

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLEDGE

Otwere, Mbosi Traditional Institution Facing the Challenges of the Development in Congo-Brazzaville

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Abstract:

In this text, which is the result of our research, the work consists in looking in the culture of Otwere which allows it to face the challenges of modernity. The problem is two-fold. The first challenge is to look into the traditions of Otwere to see what allows it to resist the demands of the Congolese traditions at first and secondly to see what allows it to face the challenges of culture in the world, in the context of African literature. The oral and written works that are available on the mbosi group allow it to take part in the international concert of the promotion of African traditional cultural values. For this to happen the mbosi must present the elements of their culture to participate in the challenges. But unfortunately we find that Otwere was victim of attacks by the colonial regime and other African realities, even to the point of diminishing its power.

Keywords: *Otwere, challenges, customary law, Mbosi, modernity*

1. Introduction

While in Asia great battles have emerged, everywhere to protect the cultural heritage, in Africa resistance has not yielded expected results. One wonders whether Otwere, this beautiful traditional institution has managed to endow the Mbosi people in particular and the Congolese people in general with the culture of organization and defense of the institutions. The collapse of Otwere proves that the Mbosi did not have an effective solidarity during the resistance against colonization or during the attacks of this noble institution by the Saka-Saka. Apart from these few dances like Mondo Assamafou, Kiebe-kiebe, Ekongo, Okia, Imbolo etc. which did not constitute an obstacle to the expansionist policy of modernity, nothing that expressed these cultural values could be saved. These dances, which have been able to resist until today, constitute an important landmark of the air which covers the mbosi cultural space known as Ondinga and Okiba, whose Otwere constitutes the bedrock. The purpose of this research is to launch a vibrant call to other national communities, to bring them to make the critical and prospective point of their cultural legacies, like the mbosi space, so that by giving up the bad idea that the culture of each of the 52 ethnic groups is the measure of the national things, to go to the conquest of the complementarity by the trade with others; this process should make it possible to link the retrograde aspects of our cultures (customs) with the requirements of the modern law, which alone represents the national consensus discussed, as a rational anthropological-sociological foundation for creating a true historical community of destiny, that it is called Nation, and whose project has suffered too much from the indiscriminate attachment of each to its custom, by wanting to impose it on others, without ethical negotiation.

2. Area of Study

The Mbosi people live in central and northern Congo-Brazzaville, which they share with the Teke, Sangha, Maka, Pygmies and Oubangu peoples. It occupies both banks of the Alima River, the Likouala Mossaka and the right coastline of the Congo River. The area occupied by the Mbosi corresponds administratively to the regions (currently Department) of the Cuvette, the West-basin and plateaux, specifically to the districts of : Mossaka, Oyo, Tchikapika, Boundji, Ngoko, Makoua, Ntokou, Owando, Mbomo, Etoumbi, Abala, Allembe, Ollombo, Ongogni, Makotipoko and Gamboma.

