



CHANGES IN BIRTH RITE AS A FUNCTION OF NSO PEOPLE'S ACCULTURATION PROCESS, NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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Abstract

Today, modernization and globalization has brought about acculturation in the African context and the Nso culture is not left out. Despite all this changes, limited information has been made known in the literature review about the actual cultural practices in Nso and changes that have taken place. On this note, our study aimed at examining changes in birth rites of passage as a function of Nso people's acculturation process. Specifically, we examine the deviations in pregnancy cultural practices of childbirth, variations in announcing childbirth, changes in purification childbirth rituals; and changes in initiation rites of childbirth. The ethnography research design was used and data collected from 30 Nso people made up of elders / title holders, and Nso migrants to other towns of Bamenda, Buea, Douala, and Bafousam. These Nso migrants were targeted from the respective Nso cultural associations. Data were collected using interview guide and focus group discussion and analysed thematically. Findings showed significant changes in Nso birth rites.

Regarding changes in pregnancy cultural practices, pregnant women in Nso now attend all kind of gatherings that was restricted before. More so, announcing arrival of babies is now done via telephone call and face-to-face discussion unlike before that few people from the husband family will visit the bride parents with palm wine, red palm oil, and bag of salt to tell them that their daughter has put to birth. More so, the special kind of songs that were sung by married women who had their first child is no longer common these days. Regarding purification rituals after childbirth, newborn are now carried by non-parents even when the umbilical cord has not fallen off, umbilical cord is now abandoned at the hospital, majority of women now bath themselves, cook and do laundering after childbirth, and no purification done in cases where a child died to prevent further death. Finally, for initiation birth rites, child circumcision is that is now done at the hospital unlike before that was done in traditional setting by traditional specialist and baptism done by Reverend Fathers in Christian way unlike the traditional approach. Based on this, it was recommended that Nso people should document and preserve their traditional rites of passage, including the symbolic meanings and cultural significance associated with these



rituals. This can help maintain cultural heritage and promote intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge

Keywords:

Rites, Birth Rites, Pregnancy Practices, Announcing of Childbirth, Purification Rituals, Initiation Rites.

Résumé

Aujourd'hui, la modernisation et la mondialisation ont engendré une acculturation en Afrique, et la culture Nso n'y fait pas exception. Malgré ces transformations, la littérature scientifique reste lacunaire quant aux pratiques culturelles Nso et à leurs évolutions. Notre étude vise donc à examiner les changements survenus dans les rites de passage liés à la naissance, en lien avec le processus d'acculturation du peuple Nso. Plus précisément, nous analysons les variations dans les pratiques culturelles liées à la grossesse et à l'accouchement, les annonces de naissance, les rituels de purification et les rites d'initiation. Une méthodologie ethnographique a été employée, et les données ont été recueillies auprès de 30 personnes Nso, parmi lesquelles des aînés/titulaires de titres et des migrants Nso installés dans les villes de Bamenda, Buea, Douala et Bafoussam. Ces migrants ont été recrutés par l'intermédiaire des associations culturelles Nso respectives. Les données ont été recueillies à l'aide d'un guide d'entretien et de discussions de groupe, puis analysées thématiquement. Les résultats révèlent des changements significatifs dans les rites de naissance Nso. Concernant l'évolution des pratiques culturelles liées à la grossesse, les femmes enceintes de Nso participent désormais à toutes sortes de rassemblements qui leur étaient auparavant interdits. De plus, l'annonce de la naissance d'un bébé se fait maintenant par téléphone et en personne, contrairement à l'époque où quelques membres de la famille du mari rendaient visite aux parents de la mariée avec du vin de palme, de l'huile de palme rouge et un sachet de sel pour leur annoncer la naissance de leur fille. Par ailleurs, les chants traditionnels interprétés par les femmes mariées à la naissance de leur premier enfant sont devenus rares. Quant aux rituels de purification après l'accouchement, les nouveau-nés sont désormais portés par des personnes autres que les parents, même si le cordon ombilical n'est pas encore tombé ; ce dernier est abandonné à l'hôpital ; la plupart des femmes se lavent, cuisinent et font leur lessive elles-mêmes après l'accouchement ; et aucune purification n'est pratiquée en cas de décès d'un enfant, afin d'éviter d'autres décès. Enfin, concernant les rites de naissance initiatiques, la circoncision des enfants est désormais pratiquée à l'hôpital, contrairement à la pratique traditionnelle qui avait lieu dans un cadre traditionnel par des spécialistes. Le baptême, quant à lui, est célébré par des révérends pères selon le rite chrétien, contrairement à la tradition. De ce fait, il a été recommandé au peuple Nso de documenter et de préserver ses rites de passage traditionnels, y compris leurs significations symboliques et culturelles. Cela contribuera à la préservation du patrimoine culturel et à la transmission intergénérationnelle des connaissances culturelles.

Mots-clés : *Rites, Rites de naissance, Pratiques liées à la grossesse, Annonce de la naissance, Rituels de purification, Rites initiatiques.*

Introduction

Every society has its traditions and culture characterized by symbols, ceremonies, values, philosophies, perspectives, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, rituals, rites, language, taboos, and myths (Dadey, 2022). When individuals deviate from the culture they were born and raised in and enter a new unfamiliar one, a range of changes can occur. More so, when people from disparate cultural backgrounds interact, they might adopt each other's customs, languages, beliefs, values, social systems, or technologies but this doesn't always happen. It is worthy to note that the adoption can have positive or negative impact. It is paramount to know that the Akan of Ghana has unique cultural practices vital to their existence as a people. Among them are the birth and childhood rites (naming ceremony), puberty rites, marriage rites, and funeral rites (Dadey, 2022).

Just like the Akan of Ghana, in Cameroon, each cultural group of people do have their unique ways of performing their various rites. Of interest to this study is the birth rites of the Nso people, a group of people in Cameroon from the Northwest region. In the past, Nso people of Cameroon had a unique way of performing birth rites such as announcing pregnancy, child /children birth, rituals performed on women as mothers after childbirth, and how circumcision was done. Several studies have been done on the past in other African countries on acculturation but, limited information has been documented about the acculturation of birth rites among the Nso people in Cameroon.

For example, Biruny and Latipun (2021) study reveals birth order as one of the most extensive human experiences and is considered to determine how smart, good, responsible, sociable, emotionally stable, and open to new experiences a child can be. More so, Tati (2018) reported that among the Traditional Midwifery in the Balikumbat Fondom of the Bamenda Grassfields from Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Era, the people had developed means through which they handled birth related issues based on their conviction, perception and belief system which was characterized by superstition. Again, Ohaja and Anyim (2021) on reported that pregnancy and childbirth are not only biological events but also socially and culturally constructed with associated symbols that represent the social identities and cultural values of Africans. Birth is a rite of passage and children are perceived as special gifts from the Supreme Being. Unfortunately, literature review showed limited information of the birth rites and acculturation of such among the Nso people. On this, this study aimed to close this gap by contributing to literature by indicating how birth rites among the Nso people was done and changes that have taken place.

