

**SILENCING THE SPIRITS OF THE SHRINES:  
THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON BEROM RELIGION  
AND ECOLOGY**

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## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the research work for this thesis and the subsequent preparation of this thesis by Simon, Davou Mwakwun were carried out under my supervision.

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## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this work is the product of my own research efforts, undertaken under the supervision of Professor Umar Habila Dadem Danfulani and has not been presented elsewhere for the award of a degree or certificate. All sources have been duly distinguished and appropriately acknowledged.

**SIMON DAVOU MWADKWON**

**(PGA/UJ/11304/2000)**

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**Simon Davou Mwadkwon.**

## **DEDICATION**

I humbly dedicate this work to God Almighty the creator of the world, to my late mum and dad Da Davou Mwadkwon Fwet and Chundung Mwadkwon Fwet, my daughter Hashila and to all lovers, friends and nurses of Mother Earth.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Jos Plateau environment in general and Beromland in particular has witnessed severe decimation and change due to a number of agents of change. These agents of change have created a great ecological imbalance on the land, even as tin mining activities have left behind human-made ponds, dumps, bare vegetation, and have precipitated an avalanche of gully erosion and other activities of denudation that are now a common phenomenon on the Jos Plateau landscape. Many researchers have ventured into several aspects of mining activities with no recourse to the aspect of religion. The work further highlight on religion, considered as an important aspect of Berom existence that was destroyed through tin mining, thus precipitating an ecological crisis. Religious and cultural practices can and should be adopted as blueprints to address the present environmental crisis. This is because religious and cultural practices have demonstrated a high sense of love and care for the environment. Aside from other agents of change, however, the tin mining industry seems to be the major determining factor of huge and rapid changes in Beromland. The work aims at demonstrating the reality that a thorough grasp of the interplay between religion and ecology is needed to provide a holistic analysis of the factors that have influenced Berom land including the role played by the Tin mining industry. Furthermore, pride of place is given to the role played by religion and the variegated responses of the Berom to these agents of change. In order to help maintain an eco-friendly society, this study sets to demonstrate that socio-cultural and religious practices are important. The thesis therefore focuses on Berom religion and ecology prior, during and after the tin mining industry. It examines how the tin mining industry has impacted on Berom traditional religion and the extent to which it has affected traditional ecological ethics of the people. Qualitative method of data collection was

employed in this study including in oral interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation in his field work. Secondary sources on Berom history, traditional religion and in relation to religion and ecology, and on nature or green religion were also used. The phenomenological, historical, comparative and limited thematic approaches of data analysis were used. The researcher thus utilized what Aylward Shorter refers to as the multi-dimensional, and what Harold Turner calls the poly-methodic and/or what is known as the interdisciplinary approach to research. Results indicate that over three hundred and sixty sacred sites were defiled, destroyed and decimated by tin mining activities, activities of foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) and agents of modernity, such as the introduction of Western education, monetary economy and coinage, urbanization, disruption of traditional demographic patterns with the influx of migrant labour populations in search of black gold (tin) and the introduction of a northern vernacular (Hausa) and other cultural items, among others. Furthermore, this study reveals that the tin mining industry left over 1000 artificial killer ponds in which animals and human beings very often get drown. It also left behind numerous artificial mounds on the environment.



## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual and theoretical framework which has helped in bringing to better focus the ideas, theories and strategies that have been examined or proposed in this study include the theories propounded by Ikenga-Metuh's work, *The Gods in Retreat*, which is an edited volume of a collection of works and theories on the concept or notion of religious change. Among the theories reflected in this monumental work, is the intellectualist theory of religious change (conversion) propounded by Robin Horton, Richard Bruce and D.N. Wambutda. The anthropologist Robin Horton was thoroughly influenced by the works of J. Spencer Trimingham, which Ikenga-Metuh simply titled 'the shattered microcosm'.

Another theory of religious change discussed by Ikenga-Metuh is the materialist or instrumental theory of religious change by Caroline Ifeka-Moller, which was reflected in her work published in a Canadian Journal of Religion titled 'White Power'. She was in turn influenced by the works of Karl Marx. A third theory reflected in the study of impact of change on the religious landscape of Africa is the historical theory of renown British historian Humphrey Fisher. All these theories and the numinous theory of religious change have influenced the writing of the impact of change among the Berom by the researcher.

This is because the influence of tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau adversely affected traditional religious beliefs of the Berom thereby, literally silencing the spirits of the shrines. As the tin mining activities heightened on the Jos Plateau, using heavy duty machines, the sacred space of the Berom was not only devastated but even the spirits and other deities were destroyed. Today, those spirits are either silenced, or have fled or in the words of Ikenga-Metuh, have 'retreated' as reflected in the title of his book already mentioned above.

The world over, where ever tin mining activities have taken place in large scale as was the Tin Mining on the Jos Plateau, the environment is always devastated creating serious environmental challenges for the people. The creation of ponds, gulleys and dissipation of the land makes it problematic to engage in any agricultural endeavour.

Furthermore, where ever tin mining activities have been witnessed they create or lead to urbanisation growth of cities due to influx of mine workers migration of both skilled and semi-skilled workers typical of the Jos case. It also creates social problems such as, prostitution, alcoholism, gambling, and social deviants, among others. This led to the development of slums that affected social and traditional values. Tin mining activities created challenges of environmental degradation that calls for Government action and policy in order to protect environment.

Added to the theories propounded by these scholars above, the works of the renown historian Charles C. Jacobs, the works of colonial anthropologists that include J.G. Davies, Tanya Baker, H.D. Gunn, Leonard Plotnicov, and Bill Freund, and the Australian/Nigerian historian Elizabeth Isichei have been invaluable in the writing of this thesis.

Concerning the ecological section of this work, it was not only confirmed that traditional societies, including the Berom, had ecological ethics that promoted the protection of the environment and were religiously sanctioned, but a number of works were also used for the development of the theoretical framework for this section. The JPERDP—Jos Durham papers relating to the Jos Plateau environment written by half-a-dozen scholars from both Durham and University of Jos were used as theoretical bases for this work. The works of the doyen of ecological studies and religion, Lynn White Jr., which is based on his ‘ecological crisis’ and his critics, such as Jaap Frouws, Colin Sage (based on population growth, poverty

and environment) and Tellegen (and his theory of democratization and market economy) form the foundation of the theoretical framework for this section. The theory of Taylor on the interplay between ecology and nature religion is also captured here. The works of other scholars such as Landeberg, Albanese, Bode and Cowley, Emerson, and Wilber, among others do not only lend credence to the theory of Lynn White Jr., but also relay the interplay between ecology/environment and religion.

The theories propounded by Taylor, Glacken, Worster and Buell reinforce the notion of the revival of nature or green religion, while the work edited by Thomas Bagatzky and R. Kuschel of Bayreuth University in Germany, titled *The Reinvention of Nature*, goes beyond nature religion to giving new life to nature. So also is Aldo Leopold's *Thinking Like a Mountain*, which was re-echoed in the work of Seed by the same title and their critics. This author also examined the theories of Harper, Herrer, Kanaby and Willis, Sherrer, Taylor, Gary Snyder, Joan Macy and John Steed, biologist and ethnologist Marc Bekoff, and Jane Goodall, who was named UN Ambassador for Peace in 2002, among others, on the typology of ecologically based religions.

Furthermore, this scholar also cited other theories in writing about world religions (including Africa land ethics, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Eastern mysticism, and atheistic humanism), theories concerning religion and ecology, approaches to ecology and religion, (especially the works of Grim and Tucker and Gbenda), and women/feminism, religion and ecology. In concluding this theoretical framework, it should be stated that what we are witnessing today in Africa is a deviation of traditional ecological orientation which calls for a return to ethics in order to sustain the environment for human development.

## GLOSSARY

Bekarak	A specie of indigenou beans
Bekit	Yam
Bemad whal	Medicine men or persons
Bemakuk	Elders
Bes	Supernatural power
Bin	Drum
Bot	Frog
Buna	A festival to mark harvest of new crops
Chap	Farm
Cheng	Spirit
Chi//chit	Spirit land, it can be plain land, rocks, grove, shrine, etc
Chomo	War
Choo	Mahogany
Chun	A staple grain use for food and the king crop of the Berom
Chwei	Lion
Da	Father
Dagwi	God
Dagwom	District Head
Dahwong	My father
Dalo	Head of the family
Damanjei	Ward head
Dang/Dangkal	Sweet potatoes
Duk shot	Court
Dyam	Iron or money
Fei	Hare
Fwa	Stone
Gachik	Stand straight
Gai	Millet
Gbong Gwom	Paramount ruler of the Berom
Geng chap	Grass use for dividing farmland

Gi	Egg
Gul	Wind
Guput	Mat
Gura chap	Part of the farm
Gwele	Working stick
Gwes	Broom
Gwi	Sun
Gwom	Chief
Gwom jamo	Chief hunter
Gwom kwit	Ritual priest
Hala	Release, forgive, to let go
Hei	Bush
Hwa	Woman
Hwa jem	Woman lover
Hwa lo gwaha	My uncle's wife
Hwal	Medicine
Hwol	Tomorrow
Hwong	Girl
Hwonong	Vegetable
Hworop	A medicinal soft and solid soil use in the treatment of heart burn
Jamo/Jama	Hunting
Jek	Trade sometimes used as write
Jem	A contracted love relationship between a married man and married woman
Jeng nkeri	Sacred time
Jot	Spring
Ju	Flute
Kanang	Seeing beyond the physical
Kpatak	Sandal or shoes
Kugul	Silk cotton

Kundung	xylophone
Kwit	Ritual
Kwot	An animal counterpart of a human being
Ladura	Village square
Laron	Locust beans
Lele wal	Oath taking using the sword
Leng	Soup
Loh	House
Mafeng	Thank you
Mala	Bag
Mandyieng	A festival marking the beginning of the rains in preparation for cropping
Mok	Prayer
Mwad	Person
Mwadkwit	Ritual person
Ndem kwit	Ritual sites or sacred spaces
Nei Choo	Mahogany oil
Nei pwat	Olive oil
Nkeri	Taboo, forbidden
Noro	Gift
Npuk	Penis sheath
Nshe pyeng	White water
Nshok	A harvest festival
Ntou	Potash, salt
Nyara	Small pox
Nye	Buffalo
Nzem	Festival, fashionable
Pwat	Olive
Ruga	Shield
Rwak	Rain
Rwang	Leave, Paper

Rwas	Man
Rwas njem	Man lover
Sele	Help, Assist
Sep	Belt
Shap	Basket
Sheh	Bamboo
Shit	Sack
Simi	Love
Sireng	Beer
Suga	Warrior
Te chap	Middle of farm
Tegwong	Middle of road
Ti	Red ochre
Tobes	Spiritual power
Tok	Fish
Vongchit	Spirit hole
Vongti	Red ochre hole
Voshon	Doctor
Votut	Measles
Vovwel	Ancestor
Vum	A bottomless pit in Riyom
Vwel	Land
Vwel damot	Fatherland
Vwel mot	Our land
Vwi	Backyard
Vwos	Clay
Wen	Boy
Weng	Luck
Worongchun	A Chun planting ritual
Yara	Corn
Yom	guitar

Zeng

Dry season



**ABBREVIATIONS**

ATMN	Amalgamated Tin Mines of Nigeria
BTA	Berom Tribal Area
BPU	Berom Progressive Union
EEC	European Economic Community
EPIC	Environmental Policy in International context
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
HMNPC	House Magazine of National Population Commission
ITV	Interview
JPERDP	Jos Plateau Environmental Resources Development Programme
JP F	Jos Provincial files
NAK	National Archives Kaduna
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIV	New International Version
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission
SNP	Secretary Northern Province
SUM	Sudan United Mission
TNCDT	The New Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus
TPSHB	The Plateau State Hand Book
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND OF STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The thesis is intended to study the impact of the tin mining industry as a way of tracing the history of eco-religious change that occurred in the whole of Beromland. We have done this by studying the impact of the tin mining industry on Berom sacred spaces (shrines) and land or the environment. Thus, the primary goal of the study is to bring scholarship to bear on an urgent contemporary problem, namely, ecology and environmental degradation, which has threatened the food security and economic viability of the Jos Plateau region of Nigeria. It constitutes one of the major causes of the poverty and political unrest in the area today. Ecologists agree that one of the main roots of environmental crisis is religious and, therefore, one aspect of the solution could come from sourcing available eco-ethics from indigenous knowledge. For the Berom, this indigenous knowledge is in their altars and shrines.

Altars speak and people speak at altars where the human and the divine interface and negotiate the contours of salient living. Altars are, therefore, powerful spaces where destinies are decided. Some altars are personal; others belong to the families, villages or to the large territories such as the clan. The altars with large provenance are often conserved within shrines. Altars are the heartbeat of shrines and thus the scope, physiognomy, provenance and complexity of ritual may measure the importance of a shrine. When it is polluted or desecrated (for instance, by reversal into secular use), the shrine is silenced. Some traditionalists argue that such altars will continue to be dormant until votaries return.

From another perspective, shrines are about land and people in relationship. Indeed, the root of Berom Religion can be found in *vwel*, which simply means land. The concept of land has different meanings to different people. Anigbo has defined land as “the soil or the hard crust of the earth on which the individual may build his house, plant his crops, transact his social and religious business and he gets buried there when he dies”(25-26). This definition seems to fit into the Berom concept of land. Any piece of land, which satisfies those conditions for the individual or group, must be considered significant for them.

A major belief of the Berom concerning land is that, human beings do not own land; it is the land that owns the human beings because in the final analysis, all must return to the land. At birth, a child is united to the land, as the placenta, which the Berom refers to as “the house” or “cloth” of the child during his/her temporal stay in the mother’s womb is buried in a spot behind the compound. The child’s umbilical cord is, later on like the placenta, buried in another spot within the compound. By these acts, the child is linked to the land, and now belongs to it, pointing to a symbiotic relationship which exists between the Berom and land. For these reasons it is considered not dignifying to the dead to be buried in a piece of land to which the deceased has no right as a member.

The Berom consider land in feminine terms to be very sacred such that they swear by her and the powerful allure of land is the source of the people’s identity as an ethnic group, which is sometimes also the source of their ethnic consciousness as a people. Intimate relationship with land is often displayed in naming children. People are named *Chap* meaning, “Land” or “farmland”; *Geng*, “land demarcation”; *Honghei*, “farmland-girl”, *Techap* “middle of farmland” and *Vwi*, “house land”.

Land must, therefore, be “protected”, because of its significance to individuals and the society. Perhaps this explains why the Berom placed a great deal of religious taboos, prohibitions or as Kalu calls it, “boundaries of behaviour” (13) to protect the land. This can be seen in the identification of several spaces on the land as altars and shrines. The Berom worldview thus became a socialized one. This socialized worldview is extended to the whole of nature and the environment. This paved the way for a kind of ecological ethics in Berom traditional religion. There are also religious rituals made to keep the land “sacred”. Perhaps, this may also explain why the Berom understand even socio-economic and political activities performed on the land as socialized events.

The zoned shrine areas enclosed with a sacred canopy among the Berom included rocks, hills, rivers, lakes, swamps, and some species of trees, forests and large portions of plain land covering several kilometres. Thus, all Berom villages had large tracts of land preserved for altars and shrines. This means that most of the shrines were natural spaces within the environment.

The Berom, believe that shrines are inhabited either by the deities, *chit* spirits or ancestors. This shows that a strong affinity exists between Berom traditional religion and the environment. Several other religious rituals and cycles of life are connected to the shrines. They include marriage and naming ceremonies, initiation to adulthood, installation of priest-chiefs, rainmaking and burial rites, among others. Agricultural rituals such as planting and harvest are also linked to them. Thus their performance depends on the environment.

Suffice it to state here that mining activities were carried out in Beromland prior to the introduction of colonialism. Mining activities before and during the 1820s were not

geared towards international capitalist markets. Therefore, mining operations like tin, kaolin and salt were less intensive and extensive. For this reason, the disruptive effects of their exploration (in the 1820s) on the eco-religious life of the Berom was less severe and in some cases of no adverse consequences. Following the advent of colonialism, and its declared option for the exploration of tin in the 1900s, rather than cash crop production on the Jos Plateau for export, the eco-religious life of the Berom was immediately endangered.

The introduction of the tin mining industry into Beromland led to a gradual decline in the significance of land. The tin mining industry had a Western industrial ethics or worldview. The introduction of this western industrial worldview on a highly serialized traditional worldview, paved the way for the decimation of traditional values and norms. The spirits in the natural shrines, which formerly had protected nature and the environment from disruptive human activities literally retreated. This gave way for the exploitation of nature on the Jos Plateau.

It is difficult to tell what number or species of animals, birds, fish, shore life or plants died in the process of the tin mining operation. The introduction of such an industry into the homelands of indigenous people living in life-ways intimately connected to local bioregions and with sacred spaces all over the land was most liable to have an adverse effect on the religion and ecology of the society.

The tin mining industry seems to have overlooked ecological values in such a way that the quality of human life on the Jos Plateau also suffered. This of course affected the root of Berom Traditional Religion, which depended on the land for its shrines. Because the Berom traditional society invested enormous religious ardour to preserve the altars

and shrines, this calls for attention to the importance of shrines in the present study. Hence, the choice of the research topic, “Silencing the spirits of the shrines: The impact of tin mining on Berom Religion and Ecology.”

K. Polanyi wrote that because of economic ventures, the world became converted into exchangeable market commodities. To enable the market forces interact freely and remain productive, the natural world of various communities are commoditised into land, life commoditised into labour, and patrimony commoditised into capital (46). D. R. Loy like Polanyi has vividly described how in the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century, new technology in tools of production led to the decimation of different communities’ fabric. This is characterized by a similar ethos of the commoditisation of the “other” currently pervading the marketing of indigenous environmental wisdom (282-283). The quotation by David R. Loy is not a direct reference to the Berom situation in Jos Plateau. It however, seem to depict the extent to which the tin mining industry affected land in Berom society. In this article Loy pointed out that religion and ecology have something in common. Both religion and ecology deal with ethical values. Loy however, saw religion from a functionalist perspective, for this reason he saw religion as economics. For economic reasons land is thus commoditised and because of this, the environment is affected leading to ecological crisis.

In spite of the fact that Polanyi and Loy’s works were not centred on the Berom, the scenario described by the two scholars epitomizes the Jos tin mining experience. This huge urge and capacity towards commoditisation was indeed to keep the tin industry alive or productive for obvious economic reasons. The natural world, land, life and patrimony of the Jos Plateau were thus prized and commoditised by outsiders that were alien to the

land and the whole system of Berom eco-religious ethics. The commoditisation of land, life and patrimony by the mining industry invariably led to a kind of nonchalant attitude to environmental ethics. These thus corrode the much-shared needed community values protecting the eco-religious ethics of Berom society.

Every society is dynamic and subject to change, thus it is possible that changes in Berom society may have as well led to changes in Berom cosmology and religion generally. In other words, changes in Berom Traditional Religion may have been possible irrespective of the decimation of the environment or the shrines by tin mining activities. We must thus be cautious so that the tin mining industry is not seen as the only change agent responsible for the decline in Berom Religion. We must not also in anyway romanticize the Berom traditional religious worldview as being holistically eco-sensitive. It is true that despite the practice of conservation (particularly through traditional terracing and other systems) in Berom indigenous traditional knowledge; and the sacralisation of the land or because of it, as put by Kalu, “there is often a lack of an ideology of preservation, conservation and replacement” (1). Although Kalu’s statement above is not centred on the Berom, his observation points to aspects of non-ecological ethics that exists in some African worldviews. This is also true of Berom traditional religious worldview.

Today, the situation is not different, if anything at all, it has and is still drastically deteriorating. For example, to what level has the affinity of Berom Traditional Religion and the environment enhanced such values as maintenance, replacement, restraint, regeneration, selective consumption, sufficiency and efficiency? This will become clear as we discuss Berom activities before, during and after the introduction of colonial tin

mining industry. The point we are making is that, the Berom as a people may have as well contributed to the process of eco-religious change that took place and is still taking place on the Jos Plateau.

From the above discussion, it is difficult to study “Silencing the spirits of the shrines”, using a mono causal factor approach. The most suitable approach which become obvious and incumbent to this research therefore is the multi-causal factor approach. It is thus important to consider other change agents, namely world religions, (Christianity, Islam), colonialism and modernity. We must ask ourselves why people change their beliefs. Why did the Berom gradually abandon their gods and culture for world religions, modernity and secularism? The reason may, or, may not be, due to influx of people of different religious faiths and cultures to the Jos Plateau to work on the tin mines. Christianity through what was then known as the “Civilizing mission” policy introduced western education into Beromland. This then gave rise to modernization. These forces also helped in eroding aspects of Berom religious belief systems.

Going by most of the information collected during fieldwork in the 80 Berom villages, the researcher is obliged to say that Berom traditional religious objects or shrines “defiled” by missionaries are mostly those of individuals and families, and, not community religious objects and shrines. Community sacred spaces or shrines which unite a section or the whole of Berom society in the observation of religious rituals are the ones mostly affected by the tin mining industry, unlike the shrines and sacred places disseminated by world religions and modernity. World religion and modernity found its footing in Berom after the tin mining industry opened up Beromland for them to thrive on.



This does not presuppose that world religions and modernization are considered totally inimical to Berom Religion. Change is a gradual process, which involves negotiations. Primal religions always synthesized, sieved and accepted what is “good” for them, while rejecting what is destructive. In other words, in much as we talk of the influence of world religions on Berom worldview, we should not look at this from only one direction. It is possible that the world religions “conquered” Berom Religion. We must as well accept that Berom Religion is resilient. This is clear in the use of proverbs by the Berom in daily conversations, the manner in which the Berom still shout out “*ayeye Dagwi*”, literally calling on God as in the olden days when in trouble, and naming of children using religious concepts as was done in the past, among others. The celebration of socio-cultural festivals is another case in point. Thus, it is pertinent to note from the onset that, we are dealing with a complex phenomenon, which though visibly changing may be far from moribund.

As A. T Grove declared about the Jos Plateau communities:

...In the remote parts of the state are some of the most colourful and interesting survivals of ancient communities, preserving their own languages, shrines and dances, and fascinating variety of houses, implements, ritual equipment and decorative clothing (148).

Grove's statement above is not completely true of the Berom today when compared to their neighbours who still hold to their traditional religion. Berom neighbours have retained till today the concept of the deities, ancestors, masquerades, diviners and medicine persons. Many other religious rituals connected to initiation,

marriage and puberty rites, planting and harvest rituals have drastically declined among the Berom.

According to informants, Berom is the largest of these ancient ethnic groups of the Jos Plateau (Gyang Bot, Pam Tok and Dudu Dalyop interview), perhaps, because of their presence in four Local Government Areas of Plateau State, namely Jos North, Jos South, Barakin-Ladi and Riyom (Mwadkwon 51). The statement, made above by Grove in 1952, during a period of intensive and extensive mining activities, coupled with the effects of world religions (Christianity and Islam) and modernization, point to two things. Firstly, that the mining industry and other change agents did not completely erode all aspects of Berom worldview. Secondly, the reason for the decline in the indigenous knowledge of the Berom cannot be explained by a single factor.

However, a contemporary comparative study of the traditional religion and culture of the Jos Plateau ethnic groups, (especially the Berom and her neighbours) in relation to Grove's statement may prove the contrary. The masquerades, shrines, cult of the ancestors, office of the diviner, and office of the medicine persons, among many other religious functionaries, are still widely maintained among Berom neighbours, for example, the Rukuba, Aten, Buji, Irigwe and Anaguta. These ethnic nationalities still maintain more aspects of their traditional religions than the Berom.

It is pertinent to note that tin mining was also introduced in some villages of Berom neighbours like the Anaguta, Rukuba (Kiche or Bache), Irigwe (Miango) and Buji of the old Pengana chiefdom. In spite of this, Berom have till today retained significant aspects of their traditional religions. Berom Traditional Religion has undergone drastic changes during and after the tin mining era. Even though many of its visible rites,

practices and institutions have and continue to disappear, more than those of her neighbours. Berom Traditional Religion has and continues to influence many sections of the population including Christians and Muslims. What is responsible for this development? This discrepancy is indicative of the fact that multiple factors must be responsible for “silencing the voices of shrines in Beromland”. These factors may be different with those of the neighbours of the Berom. Tin mining may be a big factor in forcing the retreat of the voices of the shrines and the gods in Beromland, but there are other factors. This work will examine the impact of all of these factors on the environment and eco-religious ethics in Beromland.

## **1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The major problem of the research can be fully envisaged from a recent statement by Michael Bot Mang in a publication by the *Guardian Newspaper* captioned “Ecological problems in Plateau State”(12), which captures part of the problem of this research, when he asserted that:

Plateau State is an endangered State characterized by soil erosion, nutrient depletion, degraded mine land, deforestation, floods, desert encroachment and poor soil due to bush burning and municipal waste. 1000 mining ponds and about 35 gully erosion sites are scattered in state (T. G. N. 12).

Furthermore, some scholars have shown that on the Berom area of the Plateau State “tin mining activities covered about 325 square kilometres, producing over 800 mining ponds” (Nyam xiv, Mwadkwon 51). To show the enormity of the situation, Jonah Madugu recently observed that the area was once richly endowed with the Savannah vegetation. It is now a denuded ecosystem. He asserts:

The Jos Plateau even though lying treeless today was once clad in Savannah vegetation... This from all indications means that the vegetation of the Jos Plateau was once rich and attractive for human habitation, agriculture, traditional religious living, and livestock production and hunting. (2)

Commenting on the Berom area alone Simon D. Mwadkwon has indicated that 800 of the 1000 ponds in the whole of Plateau State are located in Berom community (51).

From the above analysis by the *Guardian Newspaper*, Samuel Dung Nyam, Jonah Madugu and Simon D. Mwadkwon on the enormity of the environmental crisis on the Jos Plateau in general and Beromland in particular, the following observations can be made. Firstly, that the Jos Plateau is threatened with an ecological crisis and secondly, that the tin mining industry may be one of the reasons for the ecological problem. Thirdly, that at a point in time, the Jos Plateau had little or no ecological problems, and fourthly, that because of this; the indigenous people once witnessed a harmonious relationship in food production, livestock and traditional religious activities. Fifthly, that this condition paved the way for the multiplication of different animals, and probably other natural flora, fauna and mineral life. The Berom, therefore, make a good case study in the effort to combat environmental degradation and to explore the relationship between ecology and religion.

The key questions we may ask at this juncture, therefore, are: What is the cause of the environmental degradation? Could it be a result of lack of internal eco-ethics of the indigenous people, or the result of external change agents such as the mining activities and various forms of modernity? It is fairly axiomatic that the ecological ethics have tremendous religious underpinning. This leads in two directions, namely, to explore the

indigenous knowledge and culture of Berom people for salient eco-ethics to aid contemporary problems and to trace the impact of tin mining and modernity on Berom primal religion and culture. The impact on Beromland is obvious from the method of tin mining which tends to use up extensive land. Thus 800 artificial ponds left behind by careless miners (whom we could term as environmental enemies) within a community indicate a threat to the sustainability of that community.

One major problem of the present study is to reconstruct Berom Traditional Religion. Probably, the most effective way to do this is, to use the altars and shrines scattered all over the land. During field study, 336 shrines were identified from 80 villages. The present research cannot write on all these shrines. Thus, it is hoped that a case study of few shrines will suffice us to achieve our aims. The choice of the few shrines is due to the provinance of the shrines, their ritual function, type of religious rituals, gender of the shrines, environmental concern etc.

The questions that immediately come into our minds are: What was the nature of Berom Religion before the supposed decline stage? Where and how was it practiced? Who were the main actors? What really led to the decline of the religion? Is the decline due to a combination of factors or a mono causal factor? How did it happen? Do we still have some vestiges of Berom Traditional Religion? It is hoped that these questions will be answered in the course of this research, analyzing and interpreting materials gathered from fieldwork.

The history of tin mining on the Jos Plateau is better understood under different periods. Periodization of the tin mining history or providing a historiography of tin mining activities in Beromland becomes a yardstick for a proper understanding of the eco-

ethics of the industry. Periodization is also important if we must accept multiple reasons for the decline in the eco-religious life of the Berom. Firstly, tin mining started with the indigenous people themselves. Secondly, the different periods in the history of the mining industry are dictated by changes in technology and policy. Moreover, illegal mining activities have continued to surface in the different periods of the mining industry.

The issue of illegal mining activities forces us to ask further questions. Who are/were those engaging in illegal mining? Were they eco-sensitive? Did the tin mining industry accumulate “moral eco-ethics?” Was there a deliberate policy for reclamation of the mining ponds and pits? What necessary steps were taken to protect the rivers from being polluted? What measures were taken to control population increase in the area, etc? It has been reported that the mining industry did less in this respect; rather, the industry depleted moral eco-ethics. To be fair to the tin industry, it became more eco-sensitive within the past ten years. It further improved in 1994 following the creation of the Plateau State Environmental Protection Agency.

Many historians and scholars of religion such as Robin Horton, Evans-Pritchard, Osmund Anigbo, Ogbu U. Kalu, Humphrey Fisher, Trimmingham, Monica Wilson, Richard Bruce and Caroline Ifeka-Moller among others had attributed change in African Religion to many reasons. These reasons range from contact of highly sacralised African worldviews with the more universalistic cosmologies of world religions, which presented a materialistic progressive worldview and wider horizons. They also point to the introduction of colonialism, western education, modernity and rapid social changes. These theories of change can be divided mainly into, the socio-functionalist theories, and the symbolist intellectualist and culture lag theories.

The present study is not a complete shift from the standpoints of the above-mentioned scholars. Thus, one of the problems of the research is to discuss other factors of change in Berom Religion, the main focus being world religions and modernization. The key question is: Are these factors also responsible for the eco-religious change in Beromland? If the answer to this is in the affirmative, then we must inquire how, and to what level. This is because views of nature embedded in Berom Religion and culture are influenced by “civilization” in various phases of their “development”. As the Berom move rapidly towards “development or modernization and industrialization”, the impact on the traditional values and the environment has been enormous. We must also ascertain which of these factors can be said to be the dominant, the world religions and modernization; or the rape of the environment, land and the shrines by the mining industry?

Finally, the research is linked to the ongoing debate on religion and ecology. In other words, can religion offer any help to the present environmental decay? This has expanded the discussion on environmental issues beyond only economic valuation, political legislation, and scientific analysis. The research cannot overemphasize the importance of those areas, there is need to tap into comprehensive dimensions of human motivations and norms for salvaging the eco-religious change on the Jos Plateau. The emphasis must then be on religion and cultural values, the Berom shrines being the central point in our case.

### **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The major aims and objectives of the present study include the following: To demonstrate that no understanding of the environment is adequate without a grasp of the

religious life that constitutes the Berom society, that saturates most of their natural system. Thus, as one of our aims, an examination of Berom religion and moral force of Berom religious symbols, rituals, beliefs, practices, and teachings is needed. This will amount to a reconstruction of Berom Traditional Religion and Culture.

Secondly, literature on tin mining or on the ecological crisis on the Jos Plateau has so far concentrated on the socio-economic, political and ideological dimensions of Berom life. Little or no attention has been paid to the eco-religious impact of tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau. The present study has as one of its main objectives, the redressing of this imbalance of treatment by arguing that tin mining activities also affect the eco-religious life of the Berom. The thesis argued that, religions do help to form cultures, worldviews, and ethics and thus may assist in shaping “solutions” to environmental problems when it is fully discussed.

Thirdly, to show how the Berom responded to the environmental crisis, which is, widely believed to have been perpetuated by enormous inroads of the materialistic ethics of the mining industry, world religions and modernity. The work have argued that in addition to major economic and political changes, different worldviews from those who have captured the imagination of contemporary industrial society helped in making the Berom view nature or the environment as a commodity to be exploited.

Fourthly, the work has also demonstrated or argued that Berom Religion in its most comprehensive and particularized forms offer patterns of ecological connection that link humans (Berom) to their habitat. However, because there was no definite culture of conservation and replacement in Berom worldview, this ambivalence in the worldview also produced destructive eco-ethics.



#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the present study is manifold. Firstly, when successfully completed, the thesis will serve as an important source of information for historians of religions and other related fields.

Secondly, it will serve as a pioneering work in the study of the eco-religious life of the Berom. This will assist in researching and preserving some aspects of Berom Religion for future generations. This will mean contributing to the study of one of the most populous of the numerous ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau.

The causes and consequences of environmental crisis are still being vigorously debated. Some people have suggested that the traditional environmental knowledge of indigenous peoples is typically recognised today as suitable for inclusion in contemporary world parliaments of religions and as the “cure” for environmental crisis. If this is true, then, the present study is important as it may one day be relevant for the formulation of Government Policy on eco-ethics related problems on the Jos Plateau.

#### **1.5 SCOPE AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

The history of the tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau can be divided into three main phases. Phase one is before the 1820s to the 1900s: the indigenous people did this. Phase two is from 1902 to 1960s which was carried out by mining industries and indigenous illegal miners. The third and final phase is from 1960s to 2005, done by some registered Nigerian companies and the illegal miners.

The present study is thus limited to these periods (1820 to 1998). These periods are important as they allow us see the major developments in the eco-sensitive ethics of

the indigenous people. It will also enable us see the non-sensitive eco-ethics of the mining industry, though it has been argued that the mining industry affected the economic, political, social and psychological life of the Berom. The present study, being in the history of religions, is thus limited to investigating the impact of mining activities as it affects only the eco-religious ethics and life of the Berom.

Tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau covered a lot of space. It was also carried out in the Anaguta, Buji, Mwaghavul, Irigwe and Rukuba areas. The present study does not pretend to cover all these areas. It is only limited to the area hereafter referred to as the Jos Plateau, which comprises of four Local Government areas. The thesis is limited to Jos North, Jos South, Barakin-Ladi and Riyom Local Government Areas, in the present Plateau State of Nigeria.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In the study of African religions, the problem of approach has been and continues to be a central issue. This may be due to reasons such as differences in the religious beliefs, symbols, rituals, and practices of the various African societies. The formulation of African religions itself is based on several factors. These include the political set up, the natural environment-the topography and the entire ecology.

Others are the predominant economic activities within a given space and the historical background of the space. The socio-cultural life of individual societies has also played an important role in the formation and practice of the religions. There is also the problem of lack of a literally canon containing the beliefs and practices of the religion. All these factors had and continue to influence African Religions and the choice of a method or approach for its study. Aylward Shorter perceived this problem when he wrote that;

Complexity, particularism, rural conditions, poorly developed material culture, absence of written literature all these are factors contributing to the adverse judgment upon African Religions, the judgment that they are devoid of 'ideas of higher religions'. Without an adequate methodology the scholar is tempted to despise the little he can see (39).

Shorter envisaged the problem of methodology in African religions mainly due to;

- (i) The nature of African societies
- (ii) Second problem is the development of the discipline in response to its object of study.
- (iii) Because of autonomy enjoyed by many African ethnic groups in pre-colonial days; they were culturally and linguistically isolated from each other.
- (iv) Various African societies made independent adaptations to different or similar environments. All of these factors have continued to serve as a threat for a choice for a methodology in the study of African Religions

Faced with the above problems in the study of African religions, Aylward Shorter enumerated and discussed different approaches that could be applied in its study. A summary of each will suffice to elucidate our attempt to adopt any of these methods. They include the particularistic classical approach of social anthropologists which insists on a thorough study of each and every ethnic group. This method is in favour of an almost total agnosticism in respect of any similarities or links between the societies.

The enumerative approach Shorter said is simply what its name implies the enumeration of different items, traditions, beliefs and practices. Scholars who probably feel strict comparative analysis is either impossible or not worthwhile have adopted this method; a case in point is Geoffrey Parrinder, the doyen of the study of African traditional religions and the person who coined the term (9). Parrinder who further argued that

because of multiplicity of African peoples, the complete absence of written documents from within African Religions and the lack of central tradition south of the Sahara; enumerative approach can lead us to a partial success, leaving many vital information undiscovered. For these reasons efforts must be made to continue the study of African religions, because the only alternative will be to abandon it. This approach according to Parrinder is important, because in spite of some differences, similarities abound in the religious beliefs and practices of many African societies across regional boundaries (17).

It is pertinent to note that historical approach has been a controversial issue because some scholars have argued that Africa has no history worth recording (Parrinder 9). However, John S. Mbiti has shown that each “of the thousand and one African people has its own history” (23). Shorter agreed with Mbiti, referred to the achievements of African historians which have helped in offering solutions to methodological problems in the study of African religions. African scholars through the historical method have revealed the numerous ways in which religious beliefs and practices have developed over the years (Mbiti 23, Shorter 39).

The next approach discussed by Shorter is the limited comparative approach, whose best exponent was the late sir Edward E. Evans-Pritchard. Evans-Pritchard became aware of the relationship between history and the history of religions. He thus saw comparison as the best chance for success in circumstances where societies have much in common, structurally, culturally and environmentally.

The categorical approach to the study of African Religions is to further develop the limited comparative approach which may be too cautious of generalization and thus, unproductive. Geographical contiguity is seen by this method as far from being an index

for the study of African Religions. Thus it argues that societies which are very distant from one another may be structurally, culturally, and even environmentally similar, even without obvious historical links to explain the similarities.

The thematic approach has to do with the selection of specific themes and study them in different contexts, noting their relative position and function, their various meanings and applications. This may not be strictly comparison, but it does increase the knowledge of the scientific researcher, by revealing the dimensions of the theme in question. For example, the concepts of God, ancestors or spirits are general concepts among some African societies that can be studied using this method.

Another approach discussed by Shorter is the hypothesis of unity approach. This method is limited by assumption, which may lead to shortcut for comparability. The last method, the multi-dimensional approach discussed by Shorter suggests that to make progress in the comparative study of African religions, there is the need to combine the strength of all or a number of other methods. There is the need to establish categories on the basis of structural, cultural and environmental similarity and, where this is available, on evidence of historic interaction or contact. These categories should become the standpoint for thematic studies (39-59). This is what Harold Turner referred to elsewhere as the “polymethodic approach” (2-3). Armin Geertz called it “ethno-hermeneutics” (7) and social scientists and scholars in the humanities use it as a favourite for their interdisciplinary approach to research.

From the foregoing summary, it is clear that more than one of these methods can be applied with great results. It largely depends on what the scientific researcher wants to find out, where, when, and how. It is also worth mentioning that each of these methods

has its merits and demerits. In other words, no methodology has been able to enable us to view African Religions as a convincing unity, multiple methods seem to be more favourable for its study. However, there is no "single better" method, every method can be "bad" or "good", "right" or "wrong", "simple" or "difficult", etc. The "usefulness" and "appropriateness" of a method depends on what we are set out to achieve by that particular method. A "good" methodology may then mean how (the way) we collect our data, and, the way we utilize it in relation to what we want to find out.

The very nature of African religions therefore, demands a polymethodical and multidimensional approach. The historical and limited comparative approaches have, therefore, been adopted in a multi-dimensional approach for the purpose of the present study. Due to the problem of non-existence of previous data, especially on Berom Religion and ecology, the anthropological and phenomenological approaches are useful for the present study.

These approaches are applied especially for the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The main reason may not be farfetched from the fact that, "after years of study and research by innumerable scholars no methodology has emerged, which allows us to view African traditional religion as a convincing unity" (Turner 38).

To discuss methodological issues relevant to achieving an understanding of the indigenous religions of Africa, as suggested by the phenomenological term, the eidetic intuition, which implies a seeing into meaning, is being pursued. It requires initially the capacity to see as a believer sees and thus calls for a clear methodological approach (Cox 155).

The present study is located in the history of religions and not sociology or theology. Phenomenology of Religion is the systematic treatment of the history of religions whose task is to classify and group the numerous and widely divergent data in such a way that an overall view can be obtained of their religious contents and the religious meanings they convey (Ekarika and Edet 16-17). How can we achieve this, given that there are as many phenomenologies as there are scholars of phenomenology? (King 103) Ursula King's statement above indicates how difficult it is to apply the phenomenological approach as different writers are always in disagreement with each other over what this method entails.

The phenomenological approach as has been used in the present study is not in the broad context in which phenomenology is understood. We have used it from the point of view of phenomenologically examining and describing facts, whether historically or systematically, without judging them from a particular theological or philosophical standpoint. Thus, as an important ideal in phenomenological tradition, phenomenology is here applied in our ability to achieve complete detachment, from preconceived, prejudiced, and biased positions in the study of religious phenomena. Phenomenology discourages speculative and normative *a priori* categories in the study of religion.

We have applied the phenomenological approach from the perspective of phenomenology seen in its attempt to explain the meaning of religious phenomena, not considering the basis for religious belief or whether religious judgments create objective validity. In this case observers must not affirm the reality of the object of faith, but can remain content to describe what the adherent believes. This is how and why the historical method and phenomenological approach has been understood and is applied to the study

of “silencing the spirits of the shrines: The Impact of Tin Mining on Berom Religion and Environment”.

Mircea Eliade is well known for applying the historical approach to the study of religions. Eliade argued that the apprehensions of the sacred through hierophanies represent the believer’s own view and that if any scholar wishes to understand a religious tradition scientifically, his or her accounts must reflect accurately the perspective of adherents which revealed the sacred to be a structure of consciousness, and to achieve this the historical method is needed (xiii). To achieve Eliade’s stand point in reflecting the perspective of adherents we must avoid negative preconceived notions, biases and prejudices. There is also the need to go further to find out the meaning of religious symbols and other acts that are not self-explanatory.

Ivan Strenski, Edmund Leach, Robert Segal, and Daniel Pals among others have heavily criticized Eliade. Irrespective of the criticisms labelled against Eliade’s historical approach, his hypothesis should not be completely dismissed for it seems to be valuable in the study of African religio-cultural matrix and in the present context, valuable for the study of how the impact of industrialization caused havoc on the environment and silence voices of the Berom shrines. The aim is to apply this method to analyze, understand and interpret the effects that the decimation of the environment caused, and, is still causing on eco-religious ethics of the Berom. But unlike Eliade, who used extensive comparisons across the globe, we like Aylward Shorter; drew limited comparative examples from similar cases from other societies where possible.

To achieve this, it will suffice to first of all reconstruct Berom Religion in which the idea of the sacred (shrines) is focused on as one of the main stay of Berom Religion.



This will invariably indicate the importance of land, land use, and land ownership among the Berom. The sacred level of existence of the sacred spaces or shrines; the rituals and other forms of socio-religious activities that hitherto took place in the shrines are historically and systematically analyzed, understood and interpreted.

Eliade further emphasised that to “see” which implies a reciprocal attitude in which what is seen is opened up to the viewer (in our own case, the scientific researcher) through the viewer opening up to what is seen (the living religious datum), thus enabling the viewer to, in a special way, participate in what was seen. Eliade believes that characteristic of this approach is the fact that it lays stress upon religion as a living experience which the scientific researcher is not forced to believe (xiii).

Religion is not a mere collection or description of intellectual or historical facts. As Eliade, we are saying that despite the decimation of the environment leading to the “collapse” of Berom Religion, it is not just enough to accept that the religion is completely extinct, but that it is possible that Berom Religion is still surviving in the memory of the people or has survived in changed forms and in other religions introduced in Beromland during the mining era. This is irrespective of the fact that there are no longer organized practices of some aspects of the traditional religion.

Berom religious beliefs, symbols, rituals and other religious practices are linked to the environment and tied down to the ethnic structures. The religious beliefs are formulated based on their various myths, experiences in life and in most cases on the ecology and occupation. The lack of written canon in Berom Religion as observed earlier on seem to make Eliade’s approach significant in that it affords a fresh opportunity for pursuing *Religionswissenschaft* (the scientific study of religion) of Berom Religion

(and in fact, of most African Religions). This is especially as it allows for the quest for meaning by the scientific scholar in his/her attempt to find out why certain religious acts are performed, and what the significance to the religious person is.

There are a number of ways to generate data on this problem: oral and written. In a predominantly oral culture, oral interviews become most essential. Commentators, among them Jan Vassina the leading expert and authority on oral literary texts in Africa, recognize the viability of this method as well as the pitfalls especially accessibility and reliability (23). Indigenous communities are often wary to talk to a stranger. Language can also hinder accessibility. When these do not exist, reliability may be vitiated by bias and vested interest(s). There are tested methods to obviate bias:

- i. Proper recording of bio data on those interviewed, for example, place of interview, date, age, profession, social status and a certain sense of whether the person sounds credible.
- ii. Use of group interviews. This tends to be self-corrective. As information given in public or in-group veracity can be challenged and corrections made. It becomes the memory of the people; their story is opposed to the researchers.
- iii. Instead of questionnaires, guided questions are posed. The researcher becomes a facilitator, ensuring that the flexible interview environment does not become loose and unguided.
- iv. Accurate recording with an electronic gadget-due with approval of those interviewed.

Primary sources are also important or crucial in this study because external change agents-colonial Government and missionaries kept records. These are archival materials.

The Nigerian National Archives have branches in Jos and Kaduna. The Jos branch contains letters and reports generated by District officers and Provincial Commissioners in Plateau area. The Kaduna Archives is the third of the largest depositories the other two being in Lagos and Ibadan. Here the documents relate to the governance of the entire Northern Provinces, which was amalgamated to the Southern Provinces in 1914 to constitute what is now Nigeria. It, therefore, contains much material from the governor-general and the local policy papers.

The secondary sources include books and journal articles on various aspects of this work. Magazines, seminar papers and dissertations abound on tin mining, environmental degradation, salvage measures, development of urbanization, ethnic and political interest of Plateau indigenes and more. These secondary sources formed the bulk of the information for our literature review.

From the above discussion it is clear that we have relied on three main ways to collect materials, namely, oral interviews, primary and secondary data. Primary and secondary data refer to those already existing data; there is the need for us to further comment on the issue of oral interviews or qualitative research. Data is sought from qualitative research, which involves both interviews and observation techniques for the collection of data. Thus, observation of the desacralised sacred spaces or shrines and the numerous ponds created by mining activities is carried out. An observation of the religious life and activities of both the present and older generation of Berom people was also done. This was to enable us note the differences between what was obtainable during the tin mining era and what is obtainable at the moment.

Nigel Gilbert stressed the importance of qualitative research when he wrote that “many studies begin with ‘pilot interviews’, to gather basic information about the field before imposing more precise, and inflexible methods” (137). This is why interviews have their claim to be most often used research method.

Qualitative research is applied for the collecting of data for writing the present work for many other reasons. It integrates a focus on understanding both the cognitive processes involved in engaging the methods of qualitative research and the affective ‘feel’ engendered by these same procedures; entering, observing, interviewing, analyzing, reporting and reflecting.

The interviews are based on selected modalities, taking into consideration the sex, status in society, occupation, and place of interview and age of the interviewed persons. The essence is to have a concrete reliability test on the information we are to collect. Typical of qualitative research method individuals and groups are also interviewed as well as representatives of groups. The individuals and groups included Christians, Muslims, Berom Traditional Religionists, Government functionaries, environmentalists, youths, women and men are interviewed. The phrase “practitioners of Berom traditional religion” refers to a small number of the Berom who still hold to their religion irrespective of the influence of world religions and modernity. They are mostly in the villages. They have refused to accept Christianity or Islam and they do not practice their traditional faith in any organised form. These categories of people demonstrate a vast knowledge of the Traditional Religion and culture of the Berom. In practical terms they do not accept the name traditional religious worshipers and they will not also accept to be identified with Christianity or Islam.

Most of the interviews were thematic, to allow us have a proper and different view and understanding of the “problems” in every theme. Secondly, this is to make sure that the “right” information needed to document the present work is effectively collected. However to avoid writing our ideas, the people were allowed to talk extensively. At the end of the talking, questions were asked based on each theme (s) the individuals or group(s) had already discussed.

Interview methods are often dictated by the context in which researchers work. For instance, in predominantly oral cultures, the questionnaire method would have limited use: most of the practitioners of primal religion will not be able to use them. The literate elite of the community may use them as opportunities to express deep-seated biases with vested political, economic or religious interests. Austin Shelton, who worked on the Igbo-Igala borderland where two ethnic communities join in interface with much cultural sharing found this factor as a hindrance (45).

A possible solution is to design general questions, which focus on different aspects of the problem. For instance, location of disused shrines, reason(s) for decline, ownership, provenance, nature, gender of shrine and priest, ownership, land-use practices and such-like. These broad questions were administered by viva voce to either individuals or groups. The interviews were structured in a manner to run freely so that the people could express themselves without constraints. The researcher became a facilitator to ensure that the interview flows along the required objective. In such matters, it has been suggested that group interviews are more reliable. The group dynamics becomes an instrument of reliability test. People correct one another, assisting memory recollection and combat the intrusion of bias and vested interests.

## 1.7 PLAN OF PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

To achieve the aims and objectives of the study within its scope and limitations, the thesis is structured into six chapters. It was hoped that this will answer questions that were raised when stating the problem of the study.

The thesis began with a general introduction, which was followed by a discussion on the research proposal. It contains topics such as statement of the problem, scope and limitations, significance of the study, methodology of the study etc. Chapter two discussed the literature review. It is pertinent to state from the onset that limited or no literatures exist on Berom religion and ecology. The researcher reviewed books dealing with the general phenomena of religion and ecology and those on Berom history and culture. A profile of Berom people was the main concern of chapter three. It discusses topics such as myths of migration, environment, and economy, social and political organization. The chapter also discussed Berom worldview and religion. It has sections such as worldview, religious structure, and, the land in religious imagination of the Berom. Chapter three ended with a discussion on peculiar features in Berom worldview as distinct from other African or the Jos Plateau ethnic groups. The main aim of this chapter is to introduce us to the people the thesis is focusing on.

Chapter four treated altars and shrines in Berom Religion. Taxonomy of shrines in Berom Religion was discussed. Attention was paid to four shrines. They include *not* in Rim, *mado* in Jishe, *behwol* in Jos, *gufwagachik* in Turu, Chwelnyap and Du. The choice of the four shrines out of the 336 shrines in Beromland is because the four shrines meet the four categories of shrines in Berom religious cosmology. To effectively study these

shrines particular attention was paid to the following points. They include, discussing the taxonomy, physiognomy, ritual and ritual agents, provenance, and the indigenous function of the shrines. Other important factors considered include; stating the name of the shrine or deity, location, nature, status, gender of shrine, and gender of priest(s).

The aim was to; firstly, demonstrate the importance of shrines in Berom Religion as they relate to nature and the environment. Secondly, was to discuss the various religious activities that were performed in the different shrines. Thirdly, to show the types of taboos, boundaries of behaviours that surrounds or hedges each shrine. Fourthly, to show how many of these shrines have been affected either by tin mining activities or by world religions, modernity and by activities of the indigenous people themselves.

Chapter five discussed religion and ecological ethics of the Berom, and evaluate how eco-sensitive Berom Traditional Religion was before, during and after the introduction of tin mining activities in Beromland. Chapter four also discussed the history of tin mining on the Jos Plateau throughout the years. A Periodization of the tin mining history was emphasized. This was to discuss the eco-ethics of the industry throughout all the periods identified. The following periods are thus important: they are the pre-colonial stage, industrial capitalist stage, the second phase of the industrial capitalist stage, and finally, the post-independent stage to date.

This chapter also has a section on illegal mining activities. This was intended to give us an insight into how illegal tin mining activities contributed to the decimation of the eco-religious ethics of the Berom. This chapter ended with a discussion on the eco-ethics of mining activities as it affects the different stages pointing out the impact on the land. The impact of tin mining and Berom response was also discussed in chapter four.

This chapter discusses how the Berom responded to the non eco-ethics of the tin mining industry at each stage. This is because the various responses of the Berom led to the gradual formation of streamlined unions and organizations to either counter the activities of the mining industry on one hand or to enhance their demands from the mining industries, the Government or community leaders.

The research does not pretend that it is only tin mining that is responsible for the ecological problem in Beromland. It is this reason that chapter five discusses other factors of change that came with, or, was introduced into Berom society during the tin industry era. The main focus here is world religions (Christianity and Islam) and modernization. Chapter five further examines patterns of eco-salvage operations, focusing on the observations, suggestions and concrete attempts of scientific scholars, government policies as a way-out of the Jos Plateau ecological problems. The broader goal as J.B. Callicott puts it is “the revival and deliberate construction of environmental ethics from the raw materials of indigenous traditional and contemporary cultures” (24, Tucker 32).

A summary and conclusion was drawn from what has been discussed in the previous chapters in a rather short chapter. This is chapter six and it is composed of summary and conclusion. This chapter brings the whole work to an end.



## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW**

Little or nothing seems to have been written on the impact of tin mining on Berom traditional religion. It is pertinent then to point out from the onset that a serious gap exists with regards to literature on the entire theme of the present study from the Berom perspective. Most of the useful materials have not been published as some are still in the form of doctoral theses and masters' degree dissertations in various universities. To overcome this limitation, we have reviewed literature, which deal with the general ethnographic survey of the Berom traditional setting. This is because some of these books provide us with information on the impact of tin mining on Berom economy and most especially agriculture and the land tenure system, ecology, and the socio-political life of the Berom. Some literature on the general and specific theme of and the interplay between religion and ecology are also reviewed. Although these literary texts are not on Berom religion, they will facilitate our discussion on Berom religion and ecology.

### **2.1 BEROM HISTORY, CULTURE, RELIGION AND ECOLOGY**

One of the most important works related to this thesis is Bill Freund's *Capitalism and Labour: Nigeria Tin Mines*. This work provides a good coverage on the development of the mining industry on the Jos Plateau. He treats such topics as pre-colonial mining industry, the conquest of the area, the takeover of mining by the European companies, the development of the tin mining industry, types of mining, and revenue derived from mining

Bill Freund's *Capital and Labour* observed that in the history of Nigeria, the tin mines of the Jos Plateau has received very little attention from various scholars. His aim of writing was for new direction in the development of Nigerian historiography especially in his bid to merge social history and economic history as they are generally conceived. The book seeks to be a work of historical scholarship, based on study and theory, not on revolutionary practice. The fact that tin mining was labour – intensive, it played a major role in the history of this process of dissolution. Freund is of the opinion that the study of the history of tin production will shed light on the major issues in the twentieth-century Nigerian history.

Freund demonstrated in chapter one that in a capitalist society, most production occurs for the purpose of exchange and people must produce surplus value to obtain the necessities of life. The most fundamental element in production is always labour force, that is, availability of expert human resource and labour is always performed in a social context. The author explains that there were evidences to show for the existence of tin production in pre-colonial central Savannah, but archaeological excavation has not given full height as to when the production started. According to Freund, the production of tin objects took place in essentially three distinct stages: protecting, washing and separation. At the place of discovery, smelting transformed “blank tin” into pure tin metal, and smoothing, by re-smelting tin and shape it into various objects. The development of smelting, which transformed ‘black tin’ up to 70 per cent pure into pure metal was the crucial process which made possible the practical use of tin. Roberts and other colonial visitors give an impression of the social organization of smelting and this was the transformation of tin straws into object of pure tin or tin alloy. Tin was used in the

manufacture of horse gear. It was made into sheath rings, bracelets and mixed with other metals, a finish for bowls, jug, lamps and plates. It was widely used as solder in conjunction with iron. Trade, both in tin straws and manufactured products made of tin, was thus overwhelmingly regional in character. Most tin produced in the Plateau region remained in the central savannah. Little if any left West Africa, until the eve of colonial conquest.

In chapter two, Freund observe that until the twentieth century, the amount of Nigerian tin entering the world market was very small. The tin can was invented in Britain, transforming the character of tin as a commodity. The value of tin as a strong, resistant metallic substance was now subsumed to industrial application of real importance. As a result, the demand for tin in industrializing capitalist nations began to rise sharply. The first years of the twentieth century were very propitious for the exploitation of new tin deposits. The West Africa Company inaugurated regular commerce in the Benue by 1874 and trade on the Niger with Nupe, which certainly commend Ririwai tin. By the 1880s the Royal Niger Company began to be aware that locally produced tin straws existed.

In September 1903, H. W. Laws established a permanent camp at Tilde. In December 1905, he moved his headquarters to Jos, where a smelter and sawmill were established. A third camp had been laid out at Rukuba and the Nigeria Company was mining about one ton of black tin per day. Investigation by European mining Engineer showed that Jos Plateau was rich in food and water, enjoyed an excellent climate for Europeans and was probably the richest minefield in the world. This attracted several companies into this minefield in the Jos Plateau at the turn of the twentieth century. The

central issue posed by the establishment of British capitalism on the Nigerian tin field is how, and to what extent, productive relation and the extraction of a surplus changed during the period 1900 - 14. What the mining capitalism provided was essentially an extension of scale and a transfer of surplus to themselves.

The first act of government - company collusion was the brutal conquest of the Plateau and adjacent areas to make them safe for tin-miners. While European capital destroyed African competition, it also appropriated African labour.

In chapter three the author vividly describes the emergence of a capitalist mode of production in Nigeria. During the period between the wars (1914 - 1918), two-market mechanism operated upon labour. One was the relative price of grain, given the growing cash demands of rural society. Secondly, the mines wage rate affected the quantity of labour power available. During the 1920's, tin prices recovered handsomely and tin production reached rare heights. From the end of 1928, wage levels fell with increasing rapidity in the mines. A major feature of the penetration of capitalist social relation in Nigeria had been geographically uneven development. Labour contracting is a characteristic feature of early capitalism. The real key to social situation of labour contractors lies in the evolution of class relationships under the capitalist penetration in West Africa. Camp life and the organization of minefield labour suggest the general palter of capitalist penetration of West Africa.

In chapter four the discussion is on the eve of the First World War, the Niger Company, effective King of the tin field, decided to raise its capitalization from #500,000 to #3,000,000. As the war progressed, the price of imported necessities rose, but so did the price of tin and cash crops. The price of tin began to fall in mid-1920 and the whole

financial edifice of Nigerian tin mining, built on speculation and over-capitalization began to shudder. The most dramatic victim of the slump was the Niger Company. Symbolic of removed capitalist prosperity in Nigeria was the foundation on the Plateau club in 1921, and the dedication at Jos in 1925, of St. Piran's, the Anglican Church named after the traditional patron of Cornish tin mining. Both cemented the social existence of the white miners of the Plateau. Mining capital had taken advantage of the situation facing Nigerians during the Depression to lower wages to much smaller portion of costs.

In chapter five there was the issue of forced conscription into the mining field during the Second World War. The introduction of forced labour coincided with a host of other pressures induced by the British war economy. There was simply not enough food coming to the minefield to allow for increased production. Administering the stick to the labour force was easier said than done. The co-operation of the native authority system was decisive for rounding up and holding labour on the minefield. It was clear that the health facilities of the minefield were grossly inadequate for a sudden, substantial intake of workers. Exposure was also a serious cause of illness and death. The most fundamental problem of all was an inadequate ration. The force - labour years were perhaps the most dramatic and awful episode in the history of tin mining in Nigeria.

In Chapter six he explained that by 1934 the Berom formed 31.4 percent of the total Jos district population and 47.3 percent of the indigenous population of the district. Direct expropriation of land for mining purposes was only of the new forces pressing down upon Berom agriculture. The ban on Nigerian Iron smelting ruthlessly destroyed another major component in Berom economy. The deterioration of Berom land began to

receive notice from the administration after 1940. The Berom particularly resented the government attempt to uproot and re-settle them at Sabon Zawan (new Zawan) near Jema'a below the Plateau. At the same time, the Berom resisted with increasing effectiveness new land alienation on the Plateau. In 1950, the first violence against mining prospectors on the high Plateau in a half-century took place. Throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the government was extremely nervous about the rising tide of Birom resistance to tin mining.

In chapter seven Freund demonstrated that political unionism spread as an idea especially through literate workers on the eve of the Second World War. The war years marked the beginning of union organization in the tin mines. By the middle of 1941, an African Workers Union had been formed among Amalgamated Tin Miners of Nigeria (ATMN) workers with G.W. B. Ansah as president. By 1942, the organized ATMN union succeeded in negotiating recognition and improvements in service condition with the dominant minefield employer. In the last years of British rule in Nigeria and the era of the First Republic (1960-66) real wages for labour on the tin mines increased substantially compared with their abysmal level of the 1940s.

Chapter eight explains that by the past thirty years, Nigerian tin production had stagnated due to the conditions of the tin trade in the world market. The Second World War closed off to the West the sources of most of the world's tin supply. The most important change on the minefield after the Second World War lied in the role of the colonial state.

Another published work is that of Sister Neiers Marie de Paul, titled: *The Peoples of the Jos Plateau, Nigeria: Their Philosophy, Manners and Customs*. The writer

essentially concentrated on the traditional religion of some ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau such as the Ngas, Berom, Anaguta, Ron, etc. The author in a summary form examines some components of Berom traditional religion such as the Supreme Being, spirits, and ancestors. The author also summarized the worldviews of the Berom and tries to make comparisons with other ethnic nationalities mentioned above. She also briefly discussed the social life of these ethnic groups and because of her attempt to cover a wider scope she ended up with summaries of conflicting reports on some religious beliefs of the people of the Jos Plateau, especially the Berom. In the case of the Berom no mention was made of any of the sacred religious spaces that form the core of Berom religious worship. Despite this loophole, the book forms some relevant information for chapter three.

The publication by H. D. Gunn, *Peoples of the Plateau area of Northern Nigeria*, covers a number of ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau such as Jarawa (Jar) of Bauchi and Plateau province, Berom, Aten and Irigwe. The book deals largely with traditions of origin, social organization, physical environment and traditional religion with a small section on the economy, land tenure and agriculture of these ethnic groups. The sections on physical environment and on economy though very scanty, did not suit the major theme of this thesis, but are relevant to chapter one of this work.

The report by A. T. Grove, "Land Use and Soil Conservation on the Jos Plateau", published in *Geological Survey of Nigeria 1952* is useful, though with its peculiar limitations. Basically it dealt with soil conservation. The section on land use which shows in clear terms the destruction of land, land shortage, influx of strangers and cattle to the Jos Plateau is very much relevant to this work especially chapter two and six. However,

his approach was more or less geographical not religious. Although a pioneer publication of its time has been published about forty years ago he could not have viewed and discussed the crisis as at present. Thus he failed to point out what led to the situation he was examining.

Charles C. Jacobs' *Studies in Berom History and Culture* volume 1 is another recent work on Berom, which Jacobs edited. This book dealt with micro topics on the ritual life of Berom in their political, religious and social setting such as rituals connected with chieftaincy, marriage, warfare, traditional crafts, and *mandyieng* festival and so on. This work is relevant to the introduction and chapter one of the present thesis.

The doctoral thesis by Donald Vermeer titled "Agricultural and Dietary Practices among the Tiv, Ibo, and Berom Tribes of Nigeria" is also relevant to some parts of this thesis. He tried to describe the land tenure system, as it existed in traditional society and during colonial period. He pointed out the differences between compound farms and bush farms, the different crops grown therein and the dietary habits of Berom. However, his main emphasis and interest was on nutrition rather than religious and socio-economic change. He said nothing on the deteriorating agricultural and dietary situation of Berom from the 1940s, which became so bad as a result of the almost total destruction of the environment leading to poor yield of farm produce, which subsequently affected the dietary intake of the people. Secondly, his analysis concerning the land tenure system during the two periods was not very profound. Besides this, his whole analysis on agriculture constituted a small section of the first three chapters.

Another doctoral thesis is that of Tanya Baker titled, "The Social Organization of the Berom". This work was centred around the social, political, economic and religious



organization of Berom with much emphasis on traditional institutions. However, this work is limited in many ways given that it focused only on Bachit the only Berom District that was not severely affected by tin mining activities when compared to other Districts like Du, Ropp, Gashish, Foron, Zawan, Gyel, Riyom, Heipang and Kuru.

James H. Morrison's doctoral thesis titled "Jos Plateau Societies, Internal and External Influence" talks about migration, the society before colonialism, trade and external influence such as the jihad and European conquest and also a chapter on the development of mining. He did not go beyond 1935 and did not mention anything about the great depression and ecological crisis following tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau.

Samuel Dung Nyam in his Masters Degree project captioned "Colonial Government agricultural policies on the high Plateau, with special reference to the Berom 1900-1950s", discusses how the colonial government agricultural policies affected the Berom. The colonial government agricultural policies impoverished the people because people lost their farm lands to tin mining. Many people were also dragged to the tin mining companies as labourers thereby neglecting the agricultural sector.

Samuel Dung Nyam in his doctoral thesis did a detailed account of tin mining industry on the Jos Plateau. Nyam discussed in details the history of the tin mining industry and pointed out in clear terms how the tin industry impacted on the Plateau people. Nyam demonstrated how the tin industry disrupted the land tenure system and physical environment, but with little or no information on the destruction of Berom religious places and the subsequent reactions that followed the collapse of traditional religion as a result of mining activities.

The manuscript by Davies titled *The Berom: The study of a Nigerian Tribe*, dealt mostly with the political, social and religious organization of Berom people. He limits himself to the period before colonialism. The short portion on economy and land appears very useful for some part of this thesis. Here he tried to show that there was growing poverty in Beromland thus the need for the colonial administration to find out ways of ameliorating the situation. He tries to show this by using statistics of the earnings of an average Berom family. However, he failed to analyze the causes of this rural poverty or how to effectively check the situation. His discussion on land tenure system, although not very elaborate, pointed out the inadequacy of land because of devastation of the land by mining work. He, however, weakened his work by confusing the Periodization of Berom society as he kept on oscillating from the traditional period to the colonial period and back again.

Charles C. Jacobs' unpublished works are very much relevant to this thesis. He devoted most of his time to collecting archival and oral materials on tin mining on the Jos Plateau for which reasons he supervised most of the undergraduate and post-graduate students of the University of Jos who had written on the effect of tin mining on the Jos Plateau. It is pertinent to note here that none of such students who wrote on tin mining activities on the Jos Plateau ever mentioned anything on the eco-religious problems arising from tin mining activities as most preferred to discuss the socio-political and economic changes caused by tin mining on their numerous communities or local Government councils. Jacobs presented series of papers on tin mining on the Jos Plateau.

The most relevant to this thesis is "The Land shortage and its impact upon the Berom in the 1940". This paper unveils the process of economic change amongst Berom

who constituted the majority ethnic group on the Jos Plateau. It revealed the sudden change of the Berom society from a predominant agrarian society to total dependence on tin mining labour jobs. Mining, he pointed out devastated the land to the extent that the colonial administrator had to make attempts to ameliorate its effects principally due to pressure from the Berom Progressive Union (BPU) from 1945 to 1948. One of such schemes by the colonial administrator was the Sabon Zawan resettlement scheme, an attempt to deport the Berom to some parts of Sanga Local Government of Kaduna state.

Other unpublished works by the same author are: “The Berom Pre-colonial Economy: An Overview” and *Inshei da Chen Lawal are Bemat* literally translated to mean, “The year in which the Locust-spirit ate people”. These papers discussed the pre-colonial economy of Berom lacing it with theoretical framework and the locust invasions of the 1930’s and the impact on Berom economy. These papers are relevant to chapters one, two, three and four of the present study.

Leonard Plotnicov’s *Strangers to the City* described and analyzed urban development in a West African community. According to the author, cities were not part of traditions but came to exist due to economic stimuli or administrative needs. In the same way Jos came into being due to its tin mine deposit. That most of the residents as at the time of research were born and raised elsewhere with different cultures from that of the cultural milieu of Jos.

The author further observes that modern urban development breaks down traditional moral codes, disintegrate family, increase crime, social strain, causes crisis, spiritual confusion and social disorder. According to Plotnicov, Africans came to be aware of urban city life during the Second World War where both whites and blacks

fought side by side and lived in these cities and their needs carried out after their experiences, this led to industrial revolution in African. That sharp contrast exists as to the degree of formal Western education they have to their acceptance of a European way of life. Therefore religious affiliations vary from Christian and Muslim sects to traditional African cults. The author also observed the fact that though there are changes but still there are instances that despite other social relationships, there are some unique individuals who sticks top their cultural observations.

The author comment briefly on interview procedure especially venue which he says were informant's homes and his own quarters while language used was English accept Tiv and Yoruba informants who could not speak English. Here indigenous interpreters were used. In selection of informants, the author says he selected from different tribes who varied in age, wealth, occupation, and degree of western education, religious affiliation, and status in the community to reflect the plural social and cultural conditions of Jos.

Elizabeth Isichei's *Studies in the History of Plateau State, Nigeria* is a collection of sixteen articles by thirteen scholars on the various aspects of the life and history of the people that make up Plateau State, Nigeria. Beginning with a general introduction, the editor examined the early sources as well as problems that would have to be addressed by any historian keen on constructing the history of peoples on the plateau. The sources include material remains extracted by archaeologists and oral traditions passed by the people themselves. A glaring problem is that of terminology since most of the ethnic groups have at least two names for the ethnic groups or places.

Nevertheless, evidence of archaeology suggests the antiquity of settlement both in the lowlands and on the high plateau. Language groupings (mainly Chadic and Benue - Congo) except for isolated cases provide the best key for the study of the people in question. There are also common cultural traits amongst the peoples of the plateau like sacred kingship and the masques or masquerades. A Similar trait is to be found in the economic as well as traditional technology of the peoples of the area.

In chapter two, Arnold Robin provides what he terms as a “prologue to Art History in Plateau State”. He started by noting, the current state of art, historical research in Plateau State and most of Africa, and justifies the use of the term ‘prologue’ as title of the chapter. Based on the author’s field research in the Benue River valley between 1964 - 1966 and 1969 - 1971, the work is limited to the southern area of the plateau - precisely around and between Lafia and Langtang and is concentrated in the Tarok (Yergam), Jukun and Alago areas. By hindsight, the author emphasized, the interest in the peoples of the Benue valley and their sculpture was something of an a priori response to the conventional wisdom that there was no ‘art’ among more northerly peoples.

John G. Nengel examined the movements of peoples in Pengana district from the earliest times to 1960 in chapter three. The Pengana district, which is inhabited by the Amo, Buji, Chokobo, Gusu, Janji, Jere, Kurama, Limoro, Rabina, Bache (Rukuba) and Tariya, have most of their political, economic and social customs in common. Drawing from Gurum, the author illustrated some of the changes in settlement patterns that have taken place in the district during the twentieth century.

