

Mbororo migrant workers in Western Cameroon: Case study of Bahouan



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Master thesis in Visual Cultural Studies
Faculty of Archaeology and Social Anthropology
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother and my informants for making this thesis possible.

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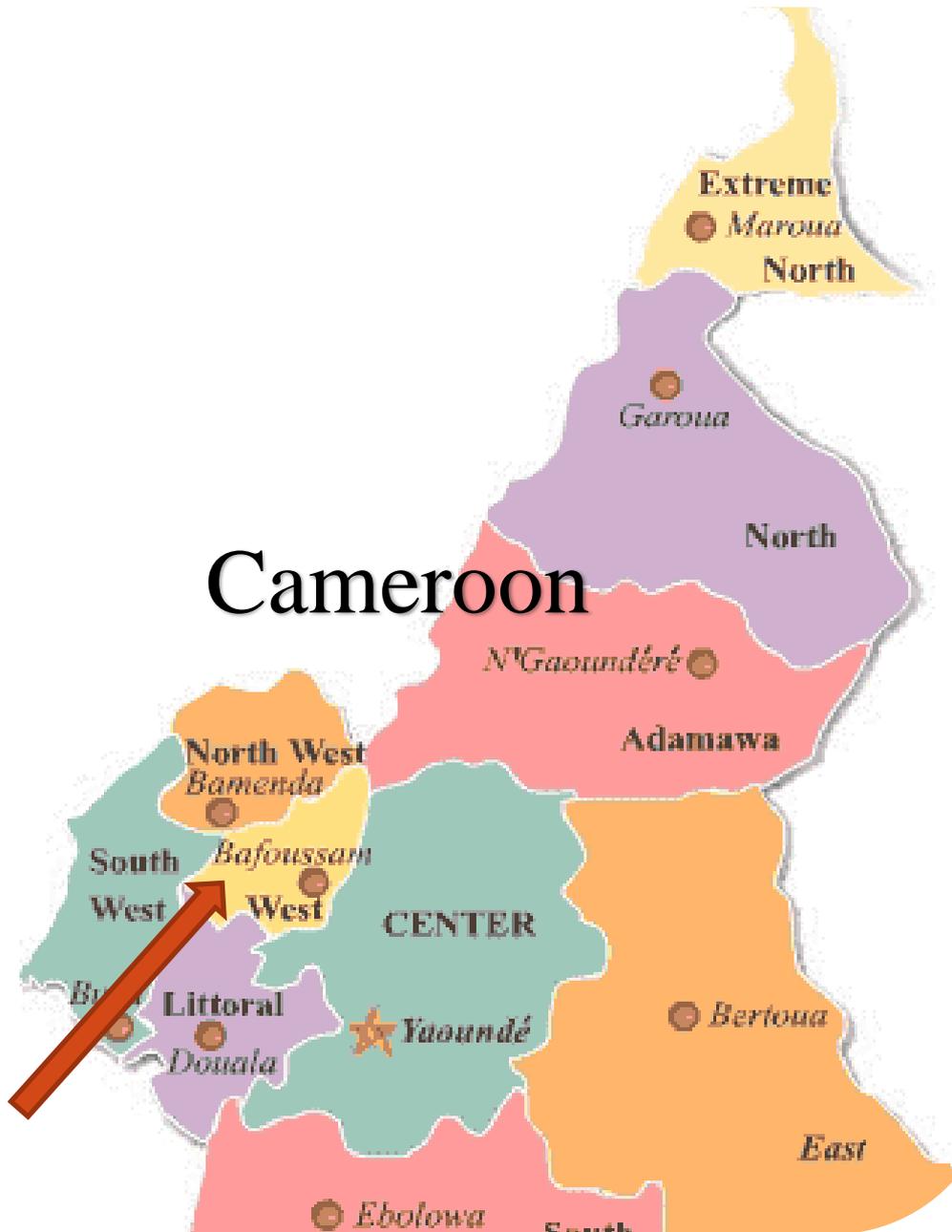
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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the daily life of some Mbororo migrant workers in Bahouan village. Due to some external and internal forces on their nomadic lifestyle, these Mbororo Muslims have decided to seek for livelihood in Bahouan, among the mainly agricultural Christian people. Since then, their strategy has been in attempting to rebuild their herd and provide for their relatives back home. This analysis of the integration process of these Mbororo to Bahouan, tries to examine how, despite their cultural differences with the host population, these Mbororo have been able to contribute and get integrated in this community. It also presents the socio-cultural dynamics and the possible changes in their tradition through their daily encounters. Finally, this paper presents the socio-cultural dilemma that the Mbororo are facing in Bahouan. While trying to earn their living in this community, they are in a situation of a split identity. In fact, their daily life is oscillating between three main concerns. The first dilemma is that they are trying to integrate themselves to Bahouan community in order to be accepted by the local people. Secondly, they are gradually assimilating themselves with the *settled Fulani*. Even not being physically present in Bahouan, the *settled Fulani* are constantly in the mind of these Mbororo who want to embrace the Fulani way of life. Meanwhile, the fact that the Bahouan people have little knowledge on Mbororo people background makes it easier to them to be perceived as Fulani. Thirdly, the fact that these Mbororo are sending half of their monthly salary back in the bush to preserve their cultural heritage shows that they are not yet ready to cut contact with their original tradition.

