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**VID SPECIALIZED UNIVERSITY OF STAVANGER
NORWAY**

**THE SPIRITUAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE
MISSIONARY'S WORK OF THE NORWEGIAN MISSION SOCIETY
(NMS) AMONG THE TIKAR PEOPLE OF THE EVANGELICAL
LUTHERAN CHURCH OF CAMEROON (EELC): PAST AND
PRESENT**

**THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
THEOLOGY
(MTHEOL-342)**

By

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late father Nyandji David and to my mother Ngaliefon Christine.

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Abbreviations

NMS: The Norwegian Mission Society

EELC : Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun

FPC : Femmes pour Christ

PM : Mission de Paris

OSEELC : Œuvre de Santé de l'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun

CM1 : Cours Moyen 1

CM2 : Cours Moyen 2

SM: Sudan Mission

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context and background

Beginning in 1937, the NMS, through its missionaries, started mission work among the Tikar and carried out activities, both in the spiritual and social fields, which have strongly impacted the Tikar people and their lives in certain ways.¹ This missionary activity of the NMS greatly influenced the spiritual, social and economic life of this people. In this thesis, I plan to study this multidimensional influence of that missionary work, which is why I have entitled this work: *“The spiritual, social and economic impact of the missionary work of the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) among the Tikar people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC): past and present.”*

In this study I have focused on the work of the NMS among the Tikar people, specifically on what was done in the districts of Bankim in Adamawa region of Cameroon and Ngambé-Tikar in the centre region. This does not mean that other Tikar villages are not important. The reason for this choice is that it was in these parts of the Tikar plain where missionaries established their base before expanding their activity to other localities. I am not going to simply present the history of the missionary work; I will also discuss the impact of that work in the Tikar context. So, this thesis is situated in the field of church and mission history.

It must be said that it is a context that I know very well, being that I am a Tikar myself and I grew up in the Tikar area. It is also a context where I served as a pastor for at least four years. This situation facilitated the task during my fieldwork and allowed me to collect very important information for this research project, which is about the mission history among my people.

1.2 Definitions

To provide a good understanding of what I want to develop in this work, it is important to start by defining the key terms of this topic. These terms are: spiritual impact, social impact, economic impact, NMS missionaries, Tikar people. The definitions of these keywords will clarify the questions that emerges in this thesis. To better understand the definition of the concept ‘spiritual impact, I will first define each of the words separately. The word “impact”, according to the *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, is defined as “a strong impression or

¹ Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté : histoire de l’église évangélique luthérienne du Cameroun*, (Amstelveen : IMPROCEP éditions, 1990), 54

effect on somebody or something”.² In other words, the impact is the effect or the influence of an action on something or on a given person.

The word “spiritual”, on the other hand, is the adjective form of the English noun “spirit” and, according to the same dictionary that I mentioned above, is defined as “which is of the order of religious belief, in relation with the life of the soul.”³ Thus, the term “spiritual impact” can be defined as the effect or influence of an action on the religious belief of a person or a group of people. And in this thesis, when I talk about the “spiritual impact,” I want to study the influence of the missionary action of the NMS on Tikar beliefs. In other words, it is a question of looking at the effect of the Gospel, brought by the missionaries, on the understanding of God, and the religious practices among the Tikar.

The second group of words of which we need to understand the meaning is “social impact”. Here I will only define the word “social” since the word “impact” has already been defined. The word “social” is an adjective that derives from the Latin word *socii* (“allies”) and is defined as that “which relates to society, to its organization (social phenomenon).”⁴ Thus, “social impact” refers to the effect of an action on the social life of men and women. In other words, the social impact is the effect of an action on the behavior of men and women in a given society. In this thesis, the term “social impact” refers to the effect of missionary work on the way of life of the Tikar people.

Another important word group that will be used is the “economic impact”. First, the word “economy” in the ordinary sense refers to human activities directed towards the production, exchange, distribution and consumption of goods and services.⁵ Thus, the “economic impact” of missionary work on the Tikar plain and on the Tikar people, refers to the effect or the influence of missionary activity, through diaconal structures, on income, trade, financial and material facilities in the Tikar people’s life.

The Norwegian Mission Society (NMS), for its part, is a missionary society founded August 8, 1942 in Stavanger in Norway,⁶ and whose objective was the evangelization of the world. NMS is thus the mission society that evangelized the Tikar people from 1937 onwards and did

² Jonathan Crowther, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*, fifth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995. s.v. impact

³ <https://dictionnaire.reverso.net/francais-definition/spirituel>, Accessed January 8, 2019.

⁴ <https://dictionnaire.reverso.net/francais-definition/social>, Accessed January 9, 2019.

⁵ <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89conomie>, Accessed January 9, 2019.

⁶ <http://www.mhs.no/arkiv/>, Accessed January 9, 2019.

a remarkable job among the Tikar people, and of which I am examining the impact of its work in this thesis.

And finally, the Tikar are a people group living in Cameroon. I should point out that the name 'Tikar' raises some problems. Not only is it used to refer to a specific ethnic group that lives on the Tikar plain, mainly in the Adamawa, Central and West regions. It is also a blanket term for a large number of ethnic groups in the Bamenda Grassfields (in other words, the North West region) whose royal families claim Tikar origin, but whose languages exhibit little, if any, linguistic similarity with the language spoken on the Tikar plain. When the term "Tikar" is used in this thesis, it refers to the former group, that is, the Tikar who live on the Tikar plain.⁷ They are a people group that had access to the Gospel from the German colonial period until the arrival of the Norwegian missionaries in 1937 and continued to have. I will present more details on this great people group in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

1.3 Research question

The definitions mentioned above direct us straight into the main research question which is: How has the missionary work of the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) among the Tikar people of the Evangelical Church Lutheran of Cameroon (EELC) influenced people's lives on the spiritual, social, and economic level from the beginning to the present day?

In other words, what has been the influence of the work of the NMS missionaries among the Tikar people of the EELC, from the beginning until today? What are the fruits of the Norwegian Mission Society work in the life of the Tikar people, spiritually, socially, and economically from the beginning of the mission in 1937 to nowadays? And, through the answers to this main question, I want to highlight the fruits of the missionary work on the life of the Tikar. I want to investigate in what way the missionaries' work have contributed to the spiritual, social and economic evolution of the Tikar people of Cameroon.

However, beside this main question, I will also answer some other secondary questions in order to shed more light on the main question. How was Tikar life like before the arrival of the missionaries? What did the missionaries do among the Tikar people? Looking back, does the

⁷<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/91085.pdf>, and https://www.nyamnjoh.com/files/africanamerican_ancestry_search_tikar_origins.pdf, Accessed April 3, 2019.

Tikar people appreciate what the missionaries did? Do they think that there have been some shortcomings with regard to this work?

This study is very interesting in that it provides an understanding of the missionary work among the Tikar people. It will enable NMS missionaries to evaluate their work and to know what the people they evangelized think about their work. As far as this thesis is concerned, the study of the missionary work of the NMS among the Tikar people will confirm the interesting nature of such research. My thesis provides a possibility for the NMS to have feedback about its work among the Tikar people in Cameroon. This topic is also interesting in that it provides the Tikar people with a written document about the missionaries' work in their locality, because until now there has not been a lot of written material about it, apart from what Kare Lode, Ngah Joseph and Pindzie Adamou Robert wrote. The aim of my thesis is to document this important history, thus preserving it, to contribute with research on mission history on the Tikar people, first for the Tikar people itself so that they have a written source, then for the NMS and not the least to academia and the field of mission history. Thus, my research will provide new knowledge on the Tikar, since no one has carried out research on the topic I am about to research. I will fill a reach gap that is important for the preservation of the history of the Tikar people. All these reasons mentioned in my opinion allow us to see immediately the importance of this theme.

1.4 Motivation

The motivations for choosing this topic are multiple. Firstly, I am a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC), and a native of the Tikar people group. Since childhood, I have noticed that the Lutheran Church and its structures are well established in the area. And when I became a pastor and worked in Bankim and in Ngambé-Tikar, I realized that our church has had a considerable influence on the lives of the people and that not much has been written on this subject. And above all, the lack of local archives about missionary activity among the Tikar motivated me to target this history, which is very rich, not only for the Tikar people but also for the EELC in general. The desire to develop the history of missionary work on the Tikar plain was an important motivation in choosing this theme. Another reason that motivated me to work on this is that I found that the Tikar who have accepted the Christian faith have changed the way they live. Several cultural practices have declined considerably. I

also noticed that the people of the Tikar plain quickly had access to education, which allowed many of them to occupy very important positions in the Cameroonian administration.

In short, on the Tikar plain today, there is a remarkable change in spiritual, social and economic terms. It is this second aspect of the observation that is my main motivation in the choice of this theme, because it has raised many questions in my mind, such as: What explains all these changes in the way of life of the Tikar people? Why did the majority of the Tikar accepted the Christian faith? It seemed as if the missionary presence played a big role. Therefore, I got interested in investigating the issue. what has been at the stake. Secondly, I will present the missionary achievements on our plain and then discuss this impact in the life of the people from the historical perspective.

1.5 Delimitation

My research here is going to cover the period from 1937 to 1992, a total of 55 years. The reason for choosing this period is that it is a period that covers all the time spent by the missionaries of the NMS on the Tikar plain. In other words, it was during this time that the missionaries of the NMS resided and worked among the Tikar. It is important to note here that the missionary work on the Tikar plain was not only done among the Tikar people. Missionaries also worked among the Kwandja and the Mambila who also live in the same plain. The missionaries called the Bankim district the “Tikar district”, even if this district also included some Mambila and Kwandja villages.⁸ But my work will not include these other people groups, even if some of them also benefited from the missionary work of the NMS among the Tikar. I will focus only on the study of the work done among the Tikar for the simple reason that it is the environment that I know best, and especially because that was where the missionaries established their base.

In addition, it is also a fact that the missionaries did not evangelize the whole Tikar plain. As was mentioned above, the Tikar are found in four administrative regions of our country, but the missionaries concentrated on two regions, namely the Central region (Ngambé-Tikar) and the Adamawa region (Bankim). This means that the missionary action did not directly affect the other Tikar in other regions of Cameroon. Thus, my thesis will concentrate on the areas where the missionaries settled, Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar. It should be noted that the missionaries never actually lived in Ngambé-Tikar, but they made frequent visits there. These

⁸ Torstein Jørgensen, *I tro og teneste: Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1842 -1992*, (Stavanger, Stavanger Misjonshøgskolen Teknisk Produksjon, 1992), 24

two localities form the largest Tikar agglomerations, that is, the largest Tikar population lives there.

Another important aspect of the delimitation of this work is that my research was done on the Lutheran Protestant Tikar as they are the most numerous. It should also be noted that not all Tikar people are Lutherans; there are also Catholics and Muslims. However, the impact of missionary work has affected all categories of Tikar people, whether Protestant, Catholic or Muslim. Missionary structures have benefited the entire population, especially the diaconal structures such as the health center and schools. But to limit the scope of my paper, I focused solely on the study of the spiritual, social and economic impact of missionary action among Lutheran Tikar in the districts of Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

To answer the main question as to what has been the spiritual, social and economic impact of the missionary work of the NMS among the Tikar people of the EELC, I have divided this thesis into eight chapters. The first chapter, entitled “Introduction”, is divided into six points namely, the first one which is devoted to the context and background, the second one on the definitions of the key words of the subject, spiritual impact, social impact, economic impact, Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS), and the Tikar people. The third point is on the research question. Here I present the main issue of the thesis which will be discussed in my work. The fourth point is devoted to the motivation for the choice of this theme. Point five is on the delimitation of my field of research. And finally, point six presents the structure of the present thesis.

In Chapter two I present the method of the work. Qualitative research method was chosen for the sake of the nature of the subject being researched

In Chapter three I present the theories that I use to analyse my data material. Two theories guided me in this journey: the historical perspective and the postcolonial perspective. In light of the historical perspective, chapter four presents the Tikar life, its culture, its religion, etc. before the arrival of the missionaries. In chapter five, I address the arrival of the Lutheran missionaries in Cameroon and on the Tikar plain and describe and discuss their work among the Tikar. In this fifth Chapter, I discuss also in historical perspective, their achievements, as well as the challenges they faced among the Tikar people.

In Chapter six I analyse the spiritual impact of the missionary work of the NMS among the Tikar people. In Chapter seven I analyse the social and economic impact of the missionary work; and finally, in Chapter eight I talk about some shortcomings of the missionaries' activities among the Tikar.

Chapter 2: Methodological framework

As mentioned above, this thesis is situated within the discipline of Church and Mission history. This chapter is a presentation of the methodology used to develop my work. Qualitative research is a relevant method for this kind of study — especially when it concerns social sciences — for several reasons that I will develop later in this chapter.⁹ First, I will start by introducing what we mean by qualitative methods, its characteristics, such as data collection. Then, I will present the criteria of choice of informants, and present how I collected data among Tikar people. Last, I will present the method of the analysis and finally, I will talk about the ethical considerations.

2.1 Qualitative research

I have chosen to use qualitative research method to develop this work. Why the choice of this method? Before answering this question, let us first try to understand what qualitative research is. First, we need to distinguish between qualitative research and quantitative research. The quantitative method evaluates the quantity, the percentage of a population in relation to a given question.¹⁰ For example, it may be a matter of determining the percentage of the population of a country affected by HIV / AIDS, the infant mortality rate, the participation rate of people in meetings, etc. In short, the quantitative method establishes the statistics of a situation.¹¹

On the other hand, by using qualitative methods we can study non-quantifiable issues in order to deepen the understanding of a particular case and situation in a particular context that involves people's reflections and practices. Kristine Hansen in *Writing in the social sciences with readings*, explains this difference when she says that “Quantitative methods yield data that can be expressed numerically, and qualitative produce data that must be described by their qualities or distinguishing characteristics.”¹²

⁹ David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, 3rd edition, (London, SAGE Publication, 2010), 124

¹⁰ Kristine Hansen, *Writing in the social sciences with readings*, (Boston, Pearson Custom Publishing, 2003), 47

¹¹ Kristine Hansen, *Writing in the social sciences with readings*, 47

¹² *Ibid*, 47

2.2 Characteristics of qualitative research

Qualitative research uses several methods. The most common methods are interviews, observation, and focus group -interviews.¹³

2.2.1 The interviews

The interview is “a speech-event in which a person A extracts information from a person B, information that was contained in the biography of B, and the story of life.”¹⁴ Observation “is appropriate for collecting data from naturally occurring behaviors in the context.”¹⁵ The focus group interview “is appropriate in eliciting data from the (cultural) people within a group setting.”¹⁶

An interview is a dialogue or a speech-event between interlocutors, one asking questions and the other answering those questions. This dialogue aims to collect useful information for the continuation of the research and particularly to help provide an answer to the research question.¹⁷ In my culture where tradition is transmitted orally, from father to son, interviewing people is the most appropriate way of collecting information about the history or the life of the people. They are familiar with this way of communicating. Thus, the interview was very important for the collection of data to provide a deeper understanding of the impact of missionary work on the Tikar people.

Regarding the interview, I chose the semi-structured method, which “is one of the most used methods in the social sciences and which is more open, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview because of what the interviewee says.”¹⁸

The questions in my interview were prepared in advance and all the informants in this thesis were informed about the project while I was searching for informants. In my interviews, I wanted to find out about the experience of Tikar before, during, and after the missionaries’ work. I wanted to know how they experienced the missionary presence and how they felt about that presence. Through the interviews I tried to obtain as much information as possible to be

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid, 2

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ BAKARI Boukar, *Christian-Muslim relations on PERE plain: challenges for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Cameroon*, (master thesis, Stavanger Norway, 2014), 13

¹⁷ Kristine Hansen, *Writing in the social sciences with readings*, 47

¹⁸ Rosalind Edwards, Janet Holland, J *What is qualitative interviewing?*. (Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). 2–3.

able to answer my research topic. In most cases, the interviews were carried out in the local language, namely, the Tikar language and my informants agreed that I tape it with my phone. I personally undertook the translation of the interviews into French, and then into English. All the citations used in this thesis had to be slightly changed to be understandable due to the syntax of the Tikar language. This is a common problem also other researches have experienced with ethnic languages in Cameroon.¹⁹ Tightly changed to the literal translation of Tikar into French and then into English sometimes resulted in ambiguous sentences. Only two interviews were done in French because the informants were former missionaries who were not able to speak the Tikar language. Appointments were made in advance with the interviewees, and interviews were carried out in their homes. The informants also talked about issues beyond the questions I asked. I think that the semi-structured interview process encouraged the informants to open up to the research topic and not be enclosed to only answering my questions.²⁰ The questions were developed in English, as required by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (I got permission from NSD to carry out the interviews before I started my work on the field), and I translated the questions into Tikar to allow the interviewees to better understand the meaning of them. All the answers were transcribed and kept in a safe place to which nobody but me had access and all the data will be destroyed by the beginning of 2020. This is part of the concept of “minimization of risk,”²¹ which obliges the researcher to “be able to show that participants will face little to no risk of physical, social, emotional or other kinds of harm from participating in his research.”²²

In brief, qualitative research is a method of research that produces descriptive data, such as written or spoken words and the observational behavior of individuals.

Hygin Kakai in *Contribution à la recherche qualitative, cadre méthodologie de rédaction de mémoire* states that “the qualitative research refers to a method of research interested in the meaning and observation of a social phenomenon in a natural environment. It deals with data that is difficult to quantify. It does not reject numbers or statistics but simply does not give them first place.”²³ In the same way Norman K. Denzin and Yvonne S. Lincoln state that,

¹⁹ Terese Bue Kessel, *Between God's sharing power and Men's controlling power: A quest for diaconal empowerment and transformation in Femmes Pour Christ in Cameroon*. (Stavanger: Misjonshogskolens forlag, 2014), 34

²⁰ David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, 161 - 206

²¹ Hansen, *Writing in the social sciences with readings*, 53

²² Ibid

²³ Hygin Kakai, *Contribution à la recherche qualitative, cadre méthodologie de rédaction de mémoire*, (Université de Franche-Comté, Février 2008), 1

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview artifacts; cultural texts and production; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives.²⁴

2.2.2 Archival materials

Archives are defined as a “collection of historical documents or records of a government, a family, a place or an organization.”²⁵ When I speak of archive material here I refer to the archive material related to the Tikar people, and the history of the NMS missionaries’ work among the Tikar. For my research, I searched in the Archives of the NMS and VID Specialized University of Stavanger, and in those of the EELC and its diaconal structures. During my fieldwork, I went to the headquarters of our church in Ngaoundéré in Cameroon and in the headquarters of its diaconal structures such as the Health Work and the secretariat of education (SEDUC), to collect documents from the archives related to the theme of my thesis. This fieldwork enabled me to gather important information on the history of the missionary diaconal structures and how they functioned.