In the fourth chapter, J. Olowo Ojoade examined proverbs as a mirror of traditional Birom life and thought. While conceding that one of the difficult problems

which easily confronts a historian or ethnographer is one of recapturing a people's past ideas at the grass roots level, "the pre-colonial past of non-literate peoples (could be) gleaned from their folklore and their proverbs". Subsequently he dedicated the rest of the chapter to an anthology of proverbs amongst the Birom. There are proverbs on marriage and family life, stressing in particular the importance of loyalty and affection to those around. There are also proverbs on the importance of incorporation in the lineage and town as well as belief in God's overriding providence. Others include proverbs on admonitions to troublemakers, the place of truth and justice, attitudes to wealth and poverty, among others.

Plateau societies' resistance to the Jihadist' penetration was the next article considered by J. H. Morrison. For the avoidance of doubt, the author stressed that the militant resistance to the Muslim invaders and the subsequent absorption of a number of refugees are two major themes in the history of the Jos-Plateau in the 19th century. The chapter in question examined the theme of resistance, which encompasses the attempts made by the Jihadists, the resistance met, as well as the internal changes brought about thereafter. Worthy of note, a number of factors combined and helped the Plateau people resist the Jihadists. Foremost amongst the factors was geographical. The plateau is a natural fortress in which the conditions of siege are difficult to apply. The second was military: "the armies of the plateau people combined three (of the then) four known military technologies which Goody attributes to West Africa – the bow and arrow, the spear and sword as well as the horse." The last was strength through unity amongst the plateau communities against an external aggressor.

Chukwudi A. Unomah treated the subject of the lowlands salt industry in the plateau in the succeeding chapter. He reports that up till the 1930's, salt was an important "commercial product of the peoples of the lowlands due to the numerous brine springs and salt marshes located in a continuous block of territory running parallel to the Abinsi and to the Ibi stretch of the river Benue.

Tin mining in the plateau before 1920 was the subject matter considered by J. J. Grace in the eleventh chapter. She opens with the assertion that "tin mining provides an interesting case of colonial economic policy of the destruction of an indigenous industry to pave way for an alien enterprise" (Grace 179). The chapter considered three principal themes, namely: traditional tin mining and smelting, an examination of the British policy and colonial attitudes towards the local industry as well as a consideration of some effects of the deliberate suppression of indigenous tin mining and its replacement by an alien industry. True, the rapid and extensive development of the tin industry imposed additional strains on the administrative machinery of both the colonial and traditional authorities. Yet there was still considerable official optimism on the benefits of tin mining on the plateau. In 1907, William Wallace wrote "tin mining was an important influence in the British policy of peaceful penetration and in the efforts to gain the confidence of the people and to bring them under law and order" (Isichei 187). That apart, the growth of tin mining encouraged the development of transport by the British on the plateau and from the plateau to other parts of Nigeria.

Chapter twelve, titled "The Fulani settlement of Butu, slavery and the trade in slaves" by Richard Bruce, described the development and organization of the Butu Rinji (one of the settlements established by the pastoral Fulani towards the end of the 19th

century on the fringes of the plateau, north of Pyem town of Gindiri). It also examined the slave trade, which grew up between the Fulani and the Pyem as well as the contrasting roles of slaves in the two societies.

Elizabeth Isichei again treats the theme of resistance to colonialism under the theme: “Colonialism Resisted”, in chapter thirteen. She opens with the statement “like many Nigerian peoples, those of the high plateau institutionalized their love of courage” (Isichei 206). The better part of the chapter is devoted to the military response of the plateau people to the colonial invader as well as the response of diplomats like “Lankuk of Pankshin, who understood the power of the invaders and came to terms with him” (Isichei 208). There were also non-military responses to the crisis like those of the Kulere who used magical techniques of resistance.

The fourteenth chapter, the second by Richard Bruce dwelt on “the growth of Islam and Christianity: the Pyem experience”. As the title suggests, it examined initial contacts of Islam and Christianity, a contact that began with their westward migration thereby placing them at the south-west extreme of the Bauchi emirate. A significant change was experienced with the coming of the British from 1905 which placed Pyem settlement under Lere district of Bauchi Emirate. By benefit of hindsight, Islam and subsequently Christianity were able to make headway into Pyem land primarily because they provided (especially for the young adults) better economic skills and a new ideology, which gave the “rules for organizing behaviour, and a justification for these rules” (Isichei 239). On the whole, Islam had easier acceptance amongst the people not because of the superiority of doctrine but because of the “wider application of the Islamic role in the economic structure of the Pyem society” (Isichei 240).



In like manner, Daniel N. Wambutda examined “some changing patterns of Ngas response to Christianity”. Focusing on the growth of Christianity in Ngas land, the chapter is divided into two main sections. The first considered the beginning of Christianity amongst the Ngas from 1904 to 1930.

The last chapter, the third by Elizabeth Isichei treats the theme “changes and Continuities from 1906 –1939”. Like the previous attempts, it considered some of the patterns of resistance to colonialism on the plateau. It is on record that many resisted the colonial rule without taking up arms against it while others turned the crisis into opportunities. On the whole the author observed that: “the dominant feature of the colonial experience on the plateau and in the lowlands was ‘immobilize’ and the juxtaposition of rural poverty and expatriated mineral wealth” (Isichei 276). Much has remained unchanged, the colonial intervention notwithstanding.

## **2.2 THE ENVIRONMENT**

### **2.2.1 Defining ‘Environment’ and ‘Ecology’**

The term environment emanates from the Greek *viron* that denotes circle, surrounding or circle or cycle around (Udezo 172). The French *environer* also means encircle or surround. According to Gbenda, in considering the etymology of the term, two important things are involved, namely: the circumstances and the conditions that surround an organism or group of it; secondly, there are the social and cultural conditions that affect an individual or community (20; see also Udezo Okoronka, Malosan and Zaruwa 202). Fatubarin informs us that the environment is the surrounding of an organism in the place where it lives or exists. The term embraces all those things external to an organism

that influence its life in the place of its existence and/or habitat. It is the place where an organism lives or exists ecologically in its habitat (1; Gbenda 20).

The environment constitutes the whole of nature, animate, biota and inanimate, abiota, beings and things. These include animals—fauna, plant life—flora and micro organisms or microbes. The terra firma—solid earth or abiota constitutes the physical features and components of the earth both within and outside (Gbenda 20; Fatubarin 2).

The term ecology on the other hand was also coined from two Greek words: *oikos*, meaning house or habitat; and *logos*, which denotes the study of, science of or doctrine. The use of ecology as a concept appeared first in 1858 and later in 1865 by the German biologist H. Reiter. Froin however believed that the term was coined by German biologist Ernest Hackel in 1866. Hackel defined ecology for the first time as:

The body of knowledge which concerns the economy of nature—the investigation of the total relations of the animal, both to its inorganic and organic environment including above all its friendly and inimical relations with those animals and plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact (Gbenda 22-23; Fatubarin 1).

Ecology must then be defined as a comprehensive science of the relationship between organism and the environment. Environment is the totality of our surrounding, while the place where an organism lives is in ecology. Ecology is therefore the study of organisms in relation to environment (Gbenda 23).

In its interplay with religion, ecology enters as a central concept by way of a movement for the preservation of nature and also as a perspective and methodological approach in the study of religion (Hultkrantz 581). Ecology is not only associated methodologically with religion, but also with geography, sociology, anthropology

(cultural ecology/cultural anthropology) and folklore, all with a bearing also towards religion. These ecological analyses are all suspects of scientific ecology, since they possess tools that are used to indicate the empirical and experimental study of the interplay between animate—living and inanimate or non-living organisms existing within their respective ecosystems (Gbenda 23).

### **2.2.2 JPERDP: Jos-Durham Works Relating to the Jos Plateau Environment**

Jos and Durham Universities once organized a seminar sponsored by the European Economic Community (EEC) and some of the presentations are relevant to the research, as they will be referred to in chapter seven. Though most of these papers had little or nothing on the loss of Berom religion as a result of tin mining activities they provided us with some relevant information on tin mining, environmental degradation, reclamation and attempts at positive use of the devastated land. The following articles were found in the proceedings of the International Seminar termed -“Jos Plateau Environmental Resources Development Programme (JPERDP)” Jos - Durham University linkage

K.D. Phillips-Howard’s “Physical Environment and Resource Use on the Jos Plateau” discussed in details the geographical landscape of the Jos Plateau. The writer tried to provide statistics to show growth in dry season farming based on the availability of water resources from the mining ponds. Furthermore, S.W.H. Husaini’s “Testing and Production of seeds in the JPERDP Nursery” was an experiment on the planting of a number of vegetables and root crops on the Marit farm project. This work tried to show how the mining ponds could be used for dry season farming using improved variety of seedlings. An indication of how scientific technology can reverse the ecological degradation.

Christian Y. Oche's, "The Response of Wheat to Variations in Microclimate on the Jos Plateau" is a paper that greatly emphasized wheat production and the period that is most suitable for the cultivation of wheat on the Jos Plateau. While, M.J. Alexander's "A Historical introduction to the reclamation of mined land on the Jos Plateau" is a paper that provides the historical background to mining activities on the Jos Plateau, the mining methods, process of reclamation, and what is to be done to effect reclamation.

The paper by John Dung Gwom on "Reclamation of Mined lands on the Jos Plateau, past failures, future policy directions" constituted a good material on land reclamation, which was one of the mining laws that were seriously violated. In this paper, John Dung Gwom like Samuel Dung Nyam in his doctoral work assessed the various Government policies towards reclamation of the devastated land caused by mining activities. Although this paper is an important contribution in the discussion of the impact of tin mining on the Jos Plateau, it seems not to be relevant to the present thesis whose concern is on the religious and ecological impact of tin mining on the Jos Plateau environment. These works, however suffered a serious drawback in relation to the subject of this thesis because they failed woefully in addressing the impact of tin mining and other aspects of environmental degradation in the absence of its destructive impact of the Jos Plateau traditional religious landscape.

### **2.3 LYNN WHITE Jr. (1907-1987) AND THE DISCOURSE ON GENERAL ECOLOGICAL CRISES**

It was medieval historian Lynn Townsend White Jr., of UCLA and author of the article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" that appeared in *Science* in March, 1967, who spearheaded the debate on the crises concerning ecology and its interplay with

religion. White was a 1938 PhD graduate of Harvard, who taught briefly at Princeton and Stanford, and became the president of Mills College in 1943, before becoming UCLA History Professor from 1958, until his retirement in 1978. He was the first American historian to seriously examine the role of technological invention in the Middle-Ages. Though he was best known in the larger world for his ideas on the causes of contemporary environmental problems, he was regarded first and foremost as a pioneer in the field of medieval technology (Whitney 1735). He said of himself that he was a specialist in the development of technology in the Middle-Ages, who linked,

happenings from seemingly different realms, particularly ideas and artefacts, ...White retells the history of ideas from the technological point of view, ‘Until we have learned to look at the carpenter’s brace with a certain awe, we have not begun to absorb the cultural implications of the democratic revolution, ...or [the invention of the chimney] may...have fostered the individualism of the later Middle Ages more than all humanists (White, “The Changing Canons...” 1, “Technology...” 16).

His “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” (1967) was one of the most important interpretations of history to come out of medieval studies during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Whitney 1735).

White (“The Historical Roots...” in *Environmental Ethics*, 15) matched the environmental crisis to the Christian faith, arguing that ecology is ‘deeply conditioned’ by religion. He regarded Christianity, and to a lesser extent Judaism, the main culprits responsible for environmental degradation (Krznicaric 5).

Taking the story of creation in Genesis as his starting point, he accused Christianity (particularly its Western form) of being ‘the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen’ and of promoting the idea that ‘no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purposes’. By destroying pagan animism (in which every tree, river and animal had its guardian spirit) ‘Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feeling of natural objects’. Combined with the Christian emphasis on perpetual progress, this was a recipe for ecological disaster (5).

According to him, “what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny...that is, by religion” (White “The Historical Roots...” in *Environmental Ethics*, 15). He continues, “what we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship” (White, “The Historical Roots”, in *Worldviews...*35). He traces the root of the crisis to the heedless modern technological exploitation of nature back through the ages to the Judeo-Christian teaching that the human being has God-given ‘dominion’ over the earth and all its lesser creatures. Non-Western religious traditions tend not to share in such a doctrine, since they very often do not separate humanity from nature. In the books *Medieval Technology and Social Change* and *Medieval Technology and Religion: Collected Essays*, White underscores the great impact and profound effects technological innovation that began in the Medieval West has had on society. He declared according to Derr (39) that non-Western religions never had the mentality of objective detachment that gave the Western world leadership in science and technology. And that even in Western tradition it is only Latin Christianity,

not Islam or Eastern Orthodoxy, which created the cultural climate in which modern technology grew.

White linked the ethos of medieval Christianity to the emergence of what White called an “exploitative” attitude towards nature in the Western world during the Middle-Ages. The work of Lynn White the historian is consistent with a long sociological tradition exhibited in the works of Max Weber, Richard Tawney, Robert Forbes and Ernst Benz. These scholars argue that the rise of Protestantism from the 16<sup>th</sup> century was a fundamental platitude for the development of capitalism and its associated exploitation of natural resources and culture of over consumption, making White not the first scholar to associate Christianity with the birth of Western science, technology and capitalism. However, it was White who polished these arguments weaving together the dominion given to humanity over nature (Genesis 1:28-29), Christian compassion, its destruction of pagan animism, the notion of matter as inert material and the specific characteristics of Western monasticism as the fundamental cause of Western technological development (Krznaric 5; Whitney 1735).

White’s ideas set off a series of extended discourses and debates about the role of religion in creating and sustaining the increasingly successful grasp, prediction, understanding and control of the natural world through technology by the West. This debate created an explosiveness whose reverberations are still being felt today because there was an urgency in the late 1960s and 1970s over what was considered then as the newly discovered environmental crisis, White’s ability to reach an audience beyond that of his conventional circle of history professionals and, of course, the perception that White’s ideas constituted a radical attack or affront on Christianity, which urgently

needed refutation before damage was done to the value of conventional religious beliefs (Whitney 1735). The critique written by Landerberg in the *Washington Post* of the day (cited in this work) should be viewed from this perspective. Along with other eco-theologians, such as Susan Power Bratton, Paul Santmire, Roger D. Sorrell and Clarence Glacken (all examined in this thesis), White, found an appreciation of nature on its own terms and a sense that spiritual and moral ethics/obligations should govern human use of nature (Whitney 1736).

The book *Environmental Problems as Conflict of Interest* edited by Peter B. Sloep and Andrew Blowers in 1996 takes a critical and analytical look at contemporary environmental issues. This eight-chapter work that was put together by a total of sixteen contributors highlights on environmental problems from the perspective of different fields of study, ranging from ecology, environmental economy and the social sciences, among many other varied fields.

The book examined in details the origin of Environmental Policy in an International Context (EPIC). The introduction highlighted the concept of sustainable development as a central theme in the first volume. This volume, which is our concern, discusses the structure of the book, which arose as a result of tentative answers given to five questions postulated on conflict of interest. The key question is, “what are the causes of international environmental problems and what are the conflicts surrounding their definition and potential solution? The logic in this study is that generally the researchers had work from local or glocalised to global or globalised perspectives in terms of types and scale of the problems. Chapters one and two begin by examining local environmental problems in Western Europe.



In this book, *Emmybolsius*, Jaap Frouws considers ostensibly local problems associated with environmental pollution caused by intensive agriculture as practiced in the Netherlands. A closer analysis, however, reveals that there is a clear international dimension to the problem. There are three aspects that arose out of intensive livestock farming. First is the question of ecological and economic interdependencies. Second, the definition of the problem and third, its solution evolve numerous conflicts of interest.

The book also explains that livestock farm has numerous side effects, which causes environmental problems. It has impact on the soil, water and air and it generally affects the land use. The book suggested that the Sahara could be made fertile with the aid of the manure granules or that liquid manure be exported to India was critically discussed. The response from India confirms a conflicting interest. After a long tug of war with the problem, a policy development was initiated to regulate or to restrain the growth of livestock to prevent or minimize the problem, possible solutions and the role of politicians and technology was discussed. Three scenarios were put forward as a model for possible solutions to environmental problems. These are global, regional and local scenarios. In the book, Blunder and Curry demonstrates that conflicts of interest of different types are played out at different levels, including internationally, in respect of the protection of the broad land area.

Chapters three and four address environmental problems in central and Eastern Europe and in, the Southern Hemisphere respectively. Tellegen discusses the transition from an authoritarian planned economy to a democratic market economy, which has given rise to new forms of conflicts of interest in relation to environmental problems. These problems have their origins in both the nature of the political system and the level

of economic development. There are three different environmental problems. In central and Eastern Europe, namely, air pollution caused by sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and ammonia nuclear disasters caused by (radioactive contamination) and hazardous waste caused by (toxic chemical, and radioactive substances). Some forms of environmental damage in central and Eastern Europe have an excessive economic impact. Planned economies however, had more severe impact on the environment than market economies, because of their extreme denial of value to nature.

The book also shows how communist impact on environment of particular political system of these countries. An important difference between the development of market and planned economies may be seen in the developments of the price of energy. Economics of stagnation and environmental damage are considered caused by the same factor, which is wastage.

The book identified three types of environmental cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe. These are solving common interest, protecting the East against the West and finally protecting the West against the East. The adoption of western lifestyle in central and eastern European countries led to a transformation in industrial production, which is nowadays often referred to as ecological modernization.

Colin Sage argues that contrary to popular belief, there is no simple causal relationship between population growth, poverty and environmental degradation in the south. The pattern is more complex than that. It is possible to identify a range of conflicts of interest whose impact is felt away beyond the limits of the south. The north and south demonstrate a high deal of conflict of interest because of the high consumerist culture and effects of globalization in the north, alongside a high growth in human numbers;

including the effects of wide spread poverty, inequality and short-term survival strategies that is typical of the south.

This chapter has attempted to expose the dishonesty of blaming the poor for their promiscuity rather than governments and the multilateral agencies for their short-sighted policies and lack of political will to tackle environmental degradation. There is therefore the need for the north and south to work together to formulate comprehensive development strategies that reflect the complex interactions of population, consumption, technology and resources but in a way that will tackle the scourge, of poverty, hunger, high childhood mortality and environmental insecurity.

Furthermore, chapter five deals with regional ecological issues that affect the northern hemisphere. Straaten discusses the problem of acid rain, that acidic atmospheric depositions in Europe, and centres on the cross border effects of this environmental problems showing how cause - effect and cause benefit relationships can affect the way in which the problems are tackled.

European countries can both be victims and culprits of acidic depositions. This is because majority of depositions came from neighbouring countries. At the same time most European countries also emit acidic compounds themselves. Clean air is a common property resource. It is only through collective action that it be preserved, as air pollution crosses national boundaries, collective action implies international cooperation.

The theme of the last three chapters is global environmental problems. Andrew Blowers, in chapter six made some discussions on transboundary transfer of hazardous and radioactive wastes. He establishes various links between conflicts over waste disposal and the politics of power, such as the Khian Sea which is known as “leper of the

ocean” and toxic wastes to Koko in Nigeria. These illegal transfers of wastes highlight two features of the politics of hazardous waste. First is the opposition to such transfer, which is local and fuelled by media and publicity by NGOs, secondary, waste being dumped on poor or powerless community or countries. The conflict here is between the advanced industrial nations and the developing countries. Trade in hazardous waste has underlined problems of uneven development in terms of north and south.

The question of global warming with all its uncertainties is discussed in the seventh chapter. The contributors examine that over the past few decades human activities are significantly altering the atmosphere’s composition and its radioactive properties. This altering has resulted in global environmental problems such as climate change and ozone depletion, which has far reaching effects on society. Scientific progress helps in understanding the impact of atmospheric changes, which affects all sectors of human life.

One must be aware of the relationship between uncertainty about the consequences of accelerated climatic change and the effectiveness of response option, especially as to how this relationship changes over time. There are two possible policies to minimize the causes of global warming; these are emission and reduction measure or carbon sequestration. This response is known as limitation and adaptation policies.

Debate on global change led to a convention on the diversity of conflicting interest both within and between major world groupings became apparent which manifested in four dimensions, namely economic features of certain countries, physical condition, energy dependency and political factors.

In the final chapter, the contributors demonstrate how the problem of the decline in biodiversity and environmental problems are frequently closely linked to social problems.

The chapter examines social, economic and ecological elements involving in biodiversity depletion, and if policy is to provide effective solution it must necessarily be based on an understanding of all relevant factors. The international dimension of environmental problems surrounding biodiversity will require international cooperation. Finally, it is observed that the only appropriate way to safeguard adequate reserves of biodiversity is to set priorities, which focus heavily on the protection of those which are considered richest in species.

#### **2.4 ECOLOGY AND NATURE RELIGION**

Bron Taylor defines *nature religion* or the plural *nature of religions* as umbrella terms that are commonly used as proxies for religious perceptions and practices that despite substantial diversities are characterized by a reverence for nature and consider nature sacred. Over the last few centuries a number of phrases have been used to capture the family resemblance, including *natural religion*, *nature worship*, *nature mysticism* and *earth religion* (“Ecology and Nature Religion” 2661f). Others are green religion, *dark green religion*, *deep ecology*, *green religion*, *dark green religion* and *social ecology*. Taylor states that there are several other terms that have been invented to reflect what is taken to be the universal essence of such religiosity, such as paganism, modern *paganism*, *animism* and *pantheism*. The term *nature religion*, which rose above others as the more commonly and regularly utilized word within various religious subcultures right up to the time of the first Earth Day celebration in 1970, is used increasingly to represent and discuss the notion of “nature-as-sacred” religion in both popular and scholarly platitudes (“Ecology and Nature Religion” 2661f).

*Nature as sacred religions* are religions that consider nature itself to be inherently sacred, worthy of respect and reverence because it was created by a divine being (Taylor, “From the Ground Up...” 91). Scholars such as Clarence Glacken (in *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*), Donald Worster (in *Nature’s Economy*) and Lawrence Buell (in *The Environmental Imagination*), have not only emphasized the position of Taylor on nature-as sacred-religions, but they have in their different ways illustrated that such religions possess deep roots in longstanding organic and esoteric traditions in Western cultures. Furthermore, they have amply demonstrated the dynamic forms of eco-religiosity; since scientific and ecological paradigms have shifted so too have the forms of such spirituality (Taylor, “From the Ground Up...” 91). A major point to be noted here is the fact that the notion of nature as sacred is not new at all.

In an entirely different work, Taylor refers to nature religion as *green religion*, while identifying a part of it as *dark green religion*. He refers to the term “green religion” as a broad umbrella term to cover every type of religious environmentalism, ranging from those with deep roots in Western and pantheistic Asian cultural traditions to the more recent variegated innovations that are emerging in the age of ecology. Taylor refers to a contemporary impulse to foster environmentally friendly religious ethics that provides a background for the exploration of the emergence, diffusion, characteristics and types of a subset of green religion that he calls *dark green religion* (“From the Ground Up:...89). According to his definition:

By dark green religion, I mean religion that considers nature to be sacred, imbued with intrinsic value, and worthy of reverent care. Dark green religion considers nonhuman species to have worth, regardless of their usefulness to human beings.

Such religion expresses and promotes an ethics of kinship between human beings and other life forms. I use the title “From the Ground Up,” to focus on the intellectual roots of such spirituality by examining dark green religion within what I call *the environmental milieu*, namely, the contexts wherein environmentally concerned officials, movements, and individuals connect with and reciprocally influence one another (“From the Ground Up:...” 89).

Taylor traces the history of the idea of *nature religion* back to the works of Edward B. Taylor’s *Primitive Culture*, F. Max Müller’s *Natural Religion* (1888), James G. Frazer’s *The Worship of Nature* (1926) and Mircea Eliade’s *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958). Thus Lawrence Sullivan concluded in his broad comparative review of nature-related religiosity in “Worship of Nature”, being an entry in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) that there are diverse examples of nature worship in the history of religion (“Ecology and Nature Religion” 2661f).

In his criticism of Lynn White’s works as mere communist propaganda, Joshua Lederberg in an article titled “Ecology has all requisites of an authentic religion” regards the ecological movement as a rival to the Christian religion. He states that:

The ecological movement has been derided as having the flavour of a religious revival, besides having misappropriated the name of science that is still looking for the tools it needs to make effective generalizations. What we should understand is that it has all the requisites of an authentic religion, including a multiplicity of prophets...The love of earth can be at once the most primitive and the most sophisticated of religions, and it deserves the same respect as the other credos by which men shape their lives. As with other religions, its slogans may

also require creative reinterpretation before they are either criticized or routinely applied to daily life (1).

Landerberg continued in the same article by saying that the earth not only has abundance of the creations of God that is enjoyed by the human race. He similarly accepts that:

At the very least, the image of nature is deeply rooted in every man's axioms of beauty. When we speak of the esthetic values of the environment, we use ateacherous expressions: esthetics covers too much, and is likely to confuse us with controversies about the merits of one as against another style of painting or architecture (1).

In fact, Lynn White does not deny the need for a new religion in this regards, when he asserts, "more science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one" (The Historical Roots..." 16, cf. "The Historical Roots", in *Worldviews...*35).

It is this unspoiled beauty in nature that some worship in the form of nature worship, modern idolatry or modern paganism, while others as the case described immediately below by Catherine L. Albanese seek for some spirit being that is synonymous with or inherently present in nature.

In her *Nature Religion in America*, (published in 1990), Catherine Albanese referred to nature religion, or nature venerating or nature-as-sacred religion as "the natural dimension of religion". She urged scholars to examine religions in which nature is explicitly considered divine and worshipped, and in which nature serves as an important symbolic resource. She argued that though nature religion is thought to promote social



cohesion and ecological well-being, it very often masks an impulse to dominate nature as well as other people (200, 13).

Furthermore, Albanese tried to describe the house of Jesse Hutchinson and his wife Mary; a family well known in America as a singing family. She points out that singing to this family is simple and natural. She observes that the Hutchinson sang songs and told their hearers that they are their friends, and that they are equal to everybody. They made idols and worshipped it. These idols they worshipped are also a spiritual trajectory and are associated with a health reform movement. Albanese also looked at religion as something that is preoccupied with three great symbolic centres. These are God, humanity, and nature. God is regarded as the sole and monotheistic claimant to the religious throne, but humans and nature are creatures of God. Nature religion has come to be known as a cluster of beliefs, behaviour and values that encircle it. The Hutchinson family singers' offer is seen as one coherent example of nature religion. Albanese also looked at J. P. Le Jeune's explanation on how the universe looks, such as the arrangement of the sun, moon and stars to indicate that there is a being who is more than the human being and who controls the universe. Within the nature narrative of Le Jeune with its blanket rejection by Montagnais and the ritual performance of the Narragansett, with its condemnation by Rowlandson, lays an unwritten story regarding the place of nature in early America symbolic religious *erlebnis* (experience). This is in keeping with nature religion, which as we have observed above is very often referred in the literature as *nature religion*, *earth religion*, *deep ecology*, *green religion*, *dark green religion* and *social ecology*, among many others.

Albanese depicted the world as an ordered cosmos comprising animals and vegetable kingdom on Earth. The Amerindian people looked at the world as both plural and more personal universe. The Tewa people said that the world from the beginning was “green” and “unripe” but after sometime people emerged upon the Earth that is hardened, for the Algonkians believed that the animals embodied the power of the universe. They derived their origin from animals, for example, Bear or moose. The ecological perspective came through traditional tribal people. The causes of disease are always associated with nature. American Indians believed that all part of the world and their own societies are made up of the same materials. The Amerindian myths about the universe are filled with account of encounters between animals and humans that is changing from human to animals and animals to human. It was believed that people are the gift of nature so also their foodstuff especially with certain crops, such as guinea-corn. Manitou is a word for wonders and extra –ordinary power of God in every object including men. Among things that possessed Manitou are sun, moon, water, fire, etc. There are many gods belonging to different creatures, some animals possess spirit which must be respected just as the Narragansett who at times refused to kill certain animal because of this reason.

Albanese also focuses on the *Shamans* whom she describes as those who act through the powers of the Habbamock that is identified with Chepi, the Shaman helpers. The Shaman also presided at the nature ceremonies of southern New England Algonkians; they are responsible for curing all forms of disease and perform other extraordinary functions. Similarly the puritans had different value or meaning to symbol of nature and culture with that of the Amerindians.

Bode and Cowley, in their edited work, *The Portable Emerson*, state that in keeping with the thesis of environmentalists, “To the senses and the unrenewed understanding, belongs a sort of instinctive belief in the absolute existence of nature; in their view, man and nature are indissolubly joined” (33f). According to Emerson, “the world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is the remoter and inferior incarnation of God, a projection of God in the unconscious...” (43).

Even though Wilber argues that in spite of agreeing that the human race faces a serious ecological crisis (as outlined by Lynn White), in his *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality* (166) and *A Brief History of Everything* (313), he exhibits the reality that he is “in complete sympathy” with the attempt of many contemporary people at the revivalism or the recapturing of the ecological wisdom of earlier tribal/ethnic peoples (*A Brief History...313*). The respective works of Glacken, Worster, Buell and others, have analysed the early dramatic revival of nature religions, tracing it mostly back to the eighteenth-century European romanticism that impacted upon nature-related religious thinking in North America that in turn reinforced and strengthened such movements in Europe according to Steigerwald (1424 ff), Mazzeo (1424 ff) and Taylor’s “Religion and Environmentalism...”, (quoted in Taylor, “From the Ground Up...” 91). These scholars “have exposed the roots of what could be called the biocentric turn in ecological science and literature, namely, the turn towards values professing that nature has intrinsic or inherent value” (Taylor, “From the Ground Up...” 91).

For Wilber, *deep ecology* and *natural religions* such as neo-pagan spirituality is psychologically and spiritually regressive, because they are beckoning their practioners to go back to a pre-modern level of intellectual and spiritual development (diverge, “Ken

Wilber's Critique..." 1). For Wilber, nature relates with the spirit in three forms: first, is "magical dissociation" where spirit and nature are equated, resulting in a very this-worldly perspective; second is "mythic dissociation" where spirit and nature are considered separate and utterly distinct; and third, is "psychic mysticism" where spirit and nature are joined (diZerega, "Ken Wilber's Critique..." 2). Though Wilber contends that nature mysticism is very popular today with environmentalists and Pagan revivalist movements, but it is simply the first and most regressive form of spirituality (*Sex, Ecology, Spirituality...*250).

## **2.5 INVENTION AND REINVENTION OF NATURE**

*The Invention of Nature* edited by Thomas Bargatzky, and Kuschel, R. discussed myth as 'irrational' and attributed this to the reason that has attracted many Western intellectuals longing for a spiritual reorientation. Myth makes no distinction between subject and object, mind and matter, the part and the whole, the inside and the outside. The authors concluded here that primitive people do not know nature, because it is an invention of modern Western civilization not older than 200 years. That is why they argued that; we must turn to the moral, philosophical, scientific, and technology means, concept and values of Western culture. The book further observes that nature in science; and therefore, nature is akin to those behind physics, since they, too, emphasise wholeness, the unity of mind and matter. Hollis, one of the contributors in the book holds that humans are both products of nature and agents of productivity within nature, creating iconic models of the nature world and investing it with meaning. The authors also discussed the concept of nature in Greek religion and philosophy. The book reveals that Greek religion is closely related to Greek. Planck does the discussion in this part of

the book. Planck does not see a contradiction between religion and science, but total agreement in all the decisive points. While Einstein see religion as different from ethics and science, but for Plato what is decisive is not the demarcation between myth and natural philosophy, but the distinction between right and wrong concepts of God.

On the whole, Zeus is described as Lord of nature, governing everything according to his law rational human beings will obey and praise this just as law and their obedience will result to a good life.

The Divination of nature in early modern thought is also discussed in the book. The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries dispelled the clouds, which shrouded previous ages reason. Enlighten the world and disperse the darkness over things, human and divine, natural and Supernatural. By this development it was hoped the Book of nature should gradually place the Book of Revelation.

Nature is everything that is not God; this is an intrinsic part of the definition of nature. One of the names of nature is goddess. Nature in fact was into a Deity. Nature in the theological perspective is considered as that which is not made by man. God's presence is seen through nature. This tradition dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century. To bow down and worship only gave another form and a new name to the object of worship: it deified nature and denatured. God is discussed under ecology; dualism, and utilitarianism. Attitudes toward nature in American society in the book by Catherine E. Martin, noted that the degradation of oil spills and superfluous garbage threaten the American environment. That to help protect the environment the people must save endangered or threatened species; manage nature through wildlife refuges, on rangeland, and National Park. The United States was criticized for lack of commitment to environmental

conservation. Dualism, social structure, and metaphor are also focused on. The American view towards other animals is dualistic, utilitarian, and metaphorical. Animals are good, bad, or ugly; good if they are seen as ferocious and behave in ways inimical to human values, for example, carrion eaters; mythical monsters and not so mythical rats, bats, rhinoceros, and gorillas. While environmental concerns have become better integrated in the rhetoric of modern politics on both the national and international level, what is needed is a better grasp of ecosystem complexity and functioning, requiring both greater knowledge and a holistic perspective.

Next is the Bellonese' attitude towards nature as described by Rolf Kuschel. Bellona Island is a Polynesian outlay in the Solomon Islands of only 22 square kilometres whose population before 1938 when Christianity was introduced, probably never exceeded 500-600 individuals at a time. What makes Bellona an interesting object of study is its long period of isolation. The Bellonese made a clear distinction between human beings and super naturals. They see their own island being in existence from time immemorial. They had no tradition about the origin of animals. Major natural events, like conspicuous natural phenomena and disaster, mental diseases, and exceptionally cruel actions were attributed to the sky gods, controllers and benefactors of nature. The Bellonese society in general was fairly conservative.

The Desert, the wild and civilization as seen by the Kel Ewey is also discussed by Gerd Spittler the Kel Ewey were part of the French Colony of Niger, since 1560 they belonged to the independent State of Niger. They lived a wild life. They felt that they are really in the wild and would be totally lost if they did not have the guide so judiciously and brilliantly prescribed by the tourist office in Agadez. The Kel Ewey believes that

solitary life is not a country side phenomena but of the town. The experience of the desert gives the Kel Ewey a special feeling for life. The question, were crow Indians conservationists? Fred W. Voget depicted that the crow Indians shared a buffalo-hunting and horse-riding culture with the black feet, Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapaho and other northern plain tribe. The Crow learned their attitudes concerning animals and their uses from the gods. Fred Voget explains that the world had not been created solely for the Crow, for the gods had surrounded them with mortal enemies. For the star gods were dangerous for, like the sun, they thrived on flesh, that the earth co-creators out of pity had made strong mystical powers available to the Crow in order that they might control the dangers, which threatened their survival. God-like spirits were on hand to convey specialization powers which would allow individuals Crow to see things at a distance, control the movements of game, cure sickness, and confuse enemies with a foggy cloud.

Neither the behaviour of gods who established the world order, nor relations the Crow developed with the environment stimulated conservation attitudes. Control over the number, kinds and ages of animals to be killed are essential to any conservation policy. Aside from individual stalking of game, the Crow, as other plain tribes, obtained their game by organizing cooperative hunts. All cooperative hunts were directed by a man selected because he had been given a medicine gift to influence the movement of buffalo and also to control the movement of winds. Camp police assisted the hunt leader in organizing and regulating the hunt. Punishment for private hunting before the communal hunt was severe. The police could confiscate a poacher's Kill, destroy his property, and disqualify him from the hunt.

Oral traditions and literature indicates that the Crow Indians did not practice a philosophy of conservation with regard to buffalo and other game animals on which they depended for food. The book also discussed Pawnee views of nature in the central plains: The historic and prehistoric data by Patricia J. O'Brien. In this chapter it is argued that a Pawnee man looked within him to philosophically organize his life, and it is from within him, with the blessing of heaven, that his vision of his life came. Fundamentally, the Pawnee structured a cosmological system around the nature features of the central plains. For example, the eagle is a symbol of morning star, the warrior, the owl is the chief of the night, and has the power to help and protect people at night. Owls are linked to the four powers that never sleep: thunder; lightning, wind, and clouds. One can reconstruct Pawnee cosmology from archaeological data. For example, the sacrifice of a captive maiden by the Skiri Pawnee in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century shocked and horrified European and American observers of the plains Indians. The painting of this young woman half red and half black, the tying of her to a scaffold, and then shooting her full of arrows reminded some students of Indian life of the sacrifice of the Aztecs. This shows that it is possible to use the historical and archaeological records to illuminate, and enlarge our understanding of ancient Pawnee religious cosmology and to document its antiquity.

Martin Byers' discussion on action is captivating. According to Byers, the meaning of an action is the structural contents of the intention with which it was performed. What he had complicated here is the claim that the nature of the meaning of material cultural items is best characterized in action-constitutive rather than referential terms. In this view nature is the part of the objective world that a people construct or constitute in their understanding as relevant or meaningful. It is postulated here that the



Newark circle-Octagon was constructed as part of the material realization of a prehistoric monumental episode. It was built so that its formal properties would be congruent with the very same sacred structural power that sustained the world. This means that the structural content of the construction intentions presupposes certain determinate world beliefs. Monumentalism is as much a political as a religious social strategy.

The discussion on, what nature means for a South West Colombian Indian by Franz X. Faust observed that although the Yanaconas and Coconucos descend from different ancestors and from different linguistic groups; they see themselves as not ethnically different. The difference in their concept about the world is so minimal that the expression of these concepts in everyday life is very similar. For example, Auca for Coconucos and Yanaconas is something omnipresent; it is related to pregnancy, birth, the first in life, puberty, sexuality, menstruation, and finally to death and even to the dead. Auca is only related to geographical places, types of vegetation and weather, but also to human development and social conditions. Summing up, we can say that Auca is everything, which is not under human control, like a volcano, or a storm, but also including sexuality and death. To feel well and healthy for the Coconucosans Yanaconas means to maintain inside of themselves, as in their surrounding environment, a balance between the cultural, the controlled elements, and the uncontrolled, savage, wilderness of nature.

Culture, technology and the relation between man and nature, by Antonio Santangelo explains that culture, as a form of interpretation, involves technology, a possible result of mental operative abilities, at a practical level, which then develops into culture as an integral part of it. Summing up, culture, at its very beginning, is to be

considered as an interpretation of reality, investing it with meaning and thus going beyond mere knowledge. Culture, however, represented the very early advance made by man and characterized his becoming human.

Phylogenies: Reflections on Evolution by Antonio Guerci and Oscar Torretta discusses evolution as developing towards a stage of organization of the human species, which in the future will build morpho-physiologically either the tissues and the organs, or the systems of society.

The theory of inner Entropy its relation to Genetic Engineering and the concept of nature by Jorn Greve highlights that this is a logical procedure to optimize, for example, bacteria, for economical purpose by linear zing the globally compiled genetic code. This form of cultivation is a technically mediated domestication. Inner entropy is a predictive term. It means the stored pot entails and accumulated information in a technical and industrial process to produce entropy.

Art, nature, artificiality is discussed by Thomas Holscher. The Artificiality of nature in Western Art by Thomas Holscher observe that nature is being represented artificial and yet giving the impression of total naturalness. This is possible through image production in computer generated digital pictures. Leonardo wanted painting to be science. He wanted to create once again all of nature in its whole manifold variety by his power in painting.

The book, *Thinking like a Mountain*, the title which is borrowed from the original of Aldo Leopold, begins with a poem by Barbara Dening crying for the salvation of mankind and its environment from ecological degradation. It is followed by an invocation by John Seed, which is a call to consciousness for the human race to take steps in

averting the dangers that will result from our dwindling environment. Seed called on humankind to come to consciousness and take steps to avert the dangers that has come from the dwindling environment. Seed believes that the earth is already crying for help and this is Seed's way of lamenting the global dimension that environmental crisis has taken. Seed suggested that curbing environmental problems is not the work of professionals alone but the duty of the whole human race. Consequently, Seed moved into teamwork with Joanna Macy in the forest of Nightcap as a case study. It was on this basis that they realized there was little awareness among the people concerning ecological crisis on the environment. "Despair and Empowerment" was used as a forum for enlightening the human race on how to save our planet from further destruction.

Seed and Macy had to convene the Council of All Beings in the forests, conference centres, schoolrooms, and in Churches to create consciousness and love for the environment. The intention here was to firstly, redeem the earth despair and empowerment program. Secondly, there is the need to create awareness of treating the universe as an entirety, contrary to treating it as components. Thirdly, humankind must discard his or her anthropocentric understanding of the universe. Fourthly to have an evolutionary remembering which is effective in nature to come out with three important themes: mourning, remembering and speaking.

Contributing in Seed's *Thinking like a Mountain*, Arnee Naess' "Self Realization: An Ecological Approach to Being in the World", attempts to realize four cardinal ecological points. Firstly, to make mankind see the need realize his or her self and the environment he or she lives in. Secondly, to identify ourselves within all living beings, whether beautiful or ugly, small or big, etc. Thirdly we should understand the concept of

ecological self, which is to extend our relationship beyond the human community, and to a large community of all beings. It is only through this kind of self-realization that we can harness our consciousness towards saving the planet from further destruction.

John Seed again in another article, “Beyond Anthropocentrism”, called for the thinking of the human race to go beyond human being or self, but to go to whatever species created by God without distinction. He deemed it needful for the human race to learn to “think like a mountain” in order to consciously suppress the pressure posed by environmental hazards.

To further advocate for environmental friendliness, Gaia meditations by John Seed and Joanna Macy portrayed all species as part and parcel of water, earth, air and fire. These elements are very useful for the survival of all creatures, as they recycled to new forms. “Evolutionary Remembering” is another article where John Seed and Pat Fleming present the gradual evolution of the world and all the species therein over a long period of time as seen in the “Big Bang” theory.

Robinson Jeffers’s poem, *Passenger Pigeons* is set to make the human race conscious of its responsibility and not to continue destroying its environment. If adequate steps are taken to curb the ecological problems being faced in the world, there is hope to live forever,

Joanna Macy in “Our Life as Gaia” talks about how things evolved and are neatly connected to one another. But within a short period of existence, the universe was exploited and left at a deplorable state. It is in the height of this that the human race is called to consciousness to keep the environment free from ecological crisis.

Pat Fleming and Joanna Macy in “The Council of All Beings” tried to show how deeply concerned and anguished members of the Council are over what is happening to the natural world in our time. Their coming together is to reflect and find ways of healing the environment from its crisis. Testimony of Graham Innes is a clear detestation of how the earth is being stripped of her mantle, and its eminent death because of exposure to the harsh unfiltered rays of the sun and the vandalization of the rainforest.

Again, Pat Fleming and Joanna Macy in the “Council of All Being Workshop” try to create consciousness and show love for the environment. Discourage anthropocentrism and exploitative thinking of the human being in his/her relationship to the natural world. The Council also has group intention, which is meant to help each other heal our separation from nature. But, before this is achieved, members must note these three basic concepts, mourning: This is the concept of feeling pain over what is happening to the world. It is only through the workshop that this pain can be acknowledged. Remembering has to do with going back to the very beginning of time. That is, from the “Big Bang to the beginning of organic life on earth. It is from this standpoint that we can speak out what has been felt and remembered in our environment. In the first place, one would love to commend the writers of this book. They have actually thought like a mountain. One needs a big heart to go through the agonies of our dilapidated universe, which was so beautiful at creation (Genesis 1:31).

## **2.6 TYPOLOGY OF EGOLOGICALLY BASED RELIGIOSITY**

Harper states that providing a clear cut typology of the interplay between religious affiliation/belief and action and attitudes towards environment is practically impossible because it is variegated and abundant. This is more so especially with the

multidimensional nature of both empirical research by scholars with regards to the interplay between religiosity and environmental protection, given the differing results, which usually present a briarpatch of multivariate statistical analyses that seem to defy any coherent summary, which are often even contradictory. For instance, even though there are incidences of misuse of land among indigenous peoples according to Herrer, most religious Americans behave in more pro-environmental ways than secular peoples as discovered by Kanaby and Willis; and Shibley and Wiggins. On the hand, Eckberg, Blocker; and Guth, et al., established a negative relationship between religious affiliation and environmental concern/behaviour, while Greeley and Boyd individual established no relationship between the two (Harper 5, cf. Sherrer 16). Thus three types of relationships between religion and ecology are discernable here: pro, anti and neutral modes of interaction between religion and ecology.

With regards to a taxonomy of ecoreligiosity, there are five ways of typologising religions that have sprang out of the type of religiosity and/or spirituality associated with nature religion or ecoreligiosity. First are those religions that have been given impetus by the ecosensitivity, teachings, doctrines and practices of the various living faiths in the world such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Taoism (Daoism), Buddhism, Jainism and Shinto traditions, among many others. These are examined in limited details under 2.6 and 2.7 below.

The other four ways are mentioned by Taylor as examples of dark green spirituality that have been emerging since the first Earth Day in 1970. They, however, possess permeable, fluid and flexible boundaries. He refers to the first two taxonomies of dark green religion as forms of Animism or neo-Pagan religions, with one being

supernaturalistic and the other naturalistic. Furthermore, Taylor labelled his third and fourth typologies as Gaian Earth Religion (GER). They similarly appear in two forms, with one being called supernaturalistic and the other naturalistic (Taylor, “From the Ground Up” 91-92).

Taylor uses the expression Gaian Earth Religion (GER) as a short form of what he refers to as holistic and organicist world views, differentiating the supernaturalistic type of GER which he calls Gaian Spirituality, from the naturalistic category, which he refers to as Gaian Naturalism. (By the term organicist or organicism, Taylor meant both the belief that the biosphere and the cosmos are analogous to a biological organism and that this organism is sacred and worthy of reverence). These four typologies he insists possess fluid and dextrous borders, representing tendencies rather than uncomplicated, static, or rigid clusters of individuals and movements (Taylor, “From the Ground Up” 92). Examples of spiritual animism and Gaian spirituality include three scholars and thinkers. The first is Gary Snyder, who is best known as a ‘beat’ poet, a self styled Buddhist-Animist and one of the architects of bioregionalism. Bioregionalism is a social philosophy and branch of environmentalism concerned with seeking to decentralise political decision making process and streamlining them to occur within the contours of differing ecological regions. His solution to ecological crisis is to encourage a bioregional ‘reinhabitation’ of particular places; by ‘going back to the land’ people can recover their ability to hear nature’s multivocal, sacred voices. Snyder, for example, performed nature-related rituals with his intentional community, by going back to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, where a generation have drawn upon many traditions (Taylor, “From the Ground Up” 93). Aside from Gary Snyder, others include Joanna Macy and John

Steed. All three, whose spiritual paths undoubtedly have involved serious encounters with Buddhism, identify with deep ecology.

Biologist and ethnologist Marc Bekoff is a renowned advocate of naturalistic animism and has published widely on the subject, including his recent work: *Minding Animals*. Jane Goodall, the writer of the foreword to this book, and subsequent co-author of *The Ten Trusts* (169 ff), shares the same passion with Bekoff for nature (see also Goodall, *Reason for Hope*, 250). Both believe that humanity can learn in humility from animals. Named the UN Ambassador for Peace in 2002, Goodall uses her position to promote her animistic nature spirituality. Others in her category include Paul Watson (78) and famous nature photographer Frans Lanting (14f), while L. Freeman House (“Totem Salmon” 65ff cf. *Totem Salmon: Life...*, 111ff), a friend of Snyder, falls under the category of scholars that emphasize both spiritual and naturalistic animism, together with the environmental philosopher Paul Taylor and the animal rights philosophers Tom Regan and Peter Singer (in *Animal Rights and Human Obligations*), who confirm the protective rights of animals observed by indigenous groups in obligatory totem beliefs and rituals. Cleve Backster shares the same school of thought with Regan and Singer (see his *Primary Perception*). The American ecologist Aldo Leopold provides an example of a bridge maker between naturalistic animism and Gaian spirituality, even though his famous “Thinking Like a Mountain” was posthumously published in *A Sand County Almanac* in 1949. Two pieces are cited from Leopold to drive his point home: According to Leopold:

The land is one organism...the outstanding discovery in the twentieth century is...the complexity of the land organism. If the land mechanism as a whole is



good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not” (Leopold, “Thinking like a Mountain” 1). Possibly, in our intuitive perceptions, which may be truer than our science and less impeded by words than our philosophies, we realize the indivisibility of the earth—its soil, mountains, rivers, forests, climate, plants, and animals, and respect it collectively not only as a useful servant but as a living being, vastly less alive than ourselves in degree, but vastly greater than ourselves in time and space...(Leopold, *Essays From Round...*190).

Another scholar of Gaian naturalism is found in the person and works of James Lovelock, who resurrected Gaia and inserted the ancient Greek god of the earth into contemporary environmental discourse. He considered Gaia as worthy of reverence and reverent care, developed his own Gaian theory and performed his own Gaian pilgrimage. He provided a room for agreement among Gaian naturalists, traditional theists who revere a God created earth and devotees of Gaian spirituality, all consider the earth organism itself both sacred/divine and worthy of protection. The *Gaian movement* and *World Pantheist Movement* (WPM), originally named the *Society for Scientific Pantheism* in 2006, were found.

Harper identified six waves of environmentalism that articulated different environmental discourses and appealing to different constituencies. These include: preservation and conservation of nature, wildlife management, reform environmentalism (that uses scientific methods and laws to develop standards for a clean and healthy environment), environmental justice, related to race and class, deep ecology (that recognizes human life as a part of the grand cosmos of nature and calls for the minimization of human impacts towards optimization of natural resources and

biodiversity) and ecofeminism, which places emphasis on a natural link between the androcentric domination of women and the natural world (7).

There are four broad perspectives we can discern concerning the relationship between religion and ecology according to Harper. The first is the variegated empirical social science research dimension, which has been examined at the beginning of this subsection. Second, is the involvement of religious leaders and politicians, which goes a long way to prove that there is more to the religion-ecology relationship. Third is the historical context of the discipline: In fact the interplay between religion and environment emerged as a direct subset of the discourse between religion and science. Fourth, according to Barbour, the antipathy between religion and science is not only historic, but also complex, multidimensional and it is increasingly challenged and tested. This has given birth to a growing rapprochement between organized religion and environmentalism, just as it has been between religion and science (Harper 5-ff; Barbour 322 ff).

## **2.7 WORLD RELIGIONS AND ECOLOGY**

### **2.7.1 Aboriginal and Autochthonous African Land Ethics**

Most aboriginal people in Africa, Australia, India, Oceania and Latin America hold a strong belief in conceptualizing land as sacred. Consequently, many African, Native American Indians, Aboriginal Australians and other groups believe that their autochthonous tribesmen emerged from the ground. In this realm, land is a sacred entity, not property or real estate to be sold, bought or resold, but she is the mother of all humanity. There is a definitely a relationship between humans and land. The land gives birth to human beings, fauna, flora and all inanimate organisms. She feels the pain when any of her creatures are ill-treated and thus the land and it is treated determines the

humanness of humanity. There is therefore a sacred web of relationships to the land, to nature and all living things. Thus Aboriginal law refers to a complex nexus of relationships between humanity and land that covers every aspect of life (Graham 89f; 93).

Impact of money economy on African societies considerably altered traditional concepts of land use and attitudes towards natural resources. In Aboriginal and African societies, land ownership rights belonged to the social group—the ethnic group/tribe, clan, kindred group, or extended family. Each member of the social group had and exercised rights of ownership that implied the implementation of a great deal of individual and communal responsibility towards the land on behalf of God who is the ultimate owner of land. The land is thus considered a communal property belong to both the living and the living dead—ancestors (Omari 98).

African traditional religions used shrines (house, bush, groves, rocks, rivers, seas and lakes, among others), initiation rites centres, taboos associated with the preservation of trees on sacred pieces of land, the conservation of certain trees and shrubs, sacred places, forests, certain kinds of animals, and sources of water to protect the environment. These were preserved by the institution of traditional religions. African people developed ecological and concerns because out of their religious beliefs and values, they demonstrated reverence and piety for sacred places and the environment. This gave birth to a balanced ecosystem, with people and nature interacting in such as way that harmony was maintained (Omari 99).

### **2.7.2 Christianity and Ecology**

Schuenemann states that the position of the Christian religion towards the environment is unclear and therefore ambiguous. As is often the case in the history of a religion, there is a great deal of evolution that occurs in its character—in its beliefs, traditions and doctrines. Thus we do not have a universally held stance throughout the diverse denominations and the long history of Christianity and some other religions, such as Islam, Judaism and Taoism (Daoism). Thus there tend to be diverse and variegated ecological theologies in Christianity and these other religions. The reason for this position in Christianity and Judaism is because of their primary over concentration on the relationship between God and the human being (1).

It should be noted that when God created the world in its perfect form, humanity was given the dominion over it (Gen. 1:28). All creatures created were given to man in trust based on (Ps. 24:1 and 115:16). Judaism is regarded as a religion that has not only rejected nature, but as a religion that has also declared war on nature. Since the biblical story of creation insists on the dominion and subjugation of nature, it encourages the most exploitative and destructive instincts in man rather than those that are deferential and creative. This text has thus been criticised as a license for environmental polluters and destroyers and a means to conquer nature, which is considered the enemy, the threat to Jehovah (Derr 40). Humans belong to the natural environment, which is essential to their survival as species, even though humans strive to place themselves above nature (Bogen 2). The human race has torn the earth apart in both a physical and a spiritual sense, by regarding it as ‘something out there’ to be possessed, bought and sold, as a material object for profit making. Humanity has forgotten that its members cannot exist

without the environment. In fact, this attitude of despoiling and desecrating the earth has not always been there. Some early Christians such as Origen regarded the earth as a sacred living creature that is united by one soul, namely, the power and reason of God (Rajotte and Breuilly 9). The Old Testament amply demonstrates the belief that the creatures of God individually maintain a definite relationship with him. The Bible thus holds everything under the control, care and when necessary, the judgement of God. This is evident in Psalms 104 (Page 20).

Christian neo-orthodoxy promotes a Biblical theology that denies a theology for earth by interpreting the promises, imperatives and dynamics of the Gospel as being in sharp and calculated disengagement from the stuff of earthly life (Sittler 16), since all Christians are “heaven heaven bond”.

In his *The Travail of Nature...*, H. Paul Santmire surveys the ecological themes of some major Christian thinkers on ecology, including Church fathers like Irenaeus (130-200 CE), theologians and philosophers like St. Augustine (354-430 CE) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1212-1274) CE), right to modern theologians such as Karl Barth (1886-1968). Santmire draws out some ambiguities of eco-theological thought patterns in which he pointed out three recurring metaphors that contain significant ecological themes and simultaneously pervade the history of the Christian tradition (Schuenemann 1).

Two metaphors possess mountain climbing imageries that symbolise the Christian journey. The first Santmire calls ‘the metaphor of ascent’. In it, the world is left behind as the climber’s goal involves transcendence. The second is the ‘fecundity metaphor’, which involves fertility, while the third is ‘the metaphor of migration to a good land’, the Promised Land. The metaphor of fecundity and the metaphor of migration to a good land

both carry ecologically positive attitudes—they affirm the important role that material world, for example, the environment plays in the will of God. These metaphors inspire a sense of reverence, veneration, and respect for nature. They also provide a platitude for the establishment of the sense of intrinsic value and worth in the environment and ecology as a whole (Schuenemann 2).

Hints of these metaphors are found in the writings of Irenaeus, especially where he regards the physical world as a home of humanity that is very good in the eyes of God (as seen in the Genesis creation story and in 1 Tim 4: 4-5). St. Augustine identifies creation as beautiful expression of the Divine in his latter writings when he asserts:

Shall I speak of the manifold and various loveliness of sky, and earth, and sea; of the plentiful supply and wonderful qualities of the light; of sun, moon, and stars; of the shade of trees; of the colours and perfume of flowers...? Can we enumerate all these blessings we enjoy? (Augustine 22.24, Santmire 66).

Elizabeth and Martin Palmer wrote on *Ecology in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam*. This is the most modest comparative study of ecology in the five religions. Christians from very diverse backgrounds (orthodoxy, Roman Catholics, Protestants, the Benedictine and the Franciscan tradition) and the World Council of Churches did contribute their experiences on ecology and religion. How have ecological principles from these religions impacted on the planet earth negatively or positively? *Christianity and ecology* edited by Elizabeth Breuilly and Martin Palmer. The authors observed that before 1985 Christianity has always been considered inimical to ecology. It was only when the first book on Christianity and ecology was published and

this changed this belief. Many Christians and Churches have come out to support ecological concerns and programs.

Christian concerns can be seen from four dimensions, firstly, is the daily concern of the wanton harming of the natural world—the biological systems (food chain, web and habitat). Pope John Paul II expressed his dismay by asking why people engage in such devastation. He tried to find a way out by enacting the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 7:4. This has to be adopted here, for the Christians to first begin to revive the devastation done on nature before any other non-Christians. The papacy under Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict has raised their voices in concern over ecological crisis and the importance of protecting the natural environment. On September 1, 2006, the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who is spiritual head to 300 million Orthodox Christians, discussed the need to curb our ‘excessive consumption’ to help tackle environmental degradation. He released his divine directives in the “Encyclical of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew for the day of the protection of natural environment”, September 1, 2006, <http://www.oikumene.org/index.php?id=2512>

In October, 2006, archbishop Celestino Migliore, who is the permanent observer to the United Nations made a direct reference to climate change by calling for ‘ecological conversion’ thus:

The world needs an ecological conversion so as to examine critically current models of thought, as well as those of production and consumption... It is the Holy See’s hope that opportunities like [making the Kyoto protocol fully operational] may favour the application of an energy strategy which is both global and shared in the long term, capable of satisfying short- and long-term global

energy needs, protect human health and the environment, and establish precise commitments that will effectively confront the problem of climate change (see Krznaric, 5; quoted from the following web address:

[http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Justice\\_and\\_peace/JPO\\_news/catholic\\_social\\_teaching\\_news.php](http://www.scarboromissions.ca/Justice_and_peace/JPO_news/catholic_social_teaching_news.php)). Furthermore, statements on climate change are now widespread among Catholic communities. In 2001, a statement was issued by Roman Catholic Bishops in the US under the title: *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good* that called for the need to preserve God's creation (see <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/international/globalclimate.htm>). The Evangelical leaders in the US have also accepted that human induced climate change is not only real but must be tackled head-one, despite their conservatism and initial reluctance. In January, 2006, 90 US Evangelical leaders signed a release concerning this issue under the title: *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action*, that reads:

For most of us, until recently, [climate change] has not been treated as a pressing issue or major priority. Indeed, many of us have required considerable convincing before becoming persuaded that climate change is a real problem and that it ought to matter to us as Christians...As American evangelical Christian leaders, we recognize both our opportunity and responsibility to offer a biblically based moral witness that can help shape public policy in the most powerful nation on earth, and therefore contribute to the well-being of the entire world...Claim 1: Human-induced climate change is real. Claim 2: The consequence of climate change will be significant, and will hit the poor hardest. Claim 3: Christian moral convictions



demand our response to the climate change problem. Claim 4: The need to act is urgent (<http://www.christianandclimate.org/statement>).

Thus of recent, the Church has tended to narrow the area from ecological crisis down to climate change. In Nairobi of November 2006, the World Council of Churches (WCC) issued a statement, which according to Krznic sounds very corporate as if it was made by a developing agency campaigning on adaptation of funding for developing countries (6). The statement reads:

The poor and vulnerable communities in the world and future generations will suffer the most [from climate change]...The rich industrial nations use far more than their fair share of the atmospheric global commons. They must pay that ecological debt to other peoples by fully compensating them for the costs of adaptation to climate change. Drastic emission reductions by the rich are required to ensure that the legitimate developmental needs of the world's poor can be met (<http://www.oikoumene.org/index.php?=2640>).

We thus have a massive consensus and acceptance of the urgent need to tackle the feverish and rapidly rising climate change, with those with dissenting voices becoming increasingly among the marginalized minority across a broad Christian spectrum.

Environmental problems have always arisen from cultures based on Western versions of Christianity, being that the Church whose voices have been heard. However, the way out here is that more and more individuals and groups should delve into local efforts of restoration as part of their Christian concern, and to also provide a vision to sustain and support environmental action. Secondly, Christian impetus behind Christian reasoning towards God's creation is explored with reference to (Psalm 104: 24) This

verse sums up the Bible in respect to God's work, both on earth and in heaven, discarding the modern thinking that the world is by chance (an abuse of nature).

The third dimension is however practical in nature and not theological nor philosophical. For example, what the church has done in the past concerning nature. For instance, the Benedictine movement has saved Northern Europe from what some have seen as the earliest and major environmental crisis brought by humanity—the collapse of the Roman Empire. Elaborately, the Benedictines (monasteries) were able to salvage a dying continent from decay and the miss-use of the natural environment. In fact monasticism provides ancient answers to modern ecological problems because monastic ecology provided not only praise to God but in humility saw monks as stewards of the planet earth. They exercised self-control in utilizing resources, engaging in manual labour, in controlling profits and markets (Chittister 69 ff).

When it comes to exhibiting religious attitudes towards nature, St Francis of Assisi stands out as probably the most well known figure in Christian history. His religious thought concerning nature draws on both the ecologically positive fecundity and migration Christian metaphors of nature (Sorrell 49, Schuenemann 2). Saint Augustine demonstrated a deep reverence and compassion for the natural world. In his teaching and in the nature-based mysticism he originated within the Christian tradition, he clearly showed that Christians have ecological concerns. This is seen portrayed in his teaching concerning waters, hills and the earth and in the fact that in one instance he was ready to accept some baby robins as fellow friars (Derr 39, Schuenemann 2, Sorrell 49). He praised nature and saw nature-praising God. According to Derr,

As the trouble is at root religious, so also must the cure be and white finds it in St Francis of Assisi. St Francis, ‘a pan-psychist of all things animated and inanimate,’ treated the rest of nature’s creatures as if they, like man, possessed souls to be saved, hence ‘Brother Ant,’ ‘Sister Fire,’ and so on. He was, also, ‘clearly heretical,’ because he ‘tried to depose man from his monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God’s creatures’ (39f).

This however is considered heretical, as the concept is in divergence from the traditional Church teaching that “God is above all things”. Thus Derr again states:

But heretical or not, his [St Francis’] ideas are ‘recessive genes’ in Christian faith, and we need them today if we are to reject ‘the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man’ and if we are to overcome our ‘orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature’. St Francis, White proposes, would make a fine patron saint for ecologists (40).

In fact many Christian ecologists look to figures such as Francis of Assisi, because he displayed a sensitivity to animals, birds and all of natural life. This is so much the case that Pope John Paul II in 1979 proclaimed St Francis as the heaven patron of those who promote ecology (Krznaric 5; McDaniel 72).

The symbols of anthropomorphism and the domination of nature blurs the picture we have seen above, since at the end of the day, the Judaeo-Christian cosmology and theology, nature must be one of subservience as it is subjected to the human being (since the person is created *imago dei*, in the image of God, Gen 1:26-29). Thus the environment, with all its beauty and the vital role it plays, together with the rest of the material world, in assisting humanity towards its salvation journey is cantered around

humanity—the human being is commanded to subdue the earth and dominate nature for his/her own sole benefit (Gen 9:1-3, Schuenemann 2).

Though *Historical Roots* of Lynn White achieve sudden fame, being widely reprinted and quoted, its thesis sometimes oversimplified and even distorted, often being borrowed with or without acknowledgement, as it is held as true fact. However, the thesis of White has been challenged by René Dubos in his book *A God Within*. According to him, White gave popularity and ‘academic glamour’ to the idea ‘that the Judeo-Christian tradition is responsible for the desecration of nature in the Western world’ (Derr 40). Protestantism through the Calvinist ideology has also demonstrated great ecological awareness and concern.

The final dimension is focus on the future of the earth and how the church can promote nature ethics using scripture as depicted in Mathew 7:4-5. Isaiah 11:6, 9 talks of giving power to the hopeless and powerless, as this will lead to revive of nature. The author emphasized that human beings should note that lower animals reason and have consciousness though to a lower degree (Martin and Palmer 55).

### **2.7.3 Judaism**

Aubrey Rose edited *Judaism and Ecology*. This work surveyed the environment from the viewpoint of Judaism. The work introduced the Jewish faith as a religion that is monotheistic with two major sacred literatures. The book pointed out clearly that Jewish festivals are agricultural in origin, meaning that they are in love with flora and nature. Jewish festivals are not centred on commemorating events in the life of an individual, rather Jewish festivals are centred on people and the entire Jewish Nation or land. Rose Aubrey said all Jewish festival deal with special events in the life of a people and a land

(Rose 13). The book clearly depicted that Jews are on the earth to preserve and guard nature but not to destroy it (Rose 11). Jewish soldiers are cautioned even in war situation not to destroy trees, especially fruit trees. Maimonides the great medieval Jewish doctor wrote it is not only forbidden to destroy fruit-bearing trees, but whoever breaks vessels, tears clothes, demolishes a building, stops up a fountain or wastes food in a destructive way, offends against the law of ‘do not destroy’” As stated in the book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 8:9) The rule “do not destroy” is applicable to every circumstance on Yahweh’s free gift, especially nature. Likewise hunting for pleasure is considered as cruel killing and it’s is a sin, so animal a have a right to live.

The second unit of discussion in the work deals with Israel’s environment and the importance of environmental protection. Seen from the last few years, there has been great concern for the environment not merely in Britain alone but in the world in particular. In Israel, there has been love for land than just a search for political and physical asylum, because when they dare stay off from it (land), they become barren. That is why the first five books of the Bible, have a lot of injunctions about respect for land (Rose 84). Israel, a small country mostly arid and poor in natural resources has had an increase in population pressures and has experienced an industrial development, economic growth that has had negative environmental implications.

However the “non-desert” part of Israel has been the cradle of cultivation and “domestication” of staple food plants while the southern (desert part) has an entirely different significance, which is again not just local, but it is regional rather than really global. Though deserts generally have been regarded as inhospitable for humankind, the young Israelite nation is set out to “conquer” its deserts and make them habitable through

immense economic investment. There is the consideration of the high and permanent cost of transforming small parts of it to “non-deserts” through recreational and tourism centres. To create an ecological friendly society the book observe that Israel have put in place about 385 nature reserves, with each having over 300 rangers. The rangers most importantly have a deep concern for human heritage. Likewise they have a good number of botanical gardens where flora, especially flowers is preserved in their varieties.

The book finally observed that the Noah Sanctuaries established in 1990, is an umbrella organization formed to advance environmentalism in Israel. It based its philosophy on the most ancient source for environmental preservation activity. The Bible points out that the human being has been given full responsibility for the integrity of his environment. Preservation and development of the quality of life seems the focus here. Noah’s Sanctuaries have homes for both animals and humankind. The sanctuaries have issued an Architect’s ecological code of ethical quality to improve the whole environment and the quality of life. The Israelites are ask to pledge to make every effort possible to ensure the quality of life for man, domestic and wild life, as well as plant life in all urban, sub- urban and rural projects with which I will be involved.

In the third division of this discussion that deals with action, it has been realized that a lot of people know about environmental issues, but they need an understanding of the grandeur of ecological processes. As seen from Ellen Bernstein’s elaboration, “ecos” means the study of house and ecology, that is the study of the household as it teaches one how to relate to the planet and his house, and not something outside him/her. To sustain this action, there is the need for human beings to get involved totally by re-examining their attitudes towards the environment around them. Judaism encourages prayers for the

environment and this has been adopted by the people to enable them have a touched by God to avoid any action that may pollute nature in anyway.

Some of the deepest beliefs of Judaism are consistent with protection of the environment, since nature exudes and manifests the presence of order and wise design, but it should never be worship for its own sake and human beings, who are privileged over animals and other creatures because they are created *imago Dei*, in the image of God, are mere stewards of the earth. Thus the dominion given in Genesis, according to an ecological statement from the world Jewish Congress, is not that of a tyrant. In Talmudic and other rabbinical sources, the biblical injunction, ‘do not destroy/kill’ covers all objects that possess potential benefit to humanity, including the physical environment. Furthermore, several commandments in the Jewish Torah are concerned with the preservation of trees and arable land, the conservation of water and protection of animal welfare (Krznicar 8).

#### **2.7.4 Islam**

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, is a prominent scholar of Islamic approaches to Islam, who regards most Muslims (and non-Muslims) as walking through our current ecological crisis as ‘sleepwalkers’. He argues further that ‘this sleepwalking by the majority is taking place despite the reality that Islam has a powerful and persuasive spiritual teachings about nature and the relationship of humanity to it’ (Nasr 85).

The urban centres of the Western world are artificial environments from which nature has been excluded, thus almost everyone living there intuitively feels a lack of something in life (Nasr “The Problem”, 20). Nasr states that human domination of nature has de-sacralised it, even as:

...nature has come to be regarded as something to be used and enjoyed to the fullest extent. Rather than being like a married woman from whom a man benefits but also towards whom he is responsible, for modern man nature has become like a prostitute—to be benefited from without any sense of obligation and responsibility toward her. The difficulty is that the condition of prostituted nature is becoming such as to make any further enjoyment of it impossible. And, in fact, that is why many have begun to worry about its condition (20).

This domination of nature by human beings has resulted in over-population, urban congestion, depletion and exhaustion of natural resources, destruction of natural beauty, marring of the environment by machines and their numerous products, abnormal rise in mental illnesses and numerous others with some of them defying any solutions. Furthermore, it is this quest for total domination of nature that has birthed in humans the instinct for war, which today is so hi-tech that it poses a greater danger to the environment (20).

However, the *Qur'an* (7:31) states: “O children of Adam!...eat and drink: but waste not by excess for God loves not the wasters”, while an *Ahadith* of the Prophet (from Saheed Al-Bukhari) assures Muslims that, “If any Muslim plants a tree or sows a field, and a human, bird or animal eats from it, it shall be reckoned as charity from him”.

Duh points out areas of positive and direct relationship between Islam and ecology. *Qur'anic* verses, *ayat* or signs make the connection between nature and God possible because it denotes both nature and God's words. The *Qur'an* (2:164) enjoins a true believer to maintain and respect the sacredness of nature, which contains *ayat* signs of God. The *Qur'an* possesses 759 verses that reflect on the importance of ecology and



nature—they could be considered as an Islamic perspectives on environment. The *Qur'an* (6:38) enjoins Muslims to take care of the environment and not damage it. The *Qur'an* reminds Muslims to regard nature both as the property of God and a gift to humanity. It is therefore their duty to individually and communally promote the preservation and careful utilization of natural resources including water, sea, air and climate among others, thus expressing the concept of *Khilafa*, stewardship (5f). God announce that he would create a *Khalifa*, vicegerent on earth, with human beings as his *ibad*, servants, acting as his guardians of the entire natural world (Krznicaric 7).