Key words: *Mbororo, Bahouan, acculturation, integration, assimilation, immigration, settled Fulani.*



Localisation of West Cameroon, the field of study. Source: <https://www.google.fr/search>

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1. Interest of the study

I decided to carry out my research in Bahouan¹ my hometown. During my childhood, I used to visit this village together with my sisters and cousins for summer vacation. We were going there to help our grandmother with farm work and to learn the mother tongue at the same time. We were also going there some weekends for funerals, especially when the deceased person was a close relative. However, I did not know my informants before I went to the field. I was not even aware of the fact that some Mbororo² people were living in Bahouan until the 19th of October 2012. It was a real surprise when my mother told me on phone that she was paying some Fulani Muslim people³ to work in her farm. From what I could remember, until my last visit in Bahouan (more than ten years ago), I have never remarked their presence around. Since then, she developed my curiosity on the chosen topic. With the little experience that I had of Fulani people after I have lived many years in the Northern Cameroon (Ngaoundere), I found amazing that people who are not used to farm work are suddenly doing it. During my stay in Ngaoundere, I noticed that Fulani people like to manage their own affair and it was very difficult to get access to them as outsider. The Muslim Fulani which I knew also look down at farmers and their pride will never allow them to work for the people who they used to call “*gadamayo*.”⁴ They used this expression to exclude those who do not belong to their culture and religion. I wanted to know more about what has become of the pride they used to care so much about for working for non-Muslim people with whom they have nothing cultural and religious in common. I also knew that Bahouan is a very conservative village,

¹ Bahouan is community district situated among the Bamileke Grass fields, at 15 kilometers drive from Bafoussam, the capital region of the Western Cameroon.

² Mbororo is the name for a specific clan of pastoral nomads in Cameroon. In Niger, pastoralists are Wadaabe. In Ghana, Fulani is the common name for both nomadic and settle Fulani. While in Ethiopia and in many others countries, they are simply call pastoralists. This confusion finds its explanation on the complexity of the origine of this grand ethnic group who share a common historical background. (Boutrais, 1996; Pelican, 2007). In this paper, I will use the terms “Pastoral Fulani”, “Nomadic Fulani” in reference to the “Mbororo.” However, they differ from the “settled or the town Fulani” in the sense that were the first to abandon their nomadic lifestyle to the benefit of various urban activities. While on the other hand, many Pastoralists decided to continue with their herding lifestyle. In this paper, Fulbe, Pullo and Fulani are synonyms. “Pullo” is the singular name for” Fulbe” (see Diallo and Schlee, 2000; Virtanen, 2003).

³ In the Southern part of Cameroon, most people categorize all the Muslims people as Fulani or herders. They do not even differentiate the Fulani from the Mbororo people.

⁴ This is a Fulani expression of categorizing the people from the Southern part of Cameroon in opposition to the wadjo who are the population of the Northern part. Gada-mayo in Fulani is used to identify the people who are coming from the other side of the river: gada means the other side while mayo is the river (Gwoda and Zelao 2012).

especially when it concerns the traditions. For example, it is very difficult to own a land there if you are not from the locality. Land for Bahouan people has the same value as cows for the Mbororo people. It was going to be an amazing experience for me to see Mbororo daily life in a setting other than in the Northern Cameroon. I was imagining them speaking my mother tongue.

For many days, I kept asking myself: what are they doing there? Where do they live? Do they have their cows with them? Have they changed their lifestyle? What kind of relation do they have with the local people? I was also very curious to see if they were living peacefully in this village. Coincidentally, during that period, there were some news concerning a conflict between farmers and herders in Cameroon. On the 26th of October 2012, I was making an internet research on the Mbororo people when two articles captured my mind. It was a story about some Mbororo who were being thrown out by the local people because they were considered as trouble makers, strangers or foreigners. They were being accused of destroying people farms with their animals. The news said that the local population did not want the Mbororo people in their villages anymore. On the first page of one of the local newspaper call: *L'œil du Sahel*, (n° 228 of 26th February 2007), it was possible to read: « *Insécurité, les Mbororo fuient le Grand Nord, ils ne se sentent plus protégés par le gouvernement.* » Meaning that the Mbororo are running from the northern region of Cameroon because they were not feeling protected by the government anymore. The other one was in the *Mutations of 25th April 2012, N° 3145*, where the same problem was addressed, but this time in the Western region of Cameroon. There, Mbororo people were accusing the villagers of confiscating and killing their cows.

1.2. The context of the study

This research fit within a context in which the house keepers in Bahouan villages are very much demanded. In this part of Western Cameroon, customs and tradition demands that a man with satisfactory resources builds a house in his motherland⁵. However, most of these owners usually reside in the city or abroad. Even not being physically present in the village,

⁵Bahouan is a patrilineal community. The motherland is the father's home town. A man is considered as a responsible person when he has a house of his own in the village of his father. Children usually belong to the village of their father. In this village, women do not have the right to land. When a woman gets married, she belongs to her husband's lineage.

the empty houses are therefore seen as the symbolical representation of the natives who have established their life away from home. This house has a significant meaning in the sense that it materializes the existence of the owner. Thus, in Bahouan village, there are more than hundreds of such empty houses that are not inhabited by the owner. But lately, it has been noticed that such houses are often subjected to burglaries.⁶Therefore, the landowners who are not living there need people to look after their houses. So, while seeking for a job, some Mbororo people who live in the North West region of Cameroon have migrated to Bahouan village in the West. There, they have ended up as housekeepers.⁷ They live there alone with their family and get their salary at the end of the month. Furthermore, having found a job in Bahouan would therefore lead the Mbororo to a socio-cultural adaptation in their host community. Adapting themselves in Bahouan will then reinforce the possibility for these Mbororo migrant workers to be accepted by the local populations. For their insertion, they have to be in permanent contact with the local people. This encounter is not without a transformation of their original tradition as well. Considering the fact that they did not come empty handed in Bahouan, looking at their contribution and their challenges in this community is important to take into account.

