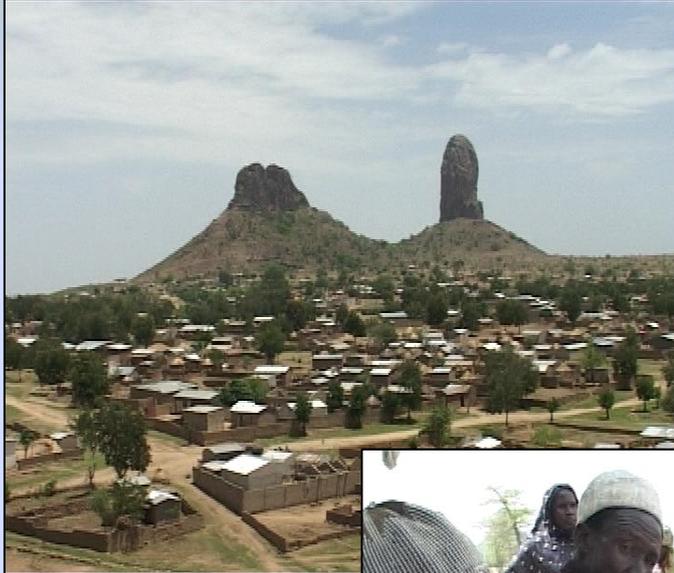


TRADITIONAL BELIEFS IN MODERN SOCIETY : THE CASE OF THE KAPSIKI BLACKSMITHS OF MOGODE NORTHERN CAMEROON



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DEDICATION

**To my whole family and friends,
Especially my wife Amélie and my daughter Eva Hana Kodji**

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LIST OF LOCAL DIALECT WORDS

Amarya: Kapsiki-Haoussa term meaning newly married woman or the wedding ceremony.

Djaouro: The Muslims chief of quarter.

Djeungwo: A small traditional drum used during the "Goula" ceremony.

Goula: The official passage of adolescence to maturity.

Hédè hédè: Traditional violin among the Kapsiki.

Heu ngodeu: (head, summit of Mogode) is the mountain where the Kapsiki prophet was living.

Houlfeu: Name that they use to design a clan among the Kapsiki.

Houmptla: The name of kapsiki prophet.

Houm tla: (mountain of cows) is the mountain where all conflicts are solved and where the rite of initiation is made.

Kapsiki: Ethnic group living in far North Cameroon, district of Mogode, Mayo-Tsanaga division, belonging to Kirdi, people living in Mandara Mountains.

Làa: The yearly harvests festival of the Kapsiki.

Lamido: The name Muslims sultan in the Northern part of Cameroon.

Margui: design the animists and means also people.

Mazeu: The name of the animist traditional chief which also means leader.

Meshke or **wjashke:** System of mutual help, a reciprocal work exchange between men and women.

Meuleu or plural **melimeu:** Name of a non-blacksmith.

Mguedji: Traditional clothes used for the burial.

Milé: Sacrifice, practice which gives right to the chief of blacksmiths and the traditional chief to go the main mountain and pray for the well being of the whole village.

Ngwuleng: Traditional guitar of two strings.

Ntsehwele: Cleverness, intelligence.

Outa or **Wta:** Among the kapsiki, there is a practice held by the blacksmiths who allows alive people to speak with a dead person.

Shala: God or god's name.

Rehe: Name by which one indicates the blacksmiths among the Kapsiki.

Tla margui or **Mbouyeu:** Pure kapsiki ox, without bump and very resistant to mountains and thirst.

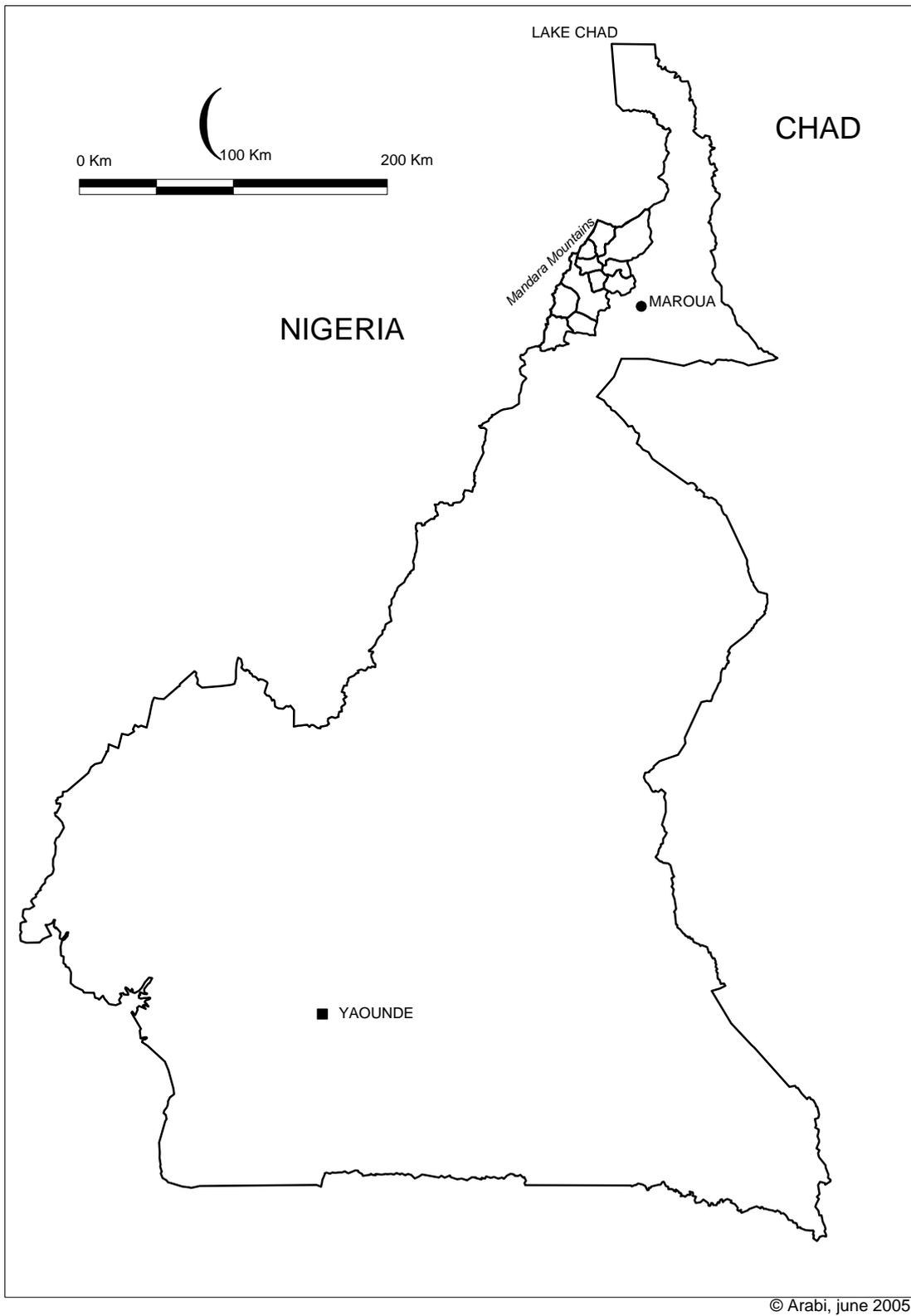
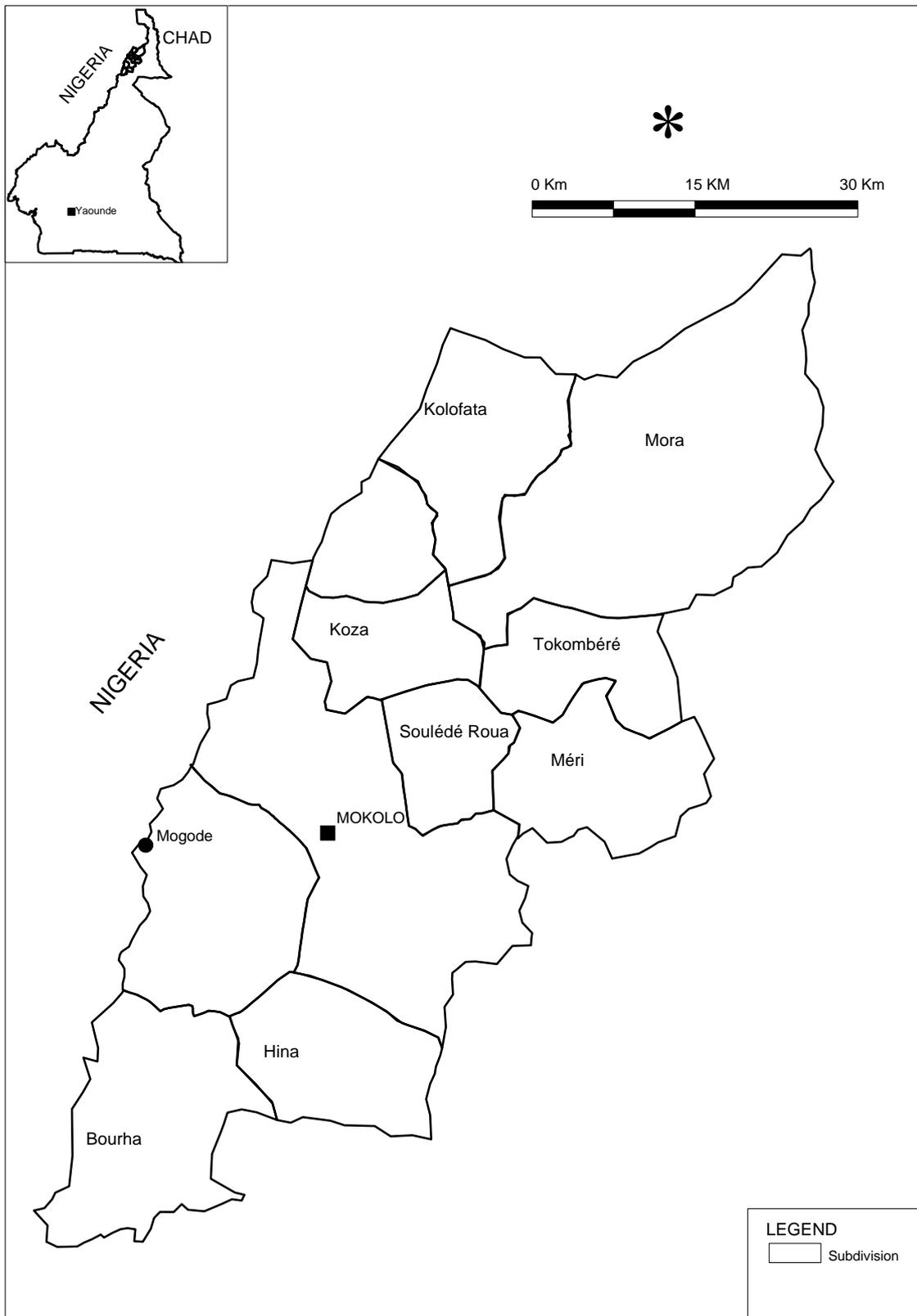


Figure 1: Location of Mandara Mountains in Cameroon



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Figure 2: Location of Mogode in the Mandara Mountains

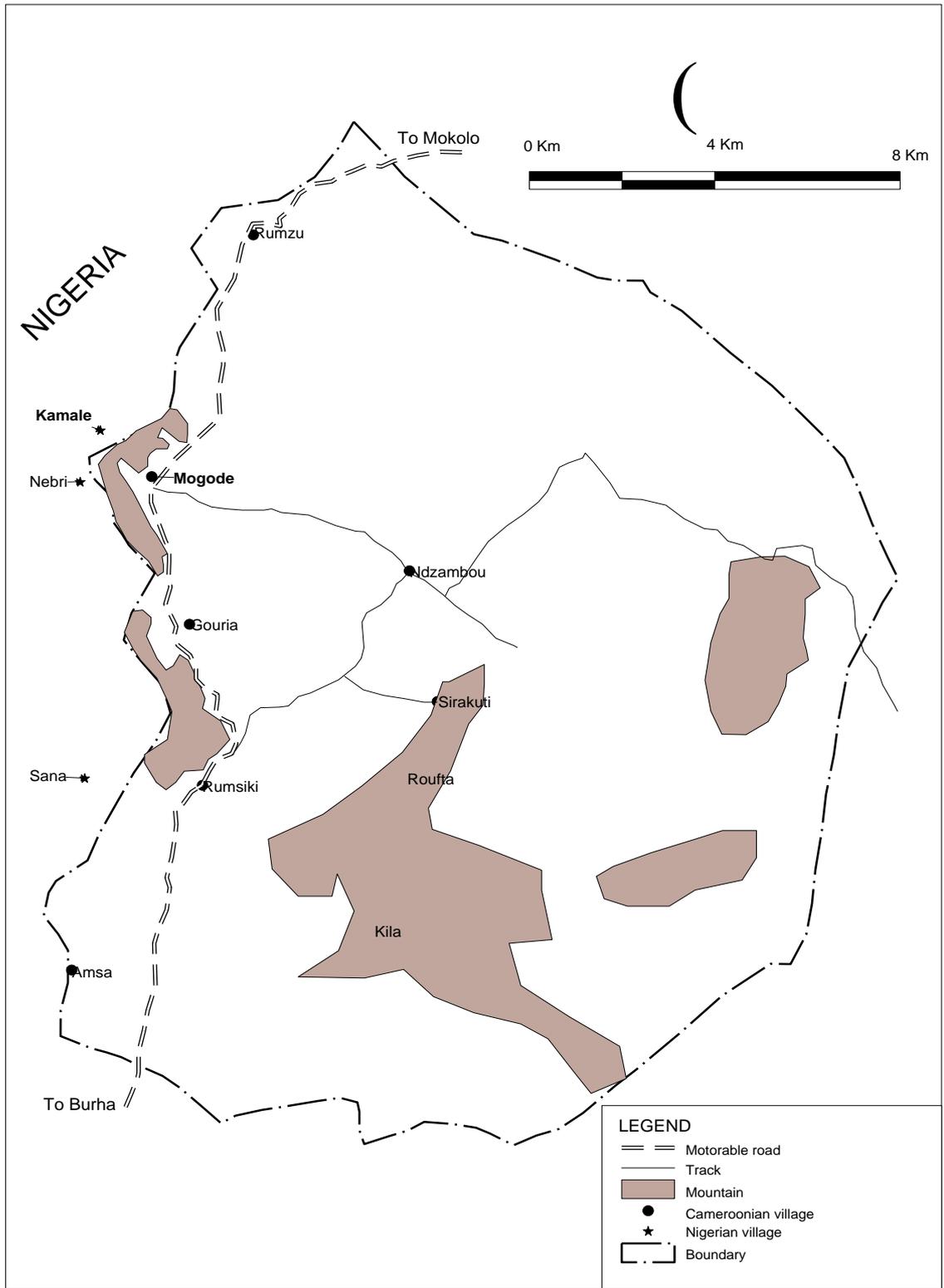


Figure 3: Location of Mogode in the border with Nigeria

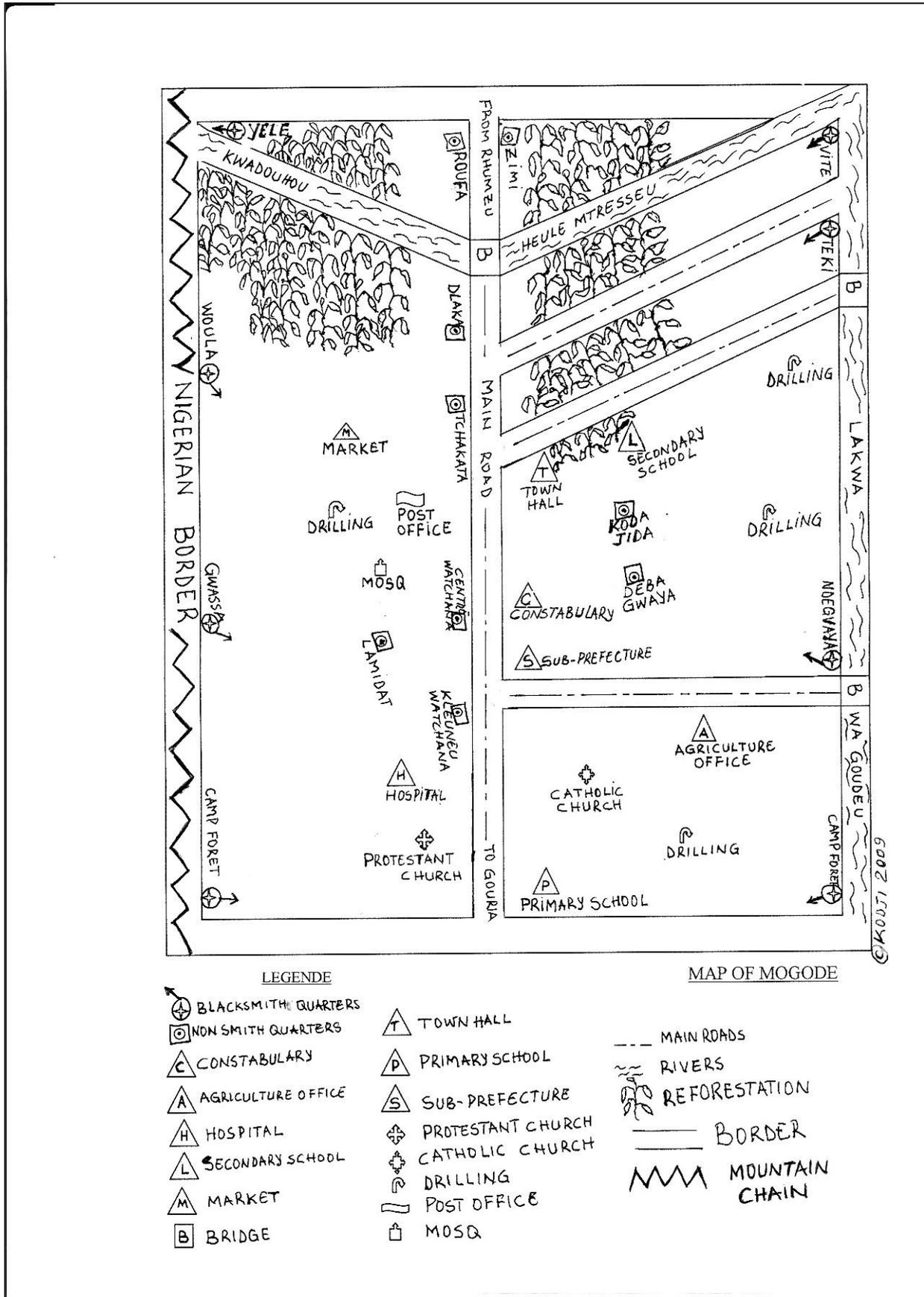


Figure 4: Location of different quarters (*melimeu* and *rehe*) in Mogode.

ABSTRACT

The Kapsiki society belongs to the group of peasants living on the hilltops (Kirdi) in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon south of the Mandara Mountains. The Kapsiki people are divided into contiguous clans spread in small autonomous villages. In the social ladder of each clan is the blacksmith caste which is a hardworking and tedious social group who strongly believes in traditional gods of the mountains. Due to many skills, they are in the center of all the traditional activities in the life of the society because its activities are important and gainful to the whole community. Their services are not only requested during happy ceremonies (weddings, naming, initiation rites ...) but also during sad ones (funerals and such).

This normally puts them on a higher standard rank on the social ladder among the other Kapsiki social groups, but because of some prejudices such as sorcery, dirtiness, impurity, begging etc, they are considered as being at the bottom rank of the whole society. Neglected by the non smiths, they are reduced to live as animals with their master.