2.2.3 Books

Books are also very important in historical research. In this work, several books, especially the historical books, helped me to interpret the information of historical interest provided by my informants. The books in question were those relating to the history of the Tikar people, their culture, such as the book entitled, *L’histoire du peuple Tikar*, written by Mgbékoum Aboubakar, the book entitled, *Traditions historiques des peuples du Cameroun central*, written by Mohammadou, Edridge, and those relating to the history of the missionary activities of the NMS in Cameroon, from the beginning to the creation of the local church called the EELC in 1960.²⁶ With regard to this topic, the Norwegian Kåre Lode’s book was of paramount importance to me.

²⁴ Norman K. Denzin, Yvonne S. Lincoln *Handbook of qualitative research*, second ed. (California, Sage Publications, 2000), 3

²⁵ Diana Lea, et al., *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of Academic English*, s.v. archive

²⁶ Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 161

For my research, I have used the interviews and archive materials to collect data among Tikar people. The process of interviewing and looking at archival materials such as historical texts and books, permitted me during my fieldwork to collect important data to answer the research question I am asking.

I did use observation deliberately as methodological approach during field research as I have already for many years been observing the context, as explained earlier in the text, under the section about my motivation for doing this research. However, also observation is a method in qualitative research Through cases studies, and the analysis of documents and interviews, the qualitative method allows researchers to describe and to do an in-depth analysis of an individual or a social situation. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of what is being investigated.²⁷

So, it should be clear that qualitative methods are appropriate and relevant for my investigation because, my topic is to understand various parts of the life of the Tikar people before, during, and after the missionary activity. According to Kakai, the purpose of qualitative research is “to seek to understand, to describe, to explore a new domain, to evaluate the performance of one person, to discover the other, to evaluate an action, a project.”²⁸ With regard to my thesis, the purpose is to describe and analyze the work done by the missionaries in the Tikar area and to investigate the implications of this work in the spiritual, social and economic life of the Tikar people.

2.3 Selection of informants

I interviewed seven informants, five from the Tikar ethnic group and two NMS missionaries who served on the Tikar plain. They were chosen based on the following criteria: age with reference to the need for people with in-depth knowledge of the missionary work, especially regarding the questions I was about to investigate, knowledge of their context and environment, the people’s living conditions, and the general situation; involvement in the mission in the local context; and gender.

Regarding the first criterion, I focused on the age of informants because being able to provide historical knowledge of the topic requires some experience of the situation. Older people are

²⁷ Ibid, 49

²⁸ Kakai, *Contribution à la recherche qualitative*, 1

better able to provide information regarding historical issues. Young people do not have enough life experience and there is a risk of providing information that is not accurate. That is why the age of my informants was between sixty and ninety three years old. These are most often people who have been direct witnesses of missionary activities among the Tikar.

The second criterion, knowledge of the environment and the situation, reflects the fact that the interviewees were for the most part people who were very familiar with the Tikar plain. Apart from the two missionaries who were Norwegians, the other five informants were from the Tikar ethnic group, i.e. they not only know the Tikar history and culture, but also, they worked for a long time with the missionaries.

Regarding the third criterion, I considered their involvement in the missionary work to be important. The aim here was to avoid interviewing people who had not been directly involved, to avoid unsubstantiated and unreliable responses. I also considered the fact that they are Lutheran Christians and therefore were close to the missionaries and sometimes were involved in the missionary's work.

The gender issue was also one of my concerns during fieldwork. I wanted to ensure the parity between men and women, but I was not able to do so, for several reasons. First, the women who fulfilled the criteria and were asked to join the project were not willing to talk with me. Second, most women in question did not fulfill the conditions mentioned above, especially with regard to the age and knowledge about the missionaries' activities. Third, many of them said they were not available. Since I myself am Tikar, I understood that it is simply a cultural issue. Among the Tikar, a married woman is not supposed to have (an interview) meet with another man without her husband's permission. And dialogue between a woman and a man other than her husband is not well looked upon in society. However, I interviewed two women among my informants.

In short, I can say here that the people involved in this research are those who know the subject very well and in whom we can have confidence about the credibility of their answers.

2.4 Method of analysis of material

In order to answer my research question, I used several sources. I also received information from the books of people such as Kåre Lode, Ngah Joseph and Pindzié Adamou Robert, who have written about the work of the Mission among the Tikar people.

It was a matter of studying the data from the archives and books about the Tikar people, to analyse them with the feeling of the local people to reveal the impact of this missionary work. In other words, the archives informed us about the missionary achievements in the Tikar area, and the interviews allowed us to analyze the impact of that work. These were all sources that helped provide the information I needed to answer the main question asked in the introduction. The analysis is “the reviewing your data in the light of your research question.”²⁹ That's what I did during my research. After collecting data from interviews, archives, and historical books, I organized them in the light of my research question, to analyze the impact of missionary's work among the Tikar people. And After transcribing the material there I categorized them into the three topics under investigation to prepare for the writing and analytical process.

2.5 Ethical considerations

Research work requires respect for several ethical rules, especially when it comes to qualitative research and when it involves human beings. Research ethics refers to the complex values and principles that constitute and regulate scientific activity.³⁰ Terese Bue Kessel explains the topic of research ethics in more detail in these terms:

Research ethics is developed and systematized on the bases of general ethics of science which in turn is developed from common sense morality. It is to provide guidelines and a framework for the researcher to reflect and proceed within the purpose of securing that the human dignity of those involved in the project is respected and is not harmed in any way.³¹

The Norwegian National Committee for Research Ethics in Science and Technology has enumerated four principles for ethical consideration in research. They are: respect, good consequences, fairness and integrity.³²

About respect, it means that the “people who are involved in research, as informants or otherwise, shall be treated with respect.”³³ This requires the “respect for the dignity and

²⁹ David Silverman, *Doing Qualitative Research: A Practical Handbook*, 221

³⁰ Terese Bue Kessel, *Between God's Sharing Power and Men's Controlling Power: A Quest for Diaconal Empowerment and Transformation in Femmes Pour Christ in Cameroon*, (Stavanger, Misjons Hogskolens forlag, 2014), 34

³¹ Ibid, 34-35

³² <https://www.etikkom.no/globalassets/general-guidelines.pdf>, Accessed January 17, 2019.

³³ Ibid

autonomy of individuals, requires that participants comprehend the nature of the research, give their informed consent, and participate voluntarily.”³⁴ Good consequences mean that “the researcher should seek to ensure that his activities produce good consequences and that any adverse consequences are within the limits of acceptability.”³⁵ Fairness means that “all research projects shall be designed and implemented fairly,”³⁶ and integrity means that “researchers shall comply with recognized norms and behave responsibly, openly and honestly towards their colleagues and the public.”³⁷

Considering all these principles, I can say that my thesis respects the ethical rules of research. First, because it is I who formulated the theme and methodology of my work and the questions of the interviews. VID Specialized University, where I am a student, assigned me a supervisor with whom I work. During the interviews, the informants were informed of the subject being researched, and were informed about the guarantee of confidentiality as required by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). However, my informants did not have any problem with the use of their names in the quotes in my work. I contacted the NSD before my fieldwork and I accepted the conditions of confidentiality. However, my informants told me that they explicitly wanted their names mentioned in my thesis. They were not happy with the issue of confidentiality since their information did not touch upon controversial and problematic issues that could harm them. Instead, they were proud to participate in the project. They thought it was an honor that the story of the mission and its impact among the Tikar was finally being written. This is the reason why I have referred to their names and have not used fictitious names. As I met my informants and presented the issue of confidentiality to them, I was persuaded that confidentiality in this thesis was of no meaning. When their names are written in the thesis, it is also a way of showing them respect. Some even said that if I had not undertaken such a project, they would have died with all this knowledge in their heads and that it is the Tikar people who would have been the losers. That is why my informants agreed, without any hesitation, to have their names mentioned in my thesis.

They were told that they were free to stop at any point during the interviews. I am glad that none of them abandoned the project during my fieldwork. It should be mentioned that I did not encounter much difficulty in my interview work because I am myself a member of the Tikar

³⁴ Hansen, *Writing in the Social Sciences: A Rhetoric with Readings* 53

³⁵ <https://www.etikkom.no/globalassets/general-guidelines.pdf>, Accessed January 17, 2019.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

people group; and, therefore, there were no problems of language or translation. All were proud to participate in the project because for them it was the first time that a “child from the village”, that is, a native-born Tikar researcher had approached the topic of missionary action in the area.

It must be noted here that it was not easy for me to be critical and distant in this work, since I am myself a son of the locality. It was really a big challenge for me in that direction. But I have done my best to provide scientific work that recommends the researcher to be distant and critical of the subject he is dealing with.

With this, I have presented the methodology used in my thesis, the way I collected the data material, and I have discussed some ethical considerations.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

In this work, I have had two theoretical perspective, the historical and the postcolonial. I will present those theories, their characteristics and their importance for this work.

3.1 The historical perspective

I will, in the following, present a definition of the meaning of a historical perspective and why this approach is useful and important in my research. The historical approach is used here because my thesis falls within the field of historical research and in such cases, therefore this approach is appropriate to answer a question from a historical perspective in describing and analyzing the influence of the missionary's work among the Tikar people.

3.1.1 Definition

A historical perspective is defined as “the study of a subject in light of its earliest phases and subsequent evolution.”³⁸ In other words, the historical perspective is the description, analysis and explanation of events through time. It also makes it possible to describe the changes and to study the process of a case. Thus, the description and the analysis of the case are very important elements in understanding the situation and practices of the past in a context, such as that of the work among the Tikar people.³⁹ By historical facts I mean what took place at a certain time and in a certain place.⁴⁰ The historical perspective allows the researcher to dig into the history and to understand the origins, evolution and influence of a social fact or human behavior. Barbara S. Lawrence further explains this aspect when she states that: “The historical perspective is therefore important when one wants to study a social fact based on its origin, on its evolution.”⁴¹ It is about looking into the history of a social fact to find its causes and its consequences in the society or in the life of a given people. Thus, “the task is to investigate

³⁸ Barbara S. Lawrence, “*Historical Perspective: Using the Past to Study the Present*” *The Academy of Management Review* Vol. 9, No. 2 (Apr. 1984), 307-312

³⁹ Lawrence, “*Historical Perspective: Using the Past to Study the Present*”, 307-312

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

some aspect of the lives of the people who are being studied, and this includes finding how these people view the situation they face.”⁴²

In such research, the historical material or simply the history of a people, is of capital importance because it helps the researcher in his description and analysis of the events in the time to suggest an explanation or understanding of those events. This perspective is used in my thesis to develop historical events through archival material on the missionary work among the Tikar, documents about the history of the Tikar people, and the interviews.

Historical sources have allowed me to analyze the spiritual, social and economic situation of the Tikar people before and after the arrival of the missionaries. By describing the two situations, namely before, and then after, the missionary activity in the Tikar area, it helped me gain a deeper understanding of the missionary approach and to identify some of the impacts it had on the spiritual, social and economic life of this people. So, what are the characteristics of the historical perspective? What are the elements that allow us to carry out accountable and transparent research from a historical perspective?

3.1.2 Characteristics of the historical perspective

There are several components of the historical perspective, but I will focus here only on the most essential and those that seemed appropriate for my research question. These are: the search for sources, the description of events, and the analysis.⁴³

The search for sources consists of identifying the elements that impacted the course of events in the past. But “before starting to read the sources, the historian reflects on the documents that could answer the historical question he is asking. The question will determine the sources.”⁴⁴ These sources can be both narratives and documentaries.⁴⁵ It was this first stage of work that I did during my fieldwork. As documentary sources, I found in the archives and various books, documents about missionary activity in Cameroon in general and on the Tikar plain specifically. The very important information I obtained during the interviews constituted a

⁴² Martyn Hammerley and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: principles in practice*, Third edition, (Canada, Routledge, 2007), 3

⁴³ https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/M%C3%A9thodologie_historique, Accessed 18 February 2019.

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Ibid

narrative source. All this material allowed me to establish the historical facts and consider their implication and their effect on the life of the Tikar people today.

The second important element in a historical perspective is the description of events. To present the effect of the activity over a period of time, the researcher must describe what really happened, and this description of the events is only possible if there are available documentary and narrative sources.⁴⁶ In the present work, Chapters four and five describe the situation of the Tikar people before the arrival of the missionaries, and then the missionary work carried out on the Tikar plain. It is this description of events that is the basis for the analysis in this thesis. The information I obtained from the records of my church, from the NMS and during the interviews, enabled me to describe the missionary activity among the Tikar people. For me, it was a question of looking at the history of the missionary activity to provide an explanation of the situation of today among the Tikar people.

The last element of the historical perspective is the analysis. The purpose of my work was not just the description of historical facts, but my main goal was to explore, to discuss, and to analyze the role played by the NMS missionaries in the spiritual, social and economic transformation of the Tikar people. And this understanding was gained through analyzing facts and events. In this thesis, the discussion of this analysis is done in the Chapters six and seven.

But, as mentioned above, it is not only the historical perspective that I used in my work. I also used the postcolonial perspective.

3.2 Postcolonial theory

To better understand the definition of postcolonial theory, it is important to first define colonialism and postcolonialism.

3.2.1 Colonialism

Colonialism can be defined as “the implanting of settlements on distant territory”.⁴⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, state that “the term colonialism is important in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation that

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), 8

developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years.”⁴⁸ To put it more clearly, colonialism is “the imperialist expansion of Europe into the rest of the world during the last four hundred years in which a dominant imperium or center carried on a relationship of control and influence over its margins or colonies.”⁴⁹ This domination of Western countries some time has given rise to an affirmation of the superiority of Western culture over the culture of colonized peoples. This is what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin point out when they say that “the relation between the colonizer and colonized was locked into a rigid hierarchy of difference deeply resistant to fair and equitable exchanges, whether economic, cultural or social.”⁵⁰

Although it is true that the missionaries of the NMS did not have the same goals as the European colonizers, namely to dominate and exploit the indigenous peoples, there are however some aspects of colonial approach in their work. This is what I will develop in the critical part of this thesis.

3.2.2 Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is “a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies.”⁵¹ It is “concerned with both how European nations conquered and controlled Third World cultures and how these groups have since responded to and resisted those encroachments.”⁵² The “term has subsequently been widely used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies.”⁵³ The experience of the Tikar people and their appreciation of missionary work allowed me to apply this postcolonial theory in this work.

3.2.3 Postcolonial theory

Postcolonial theory is a “body of thought primarily concerned with accounting for the political, aesthetic, economic, historical, and social impact of European colonial rule around the world in the 18th through the 20th century.”⁵⁴ It is a theory that emerged “in the US and UK academics in the 1980s as part of a larger wave of new and politicized fields of

⁴⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, second edition (New York: Routledge 2000), 40

⁴⁹ <https://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>, Accessed April 12, 2019.

⁵⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies*, 41

⁵¹ <https://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>, Accessed April 12, 2019.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies*, 108

⁵⁴ <https://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>, Accessed April 15, 2019.

humanistic inquiry, most notably feminism and critical race theory.”⁵⁵ In brief, postcolonial theory,

has remained simultaneously tethered to the fact of colonial rule in the first half of the 20th century and committed to politics and justice in the contemporary moment. This has meant that it has taken multiple forms: it has been concerned with forms of political and aesthetic representation; it has been committed to accounting for globalization and global modernity; it has been invested in reimagining politics and ethics from underneath imperial power, an effort that remains committed to those who continue to suffer its effects; and it has been interested in perpetually discovering and theorizing new forms of human injustice, from environmentalism to human rights.⁵⁶

Thus, this theory allows us today to read the story with other glasses i.e, with a critical mind. This is what I have tried to do in this work. I have tried to study the history of missionary work from the experience of the Tikar people in order to identify the positive and negative impacts. It should be noted that I will be discussing the negative impact in the chapter entitled “Shortcomings” of this thesis by applying a postcolonial theoretical approach.

3.3 Some key concepts of postcolonial theory

3.3.1 Alterity

Alterity is a word that came from “the Latin *alteritas*, meaning ‘the state of being other or different; diversity, otherness.”⁵⁷ So, alterity is defined as “the state of being other or different; the political, cultural, linguistic, or religious other. The study of the ways in which one group makes themselves different from others.”⁵⁸ The concept of alterity is visible in my thesis in the spiritual impact of the missionary work. In the chapter devoted to this aspect of the mission work, I will show how after the announcement of the gospel, the Tikar who accepted Jesus Christ acquired a new identity. They became different from others because of their behavior, their beliefs and their religious practices.

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Bill Ashcroft et al, *Post-colonial studies*, 9

⁵⁸ <https://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>, Accessed April 15, 2019.

3.3.2 *Eurocentrism*

Eurocentrism is “The conscious or unconscious process by which Europe and European cultural assumptions are constructed as, or assumed to be, the normal, the natural or the universal.”⁵⁹ In other words, it is a process in which,

‘The world’ only acquired spatial meaning after different regions had been inscribed by Europeans, and this inscription, apart from locating Europe at the top of the globe or map, established an ideological figuration, through the accompanying text and illustrations, which firmly centralized Europe as the source and arbiter of spatial and cultural meaning.⁶⁰

It is therefore a voluntary or involuntary act to consider European culture as the best. In the critical part of my thesis, I will try to show how this attitude can also be seen in missionary work.

⁵⁹ Bill Ashcroft et al, *Post-colonial studies*, 84

⁶⁰ *Ibid*

Chapter 4: The Tikar People: history, culture and religion

This chapter is a presentation of the history of the Tikar people, their origin and their geographical location, as well as the organization and life in their villages and the religion they practiced before the arrival of the Gospel. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, it will be here the description of the historical facts. The facts will be described according to the experience of the Tikar people and their connection to this subject. This presentation will give a background understanding of the context in which the mission carried out its work and is important to understand the changes in the life of the Tikar people during, and after, missionary activity.

4.1 The origins and geographic context

4.1.1 Origin

In many cultures in Africa and in Cameroon, values are transmitted orally from one generation to the other. The stories of the villages are communicated orally from grandparents to children. Orality “is related to the Word and is equivalent to the oral tradition.”⁶¹ It is the “transmission of knowledge from one individual to another, by word of mouth, through successive learning, and from one generation to another.”⁶² The history of the Tikar people has not escaped this situation. Among the Tikar people, oral tradition lives on and transcends time despite the onslaught of modernism, because the transmission of knowledge by word of mouth and from generation to generation is at the heart of the concerns relating to the preservation of cultural values. In the village where I was born, the story of my people was told by the elders of the village. This story was told to the children in the evenings after the meal and around the fire by a family member. Most of the time it was the grand parents who had the duty to tell the story to the children and grandchildren. This is how the tradition was preserved.

