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## The culture for the recognition of the identity: case of the fang culture of Equatorial Guinea

### *La cultura para el reconocimiento de la identidad: caso de la cultura fang de Guinea Ecuatorial*

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### Abstract

Culture is a manifestation that helps the recognition and identification of a certain social group or individual. It is defined as the set of manifestations that express the way of thinking, way of living, customs and intelligence developed by a social group. This paper clearly deals with culture in the Fang ethnic group of Equatorial Guinea. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to make known that culture is an essential and vital element for the Fang man, currently a lively collapse is being observed. As this research deals with a socio-cultural issue such as the Fang culture, it was necessary to adopt a qualitative methodology. The reasons that induced to apply this approach is because there are studies on social relations. One of the most relevant results is that all respondents believe that culture has an influence on the person. It must be said that in the current context, it is not possible to speak of a culture apart from a social group. And as the most revealing conclusion, there is the issue of the decline of the fang culture. It is noted that there are several reasons that are fueling this decline. Globalization and/or modernism are pointed out as causes.

### Keywords

Culture, fang culture, fang culture, personal self, cultural identity, recognition



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## Resumen

La cultura es una manifestación que ayuda al reconocimiento e identificación de un determinado grupo social o de un individuo. Ésa se define como el conjunto de manifestaciones que expresan el modo de pensar, modo de vivir, las costumbres y la inteligencia desarrollada por un grupo social. En este trabajo se trata claramente de la cultura en la etnia fang de Guinea Ecuatorial. Por lo que, el propósito de esta investigación consiste en dar a conocer que la cultura es un elemento imprescindible y vital para el hombre fang, actualmente se está observando un animoso derrumbamiento. Al tratarse de una investigación que aborda una cuestión sociocultural como es la cultura fang, se ha visto necesario adoptar una metodología cualitativa. Los motivos que indujeron a aplicar este enfoque es porque existe estudios sobre relaciones sociales. Uno de los resultados más relevantes es que todos los encuestados estiman que la cultura tiene influencia en la persona. Cabe decir que en el contexto actual, no se puede hablar de una cultura al margen de un grupo social. Y como conclusión más reveladora, está el asunto del declive de la cultura fang. Se observa que varios son los motivos que están atizando dicha decadencia. Se señala así el caso de la globalización y/o modernismo como causas.

## Palabras clave

Cultura, cultura fang, ser personal, identidad cultural, reconocimiento

## 1. Introduction

This paper is entitled Culture for the recognition of identity: the case of the Fang culture of Equatorial Guinea. There are several motivations behind the writing of this paper. Firstly, because of the importance of culture for every human being belonging to a certain social group; and in the context of the Fang black-African Bantu. On the other hand, it is estimated that the Fang culture is currently suffering a decadence in the sense that it is losing its essence, knowing that culture is power, it is history, and that people who forget their own history are condemned to repeat it. It can be affirmed that the recognition of a social group or of a personal being obviously passes through its cultural identity. If we take the following example, how does a Fang person identify himself to a Malian when he arrives in a metropolis like Paris? It is believed that it is by their culture if the question of nationality is omitted and having only the black-African skin color as an aspect.

Culture is understood as that set of manifestations that express the way of thinking in the sense of knowledge, way of living, customs and intelligence developed by a social group considered here as a people or civilization according to the context. And so it is that each people, each social group has a cultural recognition, in other words, identity. Culture through its manifestations and elements is what defines us in our essence. As far as the personal being is concerned, it refers to a term whose Greek etymology is *prósopon*, that is to say, person. The person is the peculiarity of each human being, a human nature with principles, ethical, moral and cultural values that is in accordance with its socialization process.

Finally, there is the fang culture. The Fang are a social group or black African people located more frequently in Central Africa, spread in different Central African countries such as Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon, Congo Brazaville; and it should also be noted that they form a trunk with the same historical and cultural reality, with the same beliefs (animism, for example) and speak the Bantu languages of a common trunk, among which we have Fang, Bubi, Balengue, Kikuyu, etc.



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The purpose of this research is to demonstrate that culture is an essential and vital element for the Fang. That is to say, with culture, the Fang Bantu man defines and identifies himself socially and has recognition of his personal being. The problem of our research concerns the decline of Fang culture today, and this situation has attracted attention. From this perspective, it is thought that it is necessary to investigate on the subject and give a revaluation to the Fang culture.