The opening of the country to modernity brought in every traditional African society great changes. The Kapsiki society has not escaped to this rule. Nowadays, modern schools, new religions and new visions which are supposed to be a sign of evolution, transformed their organization and reduced the number of active blacksmiths and created confusion between the work that is traditionally supposed to be handled by a blacksmith but is now done by a “non-blacksmith”.

This essay on the dynamics of the evolution of the blacksmith group of Mogode rebuilds their history and shows their present situation in a simple description and analysis of their daily life and their feelings about who they are.

Key words: Kapsiki, Mogode, traditional beliefs, Blacksmiths, caste, social organization, changes.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I am a Kapsiki (mother tongue and ethnic group) although I was not born and did not grow up there, but my parents are pure Kapsiki from Mogode, they teach us how to speak our mother tongue at home even if we were living in Ngaoundéré, very far from Mogode (our village). It was a habit for us (children) to go every holiday to greet the family that lives in the village and stay with our grandmother, learning more of our native language and getting knowledge about our history and myths. I was about 15 the first time I went in Mogode as “big” boy. When I arrived, I saw some men begging on the market day and people were giving them money and food on the ground but nobody reacted. I asked my elder sister why are they eating on the ground and why are the others accepting to do so? Are they animals? She answered that this category of people is called “*rehe*” which means blacksmith and she simply knows that this is their way of life among the Kapsiki, nevertheless I myself have never heard about them before.

While walking in the market, I realized that all of these beggars were not different from the others around. They had the same style of dirty clothing, capes, sometimes without shoes and all carrying a special bag at their back to put their begged food inside. These things gave me the first dissimilarity between the blacksmiths (*rehe*) and the others. I was feeling bad in my mind as I always got pity to see them in the market. Since then, growing up and coming each year during holydays I was witnessing new things every time. I continued asking questions about them to my uncles and elders who were surprised by reactions, because as a Kapsiki I just had to know how things are. That was how it was from the time of the ancestors there is nothing to explain, just accept as it is. Maybe since they were in the village it was normal for them to understand this difference between them and the blacksmiths but for me it was not normal.

Later on I noticed that apart from the market day blacksmiths were not around, I discovered that they are living in some quarters far from the rest of the population. Then another year during the initiation periods I saw a man alone guiding the children and giving instructions, structuring the process for the initiated. I asked to the villagers and they said he is the chief of the “*rehe*”. I knew that they were represented by someone but I haven’t seen him before. The same week during a wedding ceremony I saw only blacksmiths, fixing things, playing music and people were dancing, all the wedding were organised by the musicians and speakers who were blacksmiths. Many times after during traditional

bereavement ceremonies they were working again in groups by playing music, dancing and manipulating the death until the burial. One day when my grandmother was sick, instead of going to the hospital she went to the crab sorcerer who was a blacksmith again. Compared their work and the way people treat them I saw an incomprehension, like things does not feat; there was a visible missing thing. From that time I decided to try to know who these strange people are inside the dichotomy which exists between their lower rank and their usefulness during different moment in Kapsiki society. Then each year I tried to have answers to some questions I had in mind although I wasn't able to approach them physically and I discover day after day that they are more important than I was initially thinking.

I kept developing this idea about the blacksmiths in my mind during many years but steel without knowing what and how to focus on. I continue coming to the village every holiday as usual and during the year 2004 I heard about a friend of my elder brother who will came from Norway to make a research in Mogode and who will maybe need my help. Unfortunately I was also a student and I was not able to travel and to give my help at that moment but only two or three months later.

The very day I arrived in Mogode, everybody was talking about a man who is taking people, animals and also mountains in television. My father also as his informant told me that he will come to our place in the evening but I was not able to wait since I remember that it was Mouazamou (former student from Tromsø University) who asked me to help him previously.

I went directly to his place but he was at the market, I followed him there. It was only at that moment that I realized he was not simply doing research but at the same time a film about Mogode. Since then I became very close to him, asking questions about his work and also the possibility to become like him before he returns to Norway. When he came back to Cameroon with the final film he gave me the opportunity to screen in Mogode for the first time, I was watching my village with the people acting and speaking the mother tongue in a film made by a non Kapsiki. I concluded that if someone else made a nice film about me, then I was also able to make my own films as a native since I already knew about the possibility to study visual anthropology in Tromsø.

As I said, my study took place in Kapsikiland a rural area in far north Cameroon, department of Mayo-tsanaga, Mogode division where the "Kapsiki", one of the diverse ethnic groups lives. This group is spread in the mountainous chains that are found between Nigeria and Cameroon which Hallaire (1991) called "pays", meaning the "country" which is an expression used all over francophone Africa . They are organized into many small contiguous

clans based upon the kinship. Inside the different clans there are the blacksmiths, a group of people who look, at first view, like ordinary blacksmiths simply using iron, pottery but in fact “*Ce n’est pas la forge qui fait le forgeron, mais l’hérédité. Le forgeron est réputé détenir un savoir et des pouvoirs qui échappent au commun des mortels [...]*” (Duriez 1960-1980: 131) the forge is not the most important fact that characterizes the blacksmith but heredity. The blacksmith is deemed to have knowledge and powers beyond the ordinary mortals. Struggling with many prejudices they are still living their life and practicing their religion, “*The social inferiority of the blacksmiths does not stop at the refusal of the other Kapsiki to eat with them*” (Van Beek 1987:30). Most of the time ready to help, to plan and to solve problems, these people in another sense are playing an important role and have an influent position in relation to each clan “*Although the role of the blacksmiths in food production is crucial, many of their other activities contribute to the well-being of Kapsiki society. In general, they are specialists of Kapsiki society.*” (Van Beek, 1987:25).

In fact, blacksmiths in Sub-Saharan Africa occupy confusing social ranks, as if they are in two conflicting dimensions. They are at the same time glorified and shunned, feared and despised, and also afforded special interdiction. To western observers, the status of smiths in African societies seems to be enigmatic, and most authors, from earliest colonial officers and missionaries to contemporary scholars, have felt hard to press to make sense of it (preface of Naughton, 1988). Going in the same sense, Makarius writes that the status of the blacksmiths in tribal societies poses one of the most puzzling problems of Anthropology. By a strange paradox this noted craftsman, whose hold and meritorious services are indispensable to his community, has been relegated to a position outside the place of the society almost as an “untouchable”. Regarded as the possessor of great magical power held at the same time in veneration and contempt entrusted with duties unrelated to his crafts or to his inferior social status, that make of him performer of rites, healer, exorcist, peace-maker, arbiter, counselor, or head of cult. His figure is what may be called the “blacksmiths complex” presents a mass of contradictions (Makarius, 1968).

In my film “Rehe, the blacksmiths of Mogode”, I have shown the funeral among the Kapsiki, the three days of performance of the blacksmiths during the burial ceremony. It is about how they organize and make the weeping less dramatic and unfortunate for the bereaved family with their special burial music but also how they take care of the body from the time the man dies until they bring him to the cemetery, ending by the traditional surgery that they made before the burial. The film gives an idea about the different steps of the

mourning, the atmosphere in which *rehe* are performing and through that the traditional conception of burial among the Kapsiki.

The main concern of this text will be the investigation into this paradoxical position of the *rehe* among the Kapsiki. With my personal experiences and fieldwork time I would go into the depths of their daily life and their relation to tradition affairs and would explain in depth the paradox, the complex position and the real rank they occupy which differs from a social situation to another one making the power circulation more fluent. I would try to show the social importance of the blacksmith's knowledge related to their multiple roles, their strong traditional belief and I hope that my data and the theories that I use will help to make a light on the power circulation, not in general but, in the encounters between *rehe* and *melimeu*.

The blacksmith's group is a small minority, comprising 5% of the total population. As an endogamous group, they form close-knit subgroups which have been reduced in number nowadays. In the Mogode village, less than fifteen families' form the rest of the available caste and some clans lost all their blacksmiths. Although Maître (The chief of blacksmiths of Mogode) my main character said: "*Blacksmiths never end as long as Kapsiki never end*", not many of their children want to follow in their footsteps and some essential rites are also disappearing day after day. Trough Maître and other blacksmith families, I would like to keep in my writings and my film some aspects of this Kapsiki tradition for future descended and for the history of the Kapsiki. I structured my thesis in six distinct chapters:

- Chapter one is the methodological approach which explains how I collected my data and inside I will give some glimpses into some aspects of the research context.
- Chapter two is going to be about the presentation of the theoretical approaches which help me to analyze my data. It presents my research questions and also discusses some concepts that I will use in my thesis.
- Chapter three is the physical and human environment of the Kapsiki dealing with the kapsiki people in their living environment, their social organization and the division of labour.
- Chapter four organization and social roles of the blacksmiths is about the blacksmiths themselves, their genesis, their internal organization and the multiple responsibilities in which they are involved.
- Chapter five is the blacksmiths and the social relationships among Kapsiki. It describes their living conditions, the way they are perceived by the non-smiths. It treats the rights and duties of blacksmiths among the kapsiki.

- Chapter six is the threat of extinction of the blacksmiths caste sums up some causes of their reduction, the strategies they develop to maintain themselves and some hopes for their survival.

CHAPTER I: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In this chapter I will deal with how I have collected my data. I will also give the reader some glimpses into some aspects of the research context and their impact on the knowledge created. In terms of methodology, it is an elementary requirement that, as researcher, we outline for our readers the circumstances in which the knowledge we are presenting was produced (Altern & Holtedahl, 2000:35) because each researcher develops his own strategies according to the topic and the people about whom he is working.

1.1.1 The choice of my informants

I arrived on the 13st of March I spend the first week to visit family and friends. I was expecting the help of my father to introduce me to the blacksmiths and the clan mates as the chief of our clan “*ka-makwamteu*”. Unfortunately before I live Norway he fell ill and sends to hospital in the southern part of Cameroon. I had thought about another alternative: my uncle, who accepted at first but when I was ready, he totally changes his mind because he did not want to be connected with blacksmiths. I was finally alone because my mother as a wife should not get access to negotiate for me. Discouraged, I was now obliged to speak about my project and my film idea to some close friends just because I need some help but nothing happens, I was blocked, stopped in my run up.

At the same time I was struggling, I was confused with a group of tourists who comes in the village with cameras and a lot of audio visual materials, people say that I am trying to be the shield of the white people. The reason was that my mother has a little cocktail bar in the village and these people stopped to take fresh beer and we were speaking together, they were happy to find me there speaking English with them as a Kapsiki but it cost me prejudices. I was about to give up since I was unlucky in my native village.

One day I decided to go to the periodic market (Friday) of Mogode. There I heard the sound of flute and I saw a group of people drinking in the cabaret and Maître the chief of the blacksmiths begging by playing traditional guitar. I call him and unthinkable he kneels in front of me and he says “*I am your blacksmith, what can I do for you?*” I explain seriously my problem but he refused immediately. He says “*I can’t sell the secret of Kapsiki, I will be punished by the gods, sorry!*” he was franc and categorical when he moves. At that moment I realized the importance of my father and the role of elders to guide me since I was alone and had to accomplish what brings me in Mogode. I was not able to sleep, even to eat, I was always thinking about the way to convince Maître.

Two days later I went to his place, I spent the whole day explaining and showing my interest; he went out more than four times and when he comes back he always find me at the same place down the tree. To reach my goal I negotiated as much possible becoming too small in front of him, promising that I will be a good student, I will follow him everywhere at anytime because in order to discover the hidden principles of another way of life, the researcher must became a student (Spradley, 1980, 4). I explain the importance of this study and after started complaining the absence of my respectable father he was touched and finally he says he will speak with his elders and will came to my place to give me the answer. Since that time I got Maître as my guide, my friend and my protector, my teacher and I realized that rather than studying, ethnographer means learn from (Spradley, 1980:3).

Because almost all participant observation begins with grand tour observations (Spradley, 1980:79) we decided to explore the village by visiting his friends in principal blacksmiths quarters. I gave him the total control of the program to progressively introduce me into this strange world of blacksmiths. He became a friend of mine but also my source of problems because the more I was with him, the most I was badly judged. I did not know how tomorrow will be with him and how other people will react. It was not easy to know in advance his program because he was attached to several matters and routines but it was a good experience to study about the everyday lives, the daily routines and to enter in their social setting and get to know them well (Emerson, Fretz, Shaw 1995:1)

1.1.2 Maître Koda Houleu and other informants

Aged 46, Maître Koda Houleu is a father of a small family. He is married to Koteri mother of his last 5 children and lives together at Camp Forêt quarter. Within the concession is an entry, two major cases, an attic and an enclosure for animals. First son of a large family he have replaced his father Koda Houleu at the head of leadership after his death. Since more than ten years, helped by his elders, he is the leader of blacksmiths in Mogode village but also around because he is very influential and well respected by all. That is why by choosing him as a guide and main character; I had less difficulty in gaining access to information than if I was alone. Speaking most of the time in parabolos and proverbs Maître is a Kapisiki blacksmith in its first sense because he was born inside the caste, belonging to the clan “Ka-zermba”, he plays all the instruments, directs the rite de passage, the funerals, bury the dead and communicate with the gods of the mountain. In good term with other leaders and blacksmiths of Nigeria, he respects the customs and continuous to perpetuate blacksmiths in

Kapsikiland. Big smoker, he takes his bath only in the river once a week to well keep his fetishes. As a good blacksmith, he had never been to modern hospital up to now.

Available and always ready to help, he showed me the meaning of solidarity and Kapsiki realities without any restriction. Now, because of him, I can assume that I am a Kapsiki who knows the origins of his tribe.



Picture 1: Maître with his family



Picture 2: Maître & Tchiwou performing

After the introduction made by Maître, I became a small member of the blacksmiths by staying with them, joking, eating and sometimes sleeping. I was close to them because an important element of a fieldwork is the relationships the researcher manages to develop within the research community (Altern and Holtedahl 2000). Up to that time, I had no informant but I ask Maître to help me with useful information and advices about some of them who have more knowledge about the story and the people of Mogode.

Finally I made a choice according to many criteria as age, social rank, trade, clan etc. The first one was the chief of the traditional Kapsiki: **Mazeu Sohol (71)** who belongs to the clan of chiefs “Ka-mazeu” which is an inheritance and a powerful king’s clan. The second one was a wife of about 120 and over who was also talkative and had live many events in Mogode and around. This old woman is called **kwadiki** she is not a blacksmith but she is considered as one because she had sex with a blacksmiths. The third one was the chief of blacksmiths in second **Nawa (63)** the surgeon among the blacksmiths and one of the last practicing blacksmiths of my father’s clan “Ka-makwamteu”. The fourth informant was **Yeung Koutch Koutch (61)** the master of forgers who belongs to the clan Ka-makwyé.

Then I was already close to the family of Maître, the two chiefs (Mazeu Sohol and the Lamido), too many other blacksmith families. They say that as a Kapsiki I was strange, some of them refuse to give me the food because it is forbidden for a blacksmith even to propose food to a non-blacksmith Kapsiki it will cost a lot of sanction if the chiefs know it.

But I was feeling at ease with them in their simple life. I went many times with some of them in the field to prepare the space provided around their compounds. All that time was used to plan my entrance with the camera, the steel photography was the first instrument I used to go easily in with pictures, I was observant, participant and already adopted as a *rehe*. The time I spend without the camera helped me also to take my notes and to be closer to most of their daily tasks since participation observation is done in settings that fall somewhere along a continuum from the simplest social situation to the most complex clusters and networks of social situations (Spradley, 1980, 46).

I was deeper in their daily life, adopted by some but feared by others who did not trust me. I tried to find data and I was always noting what I supposed as important in my note book because ethnographers are committed to going out and getting close to the activities and everyday experiences of other people. Getting close minimally requires physical and social proximity to the daily rounds of people's lives and activities (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995).

1.2.1 The use of the camera and the editing of the film

I realized that a month was gone and I was only observing and taking some notes but I need more and I decided to try to introduce my camera to shoot since I was there to make film and to write a thesis. As McDougall argues: "*Sometimes, words are not strong enough to express some aspects of social life while images involve the individual as thinking and feeling person, but also as a body in relation to other bodies, to objects, to time, space and place, and to sequential chains of events*".(MacDougall 2006:7). I was living very far of *rehe* quarters and I was afraid of the weight of the camera and all the material during the rainy season. I had to arrange the practical issue of my field work with Maître; we decided not to make a program because as most of the villagers none of my informants had a fix schedule. I realized by this study in this field that approaching people with the aim to know about their realities with the camera is not easy but what visual anthropology allows us to do is to see how words fit into the contexts of specific events, along with the posture, gestures, tones of voices, facial expressions, and silences that accompany them (Ibid).

From the day I introduce the camera, some blacksmiths became more careful and they were hiding some secret of their trades from me especially potters and healers. When I was giving them an appointment to film their trades, everything was made before I came to film so that I only had the view of the final product instead of watching the different steps. I suddenly became a subject of fear among the blacksmiths who adopted me before just because they do

not want to publish their knowledge. The power I had was Maître who was well respected by his people and who enable me to film by negotiation and even by force sometimes making them more confident and myself trustful. I persist by coming every day since at the core of the approach lies the idea that through the rigorous observation of the minutiae of social events and interactions, it is possible to gain significant insights, not only into idiosyncratic personal motivations of immediate subjects, but also into broader social and cultural realities of their social world (Henley, 2004:109). After some days of filming I have got much than I was expecting in rituals ceremonies, trades and everyday life. Nevertheless the introduction of the camera creates a barrier between some of my informants and me causing a climate of mistrust and fear more than the use of still photograph before. Some of the *rehe* said that I will divulgate the kapsiki knowledge by using them to make money as others did before but I was confident because as Barbash and Taylor said: “*filming is always a stressful affair, requiring continual give-and-take, and any tensions within your crew will be communicated instantly to your subjects*” (Barbash and Taylor: 1997:72).

On the field, the fact that I was making a film makes me structure my research by adjusting my agenda, making me more curious and attentive to any event that happens in Mogode. It makes me focus on what I really need but it makes me also being always ready to go everywhere at any time since with film, you have to shoot events and activities at the time they occur, if you do not catch them then, they are lost forever (Barbash and Taylor (1997:2). It makes me part of them, read their pain and difficulties, feel at ease with them and enables me to increase my knowledge about the Kapsiki. In that frame “*The filmmaker enters other people’s lives, their hopes and fears, their loves and hates, and then goes all out to resurrect them on the screen*” (Ibid), just to emphasis on the important added that brings the camera to define people in their facial expression and feelings. After the filming step, when I came back to Tromsø I started editing my film without any idea about how it will look like. By looking over and over in my material I felt like still being in Mogode and according to the meaning of each tape, I finally decided to make a film about the funeral ceremony as an important part of Kapsiki tradition.

The editing process of the film enables me to see many small details as the connection between the *rehe* and the hoe which is the first material that they manufactured. It is the chief of *rehe* who start the weeping alone with a drum before the others join him. They pay respect to a dead man for his hard work with a pot of millet. The *rehe* carry the body over the fence and the whole family follows the same way with poetries until the grave. They bury the dead man only in the afternoon around four or five thirty. They use some special clothes and

decorations (porcupine quills, *mguidji*) to wear the body according to his sex and his social rank. The surgery is more an obligation than fashions for the blacksmiths who have to do it to people who dead from abdominal, intestinal diseases or to pregnant women among the Kapsiki. The film helps me to represent emotional expression of people acting, to get access to other domain of knowledge which is not possible to explain in a paper. As MacDougall says cinematic narrative techniques allow us to follow sequences of events and the processes of conflicting social forces that accompany them. Film is also well situated to expressing the unique individuality of human beings through their faces, gestures, postures, speech and interactions with others (MacDougall 2006). Unfortunately the ethnographic film can never explain the full cultural context and multiple layered meanings of the events, objects, social roles of the participants (Postma and Crawford 2006) that is why in the thesis I am dealing with the wide Kapsiki society, their environment, their social organization and the division of labor in which blacksmiths are taking part. In clear, the text will be more analytical and will go beyond what one cannot see in the film since I cannot show in one film the whole life of the Kapsiki.

