

# The *Abin-fo'o* and The *Mandele* Dances in the Bafut Kingdom: Some vital Issues Presented in Cultural Festival Activities and its Evolution and benefits from their Onset to the Twenty First Century

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**Keywords—** *Bafut, cultural, Mbinfo'o, Mandele, importance*

**Abstract—** *As objective, Bafut is a tribe that migrated as far back in the Seventieth Century from the Northern part of Cameroon via the Eastern Grassfields to Bamenda, found in the Western Grassfields today, North West Region of Cameroon. Actually, the Objective of this article seeks to show and explain some number of cultural dancing groups which among them is the Mbinfo'o known as the Fon dance that is always performed in an annual festival that comes up at the end of every year. More so, in the kingdom palace is found another dance called the Mandele dance usually performed and reserved just for the prince and princesses of the Village. Due to some changes these dances has experience evolutionary mutations thus giving their full flesh substances that has been admired internally and internationally hence bringing some advantages into the country and the society or tribe.*

*As method, to better bring out this cultural heritage history, we concentrate very much on oral, and written sources that could best expound on these two mention dances. Also, it will be vital for us to say or give as result that, these dances have, as among, the several advantages, shown that the existed an interrelationship advantage as far as cultural festivals are concern in the Grassfields political, economic and socio-cultural domains and derived or has as importance to the entire country and the tribe itself. In this article it should be noted that some names of items and places has been spelled differently but all meaning the same.*

## INTRODUCTION

Long time ago a group of people left the northern part of Cameroon due to diverse reasons among which was drought of Sahara Desert which they were called Tikar and finally arrived their present side via the Eastern Grassfields of Cameroon. Just north of Bamenda today is the large Tikar community of Bafut, traditionally one of the most powerful of the Grassfields kingdom. The fons (local chiefs) palace here is home to the representative of a 700-year-old dynasty and is a fascinating insight into

Cameroon's traditional culture. The palace compound consists of numerous buildings including the houses of the fons 150 occupied by so many wives (not all of whom are presently in residence), and the sacred Achum building, a shrine which is off-limits to everyone except the fon and his close advisors. In front of the palace compound are several stones marking the burial sites of nobles who died, hence reservation and preservation of some patrimony. Serving the fon, was the Takumbeng House, which holds the fons ceremonial drum. The imposing colonial building

above the palace is now a museum. It holds many interesting (and slightly scary) things, traditional costumes and weapons. In every late December in each year, Bafut usually holds a huge four-day celebration to mark the end of the year's ancestor worship with masked dancing and drumming. Within the Royalty is a dance called *MandeleNfor* of the Prince and Princesses. Bafut also holds a large market every eight days (every country Sunday) following a worship and respect of the gods that protect the people and activities like the dances.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that Bafut is a well-organised society with a vision for her rich patrimonial preservation and enhancement of cultural values for continued encouragement and improvement of internal and external developments. This is usually done following the Bafut Calendar which that the people strictly follow. Here, the question that needs an answer is to know, what is the historical context and all that surrounds the AbineNfor and Mandele festivals coupled with its importance and consequences in and out of Bafut society? To better answer this question it will be interesting to analyse the following aspects; Conceptual framework of the study and contextual history narration of Bafut Kingdom, Manifestation evolving within and around of the Abinfo'o and the Mandele dance activities, The evolution of the Abin-fo'o and the Mandele dances in the Bafut fendom, and finally, The importance and Consequences of the Abin-fo'o and Mandele Dance.

### **I-Conceptual framework of the study and contextual history narration of Bafut Kingdom**

This study has some key and veritable words that deserve good mastering for the enlargement of our understanding. Furthermore, some narration of historical background should also be given to know where this people originated and finally inhabited Bafut. It should be noted that all about them came from outside as they preserve their status till the 21<sup>st</sup> century today.