Based on the above, the following research questions are formulated: what is the impact of the Fang culture on their personal being, in other words, what does the culture contribute to the Fang being and why is it important to them; why is the Fang culture in its decline nowadays? Hence, the thesis put forward in this paper is Fang culture as a set of values, ways of thinking and living, customs and knowledge of the Fang ethnic group is their identity. Therefore, it must be protected and valued.

According to the criteria required for the realization of a research work, the following sections are developed: in section 2, the state of the question is presented, which consists of the review of the bibliographic sources that address the issue under study. Section 3 establishes the defense of the thesis where the need to protect culture is effectively shown. For this purpose, the first subheading is the considerations and perspectives on the term culture; and as a second point, the stages of the Fang culture. Section 4 details the methodology used to develop the research. Section 5 shows the results, analysis and discussion. In section 6, the conclusion is established according to the results obtained.

## 2. 2. The state of the art

The question on the Fang culture has several bibliographical supports, it is noted that many authors have devoted their full attention to write about the black-African Fang culture. This is how this subject is approached from an anthropological perspective. The studies on the Fang culture have made it possible to see that it is a very peculiar people. It is necessary that the cultural aspects of this social group be transmitted from generation to generation in order to perpetuate it. The Fang are undoubtedly pure traditionalists. That is to say, everything he does on a social level has an inclination towards knowledge or behaviors that are transmitted from one generation to the next.

This research does not intend to open a new theoretical framework on Fang cultural studies because of the number of authors who have already written about it, the authors have talked about the cultural aspects of the ethnic group. The objective is to start from those previous writings to show the vital importance of culture for the Fang. It is necessary first of all to know the historical framework. This is why Adjoa and Kouakou-Kouamé (2017) point out that:

Written history reports that the Fang originated in what is now South Sudan, from where they left to avoid the Muslim invasion; they migrated to the southwest, reaching the Congo and Nigeria. Anthropologists agree that they belong to the Bantu ethnic group, and mixed very intensely with Sudanese, Ethiopians and Congolese. Known for being brave, strong and warlike, they managed to occupy and appropriate the areas to which they were forced to migrate in search of a solution to their way of life.

In addition, their territorial distribution is so large that it exceeds the geographical area of Equatorial Guinea. Thus, they can be found in five countries among which Equatorial Guinea where they occupy 75% of



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the population, in Congo with 38%, in Gabon with 33%, in Cameroon with 23% and in Sao Tome with only 10%; a situation that makes us reflect on how inappropriate it is to consider the ethnicity of a country as an exclusive entity. In this sense, we can accept that the Fang people are more a cultural than a biological entity (p. 41).

The Fang are currently located with dense frequency in the geographic area of Central Africa. This is where they carry out their cultural activities. The history of these people indicates that they come from South Sudan where they escaped from the slave trade, and in their flight, they migrated towards the southern part until they settled in Central Africa in Gabon, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea where they are found en masse. The Fang thus represents an ethnic group with cultural greatness.

According to Bituga-Nchama (2020), it indicates that:

For several years, these people have been shaping their own worldview of the world. In fact, we can speak of a culture that has been transmitted from one generation to another, preserving the cultural legacy inherited from their ancestors. It is a people that has a diffuse origin because they are ungrammatical and there are no testimonies that really describe with exactitude their origin. The frequent hypothesis is that the Fang come from North Africa, where they had migrated in search of better settlements to dedicate themselves to cultivation and hunting (p. 17).

Along the same lines, the same author thinks that "the Fang constitute an ethnic group with its own idiosyncrasies. This means that they have their own myths, philosophy, anthropology, which constitute the cultural heritage that makes them unique" (p. 18). The Fang culture develops in different spheres as mentioned by Bituga-Nchama.

Research on Fang culture is still extensive due to the fact that there are other writers who deal with this subject. This is the case of Cornelia Beatriz Ondo Emerua who conducted research on the dowry in the marriage of the Fang ethnic group, the dowry being a cultural element of the Fang society. The same author states the following:

In the case of the Fang people, a marital phenomenon called nsua appears, which would consist of a payment from the groom to the family of his bride. The dowry is especially important among the Fang, it is the economic consideration that the family of the future husband must pay the family of the future wife, it is so important that without dowry there is no marriage (Ondo-Emerua, 2013, p. 30).