1.2.2 Son and foreign among the Kapsiki

I became very popular in the village; things were going easily, I was happy when suddenly some problems come out once again. I knew that people were trying to know the link between Maître and me some had the courage to came to ask me personally while others were hiding to speak. But one day some elder members (five) of our clan come to see my mother to tell her to advice me to stop walking with the chief of blacksmiths because it is a bad luck for the whole clan and they heard that I ate with the crab sorcerer the week before. They said that my elder brother and me (as musicians) are not welcome to any place, we became blacksmiths but the big problem is that we are not initiated; I realized that nobody was coming to see me as usual, my friend and age mate were hiding, I became a bad guy rejected by my people and not totally accepted by the blacksmiths. The death of my younger brother the son of my step-mother one month later increased the prejudices of people and up to now, for them I am a murder, a sorcerer because I walked with a blacksmith who is a lower man and who makes witchcrafts. The conclusion was that I became also a killer.

I was like a foreigner in my own village, while it was a joy for me to speak a bit Kapsiki language, for others it was a shame that I am not fully speaking and we do not understand each other. There are in that same district 24 villages, meaning 24 different vernacular languages. I continued to use the moderate participation because it occurs that ethnographer should maintain a balance between being an insider and outsider, between

participation and observation (Spradley 1980, 60). I was supposed to take particular aspects to get into general one by approaching as much possible the life and the realities of these blacksmiths, to know about what we can call their culture as the knowledge that people have learned as members of a group (Ibid). When I decided to go to Mogode, I had in mind all the advantages due to my belonging to the tribe and the presence of my whole family and relatives but unfortunately what one thinks is not always what will happen during fieldwork. Maybe if I was a foreign researcher it could have been better, they would have been happy to share their customs and knowledge with an outsider. From this experience I have learned that being home is not always an advantage, thinking that you can easily overcome all the obstacles is not always possible, problems appears everywhere. And as Naryan says: *“Even the most experienced of native anthropologist cannot know everything about his own society”* (Narayan, 1993).

This is how I went into my field to have access to data and information useful for the continuation of my research. The main method that I used was the participant observation but also the open into use method by asking questions to them, creating conversations, dialogs and being more in front of some friends than strangers. I had try to follow some strategies which other anthropologists and researchers have done before but sometimes I was oblige to find other inspiration to solve problems. As some researchers I faced many problems from the beginning to the end of my stay during the fieldwork period. The real big consequence of this research in my own village is that, until now I am feeling the paradox and the dilemma between *melimeu* and *rehe* on myself but also on my family which still lives in Mogode and which seems to bring the shame on the clan. The same goes for the film, coming in the field with pre-conceived ideas about the area under the presumption that you are a native, is a great mistake. The best way to avoid these preconceived ideas is to feel like a stranger and a student who needs help where ever he is supposed to do his fieldwork. According to each problem you will find an answer because in documentary filmmaking, style is not something that you should definitively decide on in advance. Filmmakers have individual techniques to be sure, but your film style should also be adapted to what you find in front of the camera (Barbash & Taylor:1997:73).

CHAPTER II: THE THEORETICAL APPROACH

This chapter will focus on the three complementary theories that I have used to conduct my study and to analyze my data. The same chapter will deal with my research question and some assumptions that will guide my study. I will presents and also discuss some concepts that I am using in my thesis.

II.1.1 Three complementary approaches

In the generative model of Barth human acts are predominantly understood as shaped by cognition and purpose, asserted through awareness and voluntary behavior i.e. through decision and choice (Barth, 1966, 122). Social forms can be explained if we assume they are the cumulative result of a number of separate choices and decisions made by people vis-à-vis one another (Barth, 1981, 36). This theory incorporates the nature of interdependencies among social actors by defining their relationships and the nature of interest between them. The two main groups (*Melimeu and Rehe*) in their social organization they need each other and each group has his own role to play and any organizational form must also possess a set of rules that define the nature of the transaction among the social agents. In a given organizational case, distinctive codes and goals relate to a specific category of personnel while other people are either not considered or they are deliberately excluded (Barth, 1972). People interact within a particular social situation where they carry everywhere their status and roles which seem to be their rights and obligation when accomplishing an action (Barth, 1986).

By using this perspective, I would like to investigate how through negotiation and interest *rehe* and *melimeu* perpetuate traditional habits and custom. How they use their statuses and roles to achieve a need and how social changes are reproduced through their interest and interactions according to circumstances.

Another theory associated to my study, inspired by Barth is the concept of social fields of Reidar Grønhaug who argues “*As Anthropologists we tend to regard the individuals in society as social actors who make choices, pursue goals, and maximize values* (Grønhaug, 1968, 2). Here Grønhaug sums up important parts of the perspective of Barth. Social fields are analytic constructions, defined from empirically observable patterns of behavior. Social persons constructed from different statuses are the point of departure, but social field is related to specific situations, tasks and actions which together constitute detectable and

bounded systems of interactions. Such fields are of different scale, defined by the number of involved types of statuses, and are of different extension in geographical spaces. Grønhaug's use of the concept of social field, is an earlier attempt systematize and create a tool for the discovery of the meaning of the complex micro-macro processes which people are involved in and organize in their everyday life. Through his "micro-macro" relation he argues that *"Initially the anthropologist cannot know how to circumscribe the relevant society, to measure it, or to count its members. In order to describe society in heart I must first define relevant kinds of analytic units and discover their interrelations"* (Grønhaug, 1978) to know through their interaction in which level people in the community are connected to the outside in that sense, the scale can be seen as the subjective intentionality of the actors to the level of super-individual relations. For him the problem is to identify fields of social interconnections that display the most significant patterns as seen from the viewpoint of the social production of the social person (status-elements that are activated within many different fields respectively), therefore social field is everywhere there are interrelated elements of multiple individuals, interaction and communication varying with the character of the relevant, codes, goals and tasks. The complexity is the fact that the same individuals within a population seek out, and are drawn into different fields of activity, where the rules for participation, the forms of interaction, and the number of actors involved, will vary from case to case (Grønhaug, 1968, 5). When we were walking together with Maître I realized that his authority was limited to certain areas and people. His success depends to a large extent on the strategies used within the different social fields. Therefore we can describe the individuals as they are involved in various organizational fields of social life (Gronhaug, 1968, 8).

Maître for example has many statuses; he is time to time a Cameroonian, a Kapsiki (Managing blacksmiths), a head of family, a musician, a husband, a father etc. His performance according to different social field like the area of the traditional chief (Sohohol) who is his traditional superior, the sultan (Lamido) who has his own government and who lead the whole Kapsiki community, Maître is more a servant than a leader because he has to kneel down before speaking to them and hear more than he speaks. I remember the national day, the 20th of May when we arrived at the sultan's place where people were waiting, Maître remove his shoes and his hat far from the entrance and he kneels down and walks about ten meters looking down and clapping the hands to venerate the sultan. The sultan asks him by telling off and getting increasingly angry: *"where were you since the morning? All the musicians are waiting for you and you came when it please you? Since when do I have to wait for you?"* and Maître answers: *"I am sorry, I swear not to do it again."* *"Run to join the*

others, you are lucky to be with this boy if not I will have closed you for some days” ordered the lamido. Maître ran to join his group and began to play music to the sultan.

In front of the sub prefect and the administrative people who represent another social field, as all Cameroonians, the blacksmiths are simple citizen who has to conform to the laws. As an example, in 9th June Maître was called for an interview in the gendarmerie of Mogode. He had a problem with a Muslim citizen of a neighboring village since tree months and I was there to translate for him. He was accused for breach of trust and he spends 25 000 cfa of penalty to escape the prison. He had no word to say, I had to negotiate for him in front of these people. While he is a leader among the blacksmiths, here his status of normal Cameroonian who has rights and duties like anyone reduce him, he was guilty and judged by the gendarmes who had nothing to do with his position among the Kapsiki.

By using the concept of social fields I would try to explain how individuals (*rehe* and the *melimeu*) can be affected by societal forces trough their different statuses and trades according to each social fields among the Kapsiki.

The third theory is the theory of power of Foucault for whom the power which is exercised is not designed as a property, but as a strategy, that the effects of domination are not awarded to an "ownership" but to provisions in maneuvers to tactics, techniques, to operations; that it encapsulates rather a network of relationships still active rather than a privilege that could hold. Power is circulating and penetrates into all areas, levels and exercised through different mechanisms and there is no power without aim. Power and knowledge are both intentional and non-subjective, they are imbued, through and through with calculation (Foucault, 1979). In the case of the Kapsiki blacksmiths I would explain through the theory of power that knowledge is not always power (Fardon, 1982, 49) but in the other hand discuss that however, whatever might be the case at a particular moment, it is difficult to deny that knowledge and power are always potentially part of each other and that a man may keep his wisdom private forever; but that same wisdom is there eventually for others.

The blacksmiths are playing their role, in their practice and know-how spirit speaks through them during multiple rituals. They are performing in ritual for the use of the whole villagers at specific moments but apart from the time that they became unavoidable, the blacksmiths are treated like nothing and the leaders are always the “*melimeu*”. As in the burial ceremony, during the “*Goula*”, the rite de passage, in accordance with the gods and the traditional animist chief. As seen in my film, Maître is the guide and the organizer of the

ritual. During one month from the middle of April to the end of May he manages hundred young guys in many domains and nobody else in the village is able to do it since he is the only one who really know the different steps and the places where the promoted have to go. When Maître is angry, all the leaders have to implore him to continue. His decision is able to modify the whole organization of the initiation that is why people provide him with food and drinks to keep him available and concentrate on his task.

In the contrary, when they are not needed, they have to beg, to feel as being the last and take food from the ground, to stay away from the *melimeu* as in their daily life. The discourse identified within the social structures brings power to existence in social relations and gives credibility to the ideology that the exercise of power is created by these means, the way the blacksmiths are treated among the Kapsiki looks like slavery but they change the position of power according to the opportunity and the circumstances.

Considering the “*rehe*” and the “*melimeu*” of Mogode as two different classes, through the theory of power linked to my data it will help me to explain how empirically power is generated as a process among the Kapsiki. I would analyze it as a strategy to survive for the blacksmiths who accumulated numerous trades only for their caste, most of the time keeping their knowledge from the outsiders. In clear I would study the flow and the fluidity of power, moving from *melimeu* to *rehe* and vice versa among the Kapsiki of Mogode.

Barth and Grønhaug are explicit on the way how looks the society, the process of how things are generated. They are occupied with the dynamic of changes by deconstructing the actor but they are not really treating power inside the society in an explicit way. That is why my use of Michel Foucault can add something to better understand how power is generated, used and shifted between the different groups since there is no preconceived power. I am aware of the power working from up to down of Weber, Karl Marx and others but Foucault had created a theory more close to the actor oriented theory. The link between the three theories is how the aim, the action of actors are able to make changes and modifications inside the society. These three theories will help me in my attempt to investigate the power relation between the *melimeu* and the *rehe* in Kapsiki society.

II.1.2 Research question

Among the Kapsiki, blacksmiths perform many trades and crafts calling for specialization as funeral, music, divination, magic and medicine, pottery, leatherwork, forging iron and casting brass. All these trades are crucial for people’s life in the village connecting to

the social division of labor. Despite the fact that they have their own organization with a chief who is the central figure of the caste, all *Rehe* activities are related to clans and each *rehe* belong to a clan which determines his origins and his trade. In that case, they are directed by the clan leaders, who are “*melimeu*” (non-smiths) when they are inside the clans. But when they are inside the caste, they receive orders from their chief who is influent and powerful among them, assisted by some elders to help him in his work.

Their position in the society is characterized by a big paradox between them and the others. Looking at their contribution to maintain the village and the way they are perceived as a low stratum among the Kapsiki, the fact that they are treated and considered by being dirty, dangerous and impure without any physical contact between them and the *melimeu* is complex and even odd.

It is well known that *rehe* are the most needed people as holding all the traditional knowledge and all the rituals performances but at the same time, when they are in front of the clan leaders and the traditional chief they are treated like animals. When Maître the blacksmiths chief is called by the traditional chief, he has to stay far and to kneel down, clapping the hands, imploring him and sometimes receiving food on the soil. He has to listen only not talking at all. I have also noticed that during public ceremonies, it is a rule that all *rehe* have to clap hands when the traditional chief is talking, even if he is insulting them. It is clear that between the two groups, the *rehe* are perceived as lower on the scale than the *melimeu*.

This dichotomy between the importance of the *rehe* and the treatment they receive in Mogode brings me to ask these questions:

- What are the social roles of *rehe* in Kapsiki society?
- What is the connection between the knowledge possessed by the *rehe* and how they are positioned in relation to power in Kapsiki society?
- Why is it that the “blacksmiths tradition” survives despite of the rapid social changes?

Trough these questions I would like to understand how the blacksmiths in Mogode are spending their daily, how they perceive themselves, how they are perceived by the non-smiths and how they manage to prevail despite the marginalization they suffer. Following Maître and his fellows I would like to know how blacksmiths by their knowledge, their beliefs are a powerful link in Kapsiki society during some special times. How due to their abilities and their talent, they are in the center of all the activities in the life of the society not only requested during happy ceremonies (weddings, naming ceremonies, initiation etc) but also during sad ones (funerals and such). I would try to know the intimate life of this caste through

my main character (Maître the chief), their relationships with the outside, their power and weakness in particular and the struggle of their negotiation time to time with non-smiths.



Picture 3: Maître at the Muslim sultan’s fields



Picture 4: Maître at the traditional chief’s fields

CHAPTER III: PHYSICAL AND HUMAN ENVIRONMENT OF KAPSIKI

Mogode is the capital of the Kapsiki, one of many tribes living in the southern area of the Chad basin which occupies a stretch of the western edge of the Mandara Mountains, on both sides of the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. Kapsiki are in many regards similar to the other communities which surround them. The historical context returned them on the top of the mountains which they used as refuge in the time of slavery and Islamic conquest (jihad) introduced in Northern Cameroon in early 19th century by Sheikh *Usman Dan fodio* of the *Sokoto* empire in Nigeria (Regis, Helen A. 2003). This population which was forced to live and surmount obstacles related to nature, developed strategies to conclude agriculture and trades for their survival.

III .1.1 Climate and vegetation of Kapsiki

The landscape of the Kapsiki country presents a physical aspect equipped with a characteristic of the volcanic pitons and a succession of mountains. This plays an important part in the life of the populations which live in it. Their skill to manage their life in altitude is a double advantage since the climate allows a strong pluviometer and facilitates the practice of agriculture.

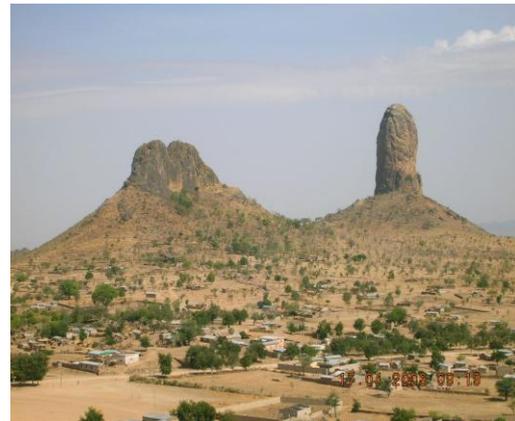
The Kapsiki country has a broken relief, mountainous area; it constitutes a natural and even colonial border between Cameroun and Nigeria. In spite of the difficulties that this broken medium presents, Kapsiki had to adapt and be accustomed to the peasant's life in the mountain. They developed, up till now, cultures on terrace, reason why Antoinette Hallaire qualified this area of the large latecomer to integrate modern civilization (Hallaire, 1991) because they spend all their time struggling in using old techniques of agriculture with hoes, rotation of crops instead of using fertilizer. They started adopt new agriculture techniques only since these ten and fifteen years. Tops reaching 1300m above the sea level in this zone, the erosion is aggressive. Basalt emissions, which are widespread there, were formed by the sides of conical pitons. This constitutes a major asset to this population which has the possibility of diversifying their crops nowadays.

Climate and vegetation are characterized by the alternation of a long eight month dry season and a short rain season of four months. The annual average heights are about 900mm. The temperatures follow the usual curve to this latitude, with a minimum in December-January, a maximum in March-April but, the problem of the drinking water supply is a great

concern in dry season in general. It is explained by a general lowering of the ground water due to the reduction in the rains, and perhaps with the exhaustion of fossil expanse of water (Hallaire, 1991, 20) which means that the provisioning of the underground water causes the dryness. The supply of drinking water requires that one travels several kilometers for hope to meet water points (Reads River) or the recently built drillings very insufficient for a population in full expansion.



Picture 5: Mogode landscape



Picture 6: The two main peaks of Mogode

III.1.2 The Kapsiki people

Biggest of 24 villages, Mogode passed from canton on the 1st of September 1992 by the decree N° 92/187 to subdivision. Consequently, the secondary school, telephone, town hall, the gendarmerie squad, the chief consultant at the hospital, the prefecture and the administrative units were built and that attracted new comers and their multiple families which increased the population of Mogode. Constituted from approximately 25 000 inhabitants in the years 1970 (Schaller, 1973), Mogode passed to 60 417 inhabitants in thirty years for a surface of 776 km² according to the census carried out in 2004-2005 (Source from sub prefecture of Mogode March 2008). Recognized as a centre of attraction in tourism, known for its hospitality, the Kapsiki population considerably increased especially with the close connections with their neighbors in Nigeria, where most of the Kapsiki population resides. The Kapsiki of Cameroon are approximately 25 000 (Podlewski, 1966); in Nigeria estimates range from 70 000 to 169 000 (Mohrlang 1972). They would be called “*Higui*” in Nigeria and Kapsiki in Cameroun but “*The Kapsiki and the Higui form one coherent group of villages, [...] normally, we shall use the term Kapsiki for both*” (Van Beek, 1987: preface).

One of the causes of the growing population can be found in the practice of polygamy which is the system among the Kapsiki. The consequence is the abundance of the children who constitute a labor for agriculture, the breeding and the prestige which leads the men to

marry many women and to make many children. Thus the wealth is measured by the number of women, children and cattle. To be the head of a great family is a sign of power, size and a place of choice in the society. According to Schaller the Kapsiki of Cameroon express a spirit of very marked independence, a sharp temperament. They are pleasant and receptive, and they finally have a remarkable eagerness with work (Schaller, 1973: 62). Constituted by a majority of the peasants, the Kapsiki populations amongst other things cultivate groundnuts, millet of all kind, corn, sesames, peas, bean, tubers and particularly Irish potatoes very recently adopted. As most of the neighboring groups they have a primarily horticultural subsistence economy; they cultivate millet and sorghum, maize and groundnuts (Van Beek, 1988). Some gardeners plant sugar cane, various vegetables, guava trees, mango trees, corn, and precisely tomatoes very appreciated in the trade nowadays but mostly they are farmers, traders, herders but agriculture and trade are the main activities (Mouazamou, 2005).

Breeding is common to almost all Kapsiki; it is a sign of attachment to the tradition. In “*margui*” culture the cattle, is an outward sign of wealth (Schaller, 1973). It is essential for a head of family to keep at home a number of cocks, sheep, goat or any other animal for some circumstances. Initiation to the breeding starts at the age of five when without reference to sex the children make feed the herd. Among the bovines, one finds mixed with the oxen zebus, sheeps, goats and a race of purely Kapsiki ox, without bump and very resistant to disease, mountains and thirst famous for fruitfulness: The “*Tla margui*” or the Kapsiki ox or “*Mbouyeyu*”. Also in the breeding, fowls, asses’ donkeys and horses for pastoral work: Harnessed agriculture. Nowadays more than in the past, the Kapsiki discovered the trade value of the pigs and his breeding, very easy, not requiring enough means it became a fashion. Although not having too many large rivers except the artificial dams, fishing existed; they practice the angling, the technique of stopping, the bow net or sometimes of the simple nets.

