

VI. The distorted thinking utilized by a recent group of people

The hypotheses investigated in this chapter in relation to a specific group of people living today include the third and fourth ones mentioned in chapter three:

- Most types of distorted thinking are based first and foremost upon an erroneous understanding or misbelief about God, often the result of a nonexistent or shallow relationship with him.
- Distorted thinking is a deep and dangerous rut that people today just as easily fall into and often have difficulty avoiding.

An investigation was made to determine the common types of distorted thinking utilized by the Esimbi in the Menchum Valley Subdivision of the Northwest Province of Cameroon, West Africa. Interviews were conducted with several Esimbi pastors, parishioners, and non-believers for this purpose.

In collaboration with a few Esimbi pastors, the interviews were analyzed and the conclusions stated later in this chapter. Some missionary colleagues who had worked in the Esimbi area were also consulted as well as a few Esimbi who have completed (or nearly completed) a seminary or university degree to verify the types that were used. Interviews were chosen over the survey method because the data from personal interviews was determined to be more reliable. Surveys written in English or French would not be well received or sufficiently comprehended in this culture at this time by a sufficient number of people and the written Esimbi

language is not yet adequately developed or ready for publication (very few have been trained to read it as it is).

The objective of documenting the common types of distorted thinking used among the Esimbi was for the pastors of this area and for this writer to become better equipped to empower others here to think and act more like Christ. This is only possible as we and they develop a deeper relationship with Christ and become more transparent with and accountable to each other within community to avoid as many of these types as much as possible and thereby to avoid the consequences which would hinder the effectiveness of ministering for the Kingdom of God within in this region.

Observations of the Esimbi thinking process.

One former partner family in ministry, Brad and Kathy Koenig, lived among the Esimbi for about four years with their two sons. Brad assisted in analyzing and documenting the phonology and grammar of the language as well as in selecting and training a national to develop a mother tongue literacy program while Kathy accepted the task of attempting to describe the culture.

The Koenigs have noticed a greater degree of the following problem among the Esimbi who do not claim to follow Christ, but a slightly lesser degree in Christians depending on their level of spiritual maturity:

A ... “double standard” exists in most everything. ... Cultural reality is almost always different than appearances would indicate. Appearances are very deceiving. It is important to the people to say what other people want to hear, but this often does not alter their actions or lifestyles.¹ There is a tremendous overlap between joking and lying.² Cunningness is the highly admired trait, there is ... conscious and unconscious deception ... and lying. ... Their

¹Kathy Koenig, “Notes on Esimbi Culture,” ed. Brad Koenig, Manuscript, April 2004, 34.

²Ibid., 24.

way of thinking, which is very different from much Western thinking, fosters very different perceptions and expectations ... firmly ingrained in them. They put great emphasis on literally based perceptions and outward appearances as opposed to attitudes—but appearances and reality are very often opposites. ... In this society human depravity is a [much] understood thing.³

Sometimes these deceptions and lies are repeated as if they were true. And such rumors have often destroyed reputations of both Christians and non-Christians. There are some Esimbi who love telling lies and enjoy deceiving others so as to gain some advantage over them.

Perhaps the above and the following quotation may explain why the Esimbi villages which contain no outsiders (or very few, i.e., nearly all but the two largest villages) are among the least developed ones in the country. This verifies President Paul Biya's concern:

There is no security in a social environment where people cannot trust each other ... liv[ing] in perpetual fear of being duped or swindled by others. ... There is no true development for the person who revels in lies, intrigues, and a total absence of principles.⁴

But lying and deception is common world wide. Most of the world (excepting North America and Western Europe) believe that losing your temper is a greater sin than lying implying that one's relationship with another person is valued higher than the truth and that "love is culturally defined."⁵

God is the only one who is completely trustworthy and never lies (Num. 23:19; Ps. 14:2-3; 116:10-11); "Let God be true, and every man a liar. ... There is no one righteous, not even one ... who does good ... There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:4, 10, 12, 18). Yet God forbids us to lie, deceive, or defraud others (Lev. 19:11, 13; 1 Cor. 7:5). Some people were clearly called liars in the Bible: the devil (alias, the serpent, Satan, Lucifer, the Morning Star)

³Ibid., 34.