Furthermore, *Tawheed*, unity of creation is a relevant positive force to be used for ecology and climate change in the sense that the unity of creation in Islamic sacred texts imply and confirms the oneness of God and by implication the interdependence of humanity and nature (Duh 6).

Islamic ethics evolved the idea of *Al-Israf*, wastefulness for the protection of environment from destruction and wastage, and elaborate strategies for environmental conservation and pollution prevention. Since God is the entity behind the diversity of nature, human beings must not waste natural produce. *Al-Mizan*, is the Islamic term for balance, a term that has gained currency in environmental movement and the problem of climatic change. This concept is clearly exhibited in the *Qur'an* (55: 5-9), which reads:

The sun and moon follow courses (exactly) computed; And the herbs and the trees both (alike) bow in adoration. And the firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the Balance (of Justice);in order that ye may not transgress (due) balance. So establish weight with justice and fall not short in the balance.

The hermeneutics of this passage and other similar passages according to some Muslim scholars demonstrate that God created everything with due balance/connection to and concern for other creatures of the created order and humans must create clear balances between what they take and give in relation to environment (Duh 6). Moreover, all environmental elements are innately and complexly interlocked with one another such that equilibrium of the environment is maintained. All that God created in the cosmos is proportionately measured both quantitatively and qualitatively—it gives values of unity, balance, order and harmony. According to the *Mufasssirun* of the *Qur'an*, balance not only governs the structuring of the universe—it has specified each element with its proper place and defined function (*Qur'an* 54: 49), (Deuraseh 527).

The *Qur'anic* term *qadar* directly carries the meaning of environmental balance. It explains that all processes of creation and growth follow the principle of *qadar* balance. For instance, *Qur'an* 54v59 states: “Verily all things We have created in proportion and measure”. The same follows for *Mouzun* environmental balance (*Qur'an* 15: 19-20), *Harim* (natural resources, such as a water source used communally), *Hima* (a piece of land protected, guided and preserved for special purposes) and *Hisba* (Islamic principle of supervising human behaviour, whereby good is ordered and evil is prohibited and it should be noted that the preservation of the environment and its resources is the display of good character). *Qur'an* is thus against destruction, abuse, over exploitation, and pollution of natural resources (Duh 6 f).

In early Medieval Islamic literature, climatic effects came to be identified as one of the major causes of ill-health and disease. Muslim scholars accurately observed that the illness of a person occurs due to the disturbance of natural balance between internal

and external environments of a person. Creation, which is a sign of God ('*ayat Allah*'), is a book of which God is the author. It becomes impossible then for one to know God without observing and knowing what is our environmental surroundings (Deuraseh 526).

### **2.7.5 Buddhism and Eastern Mysticism**

In stark contrast to the general anthropocentrism of the Abrahamic religions, the Asian religions give us a more biometric view of the world. For instance, the concept of interconnectedness of all living beings is central to Buddhism, and loving kindness is extended to both human beings, animals, plants and the earth itself. Buddhist environmentalists assert that the universality of *dhukkha* suffering and *tanha* pain engulfing the whole of creation has produced a compassionate empathy for all forms of life. Furthermore, the concept of *karma* and rebirth found in Hinduism, Buddhism and the whole of Eastern mysticism provide a link between humanity and other forms of life including nature, since during the sojourn of a person on earth, he could be transformed into a bird, toad, or tree in the cycle or wheel of birth, death and rebirth—*samsara* (Krznicaric 9).

Buddhist *ahimsa*, non-violence summarises Buddhist and Jainist concerns for nature and the whole world of living beings and their social reality. This concern for the world in which human beings live together with other beings, according to Jiwen is expressed in Mahayana ideologies of *jinsei Bukkyo* (*ren sheng fo jiao*—Buddhism for living), and *ningen Bukkyo* (*ren jian fo jiao*, social Buddhism). The *Mahayana* spirit exhibits compassion for all living things, “protecting the way of life of every life, and helping it to live in even better ways” (98). The first ten wholesome deeds of Buddhism is “abstention from killing”, while the first of the five moral precepts of Buddhism is a

probation on killing and the aphorism “It is better to save the life of one person than to build a seven story pagoda” is a common Buddhist saying (101). Buddhism has demonstrated an especially illustrious and vibrant history of concern for and protection of the ecological balance and purification of the environment.

The global environment on which human beings depend for survival has been subjected to devastation on an unprecedented scale, a devastation that has been growing in scale since WW I and II. The earnest labours of billions of people are now employed irresponsibly for the slaughter of mankind rather than protecting it, especially with the breathtaking rapid advance in the field of science and technology (98).

Whereas atheistic ideology denies that there is any God at all, pantheism (from Greek *pan*, “all” and *theos*, “God”) declares the presence of God, the one reality in, underlying or manifested through all things (Mission for the Third Millennium 111). Pantheism—all reality is ultimately one and divine, is the basic worldview of Hinduism and its bed fellows, including the New Age Movement. Pantheistic movements, ranging from Hinduism to the New Agers, and from Jainism to Buddhism aside from reckoning time in term of reincarnation, also pursue a crucial concern for the environment.

### **2.7.6 Atheistic Humanism, Pantheism and Ecology**

Atheistic humanism challenges monotheistic faiths, such Christianity, even though atheism has failed to win a large voluntary following (in the defunct USSR and present China, communism was imposed as official state ideology). Pantheism (*pan* “all” and *Theos*, “God”) has however been more successful as an alternative worldview/cosmology than atheism. This ideology holds that God is in some way the one reality in or underlying or manifested through all things (Mission for the Third Millennium 110 f).

Pantheistic beliefs that are encapsulated in variegated forms in Hindu, Buddhists, Jainist, Taoist, Shinto and Guru Godmen traditions, among others (such as Grail, Eckankar, Brotherhood of the Cross and the Star) accept the divinity of nature and in the spiritual powers latent in physical things. Such beliefs are familiar in pre-Christian pagan Europe, Native American Indian religions, Aboriginal Australian and Oceanian traditions and African traditional religions. All the Asian religious traditions, plus the New Age Movements, seem to be shouting “no god but all” according to the Mission for the Third Millennium (110 ff).

## **2.8 THEORIES CONCERNING RELIGION AND ECOLOGY**

Recent debates concerning religion and ecology, especially within the environmentalist milieu have raged over the relationships that exist between religions, cultures and the earth’s living systems. There are those that emphasize the close association of religious perceptions and beliefs with natural phenomena. The perspective states factually that religion originated or emanated from nature worship. That religious beliefs and practices, including some form of ritual practices evolved in ecologically adaptive way (Taylor, “From the ground Up...” 90). Rappaport’s *Pigs for Ancestors* and Lansing’s *Priests and Programmers* support such a thesis. Furthermore, other fine examples of this opinion are found in the works of Max Müller (as cited in Stone 12-25 *passim*) and Sir James George Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*. Others adopt a decidedly reductionist approach, telling everyone who cares to hear that religion is a by-product or brain-child of the evolutionary processes (see Burhenn 111 ff and Benavides 1:548 ff).

Better known discourses are those who blame specific religions, or religion in general, for promoting cosmologies and/or worldviews that lead to environmental

degradation and destruction (see Snarey 85 ff). The rich scholarly debates here according to Taylor have birth the field of “religion and ecology”. This discipline is characterised by efforts to recover ideas that can be used to promote environmentally responsible attitudes and behaviour by using resources from living religions today. The task here has been undertaken by religious thinkers, theologians, philosophers, leaders and religious practitioners, scholars from a wide range of disciplines interested in religion and ecology and scholars with a focus on specific traditions, spiritual and secular, in an effort to lead their members to become more environmentally or eco-friendly (Taylor, “From the ground Up...” 90).

The most successful example of this scholarly endeavour was a series of conferences held between 1996 and 2004 on Religions of the World and Ecology” that subsequently produced a book series. It was organized by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim as both were then professor in the Religious Studies department of Bucknell. The conferences were hosted by the Harvard Centre for the Study of World Religions (CSWR), with additional support from many other environmental, religious, animal welfare groups. The book series were published by the CSWR and marketed by Harvard University Press (Taylor “From the Ground Up...” 90). What we may say in support of religious tradition’s love for and preservation of nature, however, we must accept that environmental duties received far less attention than what are considered to be sacred or divine religious duties and other, more pressing, ethical obligations. This notwithstanding, diverse forms of green religion are emerging and are growing into global movements in dramatic and nascent fashions. The growing strength, contemporary novelties and romantic freshness of green and dark green religions make it possible for

scholar to consider and list them among New Religious Movements (NRMs), even though they possess deep historical roots and antecedents (Taylor, “From the Ground Up...90-91). The same point is made by Nash in *Wilderness and the American Mind*; Albanese in her *Nature Religion in America* and Fox in his *The American Conservative Movement*.

In a different work, Taylor, states that the most common debate has been between those who consider *nature religions* to be religiously or politically primitive, regressive and/or dangerous, and those who laud them as spiritually perceptive or authentic and ecologically beneficent (“Ecology and Nature Religion” 2661f). These two divergent and contrary opinions are examined below.

### **2.8.1 Nature Religion as Primitive, Regressive, or Dangerous**

As already observed above, Wilber belongs to this group. According to Taylor:

Perspectives that view nature religion as primitive, regressive, or dangerous may have originated with and throughout recorded history have been influenced by the ancient antipathy between Abrahamic religions and the pagan and polytheistic religions of the ancient Middle-East. Frazer noted, for example, that the Hebrew King Josiah initiated a death penalty for those who worshipped the sun in the seventh century BCE and that subsequent Hebrew figures, including the prophet Ezekiel, continued to battle the solar cult and other forms of what they considered nature idolatry (“Ecology and Nature Religion” 2662f).

There is thus the hostility of orthodox streams of the Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam that helped pushed nature religions and peoples who embodied them to extinction and marginalization through conversion, assimilation and sometimes

violently (“Ecology and Nature Religion” 2). This happened throughout Europe, the Americas, Australia, Africa, parts of Asia and Oceania in the name of civilization and the promotion of spiritual well being, among others. The criticism of nature related religiosity, is not however restricted to the religiously orthodox alone. As Occidental culture placed increasing value on reason, with onset of atheistic thinking and with as many thinkers becoming less religiously orthodox, the tendency to view nature religious not so much as dangerous but as primitive intensified. Georg Wilhelm Friederich Hegel (1770–1831) held such views (“Ecology and Nature Religion” 2).

### **2.8.2 Nature Religion as Spiritually Perceptive, Authentic and Ecologically Beneficent**

Taylor cites two historical works that bring the reader up to date from ancient times up to the contemporary times on nature religion both as a religion and as a persistent force and not a fossil. The first is Clarence Glacken’s *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1967). In this work, Glacken encourages his readers not to “forget the echoes of the primordial Mediterranean world: its age old veneration of Mother-Earth” (Taylor “Ecology and Nature Religion” 5; cf. Glacken 13, 15). The second work, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (1977) by Donald Worster agrees with Glacken that whereas belief in specific earth and celestial deities or nature gods have declined or disappeared altogether, the perception of some forces and places in nature as sacred/divine, a belief that has birthed classical paganism, has not withered away. It has rather been resilient, even simply episodically, curbing and threatening the hegemonistic tendency of the monotheistic consensus and even challenging secular, science based



worldviews. Examples of this are found in the works of the Jewish philosopher and theologian Baruch (or Benedictus) Spinoza (1632-1677), and French social theorist Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Their works galvanized support among later thinkers for nature religion or the so called Romantic Movement that rejected revealed Abrahamic religions (Taylor “Ecology and Nature Religion” 2665f). Spinoza influence scholars such as Friedrich Schleiermacher, Albert North Whitehead, Norwegian Arne Naess, American George Sessions, as well as a number of more recent thinkers that have explicitly promoted pantheistic religion, among them Michael Levine (1994), Robert Corrington (1997) and Donald Crosby (2002). These are scholars that postulate that nature is for human benefit; it is the duty as well as the privilege of humanity to use nature for human needs and for the need of other members of the environment.

### **2.8.3 The Role of Religion in the Protection of Nature/the Environment**

Rabbi Warren Stone (quoted in Krznaric 3) shows that shared dependency of the human race unites them even as religion tends to divide humanity. The theoretical approach here is the assumption by Krznaric that there are “common grounds shared by the world’s major religions in their approaches to environmental issues in general and climate change in particular” (2). This claim by Krznaric is hinged on the fact that religion play a major role in raising public consciousness concerning climate change (just as it did about the need to provide debt relief for poor countries), mobilising millions of people to act (just as religion fought against slavery and the slave trade), and galvanizing global coalitions from government circles, civil society and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOS) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOS) to tackle climate change. Religion has the capacity for developing greater cooperation and unity around climate

change as a part of interfaith and collaboration, and thus nib the pertinent issue of inter-religious conflict in the bud (3). All world religions agree according to Krznaric that: first, the natural world has value in itself and does not exist solely to serve human needs but the needs of other beings (both animate and inanimate) as well. Second, humans are an integral part of the natural world, and are dependable upon it for their survival. Third, the natural world, including animals (*fauna*), plant life (*flora*) and inanimate objects, is a sacred creation of God or the cosmic order, and as such, humans have a special duty to respect and conserve it for their use today and for posterity or future generations. Fourth, moral norms and the ethics of justice, compassion and reciprocity apply both to humans and non-humans, since they are caught within the ambit of the Tao (Dao) and are therefore subject to or governed by the law of the yin and yang forces, karmic order, *samsara*, and heaven/hell, among other ethical verdicts. Finally, that greed and destructiveness must be condemned, while restraint and protection must to be commended (Krznaric 12). He concludes that the world religions commonly agree that: climate change is mostly human-induced and that it should be tackled; the crises associated with climate change has arises partly as a result of human greed and the human culture of over-consumption; by damaging the environment or engaging in environmental degradation, human beings have sinned and/or acted immorally in the eyes of God or the cosmic order and finally, men and women of faith owe it as a part of their religious duty and responsibility to act now and save the earth from further destruction.

#### **2.8.4 An Economic Theory of Nature**

The UCS document that was signed by more than 1600 world's senior scientists, including many Nobel prize-winners reads:

Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Human activities inflict harsh and often irreversible damage on the environment and on critical resources. If not checked, many of our current practices put at risk the future that we wish for human society and the plant and animal kingdoms, and may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner that we know. Fundamental changes are urgent if we are to avoid the collision our present course will bring about...A great change in our stewardship of the Earth and life on it is required if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated (1).

Today, consumerism is one of the most attractive value systems in the world and the god of religious economy is the market, which has been caught up in a vicious circle of ever-increasing production and consumption. This has contributed to the ecological crisis such as in places as the rain forest in Latin America, which has been greatly diminished by the market based new religion (Loy, in *Worldviews, Religion and...* 67). Today, 358 billionaires are wealthier than the combined annual income of countries with 45 percent of the world's population. This results for the fact that in the South, a quarter million children die of malnutrition or infection every week, while hundreds of millions more are merely surviving, suffering from hunger, lack of health facilities, among others. How do we explain these socio-economic disparities and what rational do people in the north have for sleeping soundly, while the majority of people in the south languish in abject poverty, squalid living conditions and backwardness? According to Loy:

The explanation lies largely in our embrace of a peculiarly European or Western [but now global] religion, an individualistic religion of economics and markets,

which explains all of these outcomes as the inevitable results of an objective system in which...intervention is counterproductive. Employment is simply a cost of doing business and Nature is merely a pool of resources for use in production. In this calculus, the world of business is so fundamental and so separate from the environment...that the ongoing economic system is a threat to the natural order of things, and hence to future welfare (68 in *Worldviews, Religion and...*).

Thomas Malthus, in his *Essay on Principle of Population* argued for an iron law of wages, because of the belief that higher wages lead only to rapid population growth until that growth is checked by poverty. It follows then that poverty is not a product of human institutions but the natural condition of life for most people. However, neo-Malthusians must face up to the reality of who is actually consuming most of the earth's resources. While population may grow geometrically and food increases arithmetically, most of the earth's resources is consumed by the north. Even though we accept that we all live in a global village, the north wins always when it comes to the game of harnessing the resources accruable within the 'naturalness' of an unfettered market, with its competitive, self-seeking and consumerist culture (Loy, 68 in *Worldviews, Religion and...*).

The burgeoning human population growth, therefore, is not alone responsible for the negative human impact upon the planet. Others include the increasing level of affluence, and hence consumption, particularly, the consumerism of the north, together with the escalation of human technological capacities to modify and impact the environment. Human impact on the environment is thus largely the result of what

collectively might be termed *economic growth* (Fisher 134 f). The human being is a *homo-economicus*. According to Suzuki:

The rapid degradation of the planet's life-support mechanisms and unsustainable depletion of potentially renewable resources are driven largely by the workings of the world economy. Populations are impoverished by transnational corporations without concern for the long-term survival of local communities and ecosystems (quoted in Fisher 135).

Money economy has not only altered social relations among people, but it has also affected people's attitude towards nature, environment and natural resources. People now regard natural resources as objects for exploitation and profit-making, because of the new values inculcated through Western education and religions such as Christianity and Islam. Resources are utilized for individual private gain. Communal decision making processes that help communities maintain a balance between available resources and their use in places such as Africa that has been undermined by Western ideology of individualism and drive for individual achievement through power relations (Omari 100).

The thesis, which states that the predominant religion of the world today is a secular one, variously referred to as religion of progressivism, the religion of the market, the religion of economics, or simply, economism (Fisher 138). Cobb a theologian, regretted that:

In many ways economists have become the 'theologians' of our world. Because the aim of society, and of so many individuals within it, is now defined primarily in economic terms, economists are the ones who guide us and provide the theory

that informs their guidance. Most people, if they look to Christian theologians at all, do so for quite limited purposes (Cobb, quoted in Fisher 138).

David Loy puts it this way:

Our present economic system should also be understood as our religion, because it has come to fulfil a religious function for us. The discipline of economics is less a science than the theology of that religion, and its god, the Market, has become a vicious circle of ever-increasing production and consumption by pretending to offer a secular salvation. The collapse of communism – best understood as a capitalist ‘heresy’ – makes it more apparent that the Market is becoming the first truly world religion, binding all corners of the globe more and more tightly into a worldview and set of values whose religious role we overlook only because we insist on seeing them as ‘secular’ (67, in *Worldviews, Religion and...*).

Our economic systems are largely dependent on biophysical systems, yet we nurse this notion that economic growth should continue indefinitely at an exponential rate (Fisher 142). Others, economists among them have come to accept that economic growth can even be considered as part of the solution to environmental problems. Herman Daly, a former World Bank economist shares this view when he asserts:

I believe that we are fundamentally creatures, although special creatures with self-consciousness, mind, and limited creativity...as creatures our limited creativity is subject to the restraints imposed by the rest of the created order, namely, finitude, temporality, impossibility of creating or destroying matter/energy, impossibility of perpetual motion, impossibility of speeds faster than light, impossibility of spontaneous creation of living things from non-living things, and so on. Given

these biophysical limits of creature-hood, plus the moral limits imposed by our responsibility as creation's steward, it seems to me ironic in the extreme that we have built our economy on the premise that it must grow forever, that there are no boundaries imposed by the rest of creation, either from its biophysical structure or from our ethical responsibility as the 'creature-in-charge' (169).

Global economy is fatally flawed because it assumes the possibility of endless growth, which it states is necessary and represents progress. It rejects long term social and ecological sustainability and regards caring, sharing and cooperation as irrational, failing to promote the reality of spiritual needs, promoting selfishness instead (Suzuki, quoted in Fisher 142).

### **2.8.5 Social Theory of Ecology or Social Ecology**

According to Whitney, *social ecology* is a contemporary social theory that investigates interrelationship between social institutions and the natural world. According to this theory, local, regional and global ecological problems are created by authoritarian, hierarchical and exploitative social institutions. When social ecology is concerned with promoting social changes that can end the exploitation, greed and domination of nature and establish an ecologically sound relationship between humanity and the natural world, it is referred to as *political ecology* (1569). Social ecology has philosophically adapted a holistic and dialectical position. The roots of this dialectics are founded in the tradition of George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx and critical social theory. It's holistic and organicist dimension is rooted in the traditions of thinkers such as Elisée Reclus and Lewis Mumford. Its politics has on the other hand tilted towards communitarianism, decentralism, anarchism and libertarian socialism. Political theorist Murray Bookchin is

its best-known contemporary propagandist, thus the theory and practice of social ecology has naturally gained its most widespread recognition through his writings. He emphasizes the ecological dimensions of many spiritual and religious traditions, praising the non-dualistic cosmological worldviews of tribal societies, especially their concept of the way for uniting custom, morality, sensibility and nature. He rejected mystical/spiritual ecology, and ecofeminism or ecofeminist ecology, viewing the latter as depicting women as naturally superior to men. He rather suggested that animistic imagination offered modern society an outlook that complements science and is more organic than science based on a respect for symbiotic relationship with other living beings (1569 ff).

Today paganism is being revived in the West (see Mattias Gardell's *Gods of the Blood...*), while there are numerous environmental and New Age groups that often fit well into the nature religion construct. However, though they regard nature as sacred, its location and where it is considered most powerful is almost always an issue shrouded in controversy. Nature religions possess differing perceptions regarding whether the sacred is primarily earth (manifested in specific places such as mountains, sacred caves, rock formations and bodies of water), biotic (located in the flora or fauna), or cosmic (located beyond the biosphere but reflected in a platonic way in earthly life), (Taylor "Ecology and Nature Religion" 2666).

Buell has demonstrated that Henry David Thoreau is very often regarded as a patron saint for nature spirituality in America. The works of Thoreau have cast a long shadow that have influenced virtually all of the most important environmentalists thinkers of the twentieth-century, including John Muir, John Burroughs, Aldo Leopold. Rachael Carson, Wendell Berry, Edward Abby, Gary Snyder and James Lovelock.



Thoreau and these progeny have without a doubt assumed iconic status within the pantheon of saints favoured among those who participate in contemporary nature religion. Buell speaks of the concept of “personification of nature” used by some environmentalist writers, but which is curiously not connected to animistic spiritual perception, nor anthropomorphism. On the other hand, theorists such as Steward Guthrie, in his *Faces in the Clouds*, view animistic personification as the root of religion (Taylor, “From the Ground Up...” 91; 2661 ff).

## **2.9 APPROACHES IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND ECOLOGY**

There are three methodological approaches identified by Grim and Tucker in the emerging field of the interplay or interrelationship between religion and ecology. These include the retrieval, re-evaluation and the reconstruction methods. The interpretive retrieval approach involves the scientific or scholarly investigations of cosmological, scriptural and legal sources in order to clarify traditional religious teachings regarding the relationship between humanity and nature (Grim and Tucker 3; Gbenda 33).

The interpretive re-evaluation theory evaluates traditional teachings with regards to their valuative relevance to contemporary circumstances. It asks and answers the question whether the ideas, teachings and ethics present in these traditions are adaptable by contemporary scholars to foster and shape more ecologically sensitive attitudes and sustainable practices. It wants to know whether certain religious practices are harmful or may lead to inappropriate environmental practices. It asks such questions as: Are worldly/indulgence—over consumption and world-denying or negative attitudinal orientations helpful or harmful with regards to pressing ecological issues? Has the material world been devalued or destroyed on a gigantic level as the consequence of a

direct teaching by a particular religion? Is a particular ethical model focusing solely on human interaction adequate to address environmental problems (Grim and Tucker 3, Gbenda 33-34).

The interpretive reconstruction model suggests ways in which religious traditions might adapt and apply their teachings to current circumstances in new, fresh and creative ways. This may result in new initiatives, practically empirical synthesis and/or creative modifications of traditional ideas and practices to suit modern modes of expression in the field of ecology. This is the most challenging aspect of the emerging field of ecology and religion, eco-theology and/or interplay between environment and religion (Grim and Tucker 3; Gbenda 34).

Ecology affects and impacts upon religion and vice versa. This two way traffic of interaction between religion and ecology, according to Hultkrantz, has been achieved through technological, economic and material culture, thus:

The methodological model needs to be structured so that it weights the religio-ecological integration against important historical factors. Indeed, it should allow for the possibility that man's religious life springs from autonomous psychic factors (582).

Comparative ecological approach to the subject matter is a viable method that will place the field in the area of comparative ecological studies. The study of the attitude of a particular religion to ecology/environment is likewise another viable approach. There is also the possibility of morphological integration, whereby particular traits of a given religion, beliefs and rituals are modelled on natural phenomena and parts of the physical environment that are used as ritual paraphernalia, symbols and objects (Gbenda 36).

## 2.10 WOMEN/FEMINISM, RELIGION AND ECOLOGY

With feminism, the discourse of sex and gender has become explicit actor in the modernist narrative (Keller 17). Gender, of course, is not sex, since the distinction between gender as a plastic and hence polymorphous category and the relatively more fixed category of biological sex, is precisely an effort to undercut the constraining power of heterosexist discourse (18). Keller recognises categories of feminism that includes scientific, cultural and postmodernist feminisms. *Scientific feminism* refers to affirmative action feminism that calls for equality among genders and grew out of the scientific end of feminism. It regards scientific discourse as a natural ally to the aims of liberalism—liberation from oppression rooted in ignorance, prejudice and inequality in dominated patriarchal societies that have birth scientific antithesis. It does not seek to dismantle the scientific discourse but to acquire its full egalitarian promise. *Cultural feminism* on the other hand grew out of the romantic side of the modernist sentiment is the feminism twin of scientific feminism. This romantic feminism regards the world of science as both unreal and even dangerous and quintessentially destructive. It postulates that if women's values were to displace patriarchy and traditionally male values, the dangers of science would be averted. This type of feminism would strive for the preservation of nature. It states that give women the power and the world will know peace. *Postmodernist feminism* is the third type and it denies the reality of both objects of science and love/romanticism, women and men—and nature. Thus, if we are to describe scientific feminism as that of “naming nature” and cultural feminism as “renaming nature”, postmodernist feminism would be depicted as “un-naming nature” (21 f).

From an African traditional religion viewpoint, the earth is not only a deity (for example it is known as *Ala*—Earth Goddess among the Igbo of Nigeria) but the earth is considered a living being that feels pains when innocent human blood is spilled, grass is burnt, sacred trees as cut down, women are raped, the ground is cultivated without due regards to the performance of necessary rituals and a man sleeps with his wife on the bare floor/ground, among other such taboos. The earth *Ala* in Igbo cosmology is female/goddess, while the sky/sun *Igwe* is phallic and therefore a male/god (Ikenga-Metuh). Daneel see these two dimensions in *Mwari* religion of the Shona, with the male dimension existing above and the female dimension represented by the earth below (16, 44).

In terms of objects, everything is gendered: male and female pots—the cooking pot is female, shrine pot is male, the grain pounding mortar is female, the pestle is male, the failing rain is phallic and therefore masculine, the absorbing soil is uterine and therefore feminine, and the imageries continue. Among the Shona of Zimbabwe, the origin of *Mwari* (*Mwali*) cult is associated with a fertility God (Mukonyora 279, cf. Daneel 16). Thus, Mukonyora believes that *Mwari* religion originates from the margins of a society nursing female concerns about fertility. She continues that the framework for the articulation of a Shona understanding of fertility God of the earth must have been provided by women working close to nature (280). In *Mai Vedu*, a collection of Karanga myths, Aschwanden draws attention to the close relationship that exists between the woman and the environment thus:

[Mwari] created the earth and shaped it like a *rusero* [a shallow round basket used by women for winnowing]. From the clouds he took the water, from the sun he

took the fire, and placed it both in the belly of the earth (*mudumbu renyika*) to make it fertile. (27, quoted in Mukonyora 283)

It is germane to note that [rain] water from the clouds and fire the sun symbolise spermatozoa, maleness and male power, while belly of the earth is uterine and symbolises fertility, femaleness and female power of birthing and nurturing. The creative power of God is thus manifested in Mother Earth, who gives life, as the womb in which life on earth is birth, nurtured, preserved and rebirth or regenerated. According to Mukonyora in her D.Phil dissertation, God told *Mwari* the Earth Goddess, “I gave you power to give life” (283), while in *Mai Vedu*, the Earth Goddess simply said, “I can give life to plants and trees” (27). The most popular praise name for *Mwari* the Earth Goddess in Shona religion is *Dzivaguru*, meaning the Great Pool, or merely *Dziva*, pool (Daneel 16). At Matonjeni, among the Shona or in Matebeleland (Western Zimbabwe) and at many other shrines in southern and central Africa, such as at Njelele and Dhula (Merwe 39ff), a pool located in a cave marks the ideal place for both the worship of *Mwari* and rivers and pools marked out places where women trained each other concerning sexuality and initiation rites with the onset of puberty (Mukonyora 282). A pool of water that symbolizes the fountain and origin of life, like the woman’s womb (Aschwanden 13) describes the perfect union between the water of the man and the birth channel bearing feminine womb that carries life to term.

From a negative perspective, earth, nature, environment or ecology, according to Ynestra King, is not only regarded in feminine terms, but it is treated by men in exactly the same way they treat women, as something to be dominated, overcome and made to serve the needs/desires of men. She, the earth has been stripped of her magical and

healing powers and properties and reduced to mere 'natural resources'. Thus nature has been objectified, subordinated and raped as the other and not the dominant, just as women, who are also likened to nature, have been so treated in patriarchal society. In this way, women and nature constitute the original "others" (459). Simone de Beauvoir clarifies this connection by regarding "transcendence" as the creation of patriarchal culture and therefore the work of men and states further that transcendence, which refers to men strive continually to overcome immanence, which refers to the desire and the process of increasing domination environment and women. De Beauvoir asserts:

Man seeks in woman the Other as Nature and as his fellow being. But we know what ambivalent feelings Nature inspires in man. He exploits her, but she crushes him, he is born of her and dies in her; she is the source of being and the realm that he subjugates to his will; Nature is a vein of gross material in which the soul is imprisoned, and she is the supreme reality; she is contingency and Idea, the finite and the whole; she is what opposes the Spirit, and the Spirit itself. Now ally, now enemy, she appears as the dark chaos from whence life wells up, as this life itself, and as the over-yonder towards which life tends. Woman sums up Nature as Mother, Wife, and Idea; these forms now mingle and now conflict, and each of them wears a double visage (144)

Patriarchal civilizations deny the mortality of men and are constantly reminded of the impossibility of this denial and of the fact that the transcendence of men over women can never be total by the virtues and potentials of the power of procreation possessed by women and by nature. The reasons for the domination of women and nature by men are not only economical, but include trekking down psychologically arrogant and destructive

paths, and culturally hateful attitudes, such as some women hating cultures that have emerged (King 459). These patriarchal characteristics notwithstanding, we cannot deny the emphatic and evidently clear connection between woman and nature. The woman is certainly a bridge between nature human cultures; first as an active and integrative part of and producers of culture by serving the woman-nature connection. Women are then ultimately and equally involved in projects of creativity and transcendence (King 460, Ortner 87 and King, *Feminism and the Revolt...*12 ff). A cogent criticism of this approach in type of ecofeminism is contention that calls for the severance of the woman-nature connection as a condition of women's liberation, despite the insights of scholars such as de Beauvoir and Ortner (King 460).

The second position examines feminists that reinforce the woman-nature connection—woman and nature, the spiritual and intuitive, versus man and the culture dualism. It recognizes that woman's ecological sensitivity and life orientation is a socialized perspective that could be socialized. This ecofeminist view states that there is no reason to accept that women placed in position of power within patriarchal societies will act in any way differently from men. Such women in power cannot bring about a feminist revolution without consciously understanding the history and without confronting the existing economic and political structures (King 460). Ecofeminism provides a third direction that *consciously chooses not to sever the woman-nature connection* by joining male culture, even though the nature-culture dualism is a product of culture (King 260).

The implications of a patriarchal culture that prejudices, disdains, dislikes and devaluates life-giving processes, while simultaneously celebrating life-taking processes are indeed

profound for ecofeminism. This fact links worldwide feminist movements with the theories and politics of ecological movements. Thus women are perceived emphatically as 'pure nature', as having been exploited, misused and raped like the earth (Rich 285). Ecology, therefore requires a feminist perspective or ecofeminism. This will, for instance, unveil the roots of misogyny and hatred of nature by men. Ecofeminism will bring about the symbiotic harmony of humanity with nonhuman aspects of nature at both the experiential and theoretical levels. It will fashion a more humane set of ethics required for decision-making concerning technology. Ecofeminism destroys the artificial hierarchy imposed by humanity on nature by rationally shedding light on the connection between the domination of human beings and the domination of nature. It states that the domination of the woman represents the first and original domination in human society, while the domination of nature over human beings is most profound and insurmountable are demonstrated in the history of tsunamis, volcanicity, earthquakes, tornadoes, cyclones, and typhoons, among others. Ecofeminism accepts the profound truth, reality and principle of ecological science that refers to the necessity of enriching diversity in nature, which exists and interacts on the principle of unity in diversity. Though science, technology and industrialization have profoundly altered the lives of people and the earth itself, ecofeminists as a social movement actively resisted this position by supporting the rich diversity of women all over the globe towards seeking oneness. Though ecofeminists recognize and accept their differences, they deny, oppose and block the ways in which differences can separate women from each other, such as oppressions of class, privilege, sexuality, and race, among others.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **A PROFILE OF BEROM PEOPLE**

#### **3.1 THE BEROM OF THE JOS PLATEAU**

Berom of the Jos Plateau are among the estimated 150-200 various peoples, languages and dialects of the Present Plateau State of Nigeria. According to Crozier, H. David and Roger M. Blench the Berom belong to the eastern plateau sub-group of the Benue Congo language family (David and Blench 22). They inhabit the undulating highlands of the Jos Plateau along with other neighbours such as the Anaguta, Rukuba (Bache or Kiche), Irigwe, Mwaghavwul, Pyem, Amo and Buji. Concerning their position, J. G. Davies, wrote that, “the Berom live in villages on a part of the Plateau, the area which they occupy being some 1,020 square miles. Their Villages (heavily fenced with cactus) of which there are over 80, and composed of numerous compounds” (9).

The size of the area occupied by the Berom given by Davies in 1948 has changed today due to growth in the population of the people, resulting in an increase in the number of villages from 80 to 104. The Berom live on the northern side of the Jos plateau. They share boundaries on the West with the Aten, Katab Chawai and Ninzom. On the north, they share boundaries with Rukuba, Irigwe, Anaguta, Afizere, Jere and Amo. To the south the Berom share boundaries with Dafo, Rom, Atakar, Ayu and Muna, to the east, by the Pyem, Mwaghavul, Ron, and Kulere.

The settlement of the Berom is divided into three: the East, West and South. The Eastern section is made up of villages that include Ropp, Foron Du, Zawan, Shen, Fan, Heipang, and Kwang (Rayfield). The West is composed of Kuru, Vwang, Turu, Riyom,

Hoss, Rim, and Gyel. The Southern section covers villages around Bachit, Shonong, Kakuruk, Gashish and Sho.

There was an obvious distinction between the three sections in traditional times, obvious distinctions among the three sections include dialect, customs and are especially signified in the female clothing. The southern section assimilated clothing from their Chadic speaking Pankshin neighbours known as *baho*. The East and West use the same clothing but whereas the West has an important festival called *mandyieng*, the East has none. Among these three major groupings (Davies 5) observed, to a large extent, inter-marriages were not common than now prevails.

This may largely be explained by firstly, the change in the socio-religious, economic and political lives of the people following their contact with the tin mining industry, Western education, Christianity and modernization. These forces allowed for free and mass movement of people of different socio-religious backgrounds to Berom country. It also allowed for free interaction between individuals and groups than was possible in the traditional Berom society. Secondly, marriage customs have changed, as the groom is no longer required to perform manual labours through prescribed periods to his in-laws. Thirdly, most of the religious rituals attached to the institution have been lost and substituted with Christian, Muslim or European ones.

The precise population of the Berom is not known. The earliest figures traced by Davies, were printed in 1916, and stood at about 35,000 (Davies 16). Thus, Charles C. Jacobs noted, "the population of the Berom had risen, between 1944 and 1949 to about 74,977 and 82,746 respectively" (Jacobs 1). This growth rate is linked with the growth

rate in the mining industry, even though the tin industry rendered the Berom out of land or made the available ones infertile for cultivation.

The Plateau State Facts and Figures Handbook, pointed out that at a cumulative annual increase of 2.5%, the population of the citizens of both the then Jos and Barkin-Ladi Local Government Areas, between 1963 and 1980 stood at 593,110 and 389,840 respectively (Facts and Figures Handbook 1). The 1991 population census would have rendered the previous estimated population of the Berom useless if the census had embarked on head counts of ethnic groups. The 1991 population census gave the figures of the citizens of Jos North, Jos South and Barakin-Ladi as 785,681 (House Magazine of National Population Commission HMNPC 23). With this figure, the population of the Berom (the majority ethnic group in these three Local Government Areas, perhaps with the exception of Jos North, is approximately four to five hundred thousand people. No census was carried out to arrive at the estimated four to five hundred thousand population figures of the Berom. This is only based on an estimated 2.5% average growth rate of the population of the Berom and the citizens of Jos and Barakin-Ladi from 1963 to date as reported above by C. C. Jacobs and The Plateau State Handbook (TPSHB 23).

The Berom are also found in Sanga Local Government area of Kaduna state and in Tildin-Fulani area of Bauchi state. The Berom like other ethnic nationalities on the Jos Plateau such as Ngas, Goemai, Rukuba, Taroh etc, practice agriculture and terrace farming and have learnt to live in an exceedingly mountainous and stony terrain. “This is also true of most of the other ethnic groups living on the Jos Plateau” (Danfulani 23).

The name ‘Berom’ as the people are called today has undergone several misspellings and wrongful applications. Before this form, ‘Berom’, received official

recognition some thirty years ago, the name took a number of forms as noticed in H. D. Gunn and J. G. Davies' writings (Gunn 75). These names include Birom, Burum, Burumawa, Boghorum, Kibo or Kibbo, Kibyen, Sho-sho (their greetings) and Aboro.

Early anthropologists probably confused the name 'Berom' with names of other ethnic groups, such as Barom or Ron and Boghorom or Burrum, all applying to Pankshin division of the then Plateau province. For instance, solely on account of these similarities Birom and Berom were apparently entered in the 1931 population census as one ethnic group under the name Burum. This is irrespective of the fact that their respective territories are nowhere adjacent.

The main reasons for the wrongful application of the name 'Berom' may not be unconnected with the inability of "settlers" (the Hausa-Fulani, Europeans, and other Nigerian ethnic groups) who trooped into the Jos Plateau during the tin mining era. Names of villages were also changed, several cases abound: the names Kwogo were changed to Makera, Foron to Farum, Gwol to Barakin-Ladi, Vwang to Vom, Du to Udu, Jishe to Tudun-Wada, Behwol to Farin. The colonialists and missionaries were not an exception. They changed such names as Jot to Jos and Kwang to Rayfield. On the other hand "early missionary pioneer party called the Berom Kibbyen" (Davies 76).

The meaning of the name Berom is not clear. It has been suggested by some scholars that the name Berom is the plural form of the name of the mythical ancestor of the Berom (Jacobs 1, Gunn 75-76; cf. Davies 35). Another meaning, 'people of Ron' has been put forward, but where or what 'Ron' means has not been determined with certainty (Jacobs 75). However, we can infer that Gunn's assertion that Berom stands for people of

Ron may not be farfetched from the fact that Riyom is believed to be the oldest of Berom villages as well as a onetime provincial headquarters.

J. G. Davies on his part is of the opinion that the ethnic group derived its name from the mythical founder who was called '*Wo Rom*' or '*Orom*' (from whom came the name 'Biom'), '*Bi*', being a plural prefix. However, the authenticity of this is still questionable (Davies 35). According to J. P. Nyam, this is the more so as it affects the spelling of the name. "The name is spelt '*Berom*', rather than '*Biom*' (Nyam 83).

There are four migration theories. The first is tied to places of early civilisations, the second points to a two directional migration, namely from the north and from the south; the third, which is based on clan myths is multi-dimensional, claiming that some sections arrived at different periods, and the fourth asserts that the Berom are indigenous in their present location from time immemorial.

### **3.2 BEROM MYTHS OF MIGRATION**

Elizabeth Isichei observed that most of the ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau area have some form of myths of migrations, which can be ascertained from modern informants, and which have been well recorded since the early years of the twentieth century. Umar Danfulani has clearly demonstrated what Elizabeth Isichei reported (Isichei 7, Danfulani 27-28). This is also true of the Berom, which today constitutes the numerous or populous ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau.

To adequately discuss the myths of migrations (traditions of origin) of the Berom, mention must be made of the following anthropologists, ethnographers and colonial agents. They are: C. L. Temple and Oliver Temple, who carried out research work among the Berom in 1919; C. K. Meek, in 1925; C. G. Ames in 1948; H. D. Gunn in 1953; J. L.

Victoria in 1954; Tanya M Baker in 1970; J. A. Ballard, in 1971; B.O'Brien, T. D. Brosnan, and Sister Marie de Paul in 1973, 1976, and 1980, respectively. Others include James H. Morrison, in 1976 and Bill Freund in 1981. There are also the works of the indigenous writers like Sen Luka Gwom who published his findings in 1992; Charles C. Jacobs and others in 1992 and 1995, Jonah Madugu in 1996, Samuel Dung Nyam in 2001 and 2004, and other young scholars that continue to work on the Berom even into the contemporary period. Most of these writers agree with Jonah Madugu who observed that:

There is an assertion, which claims that the Berom just like their counterparts on the Jos Plateau, are not the original inhabitants of the area, irrespective of their long sojourn of the Plateau. Virtually all the groups in the region have various traditions of origins pointing to the East to fit into what today has become a general trend. Therefore, any group claiming not to have come from any place outside their homeland is treated with contempt and suspicion (2).

This statement may have some credence in the long run because it is possible that all the ethnic groups are immigrants in antiquity from other places to their present abodes. But we cannot accept this position without any concrete evidence; for this reason we are saddled with the problem of discussing the myths of migration of the Berom. This is important because of three main reasons. They are, firstly, virtually every village in Beromland had different traditions explaining their myth of migration. Secondly, even within the same village there may be families or clans with different traditions of migrations. Thirdly, some of the myths of migrations are linked to the history of origin of some religious spaces in Beromland. Illustrative of this point is the case of the three

sacred stones located at Chwelnyap, Turu and Du; we shall come to this later in chapter four.

Charles C. Jacobs faced with this problem, concluded that much of the early works on the myths of migrations of the Berom have always tended to be imaginative rather than historical. According to Jacobs, colonial writers felt under an obligation to somehow connect the Berom with the Jukun (2). C. G. Ames, one of such colonial writers in his Gazetteer of Plateau province wrote that;

The Berom came from somewhere south of the province "Wukari is mentioned in *the Notes and Tribes of Northern province of Nigeria as their place of origin*".

Ames went further to show that the Berom left their forest country possibly owing to the rise of the Jukun Empire or perhaps at a later date to free themselves from the Jukun yoke and, moving North, climbed onto the Plateau at Shonong and in the course of time, provided the present population of the southern half of the Berom. This line of immigration sent out three branches, one of which moved to the North East and became the Anaguta ethnic group; the second moved North East towards Kwon, while the third became the Ganawuri (Ames 7, Davies 38-39).

Jacobs observed that Ames supported his argument for the Southern forest zone migration of the Berom to the Jos Plateau by using part of the ecology as his proof. Thus, he claimed that two species of trees in the Berom area, the African mahogany and the African *elimi* were introduced into Beromland from the forest zone. Ames had come under serious criticism by Jacobs for this claim and especially in suggesting that Gyel and Kuru are of different origin as is Du (3). However, he is correct in perceiving that there

were two waves of migration. Firstly, from the South that settled at Riyom and Shonong, and that it was Riyom, which became the major ritual and dispersal centre of the Berom to other parts of the Jos Plateau. The second migration from the North led to settlements at Kabong and Du. The researcher conducted focus group discussion with Dung Jatau, Pam Rwang Dahwei and Dung Magit in Jos north on the 4th May 1996. They could not agree on either one-migration history, but agreed on a northern and southern migration. Those who accepted a southern migration agreed with C. G. Ames on his conclusion concerning the centrality of Riyom as the ritual home of the Berom. On the contrary, those in support of a northern migration point to Du and Kabong as their ritual homes.

According to A. J. Ballard, the Berom may have migrated to their present home a long time ago, probably from some distant place which is yet to be determined; that linguistic evidence suggests that the Plateau ethnic groups (Berom inclusive) lived in the Middle Belt of Nigeria for a long time, and might have been pushed in various directions by later invasions (Ballard 302). Suffice to observe that this kind of speculative history seems to confirm what Jacobs said concerning the early history of migration of the Berom to the Jos Plateau not based on historical facts, but based on imagination of early anthropologists.

J. G. Davies said that the Berom migration to the Jos Plateau from the northeast, and precisely from Egypt. He supported his argument by using some cultural similarities between the two societies as proof. This history of migration seems questionable, for cultural similarities cannot be used as the only reason for the history of origin of a people. Cultural similarity can occur as a result of culture borrowing, contact in trade and conquest (8). Modern anthropologists have found out that the sharing of some cultural



items is not enough to prove the place of origin of a people. To properly do this, the linguistic, archaeological facts especially those on the material culture of the people and method of counting must be taken serious (Madugu 2-4).

Tanya M. Baker has traced the migration of the Berom to the Jos Plateau from the etymology of the name 'Berom'. She thus concluded that 'Berom' means "the people of Ron". For Baker, Ron is the original home of the Berom. Ron is identified with Arum in Lere District of Bauchi State. She claimed that the Berom migrated from there to Turu in their attempt to evade the invasion of Bauchi area by the then ruler of Kano 1623 and 1648. The settlement in Turu saw the Berom migrating further to Kabong, in Jos. Baker went further to show that there are other divisions among the Berom that led to two major sections of Berom the *Ligit* and *Lwe*. The *Ligit* section moved to Jema'a plains in Kaduna State and moved northwards again to Riyom through Tachun, Shonong, Bangai and Bwandang. She further indicated that the *Lwe* section of the two sub-divisions later joined the *Ligit* in Riyom through the *Lai* and *Shas* and were given the chieftaincy office by the *Ligit*. The *Lwe* occupied Bachit and Shonong, while the *Ligit* (Riyom) people spread to various villages of Beromland (Baker 2-3).

Tanya M. Baker supported her northern myth of migration of the Berom by a number of claims. Firstly, that physical quality of the Berom and Buzus appears alike. Secondly, the chiefs of both ethnic groups wear turbans on the head without any hats underneath. Thirdly, both ethnic groups carry several spears with them and have similar war cries. Fourthly, when the Jere came to settle north of Beromland about two hundred years ago, they met some Buzus there. The Buzu at this time had escaped from Gobir during the reign of Bawa Jan Gwarzo, the then ruler of Gobir (1776-1796), during whose

reign the Buzus are believed to have been oppressed by the Tuaregs. Fifthly, that the people of Du and Gyel are said to have originated from these Buzus (9).

The claim that the Berom migrated from the Buzu area to the Jos Plateau seems to be flimsy, just like the previous ones. For example, the Berom language belongs to the plateau sub-group of the Benue-Congo, which has nothing in common with the Hausa or Kanuri, which belong to the Chadic language group of the Afro-Asiatic language family. Secondly, it has been shown that the Berom never wore clothes before 1776-1796. Instead women wore leaves and men, animal skin to cover their bodies. Linking the Berom chiefs with wearing of turbans as evidence of their migration from Egypt or Sokoto are stories designed to identify the Berom with the “so-called prestigious” people or places such as Egypt and Sokoto.

The northern origin theory by Tanya M. Baker has come under heavy criticism by Zang Fwet and Pam Tok. They argued that if what Tanya M. Baker said is correct, then the Berom could as well be linked to the Chinese and Japanese or some Asian people simply on similarities of their names and wearing of date palm hats. They mentioned such names used by the Berom and some Asians as Kim, Rwang, Lee, Wang, Kpam, Zang, Weng, Ying, Chung, Ching, Chang, and Cheng etc (focus group interview with Zang Fwet and Pam Tok).

If Tanya M. Baker emphasized wearing of turbans and carrying of spears as a link between the Berom and the Buzu people, then one can as well link them to the Asians based on similarities of names. Or link them to the Zulu of South Africa who always carry spears and have similar war songs like the Berom. Besides, both ethnic groups

speak the Bantu sub-group of language. The remarks by Davies shows clearly that Baker`s claims are problematic. Davies had remarked,

The suggestion that a part of the Berom moved off the Plateau and then came back seems rather like an attempt to prove the Northerly origin; and the fact that the tribe consider that they come from the South, both parts of the same story. There is in fact a double difficulty - firstly part of the tribe traces its immediate origin to Gabong (sic) in the North while the major part looks to the South for their immediate origin; secondly there is conflict between ultimate origin to the North and immediate origin to the South. These difficulties are yet to be solved (Davies 41, cf. Jacobs 4).

Davies J. G. and C. C. Jacobs have shown that there are contradictions in the submission by Tanya M. Baker especially in the nature of the movement in the Northern migration of the Berom. Davies had earlier on disagreed with Tanya M. Baker and Jacobs agreed with Davies and present writer also accepts the criticisms labelled against Baker only on the bases of the up and down movements.

Some Berom of Ropp claimed a Fulani ancestry. This myth claimed that some Fulani nomads migrated to the Berom area and later on married Berom women or kept them as concubines. This myth is concerned with the story of a sedentary people rather than talking about migration. How do we then reconcile marriage a social institution of sedentary people with migration stories? It appears that the Berom are always in conflict with the Fulani. Firstly, Berom had always accused the Fulani nomads for destroying their crops on the farmlands. Secondly the Fulani nomads had also been blamed for pasturing their cattle even on sacred spaces and buffer zoned areas of the Berom (Zang Fwet

interview). On the other hand, the nomads had blamed the Berom for trying to deny them a pasture space. John Dung-Gwom, wrote that;

The claim of a Berom myth of origin from Fulani nomads should be out rightly rejected because the Fulani did not penetrate the Jos Plateau prior to the British conquest. It cannot be substantiated since it has no historical roots. For example- there exists no language, occupation or other cultural similarities between the Berom and Fulani. The Fulanis are purely nomads while the Berom are agriculturists, iron smelters, blacksmiths and hunters. They Fulanis have ethnic marks while the Berom make no ethnic marks. The Fulani language belongs to the Chadic or Afro-Asiatic, while that of the Berom is Bantu of the Benue -Congo. It is logical to conclude that the originator of this tradition, C. G. Ames, must have collected his information from Hausa-Fulani settlers in the area who came into Beromland during the tin mining era (Dung-Gwom 10).

The myths of migration of the Berom are complex. This is the more so as the older generation of the Berom is not sure of the traditions they are transmitting to the new generation. Secondly, no historian has been able to link the migration history of the Berom from a particular location to the Jos plateau. It is thus clear that there is some confusion of what can be essentially called, “clans or dynasties myths of migrations”, rather than that of an ethnic group. The possible reason may be linked with the socio-political organisation of the people, which was based on purely clan or lineage setting.

To discuss the myths of migration of the Berom, we must thus, draw our attention to archaeological, linguistic and anthropological findings. This has become imperative because scholars like J.A Ballard had argued that the Berom moved to their present home

recently (309). Ballard drew his example from the Tiv migrations from Swem on the Obudu hills, in the nineteenth century. It is difficult to accept Ballard's 19<sup>th</sup> century date for the migration of the Berom to the Jos Plateau because writers like Sen Luka Gwom and Jonah Madugu had linked the Berom with the Nok culture of southern Kaduna. There is sense to logically assert that the Berom have been in their present area much earlier than the date proposed by Ballard (Gwom 12, Madugu 15).

Monday Y. Mangvwat like Jonah Madugu had observed that most of the Jos plateau people were not the original inhabitants of their present homes, but that they found themselves in their present location as a result of some series of migrations. He argued that;

The peopling and formation of groups on the Jos Plateau area can be traced to several phases. The first one was C.200 BC to 1000 AD which was the so called pre-historic. The second, C.1100 to 1700 AD was occasioned most largely by developments in Kanem Bornu region particularly following the establishment of the second Kanuri Empire that occasioned the emigration of groups of people who refused to be incorporated into the new-Kanem polity to the Jos Plateau. The third phase C.1600 to 1800 AD was associated with Jukun-Kwararafa activities. The fourth phase C.1800 to 1907 AD was related to the Fulani herders and Hausa traders, which culminated in the Sokoto Jihad (4).

Madugu had added that we could from Mangvwat's statement above safely say that, "the Berom, just like the other groups on the Jos Plateau, moved into this area during one or some of the phases given above" (Madugu 1996: 14). Accepting the submission of Mangvwat above does not solve the problem because we are not capable of placing the

Berom migration to the Jos Plateau in any of the phases Mangvwat put forward. But which of those phases is correct? Madugu had also posed an important question when he queried. “Is it apt to conclude that the Berom migrated from somewhere outside their present abode?” This seems to be an important question, as many people argued that they never recall any single myth of migration from outside of their present settlement. For example the people of Kwogo, Vwang and Kabong point to the rocks surrounding them as their cradle.

Madugu was faced with a similar problem when he reported;

The Berom [people] of Kabong look to the rocks surrounding their settlement as their cradle, from where internal migrations to places like Du and Zawan were undertaken. Similarly the Berom of Vwang and Riyom point to the Vwang and Oshonong hills as their cradles, before dispersing to other parts of Beromland (14).

Myths such as these have been rejected in some instances, especially in cases where almost every ethnic group on the Jos Plateau will prefer to have a myth of origin from elsewhere than claiming to have originated from its present location.

The probable cause of the present conflicting myths of migration of the Berom to the Jos Plateau may not be unconnected with their long stay in area, in the process of which the story of where they migrated from is lost. Otherwise we may be forced to accept that they (Berom) never migrated from somewhere and concur to the claim by the Berom of Vwang and Kabong who pointed to the rocks surrounding them as their cradle from where internal migrations took place to other villages of Beromland (Mwadkwon 23-24). We must thus, accept that more research need to carried out on the issue.

However, for the purpose of presenting the present work, we will maintain the two major myths of migrations; namely the southern and northern. The southern myths of migration presented Riyom as an important socio-religious and political space. This is important for the present study. The northern myths of migration are also important as we shall find out in chapter three because it led to the discovery and institutionalization of some sacred spaces: the three *gufwagachiks* shrines are cases in point.

### **3.3 ENVIRONMENT**

The Jos Plateau is situated approximately in the centre of Nigeria between latitudes 7 ° and 11° North and longitudes 7° and 25° East. It occupies an area of about 53,583 square kilometres. It stands on an average height of 1,200 meters above sea level. The Jos Plateau receives an average annual rainfall of 6 inches, which is about 1500 millimetres. The wet season is between April and October and the dry season is from November to March. The wet season “supplies water to rivers flowing in all directions in the northern states of Nigeria, such as the Kaduna, Delimi, Gongola and Sanga rivers” (Ames 53).

Waterfalls at the edge mark the Jos Plateau, for example, the Sopp falls along Jos-Akwanga road in Bachit District and Kura falls in Gashish District. The Jos Plateau is considered to have the best climate in Nigeria due to its average daily temperature of 72° Fahrenheit. In the dry season, humidity is low and temperature may drop to 59° Fahrenheit between December and January. Before the rain commences the temperature rises to about 78° Fahrenheit in March to April, then falls again in August to 69° Fahrenheit (Davies 2, 9).

The Jos Plateau as the name implies and as it has been described “is a place of exquisite scenic beauty, unequalled by none other such places in Nigeria” (Madugu 6). It has carpet-like vegetation covering an undulating landmass with numerous mountain ranges rising up to 6000 feet in some places. Madugu said that, even though lying treeless, this region was once clad in savannah vegetation which colonial studies showed as having survived up to the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Madugu 7).

Today, the Jos Plateau especially the part that makes up Beromland is virtually denuded due to a combination of factors. These factors include farming, bush burning, over-grazing from Fulani herdsmen, gully and sheet erosion as a result of wood and tree felling by tin miners over a long period of time. Thus, it is clear that both human beings and the environment always acted on each other within time, with human beings shaping the former to develop their culture, which is dynamic.

### **3.4 TRADITIONAL ECONOMY**

Berom traditional economy was based on the production of food crops mainly for subsistence living. Other main aspects of the economy included: - making of *ntou*: local salt, tanning, weaving, pottery, and hunting. Trade, the brewing of *sireng*: local beer was other economic activities. For economic reasons, many families kept animals like *Nye*: buffaloes, goats, horses, chickens and dogs. These economic activities were considered second to the economy of land acquisition and utility. It was probably for this reason that no individual was allowed to acquire or dispose of land as this belonged to the entire village community.

In Berom traditional society, mixed farming, mixed cropping and shifting cultivation were the major methods of farming. “Crude” agricultural implements were



employed, such as sharp stones, sticks, bones of wild animals killed during hunting expeditions, while iron came later. Due to the topography the rocky terrain and mining activities which robbed the top soil of its fertility, leaving behind ghost land and rugged terrain, most areas in Beromland have remained uncultivated. This is not to say that there has been no economic activity centred on the production of agricultural produce.

Thus, the major agricultural crops produced by the Berom were *chun: digitalis exilis* (this is the major crop of the Berom which was used for food and several ritual purposes); *Gai*: (millet) *Pennisetum typhoideum*; *Dyara*: *Sesamum indicum*; *Be-Kit* and *Beje*: yam and cocoyam respectively, *Xanthosoma saggitifolium*; *Yare*: guinea corn; *Kpana*: Finger Millet; *Vat* and *Baku*: root crops like cocoyam; *Bekarak*: beans of various kinds and sizes and so on. There were other crops introduced later by the Europeans and other Nigerian ethnic groups such as the Urhobo, Tiv, Igbo and Yoruba. They included *Be-Dang* or *Dankal*, (Sweet or Irish potatoes) *Ipomea batatas*; groundnuts, sugar cane, cassava, rice, cabbage and so on. Subsidiary crops were generally grown around the home compound farm called *Vwi*, while the staple food crops were scattered in the bush far away from home.

The production unit among the Berom was the household, which consisted of the male(s) and female(s) family members, together with their wives and children. The *Dalo* was in control of all farming operations. He decides what piece of land should be cultivated and which should be left to fallow. This helped to make already used farmlands regain fertility and helped also in controlling erosion. He also decides on the type(s) of crops to be grown on the different farmlands (Davou Yakubu interview). Agricultural production was centred on division of labour. Men did the heavy and most difficult work

of making ridges, planting *Chun*, and harvesting the crops. While women weeded the farms and conveyed the harvested crops home from the fields, besides participating in the threshing and winnowing of crops like *chun*, *gai*, *kpana* and *yare*.

Agricultural production was carried on a co-operative communal labour system called *Yat*. This was a system of communal farming in which, one mobilizes his/her friends, in-laws, and age group to assist him or her in the farm.

The economy of many families depended on the production of local salt called *ntou*. This was a predominantly women craft and was carried out virtually by every Berom family. Children helped their mothers in the production of the local salt. This involved the collection of *Chun* or *yare* straw and putting it in a basket, pot or a calabash with some holes underneath. Some of the raw straw was first placed in the container. The container was also filled with ash from the same straw leaving at least some space for water to be poured on the ash. Water was continually poured on the ash in the container until it began to drop slowly through the holes provided at the bottom of the container. This water was carefully collected and stored in some containers and used as salt. The salt could also be made into solid form by exposing the liquid *ntou* to sunlight. The mineral water now evaporated leaving the solid *ntou* which was later on fried to remove more water to turn into solid form (focus group discussions with Chundung Mwadkwon Fwet and, Garos Mwadkwon Fwet).

Following changes in diet and dietary habits the making and utility of *ntou* local salt has drastically reduced. This has been attributed to the availability of common salt. Because every Berom family carried out this economic activity, there was no need for exchange of the commodity within Beromland. *Ntou* was however exchanged for pots

between Berom people and their neighbours, the Ron, Anaguta Rukuba, Irigwe and the Aten (interview Garos Badung Davou).

According to John Dung-Gwom, the brewing of *sireng*, local beer was another economic activity of the Berom. It was largely the responsibility of women. This is not to suggest that men do not partake in its making (115). In traditional Berom society, *sireng* was always brewed to mark important occasions such as initiation rites; installations of chiefs; to engage in *yat* a communal rotational farming; to celebrate the burial rites of chiefs and other important people in the society and to celebrate marriage ceremonies. *Sireng* was also prepared during festivals like *badu*, *buna*, *nshok*, *mandyieng* and recently *nzem*.

The brewing of *sireng* is cumbersome and long. The *gai* millet was first soaked in water and allowed to ferment between two to three days. After fermentation, the grain was dried and later on ground into paste together with a small amount of *kpan* :(some black grain almost the size of millet) and added to it. The ground paste was uniformly mixed with cool water and poured into some boiling paste. The process of re-cooking was repeated for two days. On the third day a fresh fermented paste was added to the already cooked one. On the fourth day a separate *sireng* from *Chun* was cooked and mixed with the old one, and the *sireng* was ready to be drunk on the fifth day similar to pito among some ethnic groups in the Middle Belt area of Nigeria (focus group interview with Chundung Mwadkwon Fwet and Garos Mwadkwon Fwet).

People that could afford brewed *sireng* every week or less frequently did so for their private consumption or invited friends, (especially during dry season when there was less work). In Berom traditional society, the brewing of *sireng* was seen as an affair of the

wealthy members of the society because it was time consuming, and much grain was used. Thus "poor families had to depend on their wealthy neighbours or friends for their own supplies" (Dung-Gwom 117).

The brewing of *sireng* became an economic venture during colonial period; this is still upheld till date. Many families in the rural areas and even in big towns like Jos, Bukuru and Gwol (Barakin-Ladi) are involved in this economic activity. Some people have attributed this to the fact that the Berom lost important part of their land to the mining industry, which led to a fall in food production. The economy of most families had to now depend on the brewing of *sireng* for commercial purposes. *Sireng* was in high demand by labourers in the Jos tin mine fields. According Samuel Dung Nyam, mining camps themselves provided an atmosphere for the sale of *sireng*, besides gambling and prostitution (Samuel Dung Nyam interview).

Iron smelting was one of the most important economic activities of the Berom. People smelt iron and took it to the blacksmiths to work it into different instruments like hoes, knives, bracelets, swords, spears and arrows in exchange for *chun* or *gai* millet. Harold D. Gunn testified that, "the Berom smelted good quality of iron ..., and many of the older Berom men claim to know the craft; locally smelted iron is of fine quality than the imported metal" ( 81).

Probably it is this owing to this fact that John Dung Gwom said;

The British retarded Berom development. They killed our iron smelting by destroying the timber charcoal trees used by us for their tin mining. If not for those things Berom would have been producing sophisticated weapons and developed very far (118).

The above statement has some implications for the present environmental crisis in Beromland. The decimation of the timber trees by the mining industry is indicative of this fact.

*Ju* blacksmithing as an economic activity was predominantly a man's craft. Every village had its blacksmith, who was a respected member of the society. The blacksmiths were respected as sacred human beings because of their skills and *bes* that is, innate supernatural powers. They (blacksmiths) were also respected because they produced farm implements that were important for food production. They also produced war implements and items used for decoration of the human body and horses during important ceremonies. They produced implements used in important religious rituals, burial rituals and harvest rituals. Blacksmiths contributed to the survival of every village in Beromland because of their role as manufacturers of implements used in religious and normal day-to-day socio-political and economic activities. Members of a village without a blacksmith were considered lazy. Such villages were considered as villages that were interested in destroying life. They were considered as outcasts who were ready to disrupt the link between the sacred and profane realms of life. Informants postulated three reasons why it was so. Firstly, the bodies of the ancestors and every dead must be buried using tools produced by blacksmiths. Secondly, surviving members of the society must eat to survive. Thirdly, rituals meant for the enhancement of life and crops must be performed using vital implements produced by the blacksmiths and iron smelters (focuss group interview with Dayok Lokurung, Fei Lomak and Dachung Mwadkwon). Instruments produced by the blacksmiths and iron smelters were thus, in high demand. For example, hoes, knives and other instruments were in high demand by farmers.

The craft was hereditary; normally fathers transferred the art to their children who must have been apprentices. The craft was therefore, identified with particular families. In most Berom villages, blacksmiths are different from iron smelters, but in Kuru District the blacksmiths were themselves iron smelters (Dung-Gwom 106). The blacksmith was paid for his services and usually with grains.

This all-important economic activity is almost dead today. John Dung Gwom had blamed the decline of this craft on pilfering of iron from the tin mining companies by the Hausa-Fulani and colonial tin miners in the area (118). They imported cheap iron and hoes instead of utilizing the indigenous ones. Besides this, most blacksmiths abandoned their craft during the colonial period for mining paddocks as forced labourers to enable them pay their taxes. How did this new development affect the performance of religious rites and rituals that depended on the instruments produced by the blacksmiths and iron smelters?

Pottery was another traditional economy of the Berom. It was a predominantly female activity. Assorted pots were made from *chom* or *twom*: heavy and sticky clay. This was done manually without the use of the potter's wheel. The Berom rather used the indigenous African method described by William Fagg, which involved, "practicing variations of the coil and building technique (the commonest in Africa) in which the new clay is continuously added to form the walls and the mouth of the pot" (Fagg 21, Dung-Gwom 108-109).

This craft was not ubiquitous in all Beromland. For this reason, only Du, Heipang, Foron and Fan were acclaimed for pot making. This was probably because of the availability of the raw material in these districts. People from other districts travelled

several miles to buy pots of various shapes and sizes from the above mentioned districts acclaimed for the craft. Those who do not produce pots had to buy them by exchanging, grains, sacks, baskets and other items for the pots.

Weaving was widely practiced in Beromland. Unlike pottery, it was practiced by both sexes, but generally associated with old people, who because of their age could not do any hard work. *Tyet*: date palm was used for the weaving of *shit*: sacks, *goput*: mats, *go-bwem*: rain coats, *bong*: hats, *gyem* or *mala*: hand bags. Bamboo and raffia palm was used to weave *shap*: baskets, *boro*: trays used for winnowing *chun* and other seed crops. Other woven materials included, *go-share*: door covers, *gwes*: brooms, *rwig*: ropes of various types and *sep* belts. *Lyok* a traditional dress woven out of cotton yarn was among the woven economic crafts of the Berom. *Marwig* a special tall and soft grass was also used in weaving. This craft like pottery is fast dying as a result of the onslaught of similar modern equipment with the same functions.

These materials woven by the aged were exchanged for food items, and this helped in boosting the economy and food supplies of many families. In this way the aged who were becoming unproductive, contributed immensely to the survival of their families. This economic activity seems lost due to the decimation of the environment, as most of the materials used for it were lost. More so, modern imported ones have replaced them without much problem.

Carving played an important role in the economy of many individuals and families. The carvers produced different articles of various shapes and sizes from wood. Most of the trees used for this art were sacred trees, because some of the items were used for religious acts as well. For example, the walking-stick for the *Gwom*: priest-chief is

carved out of a sacred tree. The trees used include; *choo*: the African mahogany, *pwat*: olive tree, *laron*: locust bean tree, *shom*: *lauteria Africana* and *ksugul*: *ceiba pantandra*. Eating utensils were also carved out of sacred trees, the explanation is that this helped in neutralizing any poisonous substance in meals. Mortars and pestles were also carved out of sacred trees for the same reasons (focus group discussion Chollom, Dahwei, Dung Dachomo and Gyang Davou).

Wood carvers made a plethora of local items which included *lulum* and *ke-lulum*: mortars and pestles respectively for pounding of *chun*, *gubu*: spoons for cooking and eating *Bin*: local drum for music, *fom*: a wooden pillow, *yom*: another musical instrument, *kwo* or *shi*: calabash, *kundung*: xylophone, and handles for hoes, knives, axes, cutlasses, dishes and so on. *Hwere* or *ju* local whistle used for music, *gworwei e kyeng*: a native smoking pipe made partly from clay and wood. Every village had its wood carver. John Dung Gwom had observed that; “the trade in carved materials of the Berom declined substantially with the influx of carved items from other areas and the importation of manufactured items during colonial period, like metal spoons and dishes” (108-109).

Irrespective of this, there are still a few of them found all over Beromland today who are still carving different materials, though without any religious attachment to their work. For example, the use of sacred trees is no longer important for the present day wood carvers (focus group discussion with Fom Tok, Dachung Nyang and Chung Gyang). The reduction in the number of carvers is perhaps due to a drastic reduction in the availability of the specific trees needed for the trade. The trade in carved objects booms in Jos today and leather works is also growing at the Naraguta area and not controlled by the indigenous people of Jos.



Another economic venture was the production of local pomade, which was produced from *cho*: mahogany seeds. It was sometimes produced from *nasa: hophira liansoliata* or fruits of *garan*. The production involved a simple process. The seeds of any of the aforementioned trees were collected, dried and then fried. Later the seeds were pounded and boiled, and, allowed to cool down. The oil later settles on top of the water and was now abstracted from the water and later reheated before it was used. It was this pomade or oil that was sometimes mixed with *ti* or *tsi* and applied to the body or face. The making of olive oil follows the same method.

Today, while the making of local pomade is diminishing, the production of olive oil is still prevalent in many Berom districts. Olive oil is today widely produced in mostly the southern Berom villages, probably because of the availability of olive trees and the frequent domestic use of the oil. Olive oil is also use in cooking special delicacies during festive periods, for example during New Year, Christmas and *nzem* festivals. Pomade and oils of different kinds were exchanged for various items needed by those who were in want of them and this helped in boosting the economic life of many families. For example the Berom of Vwang, Riyom and Hoss exchanged olive and mahogany oils for *ti* from the Berom of Du, Zawan and Shen (Pwajok Danboyi interview).

*Bemat tugu behwo* tanners were people who produced some items out of animal skin. They were found in many Berom villages. This was another very important economic activity of the Berom which was done mainly by men specialists in the craft. They produced items like; *be-pwatak* sandals, *rug*: shields, *mala* bags and so on, mainly from hide of buffaloes and bulls. They also produced leather pants from leopard skins for

the chiefs (and sometimes some wealthy members of the society) and pants from antelope skin for the ordinary people.

The collapse of this economic activity is linked to the colonial tin mining activities, which decimated rivers, hills and forests, the abodes of most of the animals. This led to the disappearance of many animals, thereby making it difficult to acquire the skins of such animals for this important economic activity. The second reason is linked to the importation of hide and skin by the Hausa-Fulani nomads who trooped into Beromland during the tin mining era (Gyang Badung interview).