Hunters exist in all the clans and it is always done in group during precise periods of the year because in group is more possible to cut down the animals and at the end one shares the so small spoils is it. In short, agriculture, breeding, hunting and in a minus measurement, fishing is in the center of the daily life of the Kapsiki and constitutes at the same time the occupations and the means of living.

Peasants and tradesmen maintain a close connection so as when harvest is bad the market is too. The tradesmen buy in quantity, many products but especially the groundnut which pays both the traders and the peasants. Considered for its good quality, the Kapsiki groundnut goes beyond Gabon, Central African Republic, Chad and Nigeria as well. But Douala and Yaoundé are recognized as true poles of sale of groundnut, bean, garlic, or onion.

Another form of trade is that of the cattle which binds more the Nigerians to the Kapsiki peasants.

Except the general peasants and the tradesmen, the blacksmiths (*Rehe*) are also a part in the running of Mogode. This group constitutes of helping people goes beyond the simple name of blacksmith because they make possible the agriculture, fishing, hunting etc. Charged within this framework of manufacturing objects they make hoes, shovel, sickles, and machetes and repair the damaged materials. They treat also the cattle in the event of disease for the stockbreeders, removing the village from the carrion.

III.1.3 Social organization and division of labor among the Kapsiki

As mentioned in the theoretical part, the three administrative systems have been presented as different social fields especially for the blacksmiths but here they will be presented generally for the whole Kapsiki population.

We try to present the Kapsiki society in its social organization centered on the division of the labor and the place of each one in the daily occupation.

Division of labor in Kapsiki society follows the traditional lines of sex and age. Men and women have separate tasks and responsibilities especially in agriculture. Normally men clean the farms, arrange and repair stone terraces for their women. Each head of family have his field in which everybody is working one or two days per week but women work in their own fields only with children. Men grow maize, sometimes tobacco, garlic and onions while women cultivate peanuts, red sorrel and ground nuts. Sorghum and millet are cultivated by the whole family in a separate farm. Sesame and potatoes are cultivated by children in a small portion to prepare their initiation and buy some clothes.

The harvest also is an individual work but the head of family have a full authority on the entire product, he has a control on it and sometimes he is able to confiscate all the harvest of women to feed the family. While it is from the money women gain after selling the product of the harvest that they buy clothes, shoes etc men have an eye on the quantity of harvest. People who are polygamous benefit enough from women's work while even during the harvest threshing the millet, beating the sorghum is women's task and the husband only help them to carry and put sorghum and millet, corn, groundnuts, dry potatoes and sorrel are stored in the granaries to be eaten at a later date because most of the produce is consumed by members of the production unit (Van Beek, 1987). The peasants are interdependent people and to facilitate work they developed a system of mutual aid, a reciprocal work exchange between people of same or different clans which consists in gathering people to achieve a specific task:

the construction of a stone fence, the installation of a straw, the sowing, harvests with like accompaniment of the white wine, beer of millet and food. It is the “*Sourga*” (Bale, 2008) or “*meshke* or *wjashke*” in Kapsiki language and most of the time men and women do it separately if not it is following the same rules. The social work is very important among the Kapsiki this is why to pay homage to a death one always declare non-working days decided by the traditional chief.

Through that system, old people are in charge of advising the head of families, to take care of little children at home when people are in the farm, and those who are still solid can cultivate a small piece of soil around the house. As I saw in Mogode they educate and inform the children through suitable Kapsiki songs, tales, legends, fables and myths around a big fire during the dry season after the harvest. Actually at that time there is enough food, everybody is free and children can use the fire to grill some potatoes while listening to the grandfather or grandmother telling a story. This part of education is crucial for children because taking my own example, I only knew about our prophet *Houpta* and his legend during my fieldwork, is Maître who told me that story being surprise that as a native I did not have the basic knowledge concerning my ethnic group.

III.2.1 The clans and their blacksmiths

The societies of the Mandara are, or were until the rise of predatory states in the surrounding plains, relatively egalitarian, with temporal and spiritual power widely diffused among the clans that constituted each politically independent village settlement (Vaughan, 1970). The clan is the largest social unit and is defined as a group of males and females who observe the same totems and taboos, worship the gods of the particular clans to which they belong, and who claim to be the descendants, through approximately eight to ten generations, of a common putative male ancestor (Greene, 1981). It is a consanguineal kin group practicing unilineal descent, which includes only persons who can actually trace their relationship to a common ancestor; that is, a lineage (Schusky, 1972). A clan is usually segmented into lineages, which are the branches of descent from a common ancestor (Kroeber, 1917).

Called “*houlfou*” among the Kapsiki, each clan can consist of thirty to fifty families which are led by a chief who is the spokesman and the guide of the clan. He returns account to the traditional chief who is the core of all the clans. Being a membership of a clan (*houlfou*) is a distinctive sign and the roles vary according to the significance and the value of the clan and it is through this clan that the society takes care to integrate each one of its

members into the group and to create in him a climate of confidence and safety. Members of a clan carry with them certain attributes which distinguish them from those of another clan. But for the blacksmiths there is no difference since they are playing the same role everywhere they are. Normally, each blacksmith's family belongs to a specific clan and they obey to the clan leader who is the manager, but in the real life in Mogode blacksmiths have no clans or lineages of their own, but they are "adopted" into the *melimeu* clans (Van Beek, 1988). When they are adopted they became part of the clan and act as being a blood relative that is why the common appellation between a *meleu* and a *rehe* is "Cousin". The integration follow little by little from the birth to the death, one will pass "passive" rites where the councils prevail to the "active" rites where the man will be more or less, actor of his own insertion. Both *rehe* and *melimeu* perform the same process of integration but only *rehe* reach to the grade of ritual guides at a certain age.

The major clans of Mogode are: *kamazeu, kamakwamteu, kazermba, kamakwye, kangatche, kagwendji, kamava, kassini*. It is the whole of all these clans which form the traditional community of Mogode, but only few of them still have *rehe* families. This is because as it has mentioned above, being adopted in the clans, the number of *rehe* differs initially from each clan according to the power and the size of the clan. Thus, some clans received more *rehe* than the others and their number where increasing or reducing depending on their procreation faculty. These eight clans which had a special meaning according to the name and role where formerly living in different quarters to make the differentiation but nowadays they are mixed and can married between them. Each clan is close to another one according to the traditional alliances that ancestors had made to protect each other during razzia and which is used up to now. Clans like *Kamzeu, kassini* and *kamava*" are still very close and help each other in different tasks like mixing or changing *rehe* during funerals, participating in financial matters like during marriages, baptisms since there is no razzia nowadays. One is born, grows up and remains in a clan which is transmitted in a patrilineal way from generation to generation and one does not choose his clan. Thus a patrilineal social system is one in which recognized descent from a common ancestor through male links serves as a framework for social relations, such as in co-residence, exogamy, distribution of bride wealth shares, duty of vengeance, cult organization, etc (Leach, 1961).

The clan heads are also lineage elders and therefore performed tasks as adjudicating disputes; managing clans and lineage lands of particular social unit knowing that ownership of land passes through men only. They are charged to chair the traditional marriages, baptisms, rites, to regulate the small litigations, to organize the regroupings and the ceremonies relating

to the clan exclusively. They are in a sense the doors word of the entire clan at the meetings and of the village regroupings under the palaver tree. This is why they are for more the share of the old men (doyen) who inspire respect and fear to the other members.

The denomination of the clans varies according to the villages' but, one of the common clans running to all is "*Kamazeu*" the clan of kings which is powerful among all Kapsiki villages since they provide the kings. Each clan plays a precise part in the society, has a responsibility, a role to play a statute to defend but the base of the clan is the *rehe* who are the real workers. The common role of the blacksmiths is to take care of the health of the whole clan by divination and sacrifices, to insure their security and their relationship with the gods, to provide the clan with utensils, to perform and manage all the necessary rituals and to organize and guide the burial ceremony. In clear, the blacksmiths are the keepers and the protectors of the kinship system which is ordered flow of personnel with reference to rules about cognatic affinal bounds (Gronhaug, 1968) although they are not fully part of it.

So the clan system in reference to the relationships or ideas of people interacting within groups is also used in connection with inheritance, succession, authority, and other relationships of father to son that need not involve a body of people. These relationships should not be equated with that of a simple society in which all these criterion are not used because as it have been shown clan system maintain and insure the continuity of the society since kinship relation are social relations predicated upon cultural conceptions that specify the process by which an individual comes into being and develops into a complete live nature social person (Kelly R, 1993).

III.2.2 Heads of families

The term family can indicate either the whole of ascending, downward, collateral and parents of the same chalk-lining, or the community of joint and their children who constitute the first cell or unit of natural social life. The family is a group defined by a sufficiently precise and durable sexual intercourse to provide for procreation and education of the children (Mac Iver, 1932). In his opinion in any human society one finds five essential characteristics of the family: the marital report/ratio; the form of marriage which makes it possible to establish and to maintain the ratio marital; the system of nominal membership which implies also the shape of enumeration of the descendants; the common economic resources, but particularly intended for the needs for food and education for the children; the common dwelling, hearth and objects (which cannot be exclusively reserved for the family group).

The heads of household are consequently very important and inescapable in Kapsiki society. As the representative of the clan leaders each head of family is autonomous but a great bond of fastener to his habit by the means of his clan. They are generally polygamous and can manage families of several women and many children. They must always live at his place because a true head of household can “speak” only when he lives under his own roof. Kapsiki’s live in a chauvinist society but one name the child under the matriarchal base by order of birth and the child will belong to the father’s clan. In short, the heads of household direct the economy and repairs of the daily tasks; they manage their families, deal with the education and the social integration of the child, take care of the respect of the rites and customs of the society and especially ensure the future of the child by assuming the marriage. His statute in the clan ensures his family a place and a certain consideration in the society that is why when Kapsiki people are discussing the first questions are:

- How many women have you married in your life?
- How many children are you feeding?
- Are you living in your own household?
- Do you have farms for your own?
- How many of your children have been initiated?

If you do not have any answer to these questions then you are not really considered. Even if you are living with people you will not have the right or the power during some discussions and you will still be considered as a wasted Kapsiki. For all these reasons, custom, traditional rules, behaviors have to be learning by head of families to children if not they will laugh at them. And the preparation for the initiation and the marriage of children for both sexes started since the time they are born until they became bigger because it cost a lot of money, so parents and relatives have to prepare many years before another to succeed and to gain much consideration among people of the same size as them. Women participate in the education but most of the time they are there to give birth and when children reach a certain age, (especially boys) they are close to the fathers whom helped by the elders or grandparents have to teach them Kapsiki rules.

III.2.3 Mazeu the traditional chief leader of Kapsiki

In Kapsiki society, the principal source of power is the social status. One attends today a misunderstanding and a muddle with regard to the different chiefs in Mogode.

Originally, there was only the animist (margui) chief (*Mazeu*) with whom people of the village were fixed and who was charged to judge all the businesses of the city. Helped by his

ministers, the clan leaders and the blacksmiths he managed the city by organizing all the traditional needs as “*lâa*” (annual harvest), “*goula*” (rite de passage), “*mile*” (sacrifices) and the judgment of problems among people in the village or inside the clan. The Mazeu’s role is also in connection with the blacksmiths to organize the techniques’ of battles during the war time. Sohohol told me that according to his position as chief, for everything in the village, any decision or planning, he always needs the expertise and the know-how of blacksmiths. His power resides in the two main mountains “*Houm tla*” and “*Heu ngodeu*” were all the sacrifices and problems are solved in front of the gods and the ancestors. The margui chief is independent, he have no connection with the Muslim sultan. But Moslems never recognized the authority of the traditional chief considered as animist and consequently not having religion and without knowing God. Since for them, the animists do not have a religion and however adore the idols, the Moslems rules their conflict while referring to the Islamic laws thus with the Koran. This conflict between Moslems and animists is daily insofar as they are the animists who Islamize themselves and who end up ignoring and criticizing the non Moslems.

III.3.1 The Lamido traditional Muslim sultan

According to the state, at the top of the *Mazeu (animist traditional chief)*, the Muslim sultan chief of canton (*Lamido*) sits, but the Kapsiki ancestors did not know this degree, they never think about this kind of changes because formerly they focused everything on the Mazeu. The Muslim sultan was imposed on the majority mountain dwellers by French and English administrations and remained before the independences. The Sultan installed by the large Moslem conquerors came and now since the colonization and the accession of the late president Amadou Ahidjo at the head of Cameroonian state, he is attached to the state as gendarmerie and any other position but he is not respected by the traditional believers. Maître enabled me to understand that until today some *margui* do not recognize the Moslem chief who is however at the top of the 24 villages and the different animist chiefs of each village and who is a member of the great state government of Cameroon.

The sultan has to be normally feared; he has a powerful army and slaves, a big prison with many prisoners who used to work in his multiples farms around the village. He is also very rich and more needed by the administration since he took part in the organization and the campaign of the state political party during the election. But for the traditional believers, the Moslem chief is only an impostor and a destabilizing of the natural traditional order; he is the chief of the only Muslims. In the other hand, he always needs the blacksmiths for his

orchestra and to manufacture weapons and many decorative subjects useful for his army. During the big ceremonies and especially when a greatest political leader is coming, he needs the blacksmiths to organize the musical part for him, to decorate the horses and train de musicians. As the only link between the two leaders, Maître is in the middle but his logical superior is Mazeu Sohohol because as their common task they are performing rituals together. His relation to the Lamido is more during special moments or events and he is rewarded after his help while with Mazeu they are more colleagues.

These attitudes which exist between the *margui* and Muslim seems to be a common way of thinking since in both sides, members are legitimating their religion by recognizing more power and respect to their leader and their practices within the group. Christians are more quiet and neutral because they are not looking for any leadership; they are just living their lives in the village without any connection to politics matters or authority. Their only property is the church and the members. But it does not mean that they are not criticized by the others in their way of doing things.

III.3.2 The gendarmerie squad

The gendarmerie is also a chain of this administrative, the gendarme are the people normally sent to bring a peace climate and security among the population but nowadays, it is observed that they are very hard with the populations, they cause panic especially when they are establishing identity cards and solve litigations, they profit from that to bully the non educated population. In their consultancy, they manage a prison and they hold prisoners who are not able to pay the fees that they ask. All people (Muslim, Christians and animists) are afraid of them since they are educated strangers and they speak another language than the Kapsiki, they are also related to Mokolo the biggest court and prison of the department. They are well connected to the Lamido being the representative part of the state. When the lamido is not able to solve a very serious and sensitive problem, he sent the people to the gendarmerie squad. But they ignore totally the traditional chief of animists who is a simple citizen as other Kapsiki living in the same territory. This seriously irritates the animists who regard that as a discrimination against them. As for the Christians, they are neutral, failing to take God like only and true judge, they recover to the gendarmerie squad or the court of Mokolo to solve their litigations.

Life in the mountains far to be a handicap is an advantage for Kapsiki people who develop strategies to conquest the nature by developing cultures on terrace and adopting new varieties of plants, they made their agriculture better. Because of that, traders and farmers are

nowadays very close and each benefit from his trade. The clan system in which Kapsiki people lives is a share and the inheritance of the tradition from elders to children through the traditional chief, the chief of clans, the head of families and the blacksmiths. By giving to each one a responsibility in the social organization and the division of labor, they insure the continuity of the families and at the same time the one of the clan which took as a whole constitute the whole society. The modernity brought some changes and divisions that is why nowadays we assist at the confusion between the different leaders. Muslim members are more attached to their religion and the lamido sultan while margui are still following the former traditional religion by recognizing Mazeu as their only chief. The gendarmerie squad is in the middle but despite all these differences and clashes of interests, life continues in Mogode without any opened war up to now.

CHAPTER IV: SOCIAL ORGANIZATION IN THE “FIELD OF TRADITIONS”

This chapter deals with the genesis of the *rehe*, the way they perceive themselves, their structure as a caste and their know-how related to multiples trades and traditional responsibilities in which they are involved in Mogode.

IV.1.1 The myth of Kapsiki blacksmiths

“An ordinary person named Rehe and living among the Kapsiki with his wife and son won great distinction in the village. He could see the Kapsiki were suffering, struggling to cultivate with wooden and stone tools. They could not turn the soil well so the harvest was poor and very bad because wood is not tough enough to break up hard soil or cut through matted weeds. The rehe thought “why not try to improve people’s life?” so, he asked villagers to assist him by bringing from the river bank some of the shiny sand called “vizeu”. After collecting the “vizeu” he dug a small hole and put it inside. People were still wondering what he was up to by talking around him but he implored them to let him continue. Finally, by means, of a very hot fire he managed to extract a nugget of iron. When the villagers saw this metal they were astounded since it was the first iron they have seen. His fire softened the metal which he beat into shape and that object became the original hoe which he gave to the traditional chief. The chief was so impressed he ruled that people should support him, provide his food and drink from all quarters and people of the same clan may help him when there is need. In accordance with that rule, he abandoned farming since his work was benefit to everyone.

At the same moment, a man died. He observed that the corpse was being dragged by a rope as was the Kapsiki custom. But “no” said the same rehe “that was a human worthy of respect”. So in the presence of the whole village, he took the body on his back, by dancing he brought him to the cemetery, he dug a proper grave and buried him with due respect. Progressively he became close to the traditional chief so that he manufactures weapons and organized the battles during the war. When he dead he was steel belonging to a clan but his children and descendant begins to organize his family to the point that they formed a caste and organized all the tradition and customs.

Finally, to distinguish them from others, Kapsiki gave them the right to eat any kind of animal alive or dead (donkeys, horses, reptiles, poultry, aquatic animals etc) forbidden to the

others. In other words, blacksmiths were distinguished by their intelligence and their knowledge which make life easy for members of Kapsiki society up to now.

This history told to me by Maître and his fellows and which is also in my film explained how they identify themselves to their first ancestor who distinguishes himself by his exceptional intelligence by trying to improve people's life. As it is well known among them that having more *ntsehwele* (intelligence and cleverness) the *rehe* are deemed to be more intelligent than the non-smiths (Van Beek, 1982). Which means that they are more like teachers for the non-smiths who are not able to make things without the expert help of *rehe*. The first hoe that they made is the perfect illustration of their concern of the well being of other people and reinforces what Yeung Koutch Koutch the forger said about the probability that there would had no real agriculture among the Kapsiki without their forge and their cleverness. By really burying a dead man with due respect for the first time they also perceive themselves as the only villagers among the others capable to pay respect, to support the strong smells, to organize the ceremonies in a special way. Maître said that they have been chosen by the gods as mission to be the first Kapsiki to open eyes to the others, to guide them and to be close to the gods of the mountains another to generate and to perpetuate the rituals. As they said to me the fact that they eat everything and they do not cultivate is neither a personal decision nor laziness but more a reward in accordance with what *Rehe* was doing for the whole village.

For most of them, especially those who I was working with, being a *rehe* far to be a fatality is more a question of deserve. As a chosen one he is the hero and the best towards the others that is why the gods focused the intelligence on them to perpetuate Kapsiki culture. By saying in the film that *rehe* never disappear as long as the Kapsiki will exist; that Kapsiki without blacksmiths is like separating the tongue and the teeth, Maître implies the natural dependency of *melimeu* on *rehe* who give a sense to Kapsiki's live. None of them talk about any advantages that they gain from their responsibilities, only what people gain from their perpetual generosity and help which is a gift of the mountain gods. In clear, *rehe* look upon themselves as the gods chosen saviors or the messiahs without whom Kapsiki people cannot live or exist.