However, some researchers and historians have made remarkable efforts to provide a written history of the Tikar People. This is the case of Eldridge Mohammadou, Engellbert Mveng, Aboubakar Mgbékoum, Tchimi Basile, Beemster Bernard, etc. These writers have produced written documents concerning the history of the Tikar people. These documents and books

⁶¹ Clément Dili et Kolyang Dina Taïwé, *Culture et identité au Nord-Cameroun*, (Paris, L’Harmattan 2008), 20

⁶² Ibid, 55

assisted me in presenting this story. Together with the qualitative interviews I was enabled to provide some new information about this ethnic group in Cameroon.

There are several chiefdoms in the Tikar area, but I am going to focus on the chiefdoms of Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar. The reason for this is twofold; first, because these two chiefdoms constitute the very first Tikar chiefdoms from which other chiefdoms came; and secondly, because the chiefdoms of Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar are the places where the missionary activity that is being investigated in this thesis was carried out.

Aboubakar Mgbékoum, one of the princes of the Bankim chiefdom, writes in his book titled, *Histoire du Peuple Tikar*, that according to Tikar and Mboum sources, the history of the Tikar people began on the plateau of the Adamawa region of Cameroon. He claims that it was the sacred mountain located a few kilometres from Ngan-Ha⁶³ — site where the current chiefdom of Belaka, the chief of the Mboum is located — that destiny chose as the starting point of the Tikar people. Two versions of the story explain the reasons for this departure of the Tikar from the Mboum people, the ancestors of the Tikar people. Some argue that the story started with a conversation between Prince Klo⁶⁴ and his father who accused him of having sex with one of his wives. The father of Klo supposedly said to his son “*Tinkala djé*”, which means in the Mboum language “Get out of here” or simply “Go from here”. This term *Tinkala* is then the root of the name “Tikar” for the descendants of Prince Klo.⁶⁵

Another version, and the one that is more accepted by the majority of the Tikar, states that a princess of Belaka⁶⁶ by the name of Wouten had violated the law which forbade women to enter the sacred house of the chiefdom. In fact, this house was reserved for the settlement of conflicts within the chiefdom and the processing of important cases and was off-limits to women because it was believed that the spirits of the chiefdom lived there.⁶⁷

It is reported that one day, the chief was dividing up his territory between his three sons and when Princess Wouten heard about that, she was angry because she had not been included in the dividing up of the chiefdom. She entered the sacred house and claimed her share of the territory. The chief, very angry about this unexpected intrusion of Wouten, said to the princess

⁶³ Aboubakar Mgbékoum, *L'histoire du peuple Tikar*, Tome 1, (Cameroon, Abou Production, 2009), 14-15

⁶⁴ According to the story, He was the son of the King

⁶⁵ Aboubakar Mgbékoum, *L'histoire du peuple Tikar*, 14-15

⁶⁶ This is the name of the king in the Mboum tradition.

⁶⁷ Aboubakar Mgbékoum, *L'histoire du peuple Tikar*, 14-15

“*Tinkala dje*”. This happened around the year 1201 according to Aboubakar Mgbekoum.⁶⁸ Thus, Princess Wouten, angry at her father's words, left the chiefdom with her three sons (Klo, Tinki and Guié), and began to descend south along the Mbam River. Unfortunately, Princess Wouten died during the journey and was replaced by her elder son Klo. The group of three brothers arrived in the locality of Ina (a village located about ten kilometres from Ngambé-tikar) and when they arrived close to the Mbam River they separated. Two of them, namely Klo and Tinki, crossed the Mbam River and founded the chiefdom of Bankim. Their younger brother, Guié continued straight on, creating the present chiefdom of Ngambé-Tikar.⁶⁹ It is from these first two kingdoms that many other kingdoms were created. In short, the Tikar people came from the Mboum area, so they are the descendants of the Mboum in the Adamawa region of Cameroon.

4.1.2 Geographic context

After having founded the chiefdoms of Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar, the Tikar migrated to other regions of Cameroon. According to Nygandji Ndi Samuel, geographically, the Tikar are found in four administrative regions of Cameroon, namely the subdivision of Bankim in the Adamaoua region, the subdivisions of Yoko and Ngambé-Tikar in the central region of Cameroon where several Tikar groups and villages are settled and whose main town is Ngambé-Tikar, the subdivision of Nwa in the North West of Cameroon where we can observe several Tikar villages like Nguh, Ntem, Nwanti.⁷⁰ Carol Stanley, in her doctoral thesis, situates the Tikar plain in this way:

The “Tikar plain” located in the western part of central Cameroon, extends on both sides of the Mbam River. From the administrative point of view, the Tikar country is divided into three different departments: that of Mayo Banyo, in the province of Adamawa; that of Mbam, in Central Province; and finally, that of Noun, in the West Province. The neighbouring ethnic groups are: in the west-south-west, Bamoun; to the north, the Mambila; in the north-east, the Kondja; and to the east, the Babuté.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ Ibid, 15

⁷⁰ Nygandji Ndi Samuel, “Pourquoi les Kirdi du Nord-Cameroun ont-ils préféré le Christianisme à l’Islam ? le cas des « Habe » de Bankim”, (mémoire de maîtrise, Yaoundé, Faculté de théologie protestante, 1993), 6-7

⁷¹ Carol Stanley, *Description morpho-syntaxique de la langue tikar (parlée au Cameroun)*, (Lille, 1991), 1

4.2 The structure and life in the villages

4.2.1 Structure of the village

All the Tikar villages have a similar organization. At the head of each village is a chief whose title may differ from village to village. He is called *mveing* or *mbwen*. Mohammadou emphasizes that as for Bankim, the chief has a specific title of *cimi*, which means “the one responsible for, or master of the village.”⁷² The chief is chosen from among the princes by a group of notables. He is the guardian of the traditions and has the responsibility for the well-being of all the inhabitants of his village. In Bankim, the *cimi* could not be dismissed.⁷³ However, if he were considered by the majority of dignitaries as bad, they would somehow manage to eliminate him.⁷⁴ He does not have the right to drink wine or eat in public. The *mveing* or *mbwen* governs the chieftaincy with the help of various dignitaries and servants performing specific functions, either within the chieftaincy, either in the royal court, or in the town or in ritual and sacred places.⁷⁵ At Bankim, these dignitaries are: the *mandwop yiwé* who is the paternal aunt of *cimi*; the *ngyinum cimi* who is the queen-mother; the *mèki*, who are the seven notables or ministers; the *mèlunyip*, who are the seven princesses of the royal family of the chieftaincy; the *mènsinki* who are the maternal uncles of the *cimi*; the *mèndji* who are the princes and sons of the *cimi*; the *mèngwo* who are the wives of the *cimi*; the *mècikpu* who are the servants of *cimi*; and the *mèngbè* who are the governors or chiefs of the various quarters.⁷⁶ It should be noted that this system is almost the same in all Tikar kingdoms. The difference is at the level of the names of these dignitaries, but the role remains the same.

4.2.2 Life in the villages

The Tikar speak the Tikar language. According to the story, the Mboum princes who were called *tinkala*, arrived in Bankim, the village of the *tùmù* people, and mixed with that local population. They married the *tùmù* women and abandoned their language —which was Mboum — and began to speak *tùmù* instead. This version of the story is supported by Stanley who states that,

⁷² Mohammadou, *Traditions historiques des peuples du Cameroun central*, 308

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ Ibid

The Tikar migration from the Mbum country ended up in the Tumu territory, the current Tikar plain. The emigrants mingled with the local population, marrying Tumu women and so the Tumu language replaced the original language. At present the Tikar of Bankim and its surroundings are *ɓwum twùmɓwù* "Tumu people" and their language *lɛ' twùmɓwù* "Tumu language."⁷⁷

Even though the *Tùmù* language is spoken by all Tikar, there are still many dialects within the tribe. Stanley divides them into four large groups namely, the Bankim dialect, the Ngambé-Tikar dialect, the Kong dialect and the Nditam dialect.⁷⁸ She says that the last two dialects, Kong and Nditam, are very different from the first two, sometimes to such an extent that communication between them and the other two dialects is often difficult.⁷⁹

In terms of lifestyle, the Tikar people live together in villages and families. According to the culture, the man is the head of the family and has the duty to protect and provide for the needs of his wife and children. He can have more than one wife. Mohammadou affirms that in the chiefdom of Bankim, polygamy was for the chief obligatory because he had to marry all the women left by his father except his own mother.⁸⁰ This tradition was practiced in almost all Tikar chiefdoms. Each village led by a *mveing* or *mbwen* is autonomous. The population has the duty to obey the chief and respect the traditions. As a means of subsistence, the Tikar live mainly from agriculture, fishing, hunting and gathering. By the way, Stanley says that "most people on the Tikar Plain are engaged in agriculture, and grow mainly maize, cassava, coffee, and peanuts. These last two crops provide them with a significant income."⁸¹ They raise goats, sheep and chickens, but nowadays many Tikar also grow cocoa, plantain, hot peppers, egusi, etc.

With regard to education and according to one of my informants, Mgbatoussoung Jean Paul Paul, the children belong to both the parents and the whole society because it is said that the child does not belong only to his parents but belongs to the whole village. Thus, it is very common to see another person give lessons on morality to a child who is not his own. Before the arrival of schools, girls were educated by their mothers and the boys by their fathers. The

⁷⁷ Carol Stanley, *Description morpho-syntaxique de la langue tɪkar (parlée au Cameroun)*, 1

⁷⁸ Ibid, 4

⁷⁹ Ibid,

⁸⁰ Mohammadou, *Traditions historiques des peuples du Cameroun central*, 311

⁸¹ Carol Stanley, *Description morpho-syntaxique de la langue tɪkar (parlée au Cameroun)*, 3

mother taught the girl how to take care of her home, how to raise her children, how to take care of her husband, how to cook food, etc.⁸² In short, she was taught how to be a good housewife, because that was the role of the woman, to be a housewife. The girl was educated to be subject to her husband, to obey him in all circumstances. When a girl did not perform her normal conjugal duties, or if she committed adultery, the blame fell on her family, which, according to popular opinion, had not brought her up well. This family could therefore be considered a bad family and their daughters might not be able to get a husband. This is why many of the parents, after the schools were created by the missionaries, still refused to send the girls to school, because it was thought that the school would make the girls rebellious and disrespectful.⁸³ The young boy was taught how to provide for a wife and children. He had to be able to provide everything that was needed for his family's life, and he had a duty to protect his wife and children. He had a duty to teach the law of the society to his children and to make sure that they were respectful children. A bad act by a child dishonored the whole family, but mostly the father. Therefore, the respect of the moral rules was rigorously drilled into the children.⁸⁴

Although suicide and homicide are known, the Tikar had a great respect for human life,⁸⁵ for the property of others, for one's reputation and for the truth. Verbal insults tarnished the reputation of others and led to endless quarrels, especially if one was a sorcerer.⁸⁶

It should be noted that before the arrival of the missionaries, there were no schools. People did not have access to modern education, and because of that, young people did not have access to jobs.⁸⁷

About health care and according to my informant Mveing Alphonse, hospitals did not exist on the Tikar plain before the missionaries arrived. The Tikar people were frequently victims of diseases and health problems such as leprosy, sleeping sickness, difficult deliveries, scabies, tuberculosis, hernias, malaria etc.⁸⁸ For most of these health issues, a treatment was made from plants and tree shoots. Often, however, the treatment was not appropriate and there were many

⁸² Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 42

⁸⁶ http://horizon.documentation.ird.fr/exl-doc/pleins_textes/pleins_textes_6/colloques2/40380.pdf, Accessed 24th January 2019.

⁸⁷ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, July 9, 2018

deaths in the villages. Because of superstition, people most time attributed the causes of disease to either witchcraft or evil spirits⁸⁹. Joseph Ngah on this subject assert that:

Here the biological and spiritual dimensions intermingle. The physical or biological dimension may be threatened: the disease affects this dimension. However, the disease is not only a malfunction of the organs or an infection exclusively caused by pathogens, it is a condition that can be caused by an enemy, a wizard for example.⁹⁰

That is why they always used both the seers and indigenous treatments. This situation caused enormous loss of life. There were no means of disease prevention or appropriate treatment. Many children died of malaria. This motivated the missionaries to create a health center in Bankim and we will see later the social impact of this center.

It can thus be noted that at the time when the missionaries of the NMS arrived in the Adamawa in general and on the Tikar plain in particular, the society was characterized by deceases, the lack of schools and dispensaries, the small local health centers⁹¹ and especially by the practice of ancestor worship which was one aspect of the religion of the Tikar.

4.3 Religion

Religion is defined as the “belief in the existence of a god or gods.”⁹² It is “one of the systems of belief that are based on the belief in the existence of a particular god or gods.”⁹³ This definition implies that religion is a means by which humans seek to relate to a deity. This is true of the Tikar people. Religion occupies a very important place in the life of the people. For them, as for many African cultures, “religion affects all aspects of life to the point that there is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and the non-religious, between the spiritual and the material world.”⁹⁴ If we follow the definition above, we can say that to talk about religion, there must be one or more deities to which humans submit.

⁸⁹ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 42

⁹⁰ Ibid, 94

⁹¹ Nyiwe Thomas, “La stratégie missionnaire de l’église face aux traditions musulmanes dans l’Adamaoua”, (mémoire de maîtrise, Yaoundé, Faculté de théologie protestante, 1988), 41

⁹² Diana Lea Bull Victoria, Webb Suzanne, Duncan Robert, *Oxford Learner’s Dictionary of Academic English*, s.v. religion

⁹³ ibid

⁹⁴ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, (Ngaoundéré, Tello editions, 2002), 26

So then, who was God for the Tikar, and how did they practice their religion before the arrival of the missionaries? Here I will present the conception the Tikar had of God and the divinities, and their practice of religion.

4.3.1 God

The Tikar according to Ngah, believed in the existence of a supreme being, beyond themselves, who created the world and human beings.⁹⁵ They called him *Mveinswab* (the Bankim dialect) or *Mbwenswe* (the Ngambé-Tikar dialect). *Mveinswab* is a composed name, *Mvein* meaning “king or chief”, and *Swab* meaning “spirit”. *Mveinswab* therefore means “chief of spirits”. *Mveinswab* is almighty since he is the chief of spirits. This is one of the reasons why the Tikar accepted Christianity because they found that the God of whom the Bible speaks is none other than the *Mveinswab* they already worshiped. So, as John Mbiti point it out in *African Religions and Philisophy* that the “minimal and fundamental idea about God, is found in all African people,”⁹⁶ the Tikar new God before the arrival of missionaries. It is the name *Mveinswab* which was used by the translators of the New Testament into the Tikar language to designate the God of the Bible, the creator God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. One of my informants, Nimpang Gustave, said that the Tikar thought that *Mveinswab* was very holy and far away in heaven. To reach him or to pass on their prayers to him, they did so through the ancestors who served as a link between *Mveinswab* and humans.⁹⁷ This is why the ancestors and ancestor worship were central to the Tikar religion.⁹⁸

4.3.2 The ancestors and ancestor worship

Among the Tikar, the ancestors were people who died when they were old and who performed acts of integrity during their lives. The ancestor must have lived an irreproachable life. Thus, moral integrity was an important condition for ascending to the rank of ancestor. Ngah divides the conditions of accession into the rank of ancestor into four points. First, the ancestor is someone who was old when they died. Secondly, the ancestor is a member of the local community; in other words, an outsider cannot become an ancestor. Thirdly, the ancestor must

⁹⁵ Ibid, 58

⁹⁶ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, second edition, (Great Britain, Heinemann, 1990), 29

⁹⁷ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July11, 2018

⁹⁸ Ngah Joseph, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 58

have been married and the father of many children; and fourthly, the ancestor must have been buried with dignity according to the traditional custom. The ancestors have a bi-dimensional position, that is, they are considered part of the community of the living on the one hand, and on the other hand, they are part of the spiritual world. We cannot approach them physically, but we know they exist.⁹⁹ Ngah explains that,

because of their privileged position and their proximity to deities, ancestors are the best intermediaries between deities and men; the living depend on the ancestors as much as the latter depend on the living. This relationship of interdependence is concretized on the part of the ancestors by favors that they bestow on their offspring. On the part of the living, the relationship must be concretized by sacrifices and libations. If the ancestors are forgotten or neglected, they can express their rage by sending annoyances and misfortunes as reminders.¹⁰⁰

The people were therefore called to celebrate a cult of the ancestors to either implore their blessing or appease their anger. That is why ancestor worship was highly respected by the Tikar, because the dead were considered present in the daily life of the living. They observe the conduct of each individual and may, if necessary, intervene in a dream to call to order the one who deviates from the right path. Ngah explained that the cult of the dead, called *Switi* or *Nkan Ngnàbi*, was a rite that celebrated the link between the ancestors of the tribe and the living of the same tribe. It was a way of telling the ancestors that they were not forgotten by the living. This worship was an occasion where people, through the mouths of the priests, submitted their grievances to *Mveinswab* through the ancestors. It was on this occasion that the living demanded soil fertility, prosperity, peace and fertility throughout the village, but also, it was an opportunity to thank the ancestors for all the benefits they had given to the people all year long¹⁰¹. That is why this cult was most often celebrated after the harvest and shortly before the new season. During the worship ceremony, the traditional wine was poured on the tombs of the ancestors by the minister of worship as a gift given to the ancestors. The end of the worship was accompanied by a time of dancing and celebration.

Eldridge Mohammadou goes in the same direction by saying that the cult of the ancestors, *switi* in Bankim took place around the month of November after the harvest and in honor of the royal

⁹⁹ Ibid, 78

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 79

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 26

ancestors.¹⁰² According to him, the ritual was practiced in three phases and lasted seven days during which the skulls of the ancestors were cleaned and exposed to the sun, with the seventh day being the culminating point of worship. He declares that,

On the seventh day, the libations on the royal tombs made with the beer of the new millet are celebrated, thanks are given to the ancestors for having favored the harvest, and they are asked to make the following crop as abundant and women as fertile. It is only at the end of this rite that we can begin harvesting the products of the fields.¹⁰³

Even though the names differ from one village to another, the practice and meaning of ancestor worship remains the same throughout the Tikar area. This cult sums up in a few ways the traditional religion of the Tikar.

4.3.3 The spirits

The belief in the existence of spirits was very common among the Tikar. In fact, according to Ngah, spirits are immaterial entities that live in the spiritual world and from time to time intervene in the material world.¹⁰⁴ These are the spirits of the dead. Even if you cannot see them, you can feel their presence. There are good and bad spirits.¹⁰⁵ Good spirits were sometimes confused with ancestors. One could even use terms such as “the spirits of our ancestors” to simply refer to the ancestors themselves. Thus, some places such as mountains, lakes, forests, rocks etc. were considered as where the spirits of ancestors lived. It was necessary to have the permission of the ancestors before accessing these sacred places. Those who did not respect this rule could be struck down by these spirits. As for the evil spirits, they roamed all over the world and sometimes caused incurable diseases in humans. It was therefore necessary to protect oneself against this kind of spirit. That is why the Tikar put a lot of importance on fetishes because they provided them protection against wizards and evil spirits. So, belief in spirits was also part of religion in the Tikar culture before the arrival of missionaries.

