As the title suggests, this article’s emphasis is upon food taboos in precolonial and contemporary Cameroon. The article explains taboos within several categories including religious, royal, social, and anthropomorphically based eating taboos. The article then demonstrates how such taboos remain or have become phased out of Cameroon society.

Religious taboos are common throughout the world and this is the same for the people of Cameroon. The major religion of the island is Islam. This has led to several different tribes holding taboos against pork. Those that maintain this taboo for the sake of faith continue to follow it; however tribes that follow it due to myths have begun to consume pork as a food source, whether domestic or wild. I don’t understand the previous sentence-- the word “myths” in a sentence that mentions religion needs explanation and the entire sentence is poorly-structured. The religion of Islam also places a restriction on the consumption of alcohol due to it interfering with devotion. The author notes however that some still partake in the practice, however.

As in many cultures the Cameroon tribes have taboos as a result of royal authority. Animals of power or cunning are left solely for the king or chieftain to consume. This includes the leopard, elephant and python. Punishment for not following such regulations ranged from servanthood to execution. Rare foods of rarity were also reserved for royalty. This includes buffalo and raffia palm wine. Due to the buffalo giving birth to only a single calf it’s consumption was saved for the king. The same was applied to raffia palm wine, since this palm wasn’t common. Another taboo was for the king to consume a common or unworthy animal and this can be seen with the pouched or giant rat. Another reason as the belief the rat consumed dead flesh, and eating human flesh would be improper.

Socially derived taboos went as far as to separate castes or men from women. For example in a certain tribe potters and smiths must use a different type of dish for consuming beer and cannot share a chair with a freeborn of the same tribe. This comes from smiths and potters being descendants of slaves. Women of childbearing age were not allowed to consume fox since it was believed its consumption would lead to the child of this woman not being toilet trained. Contemporaries believe it is because men wished to keep the better food from women. You change from past to present tense in this paragraph--keep tense consistent.

Anthropomorphic taboos apply to the consumption of the food leading to the individual or the individual’s children gaining the negative qualities of the animal. This includes palm swifts, red headed squirrels, antelopes known as duirkers, monkeys, gorillas, and animals considered to be ugly.

There were several taboos in place based upon the consumption of a food leading to ill health of the individual or of the child birthed by this person. These also apply to labor particularly. Such animals include the pouched or giant rat, tortoises, and the pangolin since it was believed these creatures would lead to a complicated childbirth. Sugar cane, eggs and plants associated with scabies were restricted from women due to child birth effects or leading to the baby having negative effects.

Upon development of these societies and the introduction of education most of these taboos are no longer in place. The most lasting restrictions are those of faith. Personally I was surprised by the superstition of these people. But with reflection I find that in Western culture the phrase “you are what you eat,” is not rare. The attempt to keep the best food from women is also found throughout almost every civilization society (this is a very broad statement for which you offer no evidence. Unless you can support it you should remove it). This article gave me a small glimpse into the mind of another culture.