⁴Biya, 90-1.

⁵Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 14-5.

who was a liar from the beginning and is the father of all lies (John 8:44); the Cretans (“are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons” Titus 1:12); those who say they have not sinned (1 John 1:8); those who say they know Jesus Christ but do not obey his commands (1 John 2:4); those who deny “that Jesus is the Christ” (1 John 2:22); and those who say, “I love God,” but hate someone (1 John 4:20).

A majority of the Esimbi could be described by the last four verses, but then so could a large majority of the world’s population. Some of the distorted thinking of the Esimbi has, like the rest of the world, resulted in major addictions to alcohol, tobacco, and snuff and to a lesser degree to marijuana or hashish (known to the Esimbi as Indian hemp). But contrary to the “civilized world” since there is no access to the Internet and almost zero interest in pornographic materials in the rural villages and since it is acceptable for the women to opt out of wearing a top in their own compound or in their farms, there is no addiction to pornography. Although tops are worn in churches or other public places, Western ideas of modesty are of no concern to mothers nursing their babies. However, there is much mental, emotional, physical and sexual abuse among this people group, though probably not any more than that of the general population of most other people groups or countries.

Examples of the fifteen types of distorted thinking utilized by the Esimbi

Filtering

It is very common for men who seek to take for themselves another man’s wife, whether or not they already have one or more wives, to repeatedly magnify negative details about him to her while filtering out or ignoring all his positive aspects. It is also common for employees to

attempt to gain an advantage in their pay or position by exaggerating (or manufacturing) negative points of fellow employees to their employer.

Another aspect of filtering is “Global Labeling.” If a person asks someone for something more than once and never receives anything, he concludes that the person is a “wicked” person. It seems as if they literally believe Matt. 5:42 (and 10:8) and they tend to judge even Christians who do not comply. Another example of labeling is if a person is deceived two or three times by someone, he may conclude that he can never be trusted again.

Tunnel Vision is another very common type of filtering among the Esimbi. A typical example is that the older men expect church to be boring so they don’t bother to come. They justify it by their assumption that “church is only for women and children.” Peer pressure is also involved here. This attitude is not restricted solely to the Esimbi—it occurs in much of Western culture today. The difference, though, is that the Esimbi (and many others who did not grow up in a white “Christian” culture) view church as honoring the “white man’s god” and putting down their traditional gods. The traditional Esimbi ignore or refuse to accept the possibility that the Creator they assume North Americans and Europeans honor is more powerful, and more demanding, than the ancestors, gods and fetishes that they have served for many generations since God does not tolerate idolatry. Although they acknowledge the existence of the Creator, who is the most powerful God, he seems to be very distant to them, thus the necessity of the other mediators (see the list and description of their gods following these fifteen types of distorted thinking).

“Awfulizing” is another very common type of filtering. The word “terrible” is frequently used among the Esimbi (and many others) when one expresses dislike or anger about what another has said or done such as stealing, adultery or murder. It is used even for good feelings.

Polarized Thinking

It is not unusual in the Esimbi area for churches to dismiss pastors due to minor errors or mistakes (i.e., not related to immorality, poor financial responsibility, or other vices). They expect a pastor to be almost perfect. If he is not perfect enough in their estimation, they dismiss him. Other examples of this type of thinking include speaking very harshly to others, or not share things or food with others because they are considered as bad, or having bad character.

Overgeneralization

An old Esimbi proverb which means once bad, bad forever is stated as follows:

Əsevi kə kikuriᅅgu amu kikuriᅅgu
Under a pig is pig

kikuriᅅgu amu kikuriᅅgu
pig is pig

“Beneath a pig was a pig, a pig is a pig.”

Very few Esimbi are considered trustworthy financially. It is not unusual to hear of church or organizational funds being misused and of treasurers and financial secretaries being dismissed. The Esimbi are usually able to recover these funds.

