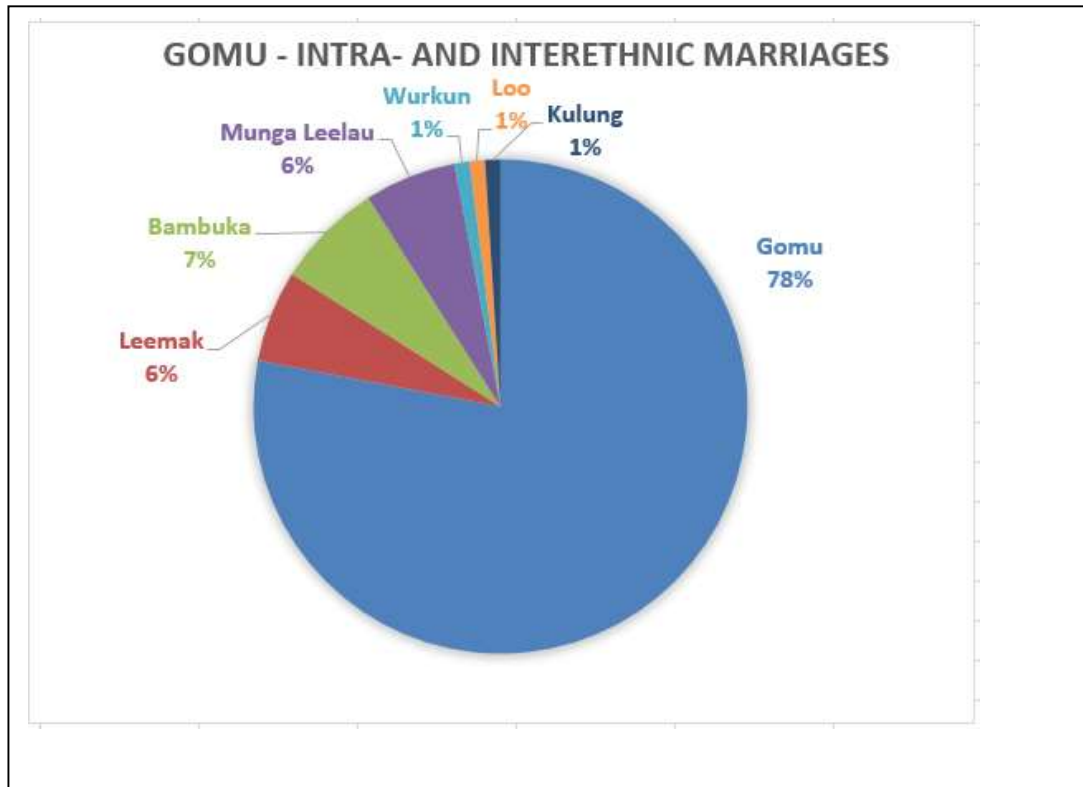
If a couple decides to marry, the girl will spend 5-6 days in the house of her prospective husband without eating or drinking anything. After this time she is taken back to her father's house where she is given food. Then, after about a year, the marriage will take place. A girl will not eat in the house of her prospective husband until after the marriage ceremony. The bride-price is negotiated between the fathers of the couple and includes iron bars which served as a traditional form of money.

For the marriage ceremony, the bride, together with her sisters and friends, brings corn flour, crushed ground nut and beniseed, and this is distributed to the neighbours of her husband in various containers. These then are filled by the neighbours with corresponding items from their own stock and sent to the husband, who will use them to prepare food for the ceremony.

In the past they practised sister exchange, when lacking a sister, one had to perform labour (Denis Chiye MS 1991, Tijani Magaji MS 1992).

### Some statistics

In a sample of 38 married Gomu men, there were a total of 100 wives, of which 78 were from Gomu, and 22 were from other ethnic groups.



The overall polygamy rate was 2.6, the polygamy rate with concurrent wives (i.e., wives who were divorced or deceased are not counted) was 2.1.