¹⁰² Edridge Mohammadou, *Traditions historiques des peuples du Cameroun central*, Vol.1, Mbere et Mboum Tikar, Tokyo, (ILCAA, 1990), 314

¹⁰³ Mohammadou, *Traditions historiques des peuples du Cameroun central*, 314

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 80

¹⁰⁵ Ibid,

4.3.4 Sacrifice

Sacrifice occupied a very important place in traditional Tikar religion because it was another means of communicating with spiritual beings. Sacrifices were used to “ward off evil, heal a sick person, and prevent a calamity.”¹⁰⁶ There were several types of sacrifices: the beer sacrifice, the sacrifice of the first fruits of the farms, and the sacrifice of blood.¹⁰⁷ The latter was the most important because it allowed one to get in touch with the spirits and consolidated the solidarity between the human communities. Before any activity such as hunting, fishing, farming, etc., sacrifice was necessary to guarantee safety and good performance.¹⁰⁸ The meaning of the sacrifice was to thank and honor to the ancestor. The “sacrifice offered to the ancestors by a descendant is an act that ensures immortality and eliminates the terror of death.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Joseph Ngah, *The work of Christ: An investigation of his soteriological significance for the Gbaya and Tikar of Cameroon*, (Ph.D Thesis, Chicago, Faculty of the Lutheran School of theology, 1994), 63

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 63-70

¹⁰⁸ Ibid,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 67

Chapter 5: The arrival of the NMS missionaries in Cameroon and in the Tikar area, and their work among the Tikar people

In this chapter, I will present the arrival of the NMS missionaries in Cameroon and how they ended up working on the Tikar plain. But before discussing how they arrived on the Tikar plain, it may be important to mention briefly the activity of the German mission that preceded them. Then I will present some of the challenges faced by the NMS missionaries when they arrived in the Tikar area, and later, I will discuss how they conducted their missionary work and created congregations. And finally, I will talk about how they created the diaconal structures and how they used them to meet the needs of the population.

5.1 The NMS missionaries in Cameroon

These two mission societies arrived at different times. The missionaries of the Soudan Mission (SM) were the first to arrive and they settled in the Gbaya villages of Cameroon in 1923; and then came the missionaries of the NMS in 1925, who established their base in Ngaoundéré.¹¹⁰ I will focus only on the missionaries of the NMS, since they are the ones whose work was the focus of my research. About the missionaries of the NMS, according to Kåre Lode, they arrived in Ngaoundéré on March 6, 1925.¹¹¹ He states that it was a delegation consisting of four people namely, Pastor Jens Nikolaisen, Pastor Sverre Oseland, Johannes Thrana, and Karl Flatland. After settling in Ngaoundéré, they started work among the Mboum and the Dii people. During the first years of the work in Ngaoundéré the focus was on the construction of houses and other structures that would be used by the mission, followed by evangelization.¹¹² He continues by saying that the first catechist was a Tikar who had originally worked with the Mission of Paris (MP) in Fouban in the Western region of Cameroon.¹¹³

A few months later, the NMS expanded its mission field south of Ngaoundéré, specifically to Tibati and Yoko.¹¹⁴ According to the report of the NMS conference held in Ngaoundéré in 1932, Norwegian missionaries met the Tikar people from Yoko.¹¹⁵ Following that encounter, they began to think about how to expand their mission field to include the Tikar. Lode also

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 11 - 15

¹¹¹ Ibid,

¹¹² Ibid

¹¹³ Ibid,

¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Source: Misjons-og diakoniarkivet, VID- MHS- A- 1045- konferanse referat, Kam- 1932

states that according to the annual report of the NMS meeting in 1935, there was a population of 15,000 in the Yoko subdivision divided among five tribes and that the Wute and the Tikar were the most important.¹¹⁶ Thus, from Yoko and Tibati, the missionaries of the NMS expanded their work to include the Tikar plain. At the beginning, they supervised the Tikar district from Tibati but after some time they decided to build a mission station in Bankim.¹¹⁷ But, before discussing their work among the Tikar, I will first talk about the work of the German Baptist missionaries among the Tikar, because it was they who first evangelized the Tikar.

5.2 The German missionaries among the Tikar people

Cameroon was officially recognized as a German colony on July 1884.¹¹⁸ It was on this day that the Germans signed treaties with the chiefs of the coastal villages of Cameroon.¹¹⁹ After conquering the country, the Germans created administrative centers throughout the territory and the center that was closest to the Tikar was the one in Yoko. However, during this colonial period, the Germans also brought missionaries with them. Thus, in 1910, the first German missionaries of the Berlin Baptist Mission settled in Ngambé-Tikar.¹²⁰ It was a missionary couple, Mr. and Mrs. Reimer. They settled there and started work among the Tikar people. One year later, in 1911, they were joined by another missionary named Herman Kayser Their work was remarkable. Rev. Robert Pindzie states:

The missionaries built two houses of fired bricks, made of clay, and with tile roofs. They had brought with them new varieties of plants: banana trees, mango trees, guava trees, and cherry trees. At the center of the social changes emanating from their work, the main action was the link they formed with the royal court, including the princes and nephews of Chief Houngue who attended the church and the school in large numbers. They worked hard learning to read and write. These people not only took Christian names but became men of faith. Many of them were baptized and distinguished

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 49

¹¹⁷ Torstein Jørgensen, *I tro og teneste: Det Norske Misjonsselskap 1842 -1992*, 24

¹¹⁸ Philippe Gaillard, *Le Cameroun*, Tome 1, (Paris : Editions L'Harmatan, 1989), 62

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ Pindzié Adamou Robert, "Houngue Othon 1916 à 1983 Église Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun Cameroun", In *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, Center for Global Christianity and Mission 745 Commonwealth Avenue Boston, Massachusetts 02215, USA 2008.

themselves in their Christian faith, such as Coula Thomas who later was one of those who formed Ngambe's greatest elite — and even Tikar.¹²¹

Unfortunately, in February 1912, Reimer's wife died in Fouban after a difficult delivery and were buried in Ngambé-Tikar. Reimer, traumatized by this event, returned to Germany and was replaced by Kayser who was joined by two other missionaries, Shüttel and Herst who will also be joined by two other missionaries. During World War I, German settlements were fired by French and English troops, and the German missionaries (Kayser, Herst and Shüttel) who worked among the Tikar at Ngambé-Tikar were driven out in 1915.¹²² Following that, the mission work among the Tikar was abandoned for a few years. The Paris Mission, already present in Fouban, began to supervise the mission field abandoned by the German missionaries.¹²³ In 1933, they sent a catechist to Ngambé-Tikar to take care of the faithful. Lode affirms that it was Mr. Faoussi Jonas who was sent there and who had the responsibility of setting up a school to teach the Christians and the catechumens.¹²⁴ But in 1936, the Paris Mission, during its big annual conference, decided to transfer the mission work among the Tikar to the NMS, and on January 1, 1937, the NMS began work among the Tikar.¹²⁵ It is important to note here that the German missionary work did not extend over the whole Tikar plain. The German missionaries appear to have worked only in Ngambé-Tikar; in any case, we have no record of them working in other localities on the Tikar plain.

5.3 The NMS missionaries among the Tikar people

As mentioned above, on January 1, 1937, following the decision made by the Mission de Paris (MP) Conference in Cameroon in 1936, the transfer of the Tikar area to the Norwegian Mission Society was completed.¹²⁶ Missionaries of the NMS, already present in Tibati and Yoko, started to supervise the work among the Tikar, and especially to take care of the salary of the workers. Supervision began with the missionary Thrana who came from Tibati and made visits to

¹²¹ Pindzié Adamou Robert, “Houngue Othon 1916 à 1983 Église Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun Cameroun”, In *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, Center for Global Christianity and Mission 745 Commonwealth Avenue Boston, Massachusetts 02215, USA 2008.

¹²² Source: Misjon-og diakoniarkivet, VID – MA – A – 1066 – 37 – legg - 26

¹²³ Ibid

¹²⁴ Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 53

¹²⁵ Ibid

¹²⁶ Ibid

Ngambé-Tikar and other villages on the plain.¹²⁷ From then on, the missionaries of the NMS extended their mission field to include almost all the Tikar plain, and even beyond the Tikar people. Then, because of the very long distance that separated Tibati from the Tikar plain, the NMS decided to build a mission station at Ngambé-Tikar on the former site of the German Mission. However, this project did not succeed because of the isolation of the Ngambé-Tikar locality.¹²⁸ And when the government of Cameroon decided to build the national road number 6 through Bankim, the NMS changed its plan and decided to build a mission station in Bankim.¹²⁹

The decision to build a mission station at Bankim was made in 1939 and the NMS sent Olaf Haagensen to settle there in 1940. Immediately, Haagensen started to build houses and do evangelization in the villages. Work was slowed down during the Second World War because of Germany's invasion of Norway.¹³⁰ But the situation was quickly settled, and work resumed among the Tikar.

5.4 The challenges

If the arrival of the missionaries did not meet resistance from the chief of Ngambé-Tikar, it was not the case about the chief of Bankim. According to my informant Mboh Christine, the chief of Bankim opposed the missionary settlement on his territory. She explains in these terms:

When the missionaries arrived, some of our parents approached them. The missionaries started working with these people. The chief and the notables began to persecute the early Christians. The chief was against the arrival of foreigners and also missionaries in his territory, because he thought that these people were coming to take their lands. That is why many of the Christians were persecuted by the chief of Bankim and were forced to flee the village and settle far from the village. Even my father was a victim of this persecution. He was forced to leave the village to settle in Nkongsamba with his wife and that is where I and my brother were born.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Ibid,

¹²⁸ Ibid

¹²⁹ Ibid, 54

¹³⁰ Ibid

¹³¹ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 10, 2018

People had a fear of white-skinned people. This fear was the result of the oppression orchestrated by the German colonizers who imposed forced labor. As for the case of Ngambé-Tikar for example, Robert Adamou Pindzie explains this situation in greater detail when he writes:

At that time, Ngambé-Tikar and the other chiefdoms mentioned above, pacified by the Germans, were expected to respect the settlers' legislation. From then on, they were all attached to the Yoko administrative post about 150 kilometers to the East. Each village now had to provide provisions, porters, men skilled in carrying weapons, build a passageway and prepare beautiful black women for the nocturnal romances of the settlers. Villages should also, if possible, provide them with wanted goods (ivory, rubber, precious stones).

In the long term, all adults paid the head tax. They also had to participate in forced labor by building houses and roads, leaving their villages for three to six months for unknown destinations. This practice limited population growth and many men were decimated because of the poor conditions, the brutal treatment, the malnutrition, and the lack of medical care.¹³²

According to my informants, this painful past caused some people to be afraid of any white skinned person because they thought that all the whites had the same colonial intentions. So, the first challenge to the missionaries was to restore the trust from the local people. The missionary policy was characterized by their flexibility and their kindness towards the local people. This allowed many of the Tikar to approach and work with the missionaries because they understood that they were not colonizers, but good people who came to share the Gospel.¹³³

The second challenge to the missionaries was the lack of knowledge of the culture. The missionaries first had to learn about the culture of the Tikar people. This task was not easy because they did not have enough time to do it. That is why many of the cultural aspects were not taken into account when they proclaimed the Gospel. Some complex issues related to the culture, such as the question of polygamy, witchcraft, and participation in traditional ceremonies were always brought to the attention of the missionaries. But most of the time they were not able to respond because all these things were quite foreign to them. Pastor Åsmund

¹³² Pindzié Adamou Robert, "Houngue Othon 1916 à 1983 Église Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun Cameroun", In *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* Center for Global Christianity and Mission 745 Commonwealth Avenue Boston, Massachusetts 02215, USA 2008.

¹³³ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim 11 July 2018

Steinnes, one of former missionary among the Tikar people, explained that, “Frankly, we have to say that we were not well enough prepared, I think we learned things about the culture as we lived there (...) but the cultural differences were very great.”¹³⁴

Another challenge to the Norwegian missionaries was the isolation of the Tikar plain. There were no roads. The missionaries were obliged to walk sometimes more than a hundred kilometers on foot and to cross great rivers in canoes to evangelize. Åsmund Steinnes testifies:

The means of travel were difficult. It was necessary to cross the Mbam River in a canoe during the rainy season. Really, I was almost scared from time to time that we would fall into the river. And also, we made long journeys only on foot. From Bankim to Nditam, I think there may be 130 kilometers, so back and forth it's 260 kilometers by foot. It was tiring but it was also a joy at the same time.¹³⁵

5.5 Evangelization and the founding of churches

Evangelization was the essential element of the missionary activity, and to carry out this mission, the missionaries recruited some men and women who accompanied them to the villages. Their role was either to carry the material needed for the mission, or to interpret the sermons, the teaching, or the Bible studies in the Tikar language. Thus, this group of missionaries and some native Tikar went from village to village to preach the Gospel. During many of the visits to the villages, many people professed faith in Jesus Christ and were baptized. This is how the congregations were founded. Local catechists were then trained to take care of the Christians in these new communities.¹³⁶ Sunday schools were also set up to take care of the children of the Christians. Around the 1970s, a new method of evangelization came into being in the EELC called, “*Vie Nouvelle Pour Tous*”.¹³⁷ This movement was intended to undertake evangelization in areas where access was difficult. They used a helicopter service called “Hélimission”. Kåre Lode says that one of the pastors of the NMS, Bjørn Bue, was chosen in January 1970 as the head of this program.¹³⁸ In 1974, this new method of evangelization was used in Yoko and Bankim where there were six teams that were sent, with

¹³⁴ Åsmund Steinnes, interview taped in Kleppe, 27 January 2019

¹³⁵ Ibid,

¹³⁶ Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 53

¹³⁷ Ibid, 199

¹³⁸ Ibid

workers ready to take care of the people.¹³⁹ This accelerated the creation of congregations in the villages since access was now easier because of the helicopter. To be baptized one had to give up pagan customs that were contrary to the Gospel such as sacrifices to ancestors, inhuman cultural practices, pagan worship of crops, etc. The goal of the missionaries was to make sure that the new converts were ready to receive the Gospel and specially to put it into practice.¹⁴⁰

5.6 The creation and the running of diaconal structures

The diaconal structures such as schools, dispensaries were very important factors in the work of the mission. They greatly contributed to the conversion of many Tikar, even those who were Muslims before. These diaconal structures that were created among the Tikar were the Bankim health center and the primary schools in several villages. I will discuss the impact of these structures on the life of the Tikar people later.

5.6.1 The Bankim health centre

As soon as they arrived, the missionaries found that the Tikar people were suffering from many illnesses, and that there was no clinic there. They started giving some primary health care to students in schools, especially in Bankim, in 1951. According to Lode, it was a missionary called John Fosse, who started the dispensary in Bankim in 1951 and the dispensary was ready in 1954.¹⁴¹ Many diseases were treated, and the missionaries gained more and more the confidence of the people, which sometimes resulted in mass conversions. Not only did this clinic solve the health problems of the Tikar, it was above all a very important factor in evangelization. Lode says that “there is no doubt that the clinics covered a need strongly felt by the population, they created trust and gave rise to a lot of contact and possibilities of evangelization.”¹⁴² He said there were devotions every morning, and for many nurses the evangelization had great emphasis.¹⁴³ Sleeping sickness was very prevalent in the area and the NMS was heavily involved in the official program for the control of this disease. To keep the clinic running, many of the Tikar were recruited and trained to work there. On July 27, 2016, the Bankim dispensary was transformed into a hospital, with a permanent doctor named Amisi

¹³⁹ Ibid, 199

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 116

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 136

¹⁴² Ibid

¹⁴³ Ibid

Useni Jean Pierre.¹⁴⁴ From now on, even cases of difficult illnesses, which were transferred to other hospitals in the past, will be able to be treated locally in Bankim. —The health structure was a means of evangelization and the Health Work of our church — the Œuvre de Santé de l’Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun (OSEELC) — has not abandoned the evangelizing aspect of the health structures. The preamble of the Statutes of its staff says in Articles 1 and 2 that:

Article 1: The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC) continues its task of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ by contributing to the improvement of the physical and moral life of the population through the Health Work.

Article 2: For the Health Work to pursue the goal it has set for itself, it is necessary that all employees are fully aware of the rules of procedure and the statutes of the Health Work and that they all work in the field of health. the spirit of love of the neighbor.¹⁴⁵

Through their health structures among the Tikar, the missionaries responded to two great goals of the diakonia namely, to help the sick one and to bring the Gospel of salvation to the lost people. The preamble of the revised statutes of the Health Work of the EELC confirms this mission in these terms:

The OSEELC is a private faith-based non-profit health organization whose mission is to provide help, help and support. in the example of Jesus Christ who has healed and relieved the suffering of the sick. The OSEELC is committed to providing quality care available to the whole community by a dedicated, qualified and efficient staff.¹⁴⁶

5.6.2 The schools on the Tikar plain

The schools were the first diaconal structures created on the Tikar plain. Like the health center, schools were a main means of evangelization and development. The Bible being a written book, to read it, one must know how to read. However, no school existed on the Tikar plain before

¹⁴⁴ Records of the Executive Committee of the “oeuvre de santé de l’Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne du Cameroun” (OSEELC), Ngaoundéré, 27th July 2016.