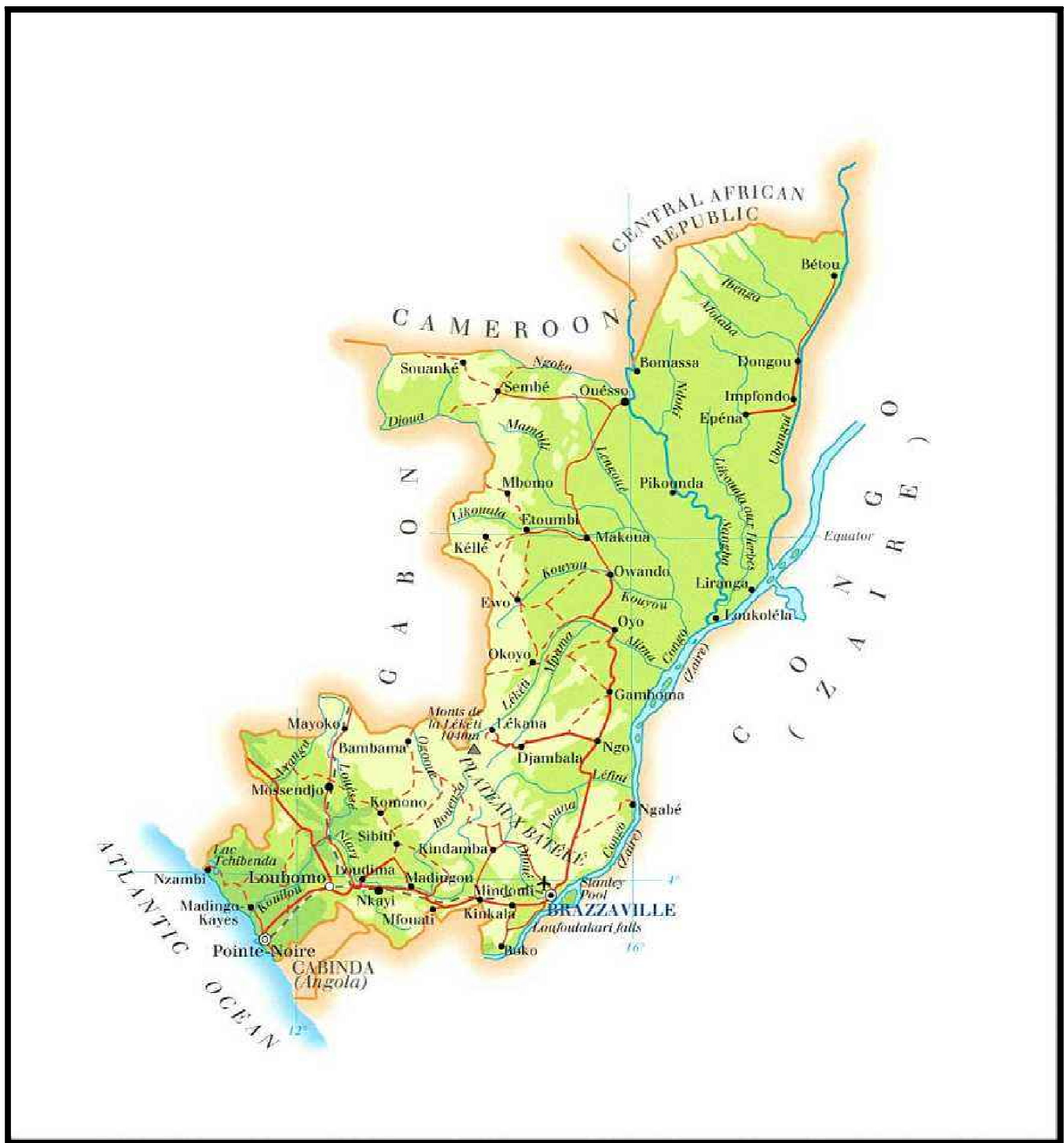


Figure 1: Map of Congo-Brazzaville

Source: <https://image.baidu.com>

3. State of Question

Managing an organization, Otwere's case in this work, is just one way to create new resources for its development at the right time. Otwere, understood as traditional organization, refers to customs, social habits, which are as important as the national law because they are derived from old practices and beliefs that many people respect. Different from one country to another, all over the world, traditional systems of justice (Otwere among the Mbosi) were born in small communities that self-regulate, to deal with court cases in Congo, these systems have survived the influences of modern justice. They are recognized by the state to handle custom-related matters. These systems aim to preserve peace and harmony in local communities. The Mbosi living in community have, in case of conflicts, often recourse to the Twere who often privilege the resolution of the conflicts by the repair of the faults more than by the punishment of the culprits. In Mbosi culture, personal virtues are

necessary as prerequisites to become an invested Twere. The Twere, as well as the Mbosi people in general, must reintegrate Otwere's values into their daily practice. Indeed, how does Otwere, which is in the realm of custom, succeed in imposing itself before the written law?