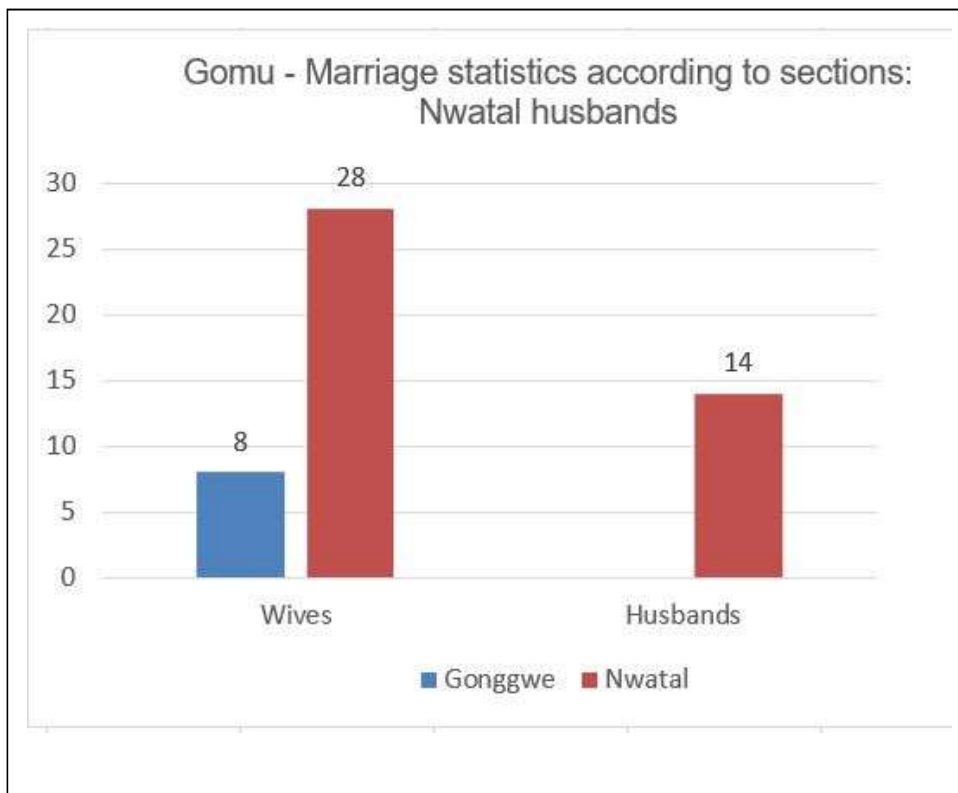
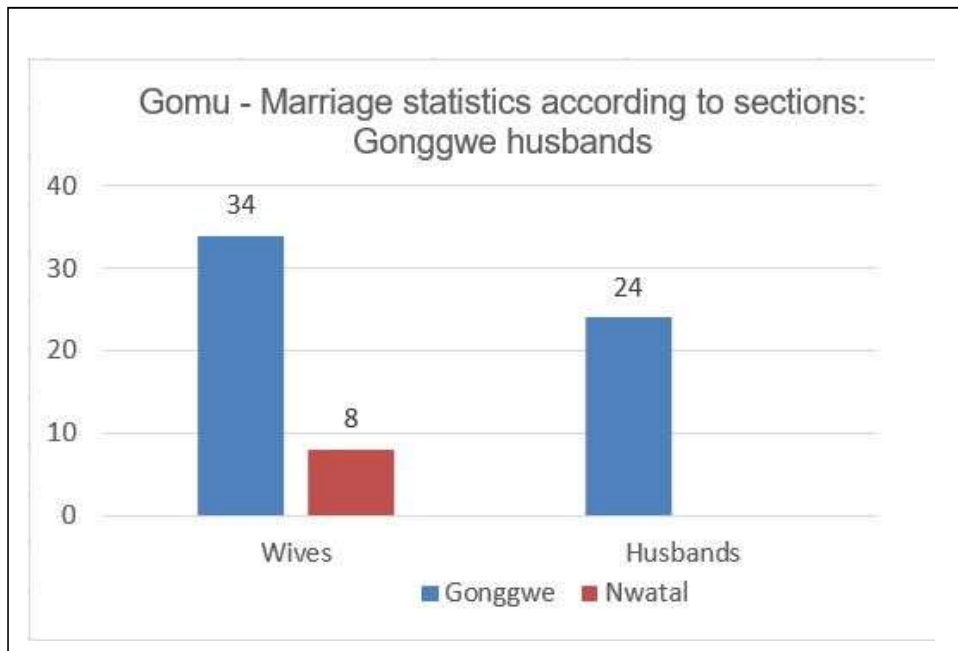
Marriages with partners from the same section (Gongwe or Nwatal) are prevalent.