IV.1.2 Blacksmiths as a caste

Caste system is a system of birth-ascribed groups each of which comprises for its members the maximum limit of status-equal interaction and between all of which interaction is consistently hierarchical (Berreman 1967:51). Well known among the Indians many castes

are traditionally associated with an occupation, such as high-ranking Brahmans; middle-ranking farmer and artisan groups, such as potters, barbers, and carpenters; and very low-ranking "Untouchable" leatherworkers, butchers, launderers, and latrine cleaners. There is some correlation between ritual rank on the caste hierarchy and economic prosperity (Dumont, 1971). This is in a large sense the case of India especially, for him each caste is part of a locally based system of interdependence with other groups in complex ways with networks that stretch across regions and throughout the nation but "*it is a serious error to believe that the caste is particular to India and related in an intimate way to the Hindu religion*" (Crooke, 1896) because as (Maquet 1961:135) thinks a caste society is one composed of several graded groups, each of which is endogamous and practicing an hereditary occupation, membership of which can be obtained only by birth meaning that everywhere this characteristics exist we are in front of a caste system.

In fact the term caste has been used frequently (and carelessly) by Africanists to describe certain systems of social stratification (Nadel 1954:21) noted that there are in Africa endogamous castes of blacksmiths, which are bound to their occupation by descent, and not only feared, but distinctly despised, shunned and avoided. Yet they are a vital section of the tribes to which they belong, providing the tools for farmers and weapons for hunters or warriors. Finally, their position is mystically sanctioned and conceived of as pre-ordained: In myths and cosmologies the blacksmiths are specifically mentioned among the first ancestors of man, already his benefactors and already bearing the stigma of their descent and calling. According to Vaughan (1970), the cultural origins of the despised castes are to be sought to the north, in the Sahara or in Arabized Africa, those in our area are of indigenous origin as Mandara blacksmiths who play vital and respected roles in the economic and ritual lives of their communities. If we agree with Vaughan that the basis of caste is technological and economic among the Mandara mountain dwellers then it is with ease that we can consider the *rehe* as a caste even if contrary to Indian caste system Kapsiki blacksmiths are initially part of clans before training a caste. As specialists they have their own organization, their own chief blacksmith as the central figure, closely associated with the traditional village chief (Van Beek, 1987, 284): Maître Kida Houleu.

If we agree that the word caste does not only make think of divided hereditary work, but with the rights unequally distributed, that their personal statute is determine for the life by the row of the group to which they belong, that clearly, the spirit of caste gathers repulsion, hierarchy, hereditary specialization (Bouglé, 1935) then we agree with Vaughan (1970) that the basis of caste is technological and economic in African villages, we can conclude that as

among the Kapsiki, familial organization of production within a caste system is an effective, if not the only, means of ensuring the long-term supply to small poor villages of a basic necessity, iron tools, under the conditions that obtain in the Mandara highlands. Tuden and Plotnicov argued: *“the existence of castes--always two--in certain Mandara societies is accepted on the basis of the co-variation of "occupational specialization of endogamous groups, in which membership is based on ascription, and between which social distance is regulated by the concept of pollution”* (Tuden and Plotnicov 1970:16). Therefore it is with reason that I think the knowledge that the *rehe* are holders is a kind of power which allows them to participate in the daily life and to insure the continuity of Kapsiki society by performing rituals, burial, medicine, manufacture, assigning all unclean work such as disposing of carcasses, digging graves, removing sweepings crucial for the whole society.

IV.1.3 The involvement of blacksmiths in rituals

The blacksmiths are deeply in the traditional practice among the Kapsiki as the keepers and the transmitters of knowledge. Several things can justify it.

The *“milé”* is a sacrifice practice which gives right to the chief of blacksmiths and the traditional chief to go the main mountain and pray at the beginning of the rainy season or at the end during the harvest to thank the gods. The other way of doing it is that the blacksmith's chief has to go alone to the crab sorcerer to predict the future for the whole village as Maître made it twice during my fieldwork period.

During the traditional marriage, the blacksmith have to guide the ceremony by yelling and giving rules to the family because there is a way to do it if the couple wanted to succeed and to have child, to prosper in their couple. So after killing the chicken before the raising of the sun, cooked in a special pot, the blacksmiths have to eat the rest of the chicken and to bury the bones in a special hole in the house only known by them.

In the traditional baptism and the twins' ceremony, the blacksmiths are also invited because they make the bracelets and they put them on the hand of the parents and the children after reciting some incomprehensible words. It is the same thing with some ceremonies like *“lâa”* the annual harvest, *“goula”* the initiation rite, *“makwa”* the traditional marriage, funeral etc. No doubt that the blacksmiths encrusted themselves in the social relations and made themselves essential. Their varied roles let believe that the Kapsiki society live through the devotion and the availability of these blacksmiths since they belong at the same time to the clans and their caste where they build all the beliefs and the practices of rituals that the others observe as a rule since they are not able to do it themselves. From the smallest thing to

the biggest one all the *rehe* are the practitioners during the ceremonies especially the chief who is the most important of them. Thus the theoretical perspective of generative model of Barth incorporates the nature of interdependencies among social actors in defining their relationships and the nature of interest being transacted in these relations.

IV.2.1 The private property of blacksmiths

Music

Among the Kapsiki, the blacksmiths are the only holders of the musical knowledge, almost all blacksmith's men are musicians. They are at the origin of manufacture, the training and the execution of the various string instruments, the percussions, the flutes and even of the seam of clothes intended for the execution of certain rhythms and dances. Moreover, a number of these instruments such as the traditional violin or "*hédè hédè*" are covered with skins of animals like lizard, snake considered as impure by ordinary Kapsiki. This knowledge is transmitted also from generation to generation and remains the property of the blacksmiths because they gain by there their daily bread. Thus, they manufacture the drums of any kind, the guitars with two cords (*Ngwuleng or hédè hédè*), the flutes made with bamboos and horns of animals which they play, skillfully during each ceremony, baptism, marriage, burial, with all the traditional festivals and the multiple events of the village.

Any person who will try to manufacture or to play instrument will be regarded as one deviating and will be relegated to the statute of blacksmith. The Kapsiki themselves act to make autonomous and clean the musical knowledge of the blacksmiths to the extent that today there is no festival without the blacksmiths. Some of them form groups of griots, passing in market, cabaret, house to play an air of music against a small motivation. Their music became a sign of unit at the point that when a drummer, a flutist and a guitarist animate the streets of the villagers run to enjoy the delights and the spectacle which offer these musicians. This knowledge that is music and which is the prerogative of blacksmiths is reflected even in the churches, the sultanate (*fantasia*) where they are still the best musicians and sometimes the good singers.

Medicine and healing

Blacksmiths are also holders of the cure they have some possibilities to mix plants and to make powerful potions able them to cure and overcome many diseases. Their fetishes and healers make use only of the roots, the sheets, skins, excrement of animals and much of other mixtures to manufacture drugs which will be use to cure several diseases. At any time the blacksmiths are solicited for the treatments of the diseases such as epilepsy, mental disorders,

sterility, fractures etc. Malaria, yellow fever, sinusitis, hemorrhoid, fractures and many other viral diseases are easily treated by the blacksmiths. Maître told me that he never been to hospital, when he is sick he go into the brush, remove herbal remedies, mix them and drink.

During my stay I attended an operation of abscess made by Kotéri Woli one of the well known blacksmith women. After having cleaned the circumference of the abscess with ebullient water and a potion she puts an iron in ember. After having left it quite red, she introduced it into the wound while having taken well care that the patient was seized by three strapping men, she turned the red iron in the wound, an enormous stock of pus splash on her but she was occupy with cleaning the deep. The guy was crying and wriggling himself because of the pain. It was too smelling that I when close to the door to have fresh air. Later on she puts a red herbal powder inside the abscess and the three men release the guy who left while crying.

In addition to the fact that calling somebody wizard is a serious insult, this word evokes also the idea of a man or a woman having dependent part with the devil. The Kapsiki blacksmiths cumulate at the same time the capacity to cure with sorcery and the effects of the vampirism with the capacity to poison and throw the bad fates. Indeed, the blacksmiths are these people able “to restore the consumed heart” or to deal with the vampires like it is vulgarly says as regards sorcery. They have the plants and potions suitable for elutriate the situation of sorcery which an individual or a family is victim. In the same way they have the capacity to throw the fates or to remove them; they make and demolish sorcery that is why people confine to them the statute of “*wolf in a skin of lamb*”.

IV.2.2 Ritual responsibilities of the rehe

Rite of passage

This is the presentation of the social role of blacksmiths which is defines according to Ralph Linton like the whole of the cultural models associated a given statute. It includes consequently the attitudes, the values and the behaviors which the society assigns to a person and all the people who occupy this statute to make live.

The “*Goula*” is the rite of passage to the adulthood and all the mountain dwellers use this very old practice recognized as the primitive form of the “Initiations” currently practiced in many of ethnic groups in Northern-Cameroun (Froedlich, 1962). One generally understands by initiation a whole of rites and oral lesson, which continues the radical modification of the religious and social statute of the subject to be initiated. It is an act which does not engage only the life of the individual but his total life. It is by initiation that in the

primitive and antiquated societies, the man becomes what he is and what he must be, somebody opened to the life of the spirit, which thus takes part in the culture (Marcea, 1992). It is the specialty of Maître but more the crab sorcerer who is the divinary and “*that divination is the area in which the general intermediary role of the blacksmith is best illustrated and they are the main healers and magician*” (Van.B, 1987).

Among the Kapsiki, the “*Goula*” is to some extent the official passage of adolescence to maturity and an identical ceremony makes reach the girl to the stage of woman (*makwa*). Young people reach by this rite the class of the warriors which is the final stage, the keystone to all the doors of the village. The initiation essential to integration will intervene at the age of 15. This very particular ancestral practice is simply about a passage of an age group to another one. To have the right to be allowed among the adults, the teenager must face a series of initiatory tests: it is thanks to these rites and revelations that they comprise, that he will be recognized like a responsible member of the society in all its senses. He learns the behaviors, the techniques and the institutions of the adults, but also the myths and the crowned traditions of the tribe, of the gods and the history of their works; he learns mainly the mystical relationship between the tribe and the supernatural beings such as they were established at the origin of times (Marcea, 1992).

Indeed, after Sohohol and Maître have consult the crab sorcerer, the promoted young people will wait between April and May for the beginning of the rites. At that date all the families prepare with chickens, goats and the couch grasses. By waiting that great day families and friends of the young promoted build a hut that the unmarried young girls of the village will undertake to whitewash with traditional painting (mixture of clay and ash). These girls designated for initiation will go from quarter to quarter in verbal sparring matches, insulting, disparaging, and defaming themselves with the girls of other close quarters. At the proper time (after 8 days), all the young “*Goula*” will be shaved by the blacksmiths of the clan under the attentive glance of the old men while having taken care to choose the page who will be used to them as commission agent. They are wearing a goat lather which passes by between leg, copper bracelets on arms, a traditional fabric strings which cross the shoulders and a small stringcourse to the head (woven wire, cord or kauris). They hold each one a lance, signs of bravery. The boy who will fall into the small river will be regarded as the chief of the initiates (Meuheu Goula). Then, guided by the chief of the blacksmiths, the “*Goula*” will go to the place intended for the beginning of initiation. In Mogode it is an apparently small river “*kwatakteu*” but which seems too wide as one wants to cross it that is used as first passport for initiation.

The harvest festival and the “goula”

Common to the quasi-majority of the ethnic groups of North and the far North Cameroon, the harvests festival or “Làa” among the Kapsiki is celebrated each year and at one quite precise time. It is classes among the festivals of the negro-African type (Ismaila Datidjo 2004). It defines' in its work like the burial of the difficulties, the sufferings or misfortunes heard like Kapsiki festival, is held every year after the period of harvests”. A few months after the “Goula”, a consultation near the crab sorcerer is still necessary to fix the date which will mark the end of harvests and the conclusion of the “Goula”. It is this day which will mean the official accession of the young people “Goula” to the statute of warriors (Ibidem).



Picture 7: “Makwa”, women’s initiation



Picture 8: “Goula”, men’s initiation

The “làa” or festival of harvests is launched by the traditional chief after a council of the wise and the chief of the blacksmiths. Official launching is generally done a market day so that everyone is well-informed. It is the dispatch rider of the village who takes care of the transmission of the message which will give the order to soak the millet for the preparation of the traditional wines. The initiated and their pages once more cover same behavior as at the beginning and accompanied by their families and especially by their mothers equipped exclusively with mask-sex as at the ancestor’s time. They are accommodated on their arrival by applauses and yells and melodious songs of initiated or married young women the year before equipped only with hides-sex, all the breast overdraft to show their sensuality and of people classified by clans, quarters and families.

It is the turn of Maître under the glance of all the population to show the last way to the warriors. He will be in front and the “Goula” will follow him in the Indian file on the rhythm of his small drum (*djeungwo*) fixed on the shoulder. The “Goula” will pose the feet everywhere the blacksmith will put his own to mark the attention, the concentration and the

loyalty. Nobody must be inattentive, all are curved and follow attentively the instructions of Maître who makes pretence tracking an animal or an enemy by steel playing his drum and while turning over time to time. After this test, the continuation will be the training of shooting with the arc which is always chaired by Maître, social guide and general of the traditional army. This occurs in the evening and meanwhile, the corn beers, the millet, the groundnut, the sesame and much of other meal without forgetting the cattle meat and the poultry are ready for the guests. Everywhere one people rejoicing, it is happiness accompanied with music animated by the blacksmiths.

Marriage ceremony

The “Amarya” is a Haoussa term which means “*newly married*”. The ceremony is a copy of that of the Kapsiki ethnic group living in Nigeria but which is institutionalized remains a cultural inheritance among the Kapsiki. It is a traditional marriage which is an official proof of a love between two or many people from different sex. During the wedding the blacksmiths after the ritual ceremony of sharing food and the speech, they will play music until 2 or 3 days and the others will dance. The traditional religious chief Sohohol told me that there is no marriage without blacksmiths because they know how to organize it and it is one of the most important roles they play nowadays.

The funeral

For Kapsiki, death belongs to the daily life and it remains one exceptional moment an event highly colored where the blacksmiths once more let watch their know-how. The colors of mourning vary according to whether it is adolescent, young person or old man but the one as seen in my film, I attended was the burial of Zété (35) a young blacksmith guy in Mogode.

Maître starts playing the drum alone to alert the inhabitants about the death and to introduce the mourning. The remote weeps and the noise of drums guide people to recognize the place of the funeral. These first sound of drums issue the following day public holiday and been unemployed, under the order of the traditional chief, anybody will not go to the field especially when it is not far from the village. Then, Maître will organize the festivities with his musicians and the elders. Since the day before in the night, Maître and the others are playing music and the next day in the morning they decided to bath the body after what they share the food prepared especially for them while people where playing outside. Around twelve they put traditional death clothes to Zété, a special clothe the “*mguedji*” with finery of feathers of ostrich and porcupine quills very important in clothing of death.

Then the afternoon, on a stretcher made with bamboo, they leave the body by the fence followed by the rest of the family and move directly to the cemetery where the tomb was dug by the other blacksmiths. Before the burial, an autopsy will be made by Nawa and Maître to determine the causes of the death of Zété. The festivities will continue during at least three days with hard music and songs. Characteristically, during funeral times the blacksmiths govern the proceedings. Neither the family of the deceased nor the village notables have the power to move them from their ways; either hastens a burial or change the dance. Ritual times are smith times, all the more at death ritual (Van Beek, 1988).

As described above, through their implication in many rituals (rite de passage, harvest festival and goula, marriage, funeral...), by taking care of people's health, bringing joy with their music, Kapsiki blacksmiths play vital and respected roles in the functioning of their community. They are in the center of some important Kapsiki institution through which the society stay alive.

IV.2.3 The multiple trades of the blacksmiths

Vaughan (1973) has written of the hill Marghi that at the sociological level of abstraction, the relationship between *melimeu* and *rehe* is best characterized as symbiotic in that they are bound together to their mutual benefit through group specialization within the social structure and the division of labor. This live style allowed the blacksmiths and their knowledge to keep some special trades which are confined to their caste in better and worst times in mogode. Formerly most of the trades which I will describe were an exclusive property of the blacksmiths but nowadays there are some which are shared between them and other non traditional believers and are not done as it was in the past.

Yeung Koutch Koutch (61) the master of forgers told me that "*The blacksmiths forgers are essential among the Kapsiki, may be the agriculture would not exist without the blacksmiths who are the only holders of the knowledge manufacture of agricultural material*". In the past they were extracting copper in the river banks in a very particular way, in a forge they melt it and manufacture hoes, sickles, peel, pickaxes, crowbar, axes, knives, and spoons, machetes which are essential for agriculture, kitchen and even small housework but nowadays they use the normal iron that they melt for manufacturing. Formerly the inter-ethnic wars mined the Kapsiki and sometimes obliged them to submit, only the blacksmiths thought to manufacture weapons to defend. Thus the arrows, the lances, the crossbows, the fire weapons with a blow, the swords and the traps were forged. These weapons were coated with a potion made either with cobra's venom or a very powerful poison which resulted in

immediate death after a small wound or a brutal contact with the blade of the weapon. I found some old weapons in Maître's room as signs of first and well known warlike.

Weaving

The caste abounds in good weavers and I saw the work of Tigé Zra (57) with his team during my fieldwork in Rhumsiki. The cotton is picked, dried and processed by weavers to manufacture the thread that should be used to make fez, big clothes more expensive and valued. Sometimes, despite the cultivation of cotton around the house, weavers used most often fruits of kapok tree which doesn't require maintenance and daily effort as cotton. These traditional fabrics are very important for Kapsiki people. Some parents feeling their close death prefer to buy their burial fabric in order to avoid tiresome expenditure to the family. This wire after being tinted is used to knit special hats, small clothes and breeches. But to make fabrics they are useful of the stakes superimposed and laid out well under which they seat and make pass wire rolled up on a rod which they handle at the same time with the hands and the feet. By the men's side, women transform cotton slips by using a brushwood which they make even roll on it.

Tourism

Within the framework of tourism, these forgers melts copper and give multiple forms to objects intended for the sale in the craft industries. These memories which one can bring from the Kapsiki are sometimes human, animal representations in short, nature and its entire constituent.

The work of women/Gender relationship

Pottery is made exclusively by the smith women in a great variety of shapes, including bowls, jars, and barrels etc. I attend a demonstration on which we were received by Massi (50) and Koigné (43) who are following the same techniques since generations. With the clay that they collect far from the village; they add some traditional products and a little powder of old clay pot so that the dough became pasty. Then on a hollow tree trunk they mould the paste during many minutes and start to give many forms. They thus dry the pots under the sun to harden and then at the end they put a large fire in an arranged place where the utensils will be cooked. When the pots are cooled, they recover them and put lime according to their taste or that of the purchasers and salesmen.

We can see that as in the whole Kapsiki society, blacksmith's men are chauvinist people who are keeping all the trades which brings money, authority, power only for them
"Women in this caste own the rights to make pottery, while men monopolize wood carving

and iron working, craft, sculpture...they too possess enormous quantities of special power, diviners, amulets-makers, doctors and priest” (Mc Naughton, 1988,7). I asked to Maître why this big difference between women and men, he simply says women are weak and fearful they are unable to do what we are doing, that is why the ancestors decided to put more power on men.



Picture 9: Maître and the crab sorcerer



Picture 10: Maître forging with Yeung Koutch

By the way they perceive themselves, their know-how visible through their trades, their traditional practices, their ritual responsibilities the *rehe* rooted themselves by using their knowledge up to the national day and always needed by the politicians to cover the musical part of the political meetings, the *rehe* are social persons who carry many status-elements by acting in many different social fields in Mogode. As Grønhaug says the most important thing must then be to try to follow the social relation of the persons and groups, as an effort to discover some of the interactional content and the range of activities and relations. They extended their relations and they impose the complementarities between them and the others and trough that many networks emerge in which they are tied together for the maintenance of the tradition among the Kapsiki. The same individual within the population seek out, and are drown into different fields of activity, where the rules for participation, the forms of interaction, and the numbers of actors involved, will vary from case to case (Gronhaug, 1968). Of course, blacksmiths behave differently according to the moment and the people who are in need of their services because most of the time, within the village it is more of a duty for them to perform and sometimes the form of language would differ; sometimes people have to beg them. Maître told me that when politicians and the lamido calls on them, during special moments they would make enough money. They negotiate the price before starting the job. At that precise moment they are simple citizen or locals who are trading their skills as

musicians, while if it was a traditional ceremony it is to accomplish a task and to perpetuate the tradition as it has been since centuries. I will go more into those details in the next chapter.