1.3. Importance of the study

Among the existing literature on Mbororo in Cameroon, many researchers have done their study on Mbororo as a minority people who are very marginalized by other ethnic groups. Many others have also insisted on farmers-herders conflicts without taking into consideration those who live in a peaceful relation with the people they live with. In addition, little research has been done on the Mbororo who are trying to mingle with the local people and create a new identity for themselves. Consequently, there are few studies concerning their socio-cultural and event economical dynamics and their contribution in African society in general, in Cameroon in particular. In other words, Mbororo people are still perceived in most existing literature as a group of people who live based on livestock activities (Boutrais, 1984; 1999; Pelican, 2006/2007). The thesis of Baba (2004) and Adamou (2007), both previous students at the Visual Cultural Studies have also enlightened this work. They wrote on the Mbororo and the importance of cows and milk

⁶ Some people steal the furniture; remove the light, the doors, chair, window

⁷ The job of housekeeper in Bahouan demands that people live in the house. Therefore, their task is to live in the house and ensure for the maintenance and the security of these houses.

products in their tradition. While Baba portrays cattle as the most important thing for the Mbororo cultural identity, Adamou shows how women are contributing mainly in their household with their business activities in order to help their husbands who have lost their cattle. By doing so, he did not only present the financial independence of Mbororo women, but also how they are still maintaining their subordinate position by being submitted to their husband. However, none of them have taken into consideration the impact of their encounter with the local people. Therefore, looking at the Mbororo in this way tend to describe them like people who are very reluctant to change because of the symbolic value which they place on their pastoralist activities. As an outsider, I wanted to bring something new, by presenting another side of Mbororo skills. Fortunately, I got this opportunity to do my research at home by combining my own culture to the culture of the pastoralists. However, knowing that no society can be developed by living in isolation to others, my main contribution in this paper is to present the new phenomenon of some Mbororo who are gradually working as housekeepers in Bahouan village. In addition, it also portrays how these Mbororo have managed to establish a peaceful relation with the local population and create a sustainable life for themselves. Most importantly, it discusses the identity dilemma that these Mbororo are facing today in Bahouan as the result of their assimilation process.

1.4. Research questions

This paper is an exploratory study which tries to understand and elaborate on life experience of two Mbororo families in Bahouan: Ibrahim, Abdou and their respective wives (Mairo and Adjara). Moreover, it deals with the relationship between my informants and the local people by portraying their integration in Bahouan. Therefore, I will present migrant workers as target earners who seek for a specific goal to accumulate enough money to start a business or to improve their daily condition and provide for their family. For these reasons, they are ready to accept any jobs, even those which are considered "degrading" in their own society.

By combining historical evidence with recent ethnographic information, this study draws a tentative reconstruction of this rapid transformation in the Mbororo culture. Specifically, the primary question addressed by this study, is to understand:

a) What is the contribution of the Mbororo to Bahouan community? b) How does the integration of these Mbororo in Bahouan affect their culture? Saying in other words, what are the changes in the culture of these Mbororo? c) What are the strategies applied in order to

promote their integration in this community? d) What are the possible limiting factors to this integration? e) Which kind of cultural dilemma are they confronted with in this community? What are the influences of this changing livelihood on their culture? How does their interrelation with the Bahouan people influence their socio-cultural identity?

1.5. Outline of the thesis

This paper is organized into four chapters. The introductory part is followed by the second chapter which consists of the different techniques which I used in the fields to collect verbal and physical data. As methods, I describe how I used the video camera to gather information and record the daily activities of my characters. I also present the reflective approach, sharing my personal experience of my encounter with my informants during my fieldwork as an insider/outsider researcher.

The third chapter describes the interaction theory as the main approach which serves as guideline to understand the encounter between the Mbororo and their hosts' population. It also present the geographical feature of the place in which I conducted my research (Bahouan). In this chapter, I also present the social organization, the economic activities and the culture of the Bahouan people. I also present an overview of the historical background of the Mbororo people. I present the political and historical circumstances in which Mbororo have been going through including their movement with their animals, weak rights to land, lack of sustainable pasture. At the end of this chapter, I present the ethnographic description of the informants.

The last chapter consists of the analytical discussion of the empirical data, examining the socio-cultural and economic relationship between the two ethnic groups (the Mbororo and the Bahouan people). I also develop the empirical data alongside with some relevant theories. In response to their interaction with the natives of this locality, this chapter analyses the contribution, the socio-cultural adaptation and the possible transformation in the tradition of the Mbororo who are now working as housekeepers in Bahouan.