Marriage within the same section: 62 %

Marriage with a wife from a different section: 16%

Marriage with a wife from a different ethnic group: 22%

While clan exogamy is the rule, in the sample there were 11 cases where the wife was from the same clan as the husband.



### Burial

If a baby dies before it can walk, it is buried at the threshold of the mother's room. The idea being that in this way it may come back into the womb of the mother and will be reborn.

A child that died of an infectious disease, like smallpox or meningitis, is buried in the bush so that the illness will not befall other children in the house.

If one child of a pair of twins dies, it is buried in the bush and the surviving child is taken away from the house for a certain length of time to protect it from being killed by the dead one.

If an adult dies, he will be taken out of his house through a large hole made into the wall of his house by men from an associated clan: for the Nwaadur it is the Zok and vice versa, for the Gok it is the Boogok; often it is done by the Nwaadur. The corpse will be seated on a chair, a boy of about 5 years placed between his legs and sprinkled with grains of different kinds. After that, a goat will be slaughtered between the corpse's legs. The meat is consumed by the elders the next day.

Locust bean leaves are put on the corpse, and if he belonged to a clan respecting the colour white, red sand is rubbed on the hand of the corpse, vice versa for the others.

Three days after the death of a person, the elders will gather in his house and shave their heads. If the deceased was a warrior, his weapons and the skulls of enemies he took are displayed on his grave.

The property of middle-aged males is taken by their elder brothers. A brother may propose to the widow and then marry her (levirate).

Women are buried at their own site. (Denis Chiye MS 1991, Tijani Magaji MS 1992)

## Granaries

The form of granaries of the Gomu and the Leemak of Panya is identical.



Photo 2: Granaries of the Gomu

Women have their own granaries built of clay and standing inside the house. Granaries of a household are built by men, the men also fill them with corn and other food items. After the initial opening of the granary by the husband, he takes out the foodstuff for the first time, after that women are allowed to fetch corn from it. In a polygy-