As a caste in accordance with the social stratification and the division of labor, the *rehe* carry on them some well established traditional occupations that they keep in a spirit of corporation. As the transmitters and the keepers of the Kapsiki knowledge they accomplish the “*mile*”, the “*amarya*”, the “*làa*”, the “*Goula*”, the “*makwa*” which they master. During these events, the presence of the *rehe* is unavoidable since they hold the knowledge related to each ritual. It is more an obligation for them to accomplish these tasks than to exercise their own trades in which they are free to do or not. To keep their place of blacksmiths, they have to take part of these rituals and to do them properly otherwise they have to justify themselves in front the traditional chief and the clan leaders. In a sense they mix their traditional obligations which are supposed to be free and their normal trades (forge, music, medicine, pottery, weaving...) from which they earn money to survive. Apparently, the ritual part is the most important for them if they really want to play their role within the society and to exercise their duties.

CHAPTER V: THE BLACKSMITHS AND THE OTHERS

In this part I would like to describe the living conditions of the *rehe*, how they are perceived by the *melimeu* through many stereotypes but also about rights and duties and of course about the power that they hold among the Kapsiki.

V.1.1 How the rehe are perceived and treated by the melimeu

Human relationships between the *rehe* and the *melimeu* are very complex because there is an ambiguity between their services and the glances which are paid on them in return. One could not speak about exclusion since the blacksmiths take part in all the important activities of the life of the Kapsiki but the exact word is “marginalization” since many behaviors explained it and “*the most telling difference in everyday life is the smith’s diet. No non-smith will ever drink or eat from the same vessel as a blacksmith, not wanting to pollute themselves*” (Van Beek, 1987, 30). During the time of my fieldwork, I was alone to walk and speak everyday with the blacksmiths, to visit them, to eat their food without waiting a special moment or event. I realized that maybe it is because I need them for my research and they were not avoidable otherwise I would have behaved as a good Kapsiki while going to seek them only when it is urgent.

Blacksmiths quarters (roufa, woulda, gwassa, camp foret, vité, téki, ndegvaya) are far from the others, at the periphery of the village since *melimeu* refuse relationship and physical contact with them. Sohohol, told me that being a blacksmith seems to be a slave but I noticed that it is not true, people simply have many prejudices and are complex because they are nothing without them. I remember how people were avoiding Maître and me when we were walking together; some of them were closing their noses when Maître was coming close to them on the other side while at the same time people support the same smell during the burial and serious events, they came close to them most of the time.

One day during a wedding, we went together with Maître so that he shows me how he performs the rites of marriage. By far, the people we saw coming have changed their route away from us, others preferred being stung by the thorns than staying on the same path with us. Maître was laughing but I was angry to see how people can live together in the same village sharing the same area and avoiding themselves as strangers. At the same moment I heard a friend of mine who was asking me what I was doing with a sorcerer by trying to prevent me from death. I started laughing but people were serious and still avoiding us. Even my clan mates refuse to greet me, I was clearly a blacksmith meaning that I am not worthy of

confidence, I saw it when I gave my hand to shake with a cousin who refuse in public to great me. These scenes repeat many times, but quickly I became less and less angry and use to it until I finish my research, it was simply the life style in Mogode.

The social inferiority of blacksmiths does not stop at the refusal of other Kapsiki to eat with them. A smith is not considered fully adult. On public occasions, he has to seat on the background; his voice may only be heard in praise of the old men and the traditional chief either singing or clapping hands, softly shouting. His opinion is not heeded (Van Beek, 1987). In that sense, the power of the blacksmiths is limited and may be transmitted to the *melimeu* because power must be analyzed as something that circulates, or rather something which only functions in the form of chain (Foucault, 1980). Thinking like Foucault and since power never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth, it became normal that sometimes like that one blacksmiths lose their power and reduced to simple people who are not able to bring out their expertise or their knowledge because there is no need of it. To be at their right place, they have to behave as people who give power and energy to the traditional chief who want them to applause even if what he is saying has no sense. I knew that maître had no obligation with the lamido but when I asked him why he was begging the sultan lamido during the national day, he told me that, what he did is the only thing which makes him think that he is powerful and by doing it in front of people he knows what he will gain from it later. I started thinking of a game and a negotiation between Maître and these leaders, by reducing himself in front of them, he give people reason to have more consideration for them but he totally lose his authority among the others. Therefore the exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others (Foucault, 1982).

V.1.2 Rights and duties of the blacksmiths

Like every society, Kapsiki organize their life on the base of rights and duties, thus it is important to know in which condition blacksmiths are living.

The rights of blacksmiths are numerous and sometimes incomprehensible like the exclusive right to eat everything they need without limit, "*Blacksmiths do not share a great number of food taboos of the Kapsiki. The non-smith Kapsiki never eat horsemeat, donkey, tortoise, serpent, lizard and many other animals. All these are considered edible for the blacksmiths* (Van Beek, 1987,30).

Begging is a determining factor of indigence of blacksmiths; they always have on them small water-bottles, horns and a bag for the transport of the provisions, fruit of the begging.

For my informant Kwadiki (around 120), blacksmiths are simply “*insatiable mendicants, covetous, greedy who always need the support of the others*”. According to the myth, as reward for the exercise of his trade, a blacksmith must receive food, clothes, money at any time inside his clan. But normally people had to bring these things to him at home since people started not coming to him frequently they decided to go out and ask themselves. Nowadays, they are the principal beggars all over the village.

During the traditional ceremonies, the blacksmiths have the right to require what they want and it cannot be refused, especially when they are performing some rituals (*funeral, goula, làa*), Maître Koda Houleu is claiming in the whole name of blacksmiths, chicken, goats even an ox before the continuation of the ceremony. It became a strategy to survive.

One of the most important duties of the blacksmiths is especially the availability because being a blacksmith means being always available at the service of the others every day at any hour. A blacksmith never been unavailable, this is the reason why they are most of the time not far of their households, they go out only when there is a real need. The crab sorcerer, the forgers, the healers, the musicians and the chief should not be far from their home because constantly they will be solicited for a help. The availability of the blacksmiths tends to be the fidelity of a dog near his master. This duty seems to be simple but it covers several sub duties which makes the blacksmiths prisoners of the others.

V.1.3 Being a blacksmith

In the literature on the peoples of the Mandara, the term "smith" has commonly been utilized to describe an endogamous minority constituting between 2.5 and 5 per cent of certain populations, whose male members, besides typically forging iron, may also carry out a variety of other tasks including smelting, the direction of funerals and other rituals, divination, healing and the public performance of music, and whose female members are potters and often specialist midwives, pediatricians and healers (Sternier and Nicholas 1991). This common definition seems to be the general idea that people have about them but *rehe* are suffering from another face of the society.

Among the Kapsiki being a *rehe* means to accept avoidance, judgments, minimization, and reduction to nothing by everybody, everywhere. It is to be ready to be categorized, to forget yourself, to stay away from the *melimeu*, to be friend only with your caste mates and to accept all the prejudices and insults as a part of you. Maître told me that if a blacksmith decide to change the quarter, he will be sent out by the *melimeu* and it is also an offense to the tradition since they do not mix themselves with the others thus every blacksmith has some

kind of non-smith patron, someone who is responsible for him, and to whom the he bears allegiance. This patron is the one that speaks for him at public function (Van Beek,1987) because they said that a smith is not able to keep himself alone.

As in the clan, a blacksmith has no choice, he belong to a family in which he grows up and learn the trade of his father or mother and totally dependent to the caste because all the trades are regulated by it. They do not allow innovation since no one can create a trade which is not that have been made by the ancestors; they simply have to follow the rules of what they have found already existing.

A blacksmith does not know the fear and the disgrace; he has to be brave, courageous, ready for difficult tasks and capable to find solution to any problem in the society. As Nawa the surgeon says: *“Kapsiki people are fearful, they only like comfort and nobility but as blacksmiths we accept the dirtiness, bad smells and hard works. That is why we are dealing with death and carrion everyday”*. In brief they considered themselves and are considered by others to belong to separate races; they say they are born with much of power, a part of their heritage (Mc Naughton, 1988, 3). A blacksmith is a special human being, entirely separate and recognizable from the others.

V.2.1 The stereotypes against the blacksmiths: Dirtyness as a symbol

Blacksmiths constitute a particular caste and scorned and yet the functions which they exert make them essential to the life of the village (Schaller, 1973:62). Same to Na’a Ong (2004-2005), in the clan of the blacksmiths among the Dii Adamawa Province in Cameroon, one arrived at the construction of stereotypes as the blacksmith is a lazy man, living from the work of the others and using his mystical capacity to strike. The reasons which qualify the blacksmiths being impure are numerous in Kapsiki area.

After my stay with the blacksmiths, it arises that they consume daily died animals of any kind, carrions whatever killed the animal (sometimes raw meat). Meat is rare and it is welcomed when one do not spends money to have it; they consume all animals forbidden to the other members (donkey, snake, big lizards, wild animals, insects, birds etc) without any restriction; they tan the skins of impure animals and people never know what they could touch during the day. That is the reason why one never eats the food of a blacksmith because even if it is a good meat, people always fear that they prepared in a doubtful pot. They support bad smells of putrefaction, wash, equip, operate, make dance and bury deaths and are able to eat food without washing their hands just after the burial. They operate sometimes the patients and same deaths without protecting themselves, they never use the protective gloves to do it.

Sohohol seriously said to me that “*blacksmiths never have notion of hygiene, they are messy eaters who have long and dirty nails, and they are bastard and almost naked feet. A blacksmith has always a special very strong bad odor that you can feel so far*”.

As an example, the first time I went to see the crab sorcerer, Maître advice me to eat whatever he will propose to me, when we arrived he brought some food, I asked water to wash my hands but he says, the water he had was just for drink, we can just eat like that. I started feeling bad especially when I saw the size of his nails, the dirtiness and the old rest of food inside, I wanted to vomit because as I saw he spend many days without washing these hands. But to get information I had to support all that and I did it.

For Van Beek (1992) the Kapsiki and Higi of north Cameroon and north-east Nigeria form such an olfactory culture, where complex symbolic relations are expressed through definitions of odors. In this culture the focus of smell is on a particular stratification within a small-scale society: the line separating *rehe* and *melimeu* is drawn by smell, with the good-smelling melu having distinctly higher status than the malodorous blacksmiths. The definition of smell here serves as a pervasive symbol of social hierarchy, economic interdependence, relations with the environment and even definitions of gender. Odors, then, can form a productive angle for the study of classification, serving as social symbols of dirt and pollution, of inclusion and exclusion. The strategy of olfactory perception can be a strategy of social discrimination, through cultural definitions of dirt and cleanliness.

Poverty is another prejudice attributed to the Kapsiki blacksmiths according to statements' the poverty of blacksmiths is natural since nowhere one did find a rich blacksmith. The majority of kapsiki think that the blacksmiths never maintain the secrecies, that they have a forked tongue, they are not worthy to maintain secrecy because they divulgate it immediately and they are always saying nasty things about the others to gain something.

Van Beek (1989:12) argues that the uncleanness of the smith resides in his ambivalence, his position between man and nature, between individual and gods, beyond the distinctions of good and evil. Uncleanness is a cultural construct, a social fact, and while *rehe* may play up to *melimeu* expectations, they do not accept their categorization, and indeed attribute ritual impurity to the others. In the same sense Barreman wrote: “*a caste system, groups are incorporated essentially by being quarantined, each being assigned a private and exclusive cell in the established hierarchy, there to perform their role of interdependence with the larger society without contaminating or infringing on the social space of others*” (Berreman 1967:51).

The stereotype can be defined as a set of beliefs, socially shared, and on the characteristics or attributes of a group (Leyens, Yzerbit and Schadron 1994). In most cases, we base our judgments of others on stereotypes that we have in memory, it would therefore be associated with cognitive performance categories that we build in our consciousness. It refers to mental processes that allow us to understand others and the social world around us. In a sense it is the basis of our social judgments which guides our behavior towards the others (Yzerbit and Schadron, 1996). In that case, judging others is primarily used to operate and interact with them (Leyens, Yzerbit and Schadron, 1994). Most of the time people use their stereotypes as basic information, not easily challenged, it is a developed stigma which is not easy to get rid of. As we can see in the Kapsiki case, the social perception is influenced by social factors such as membership of groups, the roles and social situations in which they are involved. For *melimeu* a *rehe* always represent a negative individual full of bad behaviors and ideas that put other people in danger. When a *melimeu* is talking about blacksmiths is like speaking about people who live in another land with several imperfections and who are finally useless for Kapsiki. But as I saw in Mogode and elsewhere many non-smiths Kapsiki are weak, beggars dirty and are practicing sorcery but they focused this categorization only on blacksmiths because it is already embodied on them. Maybe some of their assumptions are true but as members of the same society they are suppose to be the same as the *melimeu* even if they belong to two separate groups. Fortunately when there is a need in the clan and or concerning the ritual they are performing and they are more positive at that time than when they are not acting at all.

V.2.2 Blacksmiths considered as sorcerers

Another mark of the stereotypes attributed to the blacksmiths is sorcery which the Larousse dictionary defines as the magic which resorts primarily to secret processes, illicit or alarming. For this purpose among the Kapsiki, they remain strange people full of suspense, chameleon and changeable mainly to obtain the least advantage.

Rehe are the people feared in the field of sorcery in its broadest sense because for Kapsiki Maître is a feared personality of all he associates his knowledge to occult capacities, dealing with the mountain's gods and many other crafts. As an example, during the last interview that I made to Maître that I filmed but I did not use it in my film, he told me about how he became a close friend of his grandfather who gave him a big grigri that he shows me and that he has to keep on him everywhere. He says that this grigri became his protector, he is confident to it since it save him many times from misfortunes. He told me that since people

are qualifying them as sorcerers they have to make it in practice but not for killing people, only to prevent misfortune for themselves. Actually, blacksmiths are the healers of the village but they are also holders of poison and fetishes which enable people to kill the others, they are able of good or evil on the individuals by not hesitating to deliver the fetishes to people in need. It is renowned that no Kapsiki can kill somebody in sorcery without the participation of the blacksmiths.

Among the Kapsiki, there is also a practice held by the blacksmiths which allows alive people to speak with dead people: it is the “*Outa*” or “*Wta*”. When ones lose a close friend or member of his family and he is not confident with the causes of the death, he goes to the specialist who allows him to speak with the dead man inside special water as if he is alive. He will tell him if he were killed by somebody and that he claims revenge or divine justice. If he claimed revenge, the blacksmith undertakes to kill the culprit by pricking a dagger in the water which is in the calabash. At the same moment, water is transformed into blood and following hours the culprit dies. With Maître I had attended this practice but afterwards, nothing was visible on the tape.

Even blacksmith’s children are people whom everyone avoids because a common Kapsiki proverb says that: “*A small snake has sometimes more venom than his parents*”. For these reasons, regularly, one serves food to a blacksmith in hands; he is not even entitled to a bowl since nobody knows what he is able to keep in his long and dirty nails. The handshake between a *rehe* and a *meuleu* is forbidden since the origin and up to now a blacksmith has to stand to a considerable distance and must be curved to address to his clan mate to show his inferiority and his submission. Brief people think that a physical contact with a blacksmith became a perpetual danger for non smiths since magic and medicine form a closely linked duo in Kapsiki society (Van Beek 1975), and like divination are dominated by the blacksmiths, knowledge of traditional medicine and or magic is among the most restricted of cognitive domains; composition of herbal remedies is kept very secret, as it forms a considerable source of income.

V.2.3 When knowledge becomes power

It is visible that all the trades which the blacksmiths exert are crucial and can be taught to the others but it became their private property making the others absolutely dependent. It is well known that it belongs to them as a part of their private knowledge. “*Knowledge of Rehe is very secret and only transmitted between close kinsmen, from father to son or mother’s brother to sister’s son*” (Van.B, 1987, 27-28).

Funerals are everywhere in the world and it concern the whole society but as in some caste systems and among the Kapsiki it is exclusively the blacksmith's job. They are the "*people of the dead*", they undertake, take care and the *melimeu* just look at them when they are performing. A village without *rehe* has a huge problem, as "*who will bury their deaths?*" The chief blacksmith is the one who directs the complicated proceedings of a Kapsiki funeral.

Music also is a belonging of blacksmiths while music and rhythms are natural in everybody. They defend it and introduce it in any ceremony concerning the Kapsiki, the surprise is that even if somebody have learned how to play instrument, if he exerted it in the village, it will cause serious problem to the whole clan. It is same with divination, pottery, forgery which is crucial for the life of Kapsiki but exclusively reserved again to the blacksmiths. By taking all these trades, there is nothing for the others and people have to wait for their services.

As an example, last year, Zra Ja'a (52 years) passed away in our neighbourhood, until two days the whole village were there but none of the blacksmiths even Maître who's duty is to be the first to arrive. Only women were crying with pathetic songs but people were calm and not motivated without any sound of drums as usual. The body had bad smell from the room to the surrounding, people were running, nobody was able to stay much. The next day in the morning I saw my father (chief of the clan Kamakwamteu) and Maître with five blacksmiths (holding their material) discussing and some elders joined them, they were imploring the blacksmiths to take care of the body. Maître imposed that they kill a cow for them before they begin the work his desire was realized and the work was done immediately. Later my father explain to me that the junior brother of the deceased Hamadou Keutchi have ate a donkey in a small village close to Mogode many months before knowing that he is not a smith but Maître was informed and when he lose his brother, the blacksmiths decided to let him continue what belong to blacksmiths, like to play drum and bury his brother alone as punishment. At that moment Maître was so angry that he was telling off on the clan leader and many other elders who were there to implore him, he was walking very fast and all these elders and close family of the dead man were running after him. Knowing that it does not happen every time, the *rehe* were playing the small gods and it was successful since they achieve to obtain what they were expecting from the *melimeu*.

Wrong wrote that: "*If an actor is believed to be powerful, if he knows that others hold such a belief, if he encourages it and resolves to make use of it by intervening in or punishing actions by the others who do not comply with his wishes, then he truly has power and his power has indeed been conferred on him by the attributions, perhaps initially without*

foundation, of others” (Wrong1979:9). As in the story mentioned above, if people refuse to collaborate, the corps will have rotten and nobody will have touched because it establish that only *rehe* have this right to manipulate the dead body. Even people around were saying that when a *rehe* have an opportunity to say something he abuse but it was their round to lead at that particular moment with this punishment because just after that time, they officially return at the bottom of the stratum as usual and the circle continues.

The autopsy is an intervention which includes a manual and instrumental work consisting of opening the dead body to find out the cause of death. I filmed Maître and Nawa the surgeon practicing it when Zété (35 years) dead in Mogode June 2009.