Base on their daily encounter with the Bahouan people, the changing livelihood of the Mbororo, their gender relation and the interethnic friendship are the main factors to look closer at to understand the continuity and change in their original culture. Taking into consideration the historical approach, this parts is an attempt to throw light on what has

become of the economic freedom women used to have by being financially independent vis a vis their husband. During their nomadic time in the bush, women were selling cow's milk and butter in the neighborhood to buy some needs for the house while their husbands were out for their pastoral occupations. It also describes their main concern and the strategies which they have developed to get integrated in Bahouan community.

Finally, I also discuss the identity dilemma of my informants. While trying to adapt themselves to Bahouan culture, they create a new identity for themselves.

Chapter two: Methodology

The exploratory nature of my inquiries may call into question for some of the scientific validity of my findings and interpretations. This paper is based on three months research work which was conducted on the Mbororo who live in Bahouan community (from April to June 2013). The data was collected based on qualitative research methods with unstructured interviews and participant observation. The video camera was the main recording tool which was used to collect verbal and physical facts for a film⁸. To achieve this, I used three research techniques: I examined written sources, conducted both interviews and focus group discussions and used participant observation. First, I consulted written sources, which consisted of literature (books, newspapers, magazine articles, Internet sources, etc.) on the Mbororo and the Bahouan people. The literature review helped at understanding some general background concerning the Fulani in general and the Mbororo in particular. It allowed me also to see what others researchers have studied on the Mbororo and to see what have been left out. Secondly, my questionnaire was based on unstructured interviews which were directed in form of dialogue during an individual and focus group discussion with the informants. Finally, I used participant observation with a video camera to gather the information and record the daily activities of my characters on the field.

2.1. The importance of the literature review for research

This part presents how the literature review framed what I encountered in the field. The knowledge I got from the literature inspired me on how I was going to address my informants. Some of my questions during interviews were just to verify what I knew already from the books. The observational approach gave me the opportunity to verify the literature review through my hypothesis and thinking by listening to my informants own point of view. For example, during the baby bath (see the film *new way of life*) I asked several questions to the mother of the baby concerning the Mbororo tradition. Even though the questions were spontaneous, most of them were guide by the knowledge I got from books concerning the pastoral Fulani. The answers to my questions gave me the opportunity to verify what I read about concerning their life. This is how I got to confirm for example that father does not carry his first born baby in Mbororo tradition. He should be *ashamed* to carry his first newly born

⁸ See the film "New way of life." By Flavie Chiwo Tembou

baby because of *pulaaku*⁹ (see Bocquene, 2002). Like in many other literatures on Mbororo people, this work is relevant in the sense that it is going to help in exploring whether cows are still central in Mbororo culture.

2.2. A reflexive approach of doing research as an insider/outsider researcher

Reflexivity is a process of “*self-inference*” (Davies, 1999). Taking on a research in a village I am familiar with but on people I have never been in touch with before was both a challenge and advantage for me. I was both perceived as an outsider and as an insider researcher depending on my position within the field. My cultural awareness allowed me to take into consideration my position in the field and to see my own perception about what was really going on. My mother was the person who did the first negotiation with my informants. As she knew them already, I gave her this task to try to see if they would allow me to follow them around with a camera for up to three months. She seemed very enthusiastic about the idea and she told me not to worry about it, because she knew a nice family with whom she had established a very good relationship through the different services they provide to her. As time was passing, I became quite skeptical being aware of the fact that Mbororo people are very conservative and they might refuse to be filmed by an outsider, a person they do not share the same culture and religion with.

At the same time, I was also optimistic that being an insider (from Bahouan) would be a positive argument to convince them. I was more comfortable with the idea of doing research at home even though as an “outsider”. I thought it was going to be easier than facing them in their own community or do a research on the Mbororo people who live in the Northern Cameroon.¹⁰ When she finally informed me that they agreed to be filmed and that one of them was asking her how much they were going to be paid, I was a bit shock by this information. I was aware that pastoralists Fulani commonly do not express their interest for money due their traditional principle *pulaaku*. At the same time, I understood that their conditions and the fact that they were away from home could explain this attitude. I asked my mother if she could

⁹ The *pulaaku* is a set of norms and values that governs the daily attitudes which are shared by all the pastoralists Fulani (Dupire, 1962; Bocquene, 2002; Bonfiglioli, 1988). In Mbororo tradition, *Pulaaku* is all about how to behave correctly in regard to the society. This imply having knowledge in pastoral activities, living permanently with shame in order to preserve your dignity and pride (Dupire, 1962; Oumarou, 2012). Shame in Fulani context expresses one of the principles of the *pulaaku*. (See the chapter four for more explanation).

¹⁰ The Northern part of Cameroon is mainly Muslim and people speak Fulani there as the common language.

explain to them that the film was just for academic needs and that it was not going to be for lucrative purpose. This is how I started the negotiation with my informants through a third party who was my contact person. However, once on the field, my cultural education was influencing my behavior vis a vis my informants due to the fact that my culture has become a “conceptual maps” which is guiding my social daily behavior (Spradley, 1980). My cultural awareness as an insider eased the possibility for me to get in contact with my informants. However, our relationship was built up through a gradual process. This awareness helped me to avoid taking things for granted once in the field. For example, even though I was an insider researcher, I went through many challenges to get some information. However, I was also aware of the fact that they might not be completely opened to me as an outsider or that they might try to please me by answering to me in a way which they thought would be suitable for me as an insider. Sometimes, as performing actors, people do not always do what they say. This explains the flexibility of the individual to adapt himself in order to survive in new environment.