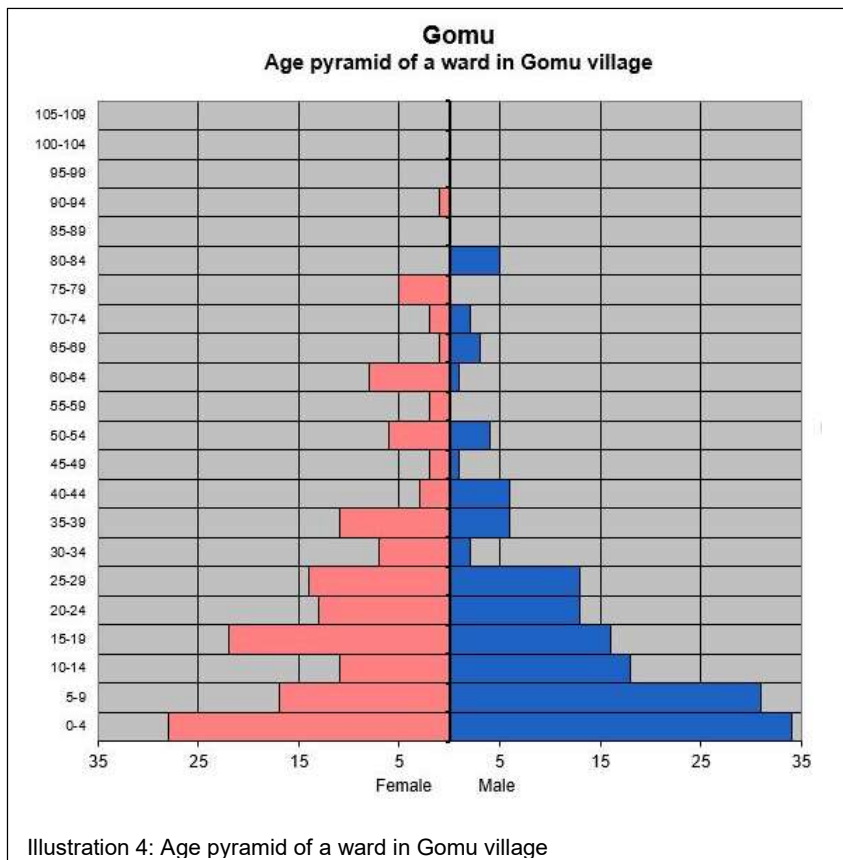
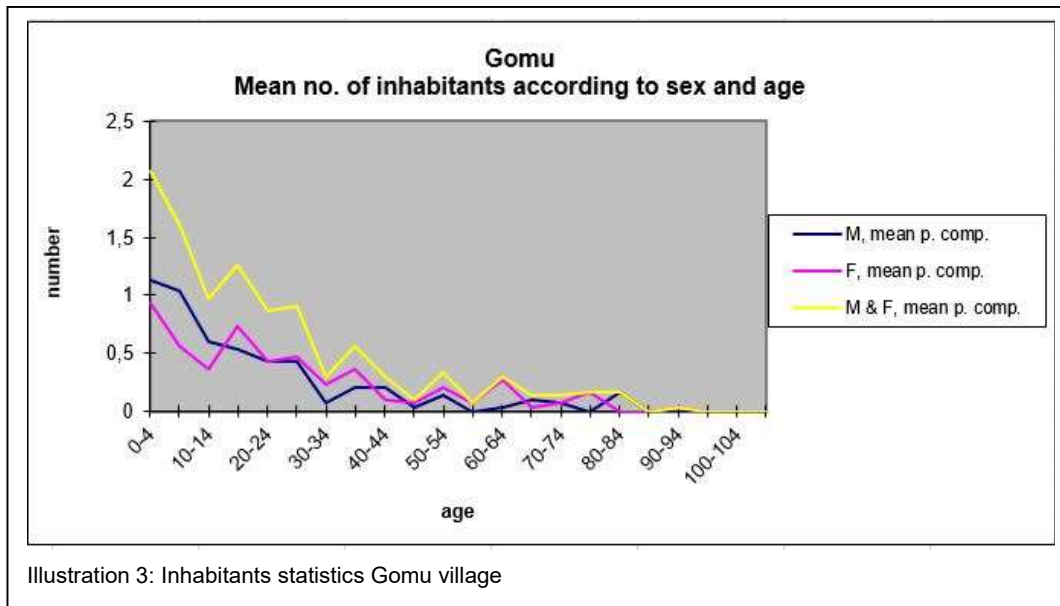
nous family, each wife in turn is responsible for fetching the food from the granary: each year another wife is assigned this task.

It is always the first wife who distributes the foodstuff among her co-wives.



## Village

In a census conducted among 30 compounds at Gomu, a total of 308 inhabitants were counted, of which 155 were males, 153 females. The average number of persons living in a compound was 10, with an approximately even distribution of males (5) and females (5).