#### **A-Conceptual framework of the study**

**Mandele Dance:** This is orchestrated by the fon and put in effectiveness by the Prince and Princesses of the Bafut palace, sons and daughters of the fons. They function in several circumstances attached to the running and administration of the palaces. It started during the reign of NforNebasisu who ruled from 1552 to 1570 as successor of MforFeurlu consider the territory of Mbebili and Bukar that, then constituted the fendom as small to

him. He decided and expanded the territory Beyond and Bukari which he created the Mandele Dance which intension was to animate to motivate and encourage the Bafut warriors during the wars of expansion. The sound of birds heard in the river *Muchwine* of 12 birds' melodies became the memorizing songs of the dance dominated by flute and drums. Later the Mandele dance became official used during the Grass Cutting festivals to construct the fons house Achum and also during the Mandele dance the traditional priest also prays to the ancestors to provide in all homes a beautiful harvest. This dance is performed once a year in June beginning in Yijong day to ending Mumita'a which is the Bafut native Sunday unlike the Abine-Mfor. These dances are situated in certain months of the year as can be seen in the Bafut calendar; January to December in Bafut Language: 1-January- San Nboo, 2-February-san Ababe, 3-March-San Ntsumbung, 4-April- San Bwiimfo, 5-May-San Mikwene, 6-June-San Mandele, 7-July-San Mbu u ansaneloo, 8-August- San Nkoonji'I, 9-September-San Ayoo-ni-mfen, 10-October-san Ntsyabe, 11-November-San Aloo, 12-December-San Abene. The sixth month is the month of Mandele while December month the twelfth month is the month of AbeneMfor.<sup>2</sup>

**Abine-Mfor:** The dance is an annual cultural festival that usually takes place at the end of each year in the Bafut palace plaza. It took place in December every year in that is characterized with the following aspects; Honour to the ancestors by offerings, sacrifices, libation, dancing, feasting, exchange of traditional gifts amongst Bafut people, Ritual parades and displays by manjong societies hence a way of preserving the village and tribes patrimony, Family reunions and meetings, General fanfare and jubilation in the Bafut fendom are other methods. They orchestrated this festival and consisted of, 6 traditional drums of various sizes, 4 flutes, a choir, 2 elephant tusk trumpets, Traditional iron foot rattles. They are four songs that characterize the music formed for dancing which are *Lele*, *Akwarehsong*, *Sawa song*, *Boom song*. The first three songs from tikari were introduced into Bafut by *M for Feurlu* that is Chief Feurlo'o and the fourth song (Boomsong) was received from Bali Kumbat and introduced in Bafut by the Mfor Abumbi I who reigned from 1852 to 1932. Finally, at the end of Abine-Mfor are performed, Mandele, Ngwa-ba'a, Ndong-mambang, sang-mandele, Afeurth, Ndanjem, lele and Akwareh which Mandele is that of the Prince and Princesses.<sup>3</sup>

**Festival:** It is a season of rejoicing like in public celebrations such as the Christmas and Easter season

<sup>1</sup>Fon palace Cameroon, lonely planet, <file:///E:/fons%20palace-%20cameroon,lonelyplanet%20Attraction%20lonelyplanat.htm> and <file:///E:/Fon's%20Palace%20%20Cameroon%20Attractions%20-%20Lonely%20Planet.htm>

<sup>2</sup>His Royal Majesty Abumbi II Fon of Bafut, *The Customs and Traditions of Bafut*, Press Book, Press Print, Limbe, 2016, p.

<sup>3</sup>His Royal Majesty Abumbi II Fon of Bafut, *The Customs and Traditions of Bafut*, Press Book, Press Print, Limbe, 2016, p.

which are church festivals that marked series of performances, of music, drama given periodically call festive or feast day, such feasting activities are the Abine-Mfor and Mandele dances in the Bafut Kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

**Cultural:** the word originated from the word culture which is institution hence advanced development of the human powers, development of body, mind and spirit by training and experience, evidence of intelligence intellectual development of science, art and human society. Particular form of intellectual development, Art, social institution, belief, characteristics of a community, race hence the Abine-Mfor and the Mandele dance are cultural institutions that preserve and enhance development.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>L E Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of English*, p316.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p.210.

**Picture:** The Old Bafut Palace at hilltop of. **Picture:** A stone for scarify in the Old palace at Mbebili. MbebiliBafut (Patrimony).



**Source:** Author Courtesy pictures

**Picture:** An Aerial View of the Land of Bafut



**Source:** Author Courtesy picture

Geographically, Bafut is situated about twenty kilometres northwest of Bamenda, in the Mezam Division, and covers an area of roughly 340 km<sup>2</sup>. It is located in the Western Grassfields geographic region - which includes Cameroon's Northwest Province and surrounding

grassland areas. Bafut is the most powerful of the traditional kingdoms of the Grassfields, now divided into 26 wards along a 10 kilometre stretch of the "Ring Road" that trails along a ridge above the Menchum Valley. The population is settled in three main zones. At the centre are



the people of *Mumala'a* (heart of the country) clustered around the Fon's palace who refer to themselves as the real Bafut (*Bufu*). This name can be applied to the whole chiefdom. To the south is the *Ntare* (ridge area). To the north is the *Mbunti* (lower) which descends abruptly to the Menchum river valley.