Background of the Study

Historically, the expression "rite of passage" was coined by Van Gennep (2019) in the early twentieth century. He identified three crucial stages in each rite of passage: a preliminary phase of separation from or abandonment of the previous state, a liminal phase, a period of transition marked by ritual discrimination, and a post-liminal phase of aggregation and readmission to society in a new condition. The purpose of the initiation is to endorse the passage of the individual from one defined situation to another that is also defined. This is why rites of passage have a recurrent structure, a real pattern that guides, controls, and regulates the transformations of each individual and a group, fostering the changes without violently arresting personal and collective life.

Human existence is a journey of changes from birth to death. Birth, the start of a new life is a special and unique life event which occurs within a cultural and social context (Nwadiokwu

et al., 2016). In many communities, childbirth is a life cycle, and a communal event associated with rites of passage (Siwila, 2015). Put differently, rituals or cultural practices are deeply embedded with rites of passage at varied stages of a person's life; pregnancy, birth, naming ceremonies, puberty/adolescence, marriage, death, and burial. The rituals that accompany these rites of passage play a role in giving meaning to people's ways of being (Mogawane, 2015).

According to Sarpong (1974) as cited in Dedume, Osei, and Dogbey (2016), every culture is ultimately the handwork of God. He thinks it is God who placed people where they are and allowed them to use their ingenuity and resourcefulness to subdue their environment, adapt to it, and draw what advantages they want to arrive at their cultural situation or stage. He also reiterated that all over Africa and world in general, significant rituals and ceremonies are with varying degrees of intensity and seriousness, performed at the three major turning points of a man's life.

Stated by Sarpong (*ibid*), in the so-called primitive societies, these rites are collectively termed "rites de passage" or "Rites of Passage" from one stage to another. The crucial turning points are generally the time a person enters the world through birth, when he comes of age and enters the world of adulthood, and when through death, he departs from this world and enters the world of his forebears (Dedume, Osei, & Dogbey, 2016). More so, Naidu and Muchono (2019) opined that rites of passage are practiced as cultural norms that allegedly transit people from one stage of life to another. These rites are community-created and community-directed experiences that transmit cultural values and knowledge to an individual (or individuals).

Celebration of a new entrant to the community begins with conception and pregnancy is indicative of a new member of the family and society; hence, birth rituals start with the pregnant woman (Nwadiokwu et al. 2016). As explained by Chukwu and Ume (2020), the joy of a woman expecting a baby, "knows no bounds as she cheerfully sings and dances harmoniously, swerving her body mass tenderly from the right to the left unknown to her that her songs have enchanted neighbours" (p. 194). In many cultures, pregnant women observe different rituals or taboos that aim to protect the mother of the child from perceived evil attacks. Honkavuo (2021) found that in addition to prayers, women wore a protective band around the waist to (Consider shielding or toward or protect) wall off evil spirits. More so, pregnant women were restricted from eating certain meals.

Many years back Mbiti opined that in many cultures, childbirth is accompany by rituals performed by elders, religious leaders or family members to communicate goodwill and ensure prosperity for the newborn. At the announcement of the birth of a child, women in the immediate and extended family and kindred gather to welcome the child with ululation, singing traditional songs and dancing. It is an expression of joy that the lineage is expanded. Birth songs are sung in most cases, and the dancing rhythm of the songs makes them more fitting for the occasion, which enhances active participation of the audience (women) that gathered to celebrate the occasion (Ohaja et al., 2021). The newborn infant is then initiated to society and the world at large through the naming ceremony ritual after other birth rituals like circumcision has been done and umbilical cord fallen off.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Rite Of Passage

According to Mandova et al. (2012), the African rites of passage involve human development through life stages such as birth, adulthood, marriage, eldership, and death. Rites have been long defined as ceremonies while passages indicate the transition between different developmental stages. Lebesse et al., (2022) opined that separation, transition, and incorporation are the three characteristics of rites of passage. The separation process involves being away from home and a change of routine. This is where human development begins, and there are physical changes and a shift from childish behaviour to adulthood. Puberty, for example, is characterized by uncertainty and mystery, which can cause anxiety. During this time, the individual is experiencing human emotions that can cause extreme stress. A course of ethics and values training guides the conduct of the initial initiative. As the children grow and mature, they move to the incorporation phase, where the internalization of values, norms, and ethics is learned during the transition.

More so, Kasomo (2009) outlined several different rites of passage classes, including territorial passages, private and public passages, marriage and betrothal rituals, and funerals. The rite of passage plays an essential role in the developmental stages of African people. Rites of passage remain integral parts of religious life in Africa, celebrated through traditional ceremonies of initiation for honouring natural developmental stages, connecting the individual to self, others, and the immediate environment, and revitalizing and restoring the human experience (Grimes, 2000). To Twala (2007) African Indigenous communities have been practicing the rite of passage since ancient times. This rite of passage concept has been transmitted from one generation to a generation. This rite of passage focuses on the traditional, spiritual, and cultural context practiced within African cultures.

Rites of passage are based on the notion of sharing one's life and vision with the community, which is rooted in the mystery of life and death. Different African tribes celebrate for example childbirth according to their culture. Rituals are performed to celebrate and welcome the newborn baby to the family and ancestors. Rituals and ceremonies associated with rites of passage typically fall into one of three categories (Falanga, 2021). The first step is toward something new that involves deviation from familiarity and social structure. One gradually gets closer to the unknown to learn and acquire new skills. The second is the Liminality which refers to the point at which a person crosses the edge or margin of society. In other words, it can refer to the period between two stable conditions or stages of a person's life. Lastly, the process of reintegration that involves putting what has been learned into practice in an individual's daily life. As the person returns from the edge, it is a new role or identity that they assume. Individuals who re-formulate an understanding of life learn to develop and accept themselves better (Markstrom & Iborra, 2003).

Birth Rites

Giving birth is celebrated through ritual events in which the whole community is involved. It is rejoiced by the husband, wife, and family, and thanksgiving is offered to appease the ancestors (Nwadiokwu et al. 2016). Motherhood defines a female and is regarded in high esteem, and the consequent inability to give birth is always depicted negatively. Consequently, should a female experience miscarriage, she is called 'one whose basket leaks', and the one who does not conceive is called 'the one who ate the placenta'. It is noted from these statements that the womb is an important organ as it is meant for nurturing and

celebrating life (Siwila, 2015). Different cultures have different rituals that are performed during childbirth, and this is viewed as one of the things that will protect the child and the mother from any bad occurrences that could occur in the future. Birth rites in this study is extensively discussed in four domains as seen below. \

Pregnancy Cultural Practices to Childbirth

During pregnancy, the mother goes through changes biological, mental and psychological. However, during this stage, it is expected that both pregnant woman and spouse will have to adhere to certain directives given by the community. It is worth knowing that special attention is given to the pregnant woman for her health and well-being since death during pregnancy or delivery of the child is considered an unnatural death. This is because in the case of a prenatal or post-natal death, proper divination must be made to ask God for forgiveness for whatever sins of commission or omission (Tariang, 2012). As such, it is mandatory for the ceremony to be performed to cleanse the family and the clan of the curse, so that such manner of death may not happen again in the future among the clan.