## ***Political organisation***

### **Village Head**

The title of Village Head (VH) was introduced by the British colonial administration. *Yigwe* was the title of the traditional chief and head-priest of the Gomu, he was responsible for all clans.

Denis Chiye (1991) in his MS lists the names of 12 chiefs:

1. Giri
2. Gwegwa
3. Chungeh
4. Durum
5. Labwere
6. Nchirambe
7. Nimin (during his time the British came to Gomu in 1909)
8. Vau
9. Abare
10. Bangma
11. Mbang
12. Doki

The following were the village heads installed during the colonial period:

1. Nyamsoh (from Nwaadur)
2. Vau (from Nwaadur)
3. Adamu (from Nwaadur)
4. Giri (or Solomon; from Nwaadur)

## ***Economic activities***

### **Division of labour**

Table 3: Gender-specific division of labour among the Gomu (m: male, f: female)

| Activity                 | Gender |
|--------------------------|--------|
| clearing                 | m      |
| sowing                   | m & f  |
| weeding                  | m & f  |
| harvesting               | m & f  |
| irrigating               | m      |
| threshing                | f      |
| prepare threshing ground | f      |
| winnowing                | f      |
| build house walls        | m      |
| build house roof         | m      |
| prepare house floor      | f      |
| cut wooden poles         | m      |
| cut firewood             | f      |
| collect firewood         | f      |
| build well               | m      |
| build terraces           | m      |
| build fence              | m      |
| weave food cover         | f      |
| weave mats               | m      |
| weave baskets            | m      |
| make ropes               | m      |
| fetch water              | f      |
| pounding                 | f      |
| grinding                 | f      |
| cooking                  | f      |
| brewing beer             | f      |
| clean house              | f      |
| make pots                | f      |
| weaving cotton           | -      |
| spinning                 | f      |
| tailoring                | m & f  |
| blacksmithing            | m      |
| wood carving             | m      |
| butchering               | m      |
| hunting                  | m      |
| collect honey            | m      |
| produce salt             | f      |

## Agriculture

Fields on slopes are terraced by the Gomu. Nowadays, they also farm on the abandoned settlement terraces. Guinea corn, millet, rice, beans, beniseed, cassava, yams, Bambara nut and melons are cultivated.

## Domestic animals

The Gomu keep cattle as domestic animals, as well as goats, sheep, donkeys, pigs, chickens, ducks, pigeons, dogs and cats.