¹⁴⁵ Statutes of the staff of the Health Work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon, adopted in Ngaoundéré the 18th April 1994, p 1

¹⁴⁶ Revised Statutes of the staff of the Health Work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon, adopted in Ngaoundéré, 2008, p 1

1950. Although there had already been some lessons taught to the students, the first school was officially created in Bankim in 1952 by Karen Ulland.¹⁴⁷

After the establishment of the Bankim school, several other schools were established in the Tikar plain and in the Mambila and Kwandja villages. It should be noted that the Tikar plain is also inhabited by these tribes that I just mentioned above. Thus, according to the information contained in the letter sent by Else Strand — Secretary of Education of EELC in 1981— to the Cameroonian Minister of National Education, requesting the reopening of EELC primary schools, it appears that there were eight primary schools created in Tikar villages by the missionaries, before and after the independence of the country. These schools were the primary school of Bankim, created in 1952; the primary school of Ngambé-Tikar, created in 1960; the primary school of Mbamla 1 and 2, created in 1960; the Beng-beng primary school, created in 1961; the Mbonga primary school, created in 1962; the Gandie primary school, created in 1962; the Nditam primary school, created in 1968; and the Ina primary school, created in 1972.¹⁴⁸ Among all these schools, those of Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar were the most important because they were in the big centers. There was a school director who resided in Bankim and who oversaw the supervision of these schools. Sigrid Braut, the second director at Bankim, explains:

I arrived in Bankim in March 1954 and it was Pastor Åsmund Eken who was in charge in there. I was the Bankim School Director and Coordinator of all the primary schools of the area, namely Bankim, Songkolong, Somié, Ngambé-Tikar and Yimbéré. I was the second director. There was a first director named Karen Ulland.¹⁴⁹

The teachers were recruited from among the young people who already had some education and were paid by subsidies from the NMS and from the Cameroonian government. These schools did not offer all the classes at the beginning. In Bankim, those who had reached Class five, called in the Cameroonian system *Cours Moyen 1* (CM1) had to then go to Galim or Mbé to obtain the Certificate of Primary and Elementary Education (CEPE). Sigrid Braut confirmed this by stating that “There were no other schools in the locality. Classes went from SIL¹⁵⁰ to

¹⁴⁷ Kare Lode, *Appelés à la liberté*, 97

¹⁴⁸ Secrétariat à l’Education (SEDUC) archives, demande de réouverture des Ecoles Primaires de l’EELC à Monsieur le Ministre de l’Education Nationale, Strand Else, Ngaoundéré 28 Avril 1981

¹⁴⁹ Miss Sigrid Braut, interview taped in Kleppe December 26, 2017

¹⁵⁰ This is Class One in the Cameroonian educational system

CM1, and after completing CM1 at the school in Bankim, students were obliged to go to Galim or Mbe.”¹⁵¹

Students were not only trained in secular education but also in religious education. To have a strong foundation for the church and a future for it, missionaries told the Christians they should send their children to school. From then on, the Christians were required to send their children to the mission schools. Sigrid Braut — one of former missionary of the NMS in Bankim and among the Tikar people— confirmed that “Christians had a duty to send their children to school, both boys and girls, and every day Christian education was taught to students, and they were taught hymns and Bible classes.”¹⁵²

In addition to these diaconal structures, the missionaries had launched an awareness campaign on coffee growing. They encouraged Christians to create coffee farms, either for the church or to prepare for their future and that of their children. According to Stanley, coffee is still one of the crops on the Tikar plain.¹⁵³ This may have been the reason why missionaries encouraged people to become interested in this coffee crop. We will see the impact of this missionary action on the economic life of the Tikar in Chapter seven of this thesis.

These are the achievements of the NMS on the Tikar plain and among the Tikar of the EELC, in terms of evangelization, and at the social level through the diaconal structures such as the health center and the schools. So, the question is what was the impact of all this work on the spiritual, social and economic life of the Tikar people? That is the question I will try to answer in the following chapters.

¹⁵¹ Miss Sigrid Braut, interview taped in Kleppe December 26, 2017

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Carol Stanley, *Description morpho-syntaxique de la langue tikar (parlée au Cameroun)*, 3

Chapter 6: The spiritual impact of the NMS missionary work among the Tikar people

The missionary work of the NMS brought about a significant spiritual change among the Tikar people. In this chapter, I will highlight the spiritual aspects that have been impacted by this missionary work. Considering the historical perspective, I will describe and analyze how the Gospel provided a new understanding of God by the Tikar people, how it contributed to the abandonment of ancestor worship and idolatry, how it helped them overcome superstition and armed them with courage when faced with the many obligations of traditional religion, and how it contributed to a new Tikar Christian identity. Here, it is only the positive contribution that is studied. Criticism of this spiritual impact will be discussed in chapter eight.

6.1 The new understanding of God

In Chapter four, I mentioned that before the arrival of the missionaries, the Tikar people knew about God, in a sense. They knew that there is a supreme being called *mveinswab*, who created the material and spiritual world, who is above all things and who is the chief of the spirits. This understanding or definition of God in the Tikar language corresponds in many ways to the God of the Bible, the God of creation as presented in the book of Genesis. They found that the God the missionaries introduced them to was none other than the one they already knew. This is a situation that can be observed in many African cultures, for as Bénézet Bujo says: “Long before the arrival of Christianity in Africa, African religion recognized God as the source of all life.”¹⁵⁴ On the same topic, Joseph Ngah asserts that, “Christianity did not bring God to Africa, he was there before its arrival, in other words Africans knew God and it was this knowledge that allowed them to accept the God of the Bible. The task of Christianity has been facilitated by the notion of the supreme God of traditional religion.”¹⁵⁵ So, as Mbiti asserts, “God is not strange to African people, and in traditional life there are no atheists.”¹⁵⁶ This was exactly the case of the Tikar people. They knew God before the arrival of missionaries. Nimpang Gustave points this out by stating that, “the Tikar knew that there is a God who created everything, who is superior to the ancestors, but who is very far from humans. They called this Supreme God,

¹⁵⁴ Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology: In its social context, first edition*, (Nairobi, Paulines Publications Africa, 1992), 2

¹⁵⁵ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 79

¹⁵⁶ John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 29

Mveinswab, which means, ‘chief of spirits or chief of the ancestors.’¹⁵⁷ This is why it was easier for the missionaries to preach the Gospel among the Tikar because they already knew there was a God.

The Catholic Tikar in Bankim call God *mbyimbyî*, which literally means, “in front of”; in other words, He who has always existed.¹⁵⁸ Traditionally, they believe He was in contact with humans only through the ancestors, and that it was the ancestors who transmitted the prayers of humans to their chief, *mveinswab*. That is why they did not even refer to him in their religious celebrations. All prayers were addressed to the ancestors, the *me swab*.¹⁵⁹ They believed the chief of the spirits, *mveinswab*, had given the ancestors all power to control and direct the material world. Nimpang Gustave explained that,

The Tikar worshiped the ancestors by offering sacrifices on the tombs during traditional ceremonies, especially after the harvest to thank the ancestors for keeping them alive throughout the year. Prayers were also offered to the ancestors for protection against epidemics, enemies, diseases, etc.¹⁶⁰

Mveing Alphonse in the same way states that,

The Tikar worshiped the ancestors. They worshiped the ancestors when they needed blessings, when they needed the brief protection of everything that threatened their existence. This cult was celebrated on their tombs once a year at the big annual festival called "Swuti". And during this ancestor worship, sacrifices were offered.¹⁶¹

These statements help us to understand not only how much ancestor worship was at the heart of Tikar religious belief, but also that it was not the missionaries who brought the knowledge of the existence of God to the Tikar people.

¹⁵⁷ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim 11 July 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Ibid

¹⁶¹ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, July 9, 2018

Thus, according to what is said by these informants it can be said that the missionaries just helped the Tikar to understand that the God they already knew about is the same One the Bible teaches about. Although the God whom the Tikar already knew about is the same as the One described in the Bible, there is a difference in His relationship with human beings. This is where the difference lies between traditional Tikar religion and Christianity. It is here that the missionaries brought new elements into the understanding of God. The main question is, how is God in contact with humanity? How does He relate to humanity? According to the traditional beliefs of the Tikar, God is not in contact with humans, he lives far away in heaven. The “ancestors were the intermediaries between *mveinswab* and the humans. This is why the Tikar addressed their prayers to them.”¹⁶²

But when the missionaries came with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Tikar discovered God in a different way. The first thing the New Testament reveals, and that the missionaries taught the Tikar people was God’s love. This love is concrete and visible in the life and death of Jesus.¹⁶³

The person of Jesus Christ was therefore the first new element introduced into the faith of the Tikar people. They were taught that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that he is God Himself who came into the world to save humankind from all their sins. They learned that Jesus was the person to whom all prayers must henceforth be addressed. Thus, they discovered a God closer to them, who could talk to them through the Bible without intermediaries. Mveing Alphonse expressed this feeling of closeness to God in these terms:

Many of the Tikar have therefore abandoned their belief in the ancestors and turned to the Gospel of Jesus Christ because, according to them this Gospel had become part of them and released them from certain obligations that were part of their traditional beliefs. They no longer needed to offer sacrifices on the graves of their ancestors to have their blessing, their protection etc. They were now reading the Word of God. They now knew that God is right beside them, that he is no longer far away in heaven.¹⁶⁴

The God they discovered in the New Testament is love. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ into the world to live among them. According to what Mveing Alphonse said above, we can see how that was a dimension of God that the Tikar did not know about before. It should be noted that

¹⁶² Ibid

¹⁶³ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 72

¹⁶⁴ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, July 9, 2018

in the ancestral religion practiced by the Tikar, the ancestors could become angry and could hurt any villagers who did not respect the rules of the society, or who refused to offer sacrifices.¹⁶⁵ There was therefore a permanent fear among the people because they did not want to suffer the anger of the ancestors. The God of the Bible was different. This led many of them to accept the Gospel. The cult of the ancestors was no longer necessary.

Another new element introduced into the Tikar belief was the question of salvation. The Tikar did not have the notion of a final judgment and salvation. Salvation was equated to the reincarnation of the soul or becoming an ancestor and eternal.¹⁶⁶ People who did good deeds in society could come back into the material world and into the same family through the process of reincarnation if they were young or enter the spiritual world and become ancestors if they were old. Nimpang Gustave said that “when someone died, and he was old, he went into the world of the ancestors and people prayed to him, but if he was young he could be reborn into our world.”¹⁶⁷

However, the Gospel brought the notion of salvation. According to Mboh Christine, the Tikar learned that after death, our soul will be judged and there is a place in heaven for those who believe in Jesus and have done His will. Mboh Christine's says that “the missionaries asked them, ‘Will you abandon the old practices to follow Jesus Christ?’ and they answered ‘yes’ and kept that commitment”.¹⁶⁸ This confirms the fact that people were afraid of the last judgment and hell. They agreed to give up practices such as witchcraft, so that they would not go to hell.

This teaching of the Bible not only changed the religious belief of the Tikar, but also contributed to the moral recovery of the society. People were afraid to sin because they didn't want to go to hell.

As a result, and according to the interviewees, many religious practices, such as ancestor worship, which were considered sinful, were gradually abandoned or simply lost their influence over the lives of the people.

¹⁶⁵ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 71

¹⁶⁶ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

¹⁶⁷ Ibid

¹⁶⁸ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 10, 2018

6.2 The abandonment of the ancestor worship

Ancestor cult is very important in African cultures because it is “in the ancestor cults of Africa that we see how people envisage life, for it is above all here that they seek an increase of that life-force which flows through the mystical body to which both they and the ancestors belong.”¹⁶⁹ The “communion with the ancestors has both an eschatological and a salvation dimension.”¹⁷⁰

This ancestor worship was at the heart of traditional Tikar religion. It was the materialization of their religion. As to the question of why the Tikar abandoned the cult of the ancestors for the benefit of the Christian faith, Nimpang Gustave responded by saying that, “our parents accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ because through it they received more answers to their prayers than through ancestor worship.”¹⁷¹ These words from Nimpang Gustave summarize the main reason for the abandonment of ancestral worship among the Tikar. All my informants underlined this aspect. It is necessary to remember that the worship of the ancestors was held once a year.¹⁷² According to Kpoh Othon, this worship was intended to pay homage to the ancestors and implore their blessing on the inhabitants of the village. He explained that, “when they (the Tikar) needed a blessing, they went and poured corn wine into the lakes or on a mountain where the spirits were reputed to live.”¹⁷³

But when the Gospel came, it brought a new message; they learned that from now they could address their prayers directly to God without going through the ancestors.¹⁷⁴ They could present their problems to Christ in their prayer. This situation allowed the Tikar people to feel more and more the presence of God in their lives.¹⁷⁵ It allowed them to experience His presence daily. Thus, it seemed like their prayers were more often answered than in the cult of the ancestors. This resulted in them putting less emphasis on the worship of the ancestors. Mgbatoussong Jean Paul explains this in more detail when he states that,

After the proclamation of the gospel, many of our parents did not completely abandon ancestor worship. They practiced Christianity at the same time as ancestor worship. It

¹⁶⁹ Bénézet Bujo, *African Theology: In its social context, first edition*, 23

¹⁷⁰ Ibid,

¹⁷¹ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 10, 2018

¹⁷² Mohammadou, *Traditions historiques des peuples du Cameroun central*, 314

¹⁷³ Kpoh Othon, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 18, 2018

¹⁷⁴ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, July 9, 2018

¹⁷⁵ Ibid

was only after a long time that they started to put not so much emphasis on ancestor worship because they discovered in the Bible that there is a God who is above all else that exists in the world. That's why even ceremonies in sacred cemeteries are not so important any more. They have become just symbolic in order to preserve the cultural tradition. People found that the prayers of the Christians were most often answered, while those who worshiped the ancestors received no answers.¹⁷⁶

In fact, Mgbatoussong Jean Paul emphasizes here that initially some Tikar were confused about the new faith in Christ. They practiced both religions at the same time, that is, they went to church and practiced ancestor worship at the same time. But the more they found solutions to their spiritual and material problems in Christianity, the less emphasis they placed on ancestor worship. According to him, the cult of the ancestors has not completely disappeared, but it exists mainly in a symbolic way to preserve the cultural tradition.¹⁷⁷ That is to say, that ancestor worship no longer influences Tikar life today in the same way it did before the arrival of the Gospel. It is difficult to say with certainty that prayers during ancestor worship were not answered, but we know at least that the Tikar, since the arrival of the Gospel, no longer attach so much importance to the worship of ancestors.

Another reason that pushed the Tikar to abandon ancestor worship was related to the constraints imposed by the cult of ancestors. In fact, the Tikar were obliged to respect scrupulously the social and religious rules so as not to be punished by the ancestors. The Gospel of Jesus Christ was less strict. People felt safer in the Christian faith.¹⁷⁸ Faced with this new spirituality, which was not so constraining, and which allowed them to pray directly to God, many Tikar accepted Christianity.

6.3 The abandonment of idolatry

Ancestors are spiritual, immaterial beings who live in the spiritual world, but who frequently intervene in the material world either to punish or to bless humans. Such is the design of the ancestors among the Tikar. But, the questions are: Where do they come in contact with humans? Where do they live? According to Kpoh Othon, the Tikar believed that the ancestors live in lakes, mountains, tall trees and rocks.¹⁷⁹ Because of this, these places were considered

¹⁷⁶ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

¹⁷⁹ Kpoh Othon, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 18, 2018

as holy places where the cults were practiced, and the sacrifices were offered to the ancestors. The worship ceremonies in these places occupied a very important place in Tikar spirituality before the arrival of the Gospel, because it was believed that this was where one encountered the spirit world. It is the importance and significance of these places in the Tikar religious life that allows me to talk about Tikar idolatry. I call that practice “idolatry” since these places were the objects that were worshiped because they were considered to possess divine powers. Kpoh Othon confirms the idolatry that I mentioned above by saying,

According to what my parents told me, before the arrival of the missionaries, the Tikar here worshiped sacred places like lakes, mountains, lakes and mountains, called “lake of spirits” and “mountain of spirits”. In these places, spirits could communicate with humans, and their voices could be heard, but they were not seen, and it was believed that there was no other god elsewhere. They believed that it was these spirits who were gods, and when they needed blessings, they went to pour corn wine into these lakes of spirits or on a mountain of spirits.¹⁸⁰

When the Gospel was preached, it might be said that the Tikar understood that they had been worshipping created things, that is, lakes, rocks, skulls, mountains etc. instead of worshipping God Himself, because God cannot be reduced to the things of the created world, he cannot be reduced to the level of his own creatures.¹⁸¹ Some Biblical texts have contributed to this understanding. We have for example the text from Exodus 20: 1-6:

¹And God spoke all these words: ²“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ³“You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴“You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.¹⁸²

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

¹⁸¹ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

¹⁸² Exodus 20: 1-6

This is what Mboh Christine points out when she says that the Tikar “were told that they should only worship God and give up worshipping the skulls of their ancestors. They were told that God does not want that. They were shown Bible verses that talk about that.”¹⁸³

Such Scripture passages have contributed to the abandonment of idolatry because the sacrifices offered in lakes, mountains, trees, rocks are an offense to God who is a jealous God. That is why it is difficult to see the Christian Tikar attending such ceremonies today. Nevertheless, like ancestor worship, these places are still preserved nowadays, but according to my informants it seems it has less impact on the spiritual life of the people. These places are now a cultural heritage, and sometimes a tourist attraction. In other words, the ancestor worship is no longer practiced for the purpose that was attributed to it formerly, but rather for the traditional festivities and to allow foreigners and tourists to see the cultural traditions of the people. Learning about ancestor worship today allows the younger generation of Tikar to see how their parents practiced religion before the arrival of Christianity and Islam. Therefore, it is important to document the stories of my informants.

6.4 Liberation from superstition

Another spiritual impact of the missionary work of the NMS among the Tikar was the liberation from superstition. The belief in the existence of ghosts and evil spirits constantly harming human beings was part of the Tikar life before the arrival of the missionaries.

Superstition is “the belief that particular events happen in a way that cannot be explained by reason or science; the belief that particular events bring good or bad luck.”¹⁸⁴ When Nimpang Gustave says that “the Gospel brought a change of mentality and of lifestyle, it delivered us from strange dreams, the fear of ghosts and evil spirits,”¹⁸⁵ he confirms the fact that the belief in supernatural phenomena was very much a part of the Tikar culture, especially the belief in ghosts, the spirits of the dead. It was believed that the dead could act in our physical world for our good or for our misfortune.¹⁸⁶ The rite of widowhood is a good example of this. It was believed that if someone lost their spouse and did not carry out the rite of widowhood, the dead spouse could cause some misfortune to happen to the surviving spouse. As pointed out by

¹⁸³ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 10, 2018

¹⁸⁴ Diana Lea, et al., *Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English*, s.v. superstition

¹⁸⁵ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim, 11 July 2018

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, this belief led most often to dehumanizing practices of the rite of widowhood where the individual who lost his spouse was not allowed to appear in public, nor to wash or change their clothes, or to engage in a sexual relationship for at least a year.¹⁸⁷

It was believed that walking alone on the road or going alone in the forest exposed you to the attacks of ghosts and evil spirits.¹⁸⁸ It was also believed that if after the death of a family member, the funeral was not done according to custom, his spirit would attack his children and spouse, and even the whole family. And when that was the case, the family had to pour libations on his grave to calm his spirit. Ngah expresses this situation well when he states that among the Tikar,

At death, the soul must make a long journey to reach its final destination. Funerals are thus a kind of obligatory farewell without which the wandering soul is a danger to the living. The primary and conscious purpose of funerary rites is to allow a smooth transition to the abode of the dead.¹⁸⁹

Thus, according to Nimpang Gustave, all these beliefs created psychoses in the people. One had the impression that the spiritual world dominated the material world of the living. Likewise, it was believed that all illnesses and even deaths are caused by wizards.¹⁹⁰ So, there was no natural sickness or death, hence they turned to the cult of the ancestors, the marabouts and seers, in order to seek protection.