According to Tati (2021), in Balikumbat when a woman is pregnant, she visits a traditional midwife regularly for checkups. The midwife then performed certain rites on the pregnant woman purportedly to protect the woman and her pregnancy from evil spare or manipulation until the baby is born. Its worthy of note that, the methods employed by the midwives differed from the other but had a common goal which is the welfare of the mother and child. However, there is a common practice among pregnant women in Balikumbat, most of them had a twined fiber rope tied around the waist and ankle to prevent miscarriage. The belief associated to this is that it had the potential of fastening the cervices of a pregnant woman in other to permit the womb to carry the fetus still it is due. The ropes are only untied on the instruction of the midwife. Childbearing is a vital issue and all pregnant women many years ago depended on the traditional midwife for their antenatal care.

Furthermore, to Tati (2021), the midwife employed the following means to achieve a safe delivery. She gave the expected mother traditional concoctions made from leaves and herbs in a calabash of water which she drank and refilled the calabash with water for a specific period. Tati (2021) added that pregnancy in the traditional Balikumbat society is characterized by superstition surrounded by many restrictions (taboos). More so, pregnant women are restricted from going out very early in the morning or late in the night for fear of evil influences because is the period that evil spirits hovered and wandered around in the village in search of prey or people to inflict with diseases and pregnant women were their main target. It is believed that evil spirits could reincarnate through a pregnant woman of his descendant. More so Tati (ibid), opined that during pregnancy, the midwife will instruct the pregnant woman not to eat termites and honey because it could cause or trigger a miscarriage. Pregnant women were also restricted from eating any animal that when killed had a fetus in other to prevent a stillbirth. In addition to the above-mentioned restrictions, pregnant women restricted from watching the performance of masquerades as it can deform the unborn baby into a frightful creature. During the third trimester of pregnancy, expected mother are told to avoid many strenuous activities but not exempted from farmwork.

According to Kharbamon and Kalita (2025), during pregnancy, the woman needs a strong social support group to ease her of both stress and anxiety and is advised not to attend

deaths and funerals as this may agitate her wellbeing and that of the child within her. Quarrels and arguments in the family are to be avoided at all costs. The pregnant woman is advised not to be part of the cremation or visit the house where an unnatural death had taken place, since such situations may emotionally disturb the mother to be. Such restrictions are not only for the mother, but for the father as well. Men of pregnant women are banned to hunt, complete the weaving and plaiting of a basket or bamboo work. More so, it was belief that going against such could leave an ugly scar on the child body. Again, Kharbamon and Kalita (ibid) opined that the father is not permitted heating or melting a piece of iron or using it as such actions are believed to have deleterious effects on baby health. In some African culture, it is a strong belief that should the father ignore the prohibitions, there is every possibility that the child conceived may be born blind, scared, maimed or even disabled in some way or the other.

Announcing of Childbirth Practices

Based on announcement of childbirth in Nso land, in the Northwest region of Cameroon, this was initially announced in a special way where few people from the husband family will visit the bride parents with palm wine, red palm oil, and bag of salt to tell them that their daughter has put to birth. In addition, special kinds of songs were sung by married women who gave birth to their first child. A special symbol “roh” was used to communicate the presence of a newborn. Childbirth is treated as a life cycle and communal event within African communities that announcement is made to let the community know of the arrival of a newborn. The celebrations surrounding the birth of a child are community events, marked with singing and dancing.

Purification Rituals

To elucidate, purification rituals done on mothers after childbirth were mixing of hot red palm oil with salts, herbs and eaten with roasted with cocoyam / plantain, not allowing the mother to cook, cocoyam and egussi is prepared and take to the village square and placed at the junction, the woman and child were bath by elderly women for days, mother and child obliged to stay indoors still umbilical cord fallen off and the fallen umbilical cord is rub with salt and red oil before buried. More so, Nwadiokwu et al. (2016) said that the nursing mother does not cook for a full three months but served special food rich in venison. Only after three months were both the infant and nursing mother allowed to go to the market.

This tied with the opinion of Kharbamon and Kalita (2025) which is same of the Khasi people where before the delivery of the child, the family prepares a specific gourd, *u klong iawbei*, a hen whose legs are spotless, an earthen pot to store hot water, a bamboo cylinder called *ka tangsohpet*, for the cold water, and the mixture is poured into an earthen pot which is kept aside to bathe the new born child. Further, a flat elongated splinter is peeled off from the side of the bamboo cylinder with one side sharpened for cutting the umbilical cord. The newborn baby is bathed from a vessel containing a mixture of hot and cold water from the red earthen pot and the bamboo cylinder respectively. Every day the baby is given a bath from these three containers till the umbilical cord falls off (Tariang, 2012).

Before the delivery of the child, the family prepares a specific gourd, *u klong iawbei*, a hen whose legs are spotless in an earthen pot. Stored hot water and cold water is mixed and poured into an earthen pot which is kept aside to bathe the newborn child. Further, a flat, elongated splinter is peeled off from the side of the bamboo cylinder with one side sharpened for cutting the umbilical cord. When the baby is born, the umbilical cord is

severed with the bamboo splinter prepared and tied three centimetres from the base of the baby's belly with a thread. The newborn baby is bathed from a vessel containing a mixture of hot and cold water from the red earthen pot and the bamboo cylinder respectively. Every day the baby is given a bath from these three containers till the umbilical cord falls off (Tariang, 2012). Kharbamon and Kalita (2025) added that after the delivery, a ritual is performed by sacrificing a hen to invoke the ancestral mother of the clan to support and bless the mother and the child with health and well-being.

The transition of expectant females from conception to childbirth is celebrated through different rituals. Some of the rituals have dietary restrictions as it is believed that it is going to ease the delivery. For instance, among the Vatsonga, pregnant females are not allowed to eat eggs or significant portions of food because they believe that the females might have difficult labour. The female is not allowed to sleep, especially during the day, as this is believed to cause laziness in the unborn baby and might cause difficult and slow labour. Within the same cultural group, pregnancy is not announced to many people; only a few people can be informed about the pregnancy, as it is thought that the unborn baby might be bewitched (Siwila, 2015). This is also observed in Akamba and Gikuyu (Kenya), where pregnant females observe regulations and taboos, including wearing protective amulets and avoiding doubtful foods. In Kenya, among the Abamba clan, pregnant females are forbidden to eat food originating from animals, beans, and meat.

In Zambian cultural practices, the pregnant mother is separated from the community for the child's safety. It is believed that the pregnancy must be handed over to the ancestors, who become the custodians of the pregnancy. Separation is done early in pregnancy, before other people take notice, and is done by the family for fear of attack from evil people (Siwila, 2015). Thus, we could see that across different African cultures, pregnant women undergo different phases as a form of rite of passage during pregnancy with main goal to guarantee health and well-being for both mother and child.