Moreover, the use of a video camera as an insider researcher allowed me to see how my informants were also performing in front of the camera. The influence of the camera and me representing the local people was a kind of treat to my informants. For example, each time I was filming in Abdou house (one of my main informants), I noticed that he and his family were always behaving as if I was there to inspect their job. They were also trying to keep themselves busy by cleaning the house (weeding, cutting grasses and sweeping the yard). By doing so, they thought that I was coming to spy them or to see if they were doing their job properly. Further, knowing that I and my informants were from a very different background put me in a difficult position. Each time I was among many Mbororo elders, I was not very comfortable because I knew that like in my community, respecting the elders is very important in Mbororo society. But I did not know how to behave properly, neither I knew where to sit, when or how to speak in certain situation. For example, young Mbororo people have to kneel down when greeting their elders. While in my own community people simply shake hands or hug each other's as the sign of greetings. I was greeting them verbally, without kneeling down, knowing that they will not feel offended because I was an outsider. While talking to my informants, especially with married men, I was trying to show them some respect by putting a physical distance between us as they were doing with their wives. In Mbororo society, men and women do not share the same space. If they do, certain minimum

distance must be respected (see the picture of my informants below). But there is no problem for women or men to sit close to each other.



Mairo and her sister-in-law sitting close to each other's while Abdou and his wife (Adjara) are distance from each other's.

2.3. Participant observation and first contact with the informants

In order to understand the context in which my research was taking place and bring myself into closer contact with my informants, I used participant observation as my primary research method. This approach helped me to gain better insight into their everyday live experience by studying them in their natural setting. Participant observation means “*spending time in the company of the person whose life history is being recorded*” (Davies, 2008). However, this time should be long enough for the researcher to familiarize himself with people and understand them “*from the native point of view*” (Spradley, 1980:3). In other words, to understand people’s life, the meaning they give to their actions, how they describe themselves and their environment, the ethnographer have to merge himself as much as possible in what is going on within a specific context. Thus, participant observation implies taking into consideration every single detail of the informants and their surroundings. This involves paying a careful attention on what informants are doing, what they know and even what they are making or using (Spradley, 1980:5). In this way, the ethnographer will grasp the significance, the meaning which specific group of people gives to their actions and even the idea behind those actions. This method allowed me to understand for example the idea behind the fact that my informants do not consider themselves as Mbororo. They always refer to

themselves as Fulani. Sometime, I was confused and each time I tried to ask to them whether they were Mbororo or Fulani, they always told me that there is no difference between those two groups of people. From my data which I develop further in the part concerning the identity dilemma (see chapter four), I was able to analyze the reasons behind these behaviors.

To build up a relationship with my informants and gain their trust, I participated in their activities, observed them doing and saying things. At the beginning of the research, I visited them during three days without the camera. I wanted to see what their daily life was like and get close to them. Some time, I was sharing with them some of my pictures so that they could have a view about how Europe looks like. They were then very interested and curious asking me various questions. I was also taking their picture at the same time and they were very happy to watch those. I used to participate in some activities like helping them to carry water from the river or from the well. On several occasions, I help Ibrahim (my main character) to pound bark in the mortar and it gave me the chance to experience how difficult and tiring it was to prepare his traditional medicine. I also walked with them to the market place, to their relatives and friends houses. From what I observed in the field, even though Mbororo people do not have much experience in farming activities like the local population, all my informants owns a piece of land which have been lent to them by their landlords. They are all involved in agriculture. They plant crops according to seasons and they are trying to make their farm similar to the villagers' farm. Ibrahim my main informant once told me that having a farm allows him to avoid his children to go and play in other people's farms. He seems to be very aware of the consequences destroying the local people crops.

2.4. Interviews

The second method of collecting information was the interview which is "*the most familiar, and possibly the most common way in which life histories are collected*" (Davies, 1999). I used approximately four hours for the main interviews, including life stories, focus group discussion to record their personal experience starting from their migration histories to what their main concerns are. The questions were in a more conversational style, spontaneous, opened and unstructured to give the chances to my informants to answer freely. I was also trying to be as flexible as possible, clear and precise to avoid any misunderstanding. However, the discussion was always directed in some topic which was going to generate an interesting discussion and help me to know my informants' better. However, I also conducted a focus group discussion with the Mbororo among themselves during a social gathering. This method

allowed me for more direct investigation into how individual informants understood their situations and made choices. It also allowed me to see how they built up and maintained relationships and how reciprocity was practiced in their daily interactions with the Bahouan people and among themselves. To show to my informants that I was following what they were saying or that I was paying attention to them, I was shaking my head or answering by a “yes, yes” or by a simple smile when they were looking at me and asking if I understood what they said. I was also aware of the fact that during an interview, “*even a slight inattention may be interpreted as disinterest and persuade the informant to omit certain memories as unimportant or not to elaborate on them*” (Davies, 1999:169). That is why even though I could not follow everything they were saying due to my weakness in *Fulfulde* (language of Fulani people), I was just encouraging them to talk more as long as the camera could record the situation. I knew that I was going to translate everything later into English. My interviews were all tapes-recorded, this allowed me to translate the data easily because they were in pidgin, French and Fulani languages.