In such a context characterized by an ingrained superstition, the arrival of the Gospel was salutary. When Nimpang Gustave states that “our parents accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ because they received more answers to their prayers than in the ancestor worship”¹⁹¹, this helps us to understand how much the Tikar experienced the power of Jesus Christ in their life. It was a liberating message. The missionaries taught that Jesus is God and that his name is above every other name, that his power surpasses that of the sorcerers, that his protection is incomparable and, above all, permanent for all who believe in him. When Nimpang Gustave and several other informants say that the prayers of Christians were more frequently answered,

¹⁸⁷ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, 12 July 2018

¹⁸⁸ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim, 11 July 2018

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 204.

¹⁹⁰ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim, 11 July 2018

¹⁹¹ Ibid

they mean that the Tikar found more security in Christianity than in the ancestor worship. It is difficult to say how often their prayers were answered by God, but the fact that they accepted the Christian faith underline these affirmations, they had not found solutions to their spiritual problems in Christianity, it is likely that they would have continued to practice their traditional religion.

The teachings of the missionaries helped the people to be freed from prejudices, superstition and especially fear. They abandoned many superstitious beliefs, because they now knew that only God is the supreme master of the material and spiritual world.

Still today, most the Tikar hold fast to that belief. They know that the power of God is greater than that of the sorcerers. In general, from my informants, it seems that the spirits of the ancestors have less influence on the Christians in the context, but as seen earlier, it is still possible that some worship ancestors.

Even though some continue to seek protection or blessing from the seers and marabouts, many trust God in prayer for all these things.

All this shows how the Gospel has entered the life of the Tikar and changed their spiritual life, their way of understanding the relationship between them and God. In the past, protective fetishes could be observed at the entrance of houses, but today as I observed in many Christian houses, the crosses are often seen inside homes. The cross of Jesus in the house symbolizes the presence of Jesus himself in that house, and therefore, his total protection.

6.5 The new identity

Identity is “the characteristics that make a person or thing who or what they are and make them different from others.”¹⁹²

Before the arrival of the missionaries, the Tikar lived a very different life from the one they live today. Their way of life was characterized by the respect of the customary laws, and especially by the fact they did not share family possessions and experiences outside the family circle. About that. Mgbatoussong says, “Before, our parents did not want to share matters of family life with those who were not family members, meetings were only within families.”¹⁹³ Which means that families were not open to other families. When Mboh Christine says that

¹⁹² Diana Lea, et al., *Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English*, s.v. identity

¹⁹³ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

“our parents did not eat alone, they invited others and visited each other constantly,”¹⁹⁴ she shows that families were not open to others.

However, the Gospel changed this way of thinking. The preaching of the Gospel gave birth to a new identity and a new lifestyle among the Tikar. Mboh Christine suggests that “faith in Jesus changed their way of life. This cultivated the love of their neighbor, and a desire to share”. She says: “Our parents did not eat alone, they invited others and visited each other constantly.”¹⁹⁵ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul also says that “after listening to the Gospel, they (Tikar) began to open up to others.”¹⁹⁶

Thus, like on the Dii Plain, where the NMS missionaries also worked and where a Dii Christian identity slowly emerged with its own agenda and characteristics which resulted in material and spiritual changes in their life style, the NMS missionaries’ work among the Tikar resulted in a new Tikar Christian identity also.¹⁹⁷ They from now identify their self as disciples of Christ. The missionary’s work changed how the Tikar understood the relationship between them and God, and between them and their neighbors.

So here I have analyzed the spiritual impact of missionary work among the Tikar, but what about the social and economic impact? That is what I will discuss in the next chapter.

¹⁹⁴ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 10, 2018

¹⁹⁵ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 12, 2018

¹⁹⁶ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

¹⁹⁷ Tomas Sundnes Dronen, “Communication, Conversion, and Conservation: the Dii meet the Norwegian Missionaries Northern Cameroon 1934-60” (Ph.D. Thesis, School of Mission Theology, Stavanger, 2007), 184

Chapter 7: The social and economic impact of the NMS missionaries' work

Missionary work has greatly influenced the social and economic life of the Tikar people. In this chapter and I will analyze, in light of historical perspective — that is, based on historical facts — the aspects of social and economic life that have been impacted by this missionary activity. Therefore, I have divided the chapter into two parts. The first part is devoted to the study of the social impact and the second part is dedicated to the study of the economic impact.

7.1 The social impact

Concerning the impact of mission work in the Tikar context, the social aspect is the area where the impact of the missionary work of the NMS was, and still is, the most visible. As I said in the introduction, it is a matter of seeing the influence of missionary action on the social life of the people. The social structures that was created on the Tikar plain not only benefited the Tikar, but also all the other ethnic groups who live on the Tikar plain (Mambila, Kwandja, etc.) and even those who live elsewhere in the surrounding contexts. Therefore, in this chapter, I will present some aspects of the social life that were influenced by missionary activity. These include the improvement of certain cultural practices such as the rite of widowhood, the reduction of witchcraft, the social development due to introduction of schools, the improvement of health conditions; and finally, the improvement of the status of women.

7.1.1 The improvement of certain cultural practices: the rite of widowhood

There were several practices in Tikar culture that were very difficult for the missionaries to accept and that to them seemed contrary to the Gospel. Here I will talk about the rite of widowhood. According to what Mgbatoussong Jean Paul explained about the widowhood, the ritual itself is not bad, but it was the way it was practiced and imposed on people that was difficult to bear.¹⁹⁸ In fact, according to Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, traditionally, among the Tikar, when a person lost his or her spouse, he/she was subjected to a certain number of rites that were formerly called “rites of purification.” After the death of the husband or wife, the remaining spouse had to sleep on the ground during all the time of the rite of widowhood, he/she could not appear in public, he/she wasn't allowed to go to the market nor to church, nor to meetings. In short, he/she could not go to places where there are a lot of people. He/she was

¹⁹⁸ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

not allowed to speak out loud or to laugh, and he/she was not allowed to change their clothes because a mourning garment was to be worn for the whole period of the ritual of widowhood. He/she had to abstain from sex and any romantic relationship during this time. He/she had to have their own plates, spoons and glass for their meals because he/she was not allowed to eat with others. This meant he/she was not allowed to eat from the same plate of food as other people.¹⁹⁹

As soon as they arrived, the missionaries modified this practice; they did not abolish it, but they made it more flexible, less painful. They taught the dignity of the human body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit and which should not be treated as an object. They taught the idea that the spirits of the dead had no influence on the lives of the living. It should be noted here that this rite of widowhood was practiced among the Tikar because it was believed that if it were not done correctly, the spirit of the dead would harm the rest of the family. In brief, the Gospel changed the practice of widowhood. Mgbatoussong Jean Paul testifies that,

Their work has allowed the eradication of certain evil practices such as witchcraft. The Gospel has given courage to the Christians, they are no longer afraid of ghosts, wizards, and evil spirits. Some bad cultural practices have also disappeared. This is the case of the widowhood rite. Today this rite is no longer as rigorous as before.²⁰⁰

Today, as stated by Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, it is the church that defines the rite of widowhood in the case of Christians and the maximum period is three months. The church oversees the period of widowhood and it accompanies the widowed spouse through prayer and material gifts. The widow or widower is no longer subject to the obligations mentioned above. He or she is constantly assisted by the members of the church and is free to choose another spouse after being widowed, all with the goal of putting an end to any human abuse he or she might have faced during the rite of widowhood in the past.²⁰¹ So, we see that missionary work has brought a significant change in the human condition of the Tikar widows and widowers. This has contributed to the revaluation of human dignity among the Tikar.

¹⁹⁹ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

²⁰⁰ Ibid

²⁰¹ Ibid

7.1.2 *The reduction of witchcraft*

The term “witchcraft” includes “the secret forces that are called the occult, that is, those powers that are simply natural and can be used for a good or a bad purpose like any other natural force.”²⁰² The practice of witchcraft was one of the great social problems on the Tikar plain, according to my informants. It was a common practice in almost all Tikar villages. Mveing Alphonse said that “people sometimes killed others with witchcraft because one person may have sought the other's wife.”²⁰³ In the Tikar tribe, a wizard can be either a man or a woman. One wonders how does someone become a witch or a sorcerer? Among the Tikar, witchcraft can be acquired in many ways. There is the kind that is called *lim* in the Tikar language, which is an innate witchcraft, that is, one which exists from birth. It is a witchcraft passed from mother to son or to daughter. Joseph Ngah states that “This kind of witchcraft is latent in childhood and becomes progressively active at puberty.”²⁰⁴ It is an involuntary witchcraft since it is hereditary. But there is also the possibility of voluntary acquisition of witchcraft. People who want to become a witch can buy the ability and initiate themselves voluntarily.²⁰⁵ It must be said that whatever the mode of acquisition, witchcraft has the same negative consequences in the life of the society.

Two important questions that can be asked are: Why is witchcraft dangerous? and how do wizards use it to harm the lives of others? Once again, there are several methods of practicing sorcery. The wizard can poison his victim in dreams and cause him to die either quickly or slowly. Mgbatoussong Jean Paul explained this method by saying that “one could poison a person even in dreams and the person would die sometime later.”²⁰⁶ There is also the *mgbati* or *mgeri*, where the wizard uses sticks and other fetishes that he ties together in a bundle and mysteriously buries in the house or home of his enemy to cause an inexplicable disease or misfortune to befall him.²⁰⁷ Traditionally, the most common method among the Tikar was the spear of needles, or *te'*, which is the mystical sending of the needles into the body of the victim, causing him intense pain and leading most often to a quick death. Also, some wizards turned

²⁰² Joseph Healey, Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, (New York, Orbis Books, 1996), 292

²⁰³ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, 9 July 2018

²⁰⁴ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 100

²⁰⁵ Ibid

²⁰⁶ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, 12 July 2018

²⁰⁷ Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, 100

into ferocious animals and physically attacked their enemies in the forest or when they were going somewhere.²⁰⁸

This situation created terror in the villages because often in a simple dispute, witchcraft would be used. Jealousy was also often a reason for the practice of witchcraft. Some did not want to see other families, or the children of another family succeed. According to Mveing Alphonse, witchcraft was a real social evil among the Tikar. That is what pushed people to turn to traditional healers, seers etc. to seek protection.²⁰⁹

But since the preaching of the Gospel by the missionaries, the phenomenon of witchcraft has diminished considerably. Several reasons explain this reduction. First, according to Mboh Christine, the message of the new birth played an important role in that sense. She says that “at the time of baptism, the missionaries asked them, "Are you abandoning the old practices to follow Jesus Christ?”, and they answered" Yes ", and then they honored their commitment to that.”²¹⁰ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, in the same way state that “the Gospel has helped reduce a lot of things here, such as witchcraft, spells, poisonings, etc.”²¹¹

Thus, we can see that the missionaries tried to make sure that people were born anew before becoming members of the church. They said that those who were baptized should give up unhealthy practices. This recommendation was followed by many of the Tikar. Thus, the practice of witchcraft began to decline. Those who were baptized had to clearly give up these practices before joining the Christian community.

It is obvious that this message of the new birth has really touched a lot of people because nowadays, witchcraft has decreased considerably, villages are more and more populous, and we no longer witness the sudden deaths of young people as was the case in the past.

Another element of the Gospel that contributed to the decline of witchcraft was the emphasis on loving one’s neighbor. About, Mveing Alphonse, one of my informants said that:

This new faith in Jesus Christ has greatly changed our way of life ... because it has cultivated the spirit of forgiving others. Before that, when someone hurt another person, that person also reacted with evil, so it looked a little like the law of retaliation that says, “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”. People were killing others with witchcraft

²⁰⁸Joseph Ngah, *La rencontre entre la religion africaine et le christianisme africain*, pp 103-106

²⁰⁹ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, 9 July 2018

²¹⁰ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 10, 2018

²¹¹ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

because, for instance, one man may have gone after the other's wife. But the Gospel brought a new way of looking at all of that. Many witchcraft practices have decreased because of the Gospel. Acts of revenge have diminished. For example, I could have avenged the death of my daughter, but I did not do it because of the Word of God that recommends forgiveness.²¹²

So, we can notice with the statements of my informants that the Gospel calmed people's hearts. People did not hold grudges anymore. There was no more seeking of revenge. Witchcraft had mostly been practiced in the context of revenge. When a person was offended, he used witchcraft to take revenge. But the Gospel of forgiveness and the emphasis on loving one's neighbor has reduced the desire for revenge.

Another reason for this reduction of witchcraft, in my opinion, was the question of the Final Judgment. The Bible teaches that those who continue in sin will be judged and sent to hell. The practice of witchcraft being contrary to the will of God can result in people not going to paradise. This message of the Final Judgment also contributed to the change in behaviour among the Tikar.

7.1.3 Schools: factors of development and social change

Education was one of the means of evangelization adopted by the missionaries. According to Sigrid, to convey the Christian message, it was necessary to educate the population. People had to be educated to be able to read the Bible, this was the first goal of schools.²¹³ Therefore, schools were the first diaconal structures created in mission fields in general, and on the Tikar plain in particular. But very quickly, schools were in demand for the training of the local elite. Parents sent their children to the missionary school not only to read and learn the Bible, but especially so they would be able to work in the colonial administration. The missionary schools thus contributed to the early training of the first Tikar intellectuals. Because of these schools, many of those Tikar children later held very important positions in the Cameroonian government.

Starting in 1958, the missionaries created the complete primary school system in Bankim. Nimfang Gustave explained that "Before that time we attended school in Bankim and after finishing Cour Elementaire (CE2), we had to go to Galim for CM1. It was only between 1957

²¹² Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, July 9, 2018

²¹³ Sigrid Braut, interview taped in Kleppe, 26 December 2017

and 1958 that the CM1 class was first taught in Bankim and between 1958 and 1959, the CM2 level was also added under the direction of Ingrid Flakk — who has been The NMS missionary in Cameroon from 1947 to 1970 and who worked in Tibati, Ngaouyanga, Galim, Bankim, Yoko²¹⁴ — which meant that the Bankim Primary School had the full primary cycle in 1958.”²¹⁵

This meant that students could attend school and obtain their first certificate in Bankim. This situation considerably increased the number of primary school graduates among the Tikar, since they were no longer obliged to go far away from their families to study. After finishing their primary studies, students who showed promise were sent to the Protestant College of Ngaoundere for secondary studies. It was a very defining moment for the formation of the Tikar elite. A boarding school was opened in Bankim to welcome the children of the poor living in distant villages. This made it possible for the children of the poor to also have access to education.²¹⁶

Mboh Christine also says that “girls were encouraged by the missionaries to go to school. They were taught to knit clothes, make cakes, etc.”²¹⁷ That means that it was in the schools that the girls were taught how to provide for the needs of their family, how to operate a small business to have money. Schools were factors of development. It was in the schools that the staff of the church and other structures were recruited. These schools helped to overcome ignorance and lack of education. About this, Sigrid Braut said that “the school helped solve the problem of ignorance and illiteracy in the area.”²¹⁸

Thus, Today, thanks to Bankim's private Protestant school, the Bankim subdivision is classified as one of the most educated subdivisions in the Adamawa region of Cameroon. Nimpang Gustave testifies to this fact and says that,

The school in Bankim trained the children coming from everywhere: The North-west, the Center, the West and the Adamawa regions because there were no schools in the

²¹⁴ Andr G. Meling, Maria Kjøllesdal, *Guds Høstfolk: Det Norske Misjonsselskaps misjonærer 1842 – 1977*, (Stavanger, 1977), 61

²¹⁵ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

²¹⁶ Ibid

²¹⁷ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, 10 July 2018

²¹⁸ Sigrid Braut, interview taped in Kleppe, 26 December 2017

home villages. This explains the fact that the district of Bankim is among the most educated districts of the Adamawa region of Cameroon.²¹⁹

The Tikar are among the relatively well-educated people in Cameroon nowadays. At the level of the EELC, the first ones to obtain a Ph.D. degree in theology were Tikar. They were Rev. Dr. Ngah Joseph who is the current Dean of the Institut Luthérien de Théologie de Meiganga and the late Rev. Dr. Nyiwe Thomas who was president and bishop of our church.

In Ngambé-Tikar, the missionary schools educated the first intellectuals. Several prominent people from that area attended those schools. This is the case of the current deputy of the Mbam and Kim division, Mgbatou Pierre; the former General Manager of Civil Engineering Equipment (Matgenie) of Cameroon, Niwa Long Othon; the brigade commander, Houmga Mirabeau; and the former mayor of Ngambé-Tikar commune, Mgbatou Joseph. I, too, am the fruit of the missionary work of the NMS because it was in a missionary school that I started my primary studies, at the Protestant private school of Mbamla 1 and 2 in 1991. In other words, schools were a great factor of development on the Tikar plain. Kåre Lode also emphasizes this factor when he states that “the NMS schools were expected to provide the workers for the mission and for the colonial administration. This was a very important social work that ultimately helped the development of the country. It would be an advantage for the mission to have Christian officials who would eventually financially support the church.”²²⁰

The schools were also the main means for the Tikar coming from the different villages to meet one another. It should be noted that, because of the isolated locations of many of the village, the Tikar had very few possibilities of travelling from one place to another. When schools were created especially in big towns like Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar, people came from everywhere to attend school and that created the possibility for them to meet one another and to live together; thus, promoting the birth of a Tikar elite.

The Tikar became more and more acquainted with others who lived far away. The schools created the same connection between people in all the mission fields of the NMS in Cameroon. This was the case of the Dii people in the northern part of Cameroon. Tomas Sundnes Dronen explains:

²¹⁹ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

²²⁰ Kare Lode, *Appelés à la liberté*, p 139

The interaction between people from different Dii villages increased as a result of the mission schools. The first villages that received schools became centers where youth from other smaller villages settled, and later young Dii from all villages on the plain gathered in the mission dormitory, first in Ngaounyanga, then in Mbé. These centres became crossroads for news and hearsay from the whole Dii area, and they became places of exchange of ideas and gave birth to new ways to promote Dii Values. This ethnic awareness developed both as a result of increased contact between Dii villages and increased contact between the Dii and other ethnic groups in the new Lutheran church.²²¹

On the Tikar plain, such contact between the Tikar in the towns of Bankim and Ngambé-Tikar was observed. It also allowed the Tikar to get in touch with other people such as Mambila and Kwandja.