Fang culture has several dimensions. Each dimension has been investigated according to the interest of the researcher himself. Those who talk about marriage, family, funeral rites, religion, etc. for this reason there is enough information about the Fang culture, since it is an open field.

### 3. Thesis defense

The thesis defended in this work is the following: Fang culture as a set of values, ways of thinking and living, customs and knowledge of the Fang ethnic group is their identity. Therefore, it must be protected and valued.



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Cultural authenticity is an aspect to be taken into account, it is considered that each people must respect its origins, its own culture. Thus the Chinese must be authentic, the French must be authentic, as must the Equatoguinean or Nigerian, the Colombian, the American, etc. Respecting the culture does not diminish its essence, but rather gives much value to one's personal being. Cultural authenticity is therefore a matter of dignity. Culture has a positive influence in all its aspects, it is said with respect to its contribution in the cultural construction of the human being. It is not being argued that culture does not have negative aspects.

Returning to the thesis, it is reaffirmed here that the cultural identity of the Fang man makes him authentic because it defines him and gives recognition to his personal being. The argument of Boleká (2003) is now analyzed, indicating that:

The Fang are an ethnic group with a very characteristic cultural and linguistic identity [...] It is a people that continues to preserve its tribal structure with patriarchs above whom there is no other authority [...] We must say that it is a people governed by the clan system, whose base group is the horizontal family, and whose members are grouped around a patriarch, some descendants, other blood relatives, etc. (p. 25).

The Fang culture has been taken as a paradigm among the Bantu cultures. However, the others would possibly be in the same conditions, alluding to transmission and conservation. Culture has a great influence on the lives of the people living in a community or society. Thus, there is no society without culture. Since ancient times, human beings have been developing traditions and customs, and thanks to it, they define themselves. Among the cultural knowledge that the Fang man has developed can be highlighted in the following fields: religion, art, sexual life, marriage, circumcision, funeral, gestation, among others. In each sector mentioned here, some type of ritual or process that resembles this ethnic group is recognized. It is important to point out and emphasize that the Fang constitute an ethnic social group with a very peculiar culture.

Among the important cultural values in the Fang ethnic group is the family. From his perspective, Bituga-Nchama (2021) stipulates that "the concept of the Fang family remains strong and blood ties constitute an unbreakable bond" (p. 14). The family concept in Africa, especially in black Africa, is highly respected. For this reason, the author cited a priori goes on to say that the family "constitutes one of the great values that African peoples possess and on which society fundamentally rests. The kinship ties that are established in the Fang people condition the individuals who belong to this tribe or family" (Bituga-Nchama, 2021, p. 14).

Within the same values, ayong appears as a fundamental value in Fang society.

Socially or communally, the term or concept Ayong (clan or tribe) as it is usually translated into modern European languages, turns out to be the primary category for the Fang, because their life revolves around it. In traditional society, it was the identity card of the Fang man and woman when they introduced themselves to an unknown village or when they occasionally met unfamiliar people, sometimes as a rule of courtesy and sometimes as a search for reputable people in distant lands, since the Fang lived in scattered villages in the equatorial jungle. The Ayong also had, in that ancestral society and still has today, the self-defensive and



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conservation character of the group, i.e., it avoided intestine wars and the danger of a centralized power (Eyama-Achama, 2014, p. 301).

As mentioned above, the tribe or clan is called ayong in Fang culture and represents the identity card of a Fang before other groups. Therefore, the tribe for the Fang is a value. Belonging to the same ayong clearly avoids relationships of a sexual nature. This vision of the ayong involves a taboo according to which individuals of the same clan cannot marry, if it were to happen it would be considered as zama duru translated in English as incest. The ayong thus has an inviolable moral dimension. In the words of Eyama-Achama (2014), "its moral character prevented incest and, therefore, made the fang people open-minded, since they always looked for their partner outside their own clan (ayong)" (p. 301). Next, we will develop some sections that help to understand the issue under study.

### 3.1. Considerations and Perspectives on the Term Culture

This subheading is introduced with the following series of questions: what is culture? why is man considered as a cultural being? what are the considerations and perspectives on the term culture? why is culture so important for any human being in general and for the fang man in particular?