Before the Civil Code, custom was therefore an essential source of objective law. A new code has had to upset this order of things by giving supremacy to the law. This supremacy of the law is justified by various arguments : first, the written law is more precise and more certain by the presence of the text whereas the custom can be a source of insecurity due to its greater uncertainty. Above all, the law is general and applies to the whole territory whereas the custom varies from one region to another and sometimes even from one profession to another. Lastly, the law reacts more quickly to the needs of society than the custom of which the elaboration is particularly long. This law does not mean that the custom has disappeared, the insufficiencies of the law at a few levels allow deducing that for the subjects where there are no legal provisions, rules laid down by the civil code, the custom can survive.

Today, despite the rarity of "A Nga Kwephe", "Ngo Twere", "Abiale" etc. to ensure the training and safety of the Twere in the Mbosi community or in the cities of Congo-Brazzaville where they are invited, the profession succeeds in imposing itself. Whereas, modern judges face the problem of ethics: Corruption, trading in influence and other acts related to the moral probity of these judges are largely at the center of the anti-maligners decried in their services. In the Mbosi community, the Twere, member of Otwere ensures that the law is respected, that the truth is clearly exposed and that the regulation of the palaver is followed. The law, "mbeyi y'okili", is lived by the Mbosi as official rules which everyone must obey for individual and collective security, as mentioned by J.J. Rousseau that without the law there is no organization. So how did the Twere manage to impose peace where they had no material and coercive means to get the law through? And how the mbosi group through Otwere is facing the challenges of Congolese modernity? This is the question in operation in this work.

4. Judicature Otwere Facing the Challenges of Congolese Modernity

For the younger generation that claims the return of Otwere, there is nothing more cultural in their living space than these dances. The griots, through their songs often retrace the history of this people, a story crowned with virtues. The Teke for example, despite the external invasion, which spared nothing cultural or mystical, were able to save their cultural heritage. What is most important in this part is the assimilation of Otwere to literature that is not a Congolese or African culture, but that we must present the necessary elements, to then try an attempt to comparison, that is to say, to go from mysticism to science ?



Figure 2: The Traditional Dance Mondo Assamafou
Source: Brazzanews.Com

Normally, in the Mbosi cultural space, Otwere guaranteed the general interest, which was his hobby horse, but that the current Mbosi society no longer knows how to preserve because of its fragility in managing what constitutes a heritage or what which is in the general interest.

Currently, within the community, there is a clear awareness of the seriousness of this situation in the face of the establishment of Christian churches that gain much of the environment. The worrisome proportions of revivalist churches in Congo-Brazzaville with their processions of decibels show that, at this level, both the general interest and the public order are being attacked, so as not to demand that the public authority looks closely, provided that it is not involved in these practices.

Fetishes no longer seem to have the role of allowing the one or the other to mystify the accounts in the general interest, which causes the loss of many.

The renunciation of this culture by Mbosi of the so-called moderate group is a way to contribute to its decline, since they are moving more and more towards protection systems from other horizons, mostly religious and / or European. The Mbosi base was therefore very permeable and very fragile compared to that of Teke which has a base that can still withstand until further notice.

"No l'idia nga idia ko ipourè la ndé", the insatiable desire of the material is a sprain for the expression of the love. While all over Congo and Africa efforts are being made to raise the level of human resources management in order to avoid the capture of the general interest by third parties, there are still some individuals enlisted in bad habits that disturb the action of the community. This defect is a historic insult, against which current members of the Mbosi community should look to never let themselves be misled, or manipulate money, someday.

This was just one way to warn the Mbosi about the issues raised in meeting management challenges in their community, of which Otwere is the supreme institution.

For us, the sacred face of Otwere (Kwephe) fell under the bullets of the Saka-saka impostors, coming from Gabon and Democratic Republic of Congo, for an obvious reason: the disinterested critical mind, which doubts before acquiescing in knowledge of cause, is not part of the device that, on the contrary, banishing the intellectual reserve and the audacity to denounce the improbable, places knowledge on the side of the elders, a knowledge whose meaning of truth is in the past. Carried by a device so unproductive, the Twere deprived itself of the means to invent the possible: innocent curiosity, historical philosophical gesture par excellence. Having understood that the Mbosi exhibited a power that they do not know how to defend in reality, the Saka-saka took them for weak-minded, easy to manipulate.