Trade was also organized among Berom villages and between the Berom and their neighbours. The Berom traded through middlemen called *be-jek* writers. They were believed to possess some supernatural powers; and were easily identified by their straw hats. The middlemen transported goods from one village to other according to the needs of each village. Prior to the introduction of colonial rule in Beromland, there were trade relations between Gyel and Irigwe people; Gashish and Ron people; Fan and Jarawa people; Hoss and Ganawuri people (Bot Nyam, Jok Leng and Chung Kwang interview).

Commenting on trade within and outside Berom society, J. G. Davies observed that; “twenty four containers of local salt: ntou was exchanged between the Berom and Ron for one big horse, while Chun, iron, pots, meat, horses were also exchanged amongst the village groups” (305).

From the above discussion, we noticed that the main stay of economy was the production of food crops. Families and villages produced identical consumable goods. Minor differences however existed within the different families and villages. Moreover, because of inter and intra raiding and warfare, people were afraid to travel far from their

environs. For the aforementioned reasons, trade was not extensively conducted amongst the Berom. However, when there was relative peace the Berom traded within them and their neighbours like the Ron, Anaguta, Rukuba and Aten. The major items of trade were foodstuff, *ntou*: local salt, slaves, horses, *dyam* iron and several things produced in Beromland by blacksmiths, carvers, weavers and farmers.

It is clear from our discussion that most of the economic activities were tied to religious rites and rituals. This will invariably provided us with a blue print, to understand some of the religious rites and rituals and why they were performed. We also noticed that economic activities such as agriculture, blacksmithing, iron smelting and woodcarving were centred on religious rites. Some trees were protected because they were needed for some economic ventures.

The same applied to some forests, rivers, mountains and some species of animals. This kind of selective preservation or utilization of nature in Berom traditional society forces us to ask the following questions. What happened to the spaces that were utilized more than the others? Did the over-utilization of some species of animals and plants, endanger such plants and animals? How healthy was this situation for the Berom, their environment and the entire ecology?

### **3.5 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION**

In traditional Berom society, the family was a very essential unit, and remains so to a certain level today. It was the life wire through which the Berom continued to increase and multiply. The Berom family was made up of a group of patrilineal-extended families. The Berom family consisted of parents, children, grandparents, uncles and aunts and one or two generations of cousins. The average number of persons in a Berom family

consisted of forty to fifty persons living in a number of separate homes or compounds. The extended family consisted of two hundred to four hundred people. This is what they Berom refer to as a clan. Thus, a clan is comprised of a group of families who trace their origin to a particular ancestry.

Most Berom families were polygamous; this system of marriage determines the economic strength, the political and social status of the family (especially that of the man). Thus, it was the general practice that a man lived with several wives in a large compound. The extended patrilineal family of the Berom included (besides) the nucleus of husband, wife/wives, and their numerous offspring, dependent relatives (especially widows) and nephews and nieces. It was a common practice for the sons who remained as part of the father's family to marry and stay with their wives in their father's family compound. The parents of the male children always assisted in taking care of their grandchildren just as they took care of their biological children. In other words, the son belonged to a father in a family and also served the role of a brother at the same time, he was a husband and father of his own children, besides being an uncle to his sister and brother's children (Hywere 28).

Like many other African societies or ethnic groups which have already been discussed by Mbiti, the Berom family did not exclude those yet unborn. The unborn are the buds of hope and expectation, of each family (107). According to Dudu Dalyop, to make sure that its own existence was not extinguished, families contracted marriages immediately a young girl and boy were born. In this way the family provided for its continuity, and prepared for the coming of those not yet born (Dudu Dalyop interview).

The ancestors were considered as the third category of members in every Berom family-the first and second categories being the living members of the family and those yet unborn. Though not physically seen, the ancestors, like every surviving member of the family, were believed to be actively participating in the daily activities of the family and even more. For example, no family meeting was conducted without some prayers to the ancestors.

The family became an important space for socio-religious relationship with the three categories of members in every family. The ancestors served as a link between the living, those not yet born and the sacred world. This made it possible for the Berom family to control space and time events for the general good of all members living, the not yet born and the dead. For example, decision making of the living was sanctioned and made into sacred law only through the validation of such a decision by the ancestors. Such a decision was immediately considered as a solution to the problem itself, because the ancestor was involved through a sneeze from a member of the family (Dudu Dalyop).

The marriage institution is one of the major ways where social relationships were maintained. The aim is not to discuss the broad concept of marriage or types of marriages, but to analyze the concept of Berom traditional marriage as it affected social relationships that concerned the family, the clan and the general society. Marriage can simply be defined as the state of being husband and wife or the legal union or contract made by a man and a woman to live as husband and wife, accompanied with some ceremony formalizing this union.

In pre-modern Berom society, before a marriage was finally conducted, both families must be sure of the following important conditions from both sides. How

disciplined, hardworking and peaceful was the family their daughter/son wanted to get married into or from? Do members of that family die young or at a good ripe old age? Do some members of the nuclear family, extended family, or clan practice witchcraft and sorcery? Do members of the family take good care of their wives? Are the girls married from such a family good home keepers in their marital homes? Do they give birth to stillborn babies? Is the girl or boy from a family of thieves? Is the family associated with mysterious deaths and sicknesses? Is there hunger and starvation in the family?

Rhoda Pam Hywere, wrote that, "these type of family history is traced back to the ancestral family of the would-be husband and wife as far back as human memory can remember" (Hywere 33). The strictest of all rules concerning marriage was that the first wife of the man was not supposed to be divorced. This was due to her role as the *delo*, "mother of the family", who was responsible for the good behaviour of younger wives in the family.

The major marriage in Berom traditional society was the customary marriage. During ceremonies to formalize these marriages, the man and woman were normally taken to a shrine where some traditional rites were performed by the elders or a priest of that shrine. These rituals included prayers for fertility, and the smearing of the girl with *ti*: sacred red ochre fetched from Mado shrine. However, there were other kinds of marriages namely; widow inheritance, levirate marriage, "ghost marriage", and *njem* contractual marriages.

Widow inheritance was practiced in Berom society. For example, following the death of a husband, the woman was free to choose a man from the relations of the deceased to remarry. It could be the deceased man's younger or senior brother or a

member of the extended family or clan. This was possible only when the widow accepted any of these persons from the family or clan as a "second husband". Otherwise, she remained in the house with full rights as every member of the family, lineage and clan.

Ghost marriages were also conducted in Berom traditional society. These marriages were same as levirate marriages. The only difference in "ghost marriage" (among the Berom) was that, the younger brother who inherited the wife of his deceased senior brother and not vice versa.

On the other hand, levirate marriage was only possible following the death of a younger brother. This type of marriage was and it is still being practice among various ethnic groups of the Jos Plateau such as the Rukuba, the Aten, the Buji, the Irigwe and the Anaguta. In this case the senior brother married the widow as observed by Taple Esther concerning the Mupun. This marriage was not regarded as dissolved in the first place (44). The essence of this marriage was to maintain and strengthen relationships within the immediate family.

Divorce was not allowed in Berom traditional society except in the case of adultery, sterility, impotence and maltreatment from the husband. Even these reasons did not allow for divorce immediately. According to Pam Tok, Dung Nyango and Toma Tari interviewed at Lobiring in Ropp district, some of these problems were corrected through certain religious rituals. For instance, when a man was said to be impotent, the wife must not divorce him but could accept to bear children for her husband by keeping a *rwas njem*; that is, a man lover (focus group discussion with Pam Tok, Dung Nyango and Toma Tari). When a woman was discovered to be infertile, the husband could marry another woman (or adopt children from other members of the family) and continue to retain her as

his wife. Perhaps it was for this singular reason that the researcher was adopted by the senior wife of his uncle because she had no child and divorce was not allowed.

Harold D. Gunn wrote concerning divorce in Berom society that, “a man divorce his wife to clear his debt” (23). This was misleading as clearly indicated in a group interview with Chundung Mwadkwon, Garos Davou, Chundung Dachung, Pam Dusu and Rwang Tok at Kabong on the 24<sup>th</sup> December 1987 at Kabong in Jos, who all vehemently rejected this assertion. They instead declared that,

No woman is forcefully separated from her husband, child or children on account of debts, even when she was without any child; it is not the practice to divorce her. Instead of divorce, if the debts of a man are many, usually the man surrendered himself to the *Gwom*: priest chief. The *Gwom* then employ the services of the debtor for some time and the *Gwom* cleared the debts of the man. Sometimes the debtor had to work for him (the creditor) until he (debtor) is able to pay back from this labour. Another alternative is that the *Gwom* could employ the services of the debtor’s eldest son when it was clear that the debtor is not physically fit. There are occasions whereby stubborn child, or children suspected to be witches; wizards or sorcerers amongst the debtor’s children are sold away to settle the debts (Mwadkwon, Davou, Dachung, Dusu, Tok 1987).

Rhoda Pam Hywere corroborated this when she confirms almost in exact terms the views of Mwadkwon, Davou, Dachung, Dusu and Tok above (Hywere 33). However, when a man insisted for whatever reason(s) and divorced his wife who had given birth to children for him, only the bride wealth was returned to the man. There were instances whereby the parents of the man took her back to the family and adequately provided her



with her needs as well. On the contrary, the man was given back the goats and horse he paid to marry the woman. Normally the father of the divorced woman waited until when she was remarried to another man. He then collected the bride wealth and paid back to the first husband. There were cases whereby pregnant women remarried. The child always belonged to the first husband the biological father of the child and the man was under obligation to provide some support for the baby until it was weaned and returned to him.

In some cases, her son, who must have grown up and was also married with a family brought her back to the family. On the contrary, if the woman decided to go away on her own accord, the man and his parents would be free from accusations from members of the family, clan and society.

Another important aspect of marriage in Berom traditional society was *njem*. In a group with interview with Badung Chok and Chwandam Loding at Kwalak in Riyom district, on the 23rd April, 1997, it was gathered that the *njem* relationship, as it existed in Berom traditional society, was a socially sanctioned relationship between a man and another man's wife in which a sexual relationship was allowed to exist between the two parties. This relationship was only possible when all the parties involved had consented to it. The parties involved included the woman, the man, the *njem* lover, and the extended patrilineal families of the husband the lover, the wife's and by extension, the society. This relationship was allowed after series of religious rituals had been conducted to seek the consent and blessings of the ancestors and spirits. The credibility of the would-be *rwas njem* (the lovers) was also investigated before a man would allow his wife to enter into such a relationship. For instance the *njem* lover had to prove himself as a hardworking man. He had to be from a family with a good reputation. He had not to be a thief. His

family should not have been associated with any suspicion of witchcraft or sorcery, with any form of mysterious deaths, or known to have suffered from any form of mental disorder. When the *njem* lover (man) had not been found wanting in any of these qualifications, the couple was permitted to enter into a *njem* relationship (focus group discussion with Dung Chok, Chwandam Loding).

According to Samuel Dung Nyam, some early anthropologists had problems with distinguishing between some of the terms associated with marriage in African societies. They therefore referred to it as polyandry, *cicisbeism*, secondary marriage, wife sharing, and wife-stealing. The *njem* relationship of the Berom, though not a kind of marriage but an aspect of the social relationship within the marriage institution was not an exception. It has proved difficult to place the Berom institution of *njem* into the correct category (145). But the most appropriate term appears to be *cicisbeism* rather than secondary marriage as indicated by Audrey Smedley's article "implications of Berom *cicisbeism*", in which she defines *cicisbeism* as,

The union of a wife with a man other than her husband, which does not follow or give rise to divorce, and is legitimized by betrothal payments made to the husband, the father or guardian of the wife (Smedley 5).

The word *cicisbeism* is probably taking from the Italian word *cicisbes*, meaning a lover of a woman. This can also be equated with the German word *Hausfreund*, referring someone who is considered a friend of a particular family but who is having a secret love affair with the woman of the house.

This definition of *cicisbeism* by Audrey Smedley is valid for the *njem* institution of the Berom. The only difference was that the betrothal payments, by which the *njem*

relationships were initiated and/or maintained, were not paid to the woman's father or guardian but to the legal husband of the woman. Besides the betrothal payments, religious rituals were also important in contracting *njem* relationships. For example, prayers were offered for the man and woman for fertility. A major theme of the prayer was centred on honesty in dealing with the relationship. According to Alamba Don Kara the late chief of Kwogo, we can therefore define *njem* as a legally sanctioned social and religiously approved sexual relationship between a married man and another man's wife which could be contracted by conducting certain religious rituals and observing the contractual arrangements guiding such relationships (Kara interview). It is clear from this definition that this relationship was not possible among unmarried people. Neither was it possible between a married man and unmarried girl or vice versa.

It should be noted that while the society permitted *njem* relationship, it very much frowned upon adultery. When adultery was discovered, both parties to such marital misconduct had to perform a number of cleansing rituals. As a prerequisite for contracting *njem* relationship, a discreet friendship had to be cultivated between the prospective lover and the woman. When the woman was interested in this friendship, the prospective lover still had to cultivate a friendship also with the legal husband of the woman. After he had been successful in both, he would then formally place his request before the husband of the wife. Interestingly, should the woman or her legal husband reject the request that would mark the end of the possibility of a *njem* relationship? The *njem* relationship was bonded and made legal only when all the three parties involved accepted the terms or arrangements. Hywere seems to have maintained a different view from Nyam when she declared that to begin a *njem* relationship, the woman played the greatest role; firstly, she

must be in love with the second lover. Secondly it was her duty to inform her husband. If the husband should reject this man on personal grounds, then the relationship was discontinued (36).

It is true that the woman played a great role in starting a *njem* relationship. However, she was not supposed to inform her husband about the man's intention for fear of arousing suspicion that a sexual relationship existed already between the two. It was thus, the duty of the would-be lover to inform the husband of the woman.

In a focus group discussion with Pam Kim, Chung Rwang, Wang Dung, Feng Gyang, Dalyop Mwanti, Gyang Mwadkwon, Pam Dudu, Honghei Tari and Bot Tok it was discovered that the would-be lover approached the legal husband. He used phrases such as *me simi in vai re hwi e lomo*, which literally means, "I want to come and eat grass in your house." Or *me simi nre honong di de hwe*, meaning, "I want to eat vegetables with your wife" (Pam Kim, Chung Rwang, Wang Dung, Feng Gyang, Dalyop Mwanti, Gyang Mwadkwon, Pam Dudu, Honghei Tari and Bot Tok). The symbolism of grass and vegetables were always used for conveying the request for *njem* relationship, firstly because the Berom people eat a lot of vegetables. Secondly vegetables were prepared and giving to special guests, to someone that was well loved, and to a hardworking member of the family. These phrases immediately informed the legal husband of what the *njem* lover-to-be was talking about.

If the legal husband and his wife approved this relationship, the following conditions or terms were contracted and must were strictly observed in most cases. The new lover must pay what is called a non-refundable access fee, which was normally a goat and

salt depending on the particular Berom society. The meat of the goat was equally shared between the legal husband and extended patrilineal family.

According to Jugu Chung, Dusu Jok, Kpam Tok, and Lomak Dauda, in a focus group discussion it was a way of making them aware that the new *njem* lover was now officially part of the family. Therefore, there was no need of accusing them of adultery or any other kind of unfaithfulness, when the *njem* lover was seen together with his wife (Jugu Chung, Dusu Jok, Kpam Tok, and Lomak Dauda interview).

Every year the *njem* lover had to give a goat to the legal husband of the woman as long as all parties wanted to maintain the relationship. That goat was always shared between the man and his brothers, for the same reason as they had shared the goat at the initiation of the relationship. Failure of a yearly presentation of a goat to the legal husband of the woman by the *njem* lover indicated a definite end to the relationship.

It is of interest that the child, or children, raised in the course of this relationship did not belong to the *njem* lover, as the biological father of the child or children, but to the legal father, the woman's husband. Samuel Dung Nyam reported that it was for this reason that the village head of Rim once lamented that although he had six various *njem* relationships, which resulted in his having fathered six children, he could not as *njem* (man) lover legally claim any of them (148).

Thirdly, the lover had to accept that he must contribute to the feeding and upkeep of the child or children that might result from the *njem* relationship. According to Zang Fwet, Choji Don, Davou Mwadkwon, Dachung Mwadkwon, even after the relationship had been terminated, the *njem* lover (man) was under obligation to contribute to certain important things that affected the future of such a child, or children. For example, he had

to shoulder some of the responsibilities in connection with his or her marriage (Zang Fwet, Choji Don, Davou Mwadkwon, Dachung Mwadkwon interview).

Fourthly, part of the contract was that the *njem* lover must help the legal husband of the wife with his farm work. In some cases, the two went into a farming partnership and jointly kept chickens, goats and other domestic animals.

Fifthly, the *njem* lover had to provide the woman with things like clothing, trinkets, oils for her skin and other such gifts especially during festivals like *mandyieng*, *nshok*, *vwana* and *badu*. Zang Fwet, Choji Don, Davou Mwadkwon, Dachung Mwadkwon in a group interview said that sexual relationships between the *njem* lovers had always taken place at the legal husband's house. Thus, when the *njem* lover came to the house, the legal husband would immediately leave his house. He might either meet his own *njem* lover elsewhere, or, if he did not have such a relationship himself, he might retire to a separate room within the house (focus group discussion with Zang Fwet, Choji Don, Davou Mwadkwon, and Dachung Mwadkwon).

Some *njem* lovers might be required to do other additional tasks depending on the Berom society and how wealthy the *njem* lover was. However, the aforementioned requirements are those legally accepted and contracted. Finally, a woman was allowed to have only one *njem* lover at a time, while a man could have as many as he could afford. Most *njem* relationships lasted for three years depending on the society.

It is evident that three persons were key actors in a *njem* relationship. What are the reasons for and benefits of this relationship to the three parties involved? The aim of this section is therefore to examine the benefits of *njem* relationship as they affected each of the parties involved and the society at large.

Apart from satisfying his sexual needs, the *njem* lover seems not to benefit from this relationship in any practical way. Firstly, he had no legal right over the child or children produced in the course of this relationship, yet he was responsible for their upkeep. Secondly, he was expected to perform much labour service into the relationship in order to maintain it. Thus he had to cultivate the farmlands for the woman, cut firewood for her, and perform many other labour tasks. The *njem* lover was expected to give a goat every year to his lover's husband in order to maintain the relationship. Failure to do so terminated the relationship. According to Dung Hywere, Dung Nyam, and Ezekiel Sambo, the man (*njem* lover) was expected to also supply the woman with her body oils, earrings and necklaces during important festivals. The *njem* lover also catered for his legal wife and children, and all this led to his serious impoverishment (focus group discussion with Dung Hywere, Dung Nyam, and Ezekiel Sambo).

The *njem* lover has to provide the woman with all kinds of gifts during festive seasons for obvious reasons, firstly, because every woman was supposed to look beautifully dressed during this time. Secondly, because she might accept a proposal from a different man if the present *njem* man was not living up to expectation in terms of such gifts. Thirdly, festivals such as *mandyieng*, *nshok*, *vwana* and *badu* provided them with much opportunity to meet and interact with people.

It is clear that the legal husband stood to benefit tremendously from his wife's *njem* relationship. Firstly, he was supplied with goat meat every year. Secondly, he had extra labour on his farm from the *njem* lover and from children who were produced from the *njem* relationship. Thirdly, he fed all children produced by *njem* lover and the legal

husband had nothing to lose. Samuel Dung Nyam commenting on the benefits of the *njem* relationship to the legal husband of the woman said;

The *njem* provided an avenue for men who had many wives to become rich provided they were willing to allow their wives to engage in *njem* relationships ... it is a way out for men who are either impotent or sterile to cover up their inadequacies and still have children legally, although not biologically (149).

Fourthly, the legal husband who was impotent will have children who will save the family name from dying off. He will also have someone to take care of him when he was old and someone to give him a befitting burial rite to mark his transition to the world of the ancestors. This was not to suggest that lazy men were at liberty to contract their wives into a *njem* relationship as was suggested by Nyam's statement above. The economic drive and other unwarranted selfishness noted above were kept in check by the religious rites. The spirits and ancestors had to consent to the relationship. A husband could not by himself force his wife, or wives, into a *njem* relationship. The wife, or wives, must themselves be interested in it and willing to go into such a relationship. And it was most important that the *njem* lover fulfilled all the aforementioned qualifications and contractual arrangements.

In a focus group discussion with Pam Tok, Dung Lange, Davou Dafei informants refused to accept that some men contracted their wives into a *njem* relationship mainly for economic gains. They rather believed that secret lovers were being kept in contemporary Berom society in large numbers both Christians, Muslims and some other members of the society, and they keep them mainly for economic reasons. Perhaps it is a truism that people keep secret lovers in contemporary Berom society for economic



reasons, but one cannot overrule that this may be as a result of the resilience of Berom religion and culture.

The woman benefited from the *njem* relationship tremendously. First, she satisfied her sexual needs by intercourse with more than one man and was able to beget children if her legal husband was impotent. Secondly, she had an insurance against impoverishment and starvation for herself and her children, as the *njem* lover was expected to supply all their food requirements. The woman always had more than enough, for her legal husband also provided her needs besides those provided by her legal husband's kin group.

Generally *njem* relationships seem to have stamped out prostitution in Berom traditional society and drastically reduced cases of adultery which the society frowned at. The Berom believe that adultery could lead to barrenness or to still births. As it was also likely that the men were unable to meet the sexual demands of their wives, *njem* was allowed to bridge this gap to forestall adultery and childlessness. Another possible reason for contracting *njem* (which was not emphasized by informants, and in some cases rejected by them), was the fact that most marriages in traditional Berom society were arranged by the parents, sometimes without the consent of the couples. It was likely that some couples never really loved each other enough to stay together. And because divorce was not allowed, *njem* contractual marriages served as an outlet. They allowed individuals to choose the lovers of their hearts themselves.

Given the fact that the society considered it a curse for someone to be childless, it was also logical for such a society to allow this system to enable impotent men to have their own children through this system of *njem*. Informants also claimed that it helped in strengthening and cementing friendship in each village. Besides, it helped to improve the

economy of poor families, especially when the relationship was between a poor woman and a wealthy man, thereby bridging the gap between the rich and the poor. It reduced adultery and divorce, acts that were socially and religiously disapproved.

It is pertinent to note that there was another form of *njem* which was chiefly practiced within the south-western districts of Beromland such as, in Gyel, Kuru, Vwang, Riyom and Bachit. On this, Samuel Dung Nyam said;

It was a kind of relationship between wives of uncles and their nephews. It was a kind of family arrangement which normally started as a joke, but which sometimes ended in a serious sexual relationship. Especially when the uncle was away on a journey... The nephew could go to the house to meet his uncle's wife. Often one heard the nephew calling his uncle's wife, *wha njem*, woman lover, and she replies by calling the nephew *rwas njem* meaning man lover (150).

It is interesting to note that there are no contractual arrangements in this form of *njem* among the south-western Berom districts, except that it was a kind of a family arrangement. This appears to be a corruption of the original *njem* relationship discussed above which was probably due to differences in the history of the settlement of the south-western districts that has been thoroughly discussed by Charles C. Jacobs (1-22).

In a focus group discussion with Bitrus Mang, John Wap and Jatau Pwat, they reported that there was a drastic decline of the number of *njem* relationships in the 1930s - 1950s. This they reported has generally attributed to the activities of the Christian missions, western education, and the impact of the colonial tin mining industry. The spread of Christianity dealt a serious blow not only to the *njem* relationship, but also to the entire Berom religion and culture. The different Christian missions carried the gospel

of ‘one man, one wife’ to all nooks and corners of Beromland. Thus, any form of sexual relationship outside marriage, even if it was approved under certain laws, was considered sinful. Berom who accepted Christianity considered *njem* relationship purely as adultery. Thus, they condemned it completely and worked hard to see to it that it was stamped out. To many Berom, Christianity became identical with modernity. Christians were regarded as members of a high social class who should not engage in such “barbaric acts”. Worse still is that people who were suspected of continuing in this relationship that many Berom despite their having lost their traditional religion (were not ready to part ways with) were barred from partaking in the Eucharist (focus group discussion with Mang, John Wap and Jatau Pwat).

Samuel Deme, Gyang Badung, Helen Pam, Grace Nyam and Mary Bwos indicated that the introduction of western education led to a change in the attitude of many Berom people towards *njem*. They began to view sexual relationships as a personal affair that should naturally involve a man and his wife, and not sharing the wife with someone else. This reduced the incidence of *njem* to a certain extent. Western education made the people understand that it was shameful to share one’s wife for material benefits by disregarding the religious and cultural traits involved in *njem* relationship. Children born from *njem* relationships at this point in time received some formal education. They were not happy because they always demanded to know their biological father and most of them would prefer to live with their biological father. This is because their friends always mocked them. By the 1930s to 1940s quite a number of the women were educated. They always made fun of women whose husbands had entered into whatever kind of *njem* relationship because they viewed those women as illiterates, uncivilized, and not as

members of their own social class (focus group discussion with Samuel Deme, Gyang Badung, Helen Pam, Grace Nyam and Mary Bwos). On this particular point Nyam observed that;

The educated women were seen taunting the orders of their husbands as they would always reply to whatever request made by them (their husbands): ‘let your *njem* woman do that for you and not me’, especially when she found out that there existed two extreme cases. First that she was regarded as educated, more beautiful and of high status in the society; which qualities the *njem* woman lacked. Second, when it was the opposite way round, then she felt threatened, especially when there was total neglect from her husband. Worse still, when she had no *njem* lover and her sex and material needs were not provided for (151).

The decline of the *njem* relationship within the 1940s was probably because of the abuse of the institution by most *njem* lovers. Some *njem* lovers became so intimate to the extent that the *njem* relationships led to marriages. This made many women and men wary of engaging in a *njem* relationship for fear of losing their partners. Marriages resulting from *njem* relationships became so frequent and numerous in many Berom districts that the village head of Ra-hoss in Riyom district had to take the drastic action of abolishing the *njem* institution in his domain (Nyam 151). However, apart from Hoss, there are no records that any other Berom district or village took action against the *njem* institution.

The beginning of the early decade of the twentieth century marked the impact of tin mining industry on the entire life of the Berom. Tin mining activities affected the religious, socio-political and economic life of Berom and thus contributed to the decline of *njem* relationship in two basic ways. First, there was the decrease in farmlands due to

activities of the mining industry. This led to gross imbalance in the farmland for the mass population of the people. Naturally, this gave rise to an increase in poverty among the Berom. It therefore became increasingly difficult to meet the material obligations that were always contracted in *njem* relationships, especially in respect of agricultural products. With the increase of land shortage, most people were no longer interested in contracting the expensive *njem* relationships. Therefore, most people found it useless to allow their wives to contract a *njem* relationship, because one important aspect of the contract which was assisting the women to cultivate their farmlands had been overtaken by the events of the mining industry. When contracted, *njem* relationships did survive on the presents lavished on the woman by her *njem* lover. Following the impoverishment of Berom by the tin mining industry, many *njem* lovers could no longer provide their *njem* women with these gifts. This led to the termination of several *njem* relationships. Secondly, to maintain the cheap labour needed by the mining industry, it introduced a system of making the mining camps attractive by allowing the sale of *sireng* or *vwere*, a locally brewed beer, gambling, traditional and modern music and prostitution to go on in all mining camps.

As sexual services were provided more cheaply by prostitutes in the mining camps, men who hitherto engaged in *njem* basically for sexual drive found it cheaper to engage the services of these prostitutes in the mining camps than to continue in the rather expensive and time consuming *njem* contractual relationships. The aforementioned reasons may therefore be said to have led to the gradual decline and final collapse of *njem* relationship, but to what level? This leads to the next stage of the discussion, which is the present stage of *njem* institution.

In spite of the decline in *njem* by the 1930s onwards, it was still persisted in some Berom villages under new names. One was *hwa lo gwaha*, which literally means “my uncle’s wife,” but also carried the connotation of “my lover”. Another was *hwong*, which means “girl” and was an indirect way of addressing a married woman as “my girl friend”. A third was *wen*, which means “boy” and was the term by which a woman addressed a man in order to refer to him indirectly as her lover. None of the traditional formalities were anymore important in this new form of *njem* relationship and were, therefore, no longer observed. But it was now a secret affair.

Interestingly enough, this secret relationship, which was probably a continuation of the Berom traditional practice, is found today even among those who profess the Christian and Muslim faiths. Nowadays, it is no longer normal to approach a man openly with the request of being permitted to start a *njem* relationship with his wife. Therefore, when a couple was suspected or caught in the act, it could lead to a divorce or crisis in the family. Such relationships are not restricted to the Berom only, but now seems to be a widespread phenomenon, which is regarded purely as adultery, and different from the original conventional *njem*. However, many people who continue to engage in such acts still refer to it erroneously as *njem*, not as adultery, even when the traditional conventional rites have not been performed. Many people agree that the resurgence of *njem* was mainly due to economic reasons and lust on the part of some women and men. But one cannot overrule the fact that it is only a survival of Berom tradition. Another reason is the lack of societal control, as it functioned in traditional society. There, such acts were frowned at and were viewed as spelling doom for the entire society, if they are not confessed and

cleansed ritually. For these reasons, modern life style may be considered one of the main reasons for a resurgence of *njem*.

In conclusion, the *njem* as discussed above points to one basic fact. That it was a multi-functional social institution in pre-colonial and early colonial Berom society with an economic undertone. This practice had survived in changed forms till today. Its main significance was seeking insurance for the woman, and also a source of labour and services by the *njem* lover for her child or children and her husband. In traditional society, the practice involved the consent of the three parties and indirectly the entire society, for the members of the extended family also shared in the meat of the goat provided by the *njem* lover at the start of the *njem* contract. The introduction of Christianity, Western education and the mining industry led to socio-religious, economic and political changes in all aspects of life of the Berom. The effects of these factors reached a climax in the 1930s-1940s. This eroded the *njem* as all these forces dealt a blow either directly or indirectly to the *njem* relationship and other aspects of Berom socio-economic, political and religious life. Finally, we saw that the practice of the *njem* relationship is secretly continued in modern Berom society. Many people would prefer calling this adultery because of failure of the parties involved to observe the formal way of contracting the *njem* relationship. The form in which *njem* has survived is practiced publicly even by members of Christian and Muslim faiths, who are not necessarily Berom and who had earlier on condemned the institution.

Christians, Muslims and the educated cream in contemporary Berom society, who had hitherto condemned *njem* relationship, the idea of keeping a *hwa lo gwaha*, *hwong* and *wen* now engaged in sexual relationships outside marriage. Though they no longer

use such seductive terms, the practice of keeping sexual partners outside legally married wife or wives by Muslims, Christians, the elite class and even those who have “no religion” is no longer a hidden issue.

### **3.6 POLITICAL ORGANISATION**

The Berom, prior to the advent of colonialism, practiced a patrilineal system of government. The village group formed the basic political unit. The political system was based on a hereditary chieftaincy and remained vested in one family that was usually the founder of the village. The first man to settle in a particular space was considered the founder and ruler of that space. The system of government was centred on a Priest-chief, who simultaneously performed dual functions: political and religious. As villages grew due to increase in population, this led to the emergence of new figures in the political set up. Thus, big villages were sub-divided and a political figure appointed to take charge of each of them. This led to a hierarchy in the political set up. This system received recognition during colonial period leading to the division of the whole of the Berom country in 1927 into eight districts. During this time, a new political concept and figure *Dagwom* came into being in Berom political structure. Following this development, both titles of *Dagwom* district head and *Gwom* village head were indiscriminately applied in most parts of Beromland. An exception existed among some southern Berom, like the Berom of Bachit, Rim, Sopp and some parts of Gashish. In these other parts of Beromland, the district head was called *Darwei*; literally meaning "holy or sacred father," while the head of the subordinate village was called *Da-gwom*. In this regard *Da-gwom* was applied to only retired chiefs, *Da*, meaning "father" and *Gwom*, meaning "chief", this depicts a kind of respect that was still accorded to the old chief.



At the top of Berom traditional political structure was the *Gwom*: priest-chief. He was considered a priest-chief because he performed religious and political functions at the same time. Thus, he was sometimes referred to as *Gwom Kwit*, meaning, "the chief priest of rituals". Because he (*Gwom Kwit*) was ritually installed, he was qualified to pray directly to the Supreme Being on behalf of his people besides arbitrating in disputes that threatened the unity of the village, among other important functions. He had quite a number of wards under him with smaller political leaders leading such wards. The small political leaders are called, *Be-Damanjei*: ward heads. The *Gwom* commands the respect and obedience of all his *Be-Damanjei*, and the other village members, both young and old. He acts as a check on the power of the *Be-Damanjei*.

Spiritually, he was the chief mediator between the people and the sacred world of the spirits, ancestors and the deities. He presided over most religious rituals and meetings; in other words, no religious ceremony took place without his approval. The religious functions of the priest-chief were carried out in conjunction with the designated priest(s) of the various spirits or deities for such occasions.

On the spiritual and secular role of the *Gwom*, J. G. Davies wrote that,

He gave guidelines on when to farm, harvest, and hunt and to celebrate any festival besides administering the laws of the land. He controlled the supply of foodstuff, preserved seeds for the next farming season, allocates farmland to newly married couples, controlled and directs communal labour through some of his various assistants like, the *Damajei*: ward head, *Vwu Gwom* or *Sa Gwom*: servant and friend of the chief respectively (303-304).

Ames observes that the *Gwom* was vested with the power to redeem any slave, thus making the slave a free member of the community. He could make the slave his servant, or adopt the slave as a member of his family. The heads of big animals killed during hunting were taken to him. He was thus, the only person who wore the leopard skin (63). The leopards were killed in organized hunting in shrines like Mado and Behwol. The priest chief used the skins and skulls of wild animal. This may explain one of the reasons why he was considered sacred. Leopard skins and skulls were used as symbols of bravery, achievement and leadership quality of the *Gwom*. Rhoda Pam Rhoda Hywere said that in exercising his role as a leader of the people, the *Gwom* priest-chief with his ritual knowledge led his people to every battlefield in the company of the *Gwom Chomo*; commander in chief of the warriors (18-19).

The *Gwom* was the trustee of all uncultivated lands. Land was considered sacred, - it was a gift from God, and was placed under the care of a sacred figure. This responsibility stemmed from his ritual functions, and this was to ensure the survival and prosperity of the entire village community. The village community depended completely on the land, both for religious, economic and socio-political activities. Therefore, his permission was always sought if individuals or groups needed land. The priest-chief was usually the first person to settle in a given area, thus, he and his descendants had the right to allocate vacant land to subsequent arrivals.

The *Gwom* had two important figures that were very close to him. They included the *vwu-Gwom* and *Sa-Gwom*. The first, *vwu-Gwom*: literally means, "dog of the chief", in other words, "servants of the chief"; with the latter *Sa-Gwom*, meaning, "friend of the chief". They always accompanied the chief while performing his duties. They were

expected to be very wise and versed in socio-religious and political matters. They acted as "eyes" and "ears" of the *Gwom* as they listened and advised the *Gwom* on events in the village. In some Berom areas, like Foron, the *Sa Gwom* or *Bevo Gwom* were members of the royal family and sometimes succeeded the chief (Hywere 23). Thus, they were very important personalities in Berom traditional political structure.

The installation of the *Gwom* was done by numbers of chief-makers, usually three in number, one of which must be a member of the royal family. This however, varied from one Berom society to the other. For example, in Kwogo; members of the chief makers were five. At installation the *Gwom* was handed an insignia of office *gwele sheh gwom* (bamboo stick), which has been passed through from several generations. The symbolic pouring of *nei pwat*: olive oil, on his head and chest preceded the installation. He was also rubbed with *Ti*: sacred red ochre acquired from Mado shrine, which was believed to be medicinal. He was then presented with the insignia of office and conferred with powers over religious, socio-economic and political matters of his people. This included *Gwele-Gwom*: a bamboo stick or a special wooden stick carved out of *choo*: mahogany tree. He was also presented with *Be-bare*: spears, *ne rawi*: bracelets all symbols of his power and authority; *Sung-to* a large jar or a pot with the design of a human head and *Shi -cho*: a calabash, for his drinks and drinking respectively. Although the priest chief was installed in public, this was possible only after the rituals for his office had been carried out secretly. According to Davou Mwadkwon Fwet, Choji Don and Dachung Mwadkwon Fwet, during these rituals the priest-chief was introduced to the ancestors, deities and most importantly the spirits that occupied a very central position in Berom cosmology. He was taken to a *dem kwit hei* (bush shrine) and stayed for three days

where he had contact with nature spirits and believed to be visited every night by the spirits. The insignia of office of the priest were articles derived from sacred items such as bamboo sticks, mahogany tree olive oil and red sacred ochre (focus group discussion with Davou Mwadkwon Fwet, Choji Don and Dachung Mwadkwon Fwet).

It is important to note that the insignia of office presented during installation of new chiefs varied from one Berom society to the other. The articles presented as insignia of office were mostly derived from shrines, sacred items and sacred trees. The essence was to introduce the *Gwom* to these forces of nature as his office was that of a spiritual and political head. This may explain why the Berom preserved these species of trees, as they were needed during such important occasions that affected the entire community, given the roles of the *Gwom* in the society.

As a prerequisite for becoming a *Gwom*, or to hold any of the political positions in Beromland, the candidate must be married. He must be of good character and not a witch or a sorcerer. He must be a descendant of the family or clan who first settled in the village, and was himself the head of his own, or extended patrilineal family or clan. However, cases abound where adopted children or freed slaves by the *Gwom* became chiefs because he (*Gwom*) had no male child to succeed him.

The method for the selection of a successor of the priest-chief varied from one Berom village to the other. However, a major rule was that a new chief was appointed only after the death of the old one. As regards ill-health or old age the *Gwom* may appoint his eldest son or any male of *Bead lo-gwom*: members of the royal family to arbitrate on his behalf. This was possible only when his son was too young, and could not handle this office, or, proved irresponsible, and worse still, when he had no male child.

The person who succeeded the priest-chief must be a man of exceptional character. He must have a sense of duty and respect for traditional customs. He must have behaved well towards elders; he must be eloquent and able to address the public. He must be intelligent, have a sense of authority, and, must have been initiated into adulthood. The installation of the priest-chief was done in public, in the presence of members of the entire village.

The *Gwom* priest-chief was subjected to several taboos protecting him and his office. For example, he was not allowed to cross any stream or river. He must not wash his body with rainwater during rainy season until harvest time. He was not allowed to bathe in a river or running water. He could only wash himself in a calabash or standing water. It was believed that *Chun* crop would wear out or be washed away by rainwater if the *Gwom* contravened any of the aforementioned taboos. The end result may lead to famine. Taboos surrounding the priest-chief were connected to water because the Berom believed that rain water, or water in the river could wash off the medicinal power of the sacred red ochre smeared on the chief during installation. According to Davou Daye even the instruments presented as insignia of office should not be exposed to water as the powers in them might as well be washed off (Davou Daye interview). The chief must not take part in hunting expeditions. He was not allowed to drink or eat indiscriminately in public places except in his house or that of the elders. He was not allowed to keep late in the evenings outside his compound. These taboos were meant to place severe restrictions on the movement of priest-chief and for this reason the position seems not greatly coveted before the introduction of colonialism.

Next to the *Gwom* was another political figure called *Damajei*: ward head, whose office was not hereditary. The *Gwom* appointed him to the throne, and thus, he was answerable to the *Gwom*. In other words the powers of *Be-Damajei*: ward heads, were checked by the *Gwom* because they implemented laws and orders from the *Gwom*. For example, the *Damajei* organized meetings of people within his ward and kept the *Gwom* informed of happenings in his ward. Therefore, larger villages were continuously subdivided, and the authority to rule vested in the hands of *Be-Damajei*. This was to make for easy administration of the village.

The next important political figures in Berom society were the *Be-danlo*; household heads, or those of the extended patrilineal family and clan that traced its origin to a particular ancestry. They commanded the respect and obedience of all members of their immediate and extended patrilineal families, as they presided over, and settled most problems affecting them. They forwarded those family problems beyond their capacity to the *Damanjei* ward head. However, the *Damanjei* could as well forward the cases to the *Gwom* if, and only when, such cases were above his judicial power.

As a member of the council of *Bemakuk* or *Bekamat* elders, every *Dalo* became part of the Berom political hierarchy, playing a very important role in the administration of the village. They served in their capacity as advisers to the *Gwom* and in most cases, to the *Damanjei*. They met from time to time to discuss matters affecting the whole village. For example, when to go for hunting, when to begin festivals, they settled witchcraft and sorcery cases, dealt with cases of epidemics and judged cases of disloyalty. They always met in the mornings at small ritual or sacred spaces to take such decisions. Morning was chosen for the meeting because the spirits and other forces of nature would be at rest this

time having worked so much in the night. The fact that such decisions were carried out in sacred places made the decisions sacred themselves. Every member of the village community thus held such decisions in high esteem, and observed them religiously.

Judgment was always passed out by the chief in the presence of the elders who sometimes acted as members of the jury. The elders were considered as the official interpreters of ancestral customs. They were qualified to give verdicts according to the seriousness of the offence. This may explain why most of the ritual priests of the different shrines in Berom traditional society were elders. Decisions (or judgments) on such important matters affecting the village were taken or passed with the full consent of the designated priest(s) of the spirits or shrines involved. The priest(s) must have a say on the nature of the fine or punishment to be meted on the culprit(s), or the rituals to be performed to correct the system. The *Gwom* then made it clear by announcing that the action be carried out or implemented. Although the priest-chief was considered sacred, he was not in any way autocratic, because he shared his powers with the council of elders and the priest of every ritual or shrine (Suffill 18).

For these reasons, each village had its tribunal and its judges who were always informed of the local events and happenings by the ward heads and elders. They (priest-chiefs) were always alerted as soon as the slightest irregularity happened. Offences ranged from breaking taboos that were connected with sacred spaces, buffer zoned areas, matrimonial quarrels, inability to pay back debts, slander and damage to property. Offenders were either asked to pay some fine of maybe a cock, hen, goat, horse, knives, grains and cows or given strokes of the cane in public. This largely depended on the nature of the offence. For example, offences like murder, theft, adultery, working in a

buffer zoned space, and desacralization of sacred space(s) were considered as big offences and carried heavy punishments. Thus, anyone found guilty of any of these offences may face death penalty, expulsion from the community or sold into slavery (Baker 9).

The *Gwom-chomo* Commander in chief of the army or warriors was yet another important political figure. The *gwom chomo* is endowed with *Bes* an innate supernatural power, which he uses in fighting wars to defend the territory of his *Gwom*. His duty was to mobilize warriors when another village threatened the territorial integrity of his village. He was well respected in every village because of his closeness to the *Gwom*. Because of his role he (*Gwom-chomo*) was considered as someone who assisted the *Gwom* to remain on the throne.

From the above discussion so far, we notice that no single village established hegemony over the others in traditional Berom society. The villages existed as separate republics, which were only regionally united in observing some religious or cultural festivals. Irrespective of the fact that no village exercised political hegemony over the others, Riyom was a dispersal centre for those villages claiming a southern origin. Villages that claimed to have been founded directly or indirectly from Riyom sent the heads of dangerous animals and those of external enemies killed in war to be deposited in the central *Vum* a sacred deep pit in Riyom.

Charles C. Jacobs observes that the central *Vum* in Riyom was considered an important ritual linkage, which drew the attention of all Berom villages claiming the southern origin. Riyom became a provincial religio-political headquarters for many Berom villages. For these reasons many cases were settled at the central shrine in Riyom before the advent of colonialism into Beromland. Those who claimed the southern origin



also buried their dead with their heads pointing to Riyom. They also stacked their *chun* crop facing the same direction. Riyom was also the starting point of the *Mandyieng* cycle, (an important festival to mark the planting of crops) and all other villages followed when Riyom had started (16). This to an extent made the position of Riyom central and important in the dispensation of justice and observance of religious festivals in traditional Berom land. The analogy is comparable and similar to the Jewish tradition with the synagogues that was belt facing the Jerusalem temple.

Before 1926, the Berom were not absorbed into the British colonial government. This was because they continuously resisted their interference. However, following the creation of Plateau province in 1926, the colonial government recommended the creation of eight districts in the Berom area. Pranker, the then colonial administrator seems to have been interested in creating large districts than in using the pre-colonial polities.

Charles C. Jacobs wrote that although Pranker recognized the special importance of Riyom for many villages, he did not consider that this outweighed the weakness of Riyom, he thought that Kuru would be a better site for any central institution; but in practice none were created (21-22). It was not until 1927 that Jos Division was divided into fifteen districts, and eleven made up the Berom tribal area (Davies 48) 1927 was an important date in the history of Berom polity as this led to additional concepts and figures in the polity, namely, those of *Gbong Gwom* big chief or president general and *Dagwom* a district head with less religious and more of political responsibilities. This shift of interest from a religious leader to a political one was meant to make the indirect rule system of the colonialists successful.

Charles C. Jacobs further wrote that by the 1940s, Berom society was in a state of crisis as a result of the effects of mining, the Great Depression of 1929-1939, the locust invasions of Beromland, the activities of the Christian missions, and the spread of Western education and civilization. Under the impact of these factors the previously self-sufficient Berom polities became impoverished and virtually reduced to a state of collapse (23).

Berom were forced to become full-time mine labourers because of lack of land, which made it impossible for most families to grow enough food to meet their subsistence requirements. By this time the Christian Missions, especially the Sudan United Mission (SUM) and the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) which had been working in the Berom area for a very long time, began to have a significant impact resulting in the further undermining of the traditional religion, and worldview which had hitherto given the people a sense of cohesion as a socio-economic and political unit.

The mission schools were beginning to turn out a trickle of Berom with sufficient education to become district scribes, dispensers and schoolteachers. It was this relative handful of persons who provided the core of the newly political conscious modern elite who were as observed by Charles C. Jacobs:

Not only prepared to champion the rights of their ethnic group against the colonial government and the expatriate mining companies, but also the process of internal colonialism by which they were being marginalized within their own land. The British who had hitherto been complaining about the conservatism of the Berom, and the parochialism of the Berom chiefs found themselves faced with a sudden awakening of the Berom. This led to political changes which included a

demand for educated leaders who could uphold the interest of the people in discussion with Government and advice, their people on how best to deal with the urgent problems of the day (24).

The appointment of Rwang Pam as President of the Tribal Council at the end of 1947 has been followed in 1948 by the appointment of not less than five literate village chiefs. There was a shift from the traditional priest-chief *Gwom-Kwit* towards younger and better-educated chiefs. Following the new developments and J. S. Synge's recommendations, the Berom tribal area was created which included Ganawuri, Kwal, Naraguta, Foron, Gashish, Heipang, Kuru, Bachit, Riyom, Ropp, and Vwang. (The last eight were of the Berom proper). This reorganization combined the Berom, Ganawuri, Irigwe, and Anaguta as well as certain Jarawa villages into a federated unit called Berom tribal area all of which were answerable to the *Gwom-Kwit* of Riyom (Davies 50). The former ritual priest, the *Be-Gwom* was promoted to district head with the title of *Be-Dagwom*- senior chief in the new political dispensation. However, there was the need to occupy the vacant position created by the new polity that of the leader of the entire Berom Tribal Council.

This then led to the selection of Dachung Gyang, (the *Damajei* of Kwalak in Riyom) as the permanent President (*Gbong Gwom*) of the Berom Tribal Area. He (Dachung Gyang) had fifteen senior chiefs and seventy-three lesser chiefs as members of the Berom Tribal Council. Each village group had a 'D' grade court that appeals were laid to the senior chiefs sitting at Riyom as grade 'C' court, later promoted to grade 'B' court.

The experiment of setting up a centralized institution did not work very well because the other senior chiefs *Bedagwom*, such as Pwajok Vwos, *Dagwom* Kuru, resented the fact that Dachung Gyang had been chosen as *Gbong Gwom* Big Chief. They refused giving him their support. Moreover Dachung Gyang showed himself to be autocratic (a system that was foreign to the Berom). For example, he interfered in chieftaincy appointments, which was the duty of the chief-makers. He tried to get his candidates appointed even when their claims were doubtful. Thus, “Riyom became less popular as the political space of the entire Berom, and attendance were always poor” (Jacobs 23).

By 1941, it became obvious that the experiment of having Dachung Gyang as the permanent President of the Berom was a total failure, the colonial authorities had to remove him from his position of *Gbong Gwom*. When he was removed he reverted to being *Dagwom* Riyom, a position he held until 1944. Though the first *Gbong Gwom* institution was not a great success, it was significant that no village demanded that it should regain its autonomy. For this reason Berom Tribal Council continued to survive as a forum to discuss such matters as rules governing marriage, land disputes and government policies.

Following the deposition of Dachung Gyang as the *Gbong Gwom*, the position was then rotated amongst the senior chiefs *Be-Dagwom* under a new name, the *Gbong Mwad* big man system. By 1947, the colonial authorities demanded from the Berom chiefs a single chief who would act as spokesman for the Berom and represent them in the house of chiefs in Kaduna. Jealousy amongst the senior chiefs *Be-Dagwom* eliminates the possibility of their selection of one person amongst them for the permanent position of the

*Gbong Gwom*. Besides, it was desirable that the candidate should have some western education and knowledgeable in the new socio-political and economic milieu. A condition which “eliminated most of the *Be-Dagwom*, majority of whom were ‘illiterates’, and parochial in the extreme”(Jacobs 26)

Following this development Rwang Pam was selected to be the permanent *Gbong Gwom*. Though he was opposed by the *Be-Dagwom* of Gyel and Kuru, on the grounds that he was neither a ruling chief nor did he come from a royal family, but this argument could not change the position of the other *Be-Dagwom*. On the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1947 the *Be-dagwom*'s recommendation of Rwang Pam was submitted to a full meeting of the Council that was attended also by many ward heads and most of the literate members of the Berom community. Jacobs reported that during Rwang Pam's presentation "not a single voice was raised against him and the proposal that he should be President was greeted with acclamation" (Jacobs 27). Rwang Pam was not only to be the permanent President of the council, but also its chief executive. He was to advise and supervise the general administration of the area with a central office in Jos and not Riyom, to enable him an easy access to the District Officer. Since then the position of the *Gbong Gwom* has been accepted into the Berom political structure following the installation of Dr. Fom Bot in March 1970 as the third *Gbong Gwom* of Jos.

Today, the ritual or religious aspects of the Berom political institution seems eroded. The *Gbong Gwom*, *Dagwom*, *Gwom*, and *Damanjei* no longer perform religious functions, they are no longer considered as sacred persons. For example people no longer wait for orders from the *Gwom Kwit* to plant or harvest their crops. By the 1930s people no longer waited to be allocated a piece of land by the priest-chief.

This sub-section of the work presented the political organization of the Berom during pre-colonial period, colonial period and postcolonial period. From our discussion so far, it is clear that the Berom in pre-colonial period practiced what one might call for want of name, "decentralized democracy", in which each village group arranged its political set up. Each group identified the functions of the others, with little overlaps while intrusion on other's professional areas was highly resisted. Thus, in pre-colonial period, while the *Gwom* was the overall political head, he did not interfere in the priest chief's ceremonials, which were very important in the calendar of Berom society. According to Thomas Baba Bingel, "all he did was to direct the priest chief to start his rituals at the right time" (Bingel 6).

The introduction of colonialism led to the appointment of political chiefs *Be-Dagwom* and *Gbong Gwom* who were on salary and were becoming increasingly literate. The colonial government was anxious to replace a system of direct rule, which was centred at the villages with a centralized one. This replaced the system of traditional priest-chief with religious functions. This development led to the appointment of first, Dachung Gyang as the President of the Berom Tribal Council, then the subsequent ones in the persons of Da. Rwang Pam, Da. Dr. Fom Bot, Da Dr. Victor Dung Pam (DIG Retired) and the Present *Gbong Gwom* Jos Da. Elder Jacob Gyang Buba. The position of the *Be-Dagwom* and *Gbong Gwom* paved the way for a political hegemony over villages by the Districts. The *Gbong Gwom* also exerted this hegemony on all chiefs either of villages or districts because they were answerable to him.

Did this new development in any way affect Berom eco-religious ethics and worldview? For example, with the new political milieu, how was land being used, or

acquired. When the power of the priest-chief who was in-charge of land allocation was limited to only political figure, did it affect the Berom concept of land? Given that people no longer received orders from the priest to start cropping or harvest their crops; did this affect the method of planting and harvesting? Did the Berom continue to respect their shrines and buffer zoned areas and places that were under the authority of both political and religious leaders? These questions are important as they all affect how land was acquired and used during colonial and post-colonial Berom society.

### **3.7 BEROM RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW**

The major aim of this section or chapter is to answer the following questions: what is worldview? How are worldviews formulated? Is there uniformity in the formulation of worldviews? What is the importance of worldviews? How did Berom worldview help in understanding the environment? How were Berom land used, land acquired and utilized based on their worldview, and to what extent did this lead to over utilisation or preservation of the ecology. While the first five questions are answered in this chapter the last two shall be answered in chapter five.

Many African cultures enjoyed varied worldviews, which served as channels through which nature, the environment, and the entire ecology was viewed, understood, interpreted, and controlled. Worldviews are thus, "the reservoirs of indigenous knowledge, stored in proverbs and folk myths" (Kalu 3).

The Berom myth of cosmology points to an omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Supreme Being, who dwells somewhere in the sky, and is responsible for the creation of the earth and all therein (Mwadhkon 75). This myth is not explicit on how the Supreme Being created the world. However, the myth from the onset presented the earth

as a sacred canopy, being the creation of a sacred Supreme Being. The socialization of the earth was further emphasized and explained by the different roles played by gods, spirits and ancestors. This kind of myth is not exclusive to the Berom alone. Many African people have similar myths of origin, explaining how the world came into existence. Kalu has reported of how one of such myths which imagines the earth as a sacred egg, at once delicate, enfolding and nurturing. Through such myths various African cultures;

Begin to construct how and why things are the way they are. Explanation aid prediction of space-time events and this, in turn, enables control. Myths of origin are, therefore, the vehicles of worldviews and differ among the ethnic groups...A common structure underlies all of them and they share a deep level meaning. Each is couched in religious, numinous terms: creation was the act of a Supreme Being utilizing the services of subaltern gods. The divine confers a sacred shroud on the created beings and social order (Kalu 3).

In spite of the fact that a common structure underlies many African worldviews, many African societies formulated their worldviews based on different models. These models, which are unique to the individual cultures and societies, are influenced by their environment and ecology. Thus Ikenga-Metuh wrote that, some people's worldview, such as the Kalabari, Ashanti and Akan were formulated based on their ecology; while others like the Yoruba patterned theirs after their social and political structure (61). Worldview thus became the base of traditional customs, social norms and law, enfolded with a religious canopy. Worldviews are embedded in the people's experience and expressed or re-enacted in their cultures. Kalu used the example of the cultural feature of masquerades of semi-savannah grassland and riverine communities to show this, when he wrote that;



Some look like moving bundles of grass. Among the forest-zone dwellers, the masquerades leap out of the bushes as followers caparison with leaves and branches. In the Owu festival of the riverine communities of the Niger Delta, the masquerades arrive in canoes with masks depicting various kinds of fishes. The community would dance to the waterfront; welcome them with a chorus into the village, and the celebration would begin. At dusk, they are led back to the beach; as they paddle off, the people would wave and cry for the departing ancestors. That is the crux of the cultural form: the masquerades are ancestors; the living and the living-dead re-unite even if for a brief period. The Owu cultural form is a celebration of a certain worldview explaining the moral order (3).

From the above example, it is clear that the environment puts forward some challenges; the society constructs a worldview which explains or solves the problems posed by these challenges. Due to the encounter of the community with the environment, it forges a culture that enables her to tame the environment and harness the resources of the environment for the benefit of the community.

Considering the above statement in relation to the Berom, we have to ask how the Berom formulated their worldview to unravel the riddle of the universe as it posed some challenges to them. In Berom traditional religion, the gods, spirits and ancestors were connected to natural objects and spaces. For example, the abode of the spirits and gods were the mountains, swamps, rivers, trees, hills, rocks, forests, caves and grooves. These natural spaces thus, constituted the shrines in Berom religion and explain the relationship between the religion and ecology. Religious communication with the spirits that pervade all aspect of Berom life was easily done in these nature shrines. It is thus, obvious that the

ecology was instrumental in the formulation of Berom worldview. This may explain why pantheons of nature spirits and gods pervaded Berom worldview. These spirits and gods enabled the people to control space-time events to harness the ecology for the general benefit of the village community.

Maceo Eliade has argued that dominant among traditional societies, is a construct of the concept of time around the cyclical movements of agricultural seasons from planting to harvest, time is repeated in the eternal cycle (42). According to Ogbo Kalu, Maceo Eliade's argument shows that life follows the pattern of nature, moving from birth, through accession to various stages, rights and duties, symbolised by membership in one sodality or the other, till death. That was not the end, for a new stage of living would begin, as the personality soul of the individual begins a journey through the spirit world until reincarnation (6). This argument fits into the Berom worldview. For this reason, important festivals marking cycles of life, such as birth; initiation into adulthood, initiation into secret cults; dead rites and cycles of passage of time from planting to harvest were all connected to these nature gods and spirits. The belief in reincarnation was also strong among the Berom. We shall come to this later in our discussion.

Some anthropologists and scholars of religion have tried to explain for the subtle difference in the meaning of worldviews. This has led to different definitions and meanings of worldviews; many examples abound. Ikenga-Metuh wrote:

A people's worldview is the sum total of beliefs, attitudes concerning the origin, the nature, structure, organization and interaction of beings in the universe with particular reference to man. It seeks to answer fundamental questions about the place and relationship of man with the universe. These fundamental answers

provide man with the ability to control his environment and to establish his social and political institutions. Understanding a people's worldview is the key to understanding their social, political and psychological problems. It also helps to understand how people evaluate life both temporal and non-temporal (Metuh 61).

Taking the Berom worldview into consideration one discovers that there is more to it than just concepts, beliefs, and attitudes, which the people shared. A description of the whole life of the Berom within a social context is clear about this. Thus we notice that Berom worldview constitutes the underlying thought link to the logic, which holds them together as a people; interacting with different forces within their environment.

According to Tucker and Grim, worldview is, “a story of the world which informs all aspects of life among a people, giving substance practices, artistic creation, ritual play and military endeavour content” (42). Charles Kraft emphasized the place of values in a worldview as “the culturally structured assumptions, values and commitments underlying a people's perception of behaviour” (20, 182). Perhaps this influenced Marguerite Kraft's meaning of worldview, when she opined that worldviews;

Affect how people perceive self, the in-group to which they belong, outsiders, nature around them and non-human world...Which makes it possible for the people to feel comfortable in their environment... Worldview is a picture of what is and ought to be, and it provides the motivation for behaviour and gives meaning to the environment (21).

D. G Mandelbaum observes that Edward Sapir an ethnologist wrote that worldviews are, "the unconscious patterning of behaviour in society... the way a people

characteristically looks outward on the universe" (548). Kalu quotes Sapir who wrote that worldviews are;

Noted patterns of thought, attitude towards life, conceptions of time, a mental picture of what ought to be, a people's understanding of their relationship to unseen things and to the order of things, and their view of self and others all these are included in a people's worldview (4).

Worldviews are never static, they change, and will continue to change due to external influences and internal inspirations; this also applies to the Berom worldview. This may explain why two ethnic groups with identical worldviews may fill the structure with different contents, emphasizing certain norms and symbols more than others (Metuh 61). For example, waves of migrations of the Berom into different ecological settings on the Jos Plateau pointed to different settlement patterns. Thus, details in the worldview may vary because of the different migrations and settlements. The tin mining industry is one external factor that led to change in the worldview; besides this, is the influence of foreign worldviews and modernity. In spite of the above factors, certain similarities can be identified, and these cut across the different Berom societies. These gave the Berom an ethnic identity; they could recognize themselves as people of the same race. This was visible in their socio-religious, political and economic structure earlier discussed in this chapter.

Ogbo Kalu used a cyclical diagram to describe the African worldview instead of the triangular one earlier applied by Parrinder. In interpreting this diagram he showed how each level of space, is inhabited by numerous spiritual beings, some good and others hostile. This cyclical diagram portrayed how activities of the gods, spirits and ancestors

celebrated in rituals and festivals, play out in the social space much of the concerns of daily living (31).

For the Berom, all beings belong to either the profane or sacred worlds. The profane world and solid earth is comprised of the rivers, mountains, lakes, forests, grooves, plants animals and human beings. The profane world is also inhabited by the different spirits both good and bad spirits. The sacred world consists of the heavenly realm located somewhere in the sky which is the abode of the Supreme Being. The 'spirit land'- the dwelling spaces of the spirits, gods, ancestors and other disembodied spirits is located somewhere underground. Thus, for the Berom, there seems to be two sacred worlds the heavenly realm of the Supreme Being and the 'spirit-land' of other spiritual beings such as the ancestors located somewhere in the ground. From the above description, we notice that very important to Berom worldview are the twin concepts of time and space. The above description points to a tripartite dimensional conception of space, the sky, the earth and the underground. It also alludes to a two fold dimensional conception of time, namely: sacred and profane times.

There seems to be no clear cut demarcation between the sacred world and the profane world; sometimes the profane was deified and given sacred qualities. Probably this led to beliefs in the existence of sacred persons, animals, objects, spaces and times, within the profane world. For example, the *be-voshon*, diviners went on religious pilgrimage into the world of the sacred to seek for remedies for different ailments and to enable individuals and the village community control space time events (focus group discussion Badung, Lomak and Mwanti). Spirits were sometimes said to possess a space, an object or a person. When this happened we have a manifestation of the sacred in the

profane within time and space. It seems logical to conclude that the profane world is conceived as carbon copy or a mirror that could be used to visualize the sacred world (Kalu 31-32).

Although in practical terms a clear cut distinction seems absent between the two worlds, however, it exists in the thought patterns of the Berom in dealing with matters affecting the two worlds. The sacred and the profane worlds are said to only influence and shade into each other. There was less contact with the Supreme Being in the daily interactions of the people that was not the case with the spirits and the gods. Perhaps this explains why Brosnan said that the Supreme Being for the Berom was remote (Brosnan 25). Spirits existed and were feared because they were always in contact with human beings in their daily activities. The ancestors, like the spirits were the closest to the human beings among the spiritual beings, because they were considered members of each family and were needed for help from the wrath of the spirits.

Do African worldviews have identical structures? According to Neiers de Paul, the East and Southern Africans who inhabit more open country and are semi-nomadic pastorals have less populated worldviews with simple structures. While the settled Nilotic worldview falls somewhere in between this worldview and those of West African peoples (de Paul 31). Neiers de Paul's argument is suggestive of the fact that different models must have been adopted in formulating worldviews of the varied African societies. Many West African societies in which the Berom form a part from this bulk, have five categories of spiritual beings, namely: the Supreme Being, gods, ancestors, spirit forces sometimes encased in charms and employed magic. The belief in these spiritual beings was conceived out of peculiarities inherent in the different ecology of every society. We

shall now discuss each of these categories of spiritual beings. Firstly, to describe the importance of these spiritual beings in Berom religious structure, secondly, to demonstrate the different levels of interactions with each of these spiritual beings, and thirdly, to point out how such interactions aided in postulating an eco-sensitive or a non eco-sensitive ethics in Berom religion.

### **3.8 RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE**

Elizabeth Isichei vividly described the religious structure when she wrote that;

They believed that there was one God, that there was a multitude of spirits, some ancestral, and some linked to particular localities, and that some individuals possessed special spiritual capacities, which, if used with malevolence, became witchcraft. Most of them have special techniques for discerning the future or the will of the spirits. There were thus a considerable number of religious roles in the community: the priest-king and the priest who performed rituals on his behalf, the diviner who commanded particular skills in divination, the controller of a masque and so on (28).

The structure of Berom religion seems to be described in the words of Isichei above. From this description, we notice a hierarchy of spiritual beings; the practice of the religion was centred on the pattern of human relationships with any of these spiritual powers. How did the Berom use these spiritual beings to control space-time events? How did this affect their environment? How did the interaction of the Berom with all the spiritual beings affect land acquisition, utility, preservation or its decimation?

In the hierarchy, God is at the top, followed by the spirits, gods, ancestors and the use of magical powers. Isichei also pointed to the prevalence of witchcraft and the misuse

of special powers by some members of the village community. The structure also pointed to the office of the diviner cum medicine person, as it was important in dealing with other spiritual beings in the religious structure. Isichei was however silent on the concept of the gods probably because the Berom conceived of the gods as natural spaces inhabited by spiritual forces without specific names for them as we have in the case of the Yoruba of south-western Nigeria or other African groups. A few examples of these gods among the Yoruba are *ogun* and *Sango*.

Which of these spiritual beings in the religious structure was dominant in the practice of Berom religion? Did this in any way influence their attitude towards nature and the environment? Religion writes P. Berger, is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established. To expand on this statement, Berger declared:

By sacred is meant here a quality of mysterious and awesome power, other than man and yet to him, which is believed to reside in certain objects of experience. This quality may be attributed to natural or artificial objects, to animals, or to men, to the object of human culture. These are sacred rocks, sacred tools, and sacred cows ... sacred space and time may be assigned the same quality as in sacred localities and sacred seasons. The quality may finally be embodied in sacred beings, from highly localized spirits to the great cosmic divinities (25).

Berger's description of the sacred (which is in the sphere of religion) presented a picture of the relationship between the Berom and spiritual beings in their religious structure described earlier by Isichei. The relationship between human beings and the religious world was centred on human beings' response to the latter. This includes human beings' response to the Supreme Being, spirits, ancestors, gods, other forces of nature and



the entire ecology. The worship and use of some of these spiritual forces was carried out in varied ways as they manifest within space and time.

The natural environment performed an important role in this respect. Religious worship was carried out, and understood from the context of the manifestation of the sacred within time and space in and outside natural spaces provided by the environment. It was through this that we find expressions of Berom religious beliefs, symbols, rituals and practices clearly exhibited. Refusing to understand Berom religion from this standpoint would thus mean missing the crux of the matter.

The Berom have a vivid concept of *Dagwi* God. The sun in the language of the people is called *gwi*, and the prefix *da* is literally translated as father. *Da* plus *Gwi*, thus means "father of the sun". Is the sun God for the Berom? Neiers Marie de Paul answered "The Berom do not believe that the sun in itself is God, rather that there is a divine energy in the sun as it shines on the whole of the earth, and God is said to be somewhere beyond the sun" (23).

The fact is that since the sun shines on all and is situated in the sky (a place believed to be inhabited by the Supreme Being) and as the adage goes, *Vere pye lere e kwon Gwi Gwom* literally translated as, "nothing is hidden under the sun of God". *Dagwi* is seen to be in control of everything and everybody under the sun, just like the sun shines on all people. The sun is therefore conceived as symbolizing *Dagwi* its creator. He is conceived as the creator of the whole cosmos and all that is in it. He also created the deities and the spirits (focus group discussion with Don, Kim, and Wap). From the focus group discussion, informants further buttressed that that the Berom do

not worship the sun but that it is just used as a symbol because of its importance; the sun is conceived as life- it regenerates plants, animals and human beings.

The Berom concept of God can also be understood from the words of T. J. D. Brosnan;

The Supreme Being for the Berom is very remote, so that to Him sacrifices are never offered. However, the chief of his designate offers prayers of inter-cessions. Though remote, He does hold control over everything. In fact no tribal meeting is complete until *Dagwi* makes His presence felt through some members sneezing. Even if a person outside a meeting sneezes, they people within pronounce some phrases that include the name of God, and so draw on the sneezer, His blessings in the form of a peaceful night's sleep. A false oath on this God will lead to death. The failures of crops are also sometimes attributed to Him (25).

The above statement by Brosnan, although true of the Berom understanding of God needs some further comments and clarifications. It is an overstatement to say that the Supreme Being for the Berom was remote simply because sacrifices were not offered directly to Him. Sacrifices were offered to God through the ancestors and spirits. God was believed to be present during every sacrifice offered to Him. There was always a spontaneous reference to God at different levels of the state of mind of the Berom. Poor yields in crops were never attributed to *Dagwi* God, because evil was not associated with Him. Poor harvests were always announced with the following phrases;

*E'waha de arame fwom vwes sede gwomo? E'mwad vwes de a rame pye yemo, chit yemo ye te pye mo vwit, Da-beda a te pye mo vwit. A Gwi Gwom sele me* (Bot Tok, Wang Kim, Feng Chung, interview).

This is simply translated as;

Why did this terrible thing happen to me, by making my crops not to produce well?  
An evil person must have done this to my crops; perhaps it is the spirits? Perhaps it is the ancestors or the gods? Oh, sun of the king (referring to the Supreme Being) helps me!

It is pertinent to note that many Berom people did not accept Brosnan's statement concerning the Supreme Being in Berom religion. This is clear from a group interview with Bot Tok, Wang Kim and Feng Chung. For example, informants disagreed that the Supreme Being for the Berom was remote. Secondly, they disassociated the Supreme Being from any form of evil; rather His agents were responsible; and that this explains why when prayers and sacrifices to spirits and ancestors failed to ward off a calamity, they people resorted to praying directly to God (focus group discussion with Bot Tok, Wang Kim and Feng Chung).

Probably Brosnan was influenced by some Christian ideas that are held among Berom today which could attribute poor harvests as a punishment from God for a particular wrongdoing. Sometimes prayers were directly offered to God by the *gwom kwit* ritual priest. Individuals revered God in many ways. For example, when a Berom wakes up from sleep and walks to his farm she or he prays, *Dagwi sele me* God, help me. When in danger she or he prays, *ooh Dagwi sai me*: "oh God deliver me". *Mafeng a' Dagwi* "I thank God" is an expression associated with happy moods due to some blessings from God whether of crops, animals, or of offspring. When falsely accused he or she prays, *Gwi gwa de or Gwi gwa tok*: "God Knows the truth or God sees" and he or she seems

completely contented with that (focus group discussion with Tok, Kim and Feng). When sickness attacks, they sick prays, “*a ‘Gwi Gwom ma ra hwo se aret de hwo a nong cheng yemo reto na me aret? Nbok nong me ne tyeng, ro cheng yemo ye kon hwong* (focus group discussion with Bot Tok, Wang Kim and Feng Chung). This prayer is simply translated as, “God the King, what evil have I committed to deserve you giving this evil spirit the right over me to punish me with this sickness? Please drive away this evil spirit and give me back my health”.

