



THE KWONCI

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

Series

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

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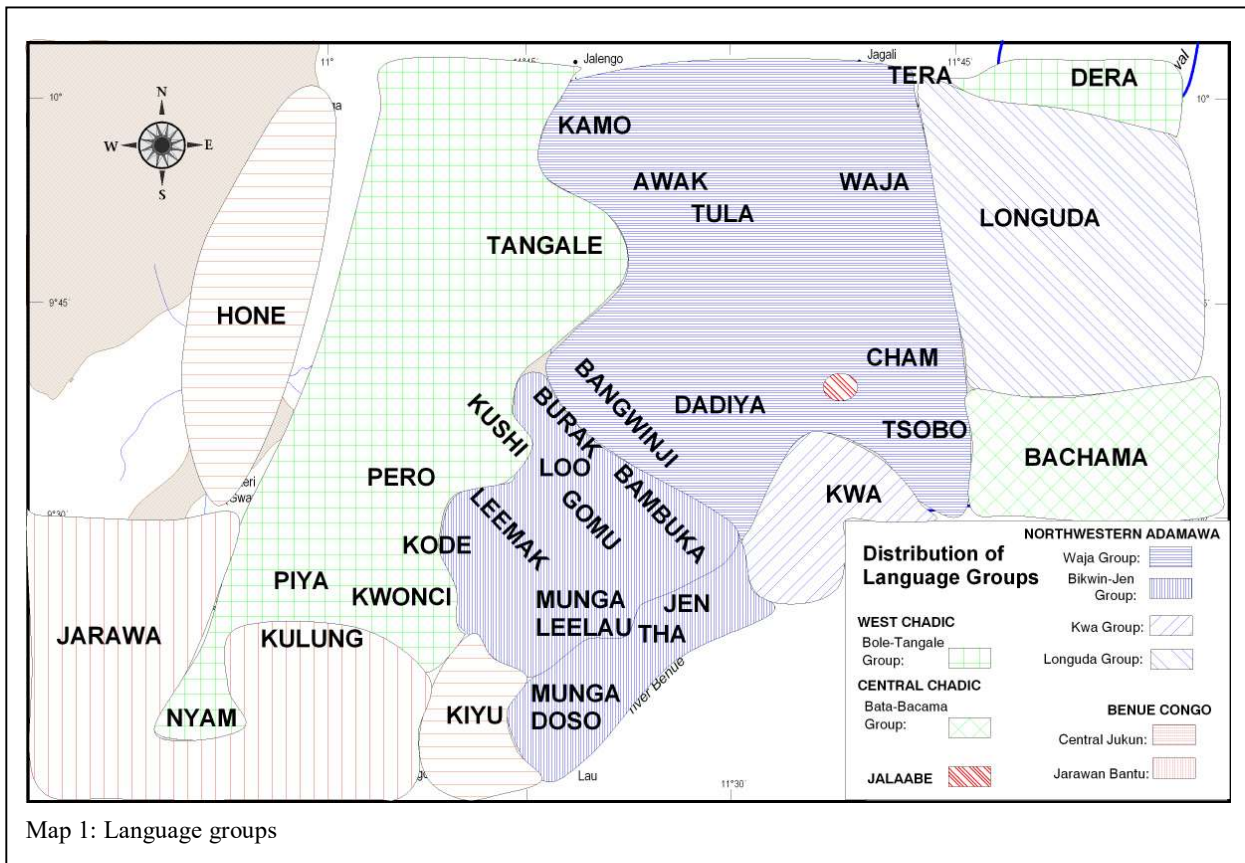
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Introduction

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.¹

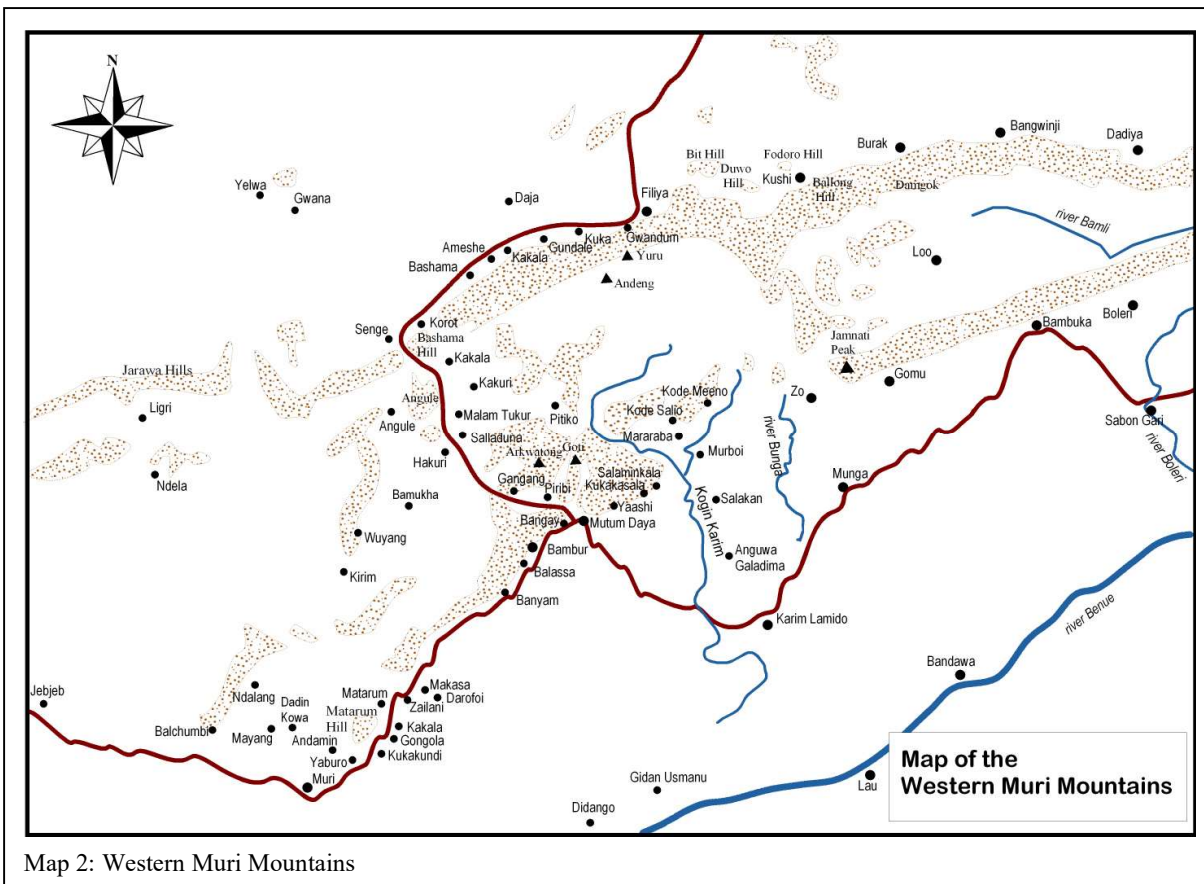
The language of the Kwonci [piy] is very similar to that of the neighbouring Piya [piy], and linguistically, they are not differentiated. Their language is classified as a member of the southern Bole-Tangale group of the West Chadic languages. However, they maintain an ethnic identity of their own.²



¹ I am grateful to Abdel Gadir Adamu (VH of Mutum Daya), Al-Haji Dan Juma Kasuwa, Amos Dan Kano, Cephas Siddi, Doro Kumbobi, Gaseri Zakaria, Gayus Tolong, Gorko Sarkin Noma, Habila Mamman, Jawro Saleh, Jibril Sambo, Likita Mai Yaki, Mamman Magaji, Musa Yilima, Sanda, Jawro Saleh and Yakubu for their co-operation during my research. My special thanks go to Zubairu Maigula, Sabo Gagare and Kefas Sallau for their untiring and invaluable assistance, and to Else Mamman of the Women's Training Centre at Bangai for her hospitality. I am grateful to Pete Eccles for correcting my English.

² In the ethnographic survey by CAPRO (1992: 402), they are called Kwanchi. Leger (2004, 2014) has published studies of the Piya, Kwonci and other Southern Bole-Tangale languages.

Settlement area and demography



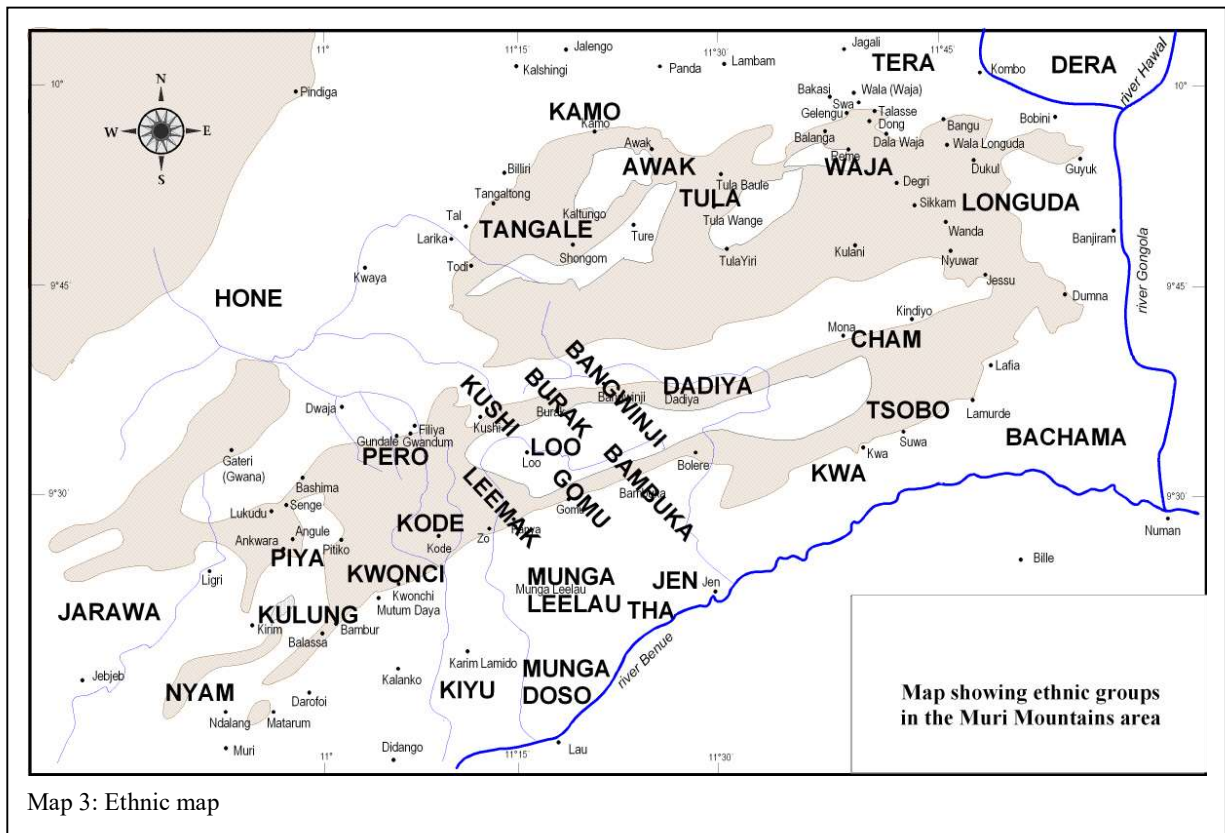
Map 2: Western Muri Mountains

The Kwonci are settled in the western part of the Muri Mountains; their settlements are Dabang, Langakonshi, Salakan, Yaashi, Mingei, Salaminkala and Kukakasala; and there are Kwonci living together with other ethnic groups at Fiya, Manaro, Anguwa Roogo, Batara and Mutum Daya. At the time of research, the Village Head of Mutum Daya was a Kwonci man. Yaashi is said to be their ritual headquarters. The Kwonci may number about 4,000 people.

Interethnic relations

Their neighbours to the northeast and east are the Kode [gmd/ktc], to the northwest and west as well as to the south the Piya [piy] and to the southwest the Kulung [bbu].

