

Climatic Change: Local Vision of a Global Phenomenon, the Case of Bamena Village, West-Cameroon

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Approach:

With regard to my anthropological background, my choice, for my master's dissertation, was to address the issue of climatic change with a societal look based on the Endo-semiotic postulate stipulating that in order to understand the livelihood of a community; one should refer to their culture and societal structure. In this respect, we based our research on three key questions:

- 1- Was the population of Bamena aware of climate change phenomenon?**
- 2- Do they have explanations of the phenomenon?**
- 3- What this population has done so far to confront the phenomenon?**

Research area:

Reputed to be the attic of the country, the West region of Cameroon is where the village of Bamena is located with a population estimated at 8 200 souls in a surface of 46 km². Peaking at 1 500 m of altitude, Bamena is characterized by a succession of trays and hills. The average temperature of the locality stands to 21°C. The yearly rain water level is 1 400 mm and their two seasons in this area: the dry lasts from October to March and the rainy season is longer, starting March to end in October. Not less than 95% of the populations of Bamena are farmers.

Understanding Bamena's culture and way of life:

Bamena is part of the Bamileke ethnic group of Cameroon. In this community, people who passed away are considered as existing in the village. The land is considered as a divinity possessed by ancestors geniuses from whom they seek authorisation before undertaken any exploitation; build a house construction or cultivation.

Findings: Synthesis of some answers of Bamena's peasants

A- Answers to the first research question:

"Was the population of Bamena aware of climate change phenomenon?"

- In the past, on March 14th, women used to sow and were sure it would rain the following day, that's to say the 15th; today it's no longer the case.
- One of the past years, we had two rains during the month of March. Women sowed but the rain left. All the seeds in the earth were eaten by insects.

B - Answer to the second question:

"Do they have explanations of the phenomenon?"

- Five years ago we had a lot of heat and waited for a long time the rain to come. We were obliged to do some sacrifices in the village's consecrated places to ask the favours of God for the rain to fall and the plants to push in the field and we succeed.
- The village started suffering heat when these tar roads were constructed.

C - Answer to the third question:

"What this population has done so far to confront the phenomenon?"

- Today, people are more prudent. They prefer to wait rain to fall at least three to four times before sowing.
- The chief of village decided to make some rituals in order that agriculture becomes as it used to be.

Final remarks

It's clear today that climate change is affected the population of Bamena. They need to be informed about climate change affects and develop with them local practices of adaptation. Local knowledge could be a good start.

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