After descending the corpse from their shoulders, they laid the ground beside the much open tomb at the edge of the grave; a hole was dug in order to accommodate the waste belly. After almost tore his clothes with a knife and presented his belly, Nawa draw a brilliant double-edged knife from his pocket. As a hero he announced the fateful moment and asked to curious and too bulky people to move away and leave them a little light and space to breathe. Then in a gesture similar to that of doctors’ films, helped by Maître Nawa who was holding the knife opened the belly of Zété having taken care to put his left foot on an old hoe with fetish and cover his hands with special traditional oil. All intestines came out and as a butcher he introduced his hands and cut piece and piece of the organs (liver, pancreas and the rest of lungs fiber). Gradually, he finished by saying: *“the laver of Zété was destroyed and this is what he dead of, it became water, you've all seen, you are my witnesses, I hope this illness will stop on him.”* They changed few words while Maître was covering the belly with clothes after putting dust inside. A very strong smell of putrefaction scent in the atmosphere, flies abounded and people were moving away, but Maître and Nawa do not hindered at all, they breathed the air as usual and simply spit. Nawa and Maître have made this surgery without protective equipment; no gloves, no special material.

As in several occasions blacksmiths showed once more what they are up to by opening the belly in front of many people totally silent and scared, closing noses and running away while the two masters were feeling at ease. Foucault says *“Power is inseparable from knowledge”* (Foucault, 1976) and that day, Nawa and Maître made use of their know-how to show the power. People were talking to each other by saying *“These rehe are mysterious”* and when they determined the cause of death, they were looking like these doctors in some fiction films who are simply doing their work as it is recommended.

Divinatory techniques vary; the most important ones are the crabe divination and the divination with stones, both of which have been amply documented by now for the Mandara

région. A highly intriguing variant is divination through a small "bird" that tweets in the night; the "bird" responds with its "song" to questions put by its blacksmith-owner. The "birdsong" is then interpreted by the blacksmith to his client, using the melody layer of the tonal Kapsiki/Higi language (Van Beek, 1978:397). In the same sense, the crab sorcerer is the man of the situation, nothing is possible without him in the village, and he is the only one who can speak for people to the gods. As he said "*I put my stones and my crabs on the ground when it is necessary and I know when there is a need because I am dreaming of it before it happens*". Apparently when people go directly to the gods without passing by him, nothing will succeed and most of the time, people return to him because he has the alliance with the gods since the ancestors. Before he speaks with the gods or solve your problem he can ask what he likes, a chicken, a goat, a sheep even a cow. In that sense knowledge established permit and ensure the exercise of power in the society (Foucault, 1976).

Yet the *rehe* are the real musicians, specialists of funeral, autopsy, divination, medicine, having a monopoly over all instruments played at the "rites de passage", especially funeral. Their musical contribution to village life does not stop at the large rituals and festivals, as they routinely serve as praise singers for the village elite, like the chief and his helpers, serving in the same capacity as the "griots" in adjoining societies (Haafkens 1979).

According to some circumstances Maître, Nawa and all the *rehe* are the masters, the teachers the powerful, the matchless within the villagers and as (Barnes 1988) says, power is a capacity for action that someone has by virtue of the social and collective distribution of knowledge. In the same sense (Lukes, 1977) argues that to use the vocabulary of power is to speak of human agents separately or together, in groups or organizations, through actions or inaction, significantly affecting the thoughts or action of others. Here *rehe* are acting in group and are imposing their needs and feelings because these people break the rules and the only way to punish them is to give a certain value to their role as funeral specialists which have been established by the ancestors.

Blacksmiths as we have seen are living as everyone in the same area but in some quarters far from the village. They are badly perceived by the others who always find the bad side of them although they are useful, in a sense that they need each other. Fortunately, as each member of the Kapsiki society, *rehe* have a well established rights and duties through the frame of which they are acting. Of course, being a smith among the Kapsiki is a big task which covers many bad thinking and prejudices beyond what dirtiness, sorcery became a symbol, a mark of identification even if sometimes it is not fully verified. Nevertheless, when *rehe* are performing they impose to the others (*melimeu*) their needs and a certain respect

which give to their trades and responsibilities a value. At that time the power and knowledge of *rehe* took the place of weakness, dirtiness, sorcery etc. This ambivalence is present in the daily life of *rehe* and the *melimeu*, it became a part of them because acting differently is a proof that you are a stranger in the area.

Regardless of these stereotypes and all the bad feelings the *melimeu* have against the *rehe*, they impose themselves to the *melimeu* by exercising some special ritual responsibilities as funeral (washing, clothing, making autopsy, burial), divination, and medicine as private properties. All these moments are crucial for the traditional Kapsiki population. During those times, the *rehe* has a high place in the society, because no one else apart from them is allowed to do it. As I have shown in my film, during my fieldwork, Maître was making use of his knowledge everywhere it was needed, especially during the funeral and when he was playing his flute and drums while dancing, jumping, moving etc. The autopsy is a particular moments during which *rehe* are showing themselves as the possessors of a special power given to them by the gods. That is why they make it in public so that they always have witnesses. People are always amazed to see how they play music, how they organize everything and how they are proud of doing their work. Once more the *rehe* make use of their knowledge to impose the power to the *melimeu* who are simply observers and nothing else. Power and knowledge are therefore well connected, and being aware of that, the *rehe* make use of it without any complex.



Picture 11: Maître and Nawa making the autopsy



Picture 12: Maître starting the burial ceremony

CHAPTER VI: THE THREAT OF EXTINCTION OF THE CASTE

This chapter enables me to make out the reduction of the blacksmiths in number nowadays, the techniques that they develop to maintain, and their adhesion to the traditional religion and naturally some hopes about their survival.

VI.1.1 Modern school, Islam and Christianity

Modern school has a not negligible responsibility in the threat of disappearance of Kapsiki blacksmiths since their children as the others who discovered the studies; open other horizons, more intellectual and more profitable. After the village, it is even at school that the children of blacksmiths have the most problem, it is where they discover their differences insofar as their comrades (class mates) refuse to sit on the same bench with them giving pretext that they smell badly or that they does not wash. Sometimes this discrimination leads them to give up the studies but those who persist seek the means of escaping the trades of their parents because being a blacksmith is being naturally and forever at the lower stratum.

Before the year 2000, the college was in Mokolo and all the children were obliged to move far from their parents, thus being more aware of the opened world than parent's trades. The diplomas obtained by them open the ways to modernity and high schools forgetting the rituals and some of them do not even came back any more in the village when they succeed in life. They end up creating an uprooted descent by denying traditional values, especially when they married other ethnic groups. Nawa the surgeon told me that several *rehe* who went to school never continue the trade of their parents, they refuse to make use of it by finding it ashamed. He continues by saying that modern school is good for the others, not for them, their ancestors were not at school; they need their children to continue their work.

“A minority of the blacksmith try to escape from their lower stratum either by moving into the towns and adhering to Islam in the process or becoming Christians in order to seek some upward mobility” (Van Beek, 1987,30). Islam and Christianity comes among the Kapsiki as much as in the surrounding villages with the Fulani conquest and catholic priests who quickly converted a number of families with the establishment of the mosques, a Moslem chief and “*djaouro*” (chief of quarter) for Muslims and a big catholic church in Sir and many other villages for Christians. The first Islamized blacksmiths were especially the forgers and the musicians to manufacture weapons during the raids and to animate the fantasia at the time of the great demonstrations.

Being egalitarian religions all people and even blacksmiths are equal and they had found a consideration that nowhere elsewhere they had thus several blacksmiths converted with their families. They were later on hoping certain advantages and better future that they should gain from other Moslem tradesmen who are rich and powerful in the village. It should be noted that by changing their religions blacksmiths are obliged to abandon their former trades ceasing officially to be in activity, to break off with their practices and becoming ordinary people but up to now whatever blacksmiths do, the prejudices always reach them they never be free of stereotypes which weigh on the caste to which he belongs for life.

Normally, modern school and new religions can be seen as a social evolution, school and new areas are a kind of social mobility for children and as a normal society they can also correspond to social changes. Unfortunately, for some *rehe* all these changes are considered like a brake for the perpetuation of their caste as we learned above. In conclusion this fatal attitude towards changes is a fear of losing their power. But social changes are inherent to any human society and some authors who study the Northern Cameroon were already aware of it. That is why Schaller wrote: “*Le Nord-Cameroun évolue, s’unifie et les vieilles traditions ont tendances à disparaître*” (Schaller, 1973, 9), meaning that, the Northern Cameroon is growing; changing and the old traditions are disappearing nowadays.

VI.1.2 Sharing knowledge with the others

The Kapsiki blacksmiths saw through the share a way of opening to the others, dynamism and to better establish bonds, tightening their tentacles while going beyond the village. The share out of the techniques in this case has a double vision. On one hand the loan of the techniques to the non-smith actors who fight the monopoly of the *rehe* and who start to be involved in the trades formerly reserved for the *rehe*. On the other hand the exchange of the techniques with the other blacksmiths especially those who live in Nigeria.

One important exchange of the Kapsiki blacksmiths is the improvement which they want to acquire by making friendship with the other neighbored blacksmiths for the mutual exchange and complementarity. They understood that the innovation is what the Kapsiki need then, through this solidarity which definite all the blacksmiths from Cameroun and Nigeria, they exchange musical instruments and rhythms (Amarya of Nigeria), of the techniques of manufacture of objects which are used in the both sides. They exchange the clothing styles, which are used in the majority of the places where the caste of the blacksmiths exist. Maître goes each year in “*Feuteu*” a Nigerian’s Kapsiki village where live many blacksmiths to train in forge funeral decoration and the fabric of some new musical instruments. This is what

Durkheim (1912) called collective consciousness and which is the fusion of all the particular feelings in a common one runs with the average of the members of the same society and forming a given system which has its own life. If this fusion is usually done by the constraint, the legal and usual rules, it creates new ideals, new formulas which will guide the society.

In fact modernity spread out the avowable talent of the blacksmiths and caused many longings on behalf of the non-smiths especially in the Christian and Moslem circles. In the majority of the Kapsiki villages' especially in "Sir Village", many men weave the material of fence (*séko*), the straw for the roofs which formerly belongs to *rehe*. A significant number of soothsayers exist now among the Muslim and most of them derive from the converted blacksmiths in Kapsiki society.

Among the women, all those old and some young people are now able to cultivate and decorate the calabash and improve in order to sale to tourist, whereas it was a work reserved to the blacksmiths women. It became a true gain for non smith women nowadays. The childbirth which was a privilege of blacksmiths women, recognized as midwives among the Kapsiki is now common to everybody. Blacksmiths cannot be windy any more however fifty years ago they was only two in Mogode and resulted from the only midwives family.

Thus in a direct or indirect way the Kapsiki blacksmiths shared part of their knowledge with the non blacksmiths although they kept the majority especially for them. These changes have creates impacts inside the society at the point that sometimes there is a confusion between the trades of the blacksmiths and those of non blacksmiths especially in Christian and Muslim area and quarters. According to that, Maître told me that he cannot count and name all these non-smith people who are hiding to eat these animals meat forbidden to them by the ancestors. Some non-smiths are hiding to share their food and beg them not to tell to anyone.

Each of us is a compound person, the incumbent of many statuses. When we come into each other's presence we do so in a physical environment - one which we perceive selectively and classify culturally as a potential scene for certain and only certain, kinds of activities. We add to these constraints, or modify them, by communicating with each other as to who we are and what we intend to do, and thereby we arrive at an agreed definition of the situation, which implies which status out of our total repertoire we shall regard as relevant and to what use we shall put it (Barth, 1972). Trying to make a connection between the generative model of Barth and the *rehe* in Mogode, we can just though that according to the people they have in front of them and the moment; they use their repertoire to negotiate. Knowing that normally it is forbidden to a meleu to use the *rehe*'s trade, according to fact that within the village there is no mixture between them and the others, they don't hesitate to share their knowledge when

they are sure that the trainee will not live in the same village with them. But it is important to note that through these shares, *rehe* also benefit in many ways because most of the trainees have to pay for what they are learning. It became a serious business which allows *rehe* to survive and to still be the teachers as they use to be. When these strangers learn the trades, they also use them for a commercial purpose by making things that they sell in the touristic sphere.

Most of the time people came far from the village to learn, at that moment they are not using their statute of *rehe*, it is more the one of artisans because if not it will be a barrier since it is forbidden. But because they have to survive as parents, head of families who had needs, since there are some occasions to earn money in the absence of the other villagers because in arriving at a definition of the situation, actors reach certain agreements about the rules of relevance in a particular encounter, both with regard to what are the relevant capacities of the participants and what is the 'job' on hand, i.e. the occasion (op.cit). By doing so they are playing with all the possibilities that they have to survive making sure that the negotiation will not deeper affect the social organization that is why they insure that the person who need to learn is a stranger or someone who will not use that knowledge in the village especially in Mogode. But in some villages like *sir* things are different nowadays, most of people are Christians and the trades are not longer a belonging that is why in Mogode Maître is using the second model which is the alliance with the Nigerian *rehe* to save their caste from the extinction.

As Barth says “Human acts are predominantly shaped by cognition and purpose, asserted through awareness and voluntary behavior, i.e. through decision and choice. Regularities in multiple cases of choice are not satisfactorily explained by the demonstration of the presence of some objective circumstances alone, it require an account of how these circumstances are perceived and evaluated by actors (Barth, 1972:122). Just to say that they are aware of what they are doing, they are aware of the dangers and the punishments but with regards to the customs they simply adjust things according to importance of the gain and the circumstances.

VI.1.3 Stasis in the techniques

The pure Kapsiki blacksmiths unanimously remained static on several domains, without seeking any innovation, any modification. The methods of manufacture of objects resulting from the forging, the pottery and well from others still almost remained the same.

One of the important information I received from Massi (50) and Koigné (43) the two famous potters is that nothing has changed in the way of manufacturing since the centuries, it is the common and the same technique and they use the same material even in Nigeria.

During the rites of initiation and the festivals of harvest while passing by the baptisms, these people apply the same rules as in the past. They remained very preserving even if the acquisition of the material proves to be difficult, due to the occupation of spaces which formerly were reserved for the extraction of iron, clay etc. Concerning the clothing level, in the absence of the normal clothes, the rags that they wear, these clothes always old, dirty, filthy, are badly maintained as usual. Some dressed only animal leathers, just an apron like the ancestors did it formerly. The double sack, the calabash and the small goblet on the shoulder, the rings on the hands and the feet, they do not borrow the vehicles and traverse kilometers by foot. To tell the truth, I never seen a smith even having a bicycle in Mogode since I am going there, they always use their feet to travel. Some rituals like the funeral ceremony, the *goula*, the *làa* and all the *milé* never change since many generations and the most important is the surgery which is one of the famous specialties of blacksmiths among the Kapsiki.

This collective mentality that the Kapsiki blacksmiths adopted is a way to keep their statute or their importance among the others as Maître told me *“we are only following what we got as an inheritance, trying to maintain and perpetuate the ritual as the ancestors, until all the mountains will be at their same places we will accomplish the same tasks”*. One can say that it is the whole of the psychological provisions, of the practices of spirits and of the fundamental beliefs of a group appearing by durable psychological features, common runs expressed through the situations, the attitudes and the similar fundamental opinions. In this case, a mentality is known as preserving when there is adhesion to the established order without critical spirit and an unreasoned mistrust in front of any change or any innovation. The ideal of the blacksmiths group consists in the order and the stability of the already present facts making obstacle to the social progress, the evolution of the ideas and the behaviors insofar as they want to legitimate and restore the old forms and practices of ancient kapsiki blacksmiths.

Barth argues that individuals in their interactions seek values, but ecologic system and the structure limit people interactions at the same time, these limits are influenced by the individual's choices and through these influences, changes occur. This happens to the blacksmiths who urge to reproduce the social forms but they face nowadays structural changes in their surroundings which modify their choices and the domain in which they involve. They are more constraint to share than to keep things for them alone so to maximize their chances to keep relationships with the

melimeu, they have to maximize their values which Barth considered as empirical facts which may be discovered, which are not an analyst's constructs, but views held by the actors themselves. They are views about significance, worth whileness, preferences for things and actions being initial to items and sequences of behavior. They are the criteria by reference to which alternative actions are evaluated, and on the basis of which choice are exercised (Barth 1981: 49). For Barth, this is a normal and natural phenomenon, he wrote: "*The most simple and general model available to us is one of an aggregate of people exercising choice while influenced by certain constraints and incentives*" (Barth 1981:34).

VI.2.1 Religious beliefs a strategy to maintain

Religion, means a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them (Durkheim,1973). In that case, religion is universal, it differs from a place to another and especially in the traditional communities, it is not the church but special places where the gods live.

Among the Kapsiki they are some main mountains "***Houm tla*** and ***Heu ngodeu***" where the gods live. The *Houm tla* (mountain of cows) is the mountain where all conflicts are solved and where the rite of initiation is made, only native initiated are authorize to go inside the biggest cave where Kapsiki where hiding during the razzia periods. Maître explain to me that *Heu ngodeu* (head, summit of Mogode) is the mountain where *Houmpta* the prophet of Kapsiki were living many centuries before he fly's away to the haven with his first wife and up to now there are many marks of foot and drawing on the stones. Only the elders and the chief of the blacksmith have the right to go there to make special and annual sacrifices to the gods for the well being of the society.

Since the religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan, and since this can be represented in the mind only in the form of the totem and that the totemic emblem is like the visible body of the god (Durkheim, 1973) we can assume that the blacksmiths accumulate all the components of the "*Margui*" religion on them to keep the secret and mystery among the Kapsiki. They are at the heart of all the traditional practices which constitute the basic of the Margui religion: the initiation which is indispensable for a normal citizen of the village. "*Among the Baktaman, all men must be initiated if they are to attend manhood, normal social recognition, active participation in any religious affairs, and any kind of sacred knowledge. The initiation rites also constitute the major cults events of Baktaman religion, and contain among their constituent parts all the elements and*

ceremonies practiced at other times (Barth, 1975, 47). Following the idea that the rites is in all religion the most stable and lasting element which controls the behavior of an individual in his relation to others, it can be seen to be the regulated symbolic expression of certain sentiments. Rites can be therefore shown to have a specific social function, and to the extent that, they have for their effect to regulate, maintain and transmit from one generation to another sentiment on which the constitution of the society depends (Radcliff, 1952). The blacksmiths among the Kapsiki hold the key of the socialization by giving solemn and collective expression to them, via the rites they reaffirm, renew and strengthen the sentiments of each member on which the social solidarity depends.

Durkheim concerned with religion as a functional source of social cohesion. As said before, religion acts to pull people together (mentally and physically, in the form of religious services or assemblies). By doing so, religion is able to reaffirm collective morals and beliefs in the minds of all members of Kapsiki society. Religion maintains the influence of society whereas "society" represents the norms and beliefs held in common by a group as in our case the *rehe*. Meaning that the blacksmiths will steel be important among the Kapsiki if people became dependent of the religion then they also became dependent of blacksmiths who are the only specialists. It is in that sense that Radcliff (Radcliff, 1952, 157) suggest as a general formula that religion is everywhere an expression in one form or another of a sense of dependence on a power outside ourselves, a power which we may speak of as a spiritual or moral power. During with Maître, I notice that he was a strong believer every week he was making sacrifices by slitting chicken every week and a got each month. every time we pass close to a mountain he spent two or three minutes of prier, speaking with people that I cannot see and when we went together to explore the main mountain *Heu ngodeu* he speaks alone a special language asking me to keep quiet and after more than fifteen minutes he says “*Now they agree that we climb the mountain, your heart is clean*”. This power that they exercise on people by the religion apparently is not only among the Kapsiki because as I can see it exist in other blacksmith societies, it is surely a strategy of maintain and survive even in Mali where “*their roles in the practice of Mande religion cut across the entire spiritual spectrum, and the rest of the population seeks their expertise most frequently*” (Mc Naughton, 1988).

VI.2.2 Some blacksmiths families survivors

Rehe are truly and dangerously in process of extinction and could certainly create within the Kapsiki a destabilization since they live in a kind of corporation which is an

organized social body, obliging a certain occupational qualification which one of the principal goals is the organization of the professional defense of certain trades.