2.5. When the use of a video camera become an asset for the language barrier

Doing research on people one does not understand the language is a very challenging experience. I was not very familiar with the culture of the people that I was studying; neither could I understand what they were saying while speaking Fulani among themselves. However, before going to the field, I was aware of the fact that my informants could speak both pidgin and French. I was also aware of my poor vocabulary skills in *Fulfulde*. But knowing that it would be easier for them to explain things in the *Fulfulde* language, I prepared myself once on the field. Further, to make sure that my informants could understand my questions, I tried to ask the same question several times in different ways and gave them the possibility to answer in different languages. But during the main interview with Ibrahim my main character, I asked him to feel free to speak in the language he felt more comfortable with. When he was speaking Fulani, his son and his brother in-law were assisting in translating the answers directly to me. When the question was a bit complex, I asked them to translate it to him in Fulani. By doing so, I was trying to avoid any misunderstanding and make sure that all the questions were well understood. But when I came back from the field, I asked to my friends who could understand Fulani to retranslate my main interviews. I realized that in the field my informant did not translate fully what Ibrahim was saying. Most of the time, they were adding their own idea to the original one. At the same time some other

information were lacking. I am not sure if they deliberately hid some information from me or if it was because of the language issue, but this second possibility to retranslate what was being said allowed me to understand my material better.

The second reason why the video camera was useful for the language barrier is that instead of trying to make sense of what was going on around me, I used the camera to record the moment so that I would be able to translate it later. Most of the time, when I did not understand what was going on around me; I was in a dilemma with my camera which was moving as a “*camera chercheur*.” I wanted to film everything at the same time and make sure that everything important was being recorded. While filming, I was very uncertain about what to capture first and what to film next. This was the case especially when my informants were all involved in different activities at the same time. I wanted to collect data as much as possible about what they were saying and what they were doing. Despite the fact that I could not speak Fulani fluently, I was also deliberately talking their language to show my interest and to create a more comfortable atmosphere between my informants and me, allowing them to forget about the presence of the camera. This method allowed me to practice some basic interactional skills in Fulfulde. They were always laughing at the way I was articulating my words and there was a more convivial atmosphere between us. At the end, they were always happy to correct me in a very nice way. Sometimes, they were also using some Bahouan expressions to make the conversation with me and it was fun to correct their mistakes as well. This allowed us to spend some good moments together. At some point, it seems like we wanted to prove to each other that one of us have more skills of the language of the other. I was using those opportunities to ask them to help me translating some questions like “how do you say what is your name in Fulfulde?” Then the answer was “*noiindemaa*”¹¹. This is how I managed to get all their names, as I was asking the same question to each of them. In return they also asked me the same question and I presented myself to them. This is how I was able to gradually build up a friendship relation with them. From this, I agree with Pink that “*The ways ethnographers intend to represent their research inevitably inform how they approach their projects; the technologies used their relationships with participants, and the experiences and knowledge they produce. These relationships, technologies and experiences might also be reflected in their representations*” (2013:187).

¹¹ This is the Fulani name which means what is your name? (The translation is mine)

2.6. The video camera, a tool of knowledge production in ethnographic research

“Ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge or ways of knowing that are based on ethnographers ‘own experiences and the way these intersect with the persons, places and things encountered during that process” (Pink, 2013:35).

As my main recording tool, the video camera was used as a note book which allows studying people reality by helping “... *understand the being of others in the world*” (MacDougall, 2005). In addition, when the camera was on the tripod, I was also taking notes from time to times of what was going on in different social situation. Following my informants in their different location also allowed me to discover my village better by going to places I have never been before. Because of the camera, I was also given the privilege to get access to a big funeral ceremony and film people freely. Many people even thought that I was send by a national TV channel. Being also a woman behind the camera was very useful because people seemed very impressed to see me behind a professional camera. At the end of that ceremony, the Governor who has been invited for the funerals congratulated and encouraged me for my choice and career.

Before going to the field, I wrote a project description full of speculation, describing my hypothesis, the theory and the problematic which were going to serve as guide line for my field work. But while analyzing my data, I realized that the theory was not fitting with my material because what determine the theories and even the research topic is the data from the field. So, I had to change the topic and even the research question on several occasion. In addition, I was not really sure about what empirical data was. I was very confused about empirical data and simple observation. At some point of the writing process, I felt discouraged. Therefore, after many discussion in class (during the screening of the rushes and the rough cut), I had the opportunity to experiment my material in different ways and see how rich it was. The more I was analyzing the footage, the better I could understand what doing research was all about. But, once I discovered the missing part of the puzzle, I finally understood what it takes to be a researcher. Without the video camera, it would have been very difficult to achieve this. The use of a video camera as a research method allows the researcher to repeat the field work by watching what was recorded. Therefore, I learned from this experience that it is very important to have an idea of what one is looking for when going for the fieldwork. However, it is also important to the researcher to be flexible, because what

ever come out as data is going to determine the theoretical approach of the final work. The video materials which I collected during fieldwork allowed me to discover a lot of information concerning the daily life of the Mbororo of Bahouan. Some of what I did not discover or understand in the field, I was able to comprehend it looking at the footage. In my film “New way of life”, I present different themes which represent the main concern of my informant. For example, they are more concern about their cultural and religious identity, their integration. Those are the topic which always comes out when I look into my material.