But if the government is involved, it is very rare that missing funds are ever recovered or returned, though it is becoming more popular to file charges against offenders through the court system. But this does not guarantee anything except that it is on public record that money is owed or missing. Even if the offender is jailed, bribes are often paid to prison guards, and the inmate escapes and flees the province or the country. Unless the person filing the charge is able to pay the transport, lodging, and feeding for the police to track down the offender, nothing further is done until he returns, if he ever returns. There is little, if any, cooperation between neighboring countries to catch and return “small-time” criminals.

Mind Reading

One common occurrence is when a person is greeted by another casually or in a hurry. The first person thinks that the other has something against him and is angry at him. Greetings in this culture should last around twenty seconds for people to feel accepted. More time spent in greetings indicates greater interest or concern. If a meeting is not halted when a late person enters so that he can greet everyone, then the new person will feel that they have been talking against him before he entered or that they are ignoring him.

Catastrophizing

Fear of witchcraft is still major problem in the Esimbi area in spite of the presence of three main-line denominations which have been around for nearly forty years. It is not unusual for parents to refuse their daughter in marriage if there is any rumor or threat of her being killed by witchcraft from the husband's family. In one recent case, a certain wife's father and his elder brother withdrew their consent after hearing a rumor of a death threat. All three were members of the same local mainline denominational church. The original dowry was only eighty percent paid (and a child was already born). The persistent question asked was, "What if she *is* killed?"

Personalization

The social hierarchy is very clear in this culture. Everyone knows how they compare with everyone else. Some strive for more recognition and respect by (1) civilized means such as education, a legitimate trade, etc., or (2) by traditional or uncivilized means such as by marrying an additional wife, becoming known as "doctors" via either one year of training in Nigeria or independently selling pharmaceutical drugs (usually expired), gambling, prostitution, etc. But

holding a certain position may not guarantee respect if it is not earned in daily life. For example, it is not unheard of for a community to physically beat their village chief occasionally.

Control Fallacies

Under the heading of Control fallacy are opposite problems. One is victimization. Many feel victimized while others control their destinies. Some whose father has died or refused to support them beyond primary school have resigned themselves to no further schooling. Many husbands have had their wives taken from them by their in-laws for one reason or another. Other husbands' wives leave them because they did not provide sufficient rewards in the form of clothing or whatever for Christmas.

Africans in general and the Esimbi in particular appear to be “haunted” by one or more of “three monsters”: (1) “We don’t have,” (2) “We cannot,” and (3) “We don’t know.”⁶ These beliefs often limit their initiative, creativity, and their dreams for improving their lot in life. Many who have become dependent on the “white man” despair when that help is removed for whatever reason. Many seem to have forgotten that no North American or European in recent history had ever promised to provide all their needs. Only God has made that promise to those who follow him (Phil. 4:19).

On the other side of control fallacy are those who insist that they have to keep people in line. The Esimbi traditional leaders “are not interested in allowing independence; rather, they are obsessed with controlling others, insisting that everyone cooperate to benefit the traditional society.”⁷ They realize that more and more Esimbi are opting for alternative leadership, such as government, one of several Christian denominations, or choosing to move out of the area and

⁶Mbwain Daniel, “Three Monsters in the African Church which must be destroyed,” a sermon delivered 8 June 2003 at the Full Gospel Seminary, Bamenda, Cameroon.

⁷Koenig, 7.

control of the traditional leadership. Several have left the area to evade the high cost of obtaining a wife via the dowry. This continues to become more expensive through the years and is often in reality only the down payment for a lifetime of service and donations to the in-laws. If the parents of the wife die, the payments continue to her father's brother(s). Often these in-laws insist that the traditional rites be performed upon their grandchildren in spite of the religious beliefs or objections of the parents.

Many have refused to obtain their required national identity card. This may be due to illiteracy, the expense involved which may include having to obtain a birth certificate and perhaps a certificate for completing primary school, as well as the difficult responsibility of maintaining records of their income to determine their tax liability, thus they have no vote in any elections.