The worship of God could be seen in the selection and uses of Berom names like Mafeng thank God, *Weng* luck from God, *Sele*, God’s help and *Noro* God’s gift. From our discussion it is clear that the belief in the existence of God helped in shaping the people’s behaviour in their socio-religious, economic and political living. God was conceived as being omnipresent and without a shrine, neither natural nor built by human persons. He created the other spiritual beings. How did this belief affect land acquisition, its utility and preservation among the Berom? The entire ecology as God's creature was regarded sacred, but the society must exercise their socio-religious, political and economic activities on this same environment. How friendly or inimical was this to the ecology? To acquire a piece of land to build, or perform any of these activities, the services of a *Gwom* pries-chief was employed. Land was not acquired or utilised by just any means, but through laid down procedures in the village community. Did the Berom in their attempt to worship God performed actions that were totally disruptive to the ecology?

In spite of the myth that the whole inhabited earth came into existence due to the hand work of the God, the spirits seem to occupy a more central position in the content and practice of Berom religion. The Berom believed in the existence of myriad of spirits

inhabiting the entire cosmos. In spite of this, the spirits were believed to live in specific spaces, objects, plants and animals. For example, spaces such as mountains, hills, forests, rivers, grooves, caves, rocks, stones, swamps, streams and farmlands “which may be as much as 200 acres” (Isichei 28). In a recent fieldwork (2000 to 2006) however the researcher found out some sacred spaces measured up to 400 hectares of land with small hills. A case in point is *jikeyei* sacred space in Vwang district of Jos South Local Government. Some species of animals were regarded as sacred such as *gwom swi* a black snake with double heads, as well as some human beings such as the *gwom* priest-chief, *be voshon* diviners cum medicine persons. Spirits also believed to inhabit certain species of trees, for example, *pwat*: olive trees, *laron* locust bean trees, *kugul* silk cotton trees and *choo* mahogany trees. The dwelling spaces of the spirits were only understood in terms of rituals, sacrifices and other religious practices that were offered to the spirits. For example “some mountains, rocks, hills and whirlwinds became gods for the Berom simply because some spirits live inside them” (focus group discussion with Chuwang Dung, Nyam Kweng, and Chap Pam).

There were basically two major categories of spirits, the *cheng* good spirits and the *chi* bad spirits. From the two major categories, a second classification was drawn; those created by the God as spirits, and those who became spirits through death the ancestral spirits and spirits of those who were not able to become ancestors; hovering around as malignant spirits.

Sometimes the Berom applied the words *chit* and *chi* interchangeably, and they refer to bad spirits. The word *chit* was also sometimes understood in relation to the space or abode of the spirits (Mwadkwon 81). *Chit* was in this case understood as a medium

through which information was sought from the spirits. We shall in the course of our discussion apply these words in the same way as understood by the Berom. T. L. Suffill wrote concerning the good spirits, “The Berom believed that spirits move in the whirlwind which is able to carry humans into the forest where they are shown herbs that are medicinal...some herbalists claimed they were instructed by such good spirits” (25).

There was a paradox in reference to the *cheng* as good spirits. Rhoda Pam Hywere wrote that “the *cheng* could be dangerous to human beings; they could cause ill-health and several other misfortunes for human beings, plants and animals. It all depends on how one tames this spirit” (48) Perhaps they are said to be good in comparison to the level of evil that could be done to human beings and the environment by the *chi*.

The *cheng* could sometimes bring good fortune to individuals. They could also cause evil, chiefly that of physical deformities. Their preys are mostly children who always go to the river to bath or to play. The *cheng* would join the children in their play and would gradually entice them to exchange some parts of their bodies for sweet food. Most often than not the leg of the child was believed to be the favoured part of the body that was always exchanged. To remedy this situation the services of the *voshon* diviner was employed. The child will lead the diviner to the place that the “exchange” was made. The diviner would then appease the *cheng* by offering a chicken. After throwing the chicken into the river or lake, the *voshon* would then threaten the *cheng* to return the missing part of the child's leg or hand. In most cases the child became physically normal, but in few instances the child remained physically handicapped for life. For this reason, prayers and sacrifices were frequently offered to the good spirits and ancestors to protect

individuals, the family, lineage and clan from the attacks of the *cheng* (focus group discussion with Mwantep Kweng, Chok Badung).

The *cheng* good spirits were believed to be small in appearance, almost like dwarfs, and light in complexion with small heads. They inhabit riverine areas, and occasionally floated freely on the water. This is probably why they were sometimes referred to as *cheng ji nshi* water spirits. Only people with a gift of the "third eye" such as the *mwad bes* a person with innate supernatural power and *voshon* diviner could see and interact with them. They had no elaborate cult and priests like the *chi* bad spirits; because of their benevolent nature, their powers were used by the diviners cum medicine persons, warriors, hunters, priest chiefs, blacksmiths, iron smelters, wood carvers and individual persons believed to have *toh bes* innate supernatural powers.

There were several *chits* spirits/spirit-lands scattered in the different Berom villages with designated priest(s) or family (ies) in-charge of religious rites and rituals. The *gwom* priest-chief appointed the designated ritual priest for each *chit* spirit/spirit-land. Each *chit* spirit/spirit-land had specific roles to play in the village community. For example, there were *chits* spirits/spirit-lands for almost every event and activity. There were “*chit* spirits/spirit-lands for hunting, for fertility, planting, harvest, festivals, rain-making, war, epidemics, marriage, medicine, divination, death, burial, initiation into secret cults and for establishing a new village” (Mwadkwon 81). They were thus, considered as spirits/ spirit-lands in-charge of different professions, as they guarded many professionals and their professions in the village community.

This probably explains why rituals for the *chit* spirits were much more frequent and grandiose than those for *Dagwi* God and other spiritual forces such as the gods and

the ancestors. Brosnan confirmed this when commenting on the role of the *chit* spirits to the family, lineage, and the entire village community when he wrote;

The *chi* spirits are more concerned with the private villages or smaller group in its relationship with the other world. The *chi* ritual will take place at planting, harvest, hunting and life cycle. The *chi* spirits are to be placated when they cause the failure of crops, or sickness or plagues, or epidemics (18).

Brosnan's statement shows how important the concept of the *chit* spirit was held in Berom religion and culture. This may explain why whenever any space was suspected to be inhabited by the *chi* spirit, it was immediately consecrated and made a shrine. This may as well explain why the Berom country had several of such sacred shrines scattered all over the land. This invariably led to a more sacrosanct concept of land and the entire ecology. The spirit lands, the material land and other aspects of the ecology inhabited by the spirits were thus protected. This led to a kind of eco-ethics in Berom religion, in which land, forests, rivers, swamps, rocks, hills, streams, mountains, lakes and certain trees and animals were preserved because they were needed for religious activities.

The *chit* spirit-lands were usually sealed and protected by *nkeri* prohibitions. Such taboos were, firstly, no one was allowed to whistle or look back when walking past the space. Secondly, cultivation of the *chi* spirit lands were not allowed. Thirdly, building or any form of construction was not allowed to take place in or around the *chi*. fourthly, no tree, wood or natural growths were to be cut or removed from the *chi*. fifthly, cows, goats, horses or donkeys were not allowed to be grazed in or around the spirit-lands. Sixthly, human beings were not allowed to loiter in the surroundings of the *chi* (Mwawkwon 81-82).



Other offences against the *chit* spirits, included planting or harvesting without the performance of the *chit* spirit ritual; or without the permission of the *gwom kwit* ritual priest. Such offences received death penalty as they endangered the lives of the entire village community. For example, such offences could lead to poor harvest, and subsequently, famine. The word *kwit*, because of its significance, needs more clarification. It can mean both specific ritual and the whole complex of Berom religious beliefs and practices. The prosperity of the individual and the village depended on both the correct performance of *kwit*, and staying on good terms with the *chit* spirits, by performing their rituals and keeping their prohibitions (Isichei 28).

According to Rwang Kim and Pam Lomak, there were also private offences against the *chit* spirits, which were sexual in nature, for instance adultery. Children born out of such relationships died prematurely irrespective of the fact that a fine was imposed on the offender to be paid to the woman's husband. Murder was another private offence against the *chit* spirits when a member of the village committed murder within his/her lineage, the culprit was tied to a tree in the forest and allowed to die slowly, or to be eaten by vultures or ants. However, when the murder was committed outside one's lineage the culprit was sent on exile (focus group discussion with Rwang Kim, Pam Lomak).

Prohibitions associated with these spirit lands varied from one village to the other. The reasons being that the spirits were limited to taking care of only their respective villages. Thus, some taboos were specific to particular plots of land, objects and spaces. Some of the taboos were permanent while others were to be observed only at certain times of the year.

A breach of any of these prohibitions could lead to violent reactions from the *chit* spirits in the particular space. For example, it could disturb or completely stop the rains or lead to heavy rain with hailstorm. It could cause unspecified illnesses and diseases, failure in crop, barenness in women and impotence in men and high death rates both of children and adults. It could cause natural disasters like flood, thunderstorm or windstorm, which would blow off roofs. It could lead to defeat in war (focus group discussion with Tep, Chap and Rapp).

Strangers were exonerated from the punishment of the *chit* spirits because of their "innocence". However, they *chit* spirits would make some strange noise, and in this way, the village would know that something wrong had occurred. This was usually followed by a sacrifice of appeasement (Dachung Gyang interview). Any member of the village who broke anyone of these taboos must go to the spirit-land in the company of the priest of that particular spirit-land and performed the necessary rituals of appeasement. The offender had to pronounce the following words; *hala hen a me, ma rod gwe wet, maga ra banen*, meaning, "forgive me I will not repeat that. I have already committed evil" (Dachung Gyang interview). In certain cases an apology was not enough, thus, offender(s) were asked to replace the article that was taken from the spirit-land. Beside this, offender(s) would have to pay a fine of a goat, chicken, or knives pending on the level of the offence and the type of shrine involved (Dachung Gyang interview).

From the above discussion, it is logical to now draw a conclusion that because there were several spirit-lands which were basically natural spaces and objects within the environment, this led to respect for nature and the environment. Taboos were also placed on certain species of plants and animals. These restrictions also led to a strict respect for

nature and the environment. The ecology, which formed part of the spirit lands, such as the rivers, mountains, hills, grooves, forests, trees, rivers, and land sometimes measuring about 400 hectares of land in the surrounding villages were preserved. The acquisition and utilisation of land was not abused. The questions that one needs to ask are, to what extent were these spaces and certain species of plants and animals protected, preserved and adequately utilised without adversely affecting the ecology? Did not the constant demand for these trees and animals endanger them?

The next spiritual beings in the hierarchy of Berom religious structure were the deities. Deity has been defined as “a god or goddess, the state of being divine; godhead the rank of a god, the nature or character of God” The New Collins Dictionary and Thesaurus (TNCDDT 257). Ikenga-Metuh defined deity as “that which has the quality of being divine”(65). Things divine are of a God or deity and are associated with religion or worship. If this is correct, this definition thus, fits into Berom concept of deities. Most African societies who have the concept of deities in their religious belief systems, conceived of them as deified seas, moon, sun, stars, rocks, thunder and lightning, rivers, lakes, trees, forests, iron, groves, swamps, mountains, some heroic human beings such as kings, queens and warriors.

For the Berom, deities or the nature gods were certain trees, bushes, rocks, hills, mountains, streams, rivers and swamps; some species of animals and trees; and whirlwinds. These spaces, animals and plants were seen as accumulators of spiritual energy in the material universe that could be utilised by human beings. According to Kim Wang and Manta Dalyop, the gods in Berom religious cosmology could be understood as the saints in the Roman Catholic Church (focus group discussion with Kim Wang and

Manta Dalyop). This analogy is not fitting in the case of Berom religion, since in Catholicism the saints started as human beings. It however, fits into Yoruba religion where some dead human beings were deified and given the status of sacred personalities, called the *orisa*.

We have mentioned elsewhere in Chapter Two that the Jos Plateau was a place surrounded by rocks, mountains and hills of varied shapes, sizes and heights. It was probably because of this reason that the Berom regarded some solid elevated highlands as gods. The varied shapes, sizes and heights of these rocks, hills and mountains might have struck fear into the people. This is because several of such hills, rocks and mountains were deified and giving qualities of gods. From time to time sacrifices and prayers were offered on such rocks, mountains and hills to receive the blessings of the gods. A few cases in point of such rocks, hills, and mountains deified and given the qualities of gods were the three *gwofwagachik* standing stone at Chwelnyap, in Jos, in Turu and Du; *raku chi* spirit mountain in Foron and *jopock* hill in Hoss.

Some myths of the people assert that such mountains had offered protection to them from enemy attacks during the epoch of inter-ethnic wars. Also of importance to the Berom was the durability of the rock, that is; the rock never dies. For these reasons the people believed that sacrifices, prayers and other religious acts on these rocks, hills and mountains possessed by certain spirits will bring solutions to the problems posed by the environment (focus group discussion with Don Kim, Tongwong Lang, and Dusu Chuwang).

Certain trees were believed to be out of the ordinary. Consequently, just like certain rocks, hills and mountains mentioned above, such trees were also deified and

given the status of gods. Most of these trees were very huge, towering over and above other trees or foliage. These trees were believed to have hollows in their trunks like the fig trees. These trees include the large *pwat* olive trees, *laron* locust bean trees, *choo* mahogany trees, *kugul* silk cotton trees and *tafo* fig trees. These trees were seen as sacred as they Berom people believe that such trees are inhabited by some powerful gods. Rhoda Pam Hywere wrote that such trees were not allowed to grow around residential quarters for fear of the terrible sounds made by the gods at intervals during the night (Hywere 63).

This seems to be an overstatement as many informants claimed that the *pwat* tree was planted by virtually every family among some southern villages of Beromland such as Vwang, Turu, Riyom and Hoss. This was because of the economic and ritual significance of the *nei pwat* olive oil. It was used to prepare meat and several other delicacies eaten during important occasions such as naming ceremonies, and burial rituals. It was also used for installation of the *be-gwom* priest-chiefs and to pronounce blessings on *gwel* newly married woman by pouring some of the oil on her chest while pronouncing blessings on her to be fruitful and bear children (focus group discussion with Zat Don, Lang Chuhwak). The presence of the *pwat* trees in most compounds of the southern villages to date may serve as a proof. However, she was right to have stated that sacred trees cannot be felled, unless through special rituals, for example, *choo* mahogany trees, *pwat* olive trees and *mantang* silk cotton trees (focus group discussion with Dung Dong, Gyang Chuhwak, and Rondong Rapp).

These gods were accorded much reverence and the people pour libations to them because they were regarded as gods. Offerings were brought to these gods from time to time, but mostly during annual festivals such as *mandyieng*, *nshok*, *badu* and *vwana* and

whenever medicine persons want to take the roots or barks of such trees (Suffill 18, Baker 220).

Certain swampy or water log spaces were also accorded the status of gods. Sanda Badung and Bara Lomak reported that, “the swamps and rivers contain life, there was always water in there and that was life in itself, no one can survive without water” (focus group discussion with Sanda Badung and Bara Lomak). There were myths explaining how swampy spaces and certain rivers helped in defeating enemies in battle. The enemies got stuck in the swamps. It could be identified by *voshon* diviner or a person with the gift of the 'third eye' who could see beyond the profane world of mortals.

Sanda Badung and Bara Lomak further opine that, several nature gods were found in many Berom villages dotting the whole space to the extent that there was enormous respect for the environment and land (focus group discussion with Sanda Badung and Bara Lomak). When such a nature god was discovered, it was immediately shielded by prohibitions. A few of such prohibitions were that ordinary mortals were not at liberty to visit any of the gods, except the priest and his aides or a designate of the particular god. No metal objects or implement was used on the space occupied by any of the gods. No one was allowed to cultivate the land for any reason. No tree was to be cut or a branch picked from the sacred land. The sacred land of the gods was not to be set ablaze for any reason (Mwadkwon 82).

Although these nature gods still exist in many parts of Beromland, their sacredness is no longer respected. The physical decimation of these gods, or the spaces they occupied by tin mining activities has been responsible for this. The introduction of

new worldviews also encouraged the decimation of religious rites, symbols and practices to these gods.

Another important spiritual being in the structure of Berom worldview was the ancestral spirit *vu-vwel* or *bemat vwel* literally meaning "people of the underground", or *be-da beda* literally meaning "the father of our fathers" were names used to refer to the ancestors among the Berom. The ancestors were the spirits of the dead who were believed to have survived death after their physical dead and now living in the spirit world. They were "feared and respected", because they belong both to the physical and the sacred worlds.

Just like in many African societies, death alone does not qualify one to become an ancestor among the Berom. To this effect the Berom had some requisite conditions that could enable dead persons assume the status of ancestors. Firstly, the dead person must have lived a life according to the norms of the society. He must have lived a dignified and moral life that was devoid of anomie. For example he must be someone who had guarded and jealously protected taboos surrounding sacred spaces. The person must not be a quarrelsome person, a thief, a witch or wizard. Secondly, the person must have lived to a good ripe old age and died a good death. In other words the person must not die as a youth and not die from a dreaded disease such as leprosy, epilepsy, small pox, or struck by thunder or lightning. According to Tok Bok, Chuwang Mancha, the reason was that;

Dagwi: God and the spirits have said no, he cannot become an ancestor. The clean spirits have rejected him he cannot force himself to dwell among them. The land has rejected him; he died of a bad disease (focus group discussion with Tok, Chuwang).

Thirdly, the person must have offspring who can accord him a befitting burial rite and perform his full burial rites to aid his transition from the world of the dead to the world of the ancestors. Having fulfilled all these conditions and become an ancestor, the ancestor was seen actively participating in the daily affairs of the living members of the family, lineage, or the entire society. They interceded for the living members of the family before the spirits, gods and Supreme Being. They protected the living members of the family from their enemies and punish wrong doers. The wishes of the ancestors always dictated to the living members of the family a code of conduct to be followed. Thus, sacred spaces were protected, as the ancestors were believed to punish anyone who desecrated them. Perhaps this explains why Zang Fwet Gyang concluded that, “the land was not to be polluted, it was the resting place of our fathers” (Zang Fwet Gyang interview). Zang Fwet further explained that;

Expensive ceremonies were conducted in order to appease the souls of the ancestors. They were constantly consulted and great care was taken to avoid displeasing them for fear of their wrath. When they fail in their duties to their living members, they were sometimes neglected or reprimanded.

The researcher witnessed one of such rituals to the ancestor in which the ancestor was seriously scolded. It was a case of series of ill-health involving three children of the researcher’s uncle, Zang Fwet in 1978. After consulting the diviner, the cause of the sicknesses was traced to the ancestors. The diviner recommended an offering of a white chicken. Zang Fwet went in the evening to where his late father, Fwet Gyang was buried to offer the chicken as sacrifice. But the ancestor was instead scolded and threatened during the sacrifice. Zang said to the ancestor,



“We will never give you any food or offer you any sacrifice when you fail in your responsibility to protect us from the wrath of all these evil spirits. Have you been eating for nothing? Have you just been eating and sleeping without going round to see what is happening in your house? However, we are giving this chicken to you for the last time, take it! Share it with your brothers. We hope you will change, otherwise, “consider it the last time that we will come to this path seeking for you”.

The chicken was hit several times on the grave as Zang Fwet scolded his fore father. After the bitter words, the chicken was slaughtered and the blood poured in a small hole dug on the grave with a bamboo stick and the rest of the chicken buried on top of the grave. This sacrifice led to an improvement in the health condition of the sick children.

Ecological precepts are contained in this ritual. First is the use of a sacred bamboo tree that was also acquired through ritualistic dictates. Secondly, a white chicken was offered. In Berom colour symbolism, white connotes purity, sacredness, peace, friendliness, calmness, etc. Perhaps this explains why it was needed in this sacrifice and in many other Berom rituals and prayers to the ancestors.

Prayers and sacrifices were always made to the ancestors. Libations were poured to them before any meal or drink during festivals, marriages and other important family, lineage and clan meetings with series of request following such prayers or libations.

Next in the structure of Berom worldview was the belief in the existence, applicability and efficacy of magic, witchcraft, sorcery and medicine. These beliefs are clearly stated in the words of Elizabeth Isichei;

Some individuals have special "powers", *to* (sic). It may lead them to wealth and success and should normally be possessed by kings and war leaders. Such a man is able to control spirits, such as the *rwang*, which live in the bush, for his own ends. The abuse of this power is witchcraft. As in many other cultures, those in practice thought to be witches tended to be the elderly, the childless or neglected wives (45).

The practice of Berom religion was characterized with some elements of magical arts as seen in the office of the *voshon* diviner, the *mwad hwal* herbalist cum medicine person and believes in activities such as witchcraft, sorcery, *jamo* hunting and *chomo* warfare. Rwang Kim said that magical powers in Berom religion were used by certain categories of people born with *toh-bes* or simply *bes* supernatural powers. People with *bes* were believed to possess the powers to shorten distances during emergencies, hunters had such powers and they could disappear whenever they were attacked by a wild beast, they could change into a fly, a bat, or even an animal that was feared (Rwang Kim interview). It is difficult to specify the boundaries between magic and religion in this instance, perhaps the only connection will be in the use of incantations which sometimes was directed at invoking the spirits, ancestors and the gods.

Commenting on this issue, Dudu Dalyop, Davou Shut and Mancha Pam explained that during inter-ethnic wars, a man with *toh bes*- magical powers, could command the enemies to either run to the bush, cut themselves, die, or return home and they would obey. They could see the evil attacks of witches on human beings or their crops and animals and give warning. They were not paid for their services like medicine men and diviners who were paid after the sick person recovered from the sickness. Such people

were feared and respected in their villages. People with this same power who were pervasive in its usage to harm were disliked (focus group discussion with Dudu Dalyop, Davou Shut and Mancha Pam).

John S. Mbiti defined magic as “the manipulation of supernatural powers or forces which in themselves are neutral, either for good or bad, but always to the advantage of the manipulator” (96). This definition fits into the concept and applicability of these phenomena among the Berom. Commenting on the topic magic, David Dalyop, Davou Shut and Mancha Pam noted that;

Magic is basically categorized broadly into good and bad magic. Good magic is seen as the utility of the mystical powers by the specialists like the medicine persons, diviners, rain makers and warriors for their own benefits, that of the individuals and groups, and that of the entire village for the protection of their homesteads, animals and other properties (focus group discussion with David Dalyop, Davou Mancha Shut and Pam).

This was sometimes referred to as productive or protective magic and socially approved. There was also destructive or bad magic. This was always referred to as sorcery and was socially disapproved. Speaking on the issue of protection from magical powers, Dudu Dalyop, Davou Shut, and Mancha Pam assert that to guide against bad magic protection was given to people in form of charms, amulets, through special incantations and some marks on specific parts of the body. Homesteads were also protected with some charms buried in the centre of the house or on a footpath leading to the compounds. This was believed to protect the entire family from witches or wizards and sorcerers. Charms were used to protect crops on the farm; a popular charm for the farm is *bwara* thunder.

The thief could remain with the stolen property till the next day or until he or she is caught (focus group discussion with Dudu Dalyop, Davou Shut, and Mancha Pam).

Sorcery is the art, practice or spell of magic; a sorcerer is a person who seeks to control and use magic powers, in this case a wizard, a witch or magician. In most cases a wrongful application of good magic is what is called sorcery. Harmful charms stored in a pot or drinking gourd were used to poison the victim by secretly applying them in foods, drinks, and objects that might come into contact with the victim. The substances could be applied around the victim's hut or footpath. Witchcraft on the other hand was the art or power of bringing magical or preternatural power to bear. The major difference is that, while contact is essential in sorcery and physically carried out at any time of the day, witchcraft is mysteriously carried out using psychic power, mostly at night. While sorcerers operate individually, witches operate in guilds.

Commenting on witchcraft in Central Nigeria, Pam Tok, Yahoda Ishaku Victor Gbasha observe that, the belief in the existence of witchcraft in the mental and social attitudes of many traditional African societies seems to be profoundly ingrained than probably any other belief. That is why whatever appears in their reasoning to be 'unnatural', 'abnormal', 'strange', or 'bizarre' is easily explained off in terms of witchcraft. This is also true of many societies in central Nigeria, for example, for the Eggon and Tiv of Nasarawa and Benue States in central Nigeria many events are attributed to witchcraft and the suspects are treated as such (focus group discussion with Pam Tok, Yahoda Ishaku, Victor Gbasha).

These forces were aimed at causing evil to individuals, families and the entire village. Sorcerers and witches could be seen uttering spells and curses against their foes or

even threatening them openly in a quarrel. People were always careful not to offend them. Sorcerers and witches might operate through certain animals like cats, snakes, leopards, bats, flies, bees, and by turning into such animals to attack their victims. If by chance such an animal was killed, then the witch, wizard or sorcerer could die a sudden death at home. The most common way of attacking enemies by witches amongst Berom was by invoking natural phenomena such as lightening which could strike the enemy to death (Gyang Nyam Nash interview).

Unlike the Tiv and the Eggon people of Benue and Nasarawa States in central Nigeria, there was no belief in an organic type of witchcraft, which may operate without the knowledge of the agent among the Berom. To become a witch was therefore, a matter of choice and interest. In this case both the art of witchcraft and sorcery could be learnt or inherited with the conscious desire of the person who was in need of the art. The art of witchcraft could be terminated. It must not therefore be permanent.

The Berom believed that witches and sorcerers were once good people in their families and villages; who had used their powers for the wellbeing of their individual families and villages until old age made them turn their good powers for evil. It was the general belief among the Berom that old men who were hitherto “powerful” in their various villages, often became embittered following the loss of their natural powers or loss of their important status in the society with the rise of younger ones above them. This was common among people of the same family, lineage and clan, who may turn their good powers to evil in order to “deal” with the young men and women within the same family or clan. This explains why old age was well respected and honoured among the people to avoid such ugly situations.

Old women and barren women whose co-wives were loved more by their husbands were also said to turn to witchcraft to avenge themselves of the ills meted on them. This was mostly used against family members and lineage or kin than against friends or neighbours. From the above discussion, it is clear that jealousy appeared to be a fairly constant cause of sorcery, witchcraft or wizardry among the Berom.

To control the evil threat of bad magic to life, properties and normal functioning of the society, Gyang Nyam Nash said that the services of the diviners and medicine persons were sought. When a person was accused of sorcery or witchcraft and refused to confess even when the diviner had proved that to be true, trial by ordeal was resorted to. *Gat* a poisonous substance was first administered to two small chickens brought by the accused and accuser. When the chicken of the accused died then she/he was guilty, on the contrary the accused was to face a further trial. This time around the same poison was administered to the two parties and the person who vomited was believed to be innocent. Sometimes the suspected witch or wizard was asked to jump over a large fire, if the witch was guilty it was believed that he or she would fall into the fire and die (Gyang Nyam Nash interview).

The office of the diviner who was called *voshon* or *mwad bes* within the different Berom villages, and the medicine person called *mwad whal* was always combined by one person. Because of threats to lives and properties from the supernatural powers of sorcerers and witches discussed above, the office of the diviner was important and well respected in all Berom villages. He was always consulted during war, epidemics, when a woman found out that she was pregnant, at the birth of a child, when someone died, and any other form of abnormality concerning the individuals or the entire society.

The art of divination and medicine was hereditary. Thus it was associated with families claiming to have received the call to the office by their ancestors. Most diviners claimed to have received powers to practice divination and administer herbs from spirits, which carried them through a whirlwind to the forest and gave them such powers. However, some could become diviners and medicine persons by receiving some training as apprentice of some renowned diviners and medicine persons. The diviner who was also a medicine person was always friendly, trust worthy, and ready to help at all times. He was expected to know the need of the people immediately they appeared before him because of his supernatural powers. For the Berom, Dung Kpam and Chungwom Pam reported that;

The art of divination was like making a religious pilgrimage to the world of the sacred to find solutions to problems in the material world; the diviner had this ability. He then administered medicine to the sick in the form of various herbs, grasses, leaves, fruits and barks of different sacred trees. Other medicines included dead insects, bones, feathers, powders fetched from different sacred animals and plants (focus group discussion with Dung Kpam, Chungwom Pam).

It is pertinent to note that most of the medicines were derived from either sacred animals and plants which were not allowed to be killed or destroyed except through certain religious rituals and only mainly for medicinal purposes. This invariably increased the affinity between Berom religion and nature. Magic unavoidably found a place in divination practice and medicine. Among Berom divination and medicine were considered as religio-magical acts. In most cases when the medicine person went out to collect leaves, bark of trees or roots (herbs), for medicinal preparations, rites and rituals

were performed. Spirits in such trees were usually invoked. They were pleaded with to come into a working agreement with the diviner at that particular moment. Incantations were uttered and in most occasions the diviner cum medicine person could not speak to people during the collection until everything had been taken home. Discussing the issue of medicine and the medicine person in Berom religious cosmology, Dung Katai, Dayok Mwanchwel and Zam Gwong said that medicine and the medicine person was shrouded by boundaries of behaviour. For example, to acquire some medicinal herbs, the medicine person must observe some strict rules. In some cases from the period of setting for the bush to collect the herbs till the time the herbs were collected and taken home, it was considered as *jeng nkeri* sacred time, by many Berom diviners and traditional religious worshipers. The explanation was that the diviner had become a spirit. This was to further change the herbs collected from ordinary materials to sacred materials possessing mysterious powers to give a holistic healing to all forms of problems (focus group discussion with Dung Katai, Dayok Mwanchwel and Zam Gwong).

Dung Katai, Dayok Mwanchwel and Zam Gwong further explained why they said diviners and medicine persons were surrounded by several taboos. For example, they were not always to be seen in public, they were not to drink much *sireng* local beer; they were to avoid sex during divination that was to last for several days or when administering some kind of medicines. Due to the powers believed to be inherent in these medicinal concoctions, anyone who used them just like the herbalist had to also observe certain taboos. For example, some medicines were not to be taken during some seasons; some were not to be taken when one already had sexual intercourse. Some of the medicines, it was believed lost their potency when touched by women observing their



menstrual flow (focus group discussion with Dung Katai, Dayok Mwanchwel and Zam Gwong).

### **3.9. LAND IN RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW OF BEROM**

The concept of land in the religious worldview of the Berom can be understood from a case study of a conflict that arose from a burial ceremony in Kwogo Hoss village in 1980.

The corpse of a man was transported from a morgue in Vwang and brought to Hoss for burial. After the full burial rites had been performed, another family from Zawan arrived to claim the body. The explanation was that the already buried corpse was not the right one. Secondly, and most importantly, was that, "he (the corpse) does not belong to this place and the land here cannot accept him", roared one of the elders who came for the corpse; was his umbilical cord buried here, why must we annoy the spirits and our ancestors? Why should we cause harm to ourselves". The elders from Hoss accepted this passionate appeal. "It is true" answered one of the elders from Hoss, it is possible that he(corpse) was a wizard or a sorcerer, that is not all, how do we account for the corpse of our brother (the one to be buried in Zawan, to the spirits and ancestors of our land? Let us not be like the foolish fly that refused a piece of advice and followed the corpse into the grave, yes I am talking to you young men here". Do not create a situation that may finally make some of you here follow this corpse into the grave. The implication of this is immense - remember the fertility of the land, remember that you must eat. Those of you who think they can face the wrath of the spirits should go ahead and bury this stranger here. There was tension and

confusion as two worldviews came into contact. The youths representing a modern worldview insisted that the Zawan people should bury the other corpse instead of exhuming the already buried one. But the elders of both villages could not just see any sense in this, thus, they immediately dismissed this suggestion from the youths. At the end, the corpse was exhumed and taken to Zawan and the other corpse was brought and buried repeating all the burial rituals (Mwadkwon 97).

This case study reveals a number of issues concerning land in the religious worldview of Berom. Firstly, Berom worldview seems important in understanding the concept of land amongst them. Secondly, it reveals that there were different kinds of lands for different purposes. Thirdly, it shows how the individuals and societies are linked to the land. Fourthly, it reveals the sacrosanct nature of land. Fifthly, it points out that there were different rights, which the individual or his group could assert to indicate his/her claim to the land. The first of these rights among the Berom seems to be the burial rights. The conflict between the elders of the two villages clearly reveals that it was indignity to the dead to be buried in a piece of land to which the deceased has no right as a member. A. O. C. Anigbo said that among the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria;

When such service is performed with the approval of the lineage members, the deceased must be considered an *efulefu*- a useless man...But even then, the burial must not be noised but kept secret or hidden from the owners of the land, for they would definitely exhume the remains if discovered, for the bones of aliens cannot rest with one's ancestors (29-30).

The scenario described by A. O. C. Anigbo concerning the Igbo was also true of the Berom as typified in our case study. The second was the right to employ one's religious practice formally on a piece of land. This was the most striking and flamboyant right which the individual or group could assert on a piece of land for such actions and ritual symbolism spoke much about the worldview of the people. From our case study, it is clear that one aspect of this was the fear of the spirits and the veneration of the ancestors. Perhaps this explains why the corpse was exhumed and taken back to the right piece of land, which it has right to. Through this, each village proclaimed that their spirits and ancestors lived in the land and thereby declared the piece of land their own (29-30).

The concept of land in the religious worldview of the Berom was further depicted from the sacrosanct worldview itself. In Berom cosmology the whole inhabited earth is believed to be God's creation. Since God is sacred, the land as His creation is sacred. It is this philosophy that led to the notion of "no one owns land", but "land owns human beings". It is only limited rights sanctioned by customs, which were claimed over the sacralised land. This may explain one important point about lineage and clan boundaries in which mathematical calculus were not the traditional principles for determining the point. Like in the case of the Igbo of south-eastern Nigeria, and as reported by Anigbo,

The title to the land is awarded or settled on the basis of *Nna mGwalu m-* My father told me. This means that information about the right to the land derives from communication with one's father, for according to Achebe in his novel, *Arrow of God*, "To say my father told me is to swear the greatest oath" (28).

The above condition among the Igbo exemplified the case of the Berom with regards to ownership and attempts to identify boundaries of land belonging only to lineage and clans. *Da hwong aha meh* my father told me, thus became a serious oath with a religious significance. It pointed to telling the truth because it is a taboo to tell lies against the father (ancestor). Unlike the case of the clan land, simple mathematical calculations were applied to determine boundaries and ownership of family land. The Berom used *sheh* bamboo sticks for this purpose. The length of the bamboo stick was supposed to be twelve normal steps of the eldest man in the family. Thus, family heads kept these sticks in their custody. Following inter and intra family disputes over ownership and the exact boundary of the family land, the elders used the *sheh* bamboo stick to calculate the point. The bamboo stick was used probably because it was accepted as a sacred plant, besides; the affair of sharing land between brothers was a sacred event, because for the Berom “two brothers do not fight over land” (Gwom 120-121).

Prayers to the spirits and ancestors preceded every sharing of land. They (spirits and ancestors) were ritually informed that sharing the piece of land was not aimed at restricting their influence on the land. Secondly, they were also informed that the event was not to set the parties involved against one another; but to pave the way for easy utilisation and the performance of elaborate sacrifices to them. For this reason every family demarcated a piece of land apportioned to her into small sections called *beto chap* heads of farm, which were small squares, using *gyeng chap* grass that was allowed to grow at the edge to show the square. A number of these squares put together were called *gwara chap* a section of the farmland.

There were situations where disputants respectively asserted the principle of *da hwong aha meh* “my father told me,” thereby rejecting the usage of the *sheh* sacred bamboo stick, to determine ownership and exact boundary of land. When these situation occurred disputants were allowed to defend their claims by *shera* swearing an oath; sometimes referred to as *lele wal or ba* licking a knife. A knife was used as a symbol because the punishment, which follows, was conceived as cutting the false person or family into pieces. The false person was believed to die by thunder. Thunder was believed to be a small axe used by the gods or spirits to kill an offender who swore a false oath or who had committed an offence. The general belief was that other members of the family could be killed by the same thunder.

In contemporary Berom society, it is common to hear a Berom telling two disputant brothers or families, who insisted on “my father told me” to claim right to a piece of land or its boundary; “be careful that the mistake of so and so family is not repeated”. In this way they were cautioned by the story of persons or families that insisted on “my father told me”, to swore a false oath and the consequences that followed. However, when this oath was taken without any disastrous action, it was respected. The result of the oath helped in transferring the right to the land to the family or individual that was not afflicted without further negotiations or even further discussions.

Underneath all these taboos and belief systems attached to the land was the importance of oath taking. An oath was sworn by touching the earth with a finger, then placing the finger on one's tongue and pointing to the sky. This represented the whole corpus of Berom religious understanding of land. An oath sworn in this way pointed to the totality of the structure of the religious worldview; firstly, it pointed to the spirits and

ancestors who were believed to be living on the land and underneath the land. Secondly, pointing to the human being who had to perform socio-religious activities to maintain the relationship with the spirits who were both good and bad. Finally, pointing to sky to the Supreme Being the creator of spirits, human beings and land.

The utility of land clearly depicts its religious significance. This is the more so as what was understood by the Berom as family land, village land and clan land was the communal land which was used for several purposes. Some of it was used as farm and some as buffer zoned areas for the collection of thatch; some of the land was used for burial of witches, sorcerers and wizards and many others who could not be buried on the family, village and clan lands for several social reasons. For example, people whose death was caused by "impure" or "distaste" diseases such as small pox and leprosy; or by natural calamities like thunder, flood; or people who fell down from trees and died and those who committed suicide were buried outside the communal land. Right to the communal land was held precariously since it was always the bone of contention between adjacent villages which would adopt all kinds of means to win the ownership. Some parts of the communal land was zoned as shrines for purely religious rituals. This is what is sometimes called spirit land.

The concept of land was variously applied in Berom religious cosmology. *Vwel mot* "our land and *vwel da mot* "our Father land", comprised of the entire land covering the whole of Berom country. The concept, "our land", was also understood as a piece of land apportioned to an individual, a family or clan. This same land was sometimes simply referred to as "family land", "lineage land" and "clan land". All these different lands could be expansive as the population of families, lineage, and clans increased. The history

of the family, lineage and clan land went back to an unspecified time in the long distant past when the first ancestor of a family, a lineage and clan acquired it or settled on it. According to Zam Gyang, this stands in opposition to a piece of land belonging to one's immediate father or grandfather today, “as it is now possible, for sale of land has been introduced since colonialism began” (Zam Gyang interview).

In Berom traditional society, land was portrayed as shrouded with religious connotations. For example, fatherland was also understood as the indivisible land sanctified by the presence of the spirits, gods and ancestors, which belonged to a specific group through time. They spirits, gods, living, dead, and even the not yet born of the group owned it as an association of persons having separate powers, duties, and liabilities or as a group of personalities acting as one body (Zam Gyang interview). Affinity of the individual families, lineage and clans to land is fully emphasized in the application of the concept, “and”. This becomes clear in the usage of possessive pronouns such as, “our, your, their, my”, in reference to land. This goes further to show that the principle of legitimacy or ownership was in one's membership of a group.

Three basic kinds or perception of land were prevalent in traditional Berom society. Firstly, *vwi* compound land or the territory where the homestead or village(s) are located. This stands in opposition to the second, *chap/hei* grassland or bush land. This refers to cultivated or uncultivated land, which was far away from the Berom domicile. This land constituted most of the territorial shrines in Berom country, for they demarcated one village from the other. Thirdly, was the spirit land, which included land within and outside Berom domicile, but which were basically sacred lands preserved for religious

functions. This land included both individual family shrines and territorial shrines located both within the homestead and grasslands (Mwadkwon 101).

In spite of this, the Berom believed that no one really owns land, because it was a gift from God; rather, it is land that owns human beings. Perhaps this is the more so as all cycles of life in human relationships, be they economic, religious, political, social or psychological, were all carried out on land. The land was understood as “my land”, “our land” and “their land”, only in its acquisition and utility and not possession. People were united to the land immediately after birth through several religious rituals. The burying of the umbilical cord and smearing of the child with the red sacred ochre acquired from Mado shrine are a few examples. The red sacred ochre was derived from a sacred land, which was part of the earth itself. Thus, smearing it on the body of a newborn child introduced the child to the land.

This red ochre was mixed with olive oil or mahogany oil (oils from religious trees), and continually applied on the umbilical cord after every bathe until it healed. The child was from the onset introduced to the land, which comprised of three basic elements water, trees and the earth crust. Water, natural or processed trees and the earth crust were prevalent in the performance of religious rituals among the Berom. The child was through this ritual free to grow, marry, take responsibilities, enjoys a full life and dies. He/she was buried on the land indicating returning to the land, which "owns" him/her. There was no definite end to life, for the dead could reincarnate, the cycle of abundant living was always repeated. Affinity to land directed the customs and pattern of behaviour of the people in their religious, social, economic and political activities. This was fissile in the performance of festivals.



The sacrosanct nature of land led to prescribed religious rituals before land was acquired or utilised. Thus, in traditional Berom society, all land was under the control of a ritually installed priest-chief, who now allocated pieces to individuals and families. This was land referred to as, “my land”, “our land”, “your land” or “their land”.

Given the religious significance of land to the Berom, several taboos were introduced to protect the land from pollution of all kinds. These taboos were mainly on how land could be acquired and utilised; what kind of instruments could be used on the sacralised land both for cultivation and harvest. Fertility rituals and prayers to the spirits, the gods and ancestors were performed before a piece of land was distributed among brothers or families. Bush burning was prohibited. This may explain why “the dry season grass was ritually burnt after everyone must have finished clearing the bush” (Isichei 22). Harvest and planting did not start until the *gwom kwit* ritual priest and his *gwom chi* the tutelary priest of the spirits of the vicinity responsible for rituals connected to farming or harvest had performed all rituals and given the instructions for the commencement of planting or harvest. Sexual intercourse in the bush and farmlands was prohibited for two reasons. Firstly, it may lead to failure in crops given rise to famine. Secondly, it was disrespect for the spirits of the vicinity who were responsible for high yields of crops. Thus, no one was allowed to urinate or defecate on farmlands for the same reasons. Perhaps another reason was that some vegetables and plants were eaten on the farmlands for medicinal reasons without washing them. *Hworop* a special solid part of the earth was also eaten as a remedy for the treatment of heart disease. People were not allowed to fetch the thatch from the buffer zoned areas individually; everyone must had to wait for the

time to be announced by the ritual priest, and it was done communally. After this time people who were still in need of the thatch could go ahead to collect more.

Greedy and jealous people who stole from other people's barns or agricultural products harvested and heaped on the road side to be later transported home were killed by thunder. Rituals were performed by every family head before the commencement of every farming and harvest season. For example, the first cocoyam was roasted or cooked and placed on the hoe for the spirits and ancestors before members of the family could then eat theirs. The first pumpkin was also well cooked and sprayed on other young growing pumpkins with prayers that, they should produce like the present one. These boundaries of behaviour ensured an orderly utilisation of the resources of nature and connected the social ethics with ecological ethics (Kalu 8).

From the above discussion, some major facts seem clear, namely, the general relationship between Berom religion and the natural environment as embedded in the religious beliefs and practices. The environment was considered sacred signified in the numerous sacred spaces and religious rituals pressed into the process of cultivation and harvesting. The sacred attitude in exploitation and contract with environment preserved it. A clear picture of the relationship between the Supreme Being and other spiritual forces all pointed to how Berom religion was linked to nature in its organization and practice. Berom religion had a strong environmental focus as several spiritual forces in the structure of Berom worldview possessed several natural spaces and could only be easily reached in such spaces. The practice of some acts like magic, witchcraft and sorcery were also controlled because the remedy was found from the ecology. For example, the

medicines needed for the treatment of diseases caused by witches and sorcerers were derived from various sacred plants and animals.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **ALTARS AND SHRINES IN BEROM RELIGION BEFORE THE ADVENT OF TIN MINING INDUSTRY**

#### **4.1 THE CONCEPT AND IDENTIFICATION OF SHRINES IN BEROM RELIGION**

This chapter of the thesis is aimed at describing aspects of Berom Religion prior to the advent of change agents into Beromland such as the tin mining industry, Christianity, Islam, modernization and Western education. The impact of these on the community's altars and shrines was our major focus here. The present analysis is based on four out of 336 deities, spirit shrines, which were studied in eighty villages of Beromland. The Berom in their encounter with their environment have covenanted with several of these deities. Some deities and spirits operate in the air as water spirits and guardians of professions such as medicine, divination, blacksmithing, iron smelting, wood carving, farming; others are spirits in natural spaces and objects. Some as unbounded spiritual forces could be tapped to enhance or hinder the vital force of life; others serve as oracles and many as ancestral spirits (Mwadkwon 2000).

This study firstly, enables us to reconstruct the religion and culture of the Berom. Secondly, this will further throw more light on the worldview of the Berom because socio-religious activities that were carried out in these altars and shrines will explain clearly how and why the Berom think, reason, controlled and responded to every event within space and time in their immediate environment.

We have relied on information derived from fieldwork; thus, the data used here were mostly from individual and focus group discussions and partly from personal observation during fieldwork. As already mentioned in (1.6.1 paragraph 1), we are

dealing with a predominantly oral culture, where the indigenous people are sometimes wary of talking to strangers, especially on their religion. Focus group discussions became most significant because nothing has been documented on this aspect of Berom Religion. The problem of language was another reason why interviews were considered important. Being a member of the culture the problem of language was thus simplified.

Thus, to systematically describe analyze and interpret the religious functions of the altars and shrines, certain questions were posed to informants on the name of the shrine, its location, nature, status, provenance, religious rituals performed in each shrine, and the gender and origin of the ritual agents. It was also necessary to determine the indigenous functions of the shrine, and gender of the shrine. These same questions may indicate how important these shrines developed and the eco-religious ethics in traditional Berom society.

In the process of collecting information for this chapter some problems were encountered. Firstly, there was translation difficulty, some words in the indigenous language have no English equivalent, and as such phrases were used to translate such words. Secondly, there was the problem of memory as some informants could not tell exactly when a particular shrine was discovered, the exact rituals performed in the shrine, how it was decimated, the provenance of the shrine and its indigenous function. There were instances when informants exaggerated information; for example, informants said that in the preparation for the hunting rituals at Mado shrine a horse was to jump a height of three to four meters.

A certain peculiarity of Berom Religion is that altars and shrines include natural objects and spaces such as rocks, mountains, swamps, lakes, trees, forests, the hilltops and

sometimes a vast area of land measuring over 20 square kilometres. This, to an extent, confirms Mircea Eliade's argument that the whole history of religions from the most primitive to the most highly developed, is constituted by a great number of manifestation of the sacred from the most elementary hierophany (stone or tree) to the supreme theophany (58, Dharvamony 73-76). These natural objects and spaces serve as altars and shrines because covenants were established by "speaking words" into spiritual beings believed to be dwelling in such spaces (focus group discussion with Toma Dung, Zang Dalyop, Bot Gyang, Chuhwak Chung).

There were major and minor altars and shrines in Beromland. Major shrines included those religious spaces that concerned religious activities of individual families, lineage and clans; major shrines included those religious spaces that brought the entire village community or the entire Berom ethnic group together in the performance of religious acts. These altars and shrines comprised rain-making spaces, hunting spaces and prayer spaces for healing and well-being of individuals, families and the entire society at every village level. There were also altars and shrines for the celebration of festivals, fire making, for depositing the heads and skulls of wild animals caught during hunting and enemies killed in conquest; altars and shrines for village meetings, altars and shrines as gates and doors leading into villages and so on.

Altars and shrines were used to identify important villages. Thus villages were known because of the provenance of their shrines and for this reason, some villages became popular because of the socio-religious events that were carried in shrines located in them. For example, Riyom became popular because of *vum* shrine consisting of a bottomless pit for storing the heads of enemies killed in wars and wild animals killed

during hunting. Similarly, *not* shrine in Rim became popular because of its link to *mandyieng* festival and *mado* shrine in Jos, because of the *ti* and hunting festivals.

This may explain why people described a route from one village to the other by using the shrines, which were found in every village. For example, if one wished to describe the road from Rim to Kabong village in Jos, the person used various shrines as signposts passing from *not* shrine through *vum* shrine in Riyom, *gufwagachik* (a standing stone) in Du or *mado* shrine to *jot* shrine in Jishe and the destination at Kabong (focus group discussion with Dung Nyam, Vou Zang and Dachung Mwadkwon).

In a focus group discussion with Kim Gyang, Dusu Tok, Pam Lotok and Jatau Dung, informants observed that; *E` vel Berom ne dem kwit na se e` kahi pomo, mwad tok gwong naka wet se ho tok ne dem sekwit, e`no de mwat a` wo kahe dem vit a boroks* (Kim Gyang, Dusu Tok, Pam Lotok).

This is translated as:

Every village in Beromland had its shrines. One cannot understand where he/ she is travelling to except he/ she had the knowledge of the shrines. Prior knowledge of the shrines helped in keeping prohibitions guiding these sacred lands.

From the above, it is clear that there were many altars and shrines for different purposes in Beromland in the old days. To have an even representation of the various types of shrines, we adopted certain criteria in selecting the ones discussed in this thesis focusing on major or “regional” shrines which concerned the socio-religious life of the Berom. For example, shrines that dealt with activities as life and agricultural cycles of planting and harvesting, rain making and hunting. These were events which occupied the entire life of the Berom, majority of whom were farmers and hunters. From these cycles

of human and natural lives, emphasis was placed on shrines connected with festivals, origins of Berom people and medicine. The reason was that festivals celebrate every happening concerning the individual and the entire society, be it birth, title taking, death, initiation rites or the celebration of ordinary village life (focus group discussion with Kim Gyang, Dusu Tok, and Pam Lotok). The history of origin of the Berom will also give us insight into their religious, socio-political and economic life as sedentary people. Medicine, as an art, was widely practiced among the different villages in Beromland. Following this method of selection, all the different shrines were evenly represented.

Shrines for the Berom were gateways between the two worlds of the sacred and the profane. They were spaces where the Berom met their gods. A shrine was thus marked out, consecrated and protected by prohibitions. Shrines were spaces where imperishable life force had once been or was still available. What gave the quality of a shrine its sacredness was the single act of “speaking words into it” and consecrating it. Any contact with the shrine was considered as contact with the spiritual realm of the Supreme Being, ancestors and spirits. The specific action of cults such as worship, reverence, and defeat in war also turned a particular space into a shrine. For this reason members had great reverence for such spaces. Thus “careless words” were not to be uttered in the shrines and quarrels were also forbidden (focus group discussion with Bot Tok, Dandom Kapanchan and Rapp Got).

Many other prohibitions were introduced to guide and protect all the shrines. For example, women, children and slaves were discriminated as they were not allowed to enter into these shrines except on special reasons, occasions or on special requests. Discrimination against women, children and slaves was to protect the shrines from being



defiled. This leads to the question of prohibitions or boundaries of behaviour. Prohibitions among the Berom seem to have developed over a long period of time as rules for the protection of things “set aside” for religious purposes.

Apart from the primary fundamental religious and cult role of these shrines, the Berom also invariably acknowledged that prohibitions surrounding these shrines made them institutional embodiments and custodians of public order, life and morality. Any infringement on a prohibition protecting a shrine could lead to natural disasters from nature gods such as thunder, lightning, flood, whirlwinds and drought on the individual, group or the entire village community. When this happened only the performance of the appropriate rites at the appropriate community, clan or family shrine will purify the culprit(s) and the land; appease the ancestors, gods, spirits and restore the individual, group(s), family, clan or community to spiritual harmony and peace with the environment and land (focus group discussion with Bot Tok and Dandom Kapanchan).

The shrines were thus seen as institutions, which inculcated personal and communal awareness of the socio-religious dimension, useful moral deterrence and educators of the conscience of the village community. Religious rituals carried out in the shrines were viewed as positive injunctions telling the individual how he/she must behave within a particular space and time. This was important for the acquisition, utility and preservation of the ecology.

How did the Berom establish shrines? Nature loomed large in Berom consciousness and religion. Thus people paid much attention to hills, rocks and mountains, groves, valleys, rivers, trees, forests, swamps, animals and plain lands. Ecology was paramount in the formation of Berom religion. It was believed that

supernatural forces could dwell in such places. So when a number of mysterious things happened in any such spaces, shrines were located there.

Secondly, another way of identifying a shrine was the uniqueness of the space in terms of temperature. For example, a space could be reported to be extremely cold while it was a hot day or season and vis-à-vis. When different people experienced this condition, the *Gwom* priest-chief was alerted. The space was immediately designated as a shrine.

Thirdly, a shrine was identified when someone with *bes* an innate supernatural power experienced and reported that spiritual forces inhabited such a space. Fourthly, a shrine was identified as a result of a historical event. For example, defeating an enemy in a war in a particular space was a pointer to the fact that the space was inhabited by supernatural forces favourable to the winner in war, especially when such a space was within the boundary of the people who won the war.

Any shrine identified through any of these four ways was designated a religious or ritual space and a particular person, a family or families was appointed by the *gwom* priest-chief to take charge of such a shrine. He bestowed the individual, family or families with the authority to oversee the performance or celebration of all religious activities linked with the shrine. It was then the duty of the overseer(s) designate to plan the types and times for the rituals. An exceptional case existed in religious rituals such as *worong chun* planting rituals and rituals associated to *mandyieng* festival in which the chief priest gave the time to the overseer. These factors will become clearer in detailed descriptions of some major shrines.

## 4.2 A TAXONOMY OF BEROM SHRINES

Name of Shrine	Priest of the Shrine & Family	1.Location & 2.Provenance	Nature of Shrine	Gender of Priest and Shrine	Items of Sacrifice	Type of Ritual	Indigenous Function
Mado	Kwon and Choji Von Dele Family of Du	1. Mado in Jos North. 2. Du, Shen, Zawan.	A nature Deity relating to space	male	Yam tubers & black goat	Hunting Ti: Red Ritual Prayers	Fertility Prayers, Collection of medicinal herbs, Making of Profession
Behwol	Kadang Family of Du	Bewhol (Farin Gada) in Jos North.	Nature Deity Relating to Space	Male	White chicken	Hunting, Pilgrimage & Collection of Medicinal harps	Fertility ritual & making of Professions
Liyam	Mann and Badung Chun Families	Central position is Present Jos Main Prison	Nature Deity relating to space	male	Big white goat	Rain making And Hunting	Fertility & Divination
Gufwagachik	Loh Du is the main ritual family. Two others include, Malaika & zi Sani Family of Anaguta tribe	Chwelnyp, Turu & Du	Standing stone, rock & Nature deity	male	3 black goats & 4 chickens	Unity, peace Making and love	Ethnic Identity adjudication
Loh	Kugam Tong family	Turu, Chugwi & Fwil in Vwang (Jos South)	Nature deity Relating to Space	male	Red cock, Human being or Lion	Hunting & war	Making of a Hero
Chono	Kugam Tong family	Turu, Chugwi & Fwil in Vwang (Jos South)	Rocks, nature deity relating to space	male	Black goat	Meeting ground & Prayer	Fertility & Prayer
Dagashet	Kugam Tong family	Turu, Chugwi & Fwil in Vwang (Jos South)	Rocks, hills Nature deity Relating to space	male	Black goats (unspecified Number)	Harvest Prayer & Hunting of Animals	Fertility Rituals, making of Heroes
Chel-Tya	Kugam Tong	Tya, Fwil, Chugwi in	Grasses and Trees,	male	White chicken	Fertility and	Plants protecting

	family		Vwang (Jos South)	nature deity			Conflict resolution, Prayer & Rain making	Land & animals Fertility & Peace and Harmony
Dagalol	Gagwang family		Turu, Fwil, Chugwi in Vwang (Jos South)	Nature deity relating to space	male	White chicken		
Lodura	Bong Family		Du, Zawan & Shen	Nature deity	male	goat	Community prayer	Fertility rituals
Kum Bunna	Kai Nire family		Kum-Du, Shen Zawan & Du	Nature deity	male	Yam tubers and goat	Community prayer	First harvest rituals
Daku lo-Gwom Du	Kim Kam family		Du, Zawan & Shen	Mountain, Nature deity	male	goat	Community prayer	Protection of grasses, plants and Small animals
Guru-Tu	Gafang family		Gyel	Nature deity	male	Goat	fertility	Plants and Animals in abundance for human use
Wak	Pwol Kun family		Gyel	Rocks, hills Nature deity	male	Goat	Public prayer	Fertility rituals
Danyeks	Yauks Gai family		Turu-Vwang	Rocks & land, nature deity	male	Cocoyam & white chicken	Public prayer	Hiding place from enemies
Bangarun	Yauks Gai family		Turu-Vwang	Thick forest, nature deity	male	Goat	prayer	Fertility ritual
Daku- Chi	Badung Yei family		Kuru	Mountain surrounded by a thick forest, Nature deity	male	Goat	Prayer	Fertility ritual & protection
Bado	Davou Kuo		Kuru	Mountain , A nature Deity	male	Goat	Prayer	Fertility and protection
Chwel	Kuru Royal family		Kuru	Vast land, Nature deity	male	New wine	Prayer, Decision making centre, choosing of profession	Fertility rituals & title taking
Chwel Gyel	Dako family		Ta-chol, Sot, Nyango in Gyel (Jos South)	Land, nature deity	male	Goat	Prayer	Fertility ritual

### 4.3 MADO SHRINE: NOTES ON FIELD STUDY

To enable us carry a systematic description of the religious activities that were carried out in *Mado* shrine, thirty focus group discussions were conducted. The distribution of these interviews shows that twelve were carried out in Du, five each in Bukuru and Gwara-lomanjei, three each in Laranto and Zawan and two in Kwogo. Most of the focus group discussions were carried out within the months of March and December 1996 to 2005 as this was the time of rest for the people who are predominantly peasant farmers. Another reason was that the ritual family of *mado* shrine comes from Du, which covers places such as Bukuru, Gwara-Lomanjei and Laranto. *Mado* shrine was linked to *vum* shrine (in Riyom) in the performance of religious rituals as heads of animals caught during hunting festivals in *Mado* were sent to the central *vum*: a deep pit in Riyom.

#### 4.3.1 Rituals and Ritual Agents in Mado Shrine

*Mado* shrine embraced a wide area of land measuring about 800 hectares of land, encompassing thick forests, hills, rocks, rivers, streams and even some flat land in certain areas. The present day Jos Wildlife Park occupies just a small portion of the original *Mado* shrine, although it constitutes the heart of *Mado* shrine in the performance of religious rituals connected with the collection of *ti* a red sacred ochre and *jamo* a hunting festival. Prior to the advent of the tin industry and colonialism, the original *Mado* sacred space included parts of Dong village, Mango Low-cost Housing units, Kabong village, Jishe (Tudun Wada), sharing boundaries with Gyel, Du, Zawan, Kabong, Anaguta, Mango and Kukupa countries.

Prior to the introduction of the colonial Tin mining industry and its subsequent impact on Berom, Mado was connected firstly, with the *ti* ritual; this means the ritual collection of the sacred red ochre called *ti*. *Ti* was used for many religious rituals connected to marriages, births, naming ceremonies, initiation into adulthood and secret cults. Various professional groups such as iron smelters, blacksmiths, medicine persons, diviners, rainmakers, wood carvers and hunters, warriors and farmers also used it. They all used *ti* for efficacy. Secondly, Mado shrine was linked with *jamo Mado* hunting rituals, which took place at Mado shrine beginning from the month of October each year, which was the Berom New Year.

The ritual of *ti* was a yearly socio- religious activity performed towards the end of the month of October, which lasted for one and a half days. The collection of *ti*: red sacred ochre was associated with certain religious rituals performed by designated families. The two ritual family in-charge of the *ti* rituals were *loh Kwon* and *Choji Von Dele* of Du. The responsibilities of the two families were carried out in a rotational order which was to enable the *dakwit* ritual father or ritual priest to be changed after seven years. The families were to change roles or responsibilities after seven years because of the importance of the number seven used in Berom divination. The ritual families were chosen based on the request of the *bemat bes* people with innate supernatural powers. Thus when it was time for the *ti* ritual, the ritual family in-charge at that moment summoned other seven elders to seek their consent (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang, Pwajok Gazu, Dazong Dung, and Jamang Lomak).

The *dakwit* ritual priest of that year performed the ritual of laying the *gwele ti*, literally meaning “laying down the stick of *ti*”, but connotatively meaning, "declaring

open *Mado* shrine for the collection of the red sacred ochre". He then fetched some undisclosed medicine and went to *Mado* to put in the *vong chi*: the holes where the *chit* spirits dwelt, spending the whole night there. He also applied the medicine at strategic places and at the *vong ti* "the sacred red ochre hole," before and after the entire ritual.

This ritual had three meanings. Firstly, it was an agricultural ritual meant to ensure the safety of persons during harvest period, which was to commence in the next month immediately after the *ti* ritual. Secondly, it was a protective ritual meant for people that took part in the collection of the *ti*. Thirdly it was a hunting ritual for people who will participate in the hunting festival that will follow after the collection of the *ti*.

It was strongly believed that only when this ritual was performed that the spirits, in the language of the Berom were "closed" or "slept", and their activities temporarily suspended until the end of *ti* collection; hunting festival and the subsequent harvest period. The words "closed" and "sleep" meant on the other hand, to temporarily suspend the activities of the bad gods and, on the other hand, to entice the good gods with gifts to come into a working agreement with human beings. After this ritual was performed, information was discreetly circulated to all the villages concerned. The information was that all was now safe; people could come out to collect the sacred *ti* (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang Pwajok Gazu, Dazong Dung and Jamang Lomak).

People who intended to participate in the collection of the *ti* were expected to dig out some yam tubers from any farm of their choice. The owners of the yam farms were neither to complain nor stop the harvest for two main reasons. Firstly, people considered it a blessing to have participants in the *ti* ritual take some yam tubers from their farms. This was because the yam tubers were to be eaten at the *Mado* shrine with the gods.

Secondly, the gods reciprocated the gift of yam with high yield of the yam crop and other crops in the farmlands (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang Pwajok Gazu, Dazong Dung and Jamang Lomak interview).

The invasion of the yam farms was neither intended to destroy the yam crops nor meant to take a substantial amount of the yam from a particular farm. It was more symbolical than predatory. The *ti* collectors were only expected to harvest one or two tubers from each farm they invaded as they needed just enough to sustain them for one night at *Mado* shrine. According to Gyang Chuwang, a member of the ritual family in-charge of the *ti* ritual, most people came along with their yams from their respective farms. The digging out of yam tubers on a farmland that did not belong to the individual was only a symbolic ritual performed by participants, and not an actual harvest of yam from an unknown farmland. It involved the usage of a small hoe to dig a particular ridge and collect a big tuber of yam, which was symbolically put into a bag to be eaten at the *Mado* shrine (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang Pwajok Gazu, Dazong Dung and Jamang Lomak).

This may explain the reason why blessings were derived from the spirits when such yam tubers were eaten at *Mado* shrine during the *ti* ritual. Participants then expected blessings for their farms and not for an unknown person. Thus most circumspexion participants came with yam tubers from their respective farmlands. Besides, the activity required the unknown person could be a wizard, a witch a sorcerer or a thief in which case he/she did not deserve the blessings of the spirits, ancestors and the gods. Such people were considered unclean and their yams could spoil the rituals.



The collection of the *ti* at *Mado* shrine was an entirely men's affair. It was perceived as warfare and dangerous for the womenfolk. Besides this, the men went with their horses. Only men rode horses, as this was associated with manhood, courage and heroism. Only married men were allowed to participate in the collection of *ti* the red sacred ochre at *Mado* shrine. Chuwang Gyang, a member of the ritual family of *Mado* shrine reported of an incident when an unmarried man entered *Mado* shrine. This man suffered a lot of humiliation called *bele hwo* beating someone with *sheh* bamboo sticks. These sticks were collected at a place called Nikot close to *Mado* shrine.

The man must not be beaten when the collection of the *ti* was still in progress, but after the collection and when all rituals associated with it were over. The beating was so severe to the extent that the *nkpok* a penis sheath worn by the male folk of the Berom was knocked out of his penis. This was the worst punishment a male Berom could receive, because it was a shameful thing for one's penis sheath to be removed in public. This reduced the status of his manhood and henceforth denied him certain privileges that were associated with manhood such as hunting, warfare (especially title taking as *sogga* warrior) and initiation into the elders' cults. When this happened the person could not practice important professions such as divination, iron smelting, blacksmithing, wood carving and medicine. These professions used ritual objects connected to several religious rituals linked to the ecology

Thus, a song was sung in ridicule of the man from the shrine to his village where the song was handed over to the young girls who were waiting to receive the *ti* collectors. The girls continued to sing the song until the end of the year. The punishment received by the young man was to show how sacred and important *Mado* shrine was to the people.

After this severe beating and humiliation, the ritual families of *mado* shrine would consult the gods and the ancestors to find out whether the punishment was commensurate with the offence. If the gods and ancestors answered in the affirmative, the man would be freed. On the contrary, the gods would be asked to pronounce their own punishment. To clean the village community and land, the offender was asked to provide a goat which was sacrificed to the gods (Pam Chuwang interview).

It is pertinent to note that the *ti* ritual at *Mado* shrine was only for Du, Kabong, Shen and Zawan people, and not the entire Beromland. This shows the provenance of *Mado* shrine. For this reason *Mado* shrine falls under the typology of regional shrine. However, the entire Beromland was indirectly involved because the whole Berom country was aware that an important religious ritual that affected their lives was being performed on their behalf. They knew that eventually they will soon receive their own supply of the red sacred ochre which was used for many rituals in the entire Berom country. The *ti* red sacred ochre from *Mado* shrine was eventually distributed to other parts of Beromland as important gifts to distant relations, friends, *njem* lovers, in-laws, and sometimes to individuals in exchange of *nei pwat* olive oil and *nei choo* mahogany oil. Those who supplied the red sacred ochre needed these oils, because the red sacred ochre was mixed with either of these oils and applied as decoration on any part of the body. According to informants, *ti* the red sacred ochre was mixed with olive or mahogany oil because;

Wana ti na nei pwat ke ne choo ha se yaga wot a se nei pwat de nei choo ye  
chokot jere yaga chokot yemu ya se lo cheng na chit. yaga a no mwad a koro  
chokot yemu wet, se mwad a ra won na bemwad jere e ji chokot yemu mu. Ei, e'  
bemwad toro ju na bemwad yong pye na chokot de yen e ra fwom na chokot

yemu. Wot a wanas pye biya ye jere yemu yaga na kaye pye ya ki naka gem de mwad a ra fwom na ti mo. Ti ya se nefongol jere arong (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang, Sha Gyang, Pwajok Dung and Nyam Chal).

This is translated as,

We mix olive and mahogany oils with the red earth (referring to *ti*) because we produce olive and mahogany oils from sacred trees, because these trees were the abodes of the spirits and the gods. Yes, both good and bad spirits live there in these trees... and that is why these trees are not cut for firewood or other uses except after specific rituals were made to placate the spirits and the gods. Only blacksmiths and wood carvers use these trees and this explains why their products are also sacred. Yes, *ti* is also a sacred earth, and only sacred plus sacred can make you (pointing to the author) sacred. To make *ti* efficacious you must mix it with any of these holy oils.

Worthy of note was the involvement of Berom neighbours in the collection of this red sacred ochre. A case in point was the Rukuba people. The Rukuba were allowed to collect the *ti* red sacred ochre at Mado shrine after the Berom had finished collecting as much as they needed. The performers of religious rituals did not accompany the Rukuba *ti* collection. The rituals performed by *loh* Kwon and Choji von Dele of Du- the ritual families in-charge of Mado shrine were adequate for *ti* collection by the Rukuba (focus group discussion with Dung Gyang Pam Rwang and Zeng Chung).

At the end of *ti* collection, fires were lit during the night to roast the yams that were brought to *Mado* shrine. The fire was not used to only roast the yam tubers, but it was believed by the people that it “burnt all diseases” and other unhealthy problems

which affected the entire Berom country. While at the Mado shrine, “the people were careful not to offend the *chit* spirits of the space irrespective of the rituals that had earlier on been performed to enable the spirits accommodate the people” (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang, Sha Gyang, Pwajok Dung and Nyam Chal).

During this night, people heard different voices in conversation, which were believed to be voices of the *chit* spirits and those of the *vu-vwel-* ancestors. The ancestors only uttered some few words, usually phrases they were fond of using while alive in the physical world of human beings. The time for the collection of *ti* was also an important period for people with *toh bes* an innate supernatural power, to collect *chun* a staple food crop of the Berom. *Bekit* yam crop was also collected from the gods to boost their output and that of the society in the next harvest season. This was one important aspect of the *ti* ritual, which was related to *vwana* or *buna* a harvest festival of the Berom. The collection of the *chun* and *bekit* by people with *bes* was not physically carried out. According to informants, “there was a communication between the people and the gods in which the gods gave them gifts for themselves, families and the Berom country” (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang, Sha Gyang, Pwajok Dung and Nyam Chal). This may probably explain one of the reasons why people with such supernatural powers were well respected in their respective village communities.

Suffice it to pause here and take a look at these people with *toh bes* in order to know what was their role in the society and how important were they in the socio-religious life of the Berom. According to Pam Chuwang and Dung Pwajok, these people were considered as “third eyes” of every village community. They could see into the sacred world (the world of the gods, spirits, and ancestors). They knew the activities of

witches, wizards and sorcerers. These people were completely different from diviners. They were not paid for their services, and they were not consulted. People with *toh bes* said what they could see only when they wanted to, for they were not office holders. However, because they were people with benevolent powers (spirits), they had the propensity to always do good; they never hid what they saw from individuals, families and the society. Due to problems that could arise following their advice, they could only see and advice especially their family members, their clans and in some specific conditions where there was great threat to the entire village community (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang, Sha Gyang, Pwajok Dung and Nyam Chal).

The collection of *ti* involved the digging and later on grinding of the red ochre from Mado shrine. This was a period where individual families prayed for barren women within their families to bear children, as this will enable their husbands to fully participate in the collection of *ti* in the following year. Prayers were also offered for the different Berom villages that were involved in the *ti* collection and even those villages that did not participate that they all may receive from *ti*, blessings such as bumper harvest, good health, procreation, iron smelting, black smiting, wood carving, fertility of crops and animals.