To elucidate, for the Nso people, in case of death of the newborn, a purification ritual is performed to prevent further death because such death is considered unnatural. The purification is a call for proper divination by asking the God for forgiveness for whatever sins. All these is to evade such manner of death in future. More so, another important aspect of purification is the believe attach to placenta. Communities believe that the child has a continuous connection to the placenta, though separated, hence the ritual performance to relink them. For this reason, placenta is buried on ancestral land to signifies that the child belongs to the homestead. (Siwila, 2015). Furthermore, burying a placenta under special tree like banana and others is believed to promote fertility within the female's womb to continue to be fruitful. For example, the value of the placenta decaying under the Mapundu tree is of high importance. This tree significance is also observed among Bemba people during initiation, as a female child is introduced to the Mapundu tree by asking her to sit under the tree during initiation lessons (Siwila, 2015). More so, Vatsonga people also bury the placenta in the cattle kraal within the homestead to cement the child's existence within the family. Therefore, purification linked to the handling of child placenta varies by cultures, but the significance remains almost the same.

Child Circumcision / Initiation Practices

Among the various African groups, circumcision involves the surgical removal of the foreskin; however, various initiation teachings accompany the surgery and hence carry a lot

of meaning. The surgical removal of the foreskin marks the entrance into a new stage in life, and the initiate is expected to act and reflect the new status the young male has acquired (Phokane, 2017). For example, Circumcision among AmaXhosa is highly significant as it represents a transition from boyhood (ubukhwenkwe) to manhood (ubudoda) (Vincent, 2008). According to the VhaVenda, male circumcision is one of the most important rituals in a boy's life. It is a rite of passage that makes him a man, allows him to hold status within the community, and enhances his sexual capabilities (Dionisio & Viviani, 2013).

Within the African perspective, circumcision is seen as a way of initiating young males to be effective role players in the sustainable and continuous existence of their societies (Maharasoia & Maharaswa 2004). Circumcisions at the time was practiced in non-clinical settings and are overseen by a traditional practitioner with different dimensions which can be religious, social, philosophical, and biomedical (CSSR, 2009). For example, among the Senegalese, circumcision is regarded as an important rite of passage that has a religious dimension. It is believed that circumcision comes from God and is sacred. The male is given the name Njulli which means prayer. It is expected of a circumcised male to pray and to meet the spiritual purity required for an act of religious communion. Circumcision is viewed as a sacrifice to the ancestors when blood is shed on the ground (Niang & Boiro, 2007). The spilling of blood on the soil is viewed as an incorporation of the initiated personhood into their ancestors and the land, which is tied to the community where the young male is born. Consequently, the bond to the land and ancestors compels individuals who have migrated to return to their forefathers' land for burial, should they die (Ramose, 2005).

Generally, from an African perspective, a circumcised male should have respect for societal values and norms. These norms and values are expected to be upheld and prohibit indulgence in petty crimes, such as stealing cows, which can be tolerable if done by uncircumcised males. It is also expected that initiated males exercise control over sexual desires (Niang & Boiro, 2007). This shows how much emphasis is placed on the individual's change of character. Therefore, it is expected that there be a distinction between an initiate and an uninitiated male based on their behaviour, where the initiated should behave well (Froneman & Kapp, 2017). The initiate is taught how to honour and respect their ancestors by adhering to the customs. This is said to be a vertical relationship and, at the same time, have a horizontal relationship with the other initiates and females in general. Niang and Boiro (2007) describe what an uncircumcised male is called, which is derogatory. They are referred to as nayafan, which means the one who does not have responsibilities. Initiation offers a sense of belonging in the community, and males always aspire to belong.

In certain cultures in Senegal, Guinea, and South Africa (Bapedi), circumcision is separated from initiation. There is an identified separation between circumcision and initiation, and failure to complete the second phase is deemed as not having completed the rite of passage. The WHO (2009) reports on initiation practiced among East and Southern African communities who do not practice male circumcision; for example, in Kenya, the six lower teeth are removed as a sign of a rite of passage. It must be noted that anyone who underwent traditional circumcision is more respected by the community than those who went through medical circumcision.

Theoretical Review

This study is guided by Bame Nsamenang's Theory of Socio-Ontogenesis (1992). The social ontogenetic framework draws on the interpretation of African life paths to recognize three

cycles. Social ontogenetic theory was built on Bronfenbrenner's and Supper and Harkness's ecological treatise on human development and the implication of ecological environment's impact on human ontogeny. According to Nsamenang (1992), theory of Socio-Ontogenesis, an African worldview envisions the human life cycle in three phases of selfhood. There is a spiritual selfhood, which begins at conception, or perhaps earlier in an ancestral spirit that reincarnates. It ends with the ceremony to confer a name on a newborn. This tells us that right from conception as in the case with pregnancy, there are social and cultural beliefs associated it and not just biological. In fact, Nso people believe that when certain rituals are performed like burring of child umbilical cord under banana trees, it permits the women to remain fertile and give birth to many children.

More so, Nso people had it as a belief that when a woman loses the first child during birth or shortly after, when purification rituals are performed, it prevents the woman from experiencing another early loss of child. Nsamenang (1992) opined that the spiritual selfhood, which begins at conception, or perhaps earlier in an ancestral spirit that reincarnates. It ends with the ceremony to confer a name on a newborn. A social or experiential selfhood continues the cycle from the rite of incorporation or introduction of the child into the human community through naming, to end with biological death. Death is more acceptable in old age. An ancestral selfhood follows biological death. In general, ancestors are the living dead (Mbiti, 1990), or spiritual presences in the affairs of the living. Some ancestors stand out as the loving dead.

A cursory examination of the intentions and meanings of funeral rites and the memories people hold of loved ones for decades, even centuries, after their death can identify this class of ancestors to substantiate the universality of a selfhood that transcends the existential self. Some cultures claim the rebirth or reincarnation of their loving dead to complete the unbroken circle of being human (Zimba, 2002). Social selfhood, the experiential phase of personhood, develops through seven stages. These include a period of the newborn, social priming, social apprenticing, social *entre'e*, social internment, adulthood, and old age and death (Nsamenang, 1992).

Adding the two metaphysical phases of human selfhood to the seven stages of social ontogenesis completes the human life cycle. Each stage of ontogenetic development is marked by distinctive developmental tasks, defined within the framework of cultural realities and developmental agenda (Nsamenang, 2000). A social or experiential selfhood continues the cycle from the rite of incorporation or introduction of the child into the human community through naming, to end with biological death. All these are evidence that from conception to birth before naming and so on, Africa in general and Nso people in particular do have certain cultural emblem to perform on the mother and child/children. Giving birth is celebrated through ritual events in which the whole community is involved, and ancestral spirits invoke to support and bless the mother and the child with health and wellbeing.

Statement of the Problem

In Africa, there are unique practices that are vital for our existence such as birth or childhood rites which strongly influence the acculturation of Nso migrants. Despite the rapid wind of modernization in society regarding migrants' efforts in social integration as per many cultures, migrants still have issues learning and integrating in some of these cultures. From observation, different ethnic groups in Nso, have their tradition and cultures,

symbols, ceremonies, values, philosophies, perspectives, beliefs, expectations, attitudes, rituals, rites, taboos, and myths that make it difficult for the migrants to continue practicing with the same exactitude in the host regions. Even if they attempt to do so it is usually adulterated thus missing out on some critical elements.