At the outset, it can be stated that man is a cultural being from the philosophical perspective. By antonomasia, man belongs to the animal kingdom, but his rational and creative capacity makes him a cultural animal. We wish to emphasize that culture is a social fact because it represents the way of life, the way of thinking, the customs and habits of a given social group. Anthropologically speaking, culture is a human product, that is to say, it is the manifestation of ideas conceived by man himself in order to accommodate and affirm himself in nature while respecting its essence. It should also be mentioned that culture is a historical process that promotes the legacy of the ancestors to posterity.

Within the framework of the theme to be addressed, we observe the Bantu Negro-African, who develops his own culture, peculiar and authentic, appropriate to his human nature and personal being. The Bantu black African culture thus manifests a set of values to be protected and safeguarded. What has been said so far assumes that the Bantu black African cultural identity is reflected in all its cultural manifestations and constitutes a set of values for it. Many "social psychologists and anthropologists agree in defining culture as a way of life. Culture consists of socially acquired patterns of thought, feeling and action" (Paéz and Zubita, 2001, p. 1).

Ron (1977) defines culture as "that complex whole which comprises knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, custom and other faculties and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (p. 13). The notion of culture is evidently linked to personality; in fact, it is argued that there are no societies or individuals that lack a culture. All societies or communities have their own peculiar culture, however simple it may be, that is, no matter its greatness or its impact on a supranational scale, the important thing is to respect it.

The human being has abilities and faculties to transform nature, this is what is called culture. So everything he has created, everything that is added to his nature through actions constitutes a cultural product. Culture is also considered as a social fact, it is the mode of organization among men in the face of nature. It is acquired through learning, education, initiation to the norms that govern the life of a whole community or social group. Therefore, societies distinguish themselves from one another by means of culture.

Culture is also a "set of knowledge shared by a group of individuals who have a common history and participate in a social structure" (Paéz and Zubita, 2001, p. 3). And precisely, in



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this work, the paradigm taken as a paradigm is the black-African Bantu culture. This social group [Bantu] has evidenced, of course, the development of knowledge, values, norms, rules and lifestyles that have been preserved and transmitted from generation to generation. Thus, the objective of this research that demonstrates how culture influences the personal being of the Bantu man continues to be maintained.

### 3.2. Fang Culture Stages

Taking into account that our research has been carried out taking as a paradigm the black-African Bantu in general and the Fang in particular as part of this family. Three periods can be highlighted in the Fang culture:

- a. **The original stage.** This stage of Fang culture refers to the culture in its raw state, i.e. the essence and purity of the culture before it came into contact with other peoples or civilizations..

These are fields of cultural tradition, understood as the whole of the shared heritage of the members of society, or the set of cultural goods that are transmitted from generation to generation within a given community. Tradition stored and guaranteed the existence of those values, customs, socio-cultural manifestations and levels of knowledge that were recreated by the society, because they were considered valuable and should be inculcated and transmitted without further ado to the new generations (Boleká, 2014, p. 35).

- b. **The colonial stage.** At this stage, the Fang culture is affected by the process of colonization. From means of transmission such as the school through the inculcation of new knowledge, the Church with the process of evangelization; colonization has greatly affected the black African cultures..

Thus, it is estimated that in this colonial stage many cultural values and "knowledge of the previous stage" have been eroded (Boleká, 2014, p. 35). In the Fang man, a victim of colonization, one therefore recognizes "a profound deculturation, a conscious enculturation and the construction of new identities, new values and knowledge for Africans mentally trapped in the permanent process of colonization" (Boleká, 2014, p. 36).

- c. **The post-colonial stage.** It is a more advanced stage where the same fang has to choose between an authentic culture (original culture) and an imported one (western culture). Hence, the establishment of a cultural heterogeneity.

There is currently a cultural hybridism, a coexistence between the authentic culture of a fang and the imported western culture. It is a rather disturbing situation that puts many in the situation of opting for the culture that suits them according to the current reality. The impact of globalization on black African cultures is considered to be one of the major anthropological problems. Bantu cultures today are in full decadence, therefore, it is necessary to look for mechanisms to eradicate this scourge.