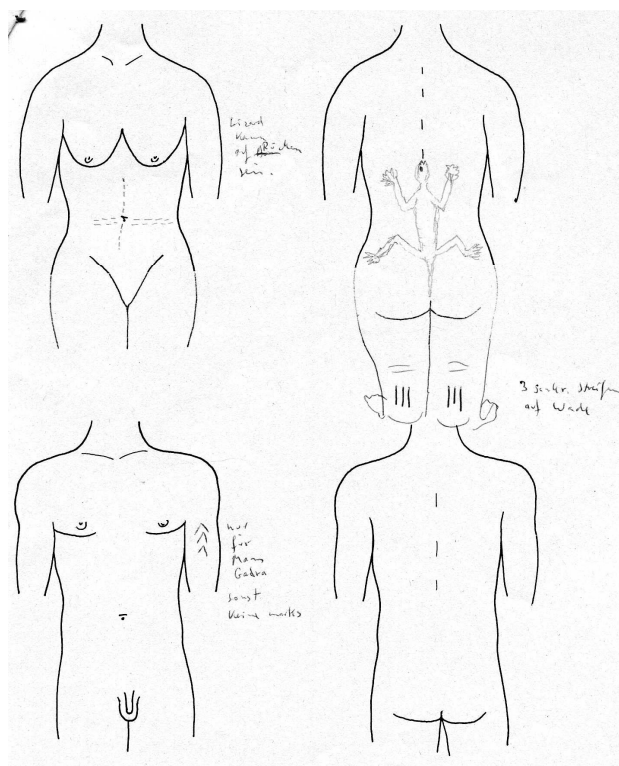
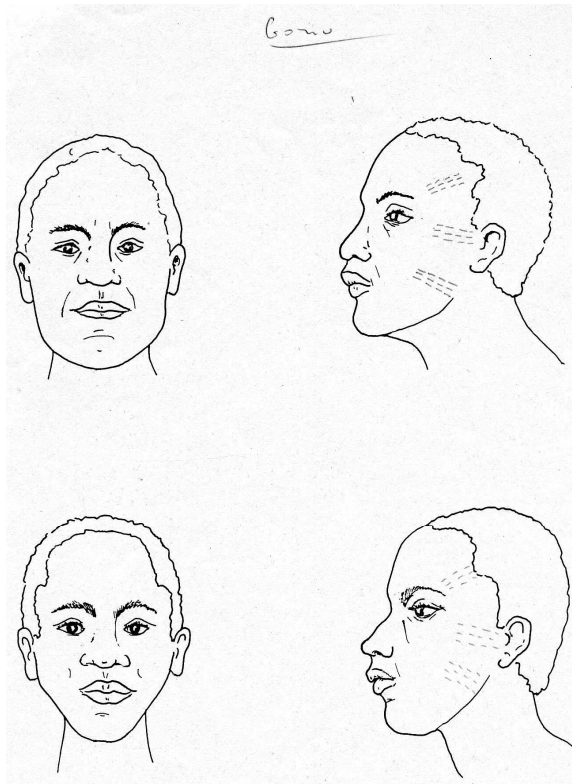
Photo 3: Selling pottery at Gomu

In a census of 15 households, the following numbers of domestic animals were determined:

Table 4: Gomu - Domestic animals kept by 15 households

|            | Cattle | Donkeys | Goats | Sheep | Pigs | Dogs | Chickens | Ducks | Pigeons | Cats |
|------------|--------|---------|-------|-------|------|------|----------|-------|---------|------|
| total      | 23     | 5       | 153   | 10    | 17   | 24   | 288      | 70    | 13      | 8    |
| mean no.   | 1.5    | 0.3     | 10.2  | 0.7   | 1.1  | 1.6  | 19.2     | 4.7   | 0.9     | 0.5  |
| median no. | 2      | 2.5     | 4     | 10    | 5    | 2    | 15       | 4.5   | 6.5     | 3    |

## Cicatrisation, bodily ornamentation



Only men who are members of the *mam gabra* cult have chevron marks on their upper arm. Women have three vertical lines on the back calves.

## ***Ritual and religion***

### **Spirits and associated rituals<sup>15</sup>**

There are people whose soul after death haunt the family. These are witch souls and when they appear in a home they may not be welcomed, then they flee into the bush where they may be killed by those possessed by the spirit of *mam*, i.e. members of the cult *mam gabra*.

Some people can change into animals like hyenas, snakes or monkeys, or nocturnal animals like owls, and attack their enemies.

There are benevolent spirits like *Ninkap*, which bring success in farming and hunting, but they also consume food and therefore diminish the amount it has helped to gain.

*Makutuk* are spirits of the wild living in the bush which may attack persons on the road making them sick. They feed on human flesh and blood and a spiritual attack may be followed by physical death.

There are water sources called Dah and Brem, where rituals are performed to ensure their flow. (Denis Chiye MS 1991, Tijani Magaji MS 1992).

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<sup>15</sup> See also CAPRO 1992: 56-63 for some information on rituals.