Migrants are unable to understand the mysteries in certain cultures in the Nso community which makes them dormant and not able to acquire knowledge of the secret mysteries of religion. Many immigrants are not aware of the meaning and reasons behind an individual's name, how birth rites unfold, marriage rites and how death rites are celebrated. This may make them to be less transformed, connected and belonged in the society. Most of them feel the loss of cultural identity, some migrants experience acculturation stress during the identity formation process, and some experience low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression. Some minority migrants are stressed which may lead to poorer mental health outcomes and psychological distress. Some experience conflict due to cultural differences and values. It is this backdrop that prompted the researcher to carry out a study on the birth rites of passage and the acculturation of traditional Nso migrants in other Regions of Cameroon.

Research Objectives

Specifically, the study is guided by the following.

1. To examine the deviations in birth rites pregnancy cultural practices as a function of Nso People's acculturation process.
2. To find out the variations in birth rites announcing as a function of Nso people's acculturation process.
3. To examine the changes in birth rites purification rituals as a function of Nso People's acculturation process.
4. To examine the changes in birth rites initiation practices as a function of Nso people's acculturation process.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: The study utilized the ethnography research design to study the culture of the Nso people and how it has changed overtime. This design was appropriate for the study because is a typical qualitative research method good at exploring cultural patterns of a group of persons, behaviour, and experiences. With this design, it permitted the gathering of sufficient data from fewer group of persons to provide perspicacious into the determinants of cultural variation of the Nso people. In fact, with ethnography research design, we can better understand possible variation in Nso people's cultural values, beliefs, norms and traditions over a period. .

Population of the Study: The main population of this study was the Nso people in their natal land and those in other regions of Cameroon. An estimated statistics of number of Nso people was 300,000 (Ethnologue, 2023). The specific reason for working with the Nso people in their homeland is because they will accurately explain the particularities of their cultural rites from the past before accounting for variations at present time.

Target Population of Study: The target population consists of lineage heads and elders living in Nso land and those in other parts of Cameroon. The reasons for targeting lineage heads and elders of Nso are that they are seen as custodians of the culture. More so, they are believed to know more about their culture due to their age and status. In fact, it is believed that for someone to ascend the position of lineage head, they must be conversant with the culture. Thus, targeting specifically lineage heads and elders, the researcher hopes to collect

appropriate data to provide readers with concrete information on the phenomenon.

Accessible Population of the Study: The accessible population of the study was delimited to lineage heads and Nso elders in the cities of Bamenda, Baffoussam, Douala, and Buea. The accessible population was limited to the Nso people of the above-mentioned cities because the ongoing armed conflict in the entire region of the study (Northwest) for over eight years makes it insecure for the researcher to travel to the actual Nso land. In Bamenda, Baffoussam, Douala, and Buea, the researcher had access to the Nso people of Bamenda Nso Cultural Group, Baffoussam Nso Cultural Group, Douala Nso Development Association, and Buea Nso Cultural Development Association. In these cultural associations of Nso people, we have a total of 35 natal Nso persons, and 55 migrated Nso people, giving a total of 90 Nso people. The number of males is 62 and females 28.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques: The sample size comprises 30 Nso people and were sampled using the purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The goal for using the purposive sampling technique was to select a few Nso lineage and elders who are believed to be adequately knowledgeable of the Nso cultural trend and could explain how birth rites have change over time. More so, we used the snowball sampling because the elders and lineage heads do not stay in the same environment. Thus, few of the lineage heads and elders were begged by the researcher for direction to the compounds of other lineage heads and elders.

Instrument for Data Collection: Interview guide and focus group discussion were the two qualitative instruments used for the study.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments: The validity of the instruments were ensured by working in close collaboration top ranking academicians and few indigenes from Nso land. The intention was to state relevant questions for relevant data collection. After considering the validity of the instruments, we also conducted reliability based on need analysis. At this juncture, the instruments were pilot tested on 3 Nso people and responses gathered showed high level consistency and similarities.

Data Collection Procedure: Data collection was done face-to-face. This implies that the researcher and trained assistance went to the field to have one-on-one interaction and discussion with sampled participants.

Data Analysis Technique: Qualitative data collected were first transcript into textual data. During this process, all audio records were carefully listened, and the responses of the participants were typed word verbatim. Thereafter, the transcript data were analysed using the process of thematic analysis whereby concepts or ideas were grouped under umbrella terms or key words with the support of Atlas Ti 5.2 (Atlas Ti GMBH, 2006). In this context, single words, clauses and sets of words or phrases were used to developed themes emanated directly from participants statements. In other words, there were no initial themes as but were generated following the standard process of thematic analysis. Themes were further elaborated using theme description were applicable. All themes or codes deduced for every statement were assumed relevant irrespective number of times it appeared. Therefore, themes were considered more important than frequency or grounding. After taking the generalization of themes into consideration, a translation rule was created to allow the streamlining and organization of the coding process so that what was being coded is necessary. This stage enabled the defining of the meaning of every

word/theme, and what they stood for and to know where to code each statement. During the analysis and to satisfy the requirement, all the themes were backed with related quotations on the thematic tables.

FINDINGS

Research Question One: What are the deviations in birth rites pregnancy cultural practices as a function of Nso People's acculturation process?

Table 1:

Observed Cultural Practices during Pregnancy in Nso Community and Taboos Associated with Pregnancy

Themes/Codes	Themes/Codes Description	Quotations
No visitation to maternal home	Some women not allowed to visit their maternal home	<p>"In some families, when a woman is pregnant, she is not supposed to visit their own family where she was born especially when a woman is in her first pregnancy. They will say the woman is in her 'vifir'. That means not anybody can visit her even her siblings. When she has given birth the husband's family deem it necessary, they can authorize mother - in law to come and take care of the child." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"Husband's family is accountable of everything at that particular time, safety for the mother and child is their responsibility." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"Restricted from visiting family of origin." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p>
Restricted from gatherings	Pregnant women not permitted to attend burials, shrines, traditional ceremonies, and celebration	<p>"Most gatherings such as burials, and sad event, she needs to isolate herself." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"The pregnant women are restricted from attending traditional ceremonies, celebrations, shrines." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"A pregnant woman was restricted from attending public places e.g market, funerals, celebrations etc."</p> <p>"Some places such as where juju' are passing as they usually carries 'bad medicine'."</p> <p>"A pregnant woman is restricted from going to certain gatherings." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p>
Restricted from certain herbs	Pregnant women not permitted from taking some medicinal herb plants	<p>"Restricted from taking some herbs." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"When a girl has grown and reached childbearing age, when pregnant she doesn't have to be using drug anyhow. Some even when pregnant don't know until they go to the hospital. With some women, it is advisable not to be doing hard work."</p>