The Kwonci acknowledge being part of the supra-ethnic Wurkun cluster, consisting of the



Kwonci, Kode, Piya and Kulung, and probably the Pero in the past.³ Quite often, individuals identify themselves as being Wurkun, and only when pressed specify that they are Kwonci. Wurkun is derived from the Jukun language meaning “rock dwellers”. At the same time, the Kwonci are part of the array of ethnic groups who speak closely related languages, calling themselves *ambandi* or *ampandi* (meaning “owner of mountain”), including the Kode, Kwonci, Piya and Pero. The Kwonci regard the Piya as being especially close to them (Zubairu Maigula MS).

The Kwonci relate that they had no frictions with other ethnic groups, but even offered refuge to others – for instance the Karimjo - when these were persecuted. An exception are the Kulung-Bambur with whom there was a fight due to a dispute over a salting belonging to the Kwonci: the Kwonci had allowed the Kulung-Bambur to collect salt there, but one day, these claimed the place for themselves. In the ensuing confrontation the Kwonci were victorious and took away a ‘victory drum’ of the Bambur, which they scorched but could not destroy, so they used it for themselves. The drum still exists and is standing at Kuka.

³ For the term Wurkun and the Wurkun groups see Adelberger 1992.

The Kwonci claim to have joking relationships with the Jen, Jukun, Mumuye, Tangale, Sayawa and Jarawa, dating back to the times when the region was suffering from raids by Emir Yakubu of Bauchi.

Table 1: Kwonci names for neighbouring ethnic groups

Ethnic group	Kwonci
Como and Wurbo	Como
Jarawa	ɓayari
Jen	Jónjò
Jukun	Gbánà'
Karimjo	Bibinang
Kode	Tára
Kulung	ƙulung
Leemak	Paw
Loo	Cóngó
Pero	Gbandum
Piya	Méthébà

History

Pre-colonial migrations

In general, the Kwonci claim to have come from the east together with the other *ampanɗi* groups: the Kode, Kushi, Pero and Piya. More specifically, however, the Kwonci refer to Mount Arkwatong (*gúllénó Arkwàtòng* = high mountain Arkwatong, about two hours on foot north of Mutum Daya) as their place of origin. The tradition details that here their ancestor Arkotong (ancestor of the Mirzem clan) came down from heaven with his dog and his spear, leaving their imprints on the rock. Arkotong saw Banyiri on Mount Goti to the east and went there to settle with him. Later they were joined by a person from the Kode and one from the Chomo. In mythical terms, this is an expression of the fact that the Kwonci are made up of different population elements from neighbouring groups. The Kwonci claim to have been the first dwellers in the area.

Relations with the Fulani emirates⁴

Bauchi Emirate was founded by Yakubu, who had already received a flag from Uthman dan Fodio prior to 1804. Bauchi town was founded in 1809 and in the following years a vast area, including the Wurkun hills in the western Muri Mountains, down to the rivers Benue and Gongola, was conquered. Yakubu pitched a war camp in front of Bambur Hill (McBride, n.d.:15; Fremantle 1972: 27) and it is said that he destroyed Kode and Gomu and received slaves as a sign of submission, but no regular tribute was paid.⁵ Under Yakubu's successors, however, the control over the subject peoples weakened, especially under Umaru (1883–1902). The region inhabited by non-Muslim peoples in the south of Bauchi Emirate was a regular target for slave raids (Yakubu 1992:147).

⁴ The following is largely taken from Adelberger 2009; see also Adelberger 2018.

⁵ NAK SNP 10 - 77P/1913, Muri Province, Gwomu District, Lau Division, Assessment Report by T. H. Haughton.

With regard to the southern parts of the Muri Mountains, the Piya are said to have migrated from the Gwandum hills in the Tangale-Waja area as a means to escape the slave raids of Emir Yakubu of Bauchi and they "...scattered over the whole of the North Western part of the [Wurkun] District extending from Darfur [most probably Darofoi, J.A.] to Bachama."⁶ Emir Yakubu made some of the Piya pay an annual tribute of slaves and hoes,⁷ which, however, was discontinued after his death (Temple 1922: 365). The Nyam living in the western end of the Muri Mountains were constantly attacked by Fulani from Bauchi and Muri and because of this, subsequently moved to Gateri (Gwana).⁸

The military strategy of the Fulani emirates was largely based on their cavalry, with noble horsemen leading the attacks (Marjomaa 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 19th 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 inaccessible 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.

The Kwonci maintain that they had good relations with the Fulani and never fought with them.

⁶ NAK Yola Prof K.5/SII, Gazetteer of Adamawa Province 1936, p. 99.

⁷ Iron hoes were used as a kind of money.

⁸ IAI cons. 2 box 2(4), McBride.

Colonial encounters⁹

In the aftermath of the Bauchi-Bornu expedition of 1902, the first campaign to subjugate parts of the Muri Mountains took place. Starting from Yola, Captain Cubitt carried out operations, sanctioned by Lord Lugard, in Bachama country and the Wurkun hills. Cubitt left Yola on April 28th, 1902, with two guns, two Maxims and 130 rank and file, marching along the north bank of the River Benue. The patrol reached Lau on May 4th. From here Cubitt started towards the Wurkun hills on 6th May. On 7th May their camp at Pitiko was attacked, but the Wurkun warriors were repulsed and several of them killed. Further fighting occurred the next day, until the Wurkun chiefs sued for peace. The district was considered pacified. The force was back at Ibi on 16th April 1902.¹⁰

In 1904 the Wurkun country was visited by the Acting Resident Elphinstone with a military patrol and "*thoroughly subdued*"; unfortunately no further information is available on this patrol.¹¹ *Sarkin* Bambur, who had acted as a guide for this patrol, was killed, apparently by people from Bacama, around the end of the following year and Elphinstone felt compelled to punish them with another patrol.

Thus, in November 1906, Assistant Resident Waters, escorted by 70 soldiers under Lieutenant Aubin, toured the area to subdue the Wurkun and to re-open the main trade route from Lau to Gateri, which had been disrupted by highway robbers. In the course of that patrol, 65 Wurkun people were killed and five villages burnt for offering resistance, and 12 villages were ordered to clear sections of the road as punishment for having robbed traders (Ruxton 1906).

A combined patrol of forces from Gombe and Muri, with officers from both provinces, toured the Muri Mountains proper in May and June 1909.¹² They went along the northern edge, then crossed the hills to the south and returned along its southern edge. Several places in that mountain refuge were visited for the first time. At Gomu, a violent conflict arose which resulted in about 30 Gomu being killed. The Gomu warriors were defeated at the same place where they had beaten the Fulani forces years before.¹³ The proclaimed intention of the patrol was to bring

⁹ The following is largely taken from Adelberger 2009; see also Adelberger 2018.

¹⁰ NAK SNP 15 Acc. No. 30, Report on Field Operations 1902. See also Dugate 1985:145–155.

¹¹ NAK SNP 15 Acc. 117, Reports from Muri Province 1906: Province of Muri, Report No. 45 for months April, May and June by Acting Resident Mr. K. V. Elphinstone.

¹² NAK SNP 7 - 147/1911, Boundary Muri - Bauchi: Extract from report on Wurkun Patrol, 1st July 1909 by Elphinstone;

NAK SNP 7 - 5093/1907, Wurkun Patrol 1909:

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

¹³ NAK SNP 7 - 147/1911, Boundary Muri - Bauchi. NAK SNP 7 - 3803/1909, Patrol Tangale-Waja, Report on: From the Resident Bauchi Province to the Secretary to the Administration, Zungeru, by E. H. Lewis Resident Bauchi 5th July 1909.

NAK SNP 7 - 5093/1907, Wurkun Patrol 1909.

NAK Yola Prof Acc. 15, Misc. Papers re Wurkun and Muri 1912: Gwomu District Wurkun Country Assessment Report Nov. 1912 by AR T. H. Haughton.

NAK SNP 10 - 77P/1913, Muri Province, Gwomu District, Lau Division, Assessment Report by T. H. Haughton.

the area under control and to stop offences being committed on traders disturbing the important trading centre of Lau.

On 20th April 1909 Colour Sergeant Bailey, along with 22 rank and file, left Nafada and marched via Deba Habe, where they joined Assistant Resident of Gombe Carlyle, to the Jukun town of Gateri where they arrived on 28th April. Here they expected to meet with the party from Muri Division, but, due to an illness of the Assistant Resident Fitzpatrick, the meeting was delayed. Eventually on 12th May they were joined by Resident Lau Division K. V. Elphinstone, Assistant Resident Brice-Smith and Lieutenant Feneran with 54 rank and file. The combined patrol left Gateri on 14th May.

From here they first marched east and then south along the boundary line on which, however, both parties had differing views. That stretch of country was covered for the first time by a British patrol. They first visited the Pero settlements of Gwandum and Filiya, and Elphinstone remarked that he was repelled especially by the Pero. As the Pero and Tangale claimed the same saltings on the river, that topic was discussed during the visit by the Galadima of Tangale and Sarkin Filiya. The next settlements they reached were Kushi and Burak. The Burak expressed their contentment with the new administration protecting them against the neighbouring Loo and Pero, and they prepared a road to Gomu. Then the patrol continued to Loo, Gomu and Bambuka. Bambuka had been visited by W. P. Hewby in 1900 (he was an agent of the Royal Niger Company on the Benue and, later, Resident of Benue province) and the Bambuka were said to have been subject to the Emir of Yola. Recently there had been a series of disputes between the Gomu and the Bambuka. When the patrol approached Bambuka, the people, armed with spears and shields, were working in the fields, and, at first, they assumed that the patrol were Gomu warriors. To settle the discord, Resident Elphinstone decided on a fine of spears and shields from both groups, but the Gomu resented the fine. After waiting for one day, the patrol marched into Gomu town on 25th May. Half way up the pass, the force was met by the Gomu ready to defend their town, so the soldiers fired two volleys at them and fighting ensued, in which the Gomu were joined by the Loo who were their allies. At the end there were 31 Gomu killed and 19 wounded, and one Loo killed and 9 wounded, with no casualties on the British side.

The patrol continued to Kode. They considered the Kode people to be at a low stage of development but friendly and co-operative. Then they passed through Panya, Bambur and Kwonchi without incident and continued to Pitiko, Bashima, Kirim, Balassa, Ankwara and Batingo. The inhabitants of these settlements were considered to be friendly with the exception of those of Angule. Angule had been burnt three times and fought twice in the past, but now the inhabitants showed no resistance. The patrol did not collect the full amount of tribute, and nothing was given to the Emir of Muri as they felt he had not earned it, for the villages were not administered by him. Although the district had been placed under the Emir by the British administration in 1900, he had never visited it. The route taken by the patrol was determined to be impractical

and it was recommended that it should never be taken again. On 27th May the two parties split and the Gombe party proceeded to Tangale country, arriving at Nafada on 14th June.