Fallacy of Fairness

When possibilities for funding from abroad are discussed or considered between expatriates and one or more of the Esimbi, especially if pictures are taken and utilized in the application and others were present (considered witnesses), even Esimbi Christians have assumed that a firm promise was made. Some time later when they feel certain the funds should have arrived they may demand that the funds be handed over, or the expatriate will be accused of having spent them illegally. They assume that they have a valid case to take to court and may attempt to obtain a "convocation" (file a suit at the police station). Such was the experience of this writer. One application was turned down. No funds for that particular person were ever sent, but ingrained suspicion reigned since it did not seem fair that others had received funding.

Blaming

Another common distortion utilized among the Esimbi is blaming: “*the principle of ‘saving face’ is extremely important in this culture.*”⁸ It is rare that anyone will accept personal responsibility for any problem. Instead, others are forced to take the blame. Those of lesser rank in the social hierarchy may quietly and undeservedly accept the blame unless they have no respect for the person blaming them.

Emotional Reasoning

One very common example is students who fail an examination believe that they should not waste time by taking another examination because they will continue to fail. This has resulted in many school dropouts. Secondary school is very costly, so they suspect that no one would be willing to sponsor them since they have not done well in primary school (grades 1-7).

Fallacy of Change

Often times a person will beg someone for something and upon the first refusal, if he realized that the person actually has one or more of what he is requesting, he will figure that he failed to ask properly and will try another approach each time he thinks of a new and perhaps better one that would surely work.

Assumption

Another belief that attempts to keep people “in line” and dependent upon others is: When someone has food, funds, or any desirable possessions, they would be considered “wicked” if they refuse to give or lend them to whoever claims to have the greater need for them. This is a

⁸Ibid.

shame-based society.⁹ After all Jesus did encourage us to give to the needy (Matt. 6:2-3) and promised a reward for doing so if it is done without fanfare. He also said that we should not worry about whether or not we have enough food or whatever tomorrow, because if we trust God first everything will be taken care of (Matt. 6:25-34). To make you feel guilty about refusing, they may even quote or paraphrase: “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8b).

They may have noticed, for example, that you have not used a particular item (such as a book, tool, bicycle, motorcycle, or truck) for some time, but they have a “pressing” need to use it today or very soon. So they will very likely ask for it assuming that if it breaks or is destroyed, they are in no obligation to repair or replace it because it was simply an accident, or whatever. They are not to be blamed if anything goes wrong. They will keep the item until you happen to remember to ask for it to be returned, and even then they may decide that they still have the greater need for it and may not return it for a long time if ever. They may even feel free to lend it out to others who ask to borrow from them. Then if something goes wrong they can blame that person. Many do not have an adequate understanding of ownership, stewardship or of working hard to earn such possessions, nor of how to properly use or maintain them. It would be foolish to lend an expensive or delicate item to such a person. Many fail or refuse to recognize that Matt. 7:6 precedes and sets the conditions for verses following which were mentioned just above. Their beliefs, therefore, have been adopted without having been adequately examined.

Being Right

There is a minority who do not admit to having done anything wrong. They may do whatever it takes to prove they are right or at least to “save face” if others insist that they did do wrong. Instead of genuine admission of wrong doing and true repentance, the popular apology is

⁹Mayers, 86-7.

to say, “If I have done anything to offend you, please forgive me.” Their offences are seen only as “mistakes” which are expected to be quickly forgiven and forgotten, never to be brought up again. They may even attempt to force others to forgive them because they want the relationship to be restored as before. This force (cajoling) could be under Fallacy of Change.

Reward Fallacy

Teachers who are competing for a promotion may discover that the least competent one is awarded the promotion. The others feel resentful and bitter and are suspicious that this less competent person must have bribed the official for the favor. Another common one is that if a person invites you to a meal at his house and you accept, he expects you later to grant him some favor, but if you do not, he will think that either someone had blackmailed him or that you have just neglected him.

The one type not listed separately above was number 10, “Shoulds.” It was actually included in several examples under other types. Being a shame based society, there is a long list of “shoulds” that everyone is expected to follow. Many more examples could have been given for each type of distorted thinking, but the above were sufficient to prove the hypothesis that they are all utilized from time to time by the general population of this people group.