It was also in schools that the rules of moral conduct were taught. Children who attended missionary schools are known to exhibit good behavior in society. Mgbatoussong Jean Paul testifies of his case and affirms that, “I personally also benefited from the work of the missionaries in our locality. Today I am a person of good morality because of the religious education that I received in the missionary school.”²²²

According to Nimpang Gustave missionary activity also gave birth to new moral rules such as the question of alcohol, polygamy, and so on.²²³ It must be said that the missionaries did not only bring the Gospel; they also brought their culture. In many cases, they banned the consumption of alcoholic beverages, participation in traditional dances, polygamy, etc; because most of these things are foreign to their own cultures. With regard to this, Åsmund Steinnes explains that, coming from a culture that prohibits the drinking of alcohol, because personally he comes from such a cultural tradition where they did not drink alcoholic beverages at all, they looked upon the excessive consumption of alcohol among the Tikar as an abuse because according to them, it created trouble in the households.²²⁴ Thus, new moral rules were instilled in people. People drank less and less alcohol. People were choosing polygamy less and less frequently. It must be said that this changed the way of life of families who were accustomed to the polygamous system of marriage. I did not do a quantitative study on the number of

²²¹ Tomas Sundnes Dronen, *Communication, Conversion, and Conservation: the Dii meet the Norwegian Missionaries Northern Cameroon 1934-60*, 184

²²² Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

²²³ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

²²⁴ Åsmund Steinnes, interview taped in Kleppe, 27 January 2019

traditional Tikar Christian leaders in the Bankim Subdivision. But when I worked as a pastor in the Bankim District, I found that the majority of Tikar traditional chiefs are Muslim. And when I asked why the chiefs chose Islam instead of Christianity, the answer was that it is because of the requirement of monogamy by the church. This impact is more important nowadays. Even though it is not easy to totally abandon all traditional practices, some people started, little by little, to break free from the traditional rules that were too strict and began to live according to what is preached in the Bible. Gradually, the biblical commandments became the rules of conduct in the Tikar society.

This is to say that the missionary work through the schools, greatly changed the educational situation of the Tikar people and allowed them to properly integrate into the intellectual society of the country.

7.1.4 The empowerment of the health situation

Mveing Alphonse says that, “When they arrived, the Norwegian missionaries found that there were many diseases that threatened people such as hernias, difficult deliveries, malaria, etc. They created a health center here near the church to cure the sick.”²²⁵ So, another aspect of the social impact of missionary work is visible at the level of health care. Through the Protestant private health center in Bankim, the missionaries participated in the prevention, healing and even eradication of many of the diseases that had threatened the Tikar. Several diseases no longer exist because of vaccines that have been donated and continue to be given to people today. This is the case of leprosy and of sleeping sickness. With regard to this, through instruction by the nurses about health issues, the Tikar realized that diseases are not always the work of witches or evil spirits. They learned that good sanitation can help them avoid many diseases.

According to Mr. Mveing Alphonse the infant and maternal mortality rate has declined considerably because babies are no longer delivered at home, but rather in the hospital. Through the multiple contraceptive methods available today, families can control the number of their children. Thus, we realize that the health center has contributed to the physical wellbeing of the people.²²⁶

²²⁵ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, 9 July 2018

²²⁶ Ibid

It should be reiterated here that the creation of the structures like schools and health centers, is, of course, the diaconal aspect of the mission, because it was through these structures that the missionaries contributed considerably to the strengthening of the social life and to the improvement of the conditions of life of the Tikar people. Pastor Åsmund Steinnes explains that,

When we do mission work, there are several goals. Just as Jesus helped the sick, and healed them, while at the same time, teaching them, it is natural for missionaries to do the same. As for the missionaries, they come from countries where there are schools and hospitals, and when they are in front of someone who is sick, who does not know how to read, it is quite natural to help him learn to read, just like we used to do with the Tikar. It's a natural thing for a Christian to do. That's the Christian culture.²²⁷

7.1.5 Gender

According to Mgbatoussong, in Tikar culture, a woman is not equal to a man.²²⁸ Although this conception of gender has evolved nowadays, it was certainly the case in ancient times. The woman occupied a different place in society. Her primary function was to be a housekeeper. She was not allowed to speak in front of men, nor even to answer her husband when he spoke to her. She was not allowed to have an education because her place was behind her husband. This is what Mgbatoussong Jean Paul explains when he says:

In families, women were not considered, they had no right to speak, they were only for cooking and procreation because it was said that the woman's place is behind her husband. That is why many girls did not go to school. It was said that the woman is made for marriage. When a girl went to school, she stopped school once she was old enough to get married. There were too many arranged and forced marriages.²²⁹

In this statement, we can highlight several aspects of the condition of women before the arrival of missionaries. First, women were considered inferior to men because they were only recognized in society if they are accompanied by their husbands. This explains the fact that all families did everything to see to it that their daughters got married, sometimes at an early age.

²²⁷ Asmund Steinnes, interview taped in Kleppe, January 27, 2019

²²⁸ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

²²⁹ Ibid

A single woman was not considered to be important in the society, she was not entitled to respect, and she was a disgrace to her family. It was felt that women were made for procreation. A woman who did not give birth was most often sent back to her family, or simply had to allow her husband to take another wife to give him children. They maintained that a woman was not entitled to education lest she become rebellious and disrespectful.

As for the men, they were the leaders of their wives and their families. Boys were considered stronger than girls, and there was work that was allocated only to men because it was thought that women were weak. I myself remember that when I was young, and a friend or brother hit me, and I was crying, my parents would tell me to shut up immediately because a boy should not cry like a girl.

So, Mgbatoussong Jean Paul explains that children were brought up with the idea that men are stronger and women weaker. This was also why, during tribal wars or conquests, the women were not part of the army; they were asked to remain in the village, while the men went to the front. Another inequality of the gender was evident in the realm of married life. You would never see a man helping his wife in the kitchen because the kitchen was the domain of women, not men.²³⁰ It is a “space of women” as we used to say in the Tikar language.

All this shows to what extent there was a very high degree of gender inequality among the Tikar. But this situation has changed a lot since the missionaries brought the Gospel.

When the missionaries arrived, the gender situation changed. They preached to the Tikar that all human beings are equal before God, whether men or women.²³¹ They encouraged the education of girls and encouraged women to attend church meetings with the men. This changed the status of women in the Tikar culture, even if some of those who wanted to preserve the traditional way did not look favorably on it. It seems that for them the education of the girls would modify the social system which considered the woman as belonging to her husband. Therefore, according to my informant Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, some parents refused to let the girls go to school.²³² But it is different today, girls go to schools and the women are the most active members in the church. Forced marriages no longer exist. The girl is now free to choose her husband. The man is the head of the family, but he does not reign anymore as grand master. Mgbatoussong testified that,

²³⁰ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

²³¹ Ibid

²³² Ibid

When the missionaries arrived, they said that before God all were equal, whether you are male or female, poor or rich, white or black. They started encouraging girls to go to school. They first announced the Gospel and then they created the schools. They allowed women to form associations and participate in meetings with men, which was not possible before.²³³

In other words, the missionary action strongly contributed to the emancipation of the Tikar woman. The Women for Christ movement (FPC) is an association of the church which is active in the church. Through this movement, the women actively participate in the life of the church. Nowadays, the woman can do everything a man can do. There is still not complete equality of the two sexes, but it has evolved a lot in the Tikar context today.

In brief, as Charlotte Walker-Said pointed it out in *Faith, Power and Family: Christianity and Social Change in French Cameroon*, “Africans in Cameroun experienced the upheaval attendant with Christian conversion [...] This upheaval was concomitant with powerful economic, political, and legal changes that challenged conventional strategies for building one’s family and reshaped its place in secular and religious life.”²³⁴

Finally, the missionary work of the NMS has had a significant economic impact on the way of life of the Tikar people. One wonders in what areas this economic impact is visible. That is the question I will answer in the next part.

7.2 The economic impact

7.2.1 *The direct economic impact*

According to my informant Mveing Alphonse, the economic life of the Tikar was very precarious because they did not have stable sources of income, and it was very difficult for them to get money for their daily needs. He states that,

Before the arrival of the missionaries, the economic situation of the Tikar was very difficult. They lived on the sale of palm kernel nuts that they would sell in Foumban or

²³³ Ibid

²³⁴Charlotte Walker-Said, *Faith, Power and Family: Christianity and social change in French Cameroon*, (Woodbridge James Currey, 2018), 2

Banyo, which were more than a hundred kilometers' walks. They also lived from fishing and hunting. They set traps in the bush and went to visit them after a few days. The meat they brought back from the hunt was used as food for the family and some of it was dried and sold. It was hard to earn money for the survival of the family.²³⁵

He explains that they lived mainly by hunting, fishing, gathering, and agriculture.²³⁶

About hunting Mboh says that, the Tikar used to go into the forest, set traps and go back to visit them a few days later. Then the meat they brought back was dried. Some of the meat was then sold in other villages, and the rest of it was eaten by the family.²³⁷ It should be noted that at that time, it was necessary to walk sometimes more than one hundred kilometers carrying tens of kilograms of meat on the head to find a market.²³⁸ This gives an idea how very difficult it was to make money with this activity.

As for fishing, the Tikar also fished to satisfy their need for food. There was individual fishing and communal fishing. The individual fishing consisted of going alone into the bush and fishing in the rivers belonging to the village. Each man camped in the forest for many days and fished. Like the meat, the fish was dried and brought back to the village, either for sale or for home consumption.²³⁹ Once again, it was very difficult to make money through this activity. There was also communal fishing. In Bankim and in many other villages, it is called *nzang*.²⁴⁰ It was practiced in one or more lakes belonging to the village and was done during the dry season when the streams were drying up. There were village elders responsible for checking the water level in the lake. And when the time came that the water was low enough in the lake, the whole village went there for fishing.²⁴¹ In the village where I am from, Mbamla 1 in the Ngambé-Tikar subdivision, the lake where the communal fishing took place is called *tàm ngouîn*, which means the lake of *ngouîn*. Communal fishing is done there once a year and allows families to accumulate some surplus money.

The Tikar also sold cola²⁴², a fruit that they picked in the forest. They picked cola and many other products in the forest. To sell their cola, they often traveled hundreds of kilometers on

²³⁵ *ibid*

²³⁶ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, 9 July 2018

²³⁷ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, 10 July 2018

²³⁸ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, 9 July 2018

²³⁹ *Ibid*

²⁴⁰ Tchimi Basile and Beeemster Bernard, *Contes, Mythes et Fêtes des Tikar à Bankim*, 90

²⁴¹ *Ibid*

²⁴² Cola is a fruit that is used in many cultures in Cameroon, especially during traditional ceremonies.

foot either to go to the north of Cameroon or to the south.²⁴³ There were also other products obtained from picking, but cola was the most sought-after product because it cost more and brought some money back to the families.

This is one of the reasons why, at the beginning of their mission work, the missionaries gave many free services to the population in their diaconal structures such as the health center, the schools, and so on. After the arrival of the missionaries, everything changed, as a result of the diaconal aspect of the mission, because the missionaries, through their work, helped the Tikar to provide for the needs of their families. They helped them to improve their economic situation and achieve a better standard of living. According to Åsmund Steinnes, providing support to those in need was also the purpose of the mission.²⁴⁴

Nimpang Gustave, in the same way states that the Tikar people practiced subsistence farming, in other words, farming that was based mainly on consumption needs.²⁴⁵ They had small farms and grew maize, cassava, tobacco, and palm oil. Edridge mentioned that they also grew millet for daily consumption or for making traditional wine.²⁴⁶ It was after the arrival of the German settlers that they started growing coffee. Frequently, to make money, they produced palm oil which they also sold in neighboring villages. it was very difficult for the Tikar to make money. The people on the Tikar plain lived in excessive poverty. Mboh Christine testifies that, “Before the arrival of the missionaries, our parents lived from fishing and hunting, they set traps, crushed and sold palm kernels and palm oil and cola to the villages. There was no money, everyone was poor, life was very difficult.”²⁴⁷ So, what happened when the missionaries arrived?

Mveing Alphonse, one of the former cooks for the missionaries in Bankim, states about that,

I myself benefited from the work of the missionaries at home because I was recruited by them as a cook and they paid me a salary every month. This salary allowed me to build three houses, to get married and to pay for my children's schooling, which allowed my children to have their diplomas, and today two of them work in the government of Cameroon as high school teachers.²⁴⁸

²⁴³ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, 9 July 2018

²⁴⁴ Asmund Steinnes, interview taped in Kleppe, January 27, 2019

²⁴⁵ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim, 11 July 2018

²⁴⁶ Edridge Mohammadou, *Traditions historiques des peuples du Cameroun central*, 314

²⁴⁷ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 11, 2018

²⁴⁸ Mveing Alphonse, interview taped in Bankim, July 9, 2018

Nimpang Gustave who was also a former employee of the mission testifies to the economic impact of his job with the missionaries on his life and that of his family. He states that,

I myself was recruited by them as a teacher at the Bankim primary school to teach in 1958. This allowed us to have some money. My job with the missionaries allowed me to have something to eat, to send my children to school, and to succeed in the Administration Clerks competition in 1974. And today, three of my children are working in the Cameroonian civil service. The oldest is a regional director of the Department of Water and Forests in the region of North Cameroon. He has the rank of colonel. The second is the tax collector at the sous-prefecture of Ndelele in eastern Cameroon. And the third is a policeman at the Ngambé-Tikar police station.²⁴⁹

Thus, according to what is said by Nimpang and Mveing we can see that when the missionaries came, they started to provide direct jobs for many Tikar. When I talk about the direct economic impact, I want to refer to the direct jobs which benefited a lot of people in the Tikar villages. These direct jobs were: the ecclesiastical staff, the school and health center staff, the cooks, and the maintenance workers on the mission station. And we can see that all these direct jobs enabled many people to improve their economic situation and the condition of their families. Because of the missionary activities, many Tikar were no longer focused on hunting and fishing like they had been before to live. Their economic situation changed more and more.

All my Tikar informants mentioned the direct economic impact. These testimonies allow us to understand how much the missionaries' work changed the standard of living of some Tikar, because it was very difficult, if not impossible, for a person at that time to achieve the things that Mveing Alphonse did. It was very difficult to earn money at that time. Many people were unable to buy clothes, to send their children to school, or to get treatment at the health centre.

This direct impact is still visible today, as many Tikar are still recruited in the church structures where they can easily earn a living. Before, there was only one health center in Bankim, but since 2018 a second health center was created in Ngambé-Tikar and several Tikar work there.

Even though not all the Tikar worked for the missionaries to earn money, the economic impact of those who did work there was considerable in the society. Missionary action paved the way for other sources of income. The practice of living by hunting and fishing slowly declined and

²⁴⁹ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

has almost disappeared today even though it was not all the people who worked with missionaries. This is at the same time deplorable because fishing and hunting were important cultural elements.

7.2.2 The indirect economic impact

During my research in the field and especially during the interviews, I identified several categories of people on whom the economic impact of the missionary work of the NMS can be considered indirect, since these people were not directly associated with missionary activity. These people are those who have been educated, and materially and financially supported by the missionaries, and who have succeeded after their studies in entering the Cameroonian civil service. I am speaking of the children of former workers hired by the missionaries, who, because of their parents' work, have had access to higher education and hold important positions in society today. And finally, there are those people who, through the advice of some missionaries on associations, savings, agriculture, and economic management, have managed to improve their economic situation and that of their families.

As for the first category of people, namely, those who have been materially and financially supported by some missionaries in their studies, there are several on the Tikar plain. Because of the extreme poverty among the Tikar, a number of children were admitted to boarding schools. They benefited significantly from financial and material support for their education by missionaries. When the catechist Kpoh Othon mentions the name of Niwa Long Othon among the sons of Ngambé-Tikar who have succeeded thanks to the missionary work,²⁵⁰ he does so because Niwa Long is the fruit of the missionary work. Thanks to missionary support, he was able to attend university and obtained a scholarship from the Cameroonian state to pursue studies in engineering in Greece. He was later appointed by the President of the Republic to the position of general director of Civil Engineering Equipment in Cameroon (Matgénie). He has greatly contributed to the improvement of the living conditions of his family, his village and even many of other Tikar through their recruitment in that company. I remember that when I was a district pastor of Ngambé-Tikar and even before me, he took upon himself the responsibility of paying the salary of the teachers of the Protestant private school of Ngambé-Tikar which he himself attended. There are several examples like this one all across

²⁵⁰ Kpoh Othon, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, 18 August 2018

the Tikar plain. I just mentioned the one I know best. Even after their departure, the economic impact of the work of Norwegian missionaries remains visible among the Tikar.

Regarding the second category of people, namely the children of those who worked with the missionaries, there are also many. In fact, their parents' work with the missionaries allowed them to study without difficulty, since their parents had regular salary and could provide for their needs. My informants, Nimpang Gustave and Mveing Alphonse, in their responses, said that it was their jobs paid by the mission that allowed them to send their children to school and now today, these children materially and financially support their families.

During field research I observed what I had already seen while I was working as a pastor that before the Norwegian missionaries arrived on the Tikar plain in 1937, German settlers had already introduced coffee growing, but many of the Tikar were not interested in doing it. Mgbatoussong state that the Norwegian missionaries encouraged them to grow coffee. Information was given about the subject in the meetings of the church and especially in the schools.²⁵¹ Those who put these tips into practice have large coffee plantations today. Some Christians have even created coffee farms for the church, such as the one in Bankim, which has one or two hectares of coffee trees. Another area of missionary advice was regarding the establishment of Christian associations, called *tontines* in French. This involved organizing Christian groups who meet weekly and make financial contributions, the total of which is given to one member of the group each week. The recipient must continue to make the regular contribution to allow other members of the group to benefit. This phenomenon is much more common among women. This has promoted the idea of savings and the responsible management of financial resources in households.²⁵² Bue Kessel explains how the *tontine* group functions in the area of Ngaoundere in which members of Women for Christ participate,

at the *tontine* each member contributes a predetermined sum of money. For instance, if ten people belong to the group, they hand in 1000 FCFA (1.52 EURO) every time they gather. According to a rotating system, one person receives the entire sum of 10.000 FCFA (15.24 EURO). This money provides a short term increased economic capacity.²⁵³

²⁵¹ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

²⁵² Ibid

²⁵³ TERESE Bue Kessel, *Between God's sharing power and Men's controlling power*, 70

In summary, I found that the missionary work of the NMS has had a considerable spiritual, social and economic impact in the life of the Tikar, both in the past and in the present. Through the diaconal structures, the Tikar have discovered that Christianity is a religion through which one obtains holistic salvation, that is, body, soul and spirit. The Tikar found in this new religion not only the solution to their spiritual problems, but also the solution to their physical and material problems. Let us not forget that in many African cultures, “religion refers to the belief in the existence of an invisible world, distinct but not separate from the visible one [...] The human world is believed to be intimately connected to the spirit world, and a regular intercourse may take place between them, in a two ways mode.”²⁵⁴

The Tikar have found that the Christian God answers these problems. This has strengthened their faith in Christ and their support of the church.

However, one can ask the question of whether there have not been shortcomings of the missionary work among the Tikar. Has all missionary work had a positive effect? This is the question I will answer in the next chapter.