		(Source: Elder/Title holder)
Husband responsibility and maternal home	When a woman is not pregnant out of wedlock	"Restricted from traditional medications that is those prescribed by the doctor "kikwiiy Keborki" mostly prepared with sweet palm wine." (Source: Elder/Title holder) "When a woman is pregnant especially when it is not of wedlock, the pregnancy is manageable by the husband family." (Source: Elder/Title holder) "The demand for nourishment by the pregnant woman is the responsibility of the two families." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Oiling of stomach and sex restricted	Abstain from sex and oiling of stomach	"Oiling of the stomach, abstinence from sexual intercourse." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Leaves marital home	Some pregnant women told to leave husband house if believed to be attack by witchcraft	"In some cases, a divine "traditional healer" recommends the pregnant woman to leave the marital home when they foresee a miscarriage sometimes associated with witchcraft." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Restricted from certain food	Some pregnant women are told to avoid certain foods	"The diviner sometimes tells the pregnant woman what the child needs e.g. meat, fish or any other type of food." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Restricted from handshake	Pregnant women not permitted to shake hand with others	"In rare cases pregnant women are restrained from giving handshakes." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
No passing in-between men		"She is not supposed to pass in between two persons especially men." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Farming restriction		"She is restricted from doing certain manual work like going to the farm." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
No night bath		"Don't bath in the night." (Source: Migrant)
No night movement	Pregnant women not permitted to walk at night	"Don't move in the night." (Source: Migrant)
No stepping over robe of masquerade		"Don't cross the robe of a sealace masquerade "nkah" else you will put to birth to deformed child." (Source: Migrant)
No night water fetching	Pregnant women not allowed to go to stream at night to carry water	"Don't fetch water from a running stream in the night." (Source: Migrant)

The actual pregnancy cultural practices revealed that pregnant women in Nso community were restricted from visiting their maternal home, attending gathering, restricted from consuming certain herbs, had to be taken care of by both husband and her family, prohibited from oiling their stomach and have sex, not allowed to eat any kind of food, prohibited from shaking hands with people, constrained from passing in between men,

prohibited from fetching stream water at night, walk at night, and bath at night. They were also constrained from crossing the robe of masquerade and conditionally allowed to stay at maternal home if her pregnancy is belief to be bewitched by members from husband family.

Table 2:
Observed Changes with Pregnancy Restrictions in Nso Community

Themes/Codes	Quotations
Attend all gatherings	<p>"Nowadays, it has changed as some people think they are supposed to be jumping from one place to another, but she is not supposed to go to any gatherings. She can go for selected gatherings like born house, death celebrations. Today, pregnant women go to any celebration without seeking permission." (Source: Elder/ Title holder)</p> <p>"Yes; presently pregnant women move freely and attend occasions, they have coitus." (Source: Elder/ Title holder)</p> <p>"Most pregnant women are attending all the above public places and celebrations." (Source: Migrant)</p> <p>"Nowadays, some women just go anywhere following juju s and other celebration in which later on the will start feeling ill not knowing it is from there." (Source: Migrant)</p>
Christianity, urbanisation, and technology	<p>"Birth and childhood, adolescence and adulthood, marriage, death and ancestorship. All these have changed as a result because of Christianity and urbanization and technology. Even with these changes, persistent and adaptability is still practiced" (Source: Migrant)</p>

With respect to changes with pregnancy taboos in Nso community, many of the respondents said pregnant women in Nso not allowed to attend gatherings now attend all kind of gatherings in the Nso community. And this change is attributed to Christianity, urbanisation, and technology.

Research Question Two: What are the variations in birth rites announcing as a function of Nso people's acculturation process?

Table 3:
Traditional Ways of Announcing Childbirth in Nso Land and if they have been Changes

THEMES/CODES	THEMES/CODES DESCRIPTION	QUOTATIONS
VISIT BRIDE FAMILY WITH BAG OF SALT, OIL, PALM WINE	Few husband people pay visit to the bride house with bag of salt to announce childbirth	<p>"When a child is born two or three people from the husband side take a bag of salt to go and give the bride side and announce that they have a child either girl or boy after which they prepare for a day for born house to celebrate. When coming they bring bag of salts to share to everybody. The people that came don't see the mother and the baby. They just enjoy and celebrate with the family and go back without seeing them." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"Salt and palm oil is taken to the family of the</p>

		<p>mother with some palm wine.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>“When it is the first child of the family, the couple sing and dance for celebration, the put salt and palm oil and the community come out celebrating with them eating, singing and dancing. Someone from the family will then go the bride’s family to announce the birth of the child. While going he/she will take along palm oil or salt.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>“Immediately the child is born, the paternal family is supposed to carry the message to the family of the woman, and they go along with the palm wine- on entering the compound there is shouts of joy announcing “suung wan” that they have gotten a child and family receives them with songs of joy. Those who come to announce the birth of the child are given gifts e.g. salt or even cash and in due cause, they seek a name for their newborn from the in laws.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>“When a woman gives birth, an elderly woman where she got marriage, will be dedicated to go to the woman’s family to inform that they have a child. When going she go with salt and palm oil. Now for those staying at Baffoussam, they don’t do that again because of distance. They call using telephone.” (Source: Migrant)</p> <p>“People are sent to the mother’s family to go and announce the delivery of the baby. The sex of the child is asked, after which they start “Ndez wan’ (jubilating) and women usually sing songs like ‘lo wan dzewan’. Gifts like salt, oil are shared.” (Source: Migrant)</p>
NDZEI-WAN LO WAN DZE WAN	A special kind of song sung by married women who gave birth to their first child.	<p>“They are announced using a certain song (Ndzei-wan lo wan dze wan) etc. This practice is going in some areas.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>“When a woman gives birth in NSO land, people present will give shouts of joy that is halting.” (Source: Migrant)</p> <p>“Women farm groups and sing songs of childbirth and dance. Only women who get married and give birth to the first child. None these days.” (Source: Migrant)</p> <p>“Women form groups and sing songs of childbirth and dance.” (Source: Migrant)</p>
“ROH”	A symbol communicating the presence of a	<p>“In welcoming the child into the society, especially the one born into a big compound, a place where he/she will stay, they will put</p>

	newborn	“Roh”. When they put the roh, the people passing will know that there is a newborn child. But you won’t see the child. The child will be there in hiding for some time except the day they want to officially send the child out to the public which is usually after 6 months or 1 year.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)
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Findings showed that childbirth was dominantly announced in a special way where few people from the husband family will visit the bride parents with palm wine, red palm oil, and bag of salt to tell them that their daughter has put to birth. In addition, special kind of songs were sung by married women who gave birth to their first child and “roh” a special symbol was used to communicate the presence of a newborn.

Table 4:

Observed Changes with Ways of Announcing Childbirth in Nso Land

Themes/Codes	Quotations
Childbirth announced via telephone and discussion	<p>“Nowadays, people just do they wish. One will give birth, but you will only know from discussions or through telephone”</p> <p>“Presently verbal messages and telephone calls are used instead of physical visit with the salt and palm wine.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>“Nowadays, all these are not down, when a child is born, even if you made the bride’s family at the roadside, you could announce the birth of the child. Also, telephone calls have made it easy for the announcement of the newborn to be done. Though some people still follow the traditional ways.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>“When a woman gives birth, an elderly woman where she got marriage, will be dedicated to go to the woman’s family to inform that they have a child. When going she go with salt and palm oil. Now for those staying at Baffoussam, they don’t’ do that again because of distance. They call using telephone.” (Source: Migrant)</p>
Singing of special songs not common	<p>“They are announced using a certain song by married women who had their first child (Ndzei-wan lo wan dze wan) etc. However, this practice is going in some areas and not in many other areas.” (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>“Women farm groups and sing songs of childbirth and dance. Only women who get married and give birth to the first child. None these days.” (Source: Migrant)</p>

To elucidate, based on observed changes in the way childbirth is announced in Nso land, respondents said childbirth is now announced via telephone call and discussion with people unlike before that few people from the husband family will visit the bride parents with palm wine, red palm oil, and bag of salt to tell them that their daughter has put to birth. More so, the special kind of songs that were sung by married women who had their first child is no longer common these days.