## Ritual calendar

### Gomu Annual festivities

| Name of festivity      | Jan. | Feb. | March | Apr. | May | June | July | Aug. | Sept. | Oct. | Nov. | Dec. |
|------------------------|------|------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|-------|------|------|------|
| <i>bangzin</i>         |      |      |       |      |     |      |      | —    |       |      |      |      |
| <i>min mam kadau</i>   |      |      |       |      |     |      |      |      | —     |      |      |      |
| <i>min yang delang</i> |      |      |       |      |     |      |      |      |       | —    |      |      |
| <i>bobsak</i>          |      |      |       |      |     |      |      |      |       |      | —    |      |
| <i>min nengbwi</i>     |      |      |       |      |     | —    |      |      |       |      |      | —    |
| <i>min mam gabra</i>   |      |      |       | —    |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |      |
| <i>yoonang</i>         |      | —    |       |      |     |      |      |      |       |      |      |      |

The traditional year starts in August with the ritual *bangzin*, addressing a spirit of the same name. The Zok clan are the custodians of *bangzin*. Before the ritual has taken place, members of the Zok clan are not allowed to eat pumpkin, (including the leaves), bean (*wake*, H.) leaves or red sorrel (*yaakuwa*, H.)<sup>16</sup>.

*bangzin* cult is also practised among the Leemak of Zo and Panya, the Munga Leelau and Munga Doso (Denis Chiye MS 1991).

The ritual of *mam kadau* is performed by the Gok clan annually, it addresses *dambang* (spirit of harvest) and its intention is to secure favourable conditions and good rains for the next season as well as peace and prosperity for the community. The Jen people join them for the ritual, bringing chicken, prepared fish and dogs for sacrifices and communal consumption.

*Dambang* cult is also practised among the Kode, Bambur, Bambuka, Jen and Bandawa (Denis Chiye MS 1991).

*Min yang delang* addresses the spirit *mam gabra*, all clans of the Gomu take part in the ritual. *Delang* (arrowroot) is a tuber from which a fine flour is made and mixed with groundnuts, this food is also called *delang*. All members of the *boori* cult will not eat *delang* prior to *min yang delang* being performed.

<sup>16</sup> H. = in Hausa language.

**bobsak** is performed first by the clan Zok, then by the Nwaadur, Gok and Dangjuwal; it addresses *sak*, spirit of the harvest. Flour from guinea corn and millet is mixed with water and poured on certain pots and the entrance of the shrines of *cheneh*, *loyi* and *mam dangbe*. Only after the ritual has been performed, may new crops be consumed, as well as the grass *wok* (*ciyawa* H.) may be cut, which is used for roofing houses and producing *zaana* mats (for example for fencing) (Denis Chiye MS 1991, Tijani Magaji MS 1992).

**Min nangbwi** is a thanksgiving, to show gratitude to the spirits for a good harvest and inviting the spirits of the ancestors to stay with the Gomu people until around June when they leave for Bandawa. *Nangbwi* are collective ancestor spirits of a clan; the ritual cleaning of the *nangbwi*'s shrine and its surrounding is called *lebmwakem*.

**Mam gabra** is performed in anticipation of the coming rainy season. The Gomu took over the cult of *mam gabra* from the Kwonci in the 1940s; a man called Mangmang of the Zok clan brought it.

**Yoonang**, (the cooking of seed), is also performed by the Zok clan, before sowing may be started at the beginning of the agricultural season. The ceremony includes sacrifices and the ritual consumption of corn and other farm produce like beans, maize or groundnut, as well as snails, earth worms etc. Members of the Zok clan are the first to start sowing and planting.

There is an agricultural ritual called *min-fok-min* which is performed by the Gwanzal clan as well as the Zok clan to ensure crop growth and good yields (Tijani Magaji MS 1992).

## Taboos

Certain animals may not be killed by the Gomu: lions and the nightjar bird. The lion is considered a friend of humans because he leaves remains of his prey for the consumption by humans. And some Gomu have the ability to morph into a lion. The nightjar bird is considered to be dangerous for a pregnant woman and her unborn child.

None of the Gonggwe clans eat red monkey. The Dangjuwal do not kill a certain snake *biyak mu-on*/ 'spear snake'.