Challenges of using a video camera to create knowledge

The use of a video camera for my research was a very challenging experience. At the beginning of the research, many people were very skeptical toward the camera. Abdou, my second informant and his family were not happy to be filmed. They were always complaining about why I was following them around. Abdou’s wife asked me one day: *How do we know that you are not going to use these images for illuminati¹² purpose? Why did you not choose to film people that you know already?* Abdou added. Deep inside me, I knew they were right. I would have probably reacted the same way if I was in their shoes. Abdou even insist on filming me back because he wanted me also to appear in the footage. Sometimes, they were using their language to laugh at me saying that I was just trying to keep myself busy by filming. It was difficult for them to believe that what I was filming was important. At the same time, they did not seem to see any relevancy on my decision to film their daily life. They did not realize that what they were saying was going to be translated later on. On many occasion, I have to leave the camera on the tripod to go and convince them that I was doing this for purpose of studies.

In opposition to Abdou and his family, Ibrahim and Mairo (his wife) were more comfortable with the camera. However, Abdou and his wife were not the only people who were superstitious on the fact that I was following them with the camera. One day, when I was following Mairo, Ibrahim’s wife in the market place, her friend a Bahouan woman came to great her. After a while, she realized that they were being film. She pulled Mairo out of the frame and the conversation was as follow:

-Friend: Look... we are being film. Let get out from here!
Looking at her behavior Mairo smiled and said:

¹² In Cameroon context, "Illuminati" is a superstitious ideology which refers to a group of people who belong to a secret society with Satanist actions. (The translation is mine)

- *I know but it does not matter.*
- *What is she going to do with the footage? Where is she taking us to?*
- *Why are you scared? I am not afraid of anything. Come on!*

There is another example like this at the beginning of the film” New way of life”

Ibrahim, my main informant is selling his medicine in the market when he meets one old couple. He went and great them. The old man asks him why I am following him around with the camera. Ibrahim answers: *“she is trying to make a story about our life in this village.”* The old man addressed me in these terms: *“come and film me with my wife.”* Surprisingly, the wife removes her hand strongly in her husband’s hand and says *“what for? I do not want to be film. Let’s go!”* Ibrahim started to laugh and he even brought the news to his family as a sign of mockery. Ibrahim was very surprised about people reaction toward the camera. One day, he told me that: *“I do not understand why people are afraid of a camera.”* For him, those people were just ignorant and *“only education is able to prevent them from this kind of behavior”* was his conclusion. There are many others examples like this with people who did not want to be film at all. Some others were event hiding behind the first thing they got in front of them. Each time I was pointing the camera toward people with insistence at the market place, they were shouting some expressions like *“where are you taking us to, do you want to sell us?”*¹³

From the above, the camera appears as a tool for discovering people feelings. Using the camera allowed me to realize that most of the local people do not like to be filmed by a stranger. Even though I am from this village, people do not know me. I did not grow up there and it is just after I presented myself with my family name that they realized that I was from the locality. Meanwhile, in this village, many people are very afraid of witchcraft. They have lost their trust in researchers who used camera as research tool. I was probably paying for some damages that some previous researchers did before me. It seems like some people used to come and film them for bad purposes. But as far as knowledge is concern, this phenomenon demands a serious attention for future studies concerning the main reason behind this constant fear. However, Mairo and her husband seem to be very confident when it comes to supernatural power. This is probably due to the fact that Ibrahim has a very good knowledge on medicine plants, especially those which can prevent evil. Some others seem to be aware of the fact that the researcher is going to enjoy the outcome of the images alone. That is the

¹³ This is a common expression that people use to express their fear of witchcraft or a supernatural power in Cameroon.

reason why many others wanted to be pay before being shouted. This explains the impact of external dynamic on the life of the local people and also the lack of ethics in many research works. The following statement portrays how I was able to convince my informants and make them understand how important it is to make research on people's tradition. One day when I was recording, Ibrahim's friend who came for a visit asked his son to translate the following to me:

Tell her that I thank her very much for making a history of our culture. Tell her that I am very grateful that she has decided to choose to do her research about our culture. What she is doing is very important for us, even though we seem to neglect what she is doing. Our culture is not like before. One day, our children will see this film and say: Is this the way our culture was before? Please, tell her that she is very welcome and that whenever she wants to learn more about our tradition, the door will always be opened for her.

To this, I will agree with Crawford and Turton that: "...we had actually come to terms with the fact that the world changes all the times and what was, yesterday, is not necessarily more interesting than what will be, tomorrow" (1992: 15).

4.7. Ethical implication

Unlike in the text where it is possible to hide the informants' identity, accessing them with a video camera presents them in their real world. For this reason, it is important for the researcher to frame them in the way that will give them justice. For ethical purposes, none of those who did not wish to be film are part of the final product. In addition, I have also tried not to present my informants in a disrespectful way. In the field, I have to follow them in different location. Sometimes it was very annoying because I felt that they also needed their privacy. Even though they were not complaining about that, I could feel that they were not always at ease with my presence. Besides, the activities recorded were outdoors (on the yard). The indoor represent their privacy and I had to respect this in order to minimize the risk of irritating them. So, doing research with a video camera is not only *perceived as a "process of knowledge, but also as process of communication"* (Crawford and Turton, 1992).