Research Question Three: What are the changes in birth rites purification rituals as a function of Nso People's acculturation process?

Table 5:

Purification Rituals Performed on Mothers after Childbirth and if they have been Changes

Themes/Codes	Themes/Codes Description	Quotations
"Tooh wan"	Hot red palm oil mixed with salts, herbs and eaten with roasted with cocoyam / plantain	"When a woman gives birth, they usually carry out "tooh wan" whereby they hot red palm oil mixed with salts and other herbs, then roast plantain/cocoyam and eat with it. After, palm oil is taken to her to show that there is "tooh wan". Thereafter, she will hot some and add salt and other spices to it and share to the people that visit her." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Not allow to cook	Mother given some food considered as reverence and not allowed to work	"Special feeding with oiling soup." "The special food was prepared and put in special dishes (baskets and traditional dishes ('lang Nso)." "The mother is given special food (eggusi pudding, corn fufu) and not allowed to cook nor do anything." (Source: Migrant) "The mother of the child is well catered for. She is not allowed to cook. She will be well catered for." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Rituals with food	Cocoyam and eggusi is prepared and take to village square	"Some rituals are done where coco yams and eggusi is prepared, taken to the village square, a big ridge is prepared, cocoyam is cut and eggussi put on it and placed at the junction. After this, the mother and child can now step out of the house." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Bath by others	The women will be bath by others for days with warm water	"After birth the mother was given a bath continuously for days until the umbilical cord is disconnected from the child." (Source: Elder/Title holder) "A door shutter (made from bamboos) was used and bathing her with it." "They warm water for the mother and child and bath them, then tell the mother to breast feed the child." (Source: Migrant) "Medical herbs are given to the mother, doesn't bath the baby except the elderly women." (Source: Migrant)
Stays indoor	The woman stays in doors till umbilical cord is off	"When a woman gives birth, she has to be besides the child until the umbilical cord falls off." (Source: Elder/Title holder) "Under some circumstances, the child is restrained to be seen by all. This happens when the child is perceived to be bewitched or is to have some special gifts." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Buried umbilical cord	The child umbilical cord rub with salt and red oil and	"The umbilical cord is cam wooded before it is buried in front of the house. This is when it dries and drops off. This is mostly done by an elderly woman" (Source: Elder/Title holder)

buried

holder)

"The umbilical cord is buried with salt and oil rubbed on it. An elderly woman is the one to perform this ritual by burying it besides the house after which, she put a stone where it was buried and fence it. Neighbours are then invited to prepare food to be eaten." (Source: Migrant)

Based on purification rituals carried on mothers after childbirth, some respondents said hot red palm oil mixed with salt and herb is eaten with roasted cocoyam or plantain. In addition, some respondents said the mother is not allowed to cook and is given food to eat. Moreso, some respondents said cocoyam and egussi is prepared and take to village square and placed at the junction before mother and child can step out of house. Mother and child will be bath by others for days, they stays indoor still the umbilical cord falls off and is buried. Finally, before the umbilical cord is buried, is rub with salt and red oil.

Table 6:***Observed Changes with Purification Rituals After Childbirth***

Themes/Codes	Quotations
Bathing by other women not common again	<p>"After birth the mother was given a bath continuously for days until the umbilical cord is disconnected from the child. Most women who delivered nowadays have never even experienced this." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"Presently except those who delivered and are sick, most of them are taking the bath by themselves, they cook and even wash their dresses with those of the child/children." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p>
Child carry by outsiders with un-detach umbilical cord	<p>"Nowadays, this is not done. When a woman gives birth, the next day you can see her and the child roaming in the quarter and giving the child to everyone, but in the past, someone isn't supposed to take the child until the umbilical cord is buried." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p>
Umbilical left in the hospital	<p>"As we are here, we don't do it. When the child is born, the umbilical cord is left at the hospital." (Source: Migrant)</p>
No more purification	<p>"Purifications are only done when the child passes. Then the mother is purified so that the next child should not die. All these are dying because of Christianity." (Source: Migrant)</p>

Based on observed changes with purification rituals after childbirth, the respondents said most women now are obliged to bath themselves after birth, cook, and even wash dresses unlike before and newborn is/are carried by non-parents even when the umbilical cord has not fallen off. In addition, the umbilical cord now even abandoned at the hospital unlike before, and no purification done in cases where a child died to prevent further death.

Research Question Four: What are changes in birth rites initiation as a function of Nso people's acculturation process?

Table 7:

Initiation Rites Like Circumcision and Baptism and How they were Performed and if they have been Changes

	Themes/Codes	Themes/Codes Description	Quotations
Circumcision rites	Circumcision at home by elders	Newborn circumcised at home with special foodstuff share to people to eat	<p>"In those days, when it is time for circumcision, special foodstuff are gathered, the one that can give nutrients to the child's body in which the mother will be eating or if she is the one to prepare and give the child, she will be doing that. Palm oil is also mixed and bring in the day of circumcision. When circumcision is done, the share it to the people to eat." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"Circumcision was done by trained elders when the child is almost two months. When circumcision was done, the child was restricted from giving to other people. The child was only handled by the mother for some days for the healing to take place." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p>
	Buried in banana	Circumcision remains buried in banana tree	<p>"When the woman gives birth, the remains of the child are taken and thrown under a banana. This is called "Suuy Wan" A "dangmbo" because if thrown away from this banana it is said that this woman might not born again. It's believed that this banana is nutritious and is always green. So will the woman be." (Source: Elder/ Title holder)</p>
	Embryo cord oiled and position at the door		<p>"The embryo cord is official reserved at the door. It is oiled with palm oil and salt and a stone is placed over it" (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p>
Baptism rites	Use of chair, fowl, oil, and salt with money drop in child bag	A specialised call to carry out baptism.	<p>"During traditional baptism of the child, they usually call someone specializd in it then asked for the child's chair, fowl, oil and salt. After which money is dropped inside the child's bag be it 25frs or 50frs or 500frs. If the child can seat already for</p>

		instance, he/she is placed on his chair and the bag given to him. He is the only one that can seat on that chair. If the specialized person is not in the community, people go to neighboring villages to look for him." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Sorcery	Special practice carried out to choose the right person.	"Sorcery was done to choose the right person to baptize the child." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
Traditional day	Special day devoted for baptism	"Baptism was done only on a traditional day (kilovey)." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
"Shoh"	Child named after casting of lots	"It is called "shoh" during this ceremony the child's name is given following the casting of the lots of the day. For example, Wirkom, Biy, etc." (Source: Migrant)

Furthermore, based on how circumcision rites were done in the past, some respondents said circumcision was done by elders at home with special food share to people afterward. Again, a respondent said circumcision remains are buried under banana tree so that the woman will remain fertile and give birth to many children.