African Traditional Religion

Adherents of African Traditional Religions may still be considered as having “vestiges of *Imago Dei*, by virtue of which they are still aware of the existence of the Supreme Being. ... But to systematize the concepts and fill them up with quality of worship of God ‘in truth and in

spirit' is foreign to Biblical Christianity.”¹⁰ Instead of worshiping God, the traditional Esimbi religious leaders (just like those of the Nso tribe several miles east) believe that they communicate directly with and appease the lesser gods who supposedly carry out the daily details of administrating over people as ministers of God (as mentioned in chapter two). Palmer describes an aspect of the Nso worldview which is identical to that of the Oku and the Esimbi, in that they each divide reality into three spheres each ruled by a specific god through a human mediator: “The inner circle concerns the lineage” (ancestral worship); “Land, fields and farms” (protecting land from defilement); and the people (protecting them from harm and disease).¹¹

Regarding the lineage, “conflict within the family is often pushed aside and ignored” due to unity being the highest moral value within both the family and the country of Cameroon. “Some resort to secret and magical means to deal with conflict so that they are not accused of destroying family unity.” In the second realm, land, the highest value is purity, and in the third realm, people, it is peace.¹² In each realm different rituals are required to restore the highest values after they have been violated or after misfortune has struck.

In the land realm, “every year farms in Cameroon are planted by approximately March 15” which marks the beginning of rainy season.

However before planting, some people will try to please the nature spirits by offering appropriate food, blood, or animal sacrifices so that the crops will do well and the proper amount of rain will fall. Similar sacrifices may also be made before harvesting, before going on long journeys, or before birthing, etc.¹³

¹⁰Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa*, with a foreword by Billy Graham and an introduction by Charles C. Ryrie (Nairobi, Kenya: Evangel Publishing House, 1975, 3d printing 1987), 75.

¹¹Palmer, 106.

¹²Ibid., 106-7.

¹³Ken Priebe, “Strategies for Evangelistic Outreach learned from the life and ministry of Five Cameroonian Evangelists who brought the Gospel to the Grasslands of Cameroon” (D.Miss. diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1994), 28.

The Christian community has yet to understand and minister effectively to all the felt needs of those who were raised under African Traditional Religion. These people, as all others, learn by proceeding from what they have known in the past to new information. Often the new information, such as the message of the Gospel, is not adequately communicated to them because “during times of crises, especially death, even professing Christians revert to traditional beliefs and practices ... the deep core world view beliefs of a people are very persistent.”¹⁴ Gehman surmises that “all African peoples are united on certain issues: a belief in the Supreme Being who is Creator of all things, the existence of spirits, life after death, a living relationship with the ancestral spirits, and the practice of magic, witchcraft and sorcery.”¹⁵ Many Africans who have been educated either in the West or by Western Christian seminaries within Africa have only held onto the first three issues mentioned above. But unfortunately, many of these experience almost as much difficulty in communicating the Gospel to non-westernized Africans due to their Western influence as do non-African missionaries.¹⁶

Among other things, this study is an attempt to fill this communication gap. The perspectives that are holding back the people of Africa (including the Esimbi) from making realistic progress in holistic development include animism, tribalism, traditional marriage protocol, bribery, and corruption. Many are confused by conflicting theories of evolution, of counseling, and of education as well as by:

Communism, or Marxism,
Capitalism (America is almost considered as Paradise),

¹⁴Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989), 17.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶Interview by author with Philemon Yong—born and raised in Cameroon—but now an American citizen and a professor at a seminary in Cameroon, 2004.

Communal Liberalism (their president's philosophy, but he almost never verifies that funds reach their destination such as paved roads and adequate education or medical buildings, staff and equipment),
 Islam, Rosicrucianism, Christadelphianism, Baha'ism, Jehovah Witnesses (all gaining more followers),
 Christianity (many wondering how to determine which denomination is best),
 and many more.

Those who are not serious followers of Christ do not have an adequate standard to determine which philosophy of life is worth pursuing. They may personally know and respect several people each of whom may have adopted one or more of the philosophies or theories mentioned above and seem to be living a meaningful or at least a successful life. One may appear to be as worthwhile as another, though more young people who are educated outside the Esimbi area are choosing not to hold their parents' beliefs in many of the traditional gods mentioned below.