Linguistically, the major languages are the Bafut language and Cameroonian Pidgin English, though Mundum, Mbuhnti and French are also spoken. The Bafut language is classed within the Mbam-Nkam section of the

central branch of the Niger-Congo family along with other nearby languages such as Bali Nyonga, Bamum and Pinyin. Bafut is famous for, being the venue of the Annual Dance of the Fon (local chieftain) or the AbineMfor. The location of the palace of the Fon of Bafut, the residential dwelling of the Fon and his wives and counsel which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Centre and houses a museum. (see Fon of Bafut and a section on the Palace of the Fon and Queens).

**Picture:** The Fons House Achum and Houses of Queens



**Source:** Authors Courtesy picture

**Pictures:** The Palace constructed by the Germans using Bafut slaves



**Source:** Author Courtesy Photo

## II-Manifestation evolving within and around of the Abinfo'o and the Mandele dance activities.

### A-AbineMfor in the Bafut traditional festivals

From the appellation *AbineMfor*, it is the fon dance, who is the king and man the activities that surround the Abin – fo'o. It is a festival that takes place at the end of every year. the month of December. According to the month of the Bafut calendar, san Abin –Fo'o. Abin – Fo'ohas different spellings as seen and comes up at the fons palace plaza called Sani – Abin –Fo'o and done at the palace within a period of a week, starting at the eve of the market day "Lika" and the market day "Jong". During this period, the Bafut secret societies and the Kwifon send out

priests to the different shrines where it is beliefs there, Bafutt for cohabiting the ancestries to worship and appease before the activities of the Abin–Fo'o,<sup>6</sup>the immediate market day that follows according to the calendar, some rituals are performed at the heart of the palace by the secretary of the palace, At sunset of this day the notables and others jointed or come together at the palace to perform the dance Abin–Fo'o after having undergone through a lot of maneuvers to put in place to standard, the Abin – Fo'o.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Tanda Augustine, in Yaoundé, on 2 March 2021.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

**Picture 85:** Some Notables in Bafut Palace during the Fon Dance preparation and BafutFon Dance *AbineMfor*

**Source:** Authors Courtesy picture

**Picture:**Head of Juju used during the Abine-Mfor Dance

**Source:** Author Courtesy picture

Furthermore, it is done for four days and on the fifth day, activities are concluded. The “Jong” which is the day of worship and sacrifices is also concluded on this day. At sunset of the worship and sacrifices, dances are done by members of royal and secret societies done for a short time which could be between or about five to ten minutes for each group. The Mfor(Fon) of Bafut as head of the society or community is the host, passing and programming activities for the next day. It continued up to the fourth day which is displayed by Mayong groups demonstrating their wear – like activities as they fought during the Bafut – German wars and tribal wars like, Lale, Nda – Mukong, Nda – Atawa, NdaNgo’o and several others. Activities on this fourth day are finished and dust. Those who have done much to the Society of Bafut are decorated for example some were given cups and red feathers, they were given or received gifts and were also rewarded with titles. The LaleChaire demonstrate its notion as planned around the community comes back to join the Orchestra to dancing and feasting for several hours. On the fifth day, only members of the royal family and some few others like notable come out to dismantle or conclude the affairs of the society, license putting end to the festival; to the citizen in the year which they look forward for the next year. This is a folk –loris; cultural

development activity that is handed from one generation to another and depicts important essences. This Abin-Fo’o on the fifth day in the week as planned and performed, it should be noted that, the day of the Abin-Fo’o marked the end or crowned all activities of the year but the commoners have great note and role to play. This has been a cultural stance due to the fact that it is a culture that has or passed on from one generation to the other or to generation upon generation.<sup>8</sup> Many children come out, learn to chant, dance and song while some come to witness and learn all about the Abin-Fo’o or The Bafut cultural annual festival performed towards the end of the year. It should be noted that no year has ever gone by and pass without the Abin-Fo’o activity and dance, not carried out except in the recent war period in Cameroon; civil war between the Government forces against secessionist Ambazonian forces.<sup>9</sup>