In the year 1912, another patrol was undertaken by Assistant Resident Haughton. Its aims were to deal with disorder and disturbances of trade and to reach the hitherto unvisited areas of Akassa and Gongon in Mumuye country. On 12th February 1912, Haughton, with a patrol of 50 rank and file under Lieutenant Ching and officer Cummins, left Lau and reached Wurkun country two days later. At Kwonchi some villagers, reportedly under the influence of an ex-prisoner, refused to pay tax, thus their stock was confiscated and their houses burnt. They submitted with the exception of the ex-prisoner. People at Lo also refused to pay tax and, as they also disturbed messengers from other locations bringing in their taxes, the people of Lo were ordered to pay, as a fine, 60 spears in addition to their tax. The patrol then continued to Mumuye country from 2nd March to 11th April. At three locations, portions of the towns were burnt and razed for failing to collect their taxes. In Akassa country, which was hitherto unvisited, there was opposition, resulting in three shots being fired and two Mumuye being killed.¹⁴

In 1914, in the southern parts of the Muri Mountains, Assistant District Officer (ADO) Haughton, with a police escort, visited several settlements of Wurkun groups and Jen due to what was termed "*various outrages*" and took "*executive measures*" at Bambur, Lukudu, Senge and Jen. In September 1914, District Officer Glenn reported that Bashima, Kode and Jen refused to pay grain tribute for the troops at Yola; this resistance was explained with reference to the First World War. No patrol was undertaken because there were no police available. Ankwarra, Kwa, Lukudu (Angule) and Lo refused to pay their tax for 1914, and further government messengers were assaulted at Ankwarra and driven out by Lo. Ankwarra and Kwa did eventually pay their tax in February 1915.¹⁵

In the next year, 1915, there was a patrol in Wurkun country again, leaving five Kwonci dead and their compounds burnt.¹⁶

District Officer Groom left Mutum Biu on 6th March 1915 and went via Lau to Karim, where he arrived on 10th 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 Kwonci and some Fulani from Yola, in which three Fulani men were killed and four cattle slaughtered. On

¹⁴ NAK SNP 7 - 5552/1911, Patrol Wurkum - Mumuye Country - Muri Border:

- Lieut. C. H. Ching "Report on the Wurkum - Mumeye [sic] Patrol", 4th April 1912
- T. H. Haughton (A.R. Pagan Districts Lau Division) "Operations of the Wurkum - Mumuye patrol during February and March 1912", 14th April 1912.

NAK SNP 10 - 181P/1913, Muri Province, Annual Report 1912.

¹⁵ 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", 7th April 1915.

¹⁶ 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", 7th April 1915. R. Fairfax Ellis "From Major Ellis, Assistant Commissioner of Police to the D.O. in charge Muri Division", 24th March 1915.

13th 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 Kwonci 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 15th March, however, they fled. Major Ellis followed them and tried to arrest some; in the skirmish five Kwonci 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 Ankwara, the man who had assaulted the government messengers was arrested. In 1910, ADO Haughton had forbidden a resettlement on Ankwara 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 20th March. On 22nd March they proceeded to Zoo and arrested two men. These 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 for a fight before they learnt about the patrol's dealing with the Kwonci, and so the Loo brought in their tax without resistance. In the report, the Loo and the Kode are described as being the least developed groups in the district. Groom then returned to Karim on 24th March, left Major Ellis at Lau and proceeded to Mutum Biu on March 27th, 1915. The Resident of Muri Province, Fremantle, together with Major Edgar and a police force, made a tour in Wurkun district for a fortnight in 1918. A chief feature of the visit was the capture by night by Major Ellis' police in three places of persons who had been involved in the Wurkun outbreak of 1915. Three were condemned to death by Major Edgar and two sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.¹⁷

¹⁷ NAK SNP 10 - 62P/1919, Muri Province, Annual Report: Resident J. M. Fremantle Report No. 102 for Half Year ending 30th June 1918. See also McBride (n.d.: 25).

Social structure

The Kwonci comprise several patrilineal descent units or clans (*fúlàn*). A number of these clans form the section of the Bamingun; and it is significant to note that among the neighbouring Kulung there is also a section called Bamingun, consisting of clans with the same names as among the Kwonci. According to the information available, these Bamingun clans were originally Kwonci, but moved away and united with the Kulung, (in particular with the Kulung-Bambur) comparatively recently, intermarrying with them and taking over the Kulung language. This move is opposed by the Kwonci and the Bamingun receive a lot of reproach. It is suggested that this happened in the late colonial or early independence era. Further research is necessary to learn about the history and origin of the Bamingun clans.

Clans

The clans, or major lineages, are sometimes subdivided into smaller units or lineages, (usually qualified by the word *yamina*; *yamina* may also mean family). The clans, but especially the lineages, are exogamous units. Co-residential clans share ritual practices, for instance the Anyagay, Bagul, Banyiri and Pukula worship one idol (*dodo*) together. The relationship between a clan and its sub-units is not necessarily based on genealogical ties, but may also be an expression of incorporation. The Yamina Gbay, who claim an origin from Cameroon, are attached to the Yagarimbe as a sub-unit, probably based on a patron-client relationship. If there are variants of clan names, these are due to variations given by informants.

Table 2: Kwonci clans

Section	Clan	Lineage	Origin	Comments
Bamingun	Bálláádi/ Baradi		Muri Mts., or from Tangale	
Bamingun	Bambughu		Muri Mts.	name means 'leaves of tree'
Bamingun	Dungngu		Muri Mts.	
Bamingun	Gbáágbáxéy/ Bagbaghi		Muri Mts.	
Bamingun	Kalakwolo/ Xalaxwolo		Muri Mts.	
Bamingun	Peina		from Pero	
Bamingun	Piigong		Muri Mts.	
Bamingun	Piira/Piida		Muri Mts.	
Bamingun	Pikodo		Muri Mts.	
-	Anyágây		Muri Mts.	
-	Bágùl/ Bògúúli		from the north to Mt. Walla, or from Kwararafa - Wukari	Mt. Walla is behind Mt. Arkwatong; some migrated to Kode
-	Balgadang/ Bárgádàng/ Bárgádáng		Mbau, a hill near Zelany	
-	Bálnyàng		from Pero	some migrated to the Kulung

Section	Clan	Lineage	Origin	Comments
-	Bangada		Kwararafa - Wukari	
-	Bányírí		Posugo, a hill near Mt. Dangberum, or Mt. Goti	Mt. Dangberum is near Mutum Daya
-	Béshì			some migrated to Pero land
-	Minjarama		Cameroon, then Numan	
-	Mírzem/ Mírjèm/ Múrzèm		from heaven onto Mt. Arkwatong, or from Chomo	
-	Múrgùlé			
-	Nyâm		Mt. Korot, via Senge	
-	Píjílàng		Mt. Balassa	
-	Pùkùlá/ Fugula		Muri Mts.	
-	Yágàrìmbé/ Anyágàrìmbè/ Nyagarimbe		Mt. Dangberum close to Mutum Daya, or Mt. Taldaka east of Posugo hill	
-	Yágàrìmbé	Mirgyaaruman		
-	Yágàrìmbé	Yamina Gbáy	Cameroon	
-	Yágàrìmbé	Yamina Gberum		
-	Yágàrìmbé	Yaminan Gunzum		
-	Yaminaburo			
-	Yaminakwaya/ Murakwaya/ Nyamarakwaya		Kwaya in northern mountain chain in Bauchi State	

The Mirzem clan is considered to be the most senior one, providing the chiefs, and is followed in rank by the Yagarimbe and the Banyiri. The chief priests of the traditional religion are provided by the Banyiri clan.

In the following paragraphs, I present further information on some clans culled from the manuscript by Zubairu Maigula (MS 1991-93).

Mirzem: their ancestor Arkwatong came down from heaven with his dog and bow and his sister Kello and settled on the mountain. A person (god) came to him and showed him the boundaries of the land and the ways of worshipping. There were also Jukun people in the area (Muri) who were fought and defeated by the Fulani because the Jukun worshipped idols.¹⁸ Kyai was the Fulani leader fighting them, then Mafindi conquered the Kwana, then Mamman Tukur (his Br). The Fulani built a mosque on the former place of the Jukun worship at Muri.

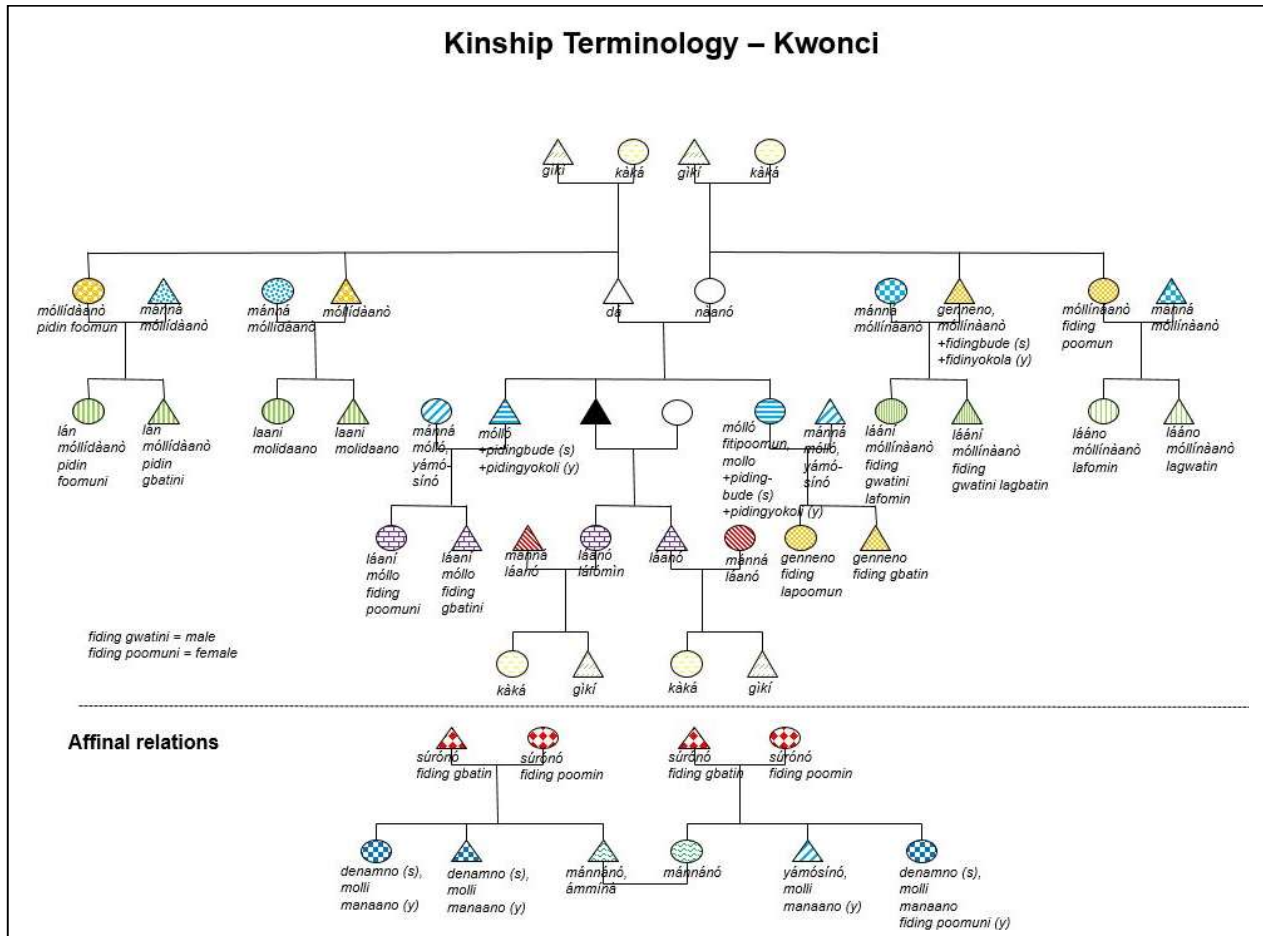
¹⁸ Prior to its conquest by the Fulani *jihādists* in 1817, Muri was inhabited by the Je-Muri, a Jukun speaking group (Hamman 2007: 81, 86). The listing of Fulani chiefs (Emirs of Muri) in this source cannot be taken for granted: Muri was conquered by Hamarua (1817-33), Kwana by Muhammadu Nya (1874-96) with the help of the French adventurer Mizon (Adelberger & Storch 2008), Muhammadu Mafindi ruled 1903-53, and Muhammadu Tukur became Emir in 1953 (Fremantle 1972: 16 ff., McBride n.d.: 18).

The Bagul and Bangada clans came from Kwararafa of the Wukari Jukun, which they left after a succession dispute between Yayo and his junior brother Njala in which the latter was successful. After leaving Kwararafa, the Bangada went to Jukum near Andamin, from there they moved to Bambur. At Bambur they had a close relationship with the Bebanlau and Kabanna, intermarried with them and taught them the worshipping of idols. From Bambur, the Bangada moved to Gwatan where they met the Yagarimbe clan, and from here they went to the Kwonci locality. The Yamina Gbay came from Cameroon under the leadership of Njakzono; they first settled with the Minjarama clan. They have a close relationship with the Tabulo clan of the Kulung (the Tabulo originate from Kode).