The gods and idols of the Esimbi

Many of the following gods, whom the traditionalists believe operate below the Creator, are unique to the Esimbi. The list of names and characteristics of some of the gods and idols they traditionally revered may provide some insight into why the animistic Esimbi think as they do.¹⁷

Kokubiri: This is the most "respected" god among all the gods and idols in Esimbi. It is believed that this god, usually a male, can do and undo anything. His function is to protect anyone who believes in him from any outside force. He can harm anyone who threatens the life of his subjects. It is believed that his power can reach everywhere—distance does not matter. He can appear before anyone.

¹⁷Information provided by Esimbi pastors Ongum James, Oteh Simon, and Ihimbru David, and confirmed by many others. Each has studied at the same seminary in Cameroon.

He also works as a mediator when someone has killed another person or has committed a crime and is to be sent to prison. The family will take a certain mixture of honey and palm wine, as well as a red rooster, and whatever money is requested to the priest. The person who has to appease the god is to confess the sin committed and then tell the Kɔkubiri his heart's desire. The god will either set confusion in the court, or carry out the case file never to be seen again. When the person comes back from prison he is required to come back for a thanksgiving offering. If not, the Kɔkubiri will start hunting the person or family members to kill them, or cause them to be lost for a few days.

Wogbə: A visible god of spirit and flesh believed to be harmless and friendly to his subjects. He also can appear before anyone in a form resembling an owl. He only moves around in search of food from his subject's relatives, especially female relatives. It is also believed that he always moves around with a long line of antelopes behind him. A good hunter can attack him and seize any number of antelopes from him.

Kɔtsərə: This god is also composed of spirit and flesh but only those who have "spiritual eyes" can see it. It lives in the houses of people that are part of an extended family. It specializes in killing those who have the spiritual eyes and want to approach him.

Abənə (plural; singular is ɔbənə): These are gods that sometimes inhabit an idol or a porcupine quill that belongs only to the members of an immediate family living in one house. They may appear as a goat which can vanish at will. Many families can have their own Abənə. Except for the mother of each group (mentioned next), an individual ɔbənə never works alone. The activities of each group of these gods will be limited only to one family. It is believed that their group of gods provides the family's needs, especially in helping them hunt animals in the bush. It is also believed that these gods can attack the family if they fail to perform certain rituals

to appease them. The rituals include pouring of wine to wash the idol, slaughtering a chicken and pouring the blood on the idol believing that the gods are drinking the blood, and tossing ordinary cooked food every morning on the floor toward the idol. When they are provoked, they leave the idol and a traditional doctor must come to help find him. This man may claim that they have entered a person's arm and may then proceed to pull them out with or without the aid of certain types of leaves. The Abənə are believed to be capable of killing any relative at any distance who was blocking the plans or hopes of the members of the family they serve. Although they may work on behalf of some men, they mainly work on behalf of women.

Tivi (Mother) Ɔbənə: The main role of the Tivi Ɔbənə is to bear more Abənə. There is no father Ɔbənə. Tivi Ɔbənə may inhabit a stone which is kept in a small bag.

Ɔkərə: This god is in the form of a snake. It stays in a different place and is ready to attack and kill whoever will approach him. Only those with spiritual eyes can see it. It is a dangerous god who kills on behalf of its owner. Whenever it passes, its movement is usually by a very strong wind which sometimes can damage homes. After it passes, it plagues the people with airborne diseases.

Masəŋə (plural; singular is Ɔsəŋə): These are small smooth stones that children have picked from the river and brought to their parents. The father takes these stones and initiates them to become a god who cannot be seen by others or even by those who picked them up from the river. If one dares to try to see the stone, the owner will force him or her to pay a fine (often a goat). The person may still die or collapse on the spot or become very sick. Some owners deliberately place it so that others will see it and force them to pay the fine. This god can only act through the commands of the owner. The owner may command that it kill someone who has

seized the Ɔsəŋə from the owner and refuses to give it back. Some claim that it can kill people who have gone far away.