#### **B-Mandele dance in the Bafut traditional activities**

The name Mandele, came from the ancestors meaning a social activity organized every year at mid of the years called *san Mandele* around or in the month of

<sup>8</sup>Interview with Tanda Augustine, in Yaoundé, on 2 March 2021.

time, to early July fixed in the Bafut calendar; san Mandele always future in the above said month. It is a festival in that, the Bafut community headed by the royal family comes out known as the period of hunger with food items reserve in the band "Mukwere". Only some food items such as cocoyam, groundnut and palm wine brings all to either and share to all present and the involved. In effect, this managed by the members of the Royal family or Royal birth and line decendance. Both male and female; princess and princesses mandate and moderated by his magesty the Fon of Bafut to all the society and shines.<sup>10</sup> **see pictures**

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Interview with Tanda Robert, in Yaoundé, on 2 March 2021.

**Picture:** Mandele Drums Prince on flutes and Princesses preparing to display



**Source:** His Royal Majesty Abumbi II Fon of Bafut, *The Customs and Traditions of Bafut*, Press Book, Press Print, Limbe, 2016.

As well as the practical manifestation of the dance, the Mandele dancers comes out only when their palm wine has been given. They use palm wine called "Fohoo Mandele."<sup>12</sup> The wine helps very much as it raised the anxiety and awake everyone to be into and for the activity dance. It should be noted that everyone is in his or

<sup>12</sup>It is whitewine that is use and spray on the musical instrument and the dancing area. It is to appease the gods and the people

The Mandele dance activity usually takes place at the Bafut palace for a period of four days every San Mandele (mandele month) made up of the princess and princesses. The items like groundnut are distributed to every one of the day for the people present in the community to take home. All those present must atleast take something home as culture depicts. It should be noted that, it has move from the Bafut palace folklore dance during the Tikaris presence at the San Festive hall at the Bafut Royal palace.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> It started and has spread in several antennas. The Tanda appointed by the fon control the activities outside the palace

her traditional dress called "egalier". All those who are present be on their legs thus a traditional respect to the dance. Their flute and drums (**see items**) give a nice rythme that all dance. follow with singing or chanting of songs in the traditionallanguage or dialet very meaningful.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Ghe George Tanda, Bonaberi-Douala on the 04-03-2021 at 18.20pm



**Picture:** Mandele Dance Activities in Action

**Source:** His Royal Majesty Abumbi II Fon of Bafut, *The Customs and Traditions of Bafut*, Press Book, Press Print, Limbe, 2016.

Moreso, the day of Mandele dance festival is a day of feasting and eating only traditional dishes like Achu being a passionate meat of the people or tribe ones. It should not be forgotten that cooked groundnut can never be exempted from this dance occasion. When sharing, the cocoyams is put inside basket “kikah”. White-stuff and oil are put inside calabashes that has been wraped with the pearlings or backs of plaintains stems and then it is follow with sharing. Goats and chickens are killed for general eating or consumption. In this dance a commoner can not take part but no initiation is done as far as the Mandele dance is concern. The flute is often or had a long rope which the dancers, each, turns it while blowing and sound of different sort joining or coverging giving a complet sweet rythm hense all is force to dance or provoked to

dance inline following the rythms of drums, flute and singing of a traditional songs in traditional dialect.<sup>14</sup>

### III- The evolution of the Abin-fo’o and the Mandele dances in the Bafut fondom

#### A-The Abin-fo’o

The annual festival that grouped all the various group in the Bafut kingdom has greatly evolved with the passing of times from the precolonial, colonial and post-colonial era. Abin-fo’o started before the coming of the Tikar group fleeing from horrors left behind. It was during

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Tanda Augustine in Yaoundé on the 02 march 2021 (he is a chief protocole officer of the bafut royal palace, secretary of the bafut royal family « cheuch-meufor » member of the Takumbeng and as secretary. He is named “Nchuala’a” a person that the sountry is in his hands or rest in him and no one else.

the annual dance that the Bafut king who was not generous has to out the aborigine that occupied the hills of Mbebili under the leadership of the chief Nebachi. As from thence, the dance continued at the discovered environment devised by the Tikar chief. Since then the precolonial people continued the dance at the Bafut plaza. As our research predicts and depicts many at this time dance necked since the existed no cloths and the eldest in the kingdom use plaited leafs from the raffia and palm bushes.