The Minjarama came from Cameroon (Ngaundere), their ancestor was called Petisu and his brother Shabikada/Shuaibu. They first settled at Numan, then moved to Dulunaman (Dulum) and finally to Kwonci, where they met the Pijilang and Pukula clans and stayed with them.

Kinship terminology

The kinship terminology of the Kwonci defies easy classification. The terminology would qualify as an Eskimo system, where cousins are called by the same term, only differentiated by gender, and distinguished from Br and Si, but in the Kwonci language the patrilineal cousins are distinguished from the matrilineal cousins, and there is even a terminological differentiation between MoSiChi and MoBrChi.

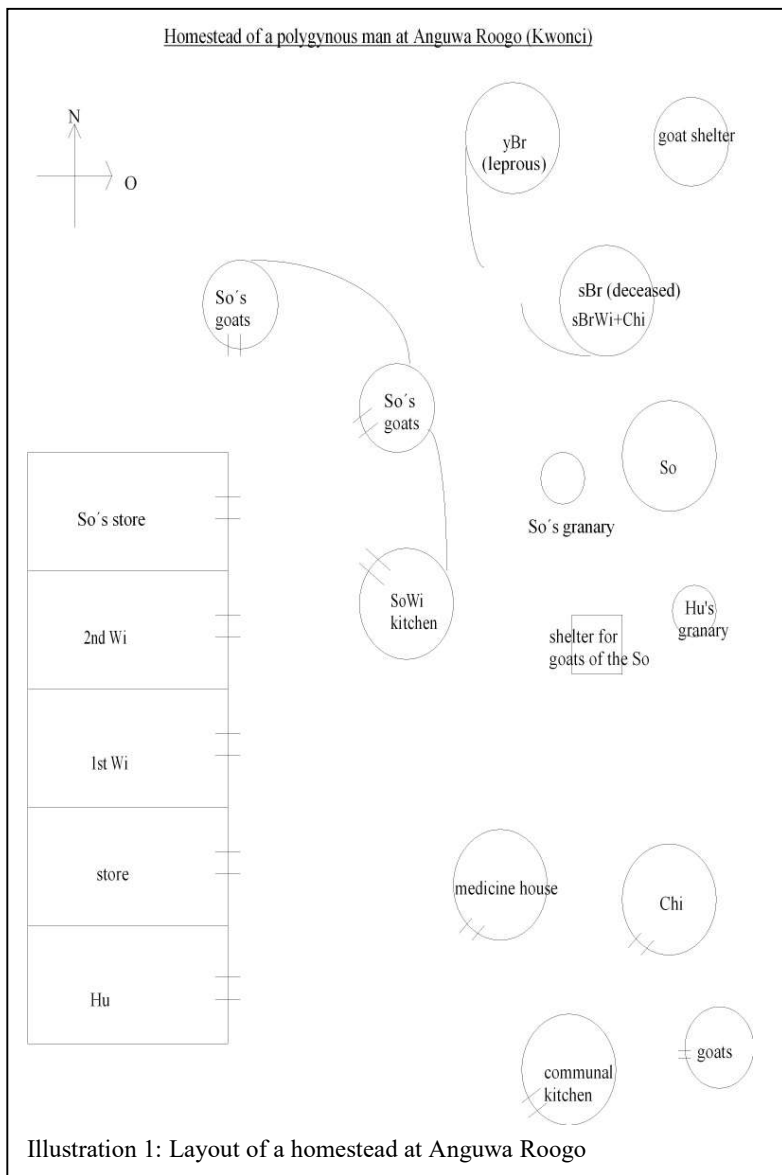


In the first ascending generation, it would be close to a bifurcate collateral system, but FaBr and FaSi are called with similar terms, only differentiated by a gender marker; and the same applies to the maternal side.

Family

A homestead is usually occupied by a family consisting of a husband, wife(s) and children. The core family is often extended by relatives who also live there. If a son has married, the father must give him land so that he can build a house where he can live with his wife.

Yamina is used to designate a family in the Kwonci language, if the name of the household head is added, it addresses a specified family. *Yamina* may also mean 'lineage'.



Marriage

In the past, marriage by sister exchange was common; as well as levirate: when a husband died, the widow married a brother of the deceased (MS Zubairua Maigula).

Clan exogamy is the rule, and a man may also not marry from the clan of his mother. Cousin marriages are prohibited. Post-marital residence rule is virilocal. There are restrictions prevent-



Photo 1: From left to right: iron rattles *kémé*, trad. currency *bolo*, *pigira* whisk, *kyangse* object, horn trumpet

ing marriages between groups due to close historical ties: there may be no inter-marriages between the Goobi clan (from the Kode), the Pindele clan (from the Piya) and the Mirzem clan (from the Kwonci), because they had been living together on Mt. Yanna in the past.

Before a marriage can take place, the bridegroom-to-be has to perform bride-service (*thitau barak*) by working on the farms of the girl's father. In this task he will

be assisted by his clan peers. The period of bride-service may last between one and two years. Additionally, a bride-price consisting of 25 pieces of traditional iron money (*bòlò*) has to be paid. After the father of the bride has received the bride-price and given his consent to the marriage, the father of the bridegroom hands over a *kyangse* (a sickle-shaped object) and a *pigira* (whisk made of horsehair) to his son. With these objects, the bridegroom visits his relatives: first his MoBr, then his FaBr, then members of his clan, in order to convey the message that the marriage negotiations have been completed successfully. After the wedding feast has taken place, the bride returns to the homestead of her parents and will live there, until she has her first child. Only then will she move into the compound of her husband. During the time she is staying with her parents, her husband may take her to his house during the night, bringing her back early in the morning; or the bride visits her husband in the night. While the bride is in the homestead of her in-laws, she will make herself useful by sweeping the yard or filling the water containers, but she will try to avoid her parents-in-law, she will not talk to them or eat there. Also the husband will try to avoid meeting his in-laws. This avoidance towards their in-laws is only practised by bride and bridegroom, other relatives, for instance their brothers and sister, may behave freely. After having given birth to her first child, the wife moves into the homestead of her husband and may behave without constraint towards her in-laws. All this applies only to a first marriage of a virgin.

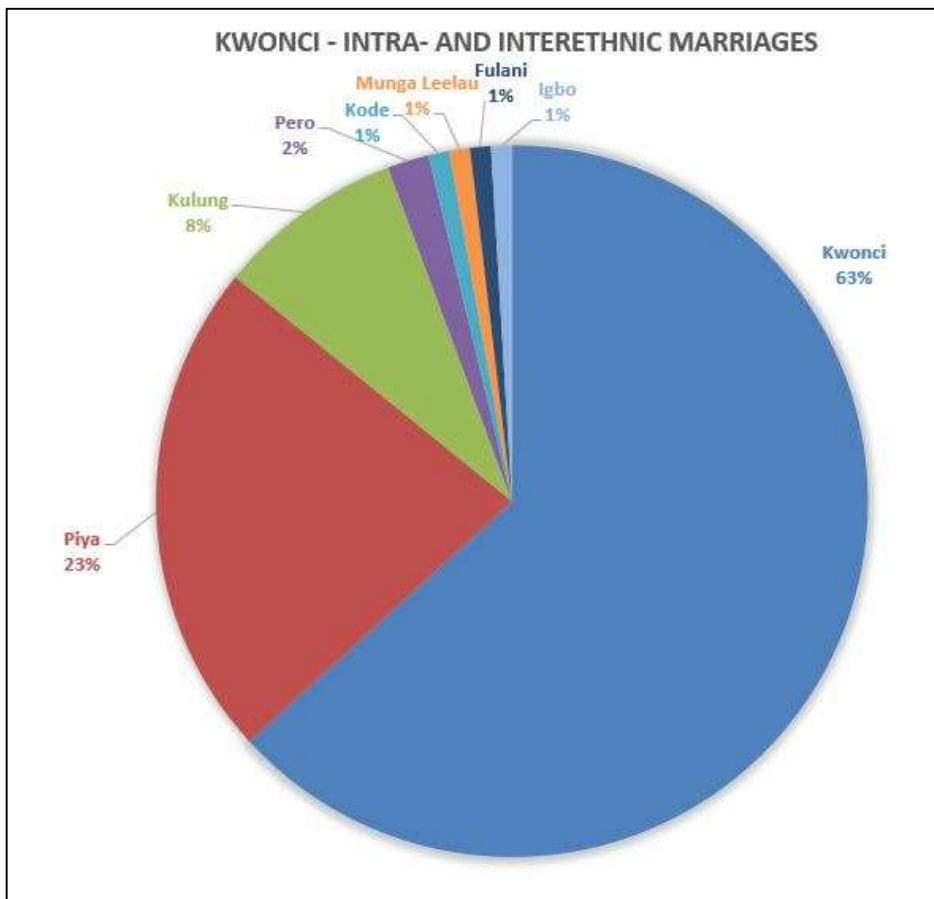
If a wife commits an offence and has to pay a penalty, her husband has to take over the payment. If he refuses, the wife's father will take his daughter back to him, including her children, and pay the fine. If no attempt is made to recompense the wife's father, for example by

the husband's clan mates, then the marriage is terminated and considered divorced, and the woman may marry another man.

When a marriage ends in divorce for other reasons than mentioned above, the children stay with the father.

Some statistics

In a sample of 54 married Kwonci men, there were a total of 106 wives, of which 67 were from the Kwonci, and 39 were from other ethnic groups, among which the Piya were most prominent. The overall polygamy rate was 2.0, the polygamy rate with concurrent wives (i.e., wives who were divorced or deceased were not counted) was 1.4.



Granaries

Granaries are usually standing outside the homestead. Among adherents of the traditional religion,

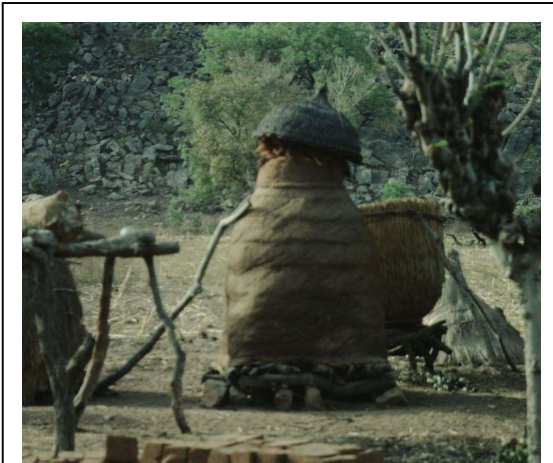


Photo 2: Piya granary

husband and wife(s) each have their own granaries (*mùnnú*: granary in general, *mununu poomun*: women's granary), but the wife prepares the food for the children from the stock of her husband. The form of men's granaries is the same as among the Piya.

The husband fills his granaries with supplies, taking out the supply needed is done by his wife, but never without the consent of her husband. When a sealed granary is opened for the first time, it is the wife who takes out the corn on request of the husband. After opening a granary



Photo 3: Woman's granary (left) and storage rack (*gàŋ*) left in a derelict house

for the first time, a part of the grain is used to prepare beer which is sacrificed to the *kindima* spirit. If a woman has to entertain the members of a work-party assisting her on her farm, she may ask her husband to contribute the grain for the beer from his supplies. Men, as well as women, can build granaries. There are storage containers made of clay that stand inside a house called *garib*; they are only used by women who also build them.

At Kukakasala, a village mainly inhabited by clans of the Bamingun section, these architectural clay structures in the photo were left over in a derelict house. The form of the small granary is peculiar to the Bamingun clans and resembles granaries of the Kwa; it was used for storing such items as groundnuts, sesame, cowpeas or spices; the rack (*gàŋ*) resembling a wall crowned with bowl shaped containers was used for keeping salt, tobacco and other items. Such a rack may also be found in the houses of women from other clans of the Kwonci, but in general it is a vanishing artefact.