As for baptism rites, a respondent said a specialised is invited who will demand chair, fowl, oi, and salt mixed with money and drop in the child bag during baptism. In addition, another respondent said the embryo is oiled and position at the door and sorcery carry out to choose the right person to baptise the child. Finally, another respondent said baptism was done on a traditional day which is specially devoted for baptism.

Table 8:

Observed Changes with Circumcision and Baptism in Nso Land

Themes/Codes	Quotations
Newborn now circumcised at the hospital	<p>"Nowadays, circumcision is done at the hospital making the culture to die. Today, when you take the child out of the hospital without circumcision, it looks like you are still primitive."</p> <p>"Circumcision is done presently in the hospital two days after birth., visiting people even take newborn babies the very day of delivery." (Source: Elder/Title holder)</p> <p>"As we are here, circumcision /baptism is done now in a modern way usually at the hospital. When a child is born, a doctor or nurse who knows how to do it will circumcise the child." (Source: Migrant)</p> <p>"In the past we used to see men who are not yet circumcised and when been circumcised it is usually very painful at that age. When doing the circumcision some medical herbs are being robbed to reduce pain. At a certain age of between 12-13years boys were circumcised so that they should feel the pains and that they are now matured. This was because</p>

	children were born at home but now, they are delivered at the hospital and circumcision done 3-4 days after birth." (Source: Migrant)
	"Circumcision now down at the hospital." (Source: Migrant)
Christianity	"Nowadays, people pretend that don't carry out child baptism but does it in hiding saying it is bad thing to the church. Even Rev father does that." (Source: Elder/Title holder)
	"The Christian baptism has replaced most of these practices." (Source: Elder/Title holder)

Regarding observed changes with circumcision in Nso land, the respondents said circumcision is now done at the hospital as depicted in the statement *"Nowadays, circumcision is done at the hospital making the culture to die. Today, when you take the child out of the hospital without circumcision, it looks like you are still primitive."* And baptism is now carried out in church as explain *"Nowadays, people pretend that don't carry out child baptism but does it in hiding saying it is bad thing to the church. Even Rev. father does that."* (Source: Elder/Title holder)

Recommendations

- **Cultural Preservation:** Encourage the Nso people to document and preserve their traditional rites of passage, including the symbolic meanings and cultural significance associated with these rituals. This can help maintain cultural heritage and promote intergenerational transmission of cultural knowledge.
- **Adaptation and Innovation:** Support the adaptation of traditional rites of passage to contemporary contexts, allowing the Nso people to incorporate modern elements while maintaining the essence of their cultural practices. This can help ensure the continued relevance and significance of these rituals in modern times.
- **Community Engagement:** Foster community engagement and participation in the preservation and adaptation of rites of passage. This can involve working with community leaders, elders, and youth to ensure that these rituals continue to serve their intended purposes and promote social cohesion.
- **Empowerment:** Empower Nso community members, particularly youth and women, to take an active role in shaping their cultural practices and traditions. This can involve providing support for cultural education, leadership development, and community engagement initiatives.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings showed that they have been significant changes in the birth rites of Nso people over time from pregnancy cultural believes, announcing of childbirth, purification rituals after childbirth, circumcision, and baptism practices. Specifically, based on initial cultural practices associated with pregnancy, pregnant women were restricted from visiting their maternal home, attending gathering, restricted from consuming certain herbs, were cared by both husband and her family, prohibited from oiling their stomach and having sex, not allowed to eat any kind of food, prohibited from shaking hands with people, constrained from passing in between men, prohibited from fetching stream water at night, walking at night, and to bath in the night. In addition, they are constrained from crossing the robe of masquerade and conditionally allowed to stay at maternal home if her pregnancy is belief to be bewitched by members from husband family.

However, while some pregnancy beliefs remain unchanged, today, Nso pregnant women now attend all kind of gatherings which was not the case in the past. This showed that there have been some acculturations with pregnancy beliefs. To confirm this, Hemron (2009) opined that during pregnancy, the woman and her spouse will have to adhere to certain directives given by the community. Furthermore, based on announcement of childbirth, this was initially announced in a special way where few people from the husband family will visit the bride parents with palm wine, red palm oil, and bag of salt to tell them that their daughter has put to birth. In addition, special kinds of songs were sung by married women who gave birth to their first child. A special symbol "roh" was used to communicate the presence of a newborn. However, ways of announcing childbirth has changed as people now announced arrival of babies via telephone call and discussion unlike before that few people from the husband family will visit the bride parents with palm wine, red palm oil, and bag of salt to tell them that their daughter has put to birth. More so, the special kind of songs that were sung by married women who had their first child is no longer common these days.

To elucidate, purification rituals done on mothers after childbirth were mixing of hot red palm oil with salts, herbs and eaten with roasted with cocoyam / plantain, not allowing the mother to cook, cocoyam and egussi is prepared and take to the village square and placed at the junction, the woman and child were bath by elderly women for days, mother and child obliged to stay indoors still umbilical cord fallen off and the fallen umbilical cord is rub with salt and red oil before buried. But, today, observed changes to purification rituals after childbirth are that newborn are carried by non-parents even when the umbilical cord has not fallen off, umbilical cord abandoned at the hospital, majority of women now bath by themselves, cook and do laundering after childbirth, and no purification done in cases where a child died to prevent further death. And this contradicted Nwadiokwu *et al.* (2016) who said that the nursing mother does not cook for a full three months but served special food rich in venison. Only after three months were both the infant and nursing mother allowed to go to the market.

As for circumcision and baptism, they were initially done by elders, and child remains buried under a banana tree for the woman to remain fertile and give birth to many children while baptism rites were also done by specialist elders after carrying out sorcery to choose the right person. Baptism was done on a special day using chair, fowl, oil, salt, and money drop in the child bag. The observed change with circumcision is that is now done at the hospital and baptism done by Reverend Fathers. In fact, in AmaXhosa and AmaZulu culture as described by Doyle (2005), circumcisions are practiced in non-clinical settings and are overseen by a traditional practitioner. More so, Among the Senegalese, circumcision is regarded as an important rite of passage that has a religious dimension.

These are belief systems that begins with conception which Nsamenang (1992) outlined in his theory of Socio-Ontogenesis. A social or experiential selfhood continues the cycle from the rite of incorporation or introduction of the child into the human community through naming, to end with biological death. Adding the two metaphysical phases of human selfhood to the seven stages of social ontogenesis that completes the human life cycle, each stage of ontogenetic development is marked by distinctive developmental tasks, defined within the framework of cultural realities and developmental agenda (Nsamenang, 2000). All these are evidence that from conception to birth before naming and so on, Africa in general and Nso people in particular do have certain cultural emblem to perform on the mother and child/children. Giving birth is celebrated through ritual events in which the

whole community is involved, and ancestral spirits invoke to support and bless the mother and the child with health and wellbeing.

In conclusion, is paramount to know changes observed with birth rites practices among the Nso people of the North West region in Cameroon, could have severe inimical effects on the present and future generation of Nso people. On this note, we are calling on all traditional authorities, elders, and family heads to reinforce their authentic traditional birth rites that were never harmful. Cultural values do have lot of social connotation and identities. Therefore, if there are lost, an entire generation of people will equally lost.

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