Additionally, when time keeps passing and event continued to evolve, the dance became matured. The spirit of the people were seen in them during the colonial days when the palace made up of bamboo and raffia roofing, sundry bricks and zinc or zinc-ties has greatly improved the palace and plaza where the people do their dancing.<sup>15</sup>

The Abin-fo'o has been greatly spice, up dated instrumentally, organizational wise, and mental and spiritual no how, the culture remains unchanged but maturity super-improved. Many do dance now annually with their dress called "Nto-o Koh" during the colonial and post-colonial till now our days.<sup>16</sup>

#### **B- Mandele dance**

The first occupant or indigenes that the Tikars met at the Mbebili site knew no such important of the princess and princesses of the kingdom. The Mandele dance was introduced by the Tikar chief or king called Firloo that left the Eastern grassfieds 600 years ago. When the king had several wives and including the already had, to put them together as one the princess and princes started the Mandele group dance as a means to unit them. From the various palaces belt the dance has gone as far as in other towns like Douala Yaounde, Kumba and others. This dance as gone as far as long distance countries like America. The noble or Royal birth are doted everywhere today in Cameroon towns cities and abroad. This dance nowadays serves as a forum to put them together, knowing their identity due to the expansion of the people and growth of the huge kingdom. Their external movement has led to the organization of the people home and abroad. This dance is noted keep expanding to various dimension in the world.<sup>17</sup>

#### **IV- The importance and Consequences of the Abin-fo'o and Mandele Dance**

There are many and varied circumstances of importance of Abine-Mfor and Mandele dances in Bafut, Cameroon and abroad or internationally. These

importances has given way to some consequences originating from the dances.

#### **A-The Importance of Abine-Mfor Dance**

##### **1-Internally (Abin-fo'o)**

The identification of the people as their return home annually is often appreciated as love ones and family comrade see each other after a long period of time in separation or isolation as such it brings together in and strengthens the unity of the people. It gives and paint the picture of collaboration between and amongst the citizens of Bafut. It sells the image of the people and village within and out of the village. It also teaches the young grown-up on issue concerning their culture.<sup>18</sup>

##### **2-Externally (Abin-fo'o)**

The Abin-fo'o brings Bafut people of Bafutorigin or decent in their numbers. Europeans, Americans and Africans in and out of Cameroon to come see or witness the dance in the Bafut plaza. The culture is sold abroad as utensils such as ceremonial drums, flute, fibers bag, baskets, hand and foot rattles, and the egalier or Nto'oKoh are sold, this brings in income into Bafut and Cameroon. Of more important, the beauty, love and togetherness of the people is seen or viewed.<sup>19</sup>

#### **3-The Importance of Mandeledance**

Firstly, it put by bringing all the royal birth together to express their problems, seek for solutions and better their lives and that of the societies. This dance has been able to make those of the royal birth to love themselves and leave in harmony as one since the world is now a global village and globalization is the team of the 21th century. The dance has left the palace to different towns in the country even externally. It portrays the culture of the Bafut people and sells their images. It brings the princess and princesses together and other well-wishers. Additionally, the dance actually entertains due to the thrilling natural beating of the dance to the people, public and members. It brings revenue into the society and free will donations to appreciate the dance and dancers during their display. Such gift in terms of money are recovers from dancers from a leaf place at the middleof the dancers. Usually, some gift in land and money is given to the best dancers of or amongst the princess and princesses. this also helped to improve on the lives of the noble birth in Bafut educationally wise in the society.<sup>20</sup> The site is an important part of the history and culture of the Bafut population in the northwest region of Cameroon, and continues to

<sup>15</sup> Interviews with Achefor in Yaoundé, 02-3-2021

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Interview with TandaMandelle, Bonaberi, Douala, February 20-03-2021

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with Che George Tanda, in Douala, on 2 March 2021.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Tanda Augustine, in Yaoundé, on 2 March 2021.



function as a Centre for religious rites and ceremonies. The violence and destruction to the Bafut Palace threatens the safety and identity of the Bafut people and the maintenance of their distinctive cultural traditions. As such it deserves protection from the Republic of Cameroon and pressure from organizations and governments to restore damaged structures and return stolen artifacts.<sup>21</sup>

### **B-The Consequences of the Abine-Mfor and the Mandele dances of Bafut**

The two dances and others found in the Bafut kingdom has boasted the cultural image of the people at home and abroad. It should be noted that due to this rich values as per say has attracted several tourists that has visited the cultural patrimony of the town of Bafut. While some look at it importance some has developed negativistic attitude towards this value.