In synthesis, before the question of the stages or periods of the Fang culture, it can be said that no black African culture has remained safe, that is to say, that all cultures have been in contact with other peoples, civilizations or cultures. It has already been pointed out above with the colonial stage, when colonization begins, cultures have been affected in all aspects. For example, at the cultural level, the importation of Christianity as a new doctrine to which the black African Bantu Fang were subjected to the detriment of their



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own religious beliefs. It is known that these people were animists, believing in the power of nature. In the following section, we show a convincing reason why the culture of the Bantu Negro-African must be preserved.

### 3.3. 3.3. Culture as recognition of the Fang identity

If culture participates in the recognition of the identity of the Fang people, it is important that it be preserved and valued. Tradition is the transmission of culture so it "was learned and was part of the cultural identity (such as music, rituals, dances, stories, among others)" (Boleká, 2014, p. 35). There are cultural manifestations and elements specific to each culture. The black African Bantu has developed this culture since ancient times and it has been transmitted from generation to generation until today. Despite this transmission, Bantu culture has undergone many modifications. Modernism has been combined with culture; as in genetics, there is always a dominant allele, and in the case of the above-mentioned combination, Western culture is the dominant one.

It is important to point out that it is thanks to culture that the Bantu man becomes an integral and authentic person.

The cultural identity of a people is historically defined through multiple aspects in which their culture is embodied, such as language, an instrument of communication among the members of a community, social relations, rites and ceremonies, or collective behaviors, that is, the systems of values and beliefs (...) A characteristic feature of these elements of cultural identity is their immaterial and anonymous character, since they are the product of the community (Molano, 2007, p. 73).

Each people or ethnic group must be authentic and this authenticity is based on its cultural elements. For example, the name of a Fang Bantu is its identity. Thus, "the name, having the meaning of familiarity, the name of a friend was imposed on the children, as well as that of the in-laws or sons-in-law" (Nsue-Mibui, 2005, p. 92). What the author means is that the imposition of the name on the son or sons obeys a certain pattern, since the objective is the preservation of the lineage.

The fang name, seen from the point of view of its application, obeyed the same conditions of the western model, i.e., the name imposed by the father became the proper name of the person and the father's name became the common surname of all his sons and daughters (Nsue-Mibui, 2005, p. 92).

The fang name as seen is one's identity. In the Bantu context one does not count the baptismal name (western name, for example, Boniface, Peter, James, etc.) but rather the cultural names are the ones used to identify one. From this perspective, there are names that are clearly used for men, such as Nguema, Ndong, Nze, Ondo, Ngomo, Esono, Obiang, Tomo, Bituga, etc.; and names such as Nchama, Ñengono, Angue, Obono, Mikue, Okomo, Ayang, Nfono, among others to identify women. For more Fang names, both male and female, it is recommended to read the work of Rosendo Ela Nsue Nsue Mibui whose title is *Historia de Guinea Ecuatorial. Pre-colonial period* (life of the first inhabitants of Equatorial Guinea).

Regarding the fact of giving names to sons and daughters, Nsue-Mibui (2005) explains it as follows: "a person whose name is -NSUE- will all have as surnames the name of his father -



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NSUE-" (p. 92). As already mentioned ut supra, the fang considers the Bantu name. And the son or daughter is called by a name given to him or her by his or her father. If the father had four children, three boys and one girl, he would give them the names of the members of the family or of the tribe to perpetuate the lineage plus the family name which is his own. Thus would be the result: First son: Nguema; Second son: Ondo, Third son: Nsue and the daughter Obono. And in relation to the father, all the sons would have the surname - NSUE-. The first son would be -Nguema Nsue-; the second would be -Ondo Nsue-; the third would be -Nsue Nsue- being the onomastic representative of his father who would take the name to his children hence the square of that name; and the daughter would be called - Obono Nsue-.

It should also be said that the names have from time to time meanings. Of the men there is a relationship with the animals of the jungle or birds: Nze (Tiger), Nkisogo (the elephant's den), Obama (sparrow hawk) or season of the year: Oyono (summer), Okiri (morning) while women's names relate to themes or social issues such as Ayetebe (difficult to get up), Ñengono (mother of the bride or mother-in-law), Ayecaba (difficult to share out), Abumgono (young girl's pregnancy), Asangono (not yet a woman), Nlang (tale, story), Nchama (destroyer woman) etc. Nsue-Mibui (2005) teaches another approach to Fang names by stating that

In all the names of the Fang people, we find names which seem to be clearly original and from which no possibility of derivation or circumstantial composition can be found, such as Mbomio (Mbomeyo), Esono, Edú, Elá, Mbá, Abeso, Nguema, Obono, Mibui, Angue, Mangué (Mengue), etc. To other names, then, by their composition, other meanings can be given, as Ndabengono: from NDA-house, and BENGOGHAN-daughters The name of Ndabengono will be given to one of the daughters of a family that only had daughters. Abecara: from ABE-ugly and cara (acaran) or to make competing ugliness that competes. Ncara: NCART-negar. It will be given to a daughter who was born with a suspicion of adultery committed by her mother during gestation and refused to denounce it at birth (p. 102).