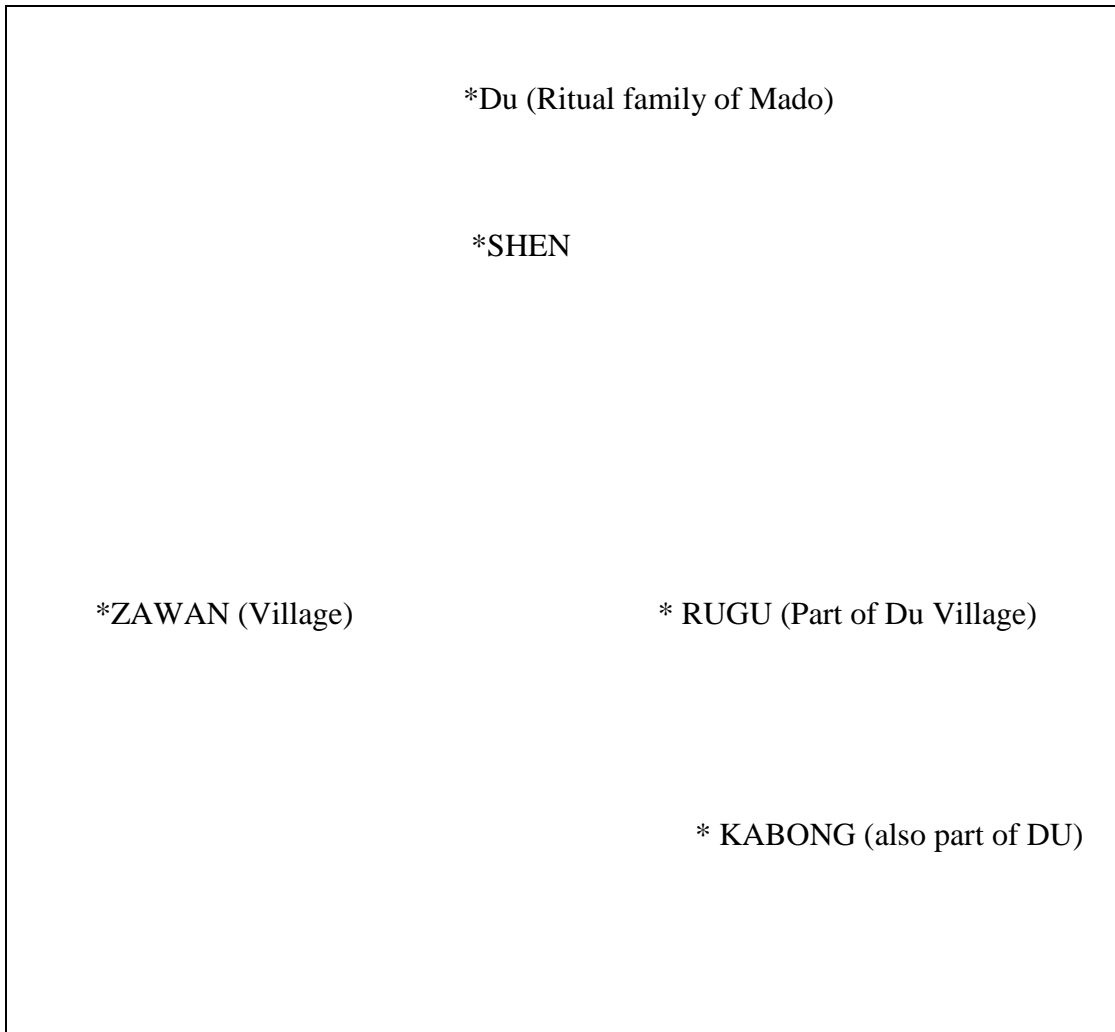
The order of the group camps during which fires were kept burning throughout the night during the *ti* ritual is illustrated by the diagram below. There were basically three villages which participated in this religious ritual of *ti collection* from Mado shrine. They were Du and Choji Von Dele families the families of the ritual priest of Mado shrine. These families became so large that they divided their members into Rubu and Kabong. The division of Du into Rubu and Kabong was to facilitate easy administration of the

family and also to minimize rivalry over leadership in the performance of the prestigious Mado religious ceremonies. Apart from this, it was to maintain the sacredness of the original ritual family from being polluted by other members of the family (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang, Sha Gyang, Pwajok Dung and Nyam Chal).

This presupposed that the first Du family on top of the diagram was the “restricted” or “secluded” ritual family. Rubu and Kabong were extended family members in which any member could succeed as the ritual priest only when there was no surviving member of the original ritual family. Other villages that attended the *ti* ritual at Mado shrine were Zawan and Shen who also sat separately during the all night-fire at Mado shrine. This was to enable every village; clan, lineage and family listen very carefully and decode the messages that were to be passed across by the spirits, the gods and the ancestors. Participants of the *ti* ritual all received different messages, even as they made different requests from the spirits, ancestors and the gods (focus group discussion with Gyang Chuwang, Sha Gyang, Pwajok Dung and Nyam Chal).

The successful collection of the *ti* was followed by drumming, singing and dancing from Mado shrine right to Du. The people (*ti* collectors) stopped at very important places, for example at Nikot, which was near Gyel and where *sheh* bamboo trees that were used in beating the unmarried men were collected. This was to enable the people of Gyel to come out in their mass to witness the special dance called *raye be kondung* dance of the xylophone, and most importantly, “to receive” the blessings of the spirits, ancestors and the gods of the land from the dancers (focus group discussion with Chuwang Gyang, Dung Pam and Pwajok Dung).

This dance continued in a procession enabling individual villages to gradually disengage to their various destinations. The dance took the people towards Fwanti where Shen people left for Shen. Du and Zawan continued the dance to Rabin from where they finally left for their individual villages. The ritual was usually rounded off at the respective *ladura* village squares of the three major villages that participated in this ritual, namely Shen, Du and Zawan. At their respective village squares, prayers were offered and dancing continued till the next day.



- ❖ This diagram is showing the position of the villages that participated in the *ti* ritual with the various camps indicating how the all-night fire was set and kept burning. Source: Simon Mwadkwon



According to Dung Chuwang;

I was present during one of the prayer sessions that were offered in the village square in Du. A member of Lo Du- the ritual family of Mado shrine offered this prayer. I hope you (referring to the author) know that the village square is also a shrine. It is where decisions affecting the village are taken. Normally such decisions are not carried out independent of our forefathers, the spirits and gods of the land. This explains why someone must sneeze during such decision indicating the approval of our ancestors, and the gods of our land with the proceedings of the meeting or the decision taken. I cannot tell you exactly the wordings of this long prayer, however I still remember that the prayer was centred on themes like: thanking God for the success of *ti* ritual; series of requests for good harvest; blessing of the womb for the women folk- for example, the man prayed, let our mothers, wives, sisters bear fruits, not just fruits but good fruits that will succeed us, sustain the continuity of our families; long life for the entire village members for example the man prayed: “let us live long, but if we must travel to the “other side of life” let our children bury us and not that we should bury our children”. He also prayed for the land, "let the land continue to sustain us with our animals, do not close the doors of the sky from us, even as we need sun shine we also need rain; thus, send down the rain whenever we are in need of it, so that the land does not go dry, so that the animals will not die, so that the rivers will not thirst, so that the trees and forests of your shrines in Mado and other places in the land will not get dry, so that the trees will send out good fruits for the birds to eat in order not

to destroy our crops on the farms. Send all forms of sicknesses to *ta* south and let our land continue to grow strong (Dung Chuwang interview).

The above prayer and our discussion on *Mado* shrine seem to point to a number of points. Firstly, that *Mado* shrine offered the entire Berom country the opportunity to come into an intimate relationship with their ecology. This is because the red sacred ochre from *mado* shrine was believed to contain life in it. This belief was extended to the rest of the environment. Secondly, the entire ecology was unified in the prayer reported by Dung Chuwang. The prayers were made for human beings, birds, trees, forests and animals were part of this prayer. Thirdly, the concept of the land is vividly presented here as being the core of Berom Religion as there was complete reliance on the sacred red ochre derived from the land and used for virtually all important religious and secular activities of the Berom. Fourthly, *mado* shrine was so significant for the entire Berom country that when this shrine was affected the totality of Berom life was invariably affected; and even that of their neighbours the Rukuba who participated in the collection of the *ti*.

To what extent did religious activities in *mado* shrine enhance an ecological ethics among the Berom? This question is important as the gods were propitiated to send down rain for trees to produce fruits for birds so that birds will not destroy crops needed by human beings. Does this prayer in anyway suggest that birds and other animals were prayed for to live in their own right as members of the earth, or simply to live at the mercy of human beings? What other religious significance did *mado* shrine offer to the Berom and to what extent did this produce an ecological friendly ethic?

### 4.3.2 Indigenous Function

The importance of *ti* ritual in Berom religion cannot be over-emphasized. Firstly, besides its religious significance which was clear as noticed in the various religious rituals and prayers to the spirits, ancestors and the gods; *ti* from Mado shrine had other values needed by the people in the performance of socio- economic and political activities. For example, *ti* ritual provided the Berom the opportunity for a social interaction and integrated them the more as a people. For example, *ti* was used as occasion for title-taking, initiation into adulthood (male and female) and celebration of festivals. Particularly crucial, it was the period for the burial of umbilical cord and the treatment of the circumcision wounds. Circumcision linked the child to the land and the sacred world. Linking the child at this stage to land was important, as it was not just linking it to the land alone but to the gods, ancestors and all other forces of nature which inhabited the land.

At this moment the child's spirit could acclimatize to the land. This made the child to be accepted by the land in the journey through the various stages of life on the land. This was to also ensure that the land finally accepted the child during his burial when he would finally embark on another journey to the world of the ancestors (Dung Chuwang interview). It was the time when hunters and warriors ritually opened their eyes to enable them see clearly. For example, hunters and warriors used *ti* to decorate their faces and also their horses before embarking on a hunting expedition or war. This was to enable them *di yigyig* see beyond the ordinary profane time and space, but to “see better” into sacred space and time. With the potency of *ti*, hunters and warriors could detect where an

enemy or an animal was hiding and to know when to attack. *Ti* was used to protect hunters from wild animals and dangerous spirits (Dung Chuwang interview).

Secondly, it offered the opportunity to pray for barren women by participants. This might possibly explain the reason why *ti* was used in most religious and social events in the celebration of cycles of life among the Berom. Thirdly, persons with *bes* supernatural powers “collected” the *chun* (the Berom staple food crop to boost the production of the crop in the next farming season) from the ancestors and the gods. Fourthly, *ti* had some medicinal and cosmetic values for the Berom. For example *ti* was mixed with olive oil and rubbed on newborn babies as a sign of protection from witches, sorcerers, and other evil spirits. It was rubbed on dead bodies before burial. *Ti* was mixed with olive or mahogany oil and rubbed on the penis of a circumcised male child. It was also rubbed on the umbilical cord and buried in the ground in a place within the homestead or in a special place called *tyan*.

The concept of *tyan* because of its importance among the Berom needs some clarification here. It was a passage where dirty water used in every Berom home passed out from the homestead. Informants said that, the *tyan* was used to perform many rituals, for example, to offer chicken for ancestors and a gate to the sacred world. As a place where family members urinate, *tyan* was considered as a “gateway” to ease one’s or the entire family problems symbolized in the passing out of urine a waste product, and dirty water from the homestead. It was also seen as a door where women and men could negotiate with or contact their neighbours. People could whisper important messages to their neighbours through the *tyan* (focus group discussion with Dung Tengwong, Gyang Davou, Davou Mwantep and Tep Gyang). Fifthly, *ti* was also used to dress newly married

brides. This was to help in cleansing of their womb from any form of barrenness and enabled the women bear children immediately. Sixthly, it was used to decorate the face and other parts of the body during important festivals like *nshok*, *badu*, and *mandyieng*.

*Ti* was smeared on bodies of the dead before burial, showing that even in death; the Berom was still linked to the land. Another possible explanation could be that the Berom did this to link the dead to *mado* shrine participants of the *ti* ritual at Mado shrine receive messages from the ancestors during the night at Mado shrine.

### 4.3.3 Mado Shrine as a Hunting Ground

Mado shrine also served as a communal hunting space called *jama* or *jamo mado*, which normally took place in the month of October the Berom New Year. Unlike the *ti* ritual, the Mado hunting was attended only by people of Du. The hunting clans included people from villages like Kabong, Rabin, Kwang, Jishe and Chwelnyp where the ritual family in-charge of Mado shrine came from.

The *jamo mado* involved a lot of religious activities. Firstly, the hunters assembled themselves on their horses at a place called Dura Fwanchi “see the spirits”. This was a space outside the heart of *mado* shrine. This ritual involved trying or testing the horses on a piece of flat land to identify the ones that were best fit for *jama mado* festival. Two or three riders rode at their full speed towards a hurdle called *vuvut*, which was approximately “three to four meters high”<sup>3</sup> and jumped over it. This was done repeatedly until all the riders had tested their horses (focus group discussion with Jang Davou, Nyam Dung, Nyang Dadok and Choji Don).

Weak horses were disqualified and sent back home together with their owners. It was not allowed for owners of disqualified horses to acquire another horse and return to

the testing ground. It is believed that the gods and the ancestors carried out the testing of the horses and their subsequent selection or disqualification. When a horse failed to jump three to four meters height, the explanation was that the Supreme Being, gods, spirits, or ancestors had answered no; the person could not attend hunting lest he brought bad luck to other hunters. The testing exercise was an opportunity for wizards, sorcerers or people who were “unclean” to be rejected from defiling the Mado shrine (focus group discussion with Jang Davou, Nyam Dung, Nyang Dadok and Choji Don).

At the end of the testing exercise, the *gwom jamo* chief hunter (who was always selected based on his achievements and performances in the previous year’s hunt) went down on his knees on the ground and all other hunters sat on their horses forming a circle round him. In this posture, the *gwom jamo* chief hunter prayed. Firstly, he prayed directly to *Dagwi* the Supreme Being. Secondly he asked for the blessings of the ancestors according to the houses represented at the hunting ground. Thirdly, and most importantly he prayed to the spirits of the forests, trees, rocks, rivers and land at *mado* shrine for guidance and protection throughout the hunting exercise. This was an important prayer as it allowed free contact between human beings and their ecology during the hunt (focus group discussion with Jang Davou, Nyam Dung, Nyang Dadok and Choji Don). This turned hunting into a ritual activity which united humans and nature.

Prayers to these three spiritual bodies were centred on the permission to hunt in the shrine without offending the gods as this could cause misfortune to the entire Berom country. It is pertinent to note that before the prayer commenced, all horses stopped eating whatever food was presented to them and listened to the prayers offered by the *gwom jamo*. This was because a section was meant for their protection and also as instructions to

them. At this particular moment, all hunters climbed their horses' backs to listen to the prayer which informants reported in the following words;

Mbok a Dagwi nong hwot weng e jamo yemo ... eeh. Tik na wot yel e kwon jere hemo na retomo... eeh. Nong hwot nyamo bere, ... emm, wot ase lolo netyeng...see song. Ye pyere wo yene mo, de mwad e jemot ase ram wet. ase noh. Be dwa mot be wonta beyis de yen a ro yamo mo naka, de gwining e'je men ase ram wet, de yen a boro lo chit wet... nekeri... ase noh (focus group discussion with Jang Davou, Nyam Dung, Nyang Dadok and Choji Don).

This is translated as;

God, please grant us good luck in this hunting... (“Yes”, answered other hunters on their horses). Let us enter into this holy place with your permission and supernatural power... (“Yes”, answered the other hunters on their horses back). Give us plenty of animals... (“Emm”, expressing agreement to what has been asked. We are begging for health and protection... (“So much”, answered the other hunters on their horses). From the beginning to the end of this hunting, we pray that none amongst us will sustain any injury... (“That is how it should be”, answered the other hunters on their horses). Let our horses open their eyes and chase the animals very well that we may have a good catch. None of them (horses) like us should sustain any injury...let none of them match a spirit hole... (“It is forbidden”, answered the other hunters...let this prayer be like that).

The same prayers were offered to the ancestors and spirits for the same purpose. It was only when one of the hunters or any of their horses involuntarily or naturally sneezed that the prayers were considered as answered by the Supreme Being, the ancestors and the

spirits or the gods. The sneeze was welcomed by the *gwom jamo* in the following phrase; *te latoh wot ase weng*, literary “add more to your present head, we have luck or we are blessed”. Connotatively, *te latoh* meant may one always “see”; which may also be translated to mean, “may one possess that supernatural power to enable him/her interpret the minds of the ancestors, spirits and the gods, so that their decisions can always be conveyed and decoded to others” (focus group discussion with Pam Wang, Kim Nash, Davou Gyang and Toma Jang).

However, if none of the horse riders or any of the horses sneezed, everyone went back home and the same ritual was repeated the next day. The reason as observed by informants was that the Supreme Being, ancestors and the spirits were not in support of the hunting on that particular day. Another possible reason was linked to the purity of the hunters themselves. Thus all hunters where to return home and perform some kind of ritual cleansing which included abstaining from sex and drinking of *sireng* local brewed beer. The horses to be used for the next day’s hunting had to be separated from other horses and kept in a special hall in preparation for the hunting (focus group discussion with Pam Wang, Kim Nash, Davou Gyang and Toma Jang).

The same ritual prayers were repeated the next day, and following a sneeze from one of the hunters or any of the horses, they (hunters and horses) were given instructions by the *gwom jamo* to enter into *mado* shrine and wait for further instructions on how to commence the hunting expedition. Meanwhile another prayer had to be offered inside the shrine. This prayer was only offered to the nature gods. Spirits of the rocks, mountains, rivers, lakes, swamps, trees and of the “earth” were pleaded for success and protection. The *gwom jamo* during this prayer thanked the spirits for allowing them entrance into the



shrine. He then asked for favour to enable them have a good hunting expedition that should be accident free (focus group discussion with Pam Wang, Kim Nash, Davou Gyang and Toma Jang).

After this prayer, the hunters took their positions in the form of a circle waiting for further instructions from the *gwom jamo*. This did not indicate the beginning of the hunt, for a reunion ritual that will connect the hunting expedition with the *ti* ritual had to be performed. This was by lighting the fire using the same method as in the *ti* ritual which involved the traditional *furung* method of rubbing two sticks together in a hole with sand and cotton mixed together to produce fire. Informants said that when the *gwom jamo* had difficulty in making the fire quickly, he prayed to the nature gods again for assistance and fire came immediately (focus group discussion with Pam Wang, Kim Nash, Davou Gyang and Toma Jang).

When the fire was lit, some of the hunters would be chosen to spread the fire at strategic positions, which were believed to be the hiding places of the games. The whole sacred land was not set ablaze, only the restricted portion meant for hunting. Those hunters with *Bes* supernatural powers were the people chosen to set the fire on the strategic hiding places of the animals. This was because they were believed to perceive through smell the hide out of the various animals. After all these had been carried out, the *gwom jamo* now gave orders for the hunting to begin.

After the day's hunt, *won bang rwi* literary translated as “prayers for the closing of the gateway”, were also offered to mark the exit of the hunters from the shrine. This prayer was directed only to the nature gods and was meant to thank them for the safe hunting expedition. The most important aspect of these prayers as observed by

informants, was a call to gods to 'close all gates' leading to the shrine. This was symbolically done by the *gwom jamo* himself when he walked out of the hunting ground making a symbolic act as if closing a big gate. Thus, any activity in shrine after the hunting was to be considered as breaking the boundaries of behaviours guiding the shrine (focus group discussion with Pam Wang, Kim Nash, Davou Gyang and Toma Jang). Needless to add that bush burning was inimical to the ecosystem as it destroyed the nutrients of the topsoil.

#### **4.3.4 Prohibitions Guiding Mado Shrine**

Mado sacred space was surrounded by a number of *nkeri*, meaning prohibitions. Prohibitions surrounding Mado as a hunting ground were many. Firstly, no one was allowed to cultivate any portion of the land for whatever purpose, in fact no iron implement could touch the shrine. Secondly, no tree or even a branch was to be cut down or even picked up from the shrine. Thirdly, unauthorized hunting was completely disallowed except the communal hunting which was only possible after the necessary rituals had been performed by the *loh* Kwon and Choji Von Dele who were the ritual families in charge of this religious space.

When any of these taboos was faulted, a black goat was sacrificed to the spirits in order to appease them. The choice of a black goat had to do with colour symbolism among the Berom. Black signified sadness, unhappiness and bad situation (focus group discussion with Rwang Kim, Mandung Choji, and Chung Gyang). On the contrary, the consequence was a visitation of dreaded diseases such as small pox, leprosy, barrenness and impotence; destruction from nature gods such as thunder and lightning, whirlwinds,

flood or drought on the entire Berom country until someone confessed and the appropriate cleansing rituals were carried out.

Building houses close to the shrine was also prohibited. According to Bara Lomak;

Many people from Gyel built their houses close to Mado shrine, this offended the gods at *mado* shrine; thus the people were afflicted with different kinds of illnesses. The ritual family of *mado* shrine did not offer the normal sacrifice to appease the gods in good time. This resulted in disasters like drought, famine, whirlwinds blowing off roof tops, thunder and lightning killing a lot of animals and destroying mahogany and olive trees. Following this havoc, sacrifices of appeasement were immediately made and the people of Gyel had to move away from this place (Bara Lomak, interview).

Perhaps if the appropriate rituals were not performed the nature gods could have intensified their punishment on the village community or the entire Berom country. According to Lomak, it was likely that the religious shrine could have subsequently lost its effectiveness and expected efficacy in the provision of solutions for the different socio-religious problems. This could also have led to the loss of the medicinal values of *ti*, derived from *mado* shrine. But it was unthinkable to refuse carrying out the rituals to appease the gods. Lomak went further to say that he made a suggestion in the 1930s to the family of Kwon and Choji Von Dele the ritual families in-charge of *mado* shrine to write down the history of *mado* shrine but the suggestion was ignored (Bara Lomak interview).

#### **4.3.5 Hunting for Small Animals in Mado Shrine**

The Mado communal hunting with its attendant rituals and series of prayers to the Supreme Being, ancestors, and the gods was followed by a small hunting expedition called *wil mado*, meaning “a visit to Mado”. It is pertinent to note that this hunt did not require any public ritual or prayers like the communal hunting. No fire was needed during hunting. People freely hunted for lesser animals. Pam Rapp reported that no rituals were needed for hunting because rituals performed during the *ti* and *Jamo* events were supposed to be efficacious till the end of the free hunt of lesser animals. Besides, this hunting was announced by the ritual family in charge of *mado* shrine. The ritual families performed secret prayers and all other rituals on behalf of the entire hunters. This event united the Berom and their neighbours, the Rukuba and Anaguta who were also invited to participate in the hunting of the small animals during this period. The hunt provides other Berom villages that did not participate in the *ti* and *jamo* rituals to have contact with *mado* shrine and the gods of the land (Pam Rapp interview). In many ways *mado* shrine occupied a larger vista of Berom religious ardour than shrines such as Behwol.

#### **4.4 BEHWOL SHRINE: NOTES ON FIELD STUDY**

To systematically describe, analyze and interpret the data on Behwol shrine fourteen focus group discussions were conducted. The breakdown shows that while eleven were focus group discussion only three were individual interviews. Because of the provenance of Behwol shrine the focus group discussion were wide spread among villages that participated in religious activities in Behwol shrine. Thus, 2 focus group discussions were conducted in Shen, 3 in Kabong, 5 in Kwang, 2 in Riyom, 1 each in Tahoss and polo field in Jos North. Three of these focus group discussions were conducted

in April, nine in March and two in September, between 1998 and 2004. Most of the interviews were conducted in March, which is a time of rest for majority of the people who are peasant farmers. The month of April was also favourable because many people could be reached during this time because of the annual *nzem*: cultural festival.

#### 4.4.1 Introduction to Behwol Shrine

Behwol shrine was located in the present day Farin Gada and consisted of a vast land running into several square kilometres. It was bigger than *mado* shrine described in 4.3 above. It shared boundaries with villages which were not Berom such as the present day Yelwa, Mista Alli, up to Tariya, Lo-Bajei, Lo-Za Kabogwom (Buji), Rukuba, Anaguta, and Berom villages of Laranto, Chwelnyap and Kabong. According to informants;

Behwol was an open plain land with trees, hills and plains. Hunting was the major religious activity of the Berom organized in this shrine. It also served as a pilgrimage space. It provided for several medicinal plants and other trees such as *choo* and *kugul*, which were connected with series of religious rituals (Pam Rapp interview).

The Behwol hunting was possibly the biggest hunting festival in the entire Berom country. The family in charge of religious activities at Behwol shrine was *loh* Kadang. Among members of the ritual family of Behwol, one of the famous holders of this sacred office was Danchom. This may explain why a song concerning Behwol shrine was composed incorporating Danchom`s name. Informants could not remember the complete contents of this song, but most of them remembered that the main wordings of the song were *gwele jamo Danchom gwa vok gul* meaning, “the hunting staff or stick of Danchom

is cold”, apparently referring to Behwol shrine (Pam Chungyang interview). This also explains that Behwol shrine was extremely cold throughout the year. This was one of the general criteria for identifying shrines in Berom religion and probably for the selection of Behwol as a shrine.

Behwol was also frequently referred to as *hwol na*, meaning “the hills of *na*”. *Na* was a kind of wild animal, which was very common at Behwol which looks like a buffalo. The principal villages whose hunters participated in the Behwol hunting expedition and which were famous for their horses were the many Berom villages and Berom neighbours of the present day Tariya, Rukuba, Irigwe and Anaguta. Nyam Dung said the Berom had a song about one of their neighbours the Tariya people during the hunting expedition. The song concerned their tribal marks. The lines of the song went this way; *hwa di suga di jot enu na beyis eweh Tariya* meaning, “when you see a hunter with tribal marks on his whole face down to his mouth he is a Tariya” (Nyam Dung, interview).

#### **4.4.2 Rituals and Ritual Agents**

Religious rituals at Behwol shrine included hunting, religious pilgrimage and the collection of medicinal herbs by *bemwad hwal* medicine persons. We have discussed each of these events and the religious acts or rituals involved.

#### **4.4.3 Hunting**

Although Berom neighbours participated in the annual hunting at Behwol shrine, the religious rituals were only performed by the *loh* Kadang of Du that was the ritual family in-charge of Behwol shrine. Two days to the hunting, the eldest man in the ritual family offered prayers to the gods that inhabited trees, hills and plain land at Behwol. This was done in the middle of the night when the gods were said to be more active.

Informants recalled when they watched and listened from a distance as their grandfather who was the eldest man of the ritual family offered prayers to the gods. They said the wordings of the prayer were clear to them except at some points their grandfather had to say some words silently. They heard their grandfather pray in these words,

Vwang negasi ne nba jeng be sogga be roda vei jamo e` kwon jere Behwol. Ma se lolo nong hwot weng, won mot de hwak e` jemot ase rwam wet. Sei kawe mwad eje mot sede hwei mo. Ai e`vwel min de wot e`ke vei de wot ase kyong ye e`ji benamo nyamo min. Yin a dun hwot wet, yaga yin ase kahe vwel, Wonta a wot beyis, la toh, nong hwot di na ka. De yin a yebam a be-sa mot wet, yen be vai se na wot arong. Wot ase lolo hei hemo wog kaye jeng ye tos nyamo bere, chogot kwong ya ras naka de ye gereb nyamo mo, neshi na ye vit wet, nyamo yen koso. A be vwo-vwel, a bemat neken, a chi na cheng in ji vwel hemo, na yin...yin de e`sanghal in ne rot, na chokog, na beta vemo eh dem jere hemo vok eh ji chap mot, yin a tok kaye pye, yong hin dem jere hemo naka, de jamo yemo yase naka kahe shei...a se noh (focus group discussion with Dung Kadang, Pam Kadang Gyang Kadang).

This prayer can be literally translated in this way;

Remaining two more days and hunters will come for hunting on the sacred ground of Behwol. We are pleading for good luck. My prayers are that none of us should sustain any injury. Consider all of us as your children. Yes, we are coming to your house to take a little out of your abundance of animals in your possession. Open our eyes, our heads, and let us see clearly. Forget not our neighbours for they will be among us. We are pleading with this forest or bush to always produce many and

different kinds of animals. May the trees continue to grow healthy in order to protect the animals produced in this place? May the waters never dry for the animals will die of thirst...? Our ancestors in this place, our gods in this holy land, the spirits here and you (referring to the gods) who reside in the rivers, trees, rocks and hills right to our farm lands. You are here in this sacred land and even all other lands. You know everything; make this sacred land (referring to Behwol) fruitful, so that this hunting will be repeated every year with the more success... (“It is so”, answered by those present during this prayer).

According to my informants, on the next day, the eldest man in the ritual family must visit any place very close to the shrine taking along with him four other members of the ritual family, four spears, bags, bows and arrows and four dogs. Three of these elders, dogs and the other items represented the three sub-divisions of Beromland and the other one represented Berom neighbours. Dogs were important in this ritual because of the general belief among Berom that dogs could see the *chit* or *cheng* spirits. Dogs were thus important in the performance of Behwol ritual because they showed their masters the way in order not to step on the heads of the spirits when chasing a game (focus group discussion with Dung Kadang, Pam Kadang Gyang Kadang).

At a spot close to the Behwol shrine, a sacrifice of a white chicken was offered to the gods. The chicken was roasted and eaten completely while the blood was smeared on the four spears, bows, arrows, shields, and bags representing the three Berom sub-divisions and their neighbours. The gods were once more reminded in another prayer to offer protection and bless the people with a good catch of animals in the next day's hunt.



The day for the hunting was then circulated by the ritual family to Berom villages and their neighbours.

Arriving at Behwol shrine the hunters positioned themselves into circles according to villages, usually turning their backs at the direction of their respective villages. Informants observed that this was to enable the gods and ancestors identify the people according to their village as they were prayed for by the ritual family (focus group discussion with Dung Kadang, Pam Kadang Gyang Kadang). The people remained in this position until the ritual family set the hunting fire at the strategic points to scare out the animals. Even then, no one was allowed to start the hunt until the ritual priest of Behwol gave the order. The order was given in a loud cry and a symbolic chase of a wild animal. This was understood by the people as an order to start hunting (focus group discussion with Dung Kadang, Pam Kadang Gyang Kadang).

The significance of lighting the hunting fire cannot be overemphasized. Besides signifying the beginning of the hunt, informants said it had a connotative symbolism which indicated bestowing all the hunters with a kind of supernatural power to “see”; which means to clearly understand where the animals were hiding and to avoid a fruitless hunting exercise. The skins of these animals were worn by the priest-chief and other important members of the society (focus group discussion with Dung Kadang, Pam Kadang Gyang Kadang).

At the end of the hunting exercise, each village went back leaving behind the ritual priest who stayed to thank the gods for their co-operation and a successful hunt. The skulls of the animals were used in decorating the walls of rooms and the granaries in Beromland. The importance of Riyom was brought to focus in this hunting as skulls of

wild animals were sent to Riyom to be deposited in *vum* shrine a deep pit in Riyom (focus group discussion with Dung Jok, Kweng Bok and Sanda Badung). This hunting usually ended with a colourful celebration making of a hero. Making of a hero had its attendant rituals which were meant to declare the best hunter in each village as a hero. The hero or the best hunter was not selected because of the quantity of animals caught during the hunt; but because of the type of animal. Thus, someone was made a hero when he caught a lion or a hyena. The skins of these two animals were used as clothes by the priest-chief and other important members of the village community. The making of a hero in Berom society is however not our concern at the moment, but deserves further research.

#### **4.4.4 Religious Pilgrimage**

Behwol shrine was “a point of contact” with the sacred order of the gods. This may explain why the Behwol became a shrine. Because of its religious significance, individuals and families went on pilgrimage to Behwol. Informants reported that, most religious priests went for spiritual awakening at Behwol after permission was granted them by the ritual family. Men and women went on this pilgrimage to pray for their barren wife or wives, impotent husbands; to pray for good health, prosperity, protection against any form of evil and to become spiritually strong. Those who went to pilgrimage were not allowed to the shrine but performed their prayers by the side of the shrine facing Riyom when making the last request from the gods (focus group discussion with Dung Jok, Kweng Bok and Sanda Badung).

Diviners also visited Behwol shrine to acquire supernatural power to enable them properly diagnose the cases of their patients. However, diviners were not to go on a physical pilgrimage to Behwol, as they had the power to delve into any sacred space and

time during their divination using psychic powers. Diviners had an innate will power which enabled them to garner supernatural powers and used same as solutions to problems of individuals, families or the entire village community. This was vividly expressed by informants when they reported that, the dwelling places of the spirits, the ancestors and the gods were the shrines and other holy places. The Behwol you are talking about (referring to the author), which we (informants) are saying diviners could 'reach' even as they seat in their offices performing their art of divination was one of these great shrines (focus group discussion with Dung Jok, Kweng Bok and Sanda Badung).

Behwol shrine had medicinal herbs that could treat a lot of ailments that were caused by malignant spirits, sorcerers, wizards and witches. Given that some diviners combined the offices of ritual priests, divination and medicine persons, such category of diviners went on pilgrimage to Behwol shrine several times within the year. This according to my informants “depended on the needs of the individuals and the society, it also explains the reason why diviners sometimes went on a spiritual pilgrimage and not a physical one” (focus group discussion with Dung Jok, Kweng Bok and Sanda Badung). Iron smelters and blacksmiths went on a yearly religious pilgrimage to Behwol or any of the shrines close to them; perhaps because iron smelting and blacksmithing as we saw in chapter three, were arts connected to series of religious rituals.

#### **4.4.5 Collection of Medicinal Herbs of Religious Significance**

Trees and shrubs provided a wide range of benefits to human beings, both in terms of products such as timber or machine and services such as shade or soil improvement (Mbuya et-al xi). Behwol shrine like Mado shrine provided for medicinal herbs. The reasons as reported by informants was that these shrines allowed for the fertility of land,

growth of trees, forests, shrubs which were not destroyed nor chopped down for firewood (focus group discussion with Dachung Gyang Dung Dalyop Sambo Gyang and Bogom Dagwom).

Trees and herbs played an important role in Berom Religion. We had earlier on in chapter one mentioned a lot of such trees, which included *pwat* olive trees, *choo* mahogany trees and *laron* locust bean trees with religious significance. The benefits of trees and shrubs were mostly in the provision of medicinal herbs for the treatment of illnesses associated with violation of religious prohibitions caused by spirits and gods who dwelt on the hill tops, rocks, trees, forests, rivers and swamps; which this study had christened nature spirits or nature gods.

Informants reported that these trees and shrubs were not destroyed for energy needs of the Berom as most Berom families used cornstalk for their energy supplies. A small percentage of the society use trees for firewood and art, and these included the aged, iron smelters and blacksmiths. In this way these trees which were believed to be the abode of the gods were preserved to a great extent for religious and other human activities such as carving, building of huts and handles for hoes and knives (focus group discussion with focus group discussion with Pam Zat, Dudu Dalyop, Nyam Dung, Dung Jok, Jangwok Andrew and Davou Dung Chollom).

#### **4.5 LIYAN RAIN-MAKING AND HUNTING SHRINE**

*Liyan* shrine occupied a vast space. The present day Jos main prison accounts for the heart beat and location of *Liyan* shrine. It occupied the whole of the area covering up to Kabong, sharing boundaries with Gwong and Jarawa areas around Laminga, proceeding up to parts of Du and Shen. *Liyan* shrine was both a hunting and rain-making

ground. The ritual family in-charge of this shrine was Mann and Badung Chun families. Information on this shrine was basically from field research. Interviews involving seven groups and an individual were conducted. Most of the interviews were carried out in December and at Gwara-Lomanjei in Jos North. This was influenced by the provenance of the shrine. Most of those interviewed were peasant farmers and December (1997-2004) was a time of rest for them.

It is pertinent to note from the onset that the type of hunting that went on in *Liyan* shrine was different in many respects to what we had earlier on described in the cases of *Mado* and *Behwol* shrines. The type of hunting rituals performed in *Liyan* shrine were called *jama leng* literally translated as “hunting for soup or searching for soup” and in some instances, *jama hwonong* meaning, “searching for vegetables”. This from the onset points to one fact that this ritual was not entirely a hunting ritual, but connotatively it was a ritual for rain-making. *Leng* and *hwonong* are vegetables which cannot grow without rain; in this way the Berom were able to use the symbolism of life in nature such as trees, rivers, lakes, swamps, fishes, forests and human beings which is only possible through rain or water to convey this message. In other words, this ritual was performed only when there was no rain leading to the gradual death of *hwonong* and *leng* (focus group discussion with Pam Zat, Dudu Dalyop, Nyam Dung, Dung Jok, Jangwok Andrew and Davou Dung Chollom).

When this condition occurred, the ritual families of *Liyan* must perform *jama leng* rituals, in other words, rain-making rituals. The only linkage of this ritual with real hunting was that after the rain rituals, the ritual family in-charge of *Liyan* must kill an

animal from this shrine which was sacrificed to the gods of *Liyan* shrine, who were believed to have withheld the rains.

It is interesting to note that only the ritual families of *Liyan* went for this hunting which was only possible when other reasons for the lack of rain had been investigated by the *voshon* diviner, and attributed the condition to the need for a rain making ritual at *Liyan*. To maintain the sacredness of *Liyan*, the following boundaries of behaviours were put in place to safeguard the shrine. Firstly, movement into the shrine was strictly restricted. Secondly, no farming or building was allowed in the shrine. Thirdly, unauthorized hunting was prohibited. Fourthly, felling of trees or even picking a branch of a tree or cutting grass from the shrine was forbidden (focus group discussion with Gyang Mang, Kim Chung and Wang Lee).

Violation of any of the prohibitions guiding *Liyan* shrine was punished by nature gods such as drought, thunder and lightning, torrential rainfall and whirlwinds. A confession for breaking a prohibition guiding *Liyan* shrine was followed by a ritual cleansing of the dirt that led to the punishment.

The concept of confession in Berom Religion needs further clearance because of the great importance attached to it. Confession was the key to solving most problems in Berom traditional society; confession was sometimes considered as the solution to the problem itself. People showed remorse during and after confession as the gods could see this and warded off catastrophe, sometimes, sacrifices were just formalities but the main thing was confession. In other words, sacrifice of appeasement made without any confession was less effective than when a confession was followed with a sacrifice (focus group discussion with Gyang Mang, Kim Chung and Wang Lee).

To remedy the situation the person(s) who violated the prohibition payed a fine of a goat which was the biggest of all his/her white goats. In cases where the culprit had none he/she had to give part of his/her land to someone who was ready to give him/her a white goat. A second alternative was that he/she could contract his/her daughter into marriage to pay for the goat. Thirdly, he/she could accept to pay the price of the goat through labour to the *gwom* Priest-chief or members of the ritual families who provided the goat for the sacrifice. Women were placed in a dilemma when it came to providing for the animal for a sacrifice for the offence committed by the woman. According to Gyang Mang, Kim Chung and Wang Lee; Women were not owners of landed properties in Berom traditional society. Women were said to own some domestic animals such as goats and chickens, these belonged to her husbands. The husband of every woman thus provided the sacrificial animal for any religious ritual involving his wife and all other female members of the family (focus group discussion with Gyang Mang, Kim Chung and Wang Lee).

The ritual families were the only ones qualified to perform the ritual cleansing or purification rites. The goat was taken to the shrine by members of the ritual families in the company of the person(s) who violated the prohibition and offered as a sacrifice. It is pertinent to note here that all that was removed from the shrine leading to the punishment by the gods was returned on the day of the sacrifice of appeasement. However, if it so happened that what was taken away from the shrine had been utilised, a symbolic action was used to return or replace the item. The white goat was then offered as a sacrifice. The blood of the animal was completely buried in a hole somewhere in the shrine. This according to informants symbolized, *bang gwol* or *won rwak*, meaning “closing the

winds” or praying for rain (focus group discussion with Gyang Mang, Kim Chung and Wang Lee). The goat was roasted and eaten by the ritual families. No part of it was to remain; instead they buried every leftover in the same hole where the blood of the goat was poured.

At the end of this ritual the victim(s) confessed to the gods and promise to henceforth be of good behaviour. He/ she must also promise not to repeat the same thing. The eldest person from ritual families closed this ritual with prayers to the Supreme Being, ancestors and finally to the nature gods (that is spirits believed to reside in rocks, trees, rivers, mountains, lakes, swamps, forests, etc). On what were the exact wordings of this prayer, Gyang Mang from the ritual family of *Liyan* reported that he watched and listened as his uncle offered this prayer in the 1930s. This was the last time as far as he could remember when such prayers were offered. Gyang continued;

Gwaha hong a te beyis wo la gwi, ko a lolo dagwi. Sa womo a ra chit, a remo wot ase e´reyom de bedok, na ryas mot, na pye mot e´ hei, de ryo tede tu. wok toso reyom mot...ase noo. A be vu-vwel, ba wot gaye bam a yin wet, sele hin wot yega yin a tok be segwong chit mwa. De yin a tik de ne loh min na yene hen wet! eeh A chit, wot ara yin benen see song. Sai yin a pye min, wot a ga tik a yin e kwon de mwad buru mo a kana jet a ye. Benamo vwel yemo yin a re mwa hin e` gabik be mat reto, ko yin a nong hwot ne tyeng. Eeh (Gyang Mang interview)

This prayer can be translated as;

My uncle looked up into the sky and begged Dagwi the Supreme Being. This man has touched the dwelling place of the ancestors, spirits and the gods. We are now suffering losses from the destruction of our houses, our wealth (referring to



animals or crops on the farm lands and health), we are suffering from different sicknesses. Listen to our plight... yes or it is so. Ah! You ancestors, we will always remember you, you noble ones, help your children for you know all the ways of the spirits and the gods. We beg that you should not allow your houses collapse. And you gods, yes, we accept that we have committed a serious offence against you. Collect back your belongings (Placing whatever thing that was taking from the shrine or using a symbolic action to replace the items). We had already placed the items back where the ignorant offender picked them. Please accept this offer of goat meat and share it with others (referring to other gods) here present and both of you should return to us peace and health.

The person who violated this prohibition then came forward, and went down on his/her knees facing the direction of the ritual families and offered his/her prayers. He or she was to utter simple words like *wot, meh ga se tabak, mwad kwit o a ra berem wet*. Meaning, “we or i had received enough counselling, punishment or advice; the ritual priest did not lie in his speech when he addressed you (referring to the gods and ancestors)”. This was not a prayer per-se but an acceptance or affirmation of all that has been requested from the Supreme Being, ancestors and the nature gods on behalf of the victim(s) or the entire village community. Confession was an affirmation of confidence on the ritual priest as someone to be trusted and relied upon. This further showed how important the ritual priests were in Berom traditional society.

#### **4.6 THE GUFWAGACHIK SHRINE**

Fifteen focus group discussions were conducted to enable the researcher described the religious activities that were carried out at the three *Gufwagachik* shrines. A

breakdown of these focus group discussions showed that 3 were carried out in Bukuru, 3 in Du, 4 in Chwelnyp, 2 in Jishe, 2 in Kwang and 1 at polo field in Jos. Most of the focus group discussions were carried in March and December (1997-2004) which were times of rest for most of the peasant farmers.

The first *gufwagachik* sacred monolith was identified at Chwelnyp during one of the migrations of the Berom to their present settlement on the Jos Plateau. The word *Gufwa* in Berom means “stone” and *Gachik* means “standing upright”, thus the word *Gufwa-gachik* in Berom is literary translated as “a stone standing upright like a human being” (focus group discussion with Dung Nyam, Dachung Fwet, Nyam Dusu and Bot Nyam). There are three of such sacred monoliths; two in Beromland and one in Turu of Bujiland. The history of the other two is linked with the first one which was first identified at Chwelnyp. This is also linked to the northern myth of migration of the Berom and several other ethnic groups of the Jos Plateau who are Berom neighbours, such as the Anaguta, Rukuba and the Buji.

The first sacred monolith at Chwelnyp and the other two at Turu and Du were designated shrines because they represented dispersal points during migrations of the Berom and their neighbours in search of a favourable place of settlement on the Jos Plateau. There is no gain discussing this northern migration myth of the Berom which has already been discussed in chapter one. However, it seems almost impossible to discuss the socio-religious significance of the three monoliths without any mention of the northern migration myth. A summary of the northern migration myth will thus suffice to vividly explain the history of origin and most importantly the socio-religious significance of the three monoliths. Unveiling the history of the northern myth of migration will enable us to

describe the religious significance of three sacred monoliths, not only in the lives of the Berom but also their neighbours.

According to my informants, the Berom went on separate ways with the Buzu in Sokoto in the far northern part of Nigeria. They passed through Bauchi and finally arrived at Turu. The Berom constituted the majority ethnic group during this migration which included other ethnic groups such as the Buji, Anaguta and Rukuba. Because of their numerical strength, the Berom were ascribed the leadership position of this migration by the other three ethnic groups (Dung Lokadang interview).

On arriving at Turu the different ethnic groups all lived in a big cave, and while the Buji ethnic group decided to permanently stay there, the other ethnic groups moved on. A *Gufwagachik* monolith was identified here and several rituals and prayers were performed. The rituals and prayers were centred on protection for the migrants and those who had settled at Turu. It was a sacrifice offered to the spirits, ancestors and the gods for seeing the migrants this far. Each family offered this sacrifice and later on each ethnic group. The final one was performed by the Berom who led this migration on behalf of the whole migrants.

Proceeding from Turu cave the migrants now arrived at Kabong and then they moved to Chwelnyap where they designated a ritual site to bear witness to the fact that they will settle there and that the place now belongs to their people (the whole migration from Sokoto). At Chwelnyap they performed a ritual called *gas shi* sharing of the calabash. This ritual was to finally point to the people's settlement in this area and also show that each ethnic group was to live independently of the other. The search for something that would unite the different ethnic migrants as one ethnic group and integrate

them as different ethnic nationalities that passed through the same migration; may have led to the designation of the *Gufwagachik* at Chwelnyap as a *kwit* ritual place. The Zi Sani family of Anaguta ethnic group was appointed the overseers of this shrine because the Anaguta settled very close to the shrine.

Leaving the Anaguta and a few population of the Berom here, majority of the Berom proceeded and arrived at a place called *nshi mpeng* meaning “white water”, which was a *jot*, meaning a “swamp or spring water” (Dung Lokadang interview). Given the swampy nature of *Jot*, the Berom could not settle there, instead they proceeded to Du but *Jot* was designated by the leader of the migration as a shrine and was thus shielded with series of prohibitions. However, a family called *loh* Kabong returned immediately with all their children to the present day Kabong; this explains why the place was named after the family.

On arriving Kabong, *loh* Kabong found out that a few Berom who first settled at Kabong on their way from Turu to Chwelnyap had already designated more shrines which included *Behwol*, *Mado* and *Jot* with different families’ in-charge of them. It is pertinent to note that the leader of the migration from Sokoto did not settle in any of the places where some population of the Berom settled. He therefore preceded with some few people to Du. According to Zi Sani Gwom and Chung Dung Pwajok, at Du the leader of the migration noticed that a lot of the population had already settled at Chwelnyap and Kabong with designated shrines at *Behwol*, *Jot*, and *Gufwagachik*; first at Turu and the second at Chwelnyap. He threw his spear into the ground and said, *mwa bemat hwong bega seh nedem segal, me segal a nyemo* meaning, “all my people are now comfortably settled, I will as well settle here”. He thus designated the third *Gufwagachik* shrine under

the control of *loh* family of Du (focus group discussion with Isa Zi Sani and Chung Dung Pwajok).

Commenting further on the sizes of the three shrines vis-à-vis the level of religious activities performed in each, Sani and Pwajok went ahead to explain that the three monoliths depreciated in size as the population of the migration continued to reduce in terms of settlement. The spirits, ancestors and the gods had to settle down with each of the ethnic groups. This may account for the reduction in size of the monoliths. This explains the number and types of religious activities carried on each monolith. Hence we have more religious activities carried out in Chwelnyap where the first monolith was designated a shrine, followed by Turu monolith and finally that in Du (focus group discussion with Isa Zi Sani and Chung Dung Pwajok). The author's observation of the three monolith shrines during field work showed that they were different in sizes. Perhaps this explains why the first designated monolith at Chwelnyap is the biggest and tallest, followed by the one at Turu, while that at Du is the shortest and smallest.

Commenting on the ritual families and how religious activities were carried out in these shrine, informants said that, although there were families appointed as overseers of the three monoliths in Turu, Chwelnyap and Du, the Du family was in-charge of all religious rites and rituals, sacrifices and prayers offered in the three shrines. For instance, when there was need for a ritual, sacrifice, or some sort of religious prayers that has to be offered at the *Gufwagachik* in Du, the representatives of Du family performed the rituals alone. On the other hand, when it had to do with Chwelnyap shrine, the representative of Zi Sani family (Anaguta) reported this to Du family and the two families then jointly performed the rituals. The representative of the *gwom* Du the royal family in Du and

another representative of Kuzeng family also from Du went along with the ritual families only as observers. Whenever the representatives of Malaika family went to Zi Sani family to report the need for a religious activity at the monolith shrine in Turu, it was now the duty of Zi Sani family to inform the Du family. The three families then went to Turu to perform the religious obligation that was needed. The representative of the royal family in Du and that of Kuzeng family also attended the religious activities performed at Turu shrine only in their capacities as observers (focus group discussion with Pam Gyang, Rwang Kim Dung and Dafei Chung).

The religious significance of the three monolith shrines signified the unity of all the ethnic groups that were involved in performing religious activities in these shrines (focus group discussion with Pam Gyang, Rwang Kim Dung and Dafei Chung). Thus we see religion performing an important function in society that of integrating the society, uniting the people in the performance of certain religious functions and linking them to their land and the entire ecology.

The researcher had argued in a paper entitled “Religion, the Settler Question and Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria: A Case Study of Jos City,” that the Berom, Anaguta, Rukuba, and Buji were always united during struggles that were superficially understood as religious but with political, ethnic and economic undertones to team up against the so called settlers (Mwadkwon 7-9). The religious historicity of the three monolith shrines which brought these ethnic groups together for a long time cannot be denied as one of the reasons for their unity in this struggle for space. They still consciously hold to the important religious unity that integrated them to the land where they had settled on for

long time prior to the arrival of other ethnic groups such as the Hausa-Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo-the so called settlers.

To maintain the sacredness of the three monolith shrines, several prohibitions were set to protect them from being defiled. These prohibitions included firstly, to avoid touching the sacred monoliths, or to remove the small cap-like structure on top of the monolith. Secondly it was forbidden to visit any of three shrines with evil intention against a family member, a neighbour and even a stranger. Thirdly, it was prohibited to visit any of the monoliths after a quarrel with a family member, a neighbour or a stranger as well (focus group discussion with Dudu Dalyop and Dusu Pam).

There were always repercussions for breaking a prohibition guiding the three monolith shrines. Commentators said that when individuals or groups violated prohibitions protecting *gufwagachik* monolith shrines there were a lot of consequences. Firstly, such an individual or group immediately became ill. Secondly, as a signal to the ritual family a member of the ritual family or the ritual priest himself became sick. Thirdly, there was the occurrence of some natural disasters which affected the entire Berom country and their neighbours such as the Anaguta, Rukuba and Buji. Fourthly, this could lead to series of intra and inter quarrels between Berom families and their neighbours which might end up in a war (focus group discussion with Dudu Dalyop and Dusu Pam).

The ancestors and the gods were used to make sure that the people kept on performing their religious duties. Necessity was not the only reason why sacrifices to the gods and ancestors were made. Salutation sacrifices attracted more blessings to the people and the land. Whenever any abnormality occurred the ritual families of *gufwagachik*

shrines immediately consulted the gods of the monoliths to find out the reasons for their grievances. It is important to note that at this crucial moment only the central *gufwagachik* at Chwelnyp was consulted to find out the remedy for this problem. Dudu and Dusu further explained that the centrality and the size of this monolith gave it this preference against the others and not that it was favoured as a result of its level of sacredness as all of the monoliths were considered sacred and favoured for specific religious rituals (focus group discussion with Dudu Dalyop and Dusu Pam).

Many of religious events were performed at the *gufwagachik* shrines on different occasions. These religious activities were only performed by members of the ritual families. According to Pwajok Gyang, religious rituals at the monoliths were not performed only when something went wrong or when someone was reported to have violated one of the laws guiding these shrines. “My father told me that sometimes they went for *tisho* ‘greetings or salutations’ to the gods and ancestors at the monoliths”. (Pwajok Gyang).

This was a simple ritual which sometimes involved no sacrifice. The only item needed for this ritual was *sireng* local brewed beer. This ritual was called *pyeme*, meaning “blowing out water or saliva from the month”. The name of the ritual was derived from the act of putting a little *sireng* local brewed beer in the month and spraying it on the shrines. Libations were also poured to the ancestors after which the rest of the *sireng* was drunk by the ritual families beneath the shrine. If there were to be any discussion at the time of drinking the *sireng* it was centred only on migration myths, recounting how the gods and ancestors protected the people and led them to their present environment. Praises of the ancestors and the gods were always pronounced.



At the end of this ritual the eldest person from the ritual families offered prayers to the gods and ancestors of the three monoliths; for the entire Berom land and their neighbours such as the Rukuba and Anaguta. Dudu and Dusu Pam reported that the wordings of this prayer run thus;

Wot a vai tisho, yaga de wot gayebam ayin wet. Ba wot gayebam de gyeng mot de yin ase ra wet Wot a se lolo netyeng , na wana lato, renuyel na seh nei na ryas mwa. Wot ase lolo hin na yin a gyeng gwom mot arong ...ase noh, eeh.

Meaning;

We have come to greet all of you (referring to the gods and ancestors) so that we should not forget you. We have not forgotten the guidance and protection you gave us during the journey to this land (referring to Berom, Anaguta and Rukuba lands). We have not forgotten the protection you are currently giving us. We are requesting for good health, unity and progress. We are requesting for blessing of the womb for our women and animals. Drive away all forms of sicknesses from us. We also pray for the protection of our chief...”it is like that...yes”, answered the other men in attendance (focus group discussion with Dudu Dalyop and Dusu Pam).

The central theme of the prayer was the unification of the different ethnic groups, peace and love for one another. Other sub themes included, thanks-giving prayers for protection, productivity in both human beings and animals and good health. The priest chief was also prayed for during this ritual, probably because the royal family was represented at every *gufwagachik* ritual. The land was prayed for to be fruitful.

On the contrary, when rituals were necessitated by a violation of any of the prohibitions guiding any of the *gufwagachik* shrines, three black goats and four chickens were sacrificed. The sacrificial goats and chickens were provided by the offender(s). But if the person(s) was poor only the four chickens were accepted from him/ her and the ritual families provided for the four goats. According to Pwajok Gyang, by the 1930s-1940s most of the offenders were not identified because of the influx of people from all parts of Nigeria and abroad into Beromland; the ritual families had to provide all the sacrificial requirements to appease the gods and ancestors of the *gufwagachik* shrines and this led to their impoverishment and consequently decline and final collapse of religious rituals in these shrines (Pwajok Gyang interview).

The animals were then slaughtered at the shrine and the meat completely eaten by the eldest of the family in-charge of the three shrines. When there was a left-over of the sacrificial meat, it was buried beneath the shrine. Besides the sacrifice of three goats and three chickens, *ti* red sacred ochre from *Mado* shrine was smeared on the *gufwagachik* shrine and its surroundings. *Ti* was used because of its medicinal and ritual values which we had earlier on discussed. At the end of this ritual the eldest person from Du ritual family offered a short prayer, *wot a vai tisho wet, wot a vai lolo yong de netyeng, de yin mobos hot wet, kanbok wet roh yin neves nemo ye na wot, te yin vwel mot tyeng...ase ano.* This prayer is translated as;

We are not here for mere salutations, we came with a heavy heart, to plead for normalcy and health, we plead that you (referring to the gods and ancestors) should stop this plagues and stop killing us, we sincerely beg you to accept this offering and drive away this evil from us. We beg that you heal our land from

these injuries... “it is so”, answered other members of the ritual families (focus group discussion with Badung Davou Gyang Musa and Pam Tep).

At the end of this prayer, the ritual families smeared their faces with *ti* red sacred ochre and left for their homes without talking to anyone on the way. Informants said, the belief was that the plagues could return if they (members of the ritual families) uttered a single word on their way back from the shrine. The red ochre on their faces was to inform members of the society not to force any of them into any conversation (focus group discussion with Badung Davou, Gyang Musa and Pam Tep).

From the above discussion, it becomes clear that there were a lot of shrines in Beromland. Most of these shrines were linked to the celebration of socio-religious, economic and political activities of the Berom. For example, religious rituals meant for rain-making were to invariably affect the ecology, the economy, the social and political life of the village or the entire Berom country as this led to enhanced food production. There were religious festivals linked to harvest and consumption of the food crops, more so, individuals and families political strength was measured by the amount of their economic resources in terms of animals or food crops.

Several prohibitions were put in place to protect Berom shrines because the Berom had great deal of concern for space. This led to the survival and sustenance of trees, swamps, rivers and other shore animals, lakes, forests and several acres of land. The shrines had designated individuals or families as overseers. Considering the socio-religious activities that went on in the shrines, we can conclude that these enhanced salient ecological ethics in Berom Religion. Even though trees were chopped down for the arts of wood carvers, iron smelters and blacksmiths, it is only sacred trees that were

mostly affected. Irrespective of this, healthy ecological ethics were clearly stressed as the shrines led to the sacralisation of space protected by religious prohibitions. Breaking any of the prohibitions attracted the wrath of the gods, spirits and ancestors whose places of abode were the shrines. The fact that some species of animals were considered sacred also led to the preservation of these animals. Thus we notice that certain ecological ethics became possible because of religious sanctions and which affected all other aspects of life within the traditional Berom society.

Going by the above summary, there is the fear of just assuming that in traditional Berom religion; the whole environment was sacralised as such Berom Religion was absolutely eco-sensitive. There is the need to pause and ask certain fundamental questions. Firstly, did Berom Traditional Religion provide a means of replacing the chopped down trees on spaces that were not sacred? What about other species of animals like lions and hyenas that were always hunted for because of the prestige that followed when such animals were killed during hunting and because of the need to supply the chief with the skin of the lion for his clothing? What about the burning of the vegetational cover for hunting expeditions? Did these diminish the salience of the ecological ethics?

Berom traditional religion was unable to sustain healthy ecological ethics from the late 1930s to date following the introduction of the colonial tin industry and other changed agents like modernization, Christianity, Islam and so on. The environment and the entire ecology were greatly injured during this period. Thousands of acres of land were lost as a result of economic activities. The health of the forests, trees, rivers, animals, lakes, swamps, rocks and the land was decimated. A healthy economy needed a healthy ecosystem, but this was totally abused.

On the contrary, we must accept that the sacralisation of space and lack of indiscriminate use of the irreplaceable natural resources of the environment because of religious prohibitions led to some level of ecological ethics in Berom Religion. This is clear as we reconstruct the history of the shrines and the religious activities that were carried out in them. The sacralisation of the environment which led to the protection of the rocks, rivers, mountains, forests, animals and the land subsequently led to the protection of human beings; as human beings used the trees and shrubs as medicinal herbs to enhance their health. Hunting was not carried in all shrines and trees or forests in the shrines were not chopped down. Based on these reasons, it is logical to now conclude that there are salient ecological ethics clearly spelt out in the practise of Berom religion.

#### **4.7 RELIGION AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS AMONG BEROM**

Over the centuries, influential thinkers have offered their definitions of religion with greater or less degrees of assurance, but many of these definitions have been found wanting by other scholars. In other words the term “religion” defies simple and universally acceptable definition. In some cases, the definitions are too narrow, defining religion in terms of the speaker’s religious beliefs or of those of his or her culture and tending to exclude the religious beliefs of other cultures. In other cases, the definitions are so vague and inclusive that they do not sufficiently delimit religion from other areas of human thought such as psychology, law, economics, physics, etc. However, this is not the focus of this chapter of the thesis.

The researcher is not concerned with the task of defining religion here. However, for the concern here, it can be postulated that religion can be described as a cultural universal phenomenon. From time immemorial religion no doubt had immensely

contributed and still contributes to stability and or survival of a social or cultural entity in Beromland.

This section of the thesis presents some non-Christian religious views of the human environment we sometimes call nature. Ethical principles that concerned the human relationship with the ecology in Berom society were elucidated. The main concern here was to show how Berom religion and culture expressed concern on the ecology. How did Berom traditional attitude to the environment help in preserving and protecting the ecology? What ecological concerns did Berom land use, land acquisition and utility demonstrate, and to what extent did this lead to over utilisation or preservation of the ecology?

There is no gain stating the fact that religious perceptions of the human environment have the human being at its centre. This deal with the impact human beings make on nature and the environment and how the human being can stay alive in a way that the survival of other species is secured. Human behaviour affects the environment in some way or another. Because we act according to our ethical standards and their forces in society, discussing religion and ecological ethics among the Berom was important. Unfortunately, the subject is so vast that much can only be mentioned superficially, and much more could be told in future.

#### **4.8 ECOLOGICAL ETHICS IN BEROM RELIGION AND CULTURE**

Ecological ethics in Berom Religion and culture is wide. It is for this reason that the researcher limited himself to prevalent ecological ethics in certain aspects of Berom religion and culture. The researcher discussed ecological ethics found in the concept of the Supreme Being, spirits, deities, ancestors, magic, sorcery, witchcraft and medicine.

The Berom who lived in small scale society in an ecological good environment maintained social control by linking moral offences to natural disasters. The relationship between human beings and the religious world was centred on human beings response to the latter. These include human beings' response to the Supreme Being, spirits, ancestors, gods, other forces of nature and the entire ecology. The worship and ritual use of some of these spiritual forces was carried out in varied ways as they manifested within time and space.

#### **4.8.1 The Supreme Being and Ecology in Berom Religion and Culture**

The concept of the Supreme Being has already been discussed in chapter three. I do not intend to duplicate it here. The important issue here is to elucidate ecological ethics prevalent in rituals connected to worship of the Supreme Being.

The first ecological perspective depicted in the concept of the Supreme Being among the Berom is found in the nomenclature. The Supreme Being is conceived and understood from nature. For example, He is called *Dagwi*. The prefix *Da*, in Berom means father and *Gwi*, means sun. However, it should not be interpreted that the Berom worship the sun as has been misconstrued by early colonial officials. Rather, the Supreme Being is more powerful than the sun since He created the sun. Further the Supreme was conceived of as being beyond the sun that is in the distant heavens (Jacobs 15). Ikenga Metuh has demonstrated that the name of the Supreme Being in a number of African societies is connected with nature such as the sky, the sun, rain and the rainbow (93-99).

According to Charles C. Jacobs, the Berom depended on agriculture, hunting and animal husbandry to provide the bulk of their subsistence. The Berom were therefore, dependent on the forces of nature, such as rain, wind and hail to influence human

reproduction for good crops, good hunting and good fortune (14). This condition seems to push the Supreme Being to the periphery in Berom religious cosmology. Thus, when things went wrong people turned to the *chit* spirits found in nature, that were believed to share control of rain, disease, fertility, and hunting with the Supreme Being. Thus, in Berom Religion the most significant religious rite given to the Supreme was prayer, on the other hand sacrifices were offered to the spirits. Suffice it to state that prayers offered to the Supreme Being, normally by the ritual priest or by the eldest man of the family or clan were carried out within specific places.

The environment was very important in the worship of the Supreme Being in many ways. Firstly, prayers were offered to Him within certain natural sacred spaces, such as forests, hills, mountains, sacred lands, valleys, rivers, caves, etc. Secondly, certain animals, trees, rivers, forests, swamps, groves, rocks and vast area of land were used as shrines where rituals were performed to the Supreme Being. There was the need to take care of the environment as it offered the opportunity for the worship of the Supreme Being. The sacred trees, rivers, lakes, groves, rocks and forests needed for rituals to Supreme Being were also protected. The same thing applied to specific species of animals and sacred spaces where rituals were performed. This led to the protection of animals such as hyenas, leopards, lions, buffaloes, antelopes, crocodiles, etc. Although prayers were offered to the Supreme Being in certain natural places, this did not suggest that shrines were built for the Supreme.

#### **4.8.2 Spirits and Ecology in Berom Religion and Culture**

*Chit*, spirits that brought unpleasant things to those who broke the taboos connected with their *kwit*, ritual sites. *Chit* spirits were linked with particular objects and



places in nature (Jacobs 23), such as trees, for example, *pwat* olive trees, *laron*: locust bean trees, *kugul* silk cotton trees and *choo* mahogany trees. Other abodes of the spirits included mountains, hills, forests, rivers, groves, farmlands “which may be as much as 200 acres” (Isichei 28). There were categories of animals and human beings that are considered as the dwelling places of spirits, for example, *dakwi*: ritual priests, *bemad bes* people with supernatural powers. Only a person with supernatural powers *bes* could see and converse with the spirits.

Protection was given to the spirit ritual sites scattered in all Berom villages. Protection was given by establishing what is called *nkeri* that is taboo or some code of behaviour or social control to set such a sacred site aside for socio-religious functions. Firstly, cultivation of the *chit* spiritlands, were not allowed. Secondly, building or any form of construction was not allowed to take place in or around the *chit*. Thirdly, no tree, wood or natural growths were to be cut or removed from the *chit* land. Fourthly, cows, goats, horses or donkeys were not allowed to graze in or around the spirit-lands. Sixthly, human beings were not allowed to loiter within the surroundings of the *chit*. Seventhly, no one was allowed to whistle or look back when walking pass *chit* space. Eighthly, *chit* land could not be set ablaze for any reason. Ninthly, using an iron implement on such spaces was also prohibited. In short no one was allowed to step on the *chit* space, except its designated priest or the family who was responsible for rituals in these spaces. A breach of any of these taboos led to violent reactions from the *chit*. There were *chits* for almost every event and activity, thus, there was a *chit* for hunting, for fertility, farming, planting, harvest, festivals, rain-making, war, epidemics, marriage, death, burial, initiation into secret cults and for establishing new villages (Jacobs 25). Human beings had a duty to

keep creation, that is nature and the environment going by protecting *chit* spaces and, from time to time travelling along those old ancestral paths to offer sacrifices to the *chit*.

The importance of these *chits*, sacred sites cannot be over emphasized. It clearly demonstrated the relevance with which the *chit* spirits was held in Berom religion and culture. This may explain why whenever any space was suspected to be inhabited by the *chit*; it was immediately consecrated and made a shrine. This may as well explain why the Berom country had several of such sacred shrines scattered in many places. This invariably led to sacrosanct concept of land and the entire ecology. The spirit lands, the ordinary land and nature inhabited by the spirits were thus protected. This led to a kind of eco-ethics in Berom Religion in which the land, forests, rivers, swamps, rocks, hills, mountains, lakes and certain species of animals and trees were preserved because they were conceived as spirits in themselves and spirit lands needed for religious rituals.

### **4.8.3 Deities and Ecology in Berom Religion and Culture**

Commenting on the hierarchy of beings in Berom religion Jacobs said that the hierarchy showed that there is the Supreme Being *Dagwi* but Jacobs was silent about nature gods or deities as *chit* and *cheng*, good and evil spirits cannot be said to have attained the status of deities (25). Ikenga-Metuh, defined deity as “that which have the quality of being divine” (65). Going by Ikenga-Metuh’s definition, Jacobs’s conclusion that the *chit* and *cheng*, good and bad spirits in Berom religious cosmology are not deities becomes problematic. Most African societies who have the concept of deities in their religious belief systems, conceived of them as deified seas, moon, sun, stars, rocks, thunder, lightning, rivers, lakes, trees, forests, iron, groves, swamps, mountains, some heroic human beings, kings, queens and warriors, etc. This is a truism that is glaringly

observed in Berom religion. For the Berom, deities or the nature gods were certain trees, bushes, rocks, hills, mountains, streams or rivers, swamps, some species of animals and whirlwinds. These spaces were seen as accumulators of spiritual energy in the material universe that could be utilized by human beings. For this reason, they were protected from destruction and intrusion by human beings.

Certain trees were believed to be out of the ordinary. Consequently, just like certain rocks, hills and mountains mentioned above, such trees were also deified and given the status of gods. Most of these trees were very huge, towering over and above other trees or foliage. These trees were believed to have hollows in their trunks like the fig trees. These trees include the large *pwat* olive trees, *laron* locust bean trees, *choo* mahogany trees, and *kugul* silk cotton trees. These trees were sacred, as some powerful gods were believed to inhabit them. Certain swampy and water log spaces were also accorded the status of gods. “The swamps and rivers contain life, there is always water in there and that is life in itself, no one can survive without water” (Mwadkwon 83). There were myths explaining how swampy spaces and certain rivers helped in defeating enemies in battles. The enemies got stuck in the swamps.

When such a space was discovered, it was immediately shielded by prohibitions. “Several of such sacred rivers, swamps and bushes were found in all Berom villages dotting the whole space to the extent that there was complete respect for the natural environment and land” (Mwadkwon 83).

#### **4.8.4 Ancestors and Ecology in Berom Religion and Culture**

The essence of this section is not to repeat a whole discussion on ancestors, which has already been carried out in chapter three. Rather we tried to demonstrate how

ancestral veneration in Berom Religion and culture presented some level of ecological ethics. The ancestors constitute a special category among the spirits of the deceased who certain powers and are the subject of the cult by their descendants. Ancestors in Berom religious cosmology served as social control models.

Ancestors could bring both misfortune and blessings on the living members of the family. Ancestors chiefly troubled their descendants if they considered that they had been buried improperly without the adequate number of the goat skin or the horse hide which they consider to be commensurate with their status or their wishes concerning their burial have not been respected (Jacobs 20). This may explain why the Berom kept animals such as goats, horses, dwarf cattle, horses, donkeys, etc. The skins of these animals were needed for a proper burial to the deceased. Thus, besides keeping these animals as source of food, the Berom needed them for religious activities, and most of the Berom ensured that such animals do not get extinct (Sale Mandyieng interview). When misfortunes befall a family, the *voshon* diviner was consulted. If the cause of the misfortune was attributed to the ancestor, rituals were performed to appease them.

When the researcher was young he accompanied his grandfather Zang Fwet to the grave of his father to offer sacrifice of goatskin and of chicken blood to appease the deceased Fwet for the constant misfortunes that bedevilled his (Zang Fwet) household. A day to the prayer, Zang Fwet went to clear the road leading to the grave. On the day of the sacrifice the researcher and his uncle set out very early in the morning for the ritual site. The researcher's uncle carried his sacred bamboo stick and goatskin bag. He also carried the chicken that was offered to the ancestor. The researcher cannot recollect the exact

prayer offered by his uncle as his uncle inserted the goatskin into a hole on the grave and later on killed the chicken and poured the blood on the grave.