Although the Masəŋə are mostly used by hunters to aid them in killing animals for food or for sale, they also are believed to empower men to dance powerfully. The dancer who performs the best or longest sent his Masəŋə to harm the Masəŋə of the other dancers causing them to leave the other dancers. People know not to stand by the door when these gods are being sent out. One may also request their Masəŋə to harm or charm those who attempt to prevent their plans or desires from being fulfilled.

Kanyiakuru: Anyone having power to “become” a tiger to carry out witchcraft. This incarnation can kill and “eat” people. It is only visible to those with “spiritual eyes.”

Otə Izhimi: A spear which is used by those who practice witchcraft as a weapon to harm people in the spiritual world. It is only visible to those with spiritual eyes.

Uhumbu: A god from a sister world blowing a grass pipe can only be seen by men or others who have been initiated in the Juju society. A non-initiated male who sees it will become a eunuch unless he offers the required sacrifice for his infraction. (The Esimbi name for the Christian’s God, which all the denominations use, is Uhumbəkənə, which literally means “the God of grass.”)

Konjiri: A male who wears a long gown of palm fibers, is a servant to the Uhumbu, and can be seen by any women. It teases pregnant women and children. It is also believed that when a pregnant woman sees him, she must throw a palm nut at it. If she does not hit him with the nut, she may bear a child that will have some complications. When the Konjiri visits a compound in which any hen has laid an egg, then one should be given to him. If it is not given, then the hen will not hatch any chicks.

Unjirikə: A person who wears a big gown and is believed to have mystical powers that can enable it to fly from one roof to another. Only the Uhumbu has the power to summon it. It only comes out in big occasions and is only seen by initiated males of a certain class. It moves or flies with a very high speed.

Ɛzu: A person who “transforms” himself or herself into a snake and kills people through witchcraft. Only those with “spiritual eyes” can see it.

Ekufu: A female who “transforms” herself into a beetle and goes out purposely to gather crops from other people’s farms into her own farm.

Kiburu Kɔmbə: A person with a wine stomach that drinks and never gets drunk or tired of drinking.

Ɔyiri wabi: A male who “transforms” himself into a particular kind of snake which looks the same on both ends, or a certain fly, both of which older adults refuse to kill for fear of their own death for killing it. It may transfer food from one person’s farms or palm nut storage place to another person’s farm or place. This explains why a neighbor’s harvest is so much better or worse than one’s own. The punishment or reward depends on whether or not the god was properly appeased.

Ihuihu: Rainbow. It confines animals to a small location to help the hunter entrap, catch, or kill them. It is only controlled by men and can also protect a man from attack from witchcraft. Witches cannot attack the man because the Ihuihu appears into his eyes like lightning or a flash of light. If a hunter does not have the Ihuihu he will not easily catch animals, or very many of them.

Mommy Wata: “The water spirit who confines ... herself to rivers, lakes, or swamps.” It may travel anywhere “instilling fear in families” perhaps “seeking revenge for one of her

children who had died.” Just as with the Israelites fearing the death angel in Egypt, the Esimbi traditionally believed they would be passed over by Mommy Wata if they applied the required item on their doors and door posts (cf. Exod. 12:7-13).¹⁸ In their case the item is a particular leaf of a medicinal plant, rather than the blood of a lamb the Israelites used.

The missing ingredient in the Esimbi traditional religion

The most crucial missing factor which is noticeable among the Esimbi who are either not fully committed Christians (syncretistic) or who seek to appease the above mentioned gods and idols is Truth. This became clearer not only from the fifteen types of distorted thinking, but also as several people were interviewed regarding their understanding of fifty-five different types of “faulty thinking” in their community.¹⁹ At least thirty-five of them were commonly used and examples were also provided for them, but they were not sufficiently significant or different to be included in this study since the fifteen types above were adequate to support the hypothesis regarding the use of distorted thinking by a group of people living today such as the Esimbi. It is hoped that before Christ returns to this earth (Acts 1:10), many who follow the old Esimbi traditions will soon come to acknowledge the Truth, repent of their sins against the Almighty God, develop and maintain an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ, and allow him to love others through them (John 14:6).

¹⁸ Priebe, 28.

¹⁹“Truth: Awareness of Faulty Thinking” Internet. See article in appendix.