#### **1-Bafut Became a Cultural Centre for UNESCO Development**

Due to the Abine-Mfor, Mandele and others like the Mansoh and Manjong dances, attracted Countries like U S A, Germany, Britain and France with some Governmental organisations and non-governmental organisation to work in partnership with Bafut in several aspects, the dances has sell the image of the town of Bafutas such Bafutis well known and identify, has become a centre for UNESCO Development through the Mayorwho set-up a climate change and agricultural research unit within the council, to educate farmers and local youth on the most productive and sustainable modern farming techniques to guarantee no food shortage which is recognised usually in the month of June every year. This encourage the subsequently joined to the World Council on Climate Change, ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, and has been hailed by the Cameroon government as a "national green hero".The *Bafut Council Eco-City Project* has become a signature programme of the council. The project has been designed to host a *Sustainable Technologies Park and Cross-Cultural Education Hub* for local and international volunteers. This Non-Formal Youth Education Programme create young Social Entrepreneurs and Young Farmers Clubs, consisting of trained environmental technicians with the knowledge and skills to develop and execute strategies for achieving sustainability, within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at scale and enterprise

business models hence due the dances the image of Bafut is worldwide for development.<sup>22</sup>

#### **2-Cultural Link to International Organisation**

Furthermore, due to the rich and attractive culture of Bafut much supports has come from organisations, *The Bafut Eco-City 2020 Project* is the most urgent sustainable development challenge facing the *Bafut* municipality. It's lack of capacity to link with World Climate Change (WCC), International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) and other international organisations in developing educational and public awareness programmes with respect to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity has been the major setback.*Bafut* has subsequently established a new mission statement and Sustainable Development Plan that better encompasses the new *Eco City Vision* and specifies what are the wishes to achieve through this vision. Moreso, due to the dances, Bafut is famous for the following touristic attractions:

The venue of the Annual Dance of the Chief (local chieftain) or the *Abin e Mfor*..

The location of the palace of the Chief of *Bafut*, which covers the residential dwelling of the Chief and his wives, counsel which is now a UNESCO World Heritage Centre and houses a museum.

The nearby location of the botanical garden of Savanna Botanic Gardens, which is noted as naturalist *Gerald Durrell* help plan, is also located near the town.

The presence of the *Bafut* market, which is very vibrant in the area; occurring every eight days to trade in fruits, spices, vegetables, meat and animals.<sup>23</sup>

#### **3-The Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA)Againstattack on cultural Values.**

The Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA)—an independent professional association which exists to facilitate communication among scholars, teachers, students, artists, museum specialists, collectors, and all others interested in the arts of Africa and the African Diaspora—condemns the violent aggression perpetrated by the Republic of Cameroon against the Palace of Bafut, a site included on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites since 2006. Human Rights Watch reports that "On September 24, 2019, soldiers from the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) attacked and looted the Royal Palace in Bafut, North-West

<sup>21</sup>CAA endorses its affiliate society, the Arts Council of the African Studies Association (ACASA), in condemning recent reports of theft, property damage, as well as violence at the Palace of Bafut in Cameroon.

<sup>22</sup>-Interview with Tanda Augustine, in Yaoundé, on 2 March 2021

<sup>23</sup>-Bafut Palace <https://www.inf.org/project/bafut-palaceWorldMonumentsFundPictures>

region. FonAbumbi II of Bafut protested the aggression in a letter dated September 24, 2019 and addressed to the Governor of North West Region. In addition to causing damage to buildings within the palace and perpetrating violence against those who had been neither charged nor tried in a court of law, these troops representing the authority of the State took away, historical objects from the palace museum away.<sup>24</sup>

#### 4- Bafut Remain a Cultural Heritage Attraction

According to the World Monuments Fund, the palace “embodies Bafut cultural identity and remains a centre for religious rites and traditional ceremonies like the Abine-Mfor and Mandele dances. Over 50 houses are clustered around the site’s spiritual core, Achum Shrine, are used by the Fon (king), his wives, and the royal court.” The palaces and museums of the North West Region of Cameroon serve as invaluable repositories of the long-standing traditions and material cultures of these vibrant kingdoms. These palaces and associated sites—where ritual practices have long been performed—foster and house the heritages, both tangible and intangible of these communities. The violent destruction and looting of such a site may be understood as an attempt to erase the cultural identity of the Bafut population, Cameroon and the outside World hence an abuse to global patrimony. As a site listed on the Tentative List of World Heritage Sites, Bafut Palace is recognized as holding even greater than just local significance, constituting a primary locus of cultural heritage for the entirety of Cameroon, and indeed the world. The Cameroonian State must treat these places as the internationally significant cultural heritage sites that they are.