However, there were clear ecological ethics displayed during this ritual, for example, the ritual cleaning of the bush leading to the grave site. The clearing was carried out in such a way so as not to injure the environment. Nests of birds were protected in the process of clearing the bush. The researcher's uncle raised an alarm when the researcher matched on any nets or tried to attack a bird. "We want to go and ask my forefathers to protect life, so do not kill any animal for this may frustrate our efforts of reconciliation with our ancestors." The prayers offered to the ancestors include request for rain, good crop yield, increase in the number of domestic and wild animals needed for food and rituals, etc. It is obvious that the ecology became significant to appease aggrieved ancestors, to treat diseases caused by sorcerers and witches or wizards and to practice genuine medicine.

#### **4.8.5 Magic, Witchcraft, Sorcery and Ecology in Berom Religion and Culture**

The belief in the existence, application and efficacy of magic, sorcery and witchcraft in Berom Religion and culture is characterized with activities surrounding the offices of the *voshon* diviner, the *mwad hwal* herbalist cum medicine person and malignant activities of witches and sorcerers.

##### **4.8.5.1 Sorcery**

Sorcery is the art, practice or spell of magic; a sorcerer is therefore a person who seeks to control and use magical powers, in this case a wizard, a witch or magician. In most cases a wrongful application of good magic is what is called sorcery. Harmful charms stored in a pot or drinking gourd were used to poison the victim by secretly

applying them in foods, drinks, objects that might come into contact with the victim. The substances could be applied around the victim's hut or footpath. Poison was derived from herbs, leaves, trees, cactus plants and some animals. Healing from poison also depended on the use of herbs, barks and animals for health purposes. It clearly demonstrated that sorcerers depended largely on the environment to achieve their aims. To counter this evil act the environment is still very important.

#### **4.8.5.2 Witchcraft**

Witchcraft on the other hand is the art or power of bringing supernatural power to bear. The major difference is that, while sorcery is physically carried out at any time of the day, witchcraft is mysteriously carried out using psychic power, mostly at night. While sorcerers operate individually, witches operate in guilds.

Ecological principles in the practice of witchcraft is portrayed in the belief that witches can turn into animals such as cats, bats, owls, hyenas, snakes, scorpions, etc. This may explain why such animals were abhorred among Berom, though not indiscriminately killed. However, medicine persons needed certain parts of these animals for healing purposes as these animals were important though the presence of some of them was a threat to human existence. For example, the Berom believed that when one heard the cry of the night owl someone was dead. The snake was considered a dangerous animal because it is poisonous. The hyena was disliked among the Berom because it could disturb the ancestor by exhuming the corpse of the ancestor for its food.

The Berom believed that some people had a special mystic union with particular species, animals or plants, which people regarded as brother, sister, father. For example, the millipede was seen as a king of the king crop of the Berom and therefore it was not

killed for whatever reason. The black short snake with a small head, which seems absent was considered as an ancestor and was not killed. This belief reduced to a large extent the assumption that witches or wizards turned into some animals as such these animals were a threat to human survival and should be killed.

Charles C. Jacobs explained the concept of *kwot*, which is a person that has animal counterpart in the bush in which anything that happened to the animal in the bush also affected the human counterpart. Thus if such an animal was wounded or killed by a hunter then its human counterpart felt the pain and may even die (29-30). This belief minimised the killing of animals and non-organised hunting expeditions that were ritually done. Therefore, *kwot* animals became sacred and protected in order to protect human life that is sacred as well.

#### **4.8.5.3 Medicine/Magic**

The Berom believed that magical powers could be acquired in some sacred trees such as bamboo trees, silk cotton trees, olive trees, mahogany trees, and some forests, groves, mountains, rocks, rivers, etc. Magical powers were also derived from sacred lands such as in shrines. In fact sacred sites and trees were protected by boundaries of behaviours from being destroyed.

Most diviners claimed to have received the power to practice divination and administer herbs from spirits, which carried them through a whirlwind to the forest and gave them such powers. For the Berom, medicine persons went on religious pilgrimage in search for solution to individuals and societal problems in sacred places provided by nature. Healing was derived from the utilisation of herbs derived from nature. Medicine in the form of grasses, leaves, fruits, water and barks was administered by the medicine

person cum diviner. Other medicines included dead insects, bones, feathers of birds and chickens, powders fetched from different sacred animals and plants, the red ochre from mado shrine, etc.

It is therefore obvious that most medicines were derived from sacred animals and plants that were not destroyed except through religious rituals and only mainly for medicinal purposes. This invariably increases the affinity between Berom Religion and ecology. The ecology became significant to appease aggrieved ancestors, to treat diseases and to practice genuine medicine that could enhance growth and development of the human being as well as allow other species to survive with minimal threat to the existence of either of them.

From the above discussion it is logical to draw a conclusion that, because of the belief in God, deities, spirits, ancestors and medicine some boundaries of behaviours were created by the Berom to maintain relationships and interaction with the above forces. This may explain why certain plants, animals and human beings such as chiefs and priests became sacred. The ecology, which form part of the spirit lands, such as the rivers, mountains, hills, groves, forests, trees, rivers, and land-sometimes measuring over 400 hectares of land in the many villages were preserved. This led to respect for nature and the environment. Berom Religion reveals that the Supreme Being who is the creator of the cosmos has entrusted the care of the whole world to some gods and spirits whose character depends on the socio-cultural and environmental conditions of the area.

#### **4.9 BEROM ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ON ECOLOGY**

Research on this section of the thesis came from the vision that everything we see today exist together in a delicate balance and as human beings that utilise nature and the



environment we must understand that balance. We must also respect all creatures from the crawling ants, the smallest sea specie, to the limping antelope, and the big elephant. Some people may ask why human beings eat the antelope and the elephant. A simple logic will suffice to explain that when human beings die and are buried, their bodies become grass and the antelope (animal) eats the grass. Therefore, we are all connected in the great cycle of the rhythm of life.

This statement points to the fact that human beings need to show concern for other creatures and treat them with respect. Other species should be seen as partners that must also survive just like the human being. Did Berom Religion and culture demonstrate this ecological ethics in any form? The focus here was to discuss how Berom Religion and culture expressed concern for nature and the environment. The following questions enabled the smooth flow of the discussion. What is Berom traditional attitude to the ecology? What ecological concerns do Berom Religion and culture demonstrate, and to what extent did this lead to preservation of the ecology as demonstrated in the ritual use of nature in Berom Religion and Culture?

#### **4.9.1 Simple Ecological Practices Among Berom**

Several ecological practices were prevalent in Berom religion and culture. This fact has been established in the previous chapters of the thesis. The aim of this section is to discuss specific ecological principles prevalent in Berom religion and culture.

The Berom believed that their environment was sacred and alive as such they felt that the land owned its people and that the people were a part of the land. Perhaps it is this notion that had led the Berom to also believe that the soil had life and gave life. Crops were planted on the soil and human beings survived from eating what the soil had given

life to in order to live. The soil was also conceived as medicinal, this may explain why farmers used it to treat cuts sustained during farming. When a farmer accidentally cut his or her leg with the hoe, one could just get soil, refine it and pour it on the wound (Pam Shut, interview). *Worop*, a solid but soft soil was eaten for the treatment of heart burn. There was a strong belief that the soil housed the ancestors, for this reason, the earth must be respected and treated as such and not destroyed. It was also believed that when the earth was destroyed, someone could dig out the house of a prominent ancestor who is taking care of the whole members of the society. This will invariably cause chaos in the society.

Other ecological practices in Berom Religion are prevalent in Berom names. Names in most African societies are symbolic and thus carried a lot of meaning. Commenting on the significance of Berom names John Dung-Gwom said that it is a truism that most Berom personal names are names of different kinds of animals. Some reasons informed why children were given animal names. Animals were important and highly regarded in Berom society because they were not only fast, smart, strong and beautiful but also a source of meat (Dung-Gwom 207-208). Majority of Berom names indicate a clear link between the people, nature and the entire ecology. Berom names portray the relationship between human beings and other lives that exist within the immediate environment.

An exegesis of Berom names clearly points out that there existed a kind of marriage between the people and nature. For example, the late *Gbong Gwom* Jos that is the paramount ruler of Jos was called *Bot*, which means frog. His predecessor was called *Pam* meaning, male buffalo and the present one is also *Pam*. Other names with ecological

relevance include *Tengwong*, meaning middle of the road; *rwak* meaning, rain; *Fei*, meaning hare; *Zing* meaning, dry season; *Cwei* meaning lion and *Tok* meaning fish, among numerous others. The above names point to nature, events and phenomena which explain that attachment of the Berom to their environment. The symbiotic relationship between Berom and their environment enabled them to interpret, manipulate and use their environment to the fullest and with utmost care.

Using animal names for human beings perhaps indicates that both human beings and animals must co-exist. It may also explain that human beings must not kill the animals indiscriminately. It may further show why the Berom loved and respected animals. Tari confirms Berom love and respect for animals when he said that a Berom does not just kill an animal except when it becomes necessary. For example, he may do so in self-defence from attack of the animal or in an organised hunting expedition. In fact if the Berom went on a private hunting to source for meat for his household, the person sometimes like the Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert apologise to the animal he had killed, especially if the hunter bore the same name with the animal (Tari, interview).

Dung Tari said that he witnessed this when he followed his father for a private hunting. Tari reported that after his father killed an antelope, the father became remorseful when he saw the carcass lying down lifeless, he apologised to the dead animal. He said,

ra me kambok, ba me simi de me moroho wet, me simi de me nong be mat lohom  
pye rhee, ya ga ase gbing gbing de yen a sa de ne kyen. Ka se gwi gwa nong me  
reto, me nong ho gwong de ho vei gabik in je lomo.

This can be interpreted as;

I am sorry, I do not intend to just harm you or kill you, but I must provide food for my family, because it is necessary for my family to survive. If God would give me the power, I would like to help you reincarnate back into your family.

Berom place names showed the level of ecological friendliness demonstrated by them. These names include names of places such as *Hoss* meaning rainy season. *Jot* is a Berom place name for spring, and now corrupted “Jos”, the capital of Plateau State.

Ecological practices are glaringly displayed in the celebration of festivals among Berom. Festivals such as *mandyieng*, *nshok*, *badu*, *vwana* and recently *nzem*-Berom are celebrated to enhance the fertility of the land. They are festivals marking the beginning of the rains, planting or harvest. Rituals connected to the celebration of these festivals show ecological respect of the people. For example, most prayers offered during these festivals are centred towards good health, blessing of offspring, good environment for the growth of animals needed for meat etc (Nyam 51-75 and 129-147).

Nature and the environment played a big role in swearing an oath among Berom. For example, the person will first put his finger on the ground to touch the soil, and then he or she will touch his or her tongue and point to the sky. As He or she points to the sky, the oath is pronounced, *ma shera na Dagwi*, meaning, “I swear to God.”

Touching the ground, tongue and pointing to the sky points out to ecological standpoint of the Berom. The Berom considered the ground, as places where the sacred shrines were located. Therefore, touching the earth shows that the person knew the gravity of the oath he or she was about taking. The ground houses the human beings, plants, the

rivers, mountains, animals and other species and this may explain why the oath is sometimes sworn to the sea or any shrine or natural place.

Touching the tongue indicates that the oath should be effective so as to prove the innocence of the accused person or prove his or her guilt. Pointing to the sky means surrendering to the Supreme Being who is all knowing and nothing can be hidden from Him. It is logical to assume that the three stages in this oath carried four basic symbolic meanings. Firstly, it shows the Berom dependence on nature to protect them as an innocent person is so proven by the oath. Secondly, it shows that nature and the ecology are alive and therefore interested in the things that affect the people living within it. Thirdly, since nature and the environment are alive people must respect and care for the environment so as not to hurt it. Fourthly, it portrays the environment and other forces of nature as social control model, because swearing a false oath by any of these forces of nature or the environment could cause disharmony within the ecological setting.

Sometimes a person could swear by his or her dead child, ancestor or any loved one. Such a person could also swear by nature. To prove innocence of an accused person, Gyang Chollom observes that the accused sometimes swore by thunder. For example, he or she could say “if I am the one that broke the taboo let thunder kill me” (Gyang Chollom interview). He or she could say let me get drown in a river or sea. However, modern machines such as cars, motor cycles and trains have substituted these ecological imageries. Thus to prove innocence people swore that if i was guilty of this accusation let a car, motor cycle, train, etc knock me down.

Another ecological practice in Berom religion and culture was found in the people’s view of the first rains. The significance of the first rain cannot be over

emphasized; children were normally allowed to play in the first rain, as it was believed to bring life. The Berom considered rain as medicine, rain healed diseases by washing away all the filthy garbage in the environment. It indicates that life will continue since there is total dependence on rain for everything (Gyang Chollom interview). Animals and crops needed rain to survive so does the entire ecology.

#### **4.9.2 Proverbs and Environmental Ethics in Berom Religion and Culture**

This section has done an expository analysis of few proverbs that are prominent in the daily discussions of the Berom. Suffice it to assert here that some of these proverbs may not be originally Berom proverbs, which means that the Berom may have borrowed them from their neighbours.

*Vwel de ya keh neken me ye reni murom vei re pye elome.* Meaning that, it is only the goat that is tired of life that will invite a lion to dinner. This proverb shows that a lion will always devour a goat at the slightest opportunity. It thus follows that only a goat that is ready to die that will invite the lion for a dinner, of course the goat will serve as the dinner.

“Any one who thinks that the snail or the tortoise is not strong, let that person like the snail or the tortoise carry his/her own house on his/her back”.

This proverb shows the significance of other species in the universe. The snail as small as it is compared with other species including the human person was able to carry its house around; this is not possible for other species that may want to destroy the snail. In other words we all need each other to survive. It is not important how strong we are, there is respect in our strength and likewise in our weakness. This proverb is saying that

we should not underestimate other people's ability. Instead everyone should be given equal opportunity to strive to the highest level of fulfillment.

“The tortoise or snail can try and try but it cannot run away from its shell”.

This proverb is saying that we must face our crisis situations squarely because we cannot run from our problems. If we make no effort to solve our problems such problems will always remain with us.

“The snail or tortoise does not go anywhere without its shell”.

The shell serves as a protection for the snail and tortoise, thus they carry their shells everywhere they go. This proverb is talking about security, in other words human beings must always use their six senses at all times if they must live.

“When a soldier ant stings a person that has not been stung by a scorpion, s/he may think that the bite of the scorpion and that of the soldier ant are the same”.

This proverb is simply saying that experience is the best teacher. In other words one will never know exactly how something feels like not until he/she experiences it. This may also explain the saying that it is he or she that feels it that knows how much it pains.

“Nothing is hidden under the sun, if the wind does not reveal it, the rain will wash it out or the earth will bring it out by itself”.

What the people may consider as a secret is not a secret, after all such things assumed to be secrets will one day be known by those that are at the moment denied access to them.

“A river does not pass through the forest without bringing down some trees”.

When the sword of justice passes through a town it has no regards for big names. In other words no one is immune to the law or above the law. When the time of true

justice comes even those in position of authority or those who make the law will not be spared when found guilty. A river is a natural creation and this proverb may be saying that if human beings can escape the judgment of humans they cannot escape that of nature that is always accepted by the Berom as the judgment of God.

“A monkey that wants to be like its master and went to buy a shaving stick to shave exposes itself”.

We should not just imitate others simply because we like their way of life, we will in the process do more harm to ourselves than good. This proverb is similar to the saying “cut your coat according to your size” so that we do not go about doing things that we do not have the dexterity of doing.

“One does not use two legs to test the depth of a river”.

Using two legs to test the depth of a river means that the person has already jumped into the river and thus, he or she may get drown. One must weigh the situation before taking a decision because any decision taken in a rush may lead to a bad situation.

“The hunter has learnt to shot without missing so also have the birds learnt to fly without pathching”.

One must always learn new techniques to protect himself/herself from enemies so as not to be a victim of attack; we must therefore be security conscious.

“A living dog is better than a dead lion”.

Life is important; thus any living thing no matter how small is better than the biggest dead thing, because the dead thing cannot be utilized like the living one.



“The lion will always roar in the jungle”.

The jungle is the abode of the lion and since the lion is the king of all animals it will always establish its supremacy and hegemony over other animals in the jungle. This does not suggest that the lion should kill all the animals in the jungle, but that all animals must co-exist even though some may serve as a source of food for others.

“When the forest becomes too small for the lion there is no need for one to be told that there is danger”.

When the forest becomes inhabitable for the lion this indicates that there is serious problem because the lion will not get preys to feed on and it may then want to attack human beings. It may also be attacked by human beings in its attempt to leave the forest.

“The hunter never leaves his brave dog for worms to feed on”.

Hunters and dogs are friends; both need each other to survive. The dog helps the hunter to hunt while the hunter supplies the dog with food. No hunter would want his brave dog killed. Similarly, no one will forsake his child to be killed by enemies.

#### **4.10 RITUAL USE OF NATURE IN BEROM RELIGION AND CULTURE**

Nature is variedly used in many religious traditions. This may explain why Mircea Eliade observed that for religious man, nature is never only “natural”; it is always fraught with a religious value (166). Eliade further declared that the universe is a divine creation. It is impregnated with sacredness (166). It is this revelation of the divine in nature that captures the eyes of the religious person. For the religious person, the supernatural is indissoluble and connected with the natural and that the Berom always expresses something that transcends it. A sacred mountain or hilltop is used for ritual purposes not

because it is a mountain or hilltop. It is so used because it is sacred and manifests the presence of the divine in it. It is through this that its essence is revealed.

The conception of nature and its ritual usage found in Berom Religion and culture is quite interesting and expresses the religious feelings and experiences of worshippers. These are brought to the fore in practical life-crisis situations that demand the ritual use of various natural objects and phenomena for the wellbeing of the individual and society at a given time.

The Berom believed that a number of spirits existed and were associated with natural phenomena. Such belief in the personification of natural forces and phenomena remained the principle behind their usage for ritual purposes. The veneration and ritual use of natural phenomena such as the earth, trees, rivers, forests, mountains, hills and groves, etc formed a significant aspect of Berom religious beliefs and practices. Some natural objects formed the favourites of some spirits, gods and ancestors and were so offered to them during ritual worship. Other phenomena were used for ritual purpose either because they formed the favourite taste of the “recipients”<sup>2</sup> or that they were themselves imbued with natural potency, or that they were residences of some spirit forces.

#### **4.10.1 Rocks, Mountains and Hills**

In Berom land, the veneration and ritual use of mountains, hills and highly elevated rocks was informed by the people’s belief that they were divine creatures, impregnated with sacredness and were abodes of spirit forces. For example rituals were performed at the three stones *be ta betat* in Chwelnyap Jos North Local Government Area. *Gufwagachik* also in Jos North Local Government Area, Jopok rock in Kwogo-

Hoss village of Riyom Local Government Area, Ropp rocks in Barkin Ladi Local Government Area etc, are examples of mountains, solid elevated rocks and highlands used for ritual purposes in Berom land.

Berom mythical history portray these mountains and hills as personified phenomena that offered protections to the people who lived near them during wars and during the Hausa Fulani Jihadists invasion of Berom land. The immortal nature of elevated rocks and hills is another fascinating quality. The Berom believed that rocks do not die as such mountains and rocks contained some supernatural powers that could be harnessed for the benefit of human beings. More so, they were abodes of spirits who could be revered for personal and community benefits. Because of these qualities, people worshipped on these mountains, rocks and hills. Ritual sacrifices were offered to the spirits for protection, prosperity and fertility of both farm crops and human beings on these mountains, rocks and hills. *Mok*, which is prayer, was carried out to the Supreme Being on these rocks, mountains and hills.

It is perhaps for the ritual importance of these rocks, mountains and hills that the Berom personified mountains, solid elevated rocks and highlands. The Berom believed that some mountains, rocks and hills had feelings like human beings and could be sympathetic to those who worship or use them for ritual purpose in times of need.

The immortal nature of mountains, hills and solid elevated rocks also determined their ritual usage. They are used for human protection and longevity. The Berom believed that an individual was born into the world full of woes. He was surrounded by enemies and exposed to a lot of dangers. An individual required rituals for protection from enemies and hazards. Natural objects were usually among the list of items ritually used

for providing spiritual security for the individual. The immortal nature of mountains and hills was usually equated with human life believing that whatever spiritual harm was done unto a victim did not have effect just as the mountain could not be harmed with sickness of any sort, or killed.

#### **4.10.2 Rivers.**

There was a general belief among Berom that some spirit forces just like other natural objects on the earth animated rivers. These river dwelling spirits were revered by the devotees and were sometimes invited to intervene in rituals carried out on the riverbanks. The Berom believed that brave men and women had gone into the river for some days to live with river spirits and had returned home with some items and esoteric knowledge and wealth.

The ritual use of flowing rivers was not only determined by their in-dwelling spirits who, when revered could provide for the worshippers' needs. The natural potency of flowing rivers was another fascinating factor for their ritual use. The Berom conceived of the flow of a river with a degree of velocity without legs, hands, wings and heads etc. It destroys when in anger and serves as a source of existence for human beings, animal and vegetation and even human beings made machines. It flows forward and never backwards. That may explain why prayers and rituals were carried out in some rivers. A few examples of rivers that were used for ritual purposes among Berom are river *Tajet* in Kwogo. Others are *Not* river where *mandyieng* festival light was made and latter circulated to other villages and Shen river in Riyom.

#### 4.10.3 Trees.

In Berom religion and culture, different species of trees were used for ritual purposes. However, suffice to state from the onset that it was not all trees that were regarded as sacred and extraordinary and therefore needed for ritual use. Trees that were used for ritual purposes were used either because they were personified or regarded as abodes of spirit forces, or that they were themselves potent and used as part of items that made rituals efficacious. Trees with unusual trunks or those with round, deep hole on the stem was considered likely to be abodes of spirit forces. Such trees struck awe in people and were marked out as sacred. They were revered and very often, medicine persons used the roots and the barks for medicinal purposes. Examples of such sacred and spirit inhabited huge trees include mahogany tree, silk cotton tree, olive tree, bamboo tree, etc (Tok Seleh interview).

Beside the fear which some extraordinary trees created in people who had them around the homestead or who passed by them in the forest, people usually complained that their heads got swollen on approaching huge trees in thick forests and especially during odd hours of the day. Some trees were said to make some unusual and disturbing noises at intervals. An example was the bamboo trees in Lwi village in Kwogo on a path leading to the only river in the village (Gyang Gadu interview).

Some trees have become sacred places and revered because they were places where regular worship and sacrifices were offered. More so, special meetings of some spirit forces and witches were held either on the top or foot of the trees. This probably accounts for the reason why suppliants were often advised to direct their rituals to such designated

places as they remained regular places of forces that could let loose their ‘repentant’ victims.

On the other hand, some trees were themselves potent for ritual purposes because they were believed to be one of the favourite ritual items of some spiritual security. The leaves, barks or roots of bamboo tree for example, were used for ritual purposes, and the process of obtaining such material from the tree was ritualised. Whenever medicine persons went to fetch the leaves or the roots and barks of such trees, offerings were brought to them as compensation for what was anticipated and for the purpose, which they were to be used. The ritual process depended largely on the gender of the suppliant. The ritual items presented for the ‘purchase’ of the barks or roots or leaves also depended on the gender of the suppliant.

It was believed that the ‘ritual purchase’ of barks, leaves and roots of a tree added potency to their ritual use for various purposes. The immunity, which the resident forces enjoyed in the tree, was extended to the ritual user of such a tree. This was expected only if the normal ritual process was followed by the medicine person or by the suppliant.

#### **4.10.4 Cross Roads**

Crossroads no doubt carried significant religious symbols among many African ethnic groups. Crossroads were seen as “spiritual gates” that served as sites for rites of passage. Crossroads were places of sacrifice where prayers, including imprecatory ones were directed to the gods. The underlying belief was the conviction that spirits, gods, ancestors and other super-human forces converged and could be influenced or encountered (Gwamna 1). This may explain why the Berom see crossroads as purveyors

of life and death and therefore humans had to learn how to appease, attract and even worshipped gods and spirits at crossroads.

Among the Berom, crossroads where four or five paths met and were believed to be good for ritual purposes while crossroads where two paths met were not used for ritual purposes. For the Berom, crossroads were regarded as general halls where forces of all categories converged for crucial meetings or celebrations. They deliberated positively or negatively on issues which affected ordinary living beings. Perhaps that may explain why the Berom believed that when an individual stayed or passed by the junction at a particular time of the day, he or she shared in the blessing or wrath of the spirit forces present there.

Any crossroad found in a town or city or village could be used for rituals. Those that led to villages or those that were found on the way to the farm in thick forests could also serve ritual purpose. Significantly, the ritual use of a particular crossroad was often determined by the instructions that may be given by the *voshon*. The Berom believed that at the crossroads, spirit forces worked together for the achievement of specific prescribed or commissioned ritual acts. No one particular spirit force did anything, which the supplicant anticipated. It was not surprising therefore to hear a diviner requesting for the blessing of a god and also inviting other spirit forces to lend assistance to the efficacy of a ritual job he had to carry out on a particular crossroad. That is why all other gods or spirits were requested to assist in ensuring the efficacy and success of the ritual act.

Spirit forces had compassion and respect for human beings and they believed that this respect should be reciprocal. The traditionalist knew this principle of harmonious living between the affiliate beings and the supernatural powers. Rituals were therefore

directed towards ensuring the unity of the two worlds whether on the social or religious realms. This is because the periods when the spirits were very much active were times when human beings were not supposed to be active outside their domains. A Berom aphorism is cited here to explain it better: *e' cheng de ye ke' torok, e' se de hoo ke torok na cheng aret* (Chong Gyang interview). This is translated as, it is the spirits that walk in the night, or why are you so busy in the night like a spirit? It is therefore clear that among the Berom the spirit forces do not walk about in the day time while a human being born of a humble background does not walk about in the mid night. It seems there is an irony here; this is because most rituals carried out on crossroads were carried out at midnight. There were also rituals that were carried out by twelve mid-day or early in the morning, depending on the directive of the *voshon*.

Prayers and ritual acts were regarded as highly potent when carried out at cross roads. Such ritual use of junctions depended on the plight of the individual and the instruction of the diviner. Human plights that were specifically associated with witches, wizards and other forces were directed to crossroads, which were designated places where such identified plights may be resolved. The diviner could instruct a client to have a ritual bath of his or her head into a wide calabash. He or she was later instructed to pour the ritual water on a particular crossroad with an accompaniment of mahogany oil and other ritual materials collected separately in a small clay pot and placed on one side of the junction (Kyong Otoh interview). This ritual acts were accompanied with prayers by the suppliant. That as the wind, animals and human beings passed on across or over the spot water was poured so that the evil forces that had taken over his or her life be matched, destroyed or blown to no existence. The Berom performed several other rituals at



crossroads; for example, the Berom like the Gbagyi of central Nigeria used crossroads as places where reconciliatory rituals were consummated (Gwamna 1). For example, the Berom people of Kwogo-Hoss encouraged people drank from the same calabash on a crossroad as a sign of reconciliation.

#### **4.10.5 Water.**

The importance of water to the ecology cannot be overemphasized. Water is important to human beings, animals and vegetation. This may explain why Berom attached significance to water in both economic and religious spheres. Because life ceases for every living thing in the absence of water, it is usually absorbed with utmost care and sanity. The Berom conceived of water from the sea, stream, fall or well as naturally medicinal, curative to living things in terms of drinking and bathing.

Baker Douglas in his study of the South African Zulu acknowledged that the people used sea water, swallowed and regurgitated as a natural remedy for intestinal disorders (236). The same scenario existed among the Berom, the only difference being that the Berom used river, well or spring water instead of seawater. This may be because the Berom lacked any proximity to the sea.

However, the Berom generally believed that water naturally had unusual properties, pure water, distilled water, dew, and rainwater; spring water and well water had tremendous absorptive powers. Natural water served as a therapy in restoring health in a variety of disorders. It is this naturopathic property that accounted for the ritual use of water among Berom people.

#### 4.10.6 Olive Oil and Mahogany Oil.

Olive oil is first and foremost taken as an edible liquid mixed in different delicacies among the Berom. It is used to prepare varied dishes-vegetables, meat, etc. However, by tradition the Berom have come to attach ritual significance to olive oil. It is a sacrificial liquid which carries almost the same symbolic weight as mahogany oil. Like mahogany oil, olive oil used as a neutralizer to soften pains from fire burns, circumcision cuts and other minor injuries.

After circumcision, olive oil or mahogany oil was used as a therapy to effect healing on the wound. Olive oil was also used to perform marriage rituals; it was poured on the chest of the bride and blessings pronounced to send off the bride to her husband's house. Olive oil or mahogany oil was sometimes mixed with *ti* that is red sacred ochre and applied on the body as medicinal therapy and antidote for knife cuts or arrow shots. Hunters and warriors mixed either of these two oils with the red ochre and rubbed on the body, as this was believed to scare away witches.

The ritual use of nature in Berom religion to a large extent led to the preservation of these objects. It is also logical to say that it also led to the over utilization of nature. Irrespective of the fact that there was some kind of over utilization of nature and the environment caused by some religious acts of the Berom, this did not cause great injury to the health of the environment as the tin mining. This will become glaring as we discuss the history of tin mining on the Jos Plateau and its subsequent ecological injury.

### NOTES ON CHAPTER FOUR

1. The phrase “speaking words into them” was explained by informants as giving or bestowing ordinary profane things such as animals, human beings, plants, and spaces such as rivers, lakes, swamps, forests and so on, with spiritual powers. This immediately changed them from their hitherto profane state to sacred nature. This could be done through the pronouncement of incantations by a chief priest. It could also be carried out through the performance of rituals which took days, weeks or months but at the end there was some kind of pronouncements which showed that the individual, thing(s), or space(s) were no longer the same but had assumed new status- and most importantly higher status than the former one. “Careless words” was explained by informants to refer to insults, or irreverent discussions and jokes.
2. The informant Dung Chuwang explained the phrase “good fruits” to mean male children. The phrase “the other side of life” was explained to mean the ancestral world or the sacred world.
3. Jang Davou, Nyam Dung, Nyang Dadok and Choji Don insisted that a height of three to four meters must be jumped by every horse to be used in the Mado hunting. Probably this was a kind of spiritual height which the researcher could not understand or it could be that informants were not well informed on modern measurements that have to do with meters. It could be that informants just intended to say that the horses had to jump an estimated height that was considered the appropriate height for a horse to be satisfied healthy and capable of

- participating in the hunting because of its socio-religious importance for the participants.
4. Jang Davou, Nyam Dung, Nyang Dadok and Choji Don explained the word “unclean” to mean men who probably had sex with their wives or *hwa njem* woman lover in the previous night. It was forbidden to sleep in the same room with a woman two nights to the hunting at *Mado* shrine. This was because women were considered ritually unclean because of their monthly menstruation and because they were considered physically weak. For this reason people were advised to keep away all articles that had come in contact with their wives or *hwa njem* in their possession.
  5. Dung Jok, Kweng Bok and Sanda Badung pwolo observed that Behwol shrine was not the only pilgrimage space, most of the shrines provided for pilgrimage spaces as well as medicinal herbs. Pilgrims at Behwol shrine made their final request facing Riyom because heads of wild animals caught in this sacred space were sent to *Vum* shrine in Riyom. Thus, for any efficacious religious pilgrimage in Behwol shrine participants had to face Riyom and this further reveals that the shrines were connected to one another.
  6. The Berom myth of migration points to three conflicting theories. The first theory pointing to a northern migration from Sokoto; the second pointing to a southern migration from the Benue River. The first two theories were popularized by colonial writers and anthropologists to the Jos Plateau in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The third theory claimed that the Berom had always been in the present abode, pointing to the Kabong and Turu rocks as their place of origin.

## **CHAPTER FIVE TIN MINING ON THE JOS PLATEAU**

### **5.1 TRADITIONAL TIN MINING ON THE JOS PLATEAU PRIOR TO THE ADVENT OF THE BRITISH**

The Jos Plateau even though lying treeless today was once clad in savannah vegetation. This from all indications means that the vegetation of the Jos Plateau was once rich and attractive for varied developmental purposes such as human habitation, agriculture, livestock, and hunting. The Jos Plateau environment is today endangered due to soil erosion, nutrient depletion, degraded mine land, deforestation, floods, over population, poor sewage disposal, desert encroachment and poor soil. A recent Committee set by the Plateau State Government to assess ecological problems in the area reported that there are one thousand mining ponds and over thirty five gully erosion sites scattered on the Jos Plateau (Mang 12). The Berom area alone has over ninety percent of this ecological problem. The above is indicative of the fact that the Jos Plateau is faced with an ecological crisis. The situation was not so in the past sixty years. One is thus forced to ask what the reasons are for this change and what the implication of this is on the development of the Jos Plateau.

The above condition is caused by a combination of factors that took place within the past 60 years some of which are still going on till today. The present ecological problem that is threatening any meaningful development on the Jos Plateau can largely be attributed to tin mining. However, the problem cannot be fully understood when seen from a monocausal point of view. To fully understand the nature of ecological problem on

the Jos Plateau, it is pertinent that we accept from the onset that multiple factors that are responsible. Chapter five of the thesis sought to explain reasons for the decline in eco-religious ethics of the Jos plateau posing a serious danger to development and the future survival of the area. The chapter gave a brief history of colonial contact with the Jos Plateau people. This history is important as it unveils the genesis of decline in the eco-religious life of the people. A discussion on tin mining activities was followed. The effect it caused to the ecology, for example the decimation of the earth, farmlands, sacred groves and the presence of killer ponds, etc was also discussed. This section of the thesis ends with a discussion on implications of the aforementioned factors on the development of the Jos plateau and what will be the future of the earth based on the impact of the aforementioned factors on the entire ecology. Although the discussion in chapter five of the thesis was sometimes generalised, the thesis does not pretend to cover the whole of the Jos Plateau. The area most affected by the “unfortunate” tin mining as earlier pointed out is Berom land.

Plateau State is blessed with assorted mineral resources such as tin, copper, kaolin, columbite, etc. Suffice it to state from the onset that for decades the tin mining was a flourishing industry on the Jos Plateau. For quite some time prior to the advent of the colonial administration tin had been mined and smelted on a limited scale by people living on or near the Jos Plateau. For example, the discovery of tin beads smelted by the Nok people nearly two thousand years ago provides evidence that the tin industry was of considerably antiquity. It has been discovered that for a number of centuries bronze was made in Nigeria with Nigerian tin and Saharan copper (Grace 149). In the 1920s Clapperton a colonial administrator saw crude antimony and tin that was produced of the

country at the market in Kano. Late in the nineteenth century, major Macdonald noted the purity of the tin at Lau a town under the jurisdiction of the Emir ruler of Muri and reported;

There is a considerable trade done here in tin, which is collected by the natives in the streams, which came down from hills, they smelt it down and bring it for barter in the shape of wire about half the thickness of one's finger. This tin is very good quality (Grace 149).

The above statement confirms that the natives did not engage in any serious mining of tin that was injurious to the environment, since they only collected the tin that came down from the hills of the streams. In fact, one can confidently say that this was a natural mining method, since no implement was used to dig the tin from the earth. The picture of a thriving tin smelting industry just off the Jos Plateau during the nineteenth century is confirmed by oral and archival evidence. The main deposits of tin were alluvial deposits in the Dilimi and Tarza rivers near Tilden Fulani. Mining was particularly the work of slaves who washed the tin sands with water in calabashes. As they did so the heavier tin ore fell to the bottom of the calabash. The tin was later bought by traders and taken to Ririwain Delma for smelting (Grace 149).

However, British commercial interests became aware of the existence of Nigerian tin in 1885. This coincides with the time that William Wallace was sent by the National African Company (NAC) that latter metamorphosed into the Royal Niger Company by the charter of 1886 to establish a trading post at Gboko on the Benue River. At this time official commercial bodies were beginning to take interest in the potential wealth to be derived from the tin deposits in Nigeria.

Tin was now becoming much sought commodity because it was used more and more in making of cans, for the canning industry and in metal alloys and it was also an important raw material for military purpose. Under pressure from the Niger Company (NC), the colonial authorities used military might to pacify the Jos Plateau people so as to make it safe for prospectors and to remove obstacles in the way of the exploitation of tin on the Jos Plateau (NAK SNP 199).

## **5.2 THE ECOLOGY OF THE JOS PLATEAU PRIOR TO TIN MINING ACTIVITIES**

Here we discussed the equilibrium between human beings and the physical natural environment as expressed by the “ideal type” or soil, vegetation, the sacredness of the environment, and rainfall regimes of the Jos Plateau. Most of the Jos Plateau ethnic groups evolved similar system of agriculture, animal husbandry, industry and social institutions (NAK SNP 199). Linguistic and cultural variations existed, but these were largely the result of millennia of immigration into the region and contacts with specific neighbouring groups in the adjoining plains, as well as the specific location (settlement) of the groups within this general environmental setting. For example, most of the groups who inhabited the south-eastern escarpment (Ngas, Mupun, M’chip, Kofyar, etc) who were under “population pressure” practiced agricultural terracing (NAK SNP 199). Similarly the main groups of the plateau massif, Berom, Mwaghavul and Ronkulere reared dwarf cattle and also kept ponies. To a large extent therefore, most of the groups on the Jos Plateau were at the same level of social and economic development up to AD 1800 (NAK SNP 199). During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, developments in Hausaland and Borno, Tiv expansion into the Benue valley (N.A.K SNP 199) and European penetration in the



same valley, began to affect some of the groups in a manner that hastened and, in some cases, slowed down social, economic, religious and political development among the plateau groups. Notwithstanding these sources of influence the main rhythm of change in which the physical setting played an important role remained internal to the region. For example, no new modes of production were articulated. Until the British conquest and the commencement of colonial activity, the natural environment of the Jos Plateau represented an age old equilibrium established between this environment and its inhabitants in an unending process of adjustments and re-adjustments. The Jos Plateau soils are derived from very rich volcanic flows. These have been able to sustain and support the cultivation of indigenous grains and tubers such as, millet, cocoyam, beniseed, maize, sweet potatoes etc, which enhanced agricultural development (Mangvwat 1-6).

The Jos Plateau is endowed with a unique climatic condition, namely, the cool temperatures in comparison with other areas on the same latitude. This has also affected the rainfall regime of the Jos Plateau, which is also higher than the average precipitin for the general zone in which it lies. For instance it receives 60-80 inches annually (Mangvwat 24-33). During dry season (that is November to March) it receives 5-10 inches as against the surrounding plains, which get 0-5 inches (Mangvwat 25). The relative high rain fall enabled the Jos Plateau to support the thick vegetation cover than those of other areas lying at the same latitudinal belt. In a detailed classification of Nigerian vegetation, Buchanan and Pugh classified the vegetation of the Jos Plateau as a distinct type of its own that lies in a transitional zone between the southern guinea savannah and the northern guinea Savannah (Mangvwat 35-36). Though located in the northern savannah, the Jos Plateau enjoyed the woodland vegetation cover characteristic

of the southern guinea savannah as a result of its high altitude and a high rainfall regime. This thick vegetation cover was in existence at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when colonialism struck (Mangvwat 36).

This rich vegetation cover, high rainfall and the variegated soil types supported an agricultural economy which was self-sustaining, with substantial surpluses which were exchanged for commodities which the region did not produce, such as salt and textile, as well as for local trade within the region. Apart from crops, the rich vegetation and climate permitted the rearing of wide variety of livestock including chickens, goat, sheep, cattle, etc, in large numbers, but especially ponies (dwarf and sturdy type of horses). The Jos Plateau was free from tsetse fly. This deadly fly is a carrier of trypanosomiasis that is a threat to both human beings and cows. The friendly nature of the Jos Plateau ecology was favourable for every sustainable development. It is not a surprise therefore, that with the establishment of colonial rule, Fulani cattle herders flocked into the Jos Plateau, thereby, making it one of the regions with the highest concentration of cattle population in Nigeria (Awogbade. 3-11).

Finally, given the population of the Jos plateau which was generally low, and the level of technology, the energy needs of the region were easily met without any threat to this rich vegetation cover. For in addition to felling of a small number of trees and shrubs for firewood, cornstalks formed an important supplement that lessened dependence on large-scale tree felling. Furthermore, the relatively low population pressure enabled the wide spread practice of bush fallow for a long time which, made for effective soil, vegetation and soil conditions. Animals such as reptiles, mammals, birds, amphibians and fish-both tamed and wild multiplied. Large and wild animals such as the elephant, lion,

leopard, hyena and the like gradually disappeared only with the onslaught of the tin mining. It has been argued no doubt with considerable justification, that most of the game that became trapped in the present day Yankari Game Reserve were originally escapees from the Jos Plateau (Dung Dazong interview). For sustainable development and to improve the health of the environment, the dry season grass was cut down and ritually burnt and used as manure.

We have shown that the environmental setting of the Jos Plateau, its climate, soil, altitude, vegetation and animal life on one hand; and the human activity within this setting on the other, interacted and standardized environmental features and patterns which encouraged sustainable development. This has also influenced socio-economic and cultural patterns that have evolved long before the colonial advent. This equilibrium represented the eco-social system that had evolved in the various ways described above and which resulted from an endless process of interaction between human beings and the environment on the Jos plateau (Awogbade 10). This eco-social system was disrupted and radically upset by colonialism in ways which formed the major concern of this thesis and to which we now turn our attention.

### **5.3 THE OPENING OF BEROMLAND FOR THE MINING OF TIN**

The aim of this section of the thesis was not to recount in details the various battles fought between the British colonial rule and the various Berom villages. Scholars such as Isichei, Mangvwat, Nengel, Ames, Bukar, and Goshit have effectively covered this. They have discussed the British conquest of the various ethnic groups on the Jos Plateau, the Berom inclusive.<sup>1</sup> However, suffice it to state that the motive for conquering Berom land was to control its rich tin ore and therefore the British were economically motivated.

Beside this motive was the desire to suppress slave trade and to “civilise” the natives. By this time British and in fact Europe’s industrial revolution had created dual related needs in its economy. These needs were the need for sustained raw materials and the need for markets to sell the finished goods. Giving the introduction of legitimate trade to replace slave trade the Jos Plateau tin had shown enormous potentials for satisfying these needs.

It is perhaps for the above reasons that the British colonial authorities were in a hurry to open up Beromland and other promising mining areas as quick as possible to exploit the commodity. In consequence, there was little time for peaceful penetration and a number of military expeditions criss-crossed Beromland between 1904 and 1906 (Ezekiel 22). When the British entered Beromland, they gave a demonstration of force to display the power of their modern weapons so as to deter resistance. They asked to see the chief and if the village put up any resistance, their chief was taken away as in the case of Gyel where the chief was taken to Tilden-Fulani in chains where he died as a result of shock or by starvation. This situation created serious political and environment crises. Politically, the death of the chief created a vacuum in the polity because his people were not aware of his death until after sometime and so the throne was left vacant for a long time. The environment also suffered given the number of people that were killed in the event that any village put up any form of resistance.

To effectively set the pattern for subsequent conquests to provide the opportunity for the mining of tin, a military expedition set out from Lokoja on the 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1904. Entering Beromland through Sopp and after a sharp encounter with the Aten, they advanced to Bukuru (then Zawan) via Vwang village. Gyel was attacked and the chief taken away by Mr. Philip a British colonial agent. “I waited for an hour and then the *sarki*

(chief) was not appearing. I entered the town with six men and arrested him” (Ezekiel 24). Naturally, the Gyel put up some resistance but were driven off with heavy casualties by the British firepower and the town was partially destroyed by the colonial forces (24).

The next day Kuru was attacked for what the colonial authority referred as recalcitrant behaviour. The chief of Kuru was called to present himself and when he refused Kuru was destroyed. It was as a result of incidents of this type that the chiefs became reluctant to surrender themselves and their people preferred not to reveal who their chiefs were (NAK SNP 199).

In July 1985, the British proceeded to Zobot in Foron. The priest-chief of Zobot Zam Ron who had earlier received warnings concerning the Whiteman’s weapons from Jahmang the chief of Gyel and from an ex-slave who had returned from Bauchi. Despite this warning the people of Zobot went ahead to resist the invasion of the British because they had not been defeated in any battle before now. When the British sent three emissaries to Zobot one of them was killed. The British attacked Zobot and many people were killed, the people fled to neighbouring villages such as Heipang and Fan (NAK SNP 199). The people of Du had already seen the military might of the British when Gyel her neighbour was attacked, for this reason they quickly surrendered to the British.

Vwang another Berom village had initially not opposed the coming of the British since they were aware of the British sharp encounter with the Aten people when the British first penetrated Beromland. However, in 1908, Vwang resisted paying tax and a punitive expedition was launched and grains were seized (Mwavwang Davou interview). The British military campaign was however carried to almost every Berom village, and the British destroyed villages that dared the British. Although some secondary resistance

continued in the British rule, these military expeditions cleared the way for the opening up of Berom land and indeed the Jos Plateau tin fields held by the Niger Company and other mining companies (NAK SNP33-52).

#### **5.4 BRIEF HISTORY OF COLONIAL CONTACT WITH THE JOS PLATEAU AND TIN MINING**

The discussion in this section of the thesis was brief because a lot has already been said by other scholars on the history of colonial contact with the peoples of the Jos Plateau. For example, the works of scholars such as Ames, C. G. *The Gazetteers of Plateau Province* (1953), Elizabeth Isichei (ed.) *Studies in the History of Plateau, Nigeria* (1982) Monday Y. Mangvwat, “A History of Class Formation in the Plateau Province 1902-1982: The Genesis of a Ruling Class” (1984) John, G. Nengel “Conquest and Resistance to Colonial Rule in the Politics of Northern Jos Plateau 1902-1917” (1987) Bukar Danazumi, “Tin Mining and Peasant Impoverishment in Jos Division 1902-1950: A Study in Colonial Domination and Underdevelopment” (1986) Zachariah D. Goshit, “The Impact of the Great Depression on the Jos Plateau: A Case Study of the Tin Mining Fields in the 1930s” *Mandyeng Journal of Central Nigerian Studies, Early Rains, Nigeria*, Department of History, University of Jos (2001) and many other such works have furnished us with information on colonial contact and conquest of the Jos Plateau.

Prior to the advent of the British colonial rule in Nigeria tin ore was mined on the “Jos Plateau, the Nok areas, Ririwain Dalma, Zaria Kano axis, Belidi” (Freund 88). However, it should be noted that while expeditions were still being launched to open up the Jos Plateau in general and Beromland in particular for the mining of tin, the colonial administration through the Niger Company was simultaneously sending mining engineers

under the protection of armed escorts to discover the sources of the Jos Plateau tin. The interest of the colonial administration on tin mining on the Jos Plateau could have been triggered by the discovery of large quantities of tin found by Clapperton a colonial officer at Kano market in the 1820s.

However, it was not until August 1902 that the mining engineer of the Royal Niger Company on a research mission of tin sent George R. Nicholas to the Jos Plateau. Nicholas discovered the source of the tin in a granite hill south of the Dilimi River and the alluvial gravel was rich enough to justify the expense of a wide exploration. Nicholas' report aroused the interest of the British and by the end of 1902 the Royal Niger Company and a number of other companies had taken prospecting licences in the Badiko area covering many square miles (Grace 179-188). Nicholas suggested that there were richer tin ore deposits as one ascended the Jos Plateau in the areas of Tilden Fulani, Naraguta, Jos and Bukuru (Grace 35). Nicholas' suggestion was accepted in 1903 and the Royal Niger Company decided to send another expedition whose main task was to penetrate the actual Jos Plateau. This expedition was led by the Australian mining engineer H. W. Laws who arrived at Bukuru on Christmas Eve in 1903 to establish a permanent camp with 600 carriers and 25 troops let by the colonial administration (Grace 35).

At Tilden, Laws began prospecting for tin in commercial quantities with 50 to 100 forced labourers whom he paid with cloth (Grace 35). Laws later discovered rich deposits of tin at Jos and Bukuru, which led to shifting his headquarters from Tilde to Jos in 1905 with four European employees and 200 labourers working under him. The prospect of the Jos Plateau in the tin ore seemed promising that the well known mining engineer, C. G.

Lush was quoted to have declared that “Jos Plateau was probably the richest tin field in the world” (Grace 35). Before 1914, the tin mining companies were largely dependent on forced labour. Mechanised mining methods were not used, rather, picks shovels, and head pans were utilised. A. P. Calvert another colonial officer confirmed this when he wrote that, “British tin miners on the Jos Plateau of Nigeria were only doing on a large scale what the black man with his limited resources has been doing for generations” (Grace 35). By the 1920s the number of mining companies on the Jos Plateau reached 83 with an output of 15,000 tons (Gonyok 9). The tin mining industry grew very fast so that by 1913, there were at least sixty eight non-Nigerian individual companies with a total capital of about 6,399,907 pounds invested in the Jos tin mining fields (Freund 39).

By March 1911, there were more than fifty companies and syndicates interested in tin with a total investment of over two and half million pounds. The boom reached its peak in 1912 following the presence of syndicates in the tin mining activities. By 1912, intensive and extensive mining methods were introduced, this led to serious rape of the environment of the Jos Plateau leading to destruction of the economic, political and socio-cultural and religious worldview of the indigenous people of the Jos Plateau that was ecologically friendly. Monday Y. Mangvwat expanded on this when he wrote that within this period the tin mining industry was the principal agent of capital penetration of the Jos Plateau which affected the economy, politics, religion, and of course the ecology (1-6).

The introduction of heavy machinery gave the mining industry a tremendous boost. Machines such as draglines, hydraulics monitors, jig plants, dredges and gravel pumps transformed the mining industry that has for some years until now depended on the same basic tools as pre-colonial mining industry using sheer labour power for exploiting



the alluvial deposits. Before the coming of the draglines, the simplest means of excavating tin sand was the use of hand labour. One person dug the ground and another loaded it into head pans while a team of three or four labourers carried the pans and deposited the soil into a dump. Godfrey Fell reported that, “the average capacity per person working in this way and carrying the head pan material 400 feet to 500 feet away was 1.5 cubic yards for a ten hour working day” (253-254). Fell Godfrey expanded further that, on the other hand, a draglines could shift 200 cubic yards per hour or 2,000 cubic yards in ten hours and was equivalent a gang of one thousand three-hundred and sixty persons. A dragline could however work sixteen or twenty-four hours a day, while labourers could only carry on head panning work for limited hours and during daylight (234).

The expansion of the tin industry led to the construction of a narrow gauge railway, which linked the Jos Plateau with other parts of Nigeria. Another factor that gave impetus to extensive tin mining was the construction of hydroelectric power resources in Kura Falls of Barakin Ladi Local Government Area. The availability of this cheap electric power resource made it economical to use heavy machinery such as draglines, dredges and other mechanical means of earth-removal. A hydroelectric power was constructed at Kwal in Bassa Local Government Area in the 1920s and another at Kura Falls in the 1930s and the two were brought under the control of one company (NESCO). The principal customers of these hydroelectric companies were mining companies, notably the Amalgamated Tin Mines of Nigeria (ATMN) that was the largest company on the minefield, which produced about fifty percent of all out of tin that was mined. Due to the high number of companies searching for tin a third hydroelectric company was constructed at Jekko about five miles bellow Kura Falls. Both Kura Falls and Jekko

hydroelectric stations used the same water source to generate their electricity. Following the completion of Jekko power station, electricity generation stood at 14,500 kilowatts (Ezekiel 30).

Suffice it to conclude this section of the thesis by stating that the construction of three hydroelectric companies and railway gauge led to destruction of land. This is because these companies did not consider the injury the construction works had on the environment. Having constructed three electric companies, several feeder roads and a railway line, the mining companies had to embark on a large-scale production if they were to make a profit on their investment. The implication of this was the introduction of heavy-duty machines. The use of heavy machinery on the minefields driven by electric power after the opening up of Beromland invariably speeded up in no small measure the process by which land, plants, animals and the entire ecology was destroyed in Beromland.

## **5.5 TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL FRIENDLINESS: GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR THE HEALING OF DEVASTATED LAND**

The above discussions point to the fact that Beromland was totally devastated by the tin industry. The colonial government was aware of the ecological implication of the mining industry in Beromland. What efforts did the colonial government made towards saving the environment and how effective were these efforts? Suffice it to note from the onset that the first tin production was given priority during the Second World War over other considerations. However, in the 1940s the colonial government with a view to rehabilitating the agricultural economy of the Berom after the war initiated certain investigations. The government also had the impression that after the war, there may be

low tin prices like it was the case in the 1930s during the great depression. The government also thought that due to the rapid mining of the most accessible and economic deposits during the war, the remaining life of the plateau tin -field would be relatively short (NAK JOSPROF 1).

However, because the mining industry was an important source of revenue through royalties, rents and taxation and a valuable dollar earner, this made the government to become reluctant about ecological issues so as not to kill off the mining industry. Imposing over stringent restoration conditions on the mining industries entailed rendering the mining industry unprofitable. It was perhaps for this reason that the government focused its attention on some agricultural policies because Berom society was agrarian, and which seemed to be on the verge of collapse (NAK JOSPROF 1).

It was this development that influenced Plateau Provincial Development Committee to sponsor series of farm surveys in some Berom districts to collect data on land use with a view to formulating a plan for rehabilitation of land in Beromland. The committee in June 1946 came out with a report that recommended various measures to check the deterioration of soil of the Plateau and to provide for its rehabilitation. This was to include reforestation and the provision of grass cover on non-arable land, reduction of livestock population to manageable levels and the application of soil conservation measures to all farmland. There was also the need to improve farming methods so as to make use of surviving farmland (NAK JOSPROF 1).

A component of government's anti-erosion programme was the restoration of grass cover by controlling the number of Fulani cattle who trooped to Beromland due to its good whether for the rearing of cattle. This measure was accepted among the Berom

whose crops straying cattle had repeatedly damaged, and who had increasing difficulty in obtaining grass for thatching. It is reported that this restriction led to a drastic fall in the number of cattle in Jos Division and the Berom populace welcomed this (NAK JOSPROF 1). By 1948 it was decided that responsibility was to reclaim mined lands. However, this ended as mere policy than concrete reclamation efforts. Therefore, for the Berom within this period, land was either unavailable or very expensive to rent and moreover, with the mining boom that began in 1948, land was destroyed more rapidly than could be possibly reclaimed and rehabilitated.

## **5.6 THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON BEROMLAND**

The peak period of tin mining has past but the long time environmental and ecological consequences of the industry have persisted till today. The affected areas include Jos North, Jos South, Barakin Ladin, Riyom, and Bassa Local Government Areas. These areas have been rendered agriculturally infertile and unproductive. Activities of the tin industry on the Jos Plateau in general and Berom land in particular was without any concept of sustainable environmental ethics. The optimal utilization of the environment was carried in such a way that it compromised and jeopardized the health of the environment. This invariably made the impact of tin mining on Beromland holistic, as it affects virtually every aspect of human endeavour in the area. For example, the tin industry affected human beings, plants, animals, nature and the environment.

## **5.7 THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

Tin mining covered over 325 square kilometres, producing over 7000 killer ponds all of which have devastating effect on all spheres of human development on the Jos Plateau. Out of this number of killer ponds about 5000 have been reclaimed leaving over

1000 scattered on the land. Thirty five billion naira is needed to reclaim the over 1000 killer ponds (Nyam12). This has led to gross imbalance and inadequacy in land for the mass population. It is particularly problematic because Berom are mostly peasant farmers. The land also no longer sustains the religious beliefs and practices of the people that hitherto maintained a strong affinity with the environment. This is because traditional religious spaces of significance have been decimated, for example, sacred groves, pilgrimage spots, religious monoliths, and worship sports were destroyed. The mining ponds which always served as death traps for human beings and animals as there have been several cases of people and animals getting drown in the abandoned mines. A recent study has shown that over five thousand people and several animals have lost their lives in these killer ponds (Mwadkwon 12).

With regards to the ecology, the adversely affected components of this were the vegetation, soils, and landscape. The altitude and climate remained relatively unaffected but this was only for a short while because the population was increased due to influx of labourers to the Jos Plateau for job opportunities.

By and large, the most phenomenal impact of tin mining was the destruction of the landscape of over half of what constituted the former Jos Division. The sinking of large, deep and open shafts and the removal from there of millions of tons and volumes of earth, loaded on to the surface in mounds, created a totally new landscape in the numerous areas affected. All over the mining districts, artificial lakes, ponds, gorges and mounds were created over farmlands. Dams were also constructed in several of the bigger streams for the purpose of generating electricity that the tin industry needed (Mangvwat 39-40). So also was an intensive and extensive network of feeder roads that linked the numerous

mining camps with one another (Mangvwat 40). These mining camps dotted all over the mining districts, were themselves an entirely new phenomenon on the landscape. The interplay of all these factors completely changed the landscape.

But it was more than an issue of a changing landscape; it was a major disruption of development and in some cases, destruction and degradation of the eco-social system, which prevailed prior to search for tin on the Jos Plateau. For example, agriculture was severely affected, since the tin-bearing soils formed the most fertile lands of the Berom, thereby driving the latter to cultivate the marginal areas against a bush-fallow system that was fast breaking down. Naturally, crop yield dropped. This together with the removal of the labour force away from agriculture into the mining industry introduced perpetual food crisis among the Berom (Mangvwat 40).

This wanton destruction of the landscape and the eco-social system of the Jos Plateau massif caught the attention of the colonial state from the very beginning of tin mining, but the law of profit maximization of capital could not be compromised. Thus, it was not until the second imperial war, when tin mining on the Jos Plateau assumed alarming proportions that some attention began to be paid to the land reclamation. Even then, it was more of policy rhetoric than a sustained, genuine, practical activity towards solution (Mangvwat 9).

It is not possible to accurately measure or quantify the scale of the damage inflicted on the physical setting of the Jos Plateau massif. Colonial studies, the most famous of which is that of Davies, attempted to document the area of the land covered by the search for gold vis-à-vis that of agriculture and settlement in a few of the most affected Berom Districts, namely Gyel, Shen and Zawan (Davies 9). These studies

showed that Berom had completely lost their farmlands to the tin mining industry. For example, in Gyel District, it was found that 10.3% of the original arable land was already destroyed through the operation of the mining companies. 2.2% was taken over for occupation by miners; 68% was under mining leases though not all of it was necessarily worked. 4% was settled and farmed by strangers employed in the mines (Davies 9-10)

Going by these figures, nothing absolutely was left for the Berom peasants of Gyel. The same author in Zawan and Shen villages obtained similar results (Davies 10). Recent studies, especially that of Danazumi Bukar have shown that what was true of the three districts which Davies surveyed was also true of Naraguta, Kuru, Heipang, Du, Vwang, Foron, Gashish and Ropp districts, though probably less so of Ganawuri, Kwal, Bassa and Jere Districts. Bukar Danazumi has shown with remarkable vividness how colonialism through what he calls a system of “alienation and ruination” destroyed the vegetation, soils, landscape and the entirety of the of pre-existing Berom environment and economy, thereby giving rise to peasant impoverishment and underdevelopment of the people (Bukar 28-32).

As stated earlier, land ruination went beyond a mere change of landscape to the disruption of the eco-social system that had existed prior to the tin mining industry. It involved massive felling of trees for energy as well as for construction purposes, thereby reducing an important source of natural humus of the soil, in addition to encouraging soil erosion. Further soil erosion was caused by gullies from the artificial mounds created by tin mining operations; reduced bush fallow due to land alienation; over-grazing due to a phenomenal influx of cattle into the region and re-diversion of streams which no longer carried the original rich alluvial sediments.

It is perhaps for these reasons that John Dung-Gwom opined that, the British through the tin industry retarded Berom development. Killing our iron smelting by destroying the timber (charcoal trees) for their mining, if not for one of such reasons Berom would have been producing sophisticated equipment and develop very far (118).

After the great depression of the 1930's the effect of search for tin was intensified. This led to pollution of water, air, and increase in temperature following an increase in population given the number of people that trooped into the Jos Plateau seeking for labour jobs in the mining industry (Gonyok 9).

## **5.8 THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON SACRED PLACES**

A recent field work has indicated that prior to tin mining operations on the Jos Plateau there were well over 336 *kwit* sacred spaces in over 80 villages in Beromland (Mwadkwon field work). These holy spaces range from hunting grounds, rain making sites, prayer places for healing and wellbeing of the society, places for sacrifices for appeasement of the spirits, ancestors and the Supreme Being, sacred spots for celebrations of festivals. Lyrics of such sacred groves are seen in all Berom Districts for example, *vum* in Riyom, *not* in Rim, *mado* in Kabong, *gassing* rock formation in Zobot, *dashed* hills in Vwang, *layman* in Kuru, *behwol* in Jos, *Gufwagachik* in Chwelnyap and so on. Some of the sacred places measured up to about 20 square kilometres. However, the tin industry destroyed most of these religious sites and objects. In cases where such sacred places and objects were not directly destroyed, they were disregarded as a result of other forces of change that came with the tin industry such as Christianity, Islam, modernity and Western civilisation.



According to Kim Rwang, the impact of the tin industry on the sacred sites affected the people in different ways. He stated that, new diseases came when the tin industries introduced heavy machines to dig out tin from our sacred lands. Our ancestors could no longer sleep because their abodes were destroyed, and they probably lost interest in us because we could not fight this evil. We and our animals could not drink good water, trees of the great spirits were chopped down, and the sky was not spared either, for it was always coloured with smoke. Even *Dagwi* God was disrupted; including buffer zones, hunting grounds and historical places of importance were all destroyed (Rwang Kim interview).

Kim further explained that when prayers yielded no positive results then the supplicant is at fault or lacking in spiritual power and knowledge of his immediate natural environment. If not so, then certainly the supplicant must have some debts of crime against nature to confess. The supplicant might have cut down a tree or even a branch from the sacred groves or use an iron implement in such places that were the abode of the spirits. He might have also trampled on the ground of the ancestors or invoke the wrath of the gods by touching their dwelling places which are the sacred hills, trees, groves, mountains, rivers, lakes, animals, and in some cases the human being. The tin operators are guilty of all these offences because they destroy our sacred sites (Rwang Kim interview).

## **5.9 THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON BEROM ECONOMY**

Prior to the advent of tin mining on the Jos Plateau, the rich vegetation cover, the high rainfall and the variegated soil types supported an agricultural economy that was self-sustaining. There were also substantial surpluses which were exchanged for

commodities which the people did not produce, such as salt and textile. Apart from crops the rich vegetation and climate permitted the rearing of wide variety of livestock including chickens, goats, sheep, dogs, etc, in large numbers. Following the introduction of the tin industry the impact on the economy was glaringly noticed especially the adverse effect the industry had on the land tenure system of Berom especially the traditional agrarian subsistent farming that was totally dislocated. This severely affected agriculture, because the tin bearing soils formed the most fertile lands of Berom against a bush fallow system that was fast breaking down. Naturally crop yield dropped. This together with the removal of the labour force away from agriculture into the mining industry introduced perpetual food crisis among Berom.

Polanyi once said that because of economic ventures, the world became converted into exchangeable market commodities. To enable the market forces interact freely and remain productive, the natural world of various communities are commoditised into land, life commoditised into labour, and patrimony commoditised into capital (46).

David R. Loy like Polanyi has described how the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth century and new technology in tools of production led to the decimation of different community's fabric (282-283). This was characterized by a similar ethos of the commoditization "order" currently pervading the marketing of indigenous environmental wisdom of many societies including that of the Berom of the Jos Plateau.

In spite of the fact that Polanyi and Loy's works were not centred on the Jos Plateau people, the scenario described by the two scholars epitomised the Jos tin mines experience, to keep the tin mining industry alive and productive, obviously for economic reasons. The natural world, land, life and patrimony of the Berom people were

commoditised. The commoditisation of land, life and patrimony by the tin mining industry invariably led to a kind of nonchalant attitude to environmental ethics. This thus corroded the very shared needed community values which protected the eco-religious ethics of Berom society that could have enabled the people to development a culture of sustainable development.<sup>1</sup>

## **5.10 KILLER PONDS CREATED DUE TO TIN MINING**

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century since tin mining on the Jos Plateau began, there were no standing laws regulating mining operations. For example when the tin had been mined from the sites it was abandoned and the mining operation moved to a new location. This led to the estimated 1000 killer ponds scattered in many Berom districts. Apart from the aforementioned threats already discussed, the tin mining on the Jos Plateau produced killer ponds that inflicted the following threats on the ecology of Beromland.

### **5.10.1 Water Quality Problems.**

This developed as a result of tin mining on the Jos Plateau. Acid run-off and sedimentation from the abandoned mine site contaminated thousands of miles of streams throughout the Berom land and environs. Acid mine drainage also led to increased road maintenance costs, due to corrosive effects of this drainage on culverts.

### **5.10.2 Health and Safety Problems.**

Health and safety problems were caused by high walls created by digging of the earth, open shafts, dilapidated water-filled pits and mine structures that presented serious health and safety threats. These mining sites were sometimes within easy distance from schools and subdivisions and have become deadly play areas. Over 2000 children have been reported dead in the abandoned killer ponds because they see the ponds not as

dangerous areas but as interesting places to explore. Besides, these ponds have killed over 5000 adults (focus group discussion with Rwang Kim and Chong Balak).

Several accidents claiming several lives have occurred in some of them. One of such recent accidents, which claimed seven foreign lives, was the one involving a popular *makosa* musical group from Zaire in 1997. The inhabitants of Zawan village in Jos South Local Government Area now call the pond “Zaire dam”. No one can tell the number of animals that have been killed by the abandoned ponds (focus group discussion with Rwang Kim and Chong Balak).

### **5.10.3 Aesthetic Problems**

From the environment that is now characterised by sparse vegetation and stagnant water, this has a negative impact on outsiders and local residents. The environment scars contribute to lose community pride and people become apathetic toward the condition of these areas.

Even the beautiful rock formations have become eyesores in some places due to activities of quarry farms. Cases in point are the Zaranmaganda and Kuru quarry farms where these beautiful rock formations have been destroyed to build roads and houses.

The recent September 7<sup>th</sup> ethno-religious crisis further deteriorated the aesthetic nature of Jos and its environs. The Jos main market is now laying waste with several other residential and business centres burn down. The environmental effect of the recent September 7<sup>th</sup> crisis is difficult to tell, since no one can tell the exact number of human beings that were killed. No one can tell the number of animals, and plants that were also destroyed as people cut down trees to meet up their energy needs due to shortages in kerosine supply as a result of the crisis.

#### **5.10.4 Land Shortage.**

The tin mining industry destroyed arable land in Beromland to a large extent. Most of the fertile land was rendered useless because of the mining activities. To adequately show the impact of tin mining on Berom land, Gyel, Zawan and Shen was used here as cases in point. The choice of these three places was informed by the fact that they were most hit by tin mining activities compared to other parts of Beromland.

##### **5.10.4.1 Gyel.**

Generally speaking, tin on the Jos Plateau were mainly alluvial that were found in the vicinity of rivers, streams or valleys. There were every type of mining technique and equipment ranging from dragline and pumps at Sabon Gida by the N'Gyel river. In 1943 J. G. Davies carried out a land survey and reported that mining in all its forms accounted for about three quarters of the total land alienation in Gyel (NAK SNP 9). Davies discovered that out of the 2,759 2.7 acres of land alienated from farmers' use, 2,033.9 acres or slightly three-quarters consisted of mining dumps, holds and 'scratched' land, that is land that the surface had been removed. This was 3.10% of the original arable land. Giving the result of this survey Davies observed that Gyel would never be of any further agricultural use to the people of the area for decades. Davies also declared that no land reclamation had been carried out in any of the mining sites in Gyel before the survey he conducted. Davies further lamented that the process of natural regeneration showed no sign of producing any significant results for a very long time. And even though the land was not aesthetically unsightly but it must be considered useless to a farming community such as Gyel (NAK SNP 44).

According to Davies calculations in 1944 Gyel had 4.4 acres of land that could be farmed per adult factor, while children were counted as half adult factor. Davies compared this figure with the average of 6.4 for the entire Berom community. Davies found out that where arable land was allowed, at least 6.4 acres could barely provide sufficient diet while 4.4 acres just provided 'sufficient energy. Thus, 1945-46 population estimate already placed Gyel below the 'sufficient energy' and Berom country as a whole below diet sufficiency. According to Davies the situation became terrible to the extent that Gyel farmers had to rent land for cash crop production at long distances from their homes and this led to an increased incidence of squabbles and tension over land rights (NAK SNP 44). The picture painted above is further illustrated with a table of land rendered useless for farming in Gyel by mining activities (NAK SNP 45).

According Ezekiel Chollom, this mining was outside the village with exception of a few square yards on the sacred grounds, that is shrines in adjoining home farm in Rankyang village (71). On the contrary informants claimed that there was no exception for sacred places especially when it was discovered that there was a large concentration of tin in the place. The researcher agrees with the informants having seen more than twenty shrines that were affected by the mines irrespective of their socio-religious importance to the people (focus group discussion with Gyang Pam and Davou Gyang).

#### **5.10.4.2 Zawan.**

A similar survey was as the one narrated above carried out in Zawan by 1944. Out of the whole area covered by Zawan, 7.4% had been mined, while 1.5% was used for temporary mining purposes, making a total of 8.9%. This survey showed that in Zawan village area 10.8% of the total land had been used for mining purposes and consequently

the land had been utterly injured. A worse scenario was created in Zawan town. Here, was more congested and heavily damaged than what was obtainable in Gyel.

This survey indicated that the arable land in Zawan represented only 3.03 acres per adult factor as compared with 4.21 acres in Gyel. While 9.3% of the village lands in Zawan has been destroyed by tin mining operations, 7.6% was of the arable land was destroyed in Gyel. This made the whole area reaching to the south boundary of Jos township seriously congested as people were forced to migrate due to the onslaught of the tin mining (NAK SNP 45).

#### **Land Permanently Rendered Useless for Farming in Gyel**

	<b>Arable Land in acres</b>	<b>Non-Arable Land in acres</b>
Sabon Gida Areas (ATMN)	13000	--
Gero Areas (A.T.M.N)	540	--
Barakin Akwu Areas NCM Ltd	80	--
Barakin Acha (Mr. A. Jones)	24	36
Bukuru areas (ATMN)	50	--
North of Barakin Acha (ATMN)	10	--
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,004</b>	<b>36</b>

**Source: NAK SNP 45**

Ezekiel Chollom reported that faced with the problem of acute land shortage the people of Zawan were left without any alternative than to borrow farmlands at Rangyel a village to the West of Gyel (72). This may explain the cause of the constant land disputes between Gyel and Zawan even till today.