Birth

The birth of a first child takes place in the compound of the wife's parents, where she will stay for about a month until she returns to the homestead of her husband; all further births take place in the husband's homestead. After having given birth, the cut umbilical cord is wedged into the split stalk of a stem of gamba grass (*kari raba*), tied up and fixed to the ceiling of the

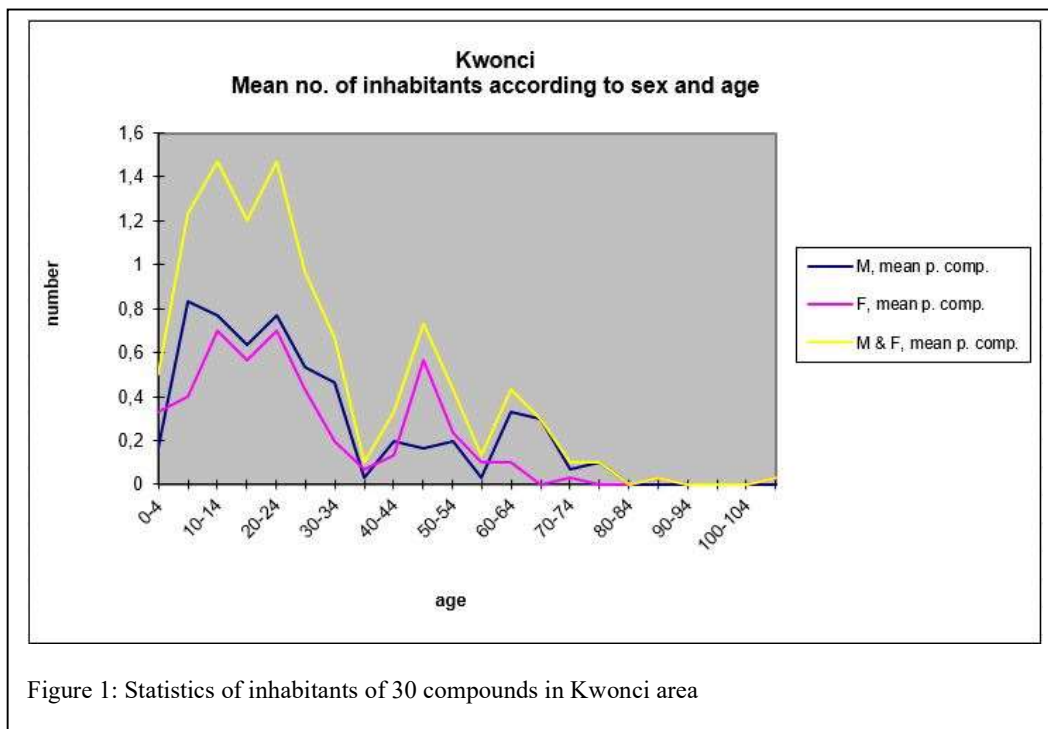
house of the wife. It is said that this was advice given by their ancestors not to discard the umbilical cord, because the more they hang on the ceiling, the more children they will be able to have. The placenta is put into a broken pot and buried next to the entrance outside the house.

Burial

If a man dies, the corpse is bathed and rubbed with groundnut oil and carried to the grave; the traditional priest will shout three times and the corpse is carried around the grave three times, then it is buried in a sitting position. After three days, relatives gather at the grave for a mourning ceremony and wash their hands as a sign that they have taken leave of the deceased. His widow as well as his children will shave their heads. The man marrying the widow gives the *dodo* priest a billy goat and a dog (MS Zubairu Maigula).

Village

Different clans live together in the villages: for instance, at Langakonshi, the Bagul, Banyiri and Pukula clans have settled. The first settlers have the power of disposal over the land and



allocate plots for housebuilding and farming to people who wish to settle with them. New settlers from other ethnic groups are questioned about their origin and the reasons for leaving. If their explanation is accepted, the case is brought before the *kindima*, beer is offered to the idol and the newcomers are sworn in as new members of the community, taking on the identity as Kwonci; if they return to their former identity, they risk dying.

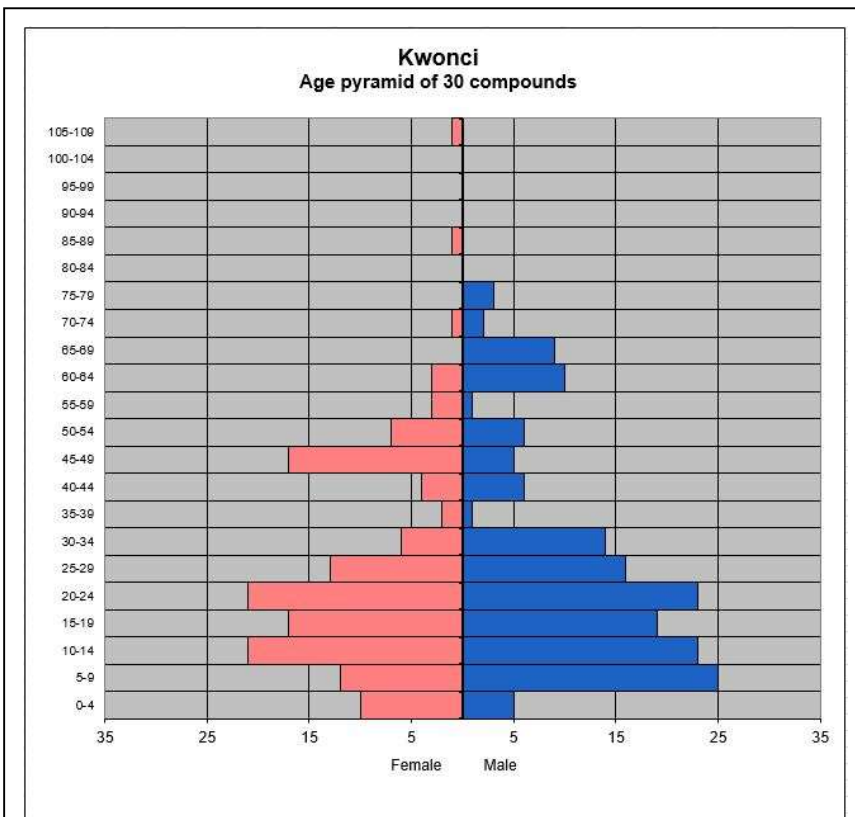


Figure 2: Age pyramid of selected compounds

In a census conducted among 30 compounds in different villages, 307 inhabitants in total were counted, of which 168 were males, 139 females. The mean number of persons living in a compound was 10.2, with slightly more males (5.6) than females (4.6).

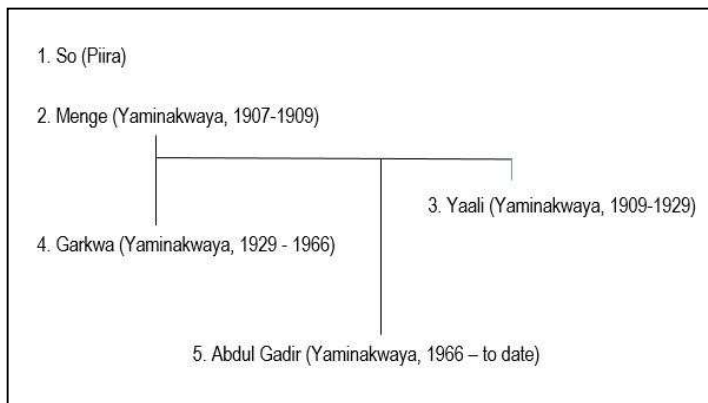
Political organisation

Village Head

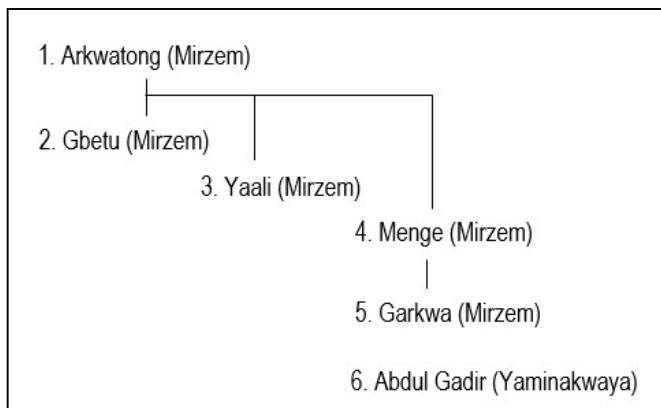
The title of Village Head (VH) was introduced by the British colonial administration. Larger settlements have a Village Head, smaller villages or the quarters of a town are administered by a Ward Head (*mai anguwa* (H.) or *jawro*). Abdul Gadir Adamu, about 70 years old and from the Yaminakwaya clan, is the Village Head of Mutum Daya; as such he is also considered to be the head of the Kwonci (*sarkin* Kwonci). There is a hierarchy of administrative titles:

1. *sarki* (chief)
2. *yarima* (deputy of the *sarki*, monitors tax revenues by the Ward Heads (*mai anguwa*))
3. *galadima* (usually he becomes the successor of the *sarki*, is also monitoring tax revenues by the Ward Heads)
4. *baraya* (monitors tax revenues by the Ward Heads)
5. *kaigamma* (monitors tax revenues by the Ward Heads)
6. *mazu anguwoyi* (plural of *mai anguwa*) or *jawro*. There are 22 *jawros* under the VH of Mutum Daya.

The genealogy of Kwonci chiefs (also Village Heads of Mutum Daya) given by the present chief Abdul Gadir:



However, there are slightly differing accounts, giving other clan affiliations of the chiefs:



According to other local sources, So, from the Piira clan, was originally a Government messenger who was appointed chief by the colonial authorities, but was then deposed and exiled because he sold away his own people as slaves (for So, see also McBride "Incidence and Customs..", IAI Cons. 2 Box 2(4): p. 11, and McBride n.d.: 25).

Economic activities

Market days are rotating in the settlements in and around Piya country. On each day of the week there is a market in another village:

- on Monday at Karim Lamido
- on Tuesday at Didango
- on Wednesday at Zailani
- on Thursday at Andamin (to the west of Zailani)
- on Friday at Jen and
- on Saturday at Mutum Daya.

The market at Mutum Daya is an important one, attracting traders from Gombe, Futuk, Kasher, Filiya, Tudu, Dogonyali (=Senge), Didango, Zelany, Tignon and Lau. From a radius of up to 15 km people come on foot to attend the market. The market's speciality is skins, from both wild and domesticated animals.

Division of labour

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

Activity	Gender
clearing	m
sowing	m & f
weeding	m & f
harvesting	m & f
irrigating	m
threshing	f
prepare threshing ground	m
winnowing	f
build house walls	m
build house roof	m
prepare house floor	m
cut wooden poles	m
cut firewood	f
collect firewood	f
build well	m
build terraces	m
build fence	m
weave food cover	-
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	-
tailoring	m & f
blacksmithing	m
wood carving	m
butchering	m
hunting	m
collect honey	m
produce salt	f

Agriculture

The Kwonci cultivate guinea corn, millet, groundnuts, beans, rice, maize and cassava as rainfed crops; irrigated they cultivate various vegetables such as garden eggs or tomatoes, as well as bananas and guavas.

The traditional guinea corn is a red variety called *kyau ntwi*, a white variety of guinea corn was recently introduced. Sesame is used as a pioneer plant which is grown on newly-cleared fields as a first crop; then, usually guinea corn or groundnuts are cultivated there in the next season. I could not observe the use of terraces on sloping fields, and was told that the Kwonci did not practise terracing on their hillside farms.¹⁹

More demanding agricultural activities such as sowing, weeding and harvesting are usually accomplished by communal labour. Work-parties consist of members of different clans and participants are obliged to assist each other on their farms.