#### 5-A Cry for protection of cultural obligation as a state project

ACASA calls on the Republic of Cameroon to protect sites of cultural heritage as required by being party to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Patrimony Property. According to Article 4(3) of the aforementioned convention, it is the obligation of the State “to prohibit, prevent and, if necessary, put a stop to any form of theft, pillage or misappropriation of, and any acts of vandalism directed against, cultural patrimony property.” In light of this international obligation, the Cameroonian State should bring to justice and punish

appropriately those responsible for this heinous act just to prohibit them for such further act. Furthermore, every effort must be taken to return looted items of cultural heritage to the palace museum of Bafut.<sup>25</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Finally, Conceptual framework of the study and contextual history narration of Bafut Kingdom, Manifestation evolving within and around of the Abinfo’o and the Mandele dance activities, The evolution of the Abin-fo’o and the Mandele dances in the Bafut fondom, and finally, the importance and Consequences of the Abin-fo’o and Mandele Dance are the axis in which this article rotates. The Better World Cameroon's (Ndanifor) Permaculture Ecovillage Demonstration Land Trust in Bawum is a major contributor to the operations of the Bafut Ecovillage Vision 2020 working with the aim of reconnecting Bafut Youth to their cultural heritage. Also with the goal of striking a balance between economic, social and environmental needs. Bafut image is in Better World Cameroon joined Action in Ecovillage Vision 2020, to actively promote culture, indigenous knowledge systems related to soil fertility, providing rehabilitation and long term care to plants and animals through a climate campaign. Better World Cameroon works closely with the Cameroon Government and Global Ecovillage Network in Africa to protect natural heritage sites and cultural development through Permaculture Education and Social support as a means of preserving Path of Cameroon Patrimony. Since 2000 Better World Cameroon has adopted Bafut and devoted to transitioning it to resilience. Bafut Permaculture Ecovillage as support structure for implementing Bafut Eco vision 2020. The Sustainable Development Goals in Cameroon envisions Bafut as a centre for international partnerships. The nearby location of the botanical garden, Savanna Botanic Gardens, which noted naturalist NgwaChe Francis now of blessed memory, Help Plan, is located near the town. The presence of the Bafut market, which is a very vibrant one in the area with a lot of patrimony values sold in it, occurring every eight days, selling fruits, spices, vegetables, meat and animals and fabricated cultural materials.<sup>26</sup>

The town of Bafut is probably best remembered as the place where the famous naturalist Gerald Durrell came on two animal-collecting expeditions in 1949 and 1957. Durrell wrote two accounts - *The Bafut Beagles* and *A Zoo in My Luggage*, on his travels in Bafut, he created a mini-TV series, *To Bafut with Beagles*. Due the richness

<sup>24</sup>CAA News Today, CAA Endorses ACASA’s Statement Concerning Destruction of Cultural Patrimony in Bafut, posted by CAA — Dec 16, 2019 and (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/10/11/world-heritage-site-attacked-cameroon#>)

<sup>25</sup>(<https://www.wmf.org/project/bafut-palace>)

<sup>26</sup>Interview with Tanda Augustine, in Yaoundé, on 2 March 2021.

and beauty attractions, on September 24, soldiers from the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) attacked and looted the Royal Palace, in Bafut, North-West region.<sup>27</sup>This has been seen as an error but destroying the dreams of the following important personalities who are cultural patrimony Developers; Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, Henri EtoundiEssomba, Ambassador of the Republic of Cameroon to the US, Peter Henry Barlein, US Ambassador to the Republic of Cameroon, NarcisseMouelle Kombi, Minister of Arts and Culture for the Republic of Cameroon, UNESCO. The fon of Bafut called on the indulgence of the above to make them aware because he is just a care taker, protector of Bafut patrimony which he needs to inform them, to protect Cameroon cultural heritage as promulgated by them and put under his care.<sup>28</sup>What actions can be suggested and put in to practice to preserve Bafut Cultural heritages and that of the entire grassfields and the country Cameroon?

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<sup>28</sup>World Monuments Fund