#### **5.10.4.3 Shen.**

The mining of tin devastated almost the same proportion of land as it did in Gyel, but more land had been permanently destroyed here in Shen. Davies' report indicated that mining was carried out in 10% of the land in Shen, but on the whole 12.5% of Shen village and its environs was used for mining activities. Barren land in Shen covered 3% of the area as most of the land in Shen was made up of poor soil. However, Shen had twice the size of land that was inhabited by the people of Gyel (NAK SNP 45).

Although no similar survey has been on other parts of Beromland to ascertain the level of damage on the land it is clear from the number of mining ponds in all Berom districts that the story may not be different. All Berom Districts with the exception of Bachit District suffered the same fate of land devastation as a result of tin mining. For example, at Foron District the areas that were seriously affected by the mining activities were Bisichi and Sabon Gidan Foron. In Du the mining scars were still visible in Du village, Rayfield, Dilimi, Federal Low-cost, etc. In Riyom mining scars are visibly seen in Rim, Gwa Rim and Chwelnyp. Mining scars are also present in Ropp Districts especially at Gwol town, Lobiring, Wereh, etc.

### **5.11 THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON BEROM SOCIAL LIFE**

The tin mining industry did not only lead to the destruction of large areas of Berom land by rendering it unproductive for agriculture, but it also caused some social



problems that cannot be overlooked. Prior to the beginning of tin mining in Beromland, brewing and consumption of *siring*, local brewed beer was regulated by Berom elders in every village. However, with the advent of the mining industry that led to the opening and building of mining camps, the situation changed. This led to increase in drunkenness among the Berom populace because *siring*, local beer came to be brewed and sold in commercial basis.

By the 1940s many Berom women who had not prepared the local beer before now were encouraged to join the business. Since the mining camps provided the atmosphere for drinking, this made many Berom people to indulge in excessive drinking. This invariably affected the Berom productive output in almost all forms of human endeavour (focus group discussion with Pam Tok and Kim Gyang).

Closely related to the sale of local beer in the mining camps was the growth of prostitution. Prostitution had no place in Berom traditional society as we had earlier on explained because of the *njem* contractual marriage which allowed for sexual relation between a man and another woman through religious rites and rituals. Therefore, prostitutes in the mining camps were initially Hausa women or divorcees, but towards the late 1960s an increasing number of indigenous women joined in the business of prostitution in the mining camps. This trend of event had an adverse effect on the family life. This is because young girls, widows and abandoned wives belonging to Berom and other indigenous people of the Jos Plateau. For the sake of money the young girls, widows and abandoned wives offered themselves to men for sex. This situation led them to contact sexually transmitted diseases that were latter spread to their respective

environments. These sexually transmitted diseases rendered some a lot of these sex workers sterile (focus group discussion with Pam Tok and Kim Gyang).

During the peak days of tin mining, Hausa language became the lingua franca on the minefield especially in the 1960s. Hausa language threatened to replace Berom in everyday use at least in the work place. This threat was due to the fact that many Berom speakers never learned to write Berom language. This situation may perhaps explain the reason why today Hausa is still spoken in the whole of Jos in particular and Plateau State in general.

The Berom on the minefields acquired a taste for certain consumer goods such as European second hand clothes and also for Hausa dresses called *baban riga* and *jampa*, etc. Some young Berom men and women who went to work on the minefields became totally absorbed into the mining community and never went back to their birth places. Some became Muslims while others returned to their villages only to ridicule contemptuously the old ways as being “uncivilised archaic and retrogressive.” This invariably led to a considerable reduction in the authority of elders as the young men could now earn their living from the mining camps and not only that, they could also pay their bride price which used to be provided by the elders (focus group discussion with Pam Tok and Gyang Kim). This scenario paved way for total neglect of some societal norms that hitherto protected the environment from being destroyed. For example such people saw nothing good in saying certain portions of land were sacred places and could therefore build their houses in such places.

Gambling was another social problem that was introduced due to the high number of people in the mining camps. Gambling became a common phenomenon in all the

mining camps. Many squatters were professional gamblers who moved from one mining camp to another to gamble and especially on pay-day. Some mining labourers who wanted to enlarge their pockets with more money left their own mining camps on gambling sprees especially on pay-day (Dung Gyang interview).

Varied crimes became the order of the day in many of the mining camps. In other words the tin mining camps became hideouts for notorious criminals who used them for their operations. A number of crimes that were prevalent in the mining camps with large number of squatters include theft of money of labourers and also theft of tin by mining labourers or squatters who collaborated with security guards on duty to achieve their aim. Adultery and fornication were other crimes that were frequently committed in the mining camps. Those caught in the act were seriously punished by the mining camp headman or reported to the police for prosecution.

Suffice it to conclude that mining camps were built to accommodate the teeming population of labourers who came from far and near. The concentration of the labour force in the mining camps enhanced the production of tin on a large commercial scale. The mining camps grew up to become commercial towns and centres in Beromland. These centres include Sabon-Gida Danyaya in Foron district, Maiadiko in Du district, Sabon-Gida Kanar in Gyel district, and Rim in Riyom district, etc.

## **5.12 THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON POPULATION EXPLOSION IN BEROMLAND**

The establishment of the tin industry necessitated the creation of large labour force that could not be provided by the population of Berom people. The colonial administration and the tin companies used several strategies to recruit labour. Firstly,

labour raids on nearby Nigerian communities were carried out and taxation was introduced. Secondly, free migration to the Jos Plateau mines was encouraged especially in the early 1930s. The 1931 tabulation shows that migrants came from Niger Republic, Borno Province, Chad, Kano, Western Niger, Benue, and Bauchi Province, etc. In the early 1940s, the Colonial State recruited through 'force labour' people from Bauchi, Benue Borno, Kano, Katsina, Niger, Plateau Sokoto and Zaria (Pam Sha 50). The highest number of migrants came from Zaria with 19%, Sokoto with 16.1% and Bauchi with 15.8% and Benue with 12.9%. These migrants settled in Jos and its environs (50).

Apart from the tin industry, the construction of Bauchi-Kafanchan railway in the 1920s for transportation of the tin and columbite required a strong labour force and therefore, both 'free' migrant and force labour were used for this purpose. The growth of commerce also facilitated the growth of settler communities in Jos and other parts of Beromland. Besides this, Jos hosted the seat of government and many private and public sector organisations. This attracted migrants in large numbers to Beromland.

The scenario described above definitely influenced the growth of big villages and towns in Beromland during the mining heydays but were often abandoned when mining activity slowed or halted. The once populated mining communities are now scared lands and with few residents. Tin miners who are willing to continue their stay in Beromland commute to large cities such as Bukuru, Barakin Ladi, Riyom and Jos the capital of Plateau State for employment.

The population explosion made a large number of people to utilise scarce natural resources for survival. This condition led to outbreak of epidemics such as cerebral spinal meningitis that hitherto was not common on the Jos Plateau in general and Beromland in

particular. The large population also gave way to diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, etc. The large settlements in Beromland are in need of new industries to replace the jobs that the tin industry once provided. However, the abandoned mining sites make it nearly impossible for these communities to compete for industry.

The mining camps provided housing to attract and keep their labour force that came from all directions. As some of the tin minefields were located in relatively inaccessible areas and most of their work forces were strangers in Beromland, the provision of housing became a necessity. Another reason for the construction of houses for strangers in the tin mining camps was the poor relationship between the Hausa and Fulani settlers and the Berom host. The former did not want to sleep in the same places with the latter and the Hausa and Fulani strangers regarded their Berom host as *kafirai*, that is, “infidels”.

It is pertinent to note from the onset that the tin mining companies regarded the Jos Plateau minefields as short-lived alluvial field. It is perhaps for this reason the mining companies were reluctant to spend money on substantial structures which would soon be abandoned when the tin in such areas was exhausted and the labourers moved to other places (NAK SNP).

However, the kind of housing that was provided created a lot of sanitary and environmental problems. Housing in the mining camps was to consist of mud huts with thatched roofs and less than ten feet from the ground to the eaves; instead of fifteen feet in-between each hut. During the tin mining heydays by the late 1920s and during world war two and in the middle of the 1950s four to five labourers could be housed in these small huts. This condition led to overcrowding and squatting in the mining camps. The

labour officer at the Bisichi Tin Mining Company Nigeria Ltd. Sabon Gida Danyaya Camp vividly described this condition. He said that, “the total number of dwellings in the camp is approximately 424 and the official number of workers said to be accommodated therein is said to be 750 but even the most conservative estimate would place the actual number at 1,500” (Jacobs 13). Under this kind of congested condition it was sure that various kinds of diseases and epidemics would eventually break up in the mining camps.

### **5.13 DISEASES AND MEDICARE IN THE TIN MINING CAMPS**

The sanitary conditions of many of the tin mining camps were bad. Consequently, the mining camps became breeding grounds for the spread of many lethal diseases and from the mining camps such diseases spread to the larger society. It is therefore not surprising that the various mining camps served as springboards of many of the epidemics of such diseases as *nyara*, smallpox, *vwutut*, that is measles, cerebral-spinal meningitis *snakarau*, etc (Dung Gyang interview).

#### **5.13.1 Nyara: Smallpox.**

Many of the mining camps were attacked by *nyara* w smallpox. *Nyara* became one of the deadliest and most widespread of the epidemics that afflicted the mining camps because smallpox was highly contagious. *Nyara* attacked all categories of people in the various mining camps ranging from children, adults and to old people especially within the 1930s to 1935 (Dung Gyang interview).

#### **5.13.2 Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis**

Although this disease was not common as smallpox, it claimed many lives in many of the mining camps. This disease was contagious just like smallpox, therefore those that were attacked by the disease were isolated. The spread of the disease was

facilitated by lack of proper ventilation in overCrowded rooms in the mining camps (Dung Gyang interview).

### **5.13.3 Vwutut: Measles.**

Measles affected infant mortality in many mining camps. Measles is highly infectious and this may explain why it spread like wild fire from the mining camps into the villages and did a lot of havoc to small children. Other common diseases in the minefields were *jigga* sand flea which immobilised labourers in the mining camps by defecting the feet of many labourers. Although this disease was not as serious as the aforementioned ones, it reached its peak period on the Jos Plateau during the mining heydays as a result of the destruction of the soil. Because of the high number of people that were affected by this epidemic, the mining companies employed special *jigga* pickers who assisted in removing this sand flea from the feet of people that were affected. The spread of *jigga* was attributed to the removal of the topsoil for mining activities and causing dust to settle on the ground thereby creating a favourable environment for the growth of *jigga*.

Other diseases common among adults in the mining camps were venereal diseases, such as gonorrhoea and syphilis. This was largely attributed to the presence of all categories of prostitutes ranging from those who were permanently resident in the mining camps and those that came to the mining camps only on pay-days (Dung Gyang). There were accidents that sometimes occurred as a result of the collapse of paddock walls, which resulted in the permanent disability of the labourers.

#### **5.14 MARKET AND FOOD SUPPLIES IN THE TIN MINING CAMPS**

There were trading settlements attached to big and important mining camps. It is pertinent to note that the Hausa people who came from Katsina, Kano, Jigawa, Borno, Bauchi, etc were in-charge of the trading within the mining camps. It is important to note that some of the Hausa people that were brought to work in the minefields were ex-convicts and this led to criminal activities in the camps. The influx of traders into the mining camps led to population explosion and this in itself was an ecological problem. Mining camps that had no trading centres depended on nearby villages to buy whatever the labourers needed. Some mining camps had slaughter slabs and others did not. For example, Maiadiko mining camp had a slaughter slab, and here, cows and goats were killed and sold at subsidised rates for the mine labourers.

#### **5.15 THE IMPACT OF TIN MINING ON FOREST RESERVES**

Due to the deforestation of the Jos Plateau as a result of tin mining, the Berom had great difficulty in getting firewood and therefore, they were forced to use cow dung and grass as fuel. The removal of the forest cover contributed to soil erosion especially in the hilly areas such as Bachit escarpment.

Pam Tok, Dung Gyang and Kim Gyang in a focus group discussion said that the Berom were placed in a difficult condition as a result of the mining of the tin having lost more than half of their arable land to the mining industry. They were said to have opposed the creation of Communal Forest Areas and the creation of reserves because such forests and reserves reduced still further the limited amount of land available. The second jeopardy was to accept the planting of trees on mining dumps and restored lands and faced the problem of delay of the return of the same lands to agricultural use, which



definitely led to food crisis. In a focus group discussion several questions were raised on the difficult situation caused by the minefields. What could have been the way out of this situation? To create forests and reserves and die with hunger due to lack of land from crop production or to plant trees, forests and reserves and help solve the environmental problem? The Berom faced with these problems abandoned ecological ethics prevalent in their culture and tradition and resign to fate (focus group discussion with Pam Tok, Dung Gyang and Kim Gyang).

### **5.16 BEROM RESPONSE TO TIN MINING**

In chapter seven the thesis was able to demonstrate the rape of Berom land and the ecology given the whole process of the search for tin in Beromland. The search for tin had a holistic impact on Berom ecology. It affected the environment, religion, economy, social and virtually every aspect of Berom life. This condition presented a situation that was not enough for the Berom and all that existed within their environment to live long without the desire to live well.

The question that comes to mind is, can the Berom live long in a devastated environment? If the answer to the above question is no, then how did the Berom respond and are still responding to the phenomenon of the search for tin on their environment and the consequent effect it produced on human beings, plants, animals, the environment, water and other species?

The Berom responded to the search for tin in multiple ways. Some of these ways include the formation of pressure groups and political associations to agitate for the rights of the people. These pressure groups were used to resist the colonial administration desire to resettle the Berom at Sabon Zawan. These associations and pressure groups include the

Berom Progressive Union, Berom Youth Movement, Berom Educational and Cultural Organisation, Berom Women Association and recently Berom Elders Forum.

According to tradition in Beromland, all land belonged to the priest-chief who became so sometimes by right of priority of settlement and the ability to defend his boundaries. No land was taken for mining except with the consent of the chief. However, once the chief distributed land to the extended families it became their collective property, which could not be resold. It is therefore correct to say that among the Berom, land tenure in practice amounted to a lease in property held by the family, which was the economic and social unit. Head of the family regulated the use of land by members of the family (Davies 9).

However, under the stress of 'development' during the colonial period, especially mining of tin, there were changes introduced in land tenure among the Berom that made them increasingly individualised. This led to the breakdown of the concept of family land owned by the whole family as a collective group in favour of the land being held by an individual under a lease in perpetuity. This kind of land tenure amounted to virtually individual ownership, which manifested itself in the 1940s. For example, in Zawan within the 1940s it was proposed that compensation on land should be paid to household members of the family. This led to a rigorous protest that it became necessary to pay each individual farmer separately and this amounted to paying a father and his sons separately (Davies 9). All these changes in the land tenure system were so because of the shortage of land due to mining activities and this made survival difficult making people to become individualistic. The Berom reacted in many ways to this new phenomenon. Some of the

ways include the formation of the following pressure associations with their attendant achievements.

### **5.17 BEROM PROGRESSIVE UNION (BPU)**

Berom political consciousness or awareness occurred immediately after the Second World War in response to the socio-economic and ecological crisis created by the search for tin operations on Berom land. Suffice it to say that they felt very strongly about the continued decimation of their land by mining of tin, which escalated during the Second World War.

The destruction of their crops and the inadequate compensation given to them led to the formation of the Berom Progressive Union in 1946 by some products of the mission schools. For example, it is reported that if a mining company wanted to start work on a lease land and the Berom had already planted crops on that same piece of land and the crops were not yet harvested the mining company may pay the farmer an amount of compensation for the destruction of such crops. The compensation may not be good enough to buy food for him as the yield he would have harvested from the farm (focus group discussion with Davou Gyang, Pam Dung and Bitrus Dachung).

People who originally conceived the idea of Berom Progressive Union (BPU) were Patrick Davou Fom a warder from Kuru, his brother John Fom, a driver from Kuru and a father of Dr. Alex Fom and Laurence Fom another uncle of Dr. Alex Fom. Other members include Patrick Dokotri from Gashish and a worker of Forestry Department, Stephen Ajani a mission schoolteacher from Du, and Choji Tyos from Zawan a treasurer with the Native Authority. Mr Bot Fom from Du who was a headmaster of the Native Authority School at Heipang, Rwang Pam Bogom from Du a headmaster at Riyom and

Frank Adung a nurse from Bokkos were also members of Berom Progressive Union (Ezekiel 73-74).

It is reported that by 1946 the membership of the Berom Progressive Union had reached fifty, consisting of largely members of the Native Authority Employees, the Christian Missions, ex-service men and Berom from areas seriously affected by mining activities. The major aims and objectives of the BPU that was created as response to destruction of Beromland by tin mining were as follows;

The first reason is to promote Berom unity and to unite all Berom villages. The second reason is enlighten the Berom people on their rights so that they can continue to struggle to achieve such rights. Thirdly, to promote the education of Berom youths up to University level by giving scholarship to deserving students. Fourthly, defend Berom interest especially in such matters as land compensation (Ezekiel 74).

From the onset the colonial administration did not take the Berom Progressive Union seriously as they thought it was just another cultural organisation. However, when in 1947, it affiliated itself to National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroon (NCNC), they realised that it was a political party and advised the employees of the Native Authority not to engage in BPU activities (Ezekiel 75). The BPU began to send petitions to the government and agitation about the land question in Beromland. Because of the activities of the BPU, the *Dagwom* and some of his elders prevented the destruction of crops by miners in the farm in what was the first example of direct action against tin mining in Beromland (Ezekiel 75).

The greatest achievement of the BPU was seen in the political networking, which

it adopted, especially as regards the land question in Beromland. This made the colonial authorities aware of the necessity of increasing the rates of land compensation and of restoring land devastated through tin mining operations in Beromland. This was done to defuse what they considered to be potentially dangerous situation, which might make the continuation of mining impossible (NAK JOSPROF Paragraph 20, 2).

#### **5.17.1 Berom Youth Movement (BYM).**

The members of this movement are mainly Berom elite. They had always remained neutral on religious issues, but would prefer to voice out on the negative effects of the tin mining industry on Berom natural environment. This is seen in serious attempts taking by some of them to document the effect of the tin mining industry on the Jos Plateau. Series of lectures had been organised by this youth movement to enlighten the general public on the need to plant trees and gardens to help reactivate the already devastated soil. The campaign on tree planting by the Berom Youth Movement was extended to both primary and secondary school children. The BYM had always called on the government to declare the Jos Plateau a disaster area that needed urgent attention, besides demanding for reclamation of all mining ponds in Beromland. In fact the activities of the BYM had influenced the Government to embark on reclamation activities.

#### **5.17.2 Berom Educational and Cultural Organisation (BECO)**

This Educational and Cultural Organisation was found to serve as an umbrella for fostering Berom unity. The organisation is interested in promoting educational and cultural matters of the Berom. The organisation has been used to speak for the Berom on issues of great importance such as the ecological problems created by search for the tin in Beromland. It has agitated for the reclamation and restoration of mining dumps in

Beromland.

The organisation has also tried its best to see that Berom occupy its rightful position of pride among the many ethnic nationalities in Plateau State and in Nigeria. They had always like the youth movement organised a number of lectures, workshops, and seminars to educate the citizens on the need to plant trees and the need to adopt good farming methods and planting of gardens.

### **5.17.3 Berom Women Association**

The women association from the look of things seem to be more radical and more serious in their activities as it affects their response to the impact of mining on Berom environment. Besides organising lectures, seminars, and workshops for women to educate them on the need of tree planting, members of this association had always taken the pains of travelling to most of the villages for their activities unlike the other unions and organisations that have always held theirs in the city.

Children have always been encouraged by their mothers to sweep the compounds, wash plates and in some cases, to plant trees. They have always mobilized women in Beromland to national tree planting campaigns in the various local governments occupied by them in the state.

## **5.18 NEW ZAWAN RESETTLEMENT SCHEME**

The search for tin became extensive and intensive to the extent that the colonial government started a scheme of resettling the Berom at new Zawan a place that can be located in the present day Sanga Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The scheme to resettle a substantial number of the Berom off the Jos Plateau was partially successful.

This may account for the population of Berom in Sanga Local Government of Kaduna State.

The idea of the resettlement scheme was an attempt by the colonial administration to reduce the pressure on the land in Beromland. This was informed by the fact as reported by the annual report of Jos Division for 1945;

However, intensive conservation measures are undertaken, it is doubtful if the productivity of the soil will ever increase very appreciably unless the land can be restored. Proper fallowing is impossible under present conditions of land shortage and with rapid increasing population the inescapable conclusion, unpalatable though it is, is that a considerable proportion of Berom must ultimately settle elsewhere (NAK JOSPROF).

However, it is pertinent to note that despite the little success recorded by the colonial government at resettling a number of Berom to *Sabon Zawan* that is new Zawan, Berom elders and other Berom Pressure groups resisted further action on the matter. The BPU in conjunction with Berom chiefs and Berom elders threatened to take the matter of resettlement with the governor-general of Nigeria. Before then, the colonial government spoke to the council of chiefs about the resettlement scheme at *Sabon Zawan*, claiming that there was sufficient land in the area to sustain many people. The colonial government therefore urged the council of chiefs and elders to convey the information to people in their respective districts (Ezekiel 73-74).

The response of Berom to the resettlement scheme was further resisted because of the advice of the secretary of Berom Progressive Union. Moses Nyam Kanang was also a member of the House of Representatives and while in the army en route to Burma had

landed at Durban, South Africa where he witnessed how the indigenous people of South Africa had been pushed off their own lands into unfavourable areas. Moses Nyam Kanang then advised the *Begwom* elders not to allow their people resettled since the chiefs would lose them as they would be placed under the Emir of Jema'a. As a result of this advice, the chief of Du and Zawan opposed the resettlement scheme and it became a failure.

### **5.19 THE EMERGENCE OF BEROM PRIVATE MINERS**

Although the rise of Berom private tin miners was as a result of change in the law that enabled Nigerians to hold mining leases and buy and sell tin. But this was a secondary reason, the primary reason being that the people joint the business of tin mining as a response to foreign destruction of their lands. Foreigners were busy making large sums of money on Berom farmlands and the Berom were becoming more impoverished every day. It is pertinent to note that European mining companies largely dominated the modern tin mining industry and they deliberately excluded Berom or African participation in the industry except as labourers.

This may explain why the mining industry in was dominated by a small number of foreign companies by the 1930s. The most important was the A. T. M. N that produced about 50% of all the tin ore on the Jos Plateau mines field. Other companies were the Bisichi Tin Mining Company Nigeria Limited, Gold and Base Metal Company Nigeria Limited, Kaduna Syndicate, Kaduna Prospectors Ltd., etc. (Ezekiel 82).

There were also European companies such as Mr. Floy, Mr. Halley, The Holland Brothers, and The Tollemache Brothers, etc. However between 1940s and 1950s some African miners emerged, many of whom were of southern origin such as C. O. Menta, Ejukorlem who came from Warri, Delta State. Within this period there were also a



significant number of Berom private miners chiefly from Du and Gyel districts. Some of the Berom private miners who responded to the European domination of the mining industry on their lands were D. B. Zang from Gyel, A. M. Dung from Zawau in Du, Toma Jang Davou from Du, and Chuwang Gyang from Shen in Du and Babuje Bot from Du.

The most successful and important among Berom private miners was D. B. Zang who rose from being a mining labourer to being a substantial private miner and contractor. He was able to benefit from his low overheads to compete favourably with some large expatriate mining companies. He acquired quite a number of leases and tin mining camps at different places such as Ropp, Foron, Wamba, Gashis, Udogi, Gyel, etc. Toma Jang Davou another Berom private miner who operated under T. J. Davou and Company Ltd., had his mining lease at Giring. Chuwang Gyang had his mining lease at Foron and Babuje Bot and Chall Pam jointly had their lease at Sika close to Jarawa chiefdom (Ezekiel 82).

Berom private miners and others had virtually ceased mining and this was not unconnected with fundamental problems of Nigeria's tin mining industry. Since the 1940s when the output of concentrates was in the range of 8,000 to 13,000 tons of tin in concentrates, production fell to around 2,7000 tones in 1980 (Ezekiel 82). There was also the problem of lack of new exploration and new investment; this is in addition to labour cost that had risen very high.

## **5.20 ILLEGAL TIN MINING IN BEROMLAND**

There were registered mining companies belonging to both foreigners and a few Berom people as noted above. However illegal tin mining was carried out in some villages in Beromland. The main reasons postulated in favour of illegal tin mining by the

indigenous population was two fold, for social and domestic responsibilities. Informant observed that;

Others and I decided to go into illegal mining to survive because our farmlands had been completely destroyed by this same mining activity. We have no formal western education to gain employment in the Native Authority. The Native Authority police sent to collect tax from us that we must pay or go to jail was also constantly harassing us. Most of us had children and other dependants to cater for and so illegal mining was the only way out for us to survive (Davou Gyang).

The above information shows that tin mining put the Berom under land pressure because of land shortages. It was therefore normal for the Berom to react to these problems negatively or positively. The response of Berom and other people to tin mining activities became more visible after the Second World War; there was a growth in illegal tin mining in Beromland but in a small scale. However, by the 1950s, there was an upsurge of illegal mining that was facilitated by the emergence of private miners whether indigenous or foreign who were ever ready to buy tin from illegal miners, even stolen one. Illegal mining of tin could have arisen due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it could be due to the great depression in the 1930s that affected the entire world economies and the Berom economy was not an exception. Secondly, as a result of the impoverishment of the Berom due to rape of the arable land meant for farming, this condition left many Berom people without any option than to indulge in illegal mining to sustain themselves and families. Thirdly, the invasion of locust within this period devastated the little farm crops and this led to food shortages among many Berom communities. Fourthly, the introduction of money economy led to the introduction of taxation, many Berom could

not pay the taxes introduced by the colonial government, and illegal mining became the way out to secure money to pay tax.

Because of the aforementioned reasons, illegal mining was carried out by all categories of mining labourers including villagers who had little or no knowledge of tin mining. Illegal mining was usually carried out on abandoned mining leases, which had been worked out or on a neglected mining lease.

Illegal miners usually dug wells or pits to see if there was tin. If they discovered the availability of tin in such an area, they would then commence work with a gang of about four to five people. Sometimes they carried out underground mining using candle lights to see their way and to enable them see the location of the tin concentrates in the dark pit or tunnel. A bucket was fastened to a wheel above the tin well with a strong cable to facilitate the winding of the tin from the well. The tin was then transferred using head-pans to a traditional made sluice in a nearby stream or paddock for washing with calabashes (Dung Gyang interview).

Illegal miners stood the risk of being arrested by the Native Authority Police. It is perhaps for this reason that they illegal miners always carried guards with them, whose job was to warn the miners should they sight the police. However, when the illegal miners were taken unawares, it usually led to a quarrel and sometimes fighting with the police and sometimes they were arrested and prosecuted.

Tin stealing was also an illegal act which some company labourers, headmen and even security guards on duty collaborated with thieves to steal at night. They had no problem in selling the tin because most of them were agents of private miners known as 'overseers' who sometimes sponsored illegal miners and even went to the extent of

accompanying them to the minefields to buy tin from them (Dung Gyang interview). It is clear from the above discussion that it was not only Berom people that were into illegal mining but all categories of people in the minefields.

On a general note, illegal mining of tin involved a lot of risks because the illegal miners did not always take adequate safety measures since they were in a hurry for fear of being detected. It is perhaps for this reason that rampant cases of underground mines collapsing and trapping and killing miners were common. Some bodies of these victims were removed while others had the underground mines as their graves (Dung Gyang interview).

The activities of illegal mining would have been reduced if reclamation of mining ponds were carried immediately the mining company was through with a particular pond. Secondly, the number of lives that were lost as a result of the collapse of the underground walls would have been avoided. Thirdly, a number of accidental deaths of both human beings and animals that sometimes fell into abandoned mined ponds would have been avoided. Because these precautions were not in place illegal mining thrived and it helped in increasing the ecological problems.

## **5.21 OTHER FACTORS THAT AFFECTED BEROM RELIGION AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS**

Changes that occurred in Berom religion and ecology both positive and negative came from different factors. The thesis had already discussed non-religious causes of change and the impact it created on Berom religion and culture in this chapter. The main factor here was the human factor of tin mining, which led to series of changes in Berom religion and ecology.

It is therefore pertinent to accept from the onset that several factors attributed to the changes that occurred in Berom religion and ecology. Although the causes of religious and ecological change were many and varied, they can be grouped into two broad categories-religious and non-religious factors.

Religious factors here refer to impulses to change generated by religious convictions and activities due to contact between Berom religion and world religions such as Christianity and Islam. It is perhaps for this reason that one can accept missionary work, the appeal and way of life of different religious systems of reformation, conversion, and/or syncretism all in different ways brought about religious change (Metuh xi). It is important to note that colonial activities in Beromland came with education and modernisation. Educational and health services were introduced in Beromland following the introduction of colonialism. All of these factors led to changes in Berom religion and ecology. For example, Western education which appeared as a means to achieve an elite status in the new social order played an important role in spreading apathy towards traditional beliefs and values, and promoted Christianity and Islam as well (Metuh xi).

The issues addressed in this section of the thesis are, those of religious and ecological change in Beromland due to missionary activities of two major world religions-Christianity and Islam. The impact created by colonialism and modernity on Berom religion and culture and the role played by colonialism and modernity which caused changes in Berom religion and ecology were both inimical and ecological friendly to Berom religion and culture.

## **5.22 BRIEF HISTORY OF FOREIGN RELIGIONS- CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM ON BEROM RELIGION AND ECOLOGY**

The purpose of this section of the thesis was to briefly tell how Christianity and Islam came into Beromland. It is not to discuss in detail the history of Christianity in Beromland, because this has already been done (Zi 66-90, Kwon 18-21). The discovery of tin on the Jos Plateau in general and in Beromland in particular prompted the conquest of the area between 1904 and 1906 to 1911 (Peter Gai 24). Following the conquest of the Jos Plateau societies and Beromland by the colonial government an attractive atmosphere of peace was created. This peace facilitated the coming of different Christian missions into the northern part of Nigeria within the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These Christian missions include the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) or the Sudan Missionum ad-Afros (SMA) in 1907, Protestant Movement (PM), Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) from 1899-1906 onwards and Sudan United Mission (SUM) from 1904.

The dominant of all the above missions in Beromland was the SUM. The major thing that prompted the drive for evangelism was the fear that Islam would spread to these 'pagan' areas and deny them the good news of Jesus Christ (The Light Bearers Magazine 58). Consequently, the major aim of these missions was the evangelisation of all the so called "pagan" tribes in the Sudan, including the Berom. This was to give way to an African church that would be self-supporting, self-propagating and self-governing. In view of the urgent need for checkmating the spread of the Islam, the SUM mission advocated the establishment of at least a strong station in every large ethnic group right across the continent from the east to the west.

The history of Christianity in Beromland is therefore traced to the Sudan United Mission (SUM) who first started work in Nigeria in 1904 when Sir Fredrick (later Lord Lugard) diverted Dr. Karl W. Kumm, Dr. A. H. Bateman, Mr. J. Maxwell Lowry and A. Burt to Wase. In the late 1904, the first mission station was built in the shadow of the great Wase rock (Danfulani 5).

In Beromland the work first started at Zawan with sub-station at Gyel by 1907, but as a result of the unpleasant experiences the Berom went through as a result of the British conquest, the people of Gyel refused to give Mr. Grey who was the resident missionary in Gyel any support. The SUM also established an out station in Bukuru in 1907. In 1910, the Gyel mission station was closed down and the SUM missionaries then moved to Du where they were also rejected. The missionary Mr. Suffil who was popularly known as *Dalo*, that is, “father of the house”, among the Berom, concluded that Zobot in Foron district would be the mission base for operation. Zobot then became the headquarters of the SUM in Beromland. It is from here that the missionaries agreed to establish Vom Christian Hospital in 1923 with Dr. Branden as its Medical Director. From Zobot the gospel of Jesus Christ spread to other parts of Beromland (focus group discussion with Dusu Lodam, Chatong Dung and Toma Tok Bot). Among the early converts to Christianity in Beromland and who were later used by the SUM as agents were Da Toma Tok Bot, Da Dusu Gyang, Da Pam Deme, Ngo Tiri (the first woman to accept Christianity in 1922), Neng Chatong Dung and Nvou Dusu among many others. By 1938, the first Berom Pastor was ordained in the person of Da Toma Tok. He graduated from Gindiri Pastors’ College with two other colleagues (Revd David O.V. Lot of Panyam and

Baba Bali of Langtang) as the first ordained indigenous ministers of the SUM. This marked the spread of Christianity to other parts of Beromland

The propagation of Islam in Beromland seems to have been resisted by the people with all seriousness. For this reason Islam had little impact on the socio-religious and cultural life of Berom people. H. D. Gunn captures the attitude of the Berom towards Islam when he said that;

Biom a small but political prominent heterogeneous people on the Jos Plateau, Nigeria of about 60,000 in population in many respects representative of societies that comprises Nigeria's pagan's middle belt. Naked hill people and subsistence farmers, Biom were nonetheless unmatched horsemen, and defended themselves successful against the Muslim Hausa and Fulani slaves raiders through the 19<sup>th</sup> century...Biom came at length to serve as a model among local people with similar cultural tradition both those that, like Biom had resisted and those that had submitted to Muslim States before the advent of the British (75-76).

Furthermore, the Muslims did not have any great influence on the people of Jos until the advent of Christianity. According to Ames, "contrary to what is often asserted, it would seem that these Muslims have not so far converted any appreciable number of adherents of traditional religions, despite the fact that their ranks include a number of returned ex-slaves who adopted the Muslim faith during their enforced exile" (309). C. G. Ames and many other scholars had observed that people drifted into Islam for economic and social status.<sup>2</sup>

Danfulani and Fwatshak had expressed similar views, adding that the few indigenous persons who embraced Islam in the early stages did so because of their quest



for a certain social status and, by implication, economic and political gains, which they imagined they would acquire by so doing (101).

Jacobs reiterated this same point when he said that, “apart from the Tiv, the Berom were probably the most consistent supporters of a Middle Belt State, and this can be seen as a reaction to the fear of Hausa domination and spread of Islam” (J234). From the observations of H. D. Gunn and Charles C. Jacobs showed the fact that the Berom stood against the domination of the Hausa and Fulani and the spread of Islam in Beromland. Perhaps this explains the low influence of Islam in Beromland till today.

However, there are a few Berom who because of one reason or the other have accepted Islam despite the resistance they put against the spread of the religion. It is pertinent to note that Berom that have accepted Islam seems to have completely lost their Berom identity except perhaps for those of them that continue to reside in Beromland. Berom who accepted Islam adopted Hausa or Islamic names, Hausa dresses and culture. It is therefore obvious that Islam failed to create any impact on Berom religion and culture. The question that easily comes to mind therefore is to what extent Christianity and Islam affect Berom religion and ecological ethics?

### **5.23 THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM ON BEROM RELIGION AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS**

There is no doubt that the advent of Christianity and Islam produced some negative impact on Berom religion and ecology. This gave birth to change of attitude, beliefs and other practices that hitherto considered the environment as a sacred living being. Traditional religious symbols sacred places of religious worship such as *mado*

shrine, *not* shrine, *gufwagachik* shrine etc, provided by nature were either destroyed or disregarded as a result of the impact of these religions.

The reception of Christianity and Islam produced a new vision on the Berom mind on life and his treatment of nature and the environment. Sacred places which were mostly rocks, forests, rivers, animals, trees, rocks, hills, swamps, mountains, etc, were no longer revered as sacred places. This was because the new religions thought the Berom that nature could be effectively utilised as a free gift from the Supreme Being without first having to perform certain traditional religious and cultural ceremonies, rites and rituals before its use. This new vision affected the ecological ethics that hitherto guided the practice of Berom religion and culture.

It was Michael Crowder who once said concerning the attitudes of Europeans and missionaries when they first came to Africa that;

When they came to Africa they quickly came to the conclusion that there was nothing good in indigenous religions. Almost from the start they condemned the indigenous religions in all their aspects, and require African conversion not only to a new religion but also to a completely new way of life (25).

The above statement is true of missionaries in Beromland and this may explain why missionaries insisted on a total turn from Berom way of life to that of the new found faith-Christianity. Therefore, as Christianity came into contact with Berom religion, the new faith appeared to be claiming more and more members from the indigenous religion. Some adherents of Berom religion now felt that their religion was under threat and decided to put some resistance to the onslaught of Christianity, but this was not successful.

This led to the destruction of many rituals in Berom religion that were ecological friendly. Those who accepted Christianity were barred from attending the ancestral rituals, the annual traditional rituals such as *vwana*, *nshok*, *mandyieng*, *badu*, etc, which were ecological rituals.

Christianity introduced a new mentality on the minds of the Berom. Salvation was to be achieved by believing in the Son of God Jesus Christ. Only God was holy and the people must strive to be holy as God. The holiness of nature was drastically eroded. The traditional attitude of Berom to nature in which nature was considered as a gift from *Dagwi* God for the benefit humankind was affected. People no longer considered certain animals, plants, rocks, mountains, rivers, etc, as sacred and therefore must be protected. The Berom traditional attitude that saw nature and the environment as alive and its powers distinguished as personal because human beings had directly experienced them was changed.

The most institutionalised forms of human beings kinship with nature and the environment as found among traditional Berom people which could be compared to that of the Shinto's where "a powerful sense of the presence of gods and spirits exist in nature", was substituted with the belief in one God.

In terms of religious significance, the traditional Berom person regarded nature and the environment second to nothing. This was due to the fact that it was through nature and the environment that the Berom performed almost all religious rites and rituals. For example, nature and environment provided for religious places of worship and the objects used in worship. It is for this reason that any disruption of the holistic functioning of the environment was considered detrimental to the progress and development of the society.

This explain why the Berom believed that only through confession of ecological destruction (which is tantamount to sin) could the gods, spirits, ancestors ward off their wrath against individuals, groups and the community. Christianity stood against this belief because it taught that only God had the power to forgive whatever wrong committed by human beings and not spirits and some gods found in nature.

The Berom confessed any crime committed against the environment. For example, the confessed ecological offences that dealt with chopping down of trees (destruction of nature). Offences like grazing in sacred rivers, land, mountains, etc, were also confessed to avoid punishment by the spirits. These beliefs changed with the introduction of Christianity. Nature such as rivers, trees, forests, mountains, etc, were no longer considered sacred. Besides this, every sin was confessed to God and no one else.

Christianity discouraged the idea that spiritual power and knowledge of nature and the environment could influence the answering of a devotee prayer. This belief as held by the traditional Berom led to the respect and protection the Berom had for the environment and therefore protected it for this purpose. On the contrary, for the Berom Christian, if prayers did not generate results, the supplicant was not assumed to be lacking in spiritual power and knowledge of nature of his or her immediate environment, rather the supplicant had not asked rightly or that God could answer at His appointed time.

Because of this drastic change of attitude of the Berom due to the influence of Christianity on Berom religion Berom who accepted Christianity no longer respected the sacred lands. They acquired them to built churches and residential homes. A recent field study shows that about fifty sacred places were used to build churches, schools, hospitals and residential homes of Pastors, Reverend Fathers, missionaries and other church

workers. Examples of such sacred places that were affected are the three sacred stones in Chwelnyap where Church of Christ in Nigeria is built. Others are Chuni in Vwang where Vom Christian Hospital is built. This sacred land also hosts Church of Christ in Nigeria and a Government Secondary School. Mado sacred place has several residential houses, hospitals, schools, etc. Chwel-Tya sacred land has St. Matthew Catholic Church Vwang. Dagashot sacred space has two Churches built there (Church of Christ in Nigeria and Roman Catholic Church). In Chwel Turu sacred place, Roman Catholic Primary School is built there. Christianity taught that these sacred places do not really mean anything.

#### **5.24 THE IMPACT OF WESTERN EDUCATION ON BEROM RELIGION AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS**

The introduction of Colonialism came with western education into Beromland. The colonial government needed interpreters and people that would help them in governance as such they introduced schools to help get the personnel. Western education was also introduced into Beromland by the different missions that came to Beromland. This led to the creation of schools such as the College of Saint Joseph Vom, Saint John Vianey Seminary Barakin Ladi, etc. The introduction of education by missionaries and colonial government created a serious impact on Berom religion and ecological ethics. This is because western education eroded some traditional Berom values.

Western education created a new consciousness in the minds of many Berom youths. The youths no longer respected the old tradition of their fathers. A new worldview was in their minds and this made them see some of the things that their parents did as archaic. Beautiful rock formations, forests, mountains, rivers, and animals that were considered sacred were now disregarded by the youths who saw such places as relaxation

spots rather than sacred places. This eroded the respect that was attached to these places as such these places were sometimes destroyed in the name of picnics.

## **5.25 THE IMPACT OF MODERNITY ON BEROM RELIGION AND ECOLOGICAL ETHICS**

Berom traditional society was a homogenous society as they people shared the same religion, cultural and social norms that integrated them together. Modernity led to the introduction of science and technology growth and development. The once homogenous society bound by common cultural traits became complex and heterogeneous.

These modern changes induced by the colonial activity and colonial government influenced Berom settlement patterns, vernacular, architecture, migration from hill tops, hill sides, and caves, where there existed direct contact between the people and nature to accessible plain sites. This process which started around the 1920s continued unabated, and by the middle of the 1970s many Berom old settlements had been abandoned for the cities and congested places (Dung-Gwom 198).

Yakubu Pam subscribed to Dung-Gwom's assertion when he stated that Berom architecture has changed from a cluster of round thatch roofed huts to zinc roofed houses. Beside this, the traditional custom of fencing compounds with cactus hedges has given way to tall block fences and back wires (86).

Modernity came with the introduction of many social amenities such as modern roads, hospitals, schools, markets, hospitals, railway lines, airports, etc. Some of these social amenities were constructed on sacred places. In order words, modernity has led to the decimation of some religious places and ritual materials in Beromland. For example, the present Vom Christian Hospital and a market are built on Chuni sacred place. The

sacred place also hosts a Church, a football field and many modern houses. Presently the Vom-Manchok federal high way passed through this sacred place. This high way also passed through Dakuchi sacred place in Chugwi –Vwang in Jos South Local Government.

The Kuru quarry farm is located on a sacred place called Dakun-chi. This once beautiful rock formation has today become an eyesore due to modernity. *Mado* sacred place has lost its importance due to modernity. The ritual materials that were present in this sacred place are no longer there. For example, there are no more bamboo trees in this place again. Even the red sacred ochre has drastically reduced. Most of the animals that populated this sacred place have also disappeared as a result of modern buildings and constructions of houses and roads.

The above condition has greatly eroded Berom ecological ethics giving way to ecological disharmony and chaos in Beromland. The environment in these areas is no longer considered important, rather what seems to be important now is the structure on the environment. Because of modernity, people now consider Berom traditional belief, which consider the environment a sacred being as “primitive”.

From the above discussion it is clear that the present ecological crisis in Beromland was aggravated through the introduction of new religious worldview, western education and modernity. These factors eroded Berom traditional worldview which was ecological friendly by decimating some of the religious and cultural symbols that promoted the hitherto general conception of the ecology as a sacred being that must not be injured.

## **5.26 PATTERN OF ECO-SALVAGE OPERATIONS**

The Jos Plateau in general and Beromland in particular is threatened by the dangers posed by the reckless treatment of the environment that is now threatening the

survival of the human species. It is also threatening the eco-system, and the common natural properties and resources on which human beings depend. Policy measures are required in the area of legislation to save and protect the environment, to enforce basic environmental standards, to enhance fundamental human rights and the initiation and execution of programs and projects that promote sustainability.

Recent events on the environment have shown that we are in a period of transformation on earth. Never before have we had so much information about the condition of the world around us. Unfortunately, what we know is frightening and deeply unsettling, while the changes that need to occur to heal the earth seem monumental and overwhelming. From what we have said in chapter six through chapter eight of this thesis, the decimation of the environment, the killing of wildlife, the destruction of rivers, rocks, mountains, and the over population of the towns, among other factors, demonstrate that we have created a massive problem on the Jos Plateau.

This is because Berom environment has over the years since the introduction of the black gold mining industry in 1902 till today, been devastated. This situation has robbed the Berom people of the land that provided them with the opportunity to practice their religion and other worthwhile ventures. This has created the problem of gross imbalance and inadequacy in land for the mass population. The situation has become problematic because the bulk of the population of the Berom was involved in subsistent agriculture, depending on the land as peasant farmers. The black gold industry destroyed Berom environment making it difficult to sustain the relationships that existed between them and the environment. This is because traditional religious places of significance provided by the natural environment have been devastated. For example, shrines,



pilgrimage spots, religious monuments and worship centres have been destroyed. The abandoned mining ponds have served as dead traps for both human beings and animals.

The advent of some instruments of change such as Christianity, Islam, western education and modernity also produced some negative effects on nature and the environment of the Berom as these factors helped in no small measure to erode the ecological ethics prevalent in Berom religion and culture. This has given birth to subsequent change of attitude, belief and other practices that hitherto considered the environment as a sacred living being. Traditional religious symbols, sacred places and other places provided by nature and the environment were either destroyed or disregarded. This helped in eroding ecological principles of the Berom and worsened the ecological problems that have set in due to the rape of nature and environment through tin mining.

The ecological problems caused by tin mining in Beromland made it important for peoples of different cultures, nations and religious traditions to reflect critically on the paths we have trodden, the risks we have taken and the prospect of our future generation. There is therefore the need to address the present ecological crisis on the Jos Plateau in general and Beromland in particular by redirecting our energies and resources to start a healing process that would redeem the beautiful and ecological friendly Berom society.

### **5.27 THE PROCESS OF HEALING THE BEROM ENVIRONMENT**

The present ecological crisis needs a holistic approach to curb it. The business of creating an eco-sensitive environment is the duty of all disciplines. Religious, cultural, political, and economic practices of communities can be adopted as a blue print to start a process of healing of the rape of the environment that has occurred and is still going on in Beromland. It is pertinent to note that the environment is still being devastated today due

largely to illegal black gold mining activities. The mining of kaolin is also going on in large scale especially around Kuru, Gashish and Barakin Ladi. This also has devastating effect on nature and the environment.

However, considering the benefits of the black gold and other mineral resources and their converse adverse implications, it is not justifiable to totally eradicate mining activities completely; rather we should find ways of mitigating the impact of mining of whatever kind on the immediate communities.

#### **5.27.1 Reclamation.**

The colonial government at a time when land devastation had reached its peak carried out reclamation of derelict land caused by the search for black gold in Beromland. During self-rule, reclamation was carried out by successive administrations on the Jos Plateau and in Beromland in particular. It is therefore pertinent to note that land in Berom society that was used and is still being used for the mining of either black gold or any other mineral is passing or has hitherto passed through a cycle of land users. This can generally be summarised as the exploitation of virgin land for black gold or other particular minerals such as columbite and kaolin; abandonment of the land and subsequent dereliction, and after an interval of decades, the treatment of the derelict land to suit for some productive use. Reclamation entails returning derelict sites to some gainful use. It is imperative to reclaim mining ponds, dams or abandoned mining sites in Beromland. The process of doing so may entail restoration, rehabilitation, after treatment, after care, after use and special treatment for redeployment (Adams 5). For clarity, the terms, restoration, after-treatment, after-care, after use and special treatment for redevelopment needs further explanation.

Restoration means the whole complex of operations that follow the extraction of minerals up to the time at which the land is fully established once more in an acceptable environmental condition. It includes removal of buildings and plant, and after treatment of the land. When restored, the area can either be suited to its old use, or be subject to special treatment for redeployment (Adams 6). What is meant by after treatment on the other hand is a process of healing of the land after mineral extraction by filling, contouring, grassing the topsoil, and seeding. This is carried out in order to return the land to an acceptable condition fit for further use. Care of the land after mining, which is sometimes called “after care”, is important because it enables people to manage the derelict land. This is to ensure that its restored condition is maintained; for example, for agricultural cultivation and drainage. The concept of “after-use” entails the use to which the rehabilitated, after-treated, after-care land is put, whether it is the old use or a new use. Special treatment for development is used here as a supplement to after treatment, because after this condition has been established, extra work may be carried out on the land for some uses, such as public parks, golf courses, leisure and spots (Spellerberg 12).

#### **5.27.2 The Nigerian Laws on Mining.**

Legislation guiding mining activities during the colonial era was not strictly applied concerning the mining of black gold in Beromland. This was due to the fact that the colonial government was determined to make profit in the exploration of black gold rather than being cautious of the environmental implication of mining. Plateau State Government must insure that it strictly applies this law in order to reduce the environmental hazard that any form of mining may cause to the environment. This is because the law has a role in controlling and regulating the negative mining impact of

mining activities in Plateau State. Therefore, enforcement of relevant mining and environmental laws will go a long way in mitigating negative mining impact. Mining companies must therefore strictly adopt laws such as the Mineral Oils Safety Regulations, the 1963 Environmental Impact Assessment Decree, number 86 of 1992, the Federal Environmental Protection Agency Decree of 1998, and the Mineral Act (Cap121) of 1946. If all these mining laws are properly applied and enforced, they will definitely mitigate the impact of mining in Beromland and Plateau State in general. To achieve this, public awareness, public participation and information gathering are vital ingredients of ensuring compliance with environmental laws and therefore can enhance mitigation process of mining impact (Sani Adams 5).

Illegal mining is today causing environmental problems just as it did during the black gold mining heydays. Policy-makers in the state must make policies to check the wanton act of illegal mining in Plateau State and also make efforts to regulate the activity of formal miners. Informal or illegal miners are individuals, groups or companies who invade mineral areas in Beromland without any rights or legal backing to illegally indulge in mineral prospecting and mining. The Plateau State Environmental Protection Agency created in 1994 is charged with the protection of the environment. There is the need for this agency to come out with sound policies to augment the functions of the recently created Ministry for the Environment in the protection of the environment in Plateau State in general and Beromland in particular. The National Policy on Solid Minerals 1999 should be adopted as a blue print in this regard (PEPSA 13).

### **5.27.3 Introduction of Eco-Tourism.**

The year 2002 was declared International Year of Ecotourism (IYE) by the United Nations (UN). This was to promote greater co-operation for ensuring that ecotourism contributes to socio-economic and environment conservation. Ecotourism as a form of leisure and travel represents the happy face of tourism as it helps to create wealth in poor regions and contribute to lighten the burden of most heavily indebted developing nations. Ecotourism should therefore be encouraged as a pattern of eco-salvage operation in Beromland.

One may have been told stories about the daily drama of elephants, tortoise or other animals in their natural habitat on the Jos Plateau. In fact a number of old Berom tales, folk stories, legends and myths used a great deal of these animal metaphors. Travel to natural areas becomes imperative with the main purpose of experiencing the scenic attraction and well managed natural environment and cultural heritage of areas still having a large number of such wildlife. If this is encouraged in Beromland it will help to encourage the people to protect the small number of animals that are left in the land because majority of wildlife in Beromland was destroyed following the search for tin in the area.

Ecotourism as an activity that originated from social, economic and environmental concern is about nature and outdoor tourism, which includes all forms of activity in natural surroundings with the prime objective of observing and appreciating natural and related cultural features and a strong conservation and environmental education should be encouraged. Ecotourism, which is the desire to make parks provide leisure activities through game viewing, should be encouraged. Ideally, parks are to protect the fauna and

flora in their natural habitat and environment, but this is not so in Beromland because of the search for black gold. The taste for bush meat is high among Berom and other Jos Plateau ethnic groups make pass time and leisure activities, such as illegal hunting very common. Animals such as hare, antelopes, carnivores and primates are the easy targets and this discourages ecotourism.

#### **5.27.4 Local Efforts at Controlling Desertification.**

Desertification has caused annual loses of land in Beromland due to the devastation of the land by mining activities. Although more money is needed to curb it, a more successful attempt to control desertification giving the impoverished nature of the Berom is adopting cheap, local and small scale methods which should be run by those personally affected. The technical solutions of desertification such as reforestation, improved farming techniques and better land use are well known and should be applied.

As a pattern of eco-salvage operation of desertification on the Jos Plateau in general and Beromland in particular, the following stand as remedies. There should be better farming systems, and end to over grazing and over cropping, sand dune fixation, the erection of wind breaks and shelter belts, reforestation and improved soil and water conservation. The traditional methods of terracing on the Jos Plateau in stony areas and on mountain slopes should be revived.

#### **5.27.5 General Concern for the Environment.**

The exploitation of the resources of the environment must be informed by a sense of belonging and responsibility to preserve the environment for future generations that also have equal claim and stake to the resources of our common heritage, the environment. Therefore, concrete measures should be adopted to achieve this. For

example, a lot of conferences, workshops, practical projects on agricultural developments, and skill acquisition on environmental management techniques should be applied to curb the present eco-crisis in Beromland.

For a proper eco-salvage operation, water pollution and sanitation, and waste management should be effectively carried out. Domestic waste has become a serious problem in Beromland in particular and Plateau State in general. To help curb this, there is need to create awareness, providing information on the dangers and hazards of improper waste management. After this has been done, there is the need for the provision of incinerators and dumpsites to help control waste.

The problem of artificial ponds could be handled positively if the private sector is lobbied to come and invest in them. Some of these artificial mining ponds that have become death traps for both human beings and animal life alike could be harnessed into profitable business ventures if some money is invested in them. They could be dredged and harnessed into fisheries, both for consumption and research purposes. They could be turned into holiday resorts and relaxation spots if hotels are built around them. The artificial lakes should be turned into swimming pools and boating lakes with powerful motor boats or the local canoe as has been done in the Plateau Resort Centre, in the Rayfield suburbs of Jos.

A lot of enlightenment programmes for the populace are essential so that the gains of environmental resources are appreciated. These could be achieved through the production and presentation of jingles, documentaries, dramas, workshops and seminars, film shows, posters, and advertisements in both print and electronic media among other strategies.

As a pattern of eco-salvage operation of the present environmental crisis, adequate and proper financing of research institutions working on environmental conservation, protection and technology development must be adopted. There should be a development of effective and efficient database for information collection and processing of all environmental issues. Modern information collection and processing on the state of the environment, past, present and future should be pursued. Environmental education should be included in the curricular of primary and secondary schools and be made compulsory subjects at all levels. Every school child should be encouraged to plant a tree, give it a pet name and nurse it till s/he graduates from primary or secondary school. Schools should have conservation sites and communities should have community forests. Ecological funds must be properly channelled into addressing purely environmental issues.

As a way out, there is the urgent need for the creation of the Jos Plateau Area Development Commission (JOSPADEC). When created, the commission should concentrate on rehabilitating areas that have experienced great mining and natural ecological damage on the Jos Plateau in general and Beromland in particular. This can be achieved through a thorough and careful mapping out of affected areas, while a programme of rehabilitation is drawn out and pursued in an integrated manner. We are aware that such rehabilitation work is tedious, and both time and money consuming. The outcome will however be very rewarding indeed.



### NOTES ON CHAPTER FIVE

1. The observations made by Loy David are not a direct reference to the Jos Plateau situation. It however, seem to depict the extent to which the tin mining industry affected land in Berom society. In this article Loy pointed out that religion and ecology have something in common, both deal with ethical values. Loy however, saw religion from a functionalist perspective, for this reason he saw religion as economics. For economic reasons land is commoditized and because of this, the environment is affected leading to ecological crisis.
2. Danfulani, Umar Habila Dadem and Sati U. Fwatshak, "Briefing: the September 2001, Events in Jos, Nigeria." London: *African Affairs, Royal African Society*, 2002. These authors further noted that conversion to Islam was associated to materialism which was a popular theme that has been elsewhere highlighted by writers on Muslim-Christian relations such as Matthew Hassan Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power*. Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 1993. Pat Williams and Toyin Falola, *Religious Impact in the Nation-State: The Nigerian Predicament-The Making of Modern Africa, Series*. Aldershot Brookfield, USA, Avebury Publications, 1995. Matthew Hassan Kukah and Toyin Falola, *Religious Militancy and Self Assertion: Islam and Politics in Nigeria- The Making of Modern Africa, Series*. Aldershot Brookfield, USA, Avebury Publications, 1996. John N. Paden, *Ahmadu Bello, Sardauna of Sokoto: Values and Leadership in Nigeria*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986. John N. Paden, *Religion and Politics in Kano*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. Elizabeth Isichei (ed.) *Studies in the History of Plateau, Nigeria*, London: Macmillan, 1982. Monday Y.

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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

#### **6.1 SUMMARY**

The thesis began with an introduction, which was followed by a discussion on the research proposal and literature review. The thesis went further to discuss a profile of the Berom. Here we concentrated on the migration patterns of the Berom to the Jos Plateau. Scholars have suggested four migration theories. This was followed with a discussion on the environment and we established that the Berom environment was eco-friendly with trees, carpet-like grasses and a great number of wildlife species. The economy of the Berom was sustained with the production of several food crops and animal keeping.

Furthermore the thesis discussed Berom worldview. Here emphasis was laid on the peculiarity of Berom worldview from other African worldviews especially with regards to nature and the environment. The religious worldview of the Berom shows their understanding of land as a living being as held in their religious imagination.

The thesis went further to discuss altars and shrines in Berom religious cosmology. Here, we found out that there were families, clan and community altars meant for different purposes. These shrines and altars helped in promoting Berom ecological ethics as rituals that were performed were meant to protect the environment.

However, the environmental ethics that was created as a result of the rituals performed in the various altars and shrines were short-lived due to the advent of the black gold or tin mining industry. The search for and mining of the black gold devastated the Berom environment so much that it shattered the eco-ethics that hitherto existed in the practice of Berom Religion and culture. The phenomenon of mining also affected

virtually every aspect of human endeavour as it eroded ecological principles relating to economic, social, religious and political life of the Berom

However, the tin mining industry came with other forces of change such as Christianity and Islam, western education and modernity. These factors also eroded certain aspects of Berom Religion and culture that were ecological friendly, thereby compounding the ecological problem that had been introduced by mining activities.

Berom responded vehemently to the ravaging situation of mining by forming pressure groups and associations. This led to the formation of the Berom Progressive Union (BPU) and other associations such as the Berom Youth Movement (BYM), Berom Women Association (BWA) and Berom Educational and Cultural Organisation (BECO). All these pressure groups and organizations were meant to help the Berom fight for their rights especially in the case of land alienation. It was the activities of such pressure groups and organizations that stopped the resettlement plan of the colonial government, which would have taken the Berom off their fatherland.

The scenario presented above calls for concern from all, and that is why the thesis concluded by discussing empirical patterns towards a successful ecological salvage operation in Beromland. The discussions here were centred on ways the devastated environment can be put into use or be repaired to save Beromland from total ruination.

The conclusion of the thesis is that all and sundry must come together to fight the monster of ecological hazard that has been created as a result of human activity in the search for black gold on the Jos Plateau. There is the need for meaningful development in Beromland and among its neighbours like the Anaguta, Rukuba (Bache, Kiche or Che), Buji and Irigwe, etc. Therefore, there is need for setting in motion machinery that will

lead to a healing process that would lead to sustainable development sustainable development through cultivating an eco-religious ethics on the Jos Plateau.

## **6.2 CONCLUSION**

The heydays of the search for black gold has come and gone. We are left with a serious ecological problem that is threatening human survival on the Jos Plateau. Today, illegal mining is going on in many parts of Beromland by Berom and other ethnic nationalities. Illegal mining is even carried out by companies who have not been legally registered or licensed to do so. Kaolin and columbite are also being mined in Beromland. Government and non-governmental organisations and all Berom registered organisations must ensure that the mistake of the past is not repeated. Therefore, any mining activity that is currently going on the Jos Plateau should strictly observe all mining laws and regulations.

The researcher therefore submitted that the state government and people of Plateau State, together with the Federal Government at the national level all have a part to play in the conservation and restoration of the Jos Plateau environment which has been hard hit by black gold mining activities. Plateau State is known for its scenic beauty. The artificial ponds and hills left behind from the search of black gold could be reclaimed in order to enhance the presence of beautiful mountain peaks, rolling plains, cascading waterfalls and aesthetic rock formations, all which combine together to bring out the scenic beauty of Plateau State.

## **6.3 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

This work has contributed to knowledge in many ways. It is the first of its kind among the Berom that many scholars have ventured into the history of mining activities

in their land, where they have concentrated on the impact of mining in other spheres of human endeavour, neglecting one important aspect religion and ecology. The present work, therefore, has broken with the past trends by focusing on religion and ecology which is an important aspect of human existence. This work demonstrated that the present ecological crisis in Berom society needs a holistic approach to curb it; and that religious and cultural practices can and should be adopted as blueprints to address the present ecological crisis.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

#### ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

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## APPENDIX II

## PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

S/N	Name	Rank/Occupation	Age	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
1	Kyong Toh	Diviner/Medicine Man	62	Mere of Rahoss in Riyom	12/May/1995
2	Bara Lomak Gyem		76	Laranto, Jos North	25/December/1997
Note: Bara Lomak Gyem is not a member of the ritual family of Mado shrine but claimed to have been a family friend of many members of the ritual family of Choji Von Dele who took charge of the Mado shrine.					
3	Da Seleh Manjei	District Head of Kabong	74	Kabong Village	23/October/1997
4	Dung Chuwang	Elder	67	Zawan, Jos South	27/December/1997
5	Dung Dazong	Elder	63	Kazong in Du, Jos South	23/July/1997
6	Dung Gyang	Elder	69	Bisichi, Barakin Ladi	12/April/1997
7	Gyang Chollom	Elder	67	Kura Falls, Barakin Ladi	23/June/1996
8	Gyang Chuwang	Member, Mado ritual family shrine, linked to Ti, red sacred or ritual ochre	76	Du, Jos South	12/December/1997
9	Gyang Gadu	District Head	60	Kwogo Village of Riyom LGA	12/July/1996
10	Gyang Pam	Elder	67	Gyel, Jos South	13/May/1996
11	Davou Gyang	Elder	71	Gyel, Jos South	13/May/1996
12	Lakadang Dung	Elder	67	Kwang Village of Du District	26/March/1996
13	Mwavwang Davou	Famer	80	Vwang Fwol	13/May/1996
14	Pwol Dalyop	Famer	75	Chigwi-vwang, Jos South LGA	13/May/1996
15	Nyam Dung	Elder	65	Shen, Jos South LGA	11/December/1997
16	Pam Chungyang	Elder	67	Shen, Jos South LGA	17/March/1997
17	Pam Rapp	Elder	78	Kabong, Jos	17/March/1996

				North LGA	
18	Pam Shut	Elder	65	Kapis of Foron District, Barakin Ladi LGA	30/April/1996
19	Pam Tok	Elder	60	Chwelnyap, Jos North LGA	12/May/1996
20	Gyang Kim	Elder	58	Chwelnyap, Jos North LGA	12/May/1996
21	Pwajok Gyang	Du Ritual family	48	Du, Jos South LGA	12/March/1996
22	Rwang Kim	Member of ruling family	68	Du, Jos South LGA	12/April/1996
23	Tok Seleh	Business man	56	Vwang, Jos South LGA	11/June/1996

**APPENDIX III**  
**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

S/N	Name	Age	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
1	Dung Jok	67	Riyom Town	15/March/1997
	Kweng Bok	75		
	Sanda Badung Polo	65		
2	Badung Davou	60	Bukuru, Jos South	21/December/1996
	Gyang Musa	66		
	Pam Tep	62		
3	Bot Tok	70	Kwogo, Riyom District	24/March/1997
	Dandom Kapanchan	75		
4	Chuwang Gyang	60	Laudura, Du District	25/December/1997
	Dung Pam	67		
	Pwajok Dung	77		
5	Dachung Gyang	80	Tahoss, Riyom District	12/December/1996
	Dung Dalyop	76		
	Sambo Gang	67		
	Bogom Dagwong	81		
6	Dudu Dalyop	78	Chwelnyap, Jos North	14/March/1996
	Dusu Pam	79		
7	Dung Gyang	78	Shen, Du District	13/March/1996
	Pam Rwang	87		
	Zeng Chung	69		
8	Dung Tengwong	81	Kwogo, Riyom District	29/Decemner/1996
	Gyang Davou	78		
	Davou Mwantep	79		
	Tep Gyang	66		
9	Gyang Mang	67	Gwara-Lomanjei, Jos North	13/December/1996
	Kim Chung	80		
	Wang Lee	69		
10	Gyang Chunwang	91	Du,	12/March/1997
	Pwajok Gazu	67		
	Dazong Dung	76		
	Jamang Lomak	67		
11	Gyang Chuwang	91	Du,	12/December/1997
	Sha Gyang	77		
	Pwajok Dung	68		Note: Gyang Chuwang is a member of the ritual family of Mado shrine. The rest of the people are former rainmaking priests.

	Nyam Chal	64		
12	Jang Davou	78	Gwara-Lomanjei, Jos North	28/May/1997
	Nyam Dung	67		
	Nyang Dadok	79		
	Choji Don	78		
13	Kim Gyang	70	Rim, Riyom District	23/June/1997
	Dusu Tok	80		
	Pam Lotok	71		
	Jatau Dung	60		
14	Chung Dung Pwajok (a Berom)	67	Gwong & Chwelnyap, Jos North	24/June/1997
	Isa Zi Sani (an Anaguta)	66	Note: These are members of the ritual families of the <i>gufwagachik</i> shrines	
15	Dung Kadang	68	Kwang, in Du District	11/December/1966
	Pam Kadang	60	Note: These are the members of the ritual family of Behwol shrine.	
	Gyang Kadan	55		
16	Nyam Dung	88	Kabong, Jos North	23/March/1996
	Vou Zang	54		
	Dachung Mwadkwon	77		
17	Pam Gyang	78	Jishe, Jos North	23/December/1996
	Rwang Kim Dung	69		
	Dafei Chung	70		
18	Pam Wang	67	Bukuru, Jos South	23/March/1997
	Kim Nash	65		
	Toma Jang Davou	76		
19	Pam Zat	76	On occasion of Nzem Berom Festival at Polo Field , Jos Town	4/May/1996
	Dudu Dalyop	78		
	Nyam Dung	70		
	Dung Jok	76		
	Jangwok Andrew	60		
	Davou Dung Chollom	68		
20	Rwang Kim	76	Gwara-Lomanjei, Jos North	19/July/1997
	Mandung Choji	78		
	Chung Gyang	66		
21	Samuel Dung Nyam	48	On occasion of Nzem Berom Festival at Polo Field , Jos Town	4/May/1996
	Dachung Mwadkwon Fwet	76		
	Nyam Dusu	60		
	Bot Nyam	67		

22	Toma Dung	78	Kuru, Jos South	23/October/1996
	Zang Dalyop	65		
	Bot Gyang	67		
	Chuhwak Chung	67		
23	Davou Gyang	70	Kok, Barakin Ladi	17/July/1997
	Pam Dung	71		
	Bitrus Dachung	56		

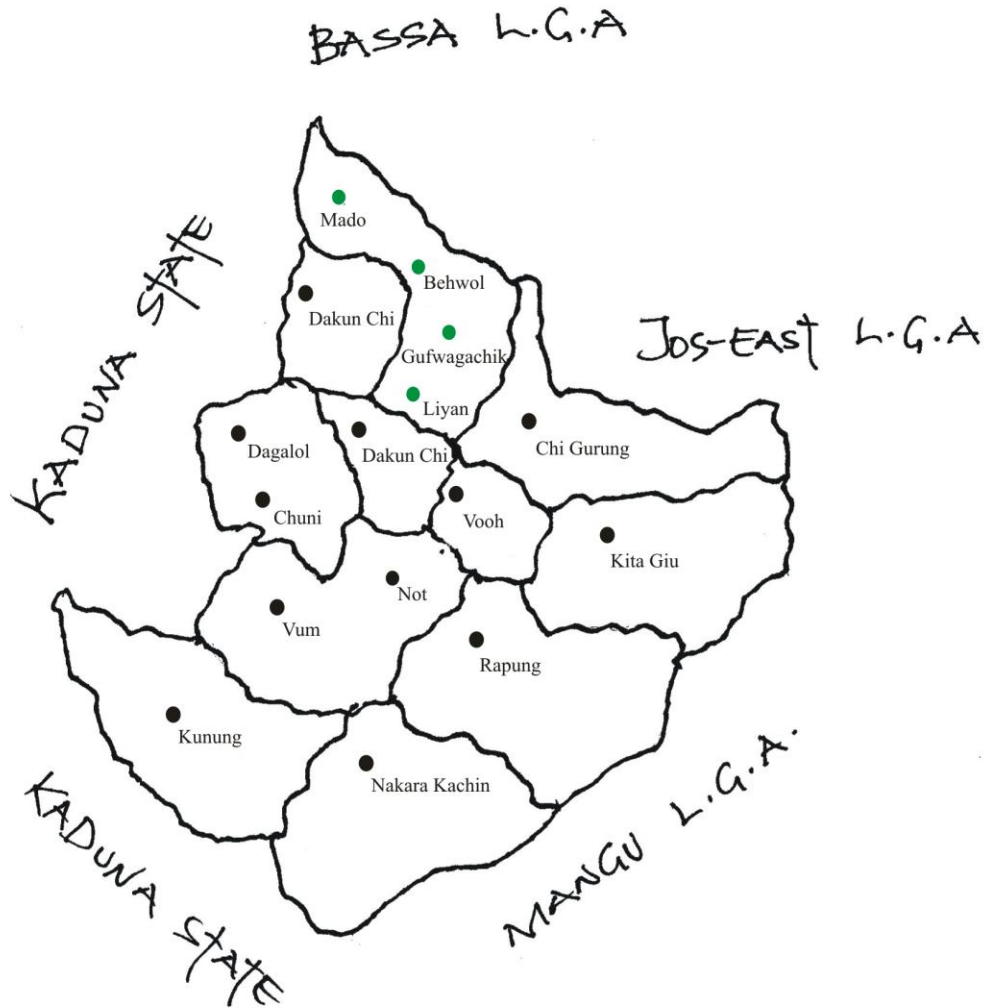


APPENDIX IV  
MAP SHOWING STUDY AREA





### APPENDIX V

## MAP SHOWING THE SACRED SITES USED AS CASE STUDY



#### KEY

-  The green colour are case studies discussed.
-  Some selected sacred site in Beromland