This onomastic dimension in the Fang culture is very important and vital in the sense that "when a man died and left many descendants, it was understood that his name, when repeated as a surname in each of his children, was naturally perpetuated in time and space" (Nsue-Mibui, 2005, p. 102).

Another cultural element that can be highlighted here is art. Art is understood to be an important manifestation in the Fang culture.

Art represents something essential and important in the culture of Fang society. Indeed, traditional Fang art overflows mainly in sculptures made of wood, and with it they seek not only aesthetics, beauty, but also something more important and higher: spiritual perfection (Adjoa and Kouakou-Kouamé, 2017, p. 41)

Masks are discussed here as a cultural identity. Anthropological studies have been conducted on the types of black African masks and their representations. Thus, "the category of masks responds to the conception of identity and the relationship of the different realities of the human being" (Revilla-Carrasco, 2014, p. 103). Revilla (2014) shows the importance of masks within black African cultures, in fact for him, "the use of



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masks entails a supplanting of our own nature that is replaced by the supplanted one" (p. 102). That is to say, with the mask, the Bantu being acquires a transcendental identity.

Within the social function, the masks can refer to fertility rites (Nimba mask of the Baga, Do mask of the Bwa, the Ty Wara helmet masks of the Bamana, the Ma'Bu mask of the Nwarog secret society of Cameroon), to initiation rites (the Cikunza mask and the Kalelwa of the Tshokwe, the Yaka mask of initiation, the Nkaki mask of the Lwalwa of Zaire, the Salampasu mask of the Salampasu and the Mbagani), or to the foundations of social life, as well as to the foundations of social life, the yaka mask of initiation, the Nkaki mask of the Lwalwa of Zaire, the mask of the Salampasu and the Mbagani) or, to fundamentals of social life, such as the legitimization of authority (aron arabai type brass mask of the Temne), or the war mask of the Grebo (Revilla Carrasco, 2014, p. 103).

On the same lines,

A mask is not exactly a disguise - in any case, in the context of the magical cultures in which it flourishes, a disguise is not merely a disguise: the frontier between being and appearing has not yet established its prestige, so that endorsing a mask does not belong to the domain of appearance and simulation, but of transformation and metamorphosis (Morey, 2001, p. 18).

In this sense, the masks have a representative aspect, i.e. they are not used as a mere disguise to adorn the face, but the masks are used for special moments especially during rituals. Bantu languages also constitute a cultural identity for the Bantu man. For the Negro-African, "language is not, as it usually is for Europeans, the conception of the world of a people, by which it presents itself as a cultural unit" (Picotti, 2005, p. 47).

In black African culture, the word understood as language has an essential role and importance: that of identification. Thus, "these considerations about the summoning African sense of the word, which has so much weight in our identity and which recovers its original dimensions in an era of instrumentalization and manipulation of language" (Picotti, 2005, p. 49). Anthropologically, languages distinguish peoples, in other words, they are bearers of a system of cultural values that constitute an important element of nationality as a concept, and form a unifying factor between individuals of the same social group (Zamora, 2001). Language is in accordance with culture, which is why it is necessary to identify with it. Throughout this research, it has become clear that language confers a certain cultural identity to its speakers.

It is thought that Bantu languages, being a cultural element for identity, should be conserved and preserved. It should be added that

The linguistic imposition can even destroy the identity of the inhabitants of a given region, because when they lose their language, they lose their culture and therefore their identity. It seems a link that is best safeguarded because it contains the essence of the human being (Bituga-Nchama and Nvé-Ndumu, 2021, p. 39).