Among the Kapsiki blacksmiths the corporation is more an organization which gathers all the members within the professional framework from the base to the top and considering the multiple changes, we can thought about the changes or evolution provoked by the modernity translated by many factors. Helped by Maître who gave me the necessary information and helped me to count his fellows; I made in two tables an account and a classification of blacksmith active members to identify them by quarter, sex, age, clan, and trade in their different milieu in Mogode. If we considered that the caste had some changes in some of its important points, we can think by the way that an evolutionary prospect as well implies a criterion of direction of the evolution as diagrams of the various stages of the evolution. We do not conceive the social evolution like a continuous or simply linear process, but it is possible to distinguish from the general levels of development where the evolution or the regression is (Parsons, 1966).

Table 1 presents the distribution of Kapsiki blacksmiths of Mogode according to clans, families and quarters'. The clans represented here (04) are those which could escape for the moment from total disappearance of their blacksmiths members but are not free of the threat which weighs on the caste. One counts for the moment among the clans the Ka-Zermba (40%), Ka-Makwadjé (13, 33%), Ka-Makwyé (40%) and Ka-Makwamteu (6, 67%). The Ka-Zermba and Ka-Makwyé clans being most numerous (06 families per clan) are still some survivors who are giving hope to the others but on the whole, we count 15 active blacksmith families in all the village of Mogode nowadays. One then notices the total absence of some clans due either to the total disappearance of those, or with the fact of not having received enough blacksmiths since the origins because, the number of the blacksmiths by clan depends on faculty to negotiate and procreate

Table 1: Classification of blacksmiths according to clans, families and quarters.

| Clans | Families | Quarters | size | Pourcentage (%) |
|--------------|--|--|-----------|-----------------|
| Ka-Zermba | - Kamao Massi - Zra Kamao - Kodji Beheu - Tizé Beheu - Maître Koda - Tchéwou | Ndjègvaya Ndjègvaya Ndjègvaya Ndjègvaya Camp Forêt Gamba Zimi | 06 | 40 |
| Ka Makwadjé | - Sini Bouba - Teri Bouba | Gamba Zimi Centre | 02 | 13, 33 |
| Ka Makwyé | - Zra Batcha - Zra Kwaguedeck - Yeng Koutch - Koutch - Ndaveu - Teri Dada - Zra Mbriki | Ldaka Ldaka Centre Centre Centre Centre | 06 | 40 |
| Ka Makwamteu | - Nawa Déli | Ldaka | 01 | 6, 67 |
| Total | | | 15 | 100 |

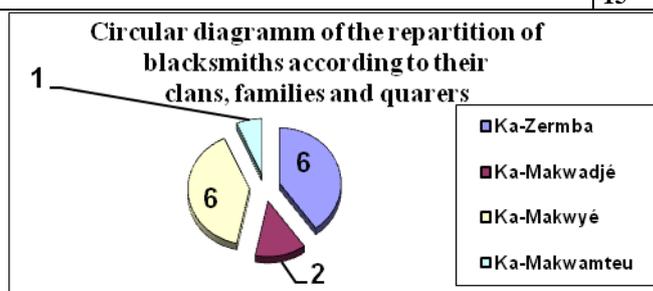
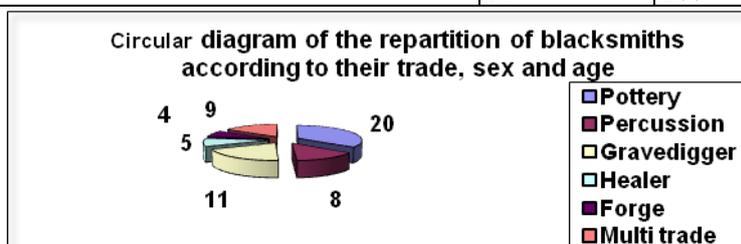


Table 2: Repartition of blacksmiths according to their trade, sex and age.

| Trades | Sex | Interval of age | size | Pourcentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Pottery | Women | [20-65[| 20 | 35, 09 |
| Percussion | Men | [30-60[| 08 | 14, 04 |
| Gravedigger | Men | [40-65[| 11 | 19, 30 |
| Healer | Men/women | [45-70[| 05 | 8,77 |
| Forge | Men | [50-75[| 04 | 7, 01 |
| Multi trade | Men | [45-80[| 09 | 15, 79 |
| Total | | | 57 | 100 |



Source: Investigation Mogode May 2008

Table 2 rather presents the distribution of the blacksmiths according to the professional categories, sex and the age. The interval of variable age between 20 and 80 years puts me

opposite to a growing old population of the blacksmiths in Mogode. The professional categories (06) in majority are reserved to men and only two are reserved to the two sexes (healers, weavers). In spite of the fact that the pottery is almost the only trade reserved to women I realize that it is where traders abounds the greatest number of anybody (20).

The percussionists (08), the healers (05) and the forgers (04) are the professional categories more in danger. In the whole Mogode one counts 57 blacksmiths all categories and quarters confused but the more in danger and the most exposed are the healers and the forgers who are relatively strong victims of a fall of their members, it is the lack of relay and the absence of young hands and new knowledge on behalf of the descent as says Nawa the surgeon.

However I noticed the total absence of original blacksmiths weavers and midwives in the Centrum of Mogode, other non smith people took hold of these trades nowadays.

VI.2.3 Hopes for the future

In “The Division of Labor in Society”, Durkheim studies and defines social solidarity as the fact that in a society, the parts are held all together by, compact, solid relations. He distinguishes the mechanical solidarity where the individuals are and live like all identical. A collective conscience emerges to be all the same ones in a situation where the interests are common. This solidarity is especially characteristic of the antiquated society. The organic solidarity is the one in which the individuals are and live themselves like the various but complementary. It characterizes especially the modern societies.

The Kapsiki blacksmiths are very interdependent and faithful to the decisions of their group. When they are in front of a situation and that they take a decision, nobody thwarts the plans and their unanimity facing a decision returns them extremely and welded opposite all the circumstances and the difficulties which arise for them. That is why one cannot use a blacksmith to betray the group, they are aware of what people think about them and act as one family. The unanimity and fidelity to the decisions are required among them at the point that when one of them has problems all the families participate. Their dwellings and residence still prove that they are inseparable and always as a group and far from the other members, blacksmiths seldom walk alone. Information of mouth to ears circulates very quickly among them and they are always the first to know about all the news and great events of the village. As an example, I went to Maître’s place after a big rain to prepare for our next walks meeting. It was 11.am when I arrived and at distance, I heard screams and noise coming from everywhere. When I approached, I noticed that there were men, women and children clustered

around the house of Maître. I went into the house and I saw Maître who was pointed at the roof of his damaged hut. He told me that the house was nearly collapsing on children, fortunately he was at home, and that's why his brothers (Blacksmiths) came on the field to help him to rebuild the damaged hut. The work was almost finished so I also put to work, as the others since I was already a family member of blacksmiths. They were all engaged in this work where they had no salary, which was their pleasure. I asked to Maître if it was because he was the chief but he said it is a common practice among Kapsiki in general but especially among blacksmiths who are a minority and who need each other. If the division of the labor produces solidarity, it is not only because it makes to each individual an exchanger as says economists; it is that it creates between the men a whole system rights and duties which bind them the ones to the others in a durable way. Just as the social similarities give rise to morals which protects them, the division of the labor gives rise to rules which contours ensure peaceful and regular divided functions. It is in his group that one feels safe and that one can create a common spirit and a mental equilibrium which binds all the members (Durkheim,1893).

Still within the framework of solidarity between blacksmiths; Maître concluded an agreement with the blacksmiths from Nigeria in order to insert in some Kapsiki clans of Cameroon some Nigerians blacksmiths because some clans are empty of blacksmiths they are obliged to borrow or exploit alliances to bury their deaths and to cover their traditional ceremonies. Since too many blacksmiths live in Nigerian villages and according to the ancestor alliances some blacksmiths accepted to move progressively to Mogodé to fill in the clans in need. I saw that members are united by ties which extend deeper and far beyond the short moments during which the exchange is made. Each of the functions they exercise is, in a fixed way, dependent upon others, and with them forms a solidier system. Accordingly, from the nature of chosen task permanent duties arise. Because we fill some certain domestic or social function, *rehe* are involved in a complex of obligations from which they have no right to free themselves. The points at which we are in contact with it multiply as do the occasions when it is entrusted with the duty of reminding us of the sentiment of common solidarity (Durkheim, 1960).

One remarks of hope concerning the survival of the Kapsiki blacksmiths is also in the conversation between Maître and me:

Me: -What do you think about being a *rehe*?

Maître: - "*I understood that a rehe will steel be a rehe one so much worse for those who are mistaken and convert to something else, can one mislead the gods and the crowned*

mountains? I am in my roots to achieve my role, I am happy to be a *rehe* and I am proud of it.”

Me: - What do you think about the disappearance of the blacksmiths caste?

Maître: - “I will never been afraid of our disappearance because people will always need us to do what they cannot do. As long as the clans will exist and that the gods of the mountains solicit us we will be always useful and will take care of playing our roles and the application of the rules ”.

Me: -What about the absence of relay?

Maître: -“You know, we procreate much and all our children are not failures, the gods always send one to us which agrees to follow us. All my children are doing my work and if their own children also do it, the future generations will follow and so we will steel be ”.

Me: -What is your conclusion to these words?

Maître: -“We will never disappear as long as the *Kapsiki* will exist; we blacksmiths will survive since thinking of *Kapsiki* without blacksmiths is like separating the tongue and the teeth in the mouth, they need each others.” then to conclude with these words of maître, in many ways the blacksmiths are better off than the rest of the population. They are better fed and command more cash, their marriages are more stable and their infant mortality is about half of the general one, and the net replacement significantly higher (van Beek 1987:30-31).

Changes are natural to human societies, as Blumer wrote: “*The life and action of people necessary change in line with the changes taking place in their world of objects*” (Blumer, 1969:12). As shown above, the *melimeu* who where suppose to be purer than *rehe* nowadays leave their traditional religion, the old social rules to take up some trades which belong to *rehe* formerly. Mazeu Sohohol the traditional chief said that nowadays life became very hard; people are struggling to survive by looking for any kind of job and trade. Since the field of work is limited *melimeu* have no much choice and they jump into *rehe*’s trades mainly when it brings money. He continues by saying that as *margui* they are strongly against that kind of attitude which brings a disorder in the traditional social organization but if these people are not longer traditional believers they have no power on them. Most of the time *rehe* are complaining because it is only trough these trades that they earn money to survive since they perform rituals responsibilities for free. But when they are able to react or to make use of their power they do not hesitate to punish all the culprits by following the old traditional laws against them.

By going to school *rehe*’s children are following modern education which is the very way to enquire some knowledge useful to reach a certain level in modern life. Modern school

offered to them a possibility to be in touch with other people and maybe afterwards to reach at a good post in the government. But for the elder *rehe*, this advantage is only for their children who are losing their way and at the same time expose the prosperity of the caste. As in my film, Nawa the surgeon said that “*children never care nowadays; they rebel and do not respect the traditional rules, they are freer to choose to do what they need unlike the elders*”. This attitude of *rehe*'s children is more because everything is concentrate on the trades and the inheritance of their parents while the children of *melimeu* are evolving in school and have more chances to choose their own trades and profession without their parent's opinion. Children are more aware of the outside and wanted to increase their chances to be other people with different status and freedom to follow their own way. In clear, by trying to move from their lower status to highest one, *rehe*'s children are simply involving in social mobility which is the only strategy to escape.

The decline in number of the *rehe* is real nowadays because of some major reasons like modern school, the apparition of new religions (Islam, Christianity) which open a wide variety of choices in life styles to the elders and the social mobility to children. Another reason not to neglect is the former distribution of *rehe* to the clans, some clans receive more *rehe* than the others and if they did not procreate enough they are surely committed to decrease in number of people. So due to their lowest number and according to social changes, *rehe* develop some strategies to escape, to survive and to maintain themselves within the traditional frame by then giving hope that they are still some families survivors and the eventuality of the continuation of the caste. The strange thing is that through these strategies, through this negotiation, they are surviving. They survive not only because they are challenged but more because of their vitality when faced with the pressure of outside.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

At the end of my work which topic is: “*Traditional beliefs in modern society: the case of the blacksmiths of Mogode Northern Cameroon*” with the main focus on the investigation of the paradoxical position of the *rehe* among the Kapsiki by trying to explain through their daily life and their relation to tradition affairs, circulation of power between the *melimeu* and the *rehe*.

Division of labor in Kapsiki society follows the traditional lines of sex and age, because men and women have separate tasks in agriculture and children are helping the both sides but have their own small land that they cultivate. But the great majority of tasks inside or outside agriculture are performed by the individual family or its individual members with the head of family as the leader. The social organization among the Kapsiki shows and makes a difference between two distinct groups: the *melimeu* and the *rehe*. The first are the normal Kapsiki who are supposed to be pure and the second considered as an endogamous group of dirty and strange people who constitute a caste. *Rehe* are a minority (5%) inside the total population and with their withdrawal by not sharing their quarters and their dwellings makes them less visible people in the village. Each group accomplishes specific tasks in the running and the well being of the society but the roles of *rehe* are more visible and seem to be important especially in the traditional domains. Belonging to each clans in which they are adopted they are specialized in several trades crafts as funeral, music, divination, magic and medicine, pottery, leatherwork, forging iron and casting brass which are crucial for Kapsiki lives in good and sad moments. But their position and the relationships between them and the *melimeu* in the society is characterized by a big paradox associate with stereotypes which characterizes them and makes them totally different people. By looking at their contribution to maintain the Kapsiki tradition and the way they are perceived as a low stratum, the fact that they are treated and considered being dirty, dangerous and impure had create physical bounds with the *melimeu* which need to be investigate and explain. To really study this ambivalence between the two groups in Mogode, I have tried to relate my understanding by using some concepts discussed in three complementary theories.

The first approach is the generative model of Frederik Barth for whom people interact within a particular social situation where they carry with them their status and roles which are respectively their rights and duties to accomplish any action. For Barth, each society in comprise an aggregate of people exercising choice while influenced by certain constraints and incentives according to each situation (Barth 1981). That is why they carry and make use of

their status according to each circumstance to interact within the different groups and beyond the Kapsiki society.

The concept of social fields of Reidar Grønhaug is the second tool that I used. Inspired by Barth, he defines the society as an aggregation of social relationships which are sets of complementary roles. Through his “micro-macro relations” he would like to see how a society, a community like Kapsiki through people interactions can be connected to the outside world and how these people by acting make choices and produce variable dynamics within different level of scales.

I used the theory of power of Michel Foucault as the third one to explain the fluidity of power that can be perceived between the different groups. It explained how according to situation and places different things happen between *rehe* and *melimeu*. In these interactions and choices each group is, from time to time, master and sometimes in need and that produces positive power and generates multiple kinds of process (Foucault, 80: 139) by giving the capacity to some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others (Wrong, 1979). For Foucault, an understanding of power must not be sought in a unique source of sovereignty from which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the later are always local and unstable. As I have seen between *melimeu* and *rehe*, power does not function in the form of a chain, it circulates, it is never taken over by one side because it is deployed and exercised through a net-like organization. This suggests that all people (blacksmiths and the *melimeu*) to a certain degree, can catch up in the circulation of power (Foucault 1980: 98). Finally nobody possesses it, and it is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And “Power,” insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these nobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement. As I have seen among the Kapsiki and that Foucault explained, power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with, but a name that one attributes to a complex strategically situation in a particular society like that of the Kapsiki. (Foucault, 1979).

I noticed that according to their roles inside the clans, the *rehe* carry some ritual responsibilities and occupations that they have to protect. As some of their duties in the traditional frame, they have the obligation to perform the “*mile*”, the “*amarya*”, the “*làa*”, the “*Goula*”, the “*makwa*” which are very important and unavoidable in Kapsiki tradition. To insure their position of transmitters and keepers of Kapsiki knowledge they should take

care of their dependency towards the tradition. The *rehe* are preparing all the ritual ceremonies during the whole year because it is an important time during which they are involved in the ritual part of the society. When comes those times, except from the Mazeu, everybody is waiting for the *rehe* to decide about the possible date, place and the feasibility of the ceremony. They are then the central figure of these ceremonies in front of the whole village which was expecting and waiting for it for a year then. Amongst the *rehe*, the *goula* and *lâa*, I saw a big difference in their ritual responsibilities and their normal trades, it was a serious moment for them to finish the year with good performances. According to that, Maître says: “*Most of these rituals happen once a year while we are dealing with our trades every day of our life. Even if it is for free, we have to do it properly if we wanted to be blessed by the gods*”. The accomplishment of these tasks in a way is in respect of the commitments formerly made by the gods for them as the guides of the society. They take it seriously at the point that they are able to share their usual trades with the others even if they earn money from it but they never share the ritual responsibility with anyone although they have no salary by doing it. By keeping these ritual responsibilities, the *rehe* are sure to be needed by the *melimeu* who are not able to assume the continuity of the tradition without them. In clear, as a part of the traditional believe, the *rehe* make use of the traditional role to maintain and to keep the monopoly on people for whom ritual are part of their life.

The theories helped me to investigate how *melimeu* and *rehe* interact and how through negotiations changes occur within the society. The modernization as an evolutionary process related to several political, economic, cultural factors brought out many visible changes in the social organization of Kapsiki society which also occurred within the caste of *rehe*. New religions, modern school, produced positive effects in the wide society and rather disaccorded the harmony which reigned within the caste. As consequences we assist at the withdrawal of some while converting and uprooting others who choose the intellectual way tending to the depreciation of the role of the blacksmiths and the impoverishment of several *rehe* families. The awakening of this state of affair at the same time facilitated the design of new methods, of new means of fight to keep their place in the Kapsiki society. They opened themselves to the others by sharing some trades and make clear the level of complementarity between *melimeu* and *rehe*. In the frame of the solidarity, they increase relationships and share in many domains with their fellow Nigerian blacksmiths who are greater in number than them. Nowadays, their contribution to the national economy is notorious within the frame of tourism through the development of their art which was formerly used only for Kapsiki families. They are also using their musical talent beyond the traditional sphere to reach the national one by

playing for politicians during political meetings and also during well known official days like the national day of Cameroon.

My general understanding of this thesis work is that *melimeu* and *rehe* can be considered as two complementary groups' instead of being totally separate. The physical boundaries and all the serotypes which exist since centuries are these common features of prejudice include self beliefs, and a tendency to have negative attitude toward members of a group, to characterize and classify them and therefore regulate their behaviors. In both groups, members have a perception of them and what make the difference between them and the others. For instance, by trying to distinguish themselves from *melimeu* *rehe* perceive their people as being intelligent and preferred by the gods than the *melimeu* who are always in need of their services and cannot survive without their craft. On the other hand, *melimeu* consider themselves as the leaders without whom *rehe* cannot live and they do not recognize the cleverness claimed by the *rehe* who for them are lazy and prefer begging than farming (As it is says by Mazeu Sohohol the traditional chief in my film). In that game each group wanted to be looked as being better than the other at the point that it became a rule in the society.

By living in the clan and lineage system, the Kapsiki people transfer the knowledge from father to son and mother to daughter. Blacksmiths who carry many roles and responsibilities are in the center of each clan to accomplish the tasks ruled by the traditional social organization and the division of labor. As the others, they have some rules that they have to follow as well. The changes are the results of dynamics between *rehe* and *melimeu* and everyday life making each other dependant to the tradition and the continuation of Kapsiki culture. These changes had on one side positive impacts as the opening to the outside, the freedom of choosing his own way, the economic income that characterize Kapsiki people nowadays via their trades. On the other hand, there is a reduction in number of the blacksmiths families joining other life styles. But as long as each group will follow the rules and accept its condition, as long as power will shift from *melimeu* to *rehe* and vice versa, the two groups will need each other and Kapsiki tradition will survive. As in a well known Kapsiki proverb, "*The teeth and the tongue are sometimes biting themselves inside the mouth but never separate because they need each other to survive*".

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