There are two kinds of work-parties: *thítáú gyèèrè* is a large work-party with 40-50 participants recruited from different clans, and *yiipa*, a small work-party with up to 10 participants recruited from the own clan or family only. The aspect of reciprocity is dominant at a *yiipa* and only millet beer is provided for the workers; at a *gyèèrè* both food and drinks have to be provided in quantity. Wage labour is called *wálkà*, and is preferred by some farmers because it may be more predictable, easier to calculate and cheaper in the end, because the workers have to provide for themselves.

By taking part in a large work-party (*gyeere*) and working on other participants' fields, one earns the right to have them work on one's own field. If a person redeems this right, however, he must also provide the participants with enough beer and food. If he cannot afford these provisions, he can sell his right to someone else who needs the assistance of a *gyeere*, without wanting to take part in the *gyeere* himself. Such a transfer of rights against payment is not possible in the context of a small work-party *yiipa*, which is predominantly based on reciprocity as well as intra-clan solidarity and may even be claimed by poor persons.

¹⁹ For a comparative study of terraces in the region see Adelberger 1995.

Ethnic Group: **Kwonci**

1

Table: **Annual Agricultural Cycle**

Crop	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Comments
guinea corn (red) <i>kyau</i>					—	1		2		3			all soils
guinea corn (white) <i>kyau</i>								1		2			all soils, late variety
millet <i>bóròng</i>					—	1		2		3			sandy soils, partly intercropped with g/corn
fonio (<i>acca</i> H.) <i>kyári</i>					—	1		2					sandy soils, with g/corn
beans (<i>waakee</i> H.) <i>dúm</i>							—						sandy soils; with g/corn & groundnut
beans (<i>kanannado</i> H.) <i>gándólòng</i>							—						sandy soils; with g/corn & groundnut
rice <i>ànggàppá</i>						—		1	2	3			on fadama; frequent weeding improves harvest
maize <i>cókkiri</i>						—							clay & loamy soils
groundnuts <i>gáaxú</i>						—	1		2				loamy soils, with g/corn & beans
bambara nut <i>gbám</i>						—							sandy soil
tiger nut <i>piyá</i>							—						sandy soil
sesame <i>áacáú, léedúk</i> (white), <i>niiró</i> (black)								—					sandy soil
tobacco <i>táamà</i>								—					sandy soil
water leaf <i>àléfù</i>					—								sandy soil, irrigated
sweet potatoes <i>kúndúkú</i>						—							sandy soil
<i>farin guna</i> (H.) <i>dághà</i>					—								intercropped with <i>guna</i> & guinea corn
cassava <i>mbóolá</i>								—					sandy soil (1 year later)
pepper (hot) <i>thimáamà</i>					—								clay & loamy soils; weeding every week
garden egg <i>kúudà</i>					—								on fadama

planting: —————
 weeding: - - - - -
 harvesting: - - - - -

Crop	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Comments
pumpkin <i>thónyi</i>								-----					sandy soils
melon <i>thùló</i>					-----					-----			with g/corn, weeding same time
okra <i>gómóróm</i>					-----	-----	-----						clay & loamy soil, rarely intercropped
tomato <i>tumatir</i>						-----	-----	-----					clay & loamy soils
karkashii (H.) <i>kúttò</i>				-----									sandy soil, with g/corn, millet, maize, groundnut
rizga <i>fú</i>							-----	-----					sandy soils
roselle <i>díbit</i>					-----		leaves		seeds				sandy soil, with g/corn, groundnut & beans
fan palm <i>kyáxó</i>						-----				(several years after planting)			
mango <i>mángòrò</i>				(at least 3-4 years after planting)				-----					
lemon <i>lèemú</i>								-----			(at least 3-4 years after planting)		
guava <i>guévà</i>								-----		(at least 2 years after planting)			

planting: _____
 weeding: -----
 harvesting: _____

Animal husbandry

The Kwonci mainly keep goats, sheep, donkeys, chickens, dogs and cats as domestic animals.

They also keep cattle which they sometimes give to the Fulani to look after.

Table 4: Domestic animals and their uses (m: male, f: female)

animal	kept by	uses	comments
cattle	m & f	meat, milk, leather	milk is bought from the Fulani
dwarf cattle	-	-	-
horse	m	riding	used by title holders
pony	-	-	-
donkey	m & f	riding, beast of burden	
goat	m & f	meat, leather	
sheep	m & f	meat, leather, wool	wool used by dancers for decoration
pig	m & f	meat	the skin is also eaten
dog	m & f	meat, guardian, assisting in hunting	only men consume the meat, esp. during funerary rites
chicken	m & f	meat, eggs	in the past, women also ate chicken
duck	m & f	eggs, meat	
guinea fowl	m & f	eggs, meat	
pigeon	-	-	-
cat	m & f	meat, protection against rats, fur used for making pouches	in the past, the Kwonci had no cats, as they believed cats transmit tuberculosis

In a census of 24 households, the following numbers of domestic animals were determined:

Table 5: Kwonci - Domestic animals kept by 24 households

	Cattle	Goats	Sheep	Pigs	Dogs	Chickens	Ducks
total	34	87	6	5	12	53	64
mean no.	1.4	3.6	0.3	0.2	0.5	2.2	2.7
median no.	2	5	6	2	1.5	5	5

Other activities

Hunting is done either individually or as a communal activity. The main period for communal hunting is the dry season and especially the month of March, before agricultural activities commence, and the hunters organise themselves according to clan affiliation, staying in the bush for a period of three to seven days.



Photo 4: Camouflage device (*búltù*) for hunting

Weapons used are bow and arrow, axe, spear, cudgel, knife and shield made of buffalo hide as protection against predators. During hunting, a device resembling a bird's head may be worn for camouflage. The device is called *búltù* and is worn by hunters in order not to be recognised as human by the animals. The structure is made of *ngòólí* wood (*wailo* H., ?) and goatskin and is said to resemble a *béngúm* bird (*gauraaka* H., crownbird).²⁰

Leopards or hyenas are the most highly regarded quarry. Accordingly, a hunter who has killed such an animal will be honoured at the closing ceremony: corn flour will be spread over his body and he will dance decorated with fur and feathers and holding a knife in his hand, also the other dancers are adorned with skins and feathers. These celebrations may last up to three days (MS Zubairu Maigula).

Ropes are produced from kenaf (*áyó*) fibres; for this, strips of the bark are rolled into a mat



Photo 5: Tools for producing ropes

(*pémpèm*) and soaked with water, after some time the strips are taken out and beaten with a mallet (*bwát*) until they are soft and ready to be braided into ropes.

Crafts practised by women are pottery and weaving of food covers. There are blacksmiths among the Kwonci.

Salt is extracted from the soil along the banks of streams.

²⁰ An early observer who travelled through the area in 1898, already reports on that device which he calls *burtu* and which he found in use among the hunters around Ibi, but not among the Jukun of Gwana (Pope-Hennessy 1900:28). A historic photo is depicted in Morel (1968: 108-109).

Material culture

Páálà: wooden trowel used for tapping clay plaster smooth, often decorated with geometric patterns that are clan-specific; the depicted pattern is of the Yagarimbe clan.



Photo 6: Wooden trowel *paala*



Photo 7: *kyala* headgear

Kyala is a special headgear that is worn during celebratory dances by men who have killed a large animal such as a leopard or hyena. For these dances, the men also wear small bells (*méngéí*).



Photo 8: Types of axe (left to right): battle-axe *bárándám*, *kíibí* for general purposes



Photo 9: Different spearheads of the Kwonci (left to right): *lèbá*, *kás wùrìn*, *kányá*, *mòòn*. The latter are used for fishing.

Like other ethnic groups belonging to the Wurkun cluster, the Kwonci have “victory drums”;²¹ these come in sets, usually consisting of four or more drums: the ones standing on legs are called *pí*, the drums without legs are called *wòlló*. The small drum, often placed under the large



Photo 10: Set of victory drums of the Piira clan



Photo 11: Set of victory drums



Photo 12: Victory drums of the Yagarimbe clan



Photo 13: Set of victory drums of the Yagarimbe clan

legged drum, is considered to be the most senior of the set, and it is not played, only the other drums. In this area at least, these three-legged drums are found only as parts of these sets of victory drums and are typical for the Wurkun peoples. The drums are only beaten on special occasions such as success in big game hunting, victory in war or in some ritual contexts. The drums are decorated with carved geometrical patterns, peculiar to different clans. I was told that the ornamentation once followed the traditional cicatrization of the human body. Although - to the best of my knowledge - all other groups in the Muri Mountains have the concept of "victory

²¹ For victory drums see also Adelberger 2011: 435.

drums", it is only among the Wurkun peoples and the Pero that they are carved in such a distinctive shape.

Drums are produced by wood carvers (*anyemo*) commissioned by the *kindima* priest (*bùré kindimà*), who, after completion, will also perform a ritual involving a sacrifice and blessing of the objects. The priest is in charge of these drums, deciding when they have to receive a new cover or where they will be placed for a celebration. During dances involving these drums, the *kindima* spirit may possess one of the dancers. These celebrations are reserved for initiates only.



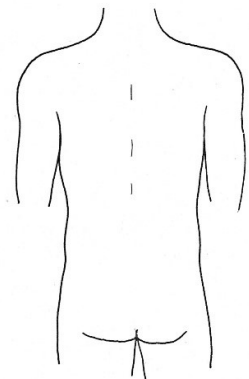
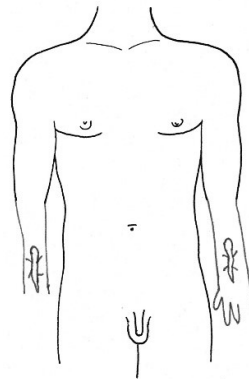
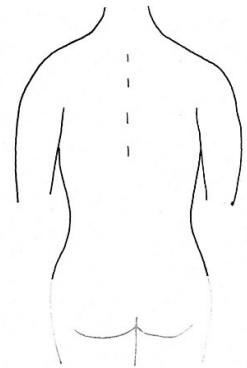
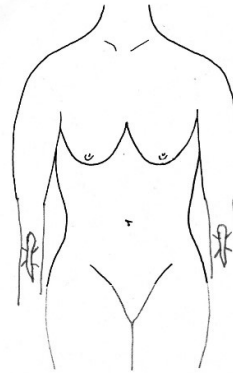
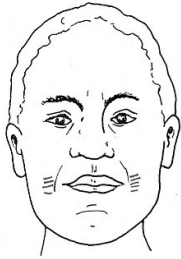
Photo 14: Kwonci men displaying weapons

Scarification/cicatrization, bodily ornamentation

The animal depicted on the neck and forearm is a lizard.

Kwonci

Kwonci



Rituals and religion

Spirits and associated rituals²²

While in the traditional religious belief *yamba* is the creator god, *yamba* is too far removed from the sphere of humans, and other deities or spirits have a more active role.

Many Kwonci are Christians and there are also a number of Muslims, but there are still adherents of the traditional local religion.

Kindima (*dodo* H.) represents the collective spirits of the ancestors, and is considered to be at the apex of the spirits. *Kindima* may appear during the night, making terrifying whistling noises, and sanctions unruly women. The *kindima* are incarnated in three entities: *borge*, *eku* and *zugey*. After a person has died, the soul will join *zugey* if he was male, or *eku* if she was female. The Kwonci claim that they gave the Piya the cult of *borge*.

The Balgadang clan, (together with the Yagarimbe clan), the Mirzem clan, (together with the Yaminaburo clan) and the Ballaadi clan, (together with other Bamingun clans), each have the *kodo* idol which is incarnated in a yoke mask or vertical mask typical for the region.²³

Waamina are clan-specific tutelary spirits protecting the clan members and their belongings.

Kundul are carved wooden columnar statues, usually occurring in male/female pairs and standing on iron spikes inserted into the wooden body. The male figurine is distinguished from the female by a crest on the head, signifying a certain headdress worn in ceremonial contexts. They are used in rituals concerned with healing and well-being. A person suffering from a disease will visit a traditional healer who may instruct him to procure a pair of these figures as a remedy; in this case, offerings of beer and the sacrifice of a chicken are made to the *kundul* and should be repeated after each annual harvest. The figures may further serve as a protective device when, after having killed certain animals, a hunter is haunted by the spirit of the animal.