²⁵⁴ Tomas Sundnes Dronen, *Religion and Development: Nordic perspectives on Involvement in Africa*, (New York, Peter Land, 2014), 13

Chapter 8: Shortcomings of the missionary's work

In this chapter, I will analyse the missionary work from a postcolonial approach in order to understand if there were some shortcomings in the missionaries' work. This I do because the informants tell stories that seem to point in that direction. I will apply two perspectives, alterity and Eurocentrism as understood by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin.²⁵⁵

As pointed out in Chapter 3, alterity refers to the "state of being other or different; the political, cultural, linguistic, or religious other. The study of the ways in which one group makes themselves different from others."²⁵⁶ Eurocentrism refers to "the conscious or unconscious process by which Europe and European cultural assumptions are constructed as, or assumed to be, the normal, the natural or the universal."²⁵⁷

About the question of the failures of the NMS missionary work among the Tikar, the answers of my informants allowed me to identify three types of shortcomings. There are shortcomings related to the cultural issues, shortcomings related to the strict requirement of Christian ethics, and third, the shortcomings related to the financial support of the church and the functioning of the congregations.

8.1 Cultural problems

One of the first difficulties faced by missionaries was the cultural question. Nimpang Gustave states that,

One of the early missionaries banned the Christians from dancing on holidays because during these dances, people insulted others. And that meant that many did not go to church because the Tikar really liked dancing. Some went to the Catholic Church, which was more flexible about it. They also banned polygamy which belongs to our culture. Many Tikar wondered if having two women prevented them from being Christians and coming to church. The polygamists who attended church did not take the Lord's Supper.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁵ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, 9, 52

²⁵⁶ <https://www3.dbu.edu/mitchell/postcold.htm>, Accessed April 15, 2019

²⁵⁷ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, 84

²⁵⁸ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

So, we can notice according to this citation that many aspects of Tikar culture were unfamiliar to the early missionaries, and so this gave rise to prohibitions that sometimes led some Tikar to either give up Christianity or live in hypocrisy.²⁵⁹ He points out several cultural traditions of importance to the Tikar, dancing and polygamy. As for polygamy it was a sign of prestige or status in the Tikar culture. He explains that the status of a man was measured by the number of his wives and children because having many children was considered a wealth.²⁶⁰ Chiefs are obliged to have several wives, even to this day, to maintain their authority. Because of the phenomenon of witchcraft that resulted in many young people being killed, it was necessary to have many children to be sure to leave offspring after death. That is why before the arrival of the missionaries, most of the marriages in the Tikar villages were polygamous. When the missionaries arrived, they banned polygamy for Christians. They banned certain cultural practices which, according to Nimpang Gustave, were very important to the Tikar.

From a post-colonial perspective, we can understand that the missionaries not only brought the Gospel but also brought their culture. As I mentioned it above and according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin, Eurocentrism is a conscious or unconscious attitude that European values and culture is superior to other cultures and considered the best and must be taught everywhere in the world.²⁶¹

Missionaries have not escaped this behavior. Perhaps they behave so unconsciously as point out by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin. In fact, among the Tikar, the missionaries or at least the first missionaries forbid the participation in traditional ceremonies, dances, and even the forbidden of some cultural values such as polygamy, the non-recognition of customary marriage, which they described as pagans.²⁶² It was perhaps a way of telling the Tikar that what comes from their culture is not good and that it is the moral rules brought by the missionaries that are good and universal.

So, the question of polygamy was a concrete example of missionaries Eurocentric attitude. In fact, polygamists were not allowed — and are still not allowed today to participate in the Lord's Supper. They were not allowed to hold certain important positions in the churches. In other words, polygamists until today do not have the same status as other Christians in the church. This is why some people, especially the chiefs in many Tikar villages have abandoned the

²⁵⁹ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

²⁶⁰ Ibid

²⁶¹ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, 40

²⁶² Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

Christian faith and turned to Islam. To forbid a Tikar to be polygamous, is to uproot him from his culture, it is to make him lose his status in the society. That is, polygamy allowed Tikar people to have large families and to create friendships. A person could give his daughter in marriage to his friend — even if he already has a wife — to strengthen their friendship. The chiefs married the daughters of the other neighboring chiefs to avoid conflicts between them. It is therefore understandable to what extent polygamy was part of the Tikar culture. Thus, imposing monogamy on Tikar Christians as the only matrimonial regime recognized by the church has been a Eurocentric attitude of missionaries, since polygamy is foreign to European culture and monogamy is their matrimonial regime.

Another cultural problem was the question of Christian participation in traditional dances as mentioned early by Nimpang Gustave. The first missionaries forbade Christians to participate in these dances. In the quote from Nimpang Gustave above he refers to the fact that they were forbidden to participate in traditional dances.

Traditional dancing is very important in the Tikar culture. It is an expression of identity. It is a means of rejoicing and communication. Through the dances, people communicated messages to one another and participated in the life of the chiefdom. To forbid it to a Tikar was to exclude him from his community. This is what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin call Alterity which refers to the state of being different from other people in cultural, political, religious contexts.²⁶³ Alterity is also one of the postcolonial aspects of missionary work. In fact, banning Christian participation in traditional ceremonies and dances was a way of bringing in Christian Tikar different from other Tikar people. The fact that they were not allowed to participate in these ceremonies made them different, stripped them of an element of their culture, which is communion with others during these manifestations. Therefore, some people no longer went to church and chiefs forbade their people to go to church because the teachings of the missionaries prevented them from maintaining their cultural values. This was for example the case in Bankim where, around the 1940s, many Christians were persecuted by the chief of that village.²⁶⁴

Another Eurocentric approach which can be seen in the missionary's work was about the gender issues. When Mgbatoussong Jean Paul states that the missionaries' work changed the status of the women, he wants to explain how the missionaries have fought a lot for gender

²⁶³ Ibid, 9

²⁶⁴ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, 10 July 2018

equality in the church and among the Tikar.²⁶⁵ In Western contexts, women basically have the same rights and duties as men, which is not the case with the Tikar culture. The missionaries found that the situation was different among the Tikar. They emphasized girls' equal rights as boy to go to school. In Tikar culture, women do not have the same status as men, but they play a very important role in the life of the family.²⁶⁶ To educate women according to Western culture is to divert from their important role in family life in the Tikar culture. That's why some parents did not want to send their daughters to the mission school.²⁶⁷ For the missionaries, it was normal for the girls to be educated because that is what makes sense in Western cultures, not only to grow up for marriage as it was the case among the Tikar. This is a commendable act, except that it seems to show that Western culture is the best, since in these missionary schools only Western education was given to children.

The missionaries should have taken more time to better study the culture before starting their mission work by first living for a long time among the people to see in the culture what were good or bad in the light of the Gospel. This would have allowed them to see the aspects of the culture that are not contrary to the Gospel and to value them so that the Tikar felt at home in the church. This is what Åsmund Steinnes pointed out when he said that “the missionaries did not take enough time to discover the culture.”²⁶⁸ He went on to say that “we discovered the cultural elements as we worked.”²⁶⁹ This was an important shortcoming of the mission among the Tikar. When many of the Tikar chiefs are Muslims today, one reason could be because of this lack of understanding from the missionaries on some of the key elements of the culture.

8.2 The strict requirement of Christian ethic

The strict enforcement of ethical rules such as the total prohibition of the consumption of alcohol, the requirement of the marriage certificate before being baptized, and the abandonment of any traditional practice, pushed some Tikar either to give up the Christian faith or made some live a hypocritical life. As Nimpang Gustave point it out, “They (missionaries) forbade Christian to drink traditional wine.”²⁷⁰ Traditional wine is used in all traditional Tikar ceremonies. During these ceremonies, people eat and drink together with others. These are

²⁶⁵ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ Ibid

²⁶⁸ Åsmund Steinnes, interview taped in Kleppe, 27 January 2019

²⁶⁹ Ibid

²⁷⁰ Nimpang Gustave, interview taped in Bankim July 11, 2018

moments of sharing, counseling, education, and especially, an opportunity to participate in village life. To forbid it to a Tikar is to take away all these values mentioned above. Instead of forbidding it altogether, the missionaries should have taught the Christians to consume it in moderation, for no matter what you say they should or should not do, a Tikar will never give up participating in traditional ceremonies, even if he is a Christian. These rules were very difficult for the Tikar to abide by and prevented them from fully accepting the Gospel. About this, Lode writes that,

Confronted with the social situation and the traditional religion, the rules were modified, strengthened or relaxed, according to the case. Haagensen commented on them in an annual report on the work in the Tikar area. On one hand, overly strict rules could be a roadblock for people; but, on the other hand, it was necessary to have some limits. Among the Tikar there was a lot of alcoholism and many marital problems! Haagensen demanded total abstinence from alcohol as did some of his American SM colleagues. Candidates for baptism that didn't follow the rules were refused, and some Christians were excluded from the holy table [...] The problem was that the ban affected those who drank in a moderate way in the same manner as alcoholics. We realized that too strict an application led to hypocrisy.²⁷¹

Missionaries also required Christians to abandon all traditional practices such as fetishes etc.

Mgbatoussong Jean Paul states that, “because of the fact that they told us to abandon all our traditional practices, some gave up everything, even good things like the bark of certain trees that was used to treat certain diseases, since they were told not to continue on with the old practices anymore.”²⁷²

As a result, and according to what Mgbatoussong Jean Paul Said, people even abandoned some good practices. As I mentioned earlier, the Eurocentric attitude of the missionaries is still visible here. Requiring Christians to abandon their traditional practices is, in my opinion, a Eurocentric attitude. For example, according to Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, they encouraged people to first go to the hospital when they are sick because that is what is right in their culture.²⁷³ But they did not know that among the Tikar, there are mystical diseases that cannot be treated in hospitals. There was appropriate treatment for these kinds of diseases. And so, banning these practices and calling them pagans has made some Tikar lost their traditional

²⁷¹ Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 115

²⁷² Ibid

²⁷³ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

points of reference. With regards to what Mgbatoussong said above we can notice that people abandoned the practice of treating diseases that could not be treated in the hospital. This postcolonial attitude makes one say that we are here in a situation where we have the impression that the missionaries wanted to make Tikar “young Europeans”, that is, to live like Europeans, since many of the ethical rules they demanded were for the most part rooted in European culture. Perhaps unconsciously the missionaries, through their practices implicitly told the Tikar that European culture is the best and that its values must be accepted by all. That is to advocate Eurocentric attitudes that made many Tikar people experience a sense of losing their identity and traditional point of reference.²⁷⁴

But a few years later, from what I experience as pastor, many of the requirements are no longer so strictly kept, (relaxed) and many aspects of Tikar culture exist today in the celebration of cults. This is the case of some hymns that have been inspired by traditional songs and dances

8.3 The question of the financial support of the church and the functioning of congregations.

Mboh Christine states that,

I think that the shortcomings of the missionary work of the Norwegians are at the level of contributions in the church. They did not teach us to give, to manage ourselves. They did things for us. They gave us clothes and even blanket. Which made us lazy. They did not encourage us to fight on our own. We lived as if they were never going to leave. Even at school, we did not pay. The books were given free of charge. So today, when people are asked to contribute or donate to support the church, they do not give. They say that it was not like that in missionary times. They think they are being turned away, that we want to use their money for something else. For me the missionaries did not prepare us for our future autonomy. At first, we thought they were doing us good by giving us everything, but today we find that they did not help us much in this way. That's what does not please me anymore in their work.²⁷⁵

. Mgbatoussong Jean Paul in the same way also states that:

²⁷⁴ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, 52

²⁷⁵ Mboh Christine, interview taped in Bankim, July 10, 2018

They did not teach us to be independent because they gave us everything. It was long after they left that we realized that they had not helped us because when they left, they said that we must now fly on our own when we were not prepared for that. The consequence is that we Christians do not contribute to the church. The revenue is low even though we have many faithful church members in our communities.²⁷⁶

Nygangji, says the same thing when he asserts that,

All the institutions were supported by missionary subsidies. Everyone received his salary from the missionary's hand, which means, in the view of the native Christians, the Mission was a project of the whites and for the whites. They had not been taught to participate in the support of this work of salvation, and later they had no idea how the offering that they gave at church was used. People thought that the whites took this money and deposited it at the edge of a large lake, and God himself came to fetch it, and for most of the natives it was God who handed over the money to the whites for their service. In reality, the natives did not really understand the money aspect.²⁷⁷

Thus, according to all these statements, we can see that the question of the financial support of the church is one of the great reproaches that the Tikar today make on the missionary's work. All my informants said that the missionaries did not teach the church to be self-supporting because they did almost everything for them. All missionary activity was subsidized. The salaries of the school teachers were paid mainly by subsidies from the NMS and the government, and the catechists and evangelists were all paid by the mission. In theory, congregations were expected to contribute with a certain amount toward those expenses; but, since people tended to not give much money to the church, sometimes, it was the missionaries themselves who made that contribution on behalf of their congregation. In short, Christians rarely contributed. Schooling was free, at least in the early days of the mission work on the Tikar plain, which meant that parents did not have to look for ways to have money to send their children to school. Even later, although parents were required to pay school fees, it was really a small amount, compared to the total cost of the teachers' salaries, most of which was paid by subsidies from the NMS and the government. In addition, for many years, all the church workers were paid by the mission; therefore, the Christians themselves contributed little, financially, to the operation of the church. This situation led to laziness. When subsidies began

²⁷⁶ Mgbatoussong Jean Paul, interview taped in Ngambé-Tikar, July 12, 2018

²⁷⁷ Nygangji Ndi Samuel, "Pourquoi les Kirdi du Nord-Cameroun ont-ils préféré le Christianisme à l'Islam ? le cas des « Habe » de Bankim", 47-48

to decline, congregations also began to suffer from lack of money to support themselves, because the Christians were not well enough prepared to do that. Even today, this difficulty still exists in the church. I was a pastor in Bankim and in Ngambé-Tikar. When Christians were asked to contribute to help meet the needs of the church, many pointed out to us that it was not like that during the time of the missionaries. There should have been more teaching on the necessity of supporting the church. This was really an important shortcoming of the mission, since it is something which continues to affect congregations today in our church.

It may have been a problem of the Christians not being well enough prepared to handle things once they were responsible for running the church on their own. The missionaries should have taught them from the beginning how to support the church. This would have prepared them for self-management when the missionaries left. The self-financing process was not taught, and many congregations pay the price today.

However, an important question remains on this subject is to know why the missionaries of the NMS did not prepare the indigenous populations for autonomy? When I was a student at The Lutheran Institute of Theology of Meiganga (ILTM) and during our discussions about it, some of my colleagues thought that it was a colonial attitude which according to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin consist of maintaining the indigenous in a dependent status.²⁷⁸ My colleagues though that it was a voluntary missionary policy to keep local churches under the domination of the NMS, their founding mission. Others thought it was the state of poverty of local people that pushed missionaries to do everything for them. This position was supported by Asmund Steinnes in our interview. But Lode thinks that the NMS missionaries were able to do what they did because they had a support organization in their home country.²⁷⁹ But whatever position one takes on this subject, it is important to note that the missionaries of the NMS should have prepared the natives for their future independence. This could be an opportunity for the NMS to accompany local churches in their empowerment program. As far as the EELC is concerned, NMS support in this direction is strongly expected to have a church that can support itself.

We can summarize this chapter by saying that the shortcomings of missionary work among the Tikar were with regard to the lack of enough study of the culture, the overly strict requirements

²⁷⁸ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, 108

²⁷⁹ Kåre Lode, *Appelés à la Liberté*, 13

of moral rules, and the lack of preparation of the Christians for self-governance. All these practices carry postcolonial attitudes.²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, 108

Conclusion

In conclusion, the theme of my thesis is “the spiritual, social and economic impact of the missionary work of the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) among the Tikar people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon (EELC): past and present”. In the study of this theme, I asked the following research question: How has the missionary work of the Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) among the Tikar people of the Evangelical Church Lutheran of Cameroon (EELC) influenced people’s lives on the spiritual, social, and economic level from the beginning to the present day? To answer this question, I organized my work in eight chapters. So, the answer to this question is that in the spiritual level the missionaries helped the Tikar people have a different understanding of the relationship between God and humans. They came to understand that God is not far away in heaven as he was portrayed in the cult of the ancestors, but that he lives among us through his Son Jesus Christ. They saw that they no longer need to make sacrifices or libations to the ancestors to receive the blessings of God, but that they can meet God in prayer. The work of the missionaries enabled the Tikar to abandon ancestor worship and idolatry, which they felt did not respond effectively to their spiritual needs. It allowed them to have a new identity. The Gospel of Christ freed them from superstition and the fear of ghosts and fostered in them courage and trust in God. The Tikar found in this new religion the solution to their desire for spirituality, because they not only found the solution to their spiritual problems, but also the solutions to their physical and material problems.

On the social level, the mission work of the NMS solved many social problems. These included the improvement of certain cultural practices such as the rite of widowhood, the facilitating the interconnection between the inhabitants of different villages, and the change of behavior in society, the reduction of witchcraft, social development because of the establishment of schools, the improvement of health conditions, and finally the improvement of the status of women. The Gospel has calmed hearts and cultivated the spirit of forgiveness that has contributed greatly to social cohesion and peace between people.

At the economic level, the missionary work has allowed many Tikar to have direct jobs in schools, congregations, in the mission station, or the Bankim health center. I also noted the indirect economic impact. Here I mentioned people on whom the economic impact of the missionary work of the NMS can be considered indirect, since these people were not directly involved in missionary activity. These people are those who have been educated, and materially and financially supported by the missionaries, and who have succeeded after their studies in

working in the Cameroonian civil service. I also mentioned children of people who worked for the missionaries who, because of their parents' work, were able to pursue studies in higher education and hold important positions in society today. And finally, I mentioned those who, through the advice of some missionaries about associations, savings, agriculture, and economic management, have managed to improve their economic situation and that of their families.

But as no human work is ever perfect, I also noted some shortcomings of this missionary work in chapter eight. These shortcomings of the work of the missionaries among the Tikar were: the alterity and Eurocentric attitude of missionaries characterized by trying to impose the European culture on Tikar lifestyle, the overly strict requirements of moral rules which led to hypocrisy; and the non-preparation of Christians for self-governance which today makes the process of governance of the church difficult; the lack of enough study about the culture. This information may allow the NMS to review its methods of evangelization around the world to prevent these issues arising elsewhere. However, the Tikar people remain forever grateful to the NMS for having contributed so greatly to their development.

I would like to mention here that this work is only the beginning of a deeper study that could be done by a researcher later, because I am sure that I have not explored all aspects of the subject and that further study could bring to light more. I am aware of the fact that this work has some shortcomings, noting the fact for having interviewed only seven people. Which is probably not enough for such research. I can also mention the shortcomings related to my origin. The fact that I from Tikar culture did not allow me most often to be critical and distant from the text. However, I think I did my best to try to answer the main question I asked at the introduction. Thus, this thesis will help the Tikar people have a written document about missionary work in their locality. This thesis will also help the NMS to have the feedback of their work among the Tikar people and to see the shortcomings of this work which could possibly be avoided during their next missionary activities in the world.

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