There are two trees *kab-song* and *kab-begram* (the latter one sheds its leaves in the rainy season and produces leaves in the dry season) the wood of which is not used as firewood. If fire is made with this wood in a house, it will bring death to the inhabitants.

Gifts may not be given with the left hand as this will bring bad luck.

The clans Dangjuwal, Nwaadur and Gok do not wear anything with the colour red, especially during harvest. Other clans do not wear white.

Traditionally, women do not eat fowl.

Only men eat dogs.

## Miscellanea

Leaves of the locust bean tree are put into the mouth of a killed mammal like hyena, baboon or leopard. For the hunter, those same leaves are made into a rope and tied on his wrist and sprinkled with guinea corn flour. Locust bean leaves are also put on a corpse when it is carried to its grave. Further, such leaves are put on a wife married from the Munga Leelau or the Bambuka

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when she is on her way from the blessing at the foot of Lokinang to her Gomu home (Denis Chiye MS 1991).

## Glossary<sup>17</sup>

| Gomu/Moo               | Gloss   | Comment   |
|------------------------|---|---|
| <i>bangzin</i>         | annual ritual marking the beginning of the traditional annual cycle |   |
| <i>biyak muon</i>      | sp. snake   | 'spear snake'   |
| <i>bobsak</i>          | thanksgiving after harvest  |   |
| <i>chene</i>           | spear cult  |   |
| <i>cikaba</i>          | rice  | <i>shinkaafar</i> H.                                    |
| <i>dam moo</i>         | Gomu peak   |   |
| <i>delang</i>          | Polynesian arrowroot  | <i>Tacca leontopetaloides</i> , <i>amora</i> H.         |
| <i>gol</i>             | cocoyam   |   |
| <i>kaareke</i>         | sugar-cane  | <i>rakee</i> H.   |
| <i>kab song</i>        | sp. tree  |   |
| <i>kab begram</i>      | sp. tree  |   |
| <i>kabwe</i>           | clan  |   |
| <i>kem zoo</i>         | an oracle to find out the cause of a disease/ a disaster            |   |
| <i>lebmwakem</i>       | ritual cleaning of <i>nangbwi</i> shrines                           |   |
| <i>looje</i>           | lineage   |   |
| <i>loyi</i>            | god of rain, male   |   |
| <i>makutuk</i>         | spirits of the bush   |   |
| <i>mam dangbang</i>    | god of harvest, female  |   |
| <i>mam kadau</i>       | annual ritual, aims at securing peace and prosperity                |   |
| <i>min</i>             | guinea corn   | also: millet beer <i>burkutu</i> or <i>pito</i> H.      |
| <i>min aa</i>          | beans   | <i>waakee</i> H.  |
| <i>min fok min</i>     | ritual to ensure crop growth, especially guinea corn                |   |
| <i>min gwi</i>         | groundnuts  | <i>Gyadaa</i> H.  |
| <i>min nangbwi</i>     | a thanksgiving ritual   |   |
| <i>min yang delang</i> | annual ritual   |   |
| <i>nangbwi</i>         | spirits of ancestors  |   |
| <i>ninkap</i>          | benevolent spirit   |   |
| <i>num vaa</i>         | bulrush millet  | <i>geeroo</i> H.  |
| <i>nungbwi</i>         | wooden idol   |   |
| <i>tal mung</i>        | sp. rock for sacrifices   |   |
| <i>waa</i>             | pearl millet  | <i>maiwaa</i> H.  |
| <i>wók</i>             | vegetables  |   |
| <i>wók</i>             | grass species   | <i>ciyawa</i> H., <i>ciyawar tuji</i> = Eleusine indica |
| <i>wong</i>            | husk, a ritual of Subiyang clan                                     |   |
| <i>yigwe</i>           | traditional chief and head-priest                                   |   |
| <i>yoongang</i>        | annual ritual before sowing may start                               |   |

<sup>17</sup> H. = Hausa term.

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