Photo 15: An unfinished Kwonci *kundul*

²² See also CAPRO 1992: 403-408 for some information on rituals and traditional beliefs among the Wurkun groups. For a comprehensive study of sacred objects and associated beliefs of the Wurkun see Adelberger 2011.

²³ See Berns 2011 for a survey of vertical masks in the region.

The cult of *dambang* is generally concerned with well-being, strength and fertility. The *dambang*

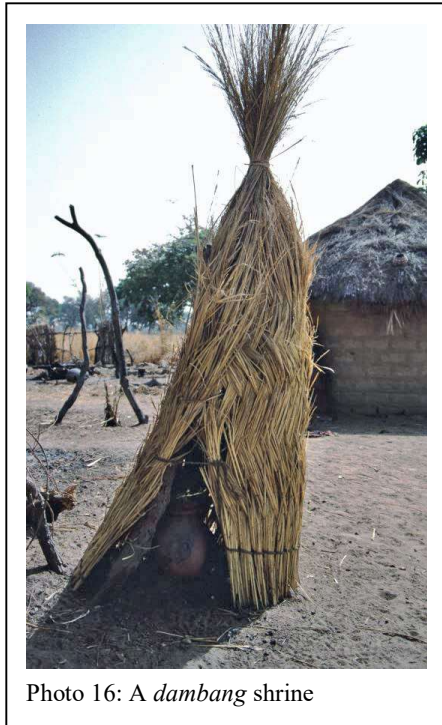


Photo 16: A *dambang* shrine

statues look very similar to *kundul* but are larger than the latter and they are regarded to be superior and more powerful than the *kundul*. They are decorated with grass or raffia fibres and/or feathers. Like the *kundul*, the male figurines are distinguished from the female ones by a crest on the head. They will be consulted to find out the reason for a certain ailment which then will be cured with the help of the statues. The *dambang* spirit may possess people. The photo depicts a *dambang* shrine (*minna dambang*), inside a pot can be discerned that is used for ritual offerings; originally, a wooden *dambang* statue had also been present but was stolen to be sold on the African Art market. The current owner had inherited the statue from his grandfather who, after having killed a dwarf buffalo (*kebene*, in Hausa *bauna*), was tormented in his dreams by the creature's spirit. A herbalist (*ang kundul*) advised him to procure a *dambang* figure to protect

him from the afflictions. The *dambang* does not live in the shrine, but is visiting it. Such a *dambang* figure is inherited along the patriline, the actual successor is chosen by the spirit and the choice will be articulated by the herbalist. It had been transferred from the grandfather to the father and then to the present owner. After it was stolen, the *dambang* punished the owner by afflicting him with lameness.

Table 6: Religious concepts and their material expression

Kwonci		
Concept	Name	Manifestation / Comments
high god	<i>yamba</i>	creator
ancestors	<i>pere</i>	
water spirit	<i>laado</i>	lives in springs, rivers and ponds; is an evil spirit that kills and takes away the souls of humans
bush spirit	<i>limmi</i>	
protecting spirit	<i>angkuyo</i>	
material expression:		
<i>gunki</i> (wooden idol)	<i>kodo, kindima, kundul, dambang, gabra</i>	<i>gabra</i> and <i>dambang</i> are made of wood and iron
<i>dodo</i> (masked dancer, masquerade)		

Ritual calendar

Mam gabra (*boori* in Hausa): also known as arm-slashing cult²⁴; it is a possession cult and the celebrations have a bacchanalian character. It is widespread in the area and seems to have



Photo 17: A *mam gabra* site with typical enclosure

originally come from the Wurbo; during the colonial era it was banned by the authorities.²⁵

The *boori* cult was introduced to the Kwonci area by a certain Tagyang from the Yaminaburo clan, and was originally imported from the Loo people.²⁶ He had paid a billy goat, four *táji* (trad. iron money), six bundles of guinea corn and a basket of peanuts for being allowed to bring the cult to the Kwonci area. Functionaries of the

gabra cult are: 1. *Áwúmà*, he is the leader, 2. *Káshì*, he collects the food for the ceremonies and collects the crockery afterwards, 3. *Káásòng* is the supervisor of the *káshì* and his representative, 4. *Káwú* distributes the food to the cult members during ceremonies and distributes beer at dances.

Any male adult who has an interest may become a member. He will be led into the *gabra* house, where he will become possessed by the spirit during the initiation ceremony: the novice must ingest certain plants; everyone kneels down, the *Káásòng* blows powder from a certain plant into the novice's nose, he becomes deranged, dances around and cuts his left arm with a knife, feeling no pain. After that ceremony he is a member. Through the power of the *gabra* spirit, one of the cult members acquires the ability to heal, for instance, in the case of a snake bite, he sucks out the poison and the patient is healed. Members are not allowed to touch a menstruating woman or to eat food cooked by such a woman. If someone breaches this rule, he has to pay a fine consisting of seven pots of millet beer, one chicken and one mat. The four functionaries will use these items to prepare a feast for the other members. Every year in June and November there is a large celebration. For these occasions, each member has to go fishing, the catch is dried and cooked, and served to the *gabra* members with peanut cake (*nyai*), millet beer and porridge. Every member contributes food items for these events, and even non-members are invited to come and watch. The festivities last for three days during which the members dance, eat and drink and take herbal drugs. During the dances their heads are adorned with feathers, signifying that *mam gabra* is actively performed. The tree species that is part of the enclosure of the *gabra* sites is called *pàrú*²⁷ and is chosen to make the site distinctive. It is one of the conditions when 'purchasing' the *boori* cult that only this tree is used.

²⁴ Cf. Meek 1934: 263.

²⁵ NAK YolaProf 5640 – Report on Wurkum District by A.D.O. Brierly, p. 7-8.

²⁶ According to other sources it was imported from the Jukun.

²⁷ Probably *ararabi* (H.) - *Commiphora kerstingii* (NAK Min. Local Gov. 4377/1912, Haughton 'Assessment Report').

The *gabra* community of the Kwonci is said to be 500 members strong and comprises people from the settlements of Anguwa Roogo, Nyaworo, Yaashi, Malabu, Mutum Daya and Kuka-kasalla.

The following annual rituals/celebrations with a link to agricultural activities were elicited. They are all intended to ensure a successful season and good harvest.

Pèebè – is an important celebration taking place in March that marks the beginning of the agricultural season, and sowing may start after *peebe* has taken place.

Koro – takes place in May, and marks the start of the farming season for the staple crops guinea corn, millet, beans, sesame and yam. Millet beer and porridge are offered to the idols *waari* and *pudum*: *waari* is the neck of a clay pot which is produced when a child is sick, *pudum* is a tutelary spirit protecting the crops of a clan from theft.

Tume - takes place around August and is intended to make the farming season a successful one. Millet beer and porridge are sacrificed to the *kindima/dodo*. It is also an initiation ceremony for boys aged 12 and over, who are presented to the *kindima*. There is another *tume* ceremony in late December with offerings of porridge with a special sauce (*miyang dargaza* in Hausa, prepared from the *dargaza* plant (*Grewia mollis*)) to the *kindima*. This ceremony marks the beginning of the salt season, i.e. women may commence to extract salt from appropriate sites on the mountains or along river banks, for example at a place belonging to the Kwonci called Kocuwang (“place of salt”) near Mt. Arkwatong.

Géégì - takes place in October, and marks the beginning of the harvest of guinea corn, millet, beans, sesame, yam (*tónnà*) and *mèlbó* (*amora* H., Polynesian arrowroot). Adherents of the traditional religion make offerings to their deities: beer and porridge prepared from guinea corn and millet for the *kindima* representing the ancestors; a pap, prepared from groundnuts and amora (this pap is called *nyâi*), on which red beans are spread on top is given to the *kodo* idol in a potsherd (*gèlé*). The date for the offering is determined by priests from the Pukula clan.

Kewu – takes place in October and addresses the clan idols (*kindima*) with offerings of millet beer and porridge. The festivity is a kind of thanksgiving, celebrating the new harvest. *Kewu* is a regional phenomenon celebrated by various ethnic groups in chronological order guided by the lunar calendar: one week before the new moon the Pero start it, then the Piya follow 2-3 days before the new moon, and at the new moon the Kulung perform their festival (which they call *zolo*), about two weeks later the Kwonci celebrate their *kewu*.²⁸

Kwonci Annual festivities												
Name of festivity	Jan.	Feb.	March	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
<i>peebe</i>			—									
<i>kòrò</i>					—							
<i>gabra</i>						—					—	
<i>túmè</i>								—				—
<i>géégi</i>										—		
<i>kewu</i>										—		

Miscellanea

Soothsayers practise a divination method whereby a globular calabash with a hole in its top is



Photo 18: Herbalist performing *keeri* divination

filled with water, then the opening is closed with a plug and the container turned upside down. Depending on the matter concerned, the diviner will utter possible causes of illness or possible culprits in the case of theft, and when the appropriate one is mentioned, water will run out of the gourd. This divination method is called *kèèrí*.

A good Kwonci should be honest, and neither a sorcerer nor an adulterer. Adultery is

²⁸ There is the possibility that *geegi* is the Kwonci designation for *kewu*, and it has yet to be clarified whether or not these are distinct celebrations.

considered particularly bad, attracting diseases sent by *kindima*, such as meningitis, smallpox or snakebites; in short, calamities that kill quickly. These may affect all clan members of the wrong-doer as well as their wives.

Taboos

Lions and *safale* (H.,?, a canine animal) are taboo (*wejile*) for the Kwonci and may not be killed or eaten, because they are considered as friends, and, in turn, these animals would not harm or kill a Kwonci person.

Women may not touch the shea tree (*paxa*), and its wood may not be used as firewood, because the wood is used for carving flutes that are played in the context of *dodo* rituals.

Glossary²⁹

Kwonci	gloss	comment
<i>ang kundul</i>	herbalist, also owner of a <i>kundul</i>	
<i>anyemo</i>	woodcarver	
<i>bárándám</i>	battle axe	
<i>béngúm</i>	crown bird, crowned crane	<i>gauraaka</i> (H.)
<i>bòló</i>	trad. iron currency (see also <i>taji</i>)	
<i>borong</i>	millet	
<i>bùré kíndímà</i>	<i>dodo</i> -priest	
<i>bwát</i>	flail	
<i>fúlàn</i>	clan	
<i>gàng</i>	architectural structure made of clay, like a rack	
<i>garib</i>	woman's granary inside a house	
<i>géégì</i>	sp. celebration in October, before harvest	
<i>gèlé</i>	broken pot	<i>kasko</i> (H.)
<i>gèrá</i>	basket	
<i>gulle</i>	high mountain	
<i>gyúk</i>	wooden stool	
<i>kányá</i>	sp. spear	
<i>kás wùrin</i>	sp. spear	
<i>kebene</i>	buffalo	in Kwonci & Piya language; <i>bawuna</i> (H.)
<i>kémé</i>	iron rattle worn at the ankle	
<i>kèèrí</i>	sp. divination method using a water-filled calabash	
<i>kííbí</i>	axe	
<i>kódò</i>	idol	
<i>kómó</i>	lute	
<i>koro</i>	celebration in May before sowing	
<i>kótóng</i>	shield	
<i>kundul</i>	wooden idol, statue	<i>gunki</i> (H.)
<i>kyangse</i>	sp. sickle-shaped object	
<i>lèbá</i>	sp. spear	
<i>méngéí</i>	bells which are worn by men after a successful hunt or during kanjang dance	
<i>mírgótì</i>	sp. <i>dodo</i>	
<i>mòòn</i>	fishing spear	
<i>mununu poomun</i>	women's granary, for storing groundnuts, cowpeas, sesame etc.	
<i>mùnnú</i>	granary	

²⁹ H. = Hausa term.