Today what is to be done is to put forward the honor of the community, to make that the Mbosi have as arguments, the non-renunciation of Otwere's ethical requirements, the non-cessation of swearing on the honor of their ancestors, so as not to lose the already traced path, and fall into acculturation.

Basically, the call to conquer the learning of freedom and responsibility through the exercise of critical reflection on the problems of modern existence is our main concern in this work.

The re-evaluation of Otwere, the mbosi cultural heritage, which is the subject of our work, should not be dissociated with the injection of the critical spirit in the operating mode of Otwere.

Indeed, as we have just said, the Republic of Congo has 52 ethnic groups, which manage to get along in Lingala and Kituba, two national languages. It is in this sense that it should be said that:

This is already an important step towards the unification of consciences for the future of the country, which is not found in some neighboring countries. But, the construction of the Nation, as a historical community of destiny, established on a geographical and unified space, through the voluntary acceptance of an individual and collective life based on the respect of the positive social law, expression of the general will and consensus, is slow to take shape and body, because of the indiscriminate attachment of individuals and communities to their ancestral customs, without questioning them, according to the critical spirit that has just been outlined, to adapt them to the demands of modern life, (Ngalebaye 2010).

In all of this, what is reprehensible is the lack of productive behavior that can have positive effects on people who must have the duty to transcend these customs through the positive law.

Since the emergence of African literature, conferences have been and are always organized on African traditions, in order to see in them the values adaptable to modernity, that we can still save, and the unsuited ones, that must definitively relegate to the museum of history. However, it can be seen that many African countries have made many efforts to upgrade and preserve the cultural heritage. The absence of this commitment can be responsible for many ills. In the acts and words of some citizens, some ethnic groups should be above others. As a result, this attitude has repercussions on the law, and the fact is that these domineering ethnic groups always tend to take precedence over the law. In countries where there is this phenomenon, each ethnic group believes itself legitimate in wanting to impose its vision on others, without cross-border ethical negotiation. This results in intersubjective misunderstandings that hinder the march of the country towards the idea of Nation. These misunderstandings take the name of tribalism. This led to interethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994.

What are the objectives of unification of the mbosi group? For their unification the Mbosi have to observe the:

- Promotion of appreciation and respect for the cultural identity of individuals, groups, nations and regions;
- Promotion of cultural identity as a factor of independence and solidarity;
- Promotion of cultural identity as part of a global development strategy;
- Promotion of respect for the cultural identity of individuals and groups, in particular those who suffer the phenomenon of marginalization in developed or developing societies.

These objectives meet the approval of the Congolese people in general and that of the Mbosi group in particular. The oral and written works that are available on the mbosi group allow him to take part in the international concert of the promotion of African traditional cultural values. For this to happen the mbosi must present the elements of their culture to participate in the challenges.

The Mbosi community has managed to establish a real understanding between the four departments (Likouala, Sangha, Central Cuvette, West Cuvette and Plateaux) where it is scattered. By renouncing special interests to form a single

group, the Mbosi, prove that their fight for a united Congo is also their workhorse. The openness and tolerance that this group has inherited from Otwere, traditional judicature, makes it an ethical obligation to distinguish between construction and separation behaviors. It is a question of reminding this community of its history of origin and migration, to be able to assume its destiny among the others.

This critical analysis of the mbosi cultural heritage, Otwere, may allow researchers in other ethnic groups in the Congo to do as much so that, overall, a prospective critical questioning is made on the customs of the country to adapt to the requirements of modernity, which will take into account the laws of consensus or positive law, foundation on which the Congolese nation will be built, as a historical community with a common destiny. If the 52 ethnic groups can come together for a common interest through dialogue, it is clear that everyone will take pleasure in belonging to one of these groups that he has not chosen (to be born there). The contradictions between these groups in Brazzaville had degenerated into serious incidents in 1993 and 1997, but over time failed to divide the nation.