The cultural identity of the black-African Bantu in general and of the Fang in particular is demonstrated by its different cultural manifestations, we reiterate the thought. If we look



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back to the original stage of this culture, we can see that they still follow the criteria of transmission of knowledge today. In order for the fang to identify itself, it starts from general considerations to particular ones. For example, I am human, I am African, I am black, I am Bantu, I am Fang, I am from tribe X..., son of X... is an aspect that is still maintained. However, it should also be added that culture cannot be static for life, it will always undergo some alterations, but these modifications should not affect the very essence of culture. It is considered that evolution does not imply substantial change, since, in the case of the fag culture, it should be the same.

#### 4. Methodology

Since this research deals with a sociocultural issue such as the Fang culture, it was necessary to adopt a qualitative methodology. The reasons that have induced us to adopt it are due to the fact that it consists of the study of social relations.

The survey will be used as a research technique and the instrument will be a questionnaire containing closed questions. The questionnaire will be useful to collect the data to be analyzed in this research. The population is that of Niefang (a district of Equatorial Guinea), and the selected sample is approximately 102 subjects, preferably of the Fang ethnic group.

#### 5. Analysis and discussion of the results

The survey conducted in the city of Niefang had the purpose of knowing the degree of perception of the object of study, and it was necessary to conduct this phase of fieldwork for a better result. The starting point was the problem that the Fang culture is in full decadence nowadays. The thesis to be defended is summarized in the fact that the Fang culture must be protected and valued by them. After the survey carried out, the results are as follows.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Valid	YES	102	100%	100%
	NO	0	0%	0%
	TOTAL	102	100%	100%

Table 1 ¿Are you a Fang ethnic group?

The Fang ethnic group is one of those belonging to the Bantu culture. In Equatorial Guinea it is the majority ethnic group. For the fieldwork, it was necessary to direct the research questions to individuals preferably of Fang ethnicity. For this reason, 100% of the respondents answered yes to the question. It is necessary for the Fang to be the referents of the research so that the results obtained a posteriori will be highly efficient.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
Valid	YES	78	76.47%	76.47%
	NO	24	23.53%	23.53%



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<b>TOTAL</b>	102	100%	100%
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Table 2 ¿Do you know what it means to be fang?

76.47% of the respondents said that they do know what it means to be fang. For the respondents, the fang is an individual with his or her peculiar traits and characteristics, hence he or she identifies as such. For them, being fang consists first of having a cultural identity, that is, belonging to a clan. For example, to belong to the Esangui, Ndong, Esawong, Nsoomo, Obuk, etc. clan. It is worth mentioning that there are more than fifty tribes or clans in the Fang culture; secondly, being Fang consists of having a village where all the members of that clan reside; then to bear the names and surnames of the Fang, for example, Nguema, Mibuy, Ondo, Esono, Nchama, among others. Knowing that in the culture there are surnames that belong to women and others that belong to men.

There are other elements that allow the identification of a fang apart from those mentioned above. There is the case of the cultural elements such as marriage, family, etc. However, 23.53% of the respondents answered that they do not know what it is to be a fang, according to them the fang can deny their identity and take the other ethnicity. It is considered that everyone is free to choose the identity that favors him/her. From this perspective, it can be seen that this minority has an existentialist way of thinking based on the ideal that man is born first and then defines himself. Therefore, a Fang can become a Kombe, Bubi or Annobonese (these ethnic groups coexist in Equatorial Guinea with the Fang ethnic group).

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
<b>Valid</b>			
<b>YES</b>	102	100%	100%
<b>NO</b>	0	0%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	102	100%	100%

Table 3 ¿Do you think the Fang culture influences the personal being of the Fang man?

All respondents believe that culture has an influence on the individual. It should be said that in the current context one cannot speak of a culture outside of a social group. In the case of the Fang, it is evident that their culture has a positive influence on the person. A Fang identifies himself as such through the cultural manifestations and practices that reside in his ethnicity despite the fact that there is currently a conflict of identity..

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
<b>Valid</b>			
<b>YES</b>	102	100%	100%
<b>NO</b>	0	0%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	102	100%	100%



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Table 4 ¿Do you know any cultural elements or manifestations in the Fang culture?