Kwonci	gloss	comment
<i>nyâi</i>	porridge made of <i>amora</i> and groundnuts	
<i>páálà</i>	wooden trowel	
<i>pémpèm</i>	sp. mat used in the process of rope making	
<i>pí</i>	drum with three legs	
<i>pigira</i>	whisk made of horsehair	
<i>táji</i>	trad. iron currency (see also <i>bolo</i>)	
<i>thítáu barak</i>	bride-service	
<i>thítáu gyèèrè</i>	large work-party consisting only of men	
<i>tume</i>	celebration in August	
<i>wálkà</i>	wage labour	
<i>wòlló</i>	cylindrical drum (without legs) in a set of "victory drums"	
<i>yamina</i>	lineage, family	
<i>yíipà</i>	communal labour, also family labour	
<i>yòòró</i>	calabash used for sowing	
<i>yólòng</i>	tobacco pipe	

Plants:

Kwonci	Hausa	English	scientific name	comment
<i>áadàù</i>	<i>riidii</i>	sesame	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>	white variety
<i>àléfù</i>	<i>alayyafoo</i>	waterleaf	<i>Amaranthus caudatus</i>	
<i>àngàppá</i>	<i>shinkaafar</i>	rice	<i>Oryza sp.</i>	
<i>áyàbà</i>	<i>ayaba</i>	banana	<i>Musa sapientum</i>	
<i>àyó</i>	<i>ramaa</i>	kenaf	<i>Hibiscus cannabinus</i>	name in Piya & Kwonci
<i>bóròng</i>	<i>maiwaa</i>	pearl millet	<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>	acc. ritual: <i>geegi</i> feast of harvest
<i>cókkiri</i>	<i>masaraa</i>	maize	<i>Zea mays</i>	
<i>dághà</i>	<i>farin guna</i>	?	?	
<i>díbit</i>	<i>yaakuuwaa</i>	roselle	<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa</i>	general term
<i>dúm</i>	<i>waakee</i>	beans		straight variety. acc. ritual: <i>geegi</i> feast of harvest
<i>érùm</i>	<i>albasaa</i>	onion	<i>Allium cepa</i>	not cultivated
<i>fú</i>	<i>rizgaa</i>	rizga	<i>Plectranthus esculentus</i>	
<i>gàaxú</i>	<i>gyadaa</i>	groundnut	<i>Arachis hypogaea</i>	
<i>gbám, bam</i>	<i>gujiiyaa</i>	Bambara nut	<i>Vigna subterranea</i>	
<i>gòmòró</i>	<i>kubeewaa</i>	okra	<i>Abelmoschus esculentus</i>	
<i>góndólòng</i>	<i>kananade</i>	beans		curved variety
<i>gùévà</i>	<i>gweebaa</i>	guava	<i>Psidium guajava</i>	
<i>gwáthá</i>	<i>gwaazaa</i>	cocoyam	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>	not cultivated
<i>kari raba</i>	<i>gamba</i>	gamba grass	<i>Andropogon gayanus</i>	

Kwonci	Hausa	English	scientific name	comment
<i>kàshú</i>	<i>kanjuu</i>	cashew	<i>Anacardium occidentale</i>	
<i>kúndùkú</i>	<i>dankalii</i>	sweet potato	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>	
<i>kúttò</i>	<i>karkashii</i>	false sesame leaves	<i>Ceratotheca sesamoides</i>	
<i>kúudà</i>	<i>gautaa</i>	garden-egg	<i>Solanum incanum</i>	
<i>kyári</i>	<i>acca</i>	hungry rice, fonio	<i>Digitaria exilis</i>	
<i>kyau</i>	<i>daawaa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	acc. ritual: <i>geegi</i> feast of harvest
<i>kyau ntwi</i>	<i>daawaa</i>	guinea-corn	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i>	red variety
<i>kyáxò</i>	<i>giginya</i>	fan palm	<i>Borassus aethiopum</i>	
<i>lèedúk</i>	<i>riidii</i>	sesame	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>	white variety, used as a pioneer plant after clearing a field
<i>lèeláu</i>	<i>audugaa</i>	cotton	<i>Gossypium sp.</i>	not cultivated
<i>lèemú</i>	<i>babban leemuu</i>	lime, lemon	<i>Citrus aurantium</i>	
<i>mángòrò</i>	<i>mangwaro</i>	mango tree	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	
<i>mbóolà</i>	<i>roogoo</i>	cassava	<i>Manihot esculenta</i>	
<i>mèlbó</i>	<i>amora</i>	Polynesian arrowroot	<i>Tacca leontopetaloides</i>	
<i>moddoo</i>	<i>geeroo</i>	pearl millet	<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>	early ripening
<i>ngòólí</i>	<i>wailo (?)</i>	sp. tree	?	
<i>níirò</i>	<i>riidii</i>	sesame	<i>Sesamum orientale</i>	black variety
<i>pakha</i>	<i>kađanya</i>	shea tree	<i>Vitellaria paradoxa</i>	
<i>pàrú</i>	<i>ararrabi</i>	sp. tree	<i>Commiphora kerstingii</i>	
<i>píyà</i>	<i>ayaa</i>	tiger-nut	<i>Cyperus esculentus</i>	
<i>reke</i>	<i>rakee</i>	sugar-cane	<i>Saccharum officinarum</i>	
<i>ribá</i>	<i>zoogale</i>	horseradish tree	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	
<i>táamà</i>	<i>taabaa</i>	tobacco	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i>	
<i>thánnè</i>	<i>dooya</i>	yam	<i>Dioscorea spp.</i>	not cultivated
<i>thimáamà</i>	<i>barkoonoo</i>	pepper	<i>Capsicum sp.</i>	
<i>thónyi</i>	<i>kabeewaa</i>	pumpkin	<i>Cucurbita maxima</i>	
<i>thùló</i>	<i>guna</i>	melon	<i>Citrullus lanatus</i>	
<i>tomatir</i>	<i>tumaatur</i>	tomato	<i>Lycopersicon esculentum</i>	
<i>tónnà</i>	<i>dooyan samma</i>	yam	<i>Dioscorea spp.</i>	

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Appendix

Facsimile of Ira McBride's notes on the Kwonci (IAI Cons. 2 Box 2(4))

The missionary Ira McBride was stationed among the Kulung for many years and also collected information on neighbouring ethnic groups.³⁰ Bang is the designation of the Kulung for the Kwonci. The following pages, containing information collected more than 60 years before my own research, are appended for the benefit of the reader.

History of Ba People

From Ngya of the Ba Da clan of Kwonchi. March 18, 1927.

Ngya, a brother of Galidima Ntai of Kwonchi, says that the Ba people are first of all no relation of the Kulung who came from Jibu. The Ba people came from a hill far to the north called Kpaia. They left there because of wars with the Dungal (Tangali), and came down past Gbwandum, not stopping there, and to the north side of the Kwonchi hill. Ngya denies that they are Pero, although admitting that the language is very similar. (He does not speak the Ba tongue.) After the imprisonment of the Kulung chief of Kwonchi, So, the Government Officer, picked a Ba man as chief. Upon his death, the present chief, his son, Yeli, was selected. Soon after he showed signs of leprosy and now he and all his household are afflicted by the disease, with at least five of his sons being in advanced stages of leprosy. (Yeli died 1938).

Because of wars between the Ba and Kulung, one of the British government officers, Mr. Groom, ordered all the Ba people to vacate the main hill top and most of them moved over to the hill top to the north, now known as Wala, and many over to the east to Baria. The Chief's clan, of course, lives at the foot of the west side of the hill by the stream known as Kyel Muga. During this dry season most of the people of Wala have moved away, some founding a new village down on the plain, and some going to Baria, and some going north to Gero. Only three houses remain. This year about twenty Kulung speaking Ba's, headed by Mallam Duna, returned to Kpaia.

History of Ba^(Bang) People

From Baria (or Baraia), headman of the village of Baraia. A Ba man, about 45 years old. March 17, 1927.

Baria says that his ancestors came out of the rock on the south side of the Gbwandum hill at a place known as Ligiri. The place is a deep hollow, surrounded by high steep mountains. The stream known as Digasok came out first, with their ancestors, and still flows down through the land occupied by them. There were two brothers called Toma and Batoma, who parted there and came southward, one of them, Toma, occupying the top of a high steep hill to the west of Jannati peak, called Gwoti. From him all the Ba people descended. Ba Toma went to Jannati and is their father, so the Ba people and the Jannatis are related. As the Ba people multiplied they occupied the ridges to the west of Gwoti and finally the main ridge of the Kwonchi hill. From here however they were driven by the order of Mr. Groom and then occupied Wala and Baria.

Baria says that he was born on top of the Gwoti hill and had two sons of his own there. His father still lives on the west ridge of that hill, and each year goes back to Ligiri, where his ancestor originated, to sacrifice there.

Also, the Jannati people deny that they are blood relatives of the Ba because when the white man first came they were afraid that if they admitted that Batoma and Toma were brothers, they would be given to the Ba people.

History of Ba

From Ngya of Ba Da, March 18, 1927.

Mallam Duna, who has just led the exodus to Kpaia, is a Ba man who went to Bornu school six years ago and who has been a Mallam at Mutum Daya for the past three years. Ten years ago he was sent by Sarkin Yeli of

³⁰ See Adelberger and Kleinewillinghöfer 2016 for a biography and the publications of McBride.

Kwonchi to arrest a Ba Da man named Djen, who had killed a Fulani man who drove his cattle too close. Duna went after him but he too was speared by Djen, who seems to have been very free with his spear throwing. Duna however was not killed, the spear going clean through his thigh. Djen has just come back (in February 1927) from serving ten years in Lokoja prison.

History of Kwonchi

From Ngya of Kwonchi Ba Da, March 18, 1927.

The Kulung on Kwonchi came from Jibu, but came originally from Kpana. A number of their ancestors came across soon after Bambur was founded and built on the Kwonchi hill. Others joined them from Bambur. They were also joined by the Ba people who came later from the north and settled on the main ridge. There was continual war between them until Mr. Groom ordered the Ba people off that hill.

The first two Kings of Kwonchi under the British government were Kulung and the next two were Ba. The first was Kala. Upon his death his brother So became chief. During So's reign four Fulani Mallams from Karim who were taking the census, were killed. Because of this a Government officer came and burned many of the Kwonchi villages from Tel Ndaku clear around to So's house. Five men were taken, one was hanged on a large Miel tree near So's house in the presence of all the people. The Miel tree was pointed out-- it stands in a hollow about three hundred yards below the house of Mallam Audu. Another of the murderers was hanged down on the plain and three at Ibi.

Chief So was later taken into custody for slaving, he having taken two adults and two boys and sold them to the north. He and some of his household were taken and tried and So died in prison at Lokoja. The first Ba man was then taken and appointed King. So had several sons, three of them being strong Mohammedans. One, a mallam, was killed by a spear at Bauchi several years ago; another mallam has been teaching a school at Mutum Daya; Audu has been imprisoned several times for various misdeeds (he is the one most desirous of being Chief after his father); and another son, a pagan, still lives in his father's house. Chief So's house occupied a prominent place on a commanding rise on top the Kwonchi hill, his yard being nearly an acre in extent. The silk cotton trees and the "Baro" trees which he planted around the spirit house still stand. There is now also a young date palm which Audu planted three years ago. So was not a Mohammedan but remained pagan until his death.

Ngya says that for many years the Kwonchi paid tribute to the Fulani at Bauchi, because this was in Bauchi's territory. This was a yearly tax of food only. He remembers as most prominent in this tax collection one Mallam Yakubu, who also made the road which follows the south side of these hills. Mallam Yakubu first came through with a large number of Fulani whom he led through Lamurdi and Numan to Yola, and leaving part of them there he returned later to Bauchi by way of the Tangali hills. The tax was finally discontinued and they were free from taxation until the coming of the white men. Ngya says that he went through the country with "Maisaje" following him to Gwomu and witnessing the battle there and was given two goats for his pains.

Kwonchi gets its name from the first Ba man who came here, who came, as did the present chief's forbears, direct from Kpaia, and not by way of Gwoti.