Figure 3: Okipha m'Otsala Claudia

Source: The Traditional Musical Instruments of the Mbosi in Congo, P87

The air that covers the Mbosi Culture, known as Ondinga and Okiba, whose common legal expression is Otwere, currently has the following characteristics:

- Geographical scattering on more than twenty-one (21) districts, straddling the departments of Likouala, Sangha, Cuvette and Plateaux : Makoua, Etoumbi, Tokou, Owando, Ngoko, Boundji, Allembe, Abala, Ongogni, Ollombo, Oyo, Tchikapika, Loukolela, Mossaka, Mpouya, Makotimpoko, Mokeko, Pikounda, Epena, Bouanela and Ngabe ;
- Variety and apparent linguistic diversity
- Variety and artistic diversity ;
- Inapparent common fund of sociological expression (Otwere, variously designated according to the milieu) almost mutual and sociological misunderstandings, historically unjustifiable, persistent between certain districts ;
- Sentiment of marginalization expressed by some districts ;
- Unequal development of one Mbosi home to another;
- Agreement and mutual consideration still to be won both in the villages and among the citizens of the Mbosi Community in the Cities;
- Unequal positioning in relation to state political power ;
- rather pronounced ignorance of the history of the group and of the Mbosi culture among the members of this community;
- Manifest traces of political superiority complex in the National Community;
- Happy persistence of the virtues of solidarity and rejection of dishonor during the difficult moments of life ;

These characteristics of the current Mbosi cultural space, in the village as in the city, make impossible the principle of the agreement and the modality of the pursuit of the common interest, like the development, so much the individuals are

monopolized by their small selfish interests to the detriment of the general interest, grouped in small districts and lineages yet without a future.

The renunciation for various reasons to the sacred principles of mbosi Culture called Ondinga and Okiba, which guaranteed to individuals:

- safety, longevity, invisibility, all-round success (...);
- The bracketing of the precautionary principle, formulated by Jules Ndombi: "Yéyaa ô boso edi ndzii" and which should inspire caution in the present action for the future;
- Complacency in disunity, while the other national communities show the fine example of agreement, organizing themselves around major issues, although rarely patriotic;
- The abandonment of the anthro-legal secret of the stability of the society inherited from the ancestors, namely: the existence and the complementary action, for the government of the city, of the three characters:
 - - "ngâa-lébaé", the one who makes the Law;
 - - "ekwere-mbaé", the one who says the Law;
 - - "Ebara-mbae", the one who obeys the Law;

Because of this drift, the mbosi cultural space may not be useful and ready for the fighting that the country will have to face tomorrow, in memory of Jules Ndombi, to play the role that the rest of the national community expects from him.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Through this chapter, we formulate the vibrant call for the culture of understanding and the unification of the Mbosi to guarantee the general interest. All the Congolese communities are equal in right and none being above the others, this call makes give up of bad behaviors which can be an obstacle for the progress of the country. Thus, the mbosi group to maximize its efforts and its contribution to the construction of the country must, through the reflexion on the judicature Otwere, to create a frame of permanent consultation with a view to reevaluate the performances and the dispositions of this institution in order to insert them in the positive law, pay them to the construction effort of the plural Congolese nation. The option to work on the inflection of the current situation, as part of the research undertaken, and to push the mbosi historical community to continue to play the role that the country expects of it, remains the largest channel by which Mbosi can win the battle of development facing the challenges of modernity. When our offspring will have to contribute to the advancement of the country on the basis of the cultural legacy that our generation will bequeath to it, we find it justifiable by many unjustified reasons, being a postulate

6. Acknowledgements

I thank, very sincerely, the Chinese Government and the Chinese Scholarship Council for granting me this doctoral postgraduate scholarship. This scholarship is for me an opportunity to question myself and evaluate my potential for higher education by contributing to scientific research. I also thank Professor Luo Lianggong, supervisor of my thesis for his availability, and the time he invests in my research. My thanks also go to my parents, friends and acquaintances for their varied contributions, not to mention the Congolese government that spares no effort to train its executives.

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