In response to this questioning, it was found that all the respondents know some or other Fang cultural manifestations. Thus, they gave us as examples of manifestations the ndong mba as a traditional dance, the alugan fang as a peculiar type of marriage, akerga (circumcision), ntonobe (choir) in the religious sphere, etc. Each manifestation has its respective processes and rituals that characterize it. It is important to point out that man manifests himself through the cultural elements that he himself has developed; it is a way of identifying himself before other social groups.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
<b>Valid</b>			
<b>YES</b>	89	87.26%	87.3%
<b>NO</b>	13	12.74%	12.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	102	100%	100%

Table 5 ¿Do you think Fang culture is in full decline?

For the majority of respondents, i.e. 87.26%, the Fang culture is in full decline, cultural values are being lost. To exemplify this, the use of the Fang vernacular language is inferiorly spoken by this social group. Thus, at home, both parents and children only speak Spanish with their children. On the other hand, there is a lack of knowledge of cultural elements such as ayong (tribe). It should be noted that the ayong is not a mere cultural element, but is part of the traditional values. Thus, no Fang can be identified apart from the ayong. One of the main causes of Fang decline is the cohabitation with other cultures and the negative influence of modernism on them. Many Fang are increasingly embracing the traditional values of the West to the detriment of their own. This is a generational problem in what sense? In the sense that these are cultural traits that gradually fade away and in the long run there would be no Fang cultural values left to inculcate in future generations.

12.74% of those surveyed consider that there is no decadence of the Fang culture because there are still traditions of this ethnic group today. It is thought that the Fang culture cannot fade away, because if that were the case, the ethnic group itself would also disappear. There is no culture without society and no society without culture. Based on this axiom, the minority of respondents thought the opposite with respect to the question of whether Fang culture has negative features or effects..

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage
<b>Valid</b>			
<b>YES</b>	102	100%	100%
<b>NO</b>	0	0%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	102	100%	100%

Table 6 ¿Does the Fang culture have negative traits or effects?



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Many of those interviewed consider that the Fang culture, despite being indispensable, has negative traits. From the gender perspective, it is observed that women are the main victims of these negative aspects, for example, there are rites such as levirate where women's rights are violated and diminished.

## 6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the research work had as a problem the current decline of the Fang culture, and as a defense of the thesis that: Fang culture as a set of values, ways of thinking and living, customs and knowledge of the Fang ethnic group is their identity. Therefore, it must be protected and valued. This thesis has mainly developed three arguments on the concept of culture from philosophical and anthropological perspectives. This subsection highlights the fact that culture designates everything that man creates and that is added to his nature, and likewise that culture is a manifestation of ideas thought by man himself to accommodate and affirm himself in nature, thus respecting its essence. Secondly, three stages of Fang culture were observed: original, colonial and post-colonial. And finally, culture has been examined as a recognition of the Fang identity, with this argument has led to express that the identity of the Black African Bantu, in general, and of the Fang in particular, is externalized in its different cultural manifestations such as the name, dance, art, religion, etc.

Starting from the research questions namely, what is the impact of the Fang culture on their personal being, in other words, what does the culture contribute to the Fang being and why is it important to them; why is the Fang culture today in its decline; and according to the results of the fieldwork, the following conclusions have been reached:

First, culture has a positive impact, in the case of the Fang man it gives him recognition and identity before other social groups. The influence of culture on the personal being of the Fang is positive, since it strengthens their identity. The Fang, regardless of their geographic location, have the same cultural criteria. Thus, thanks to it, it can be affirmed at the social level, all are bearers of a culture that characterizes or identifies them. That is why culture is of vital importance for the Fang, as it has been highlighted in the commentary of table three, which, in the case of the Fang, it is evident that their culture has a positive influence on their person. A Fang identifies himself as such through the cultural manifestations that reside in his ethnicity. As for the case of the decline or collapse of identity, it should be said that there are several reasons that are fueling this decline. There is the case of globalization and/or modernism that are seriously affecting the Fang culture. Thus, it creates the loss of values, elements and customs.

It is emphasized that in this research we do not want to build a new theoretical framework, but to contribute some details to the sociocultural studies on the Fang. Many researchers from Equatorial Guinea have described the culture, and evidently it is added to this line of research. It should be added that the Fang culture is very ambiguous, reviewing many aspects that need careful analysis. For example, in the case of gender, Pedro Bayeme-Bituga Nchama has compiled studies on gender relations from the Fang culture. Like all research, it has presented limitations, as well as difficulties such as few primary sources. However, the results obtained are highlighted in the tables above.

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