4.8. Text and film

As a research tool, the camera allows to the researcher to study his/her material as many times as possible, with different approach going back and ford. Therefore, while the film presents a reality in a descriptive and observational way, the text allows the researcher to analyze it

through theories. Further, even though the film presents what actually happened in the field in a selective way, the moving images portrays the reality of a specific group by *“bringing them to life each time we see them”* (MacDougall, 2005). So, the use of a video camera, allowed me to portray a reality which was going on within a specific time and space. Thus, analyzing the film in the text allows to the readers to understand the reality in the informant’s own point of view. For example, from the images which I collected from the field, I was able to perceive that there is a hidden conflict between the researchers with a video camera and the local people. Certain information that seemed insignificant for me on the field appeared very important while I was analyzing my footage. The footage allowed me to get to understand the social reality in Bahouan, even though sometimes, *“the sense we make of research participant’s’ words and actions is an expression of our own consciousness”* (Cohen and Rapport, 1995:12 in Pink, 2013:35).

So, the writing part explains in a more deep detail what is being discussed in the film. Moreover, *“where the text can subdue the individual and the particular, film cannot”* (MacDougall, 1995 in Pink, 2006:64). In order to better understand what is being discussed in the film, the writing part can complement the film by explaining the data or the experience further. It also helps to clarify the reason why the main concern of the characters is to talk about some issues such as integration, education, religion and tradition. The text is used to *“represent the particular and human experience, and abstract ideas can be communicated on film by diagrams, maps and voiceover”* (Pink, 2006:64). In the film *“New way of life”*, I try to contextualize some part with some posters so that the audience can understand the real context of the film. The text clarifies in details some issues which are not easily understandable by the audience in the film.

To conclude, the film and the text complement each other’s. The images and the text combine allow the researcher to create knowledge in visual anthropology. While the film presents the data from the field by visual means, the text analyze the empirical data which are presented in the film. *“Visual notes – such as those made already by Boa - may complement the written ones, but they cannot replace them”* (Crawford and Turton, 1992:14).

Chapter three: The theoretical framework and the study area.

3.1. The theory

The symbolic interactionism theory is going to serve as guideline to support this work. In every society, each type of new behavior finds their explanation in the analysis of social change. However, change occurs as the result of individual daily encounters. Thus, individuals and society cannot be separated from each other because they are both created through social interaction. Therefore, individuals cannot be understood without taking into consideration their relationship with the environment (Charon, 2009).

Focusing on meaning, a theoretician of this school, Blumer (1969), has set out three basic premises of this approach: a) "Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings those things have for them." b) "Such meanings derive from or arise out of the interaction of the individual with others and the society." c) "These meaning are handle in and modify through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounter."

In addition to this, Charon (2009:31) had identified five central ideas which can explain the causes for social interaction:

1. "The human being must be understood as a social person. It is the constant search for social interaction that leads us to do what we do. Instead of focusing on the individual and his or her personality, or on how the society or social situation causes human behavior, symbolic interactionism focuses on the activities that take place between actors. What we do depends on interaction with others earlier in our lifetimes, and it depends on our interaction right now. Social interaction is central to what we do.

2. The human being must be understood as a thinking being. Human action is not only interaction among individuals but also interaction within the individual. It is not our ideas or attitudes or values that are as important as the constant active ongoing process of thinking. We are not simply conditioned, we are not simply beings who are influenced by those around us and we are not simply products of society. We are, to our very core, thinking animals, always conversing with ourselves as we interact with others.

3. Humans do not sense their environment directly; instead, humans define the situation they are in. An environment may actually exist, but it is our definition of it that is important. Definition does not simply randomly happen; instead, it results from ongoing social interaction and thinking.
4. The cause of human action is the result of what is occurring in our present situation. Cause unfolds in the present social interaction, present thinking, and present definition. It is not society's encounters with us in our past, that causes action nor is it our own past experience that does. It is, instead, social interaction, thinking, and definition of the situation that takes place in the present. Our past enters into our actions primarily because we think about it and apply it to the definition of the present situation.
5. Human beings are described as active beings in relation to their environment. Words such as conditioning, responding, controlled, imprisoned, and formed are not used to describe the human being in symbolic interaction. In contrast to other social-scientific perspectives humans are not thought of as being passive in relation to their surroundings, but actively involved in what they do."

The above five elements describe the present situation of my informants in Bahouan. As social actors, this theory allows to analyze the capacity of the Mbororo to invent a new life for themselves. It also helps to see how these Mbororo perceive their identity in response to their encounter with the Bahouan people. The relevance of this theory for my work is the fact that my informants have moved from a nomadic life to a settled lifestyle. Therefore, they are working as housekeepers in a different environment where people daily behavior is culturally, religiously, linguistically and socially different from their own. Thus, while interacting with the Bahouan people, these Mbororo are trying to redefine their identity so that they can better interact with their hosts. For this, reason, they are presenting themselves in the way that will give meaning to people they are interacting with. So, how they want to be perceived by the others and the way they behave within and outside their community is all relevant to study, in order to understand the meaning of their daily actions. In addition to this, some scholars such as Grønhaug and Barth with their concepts of social field and ethnicity will also help to explore what the Mbororo are facing in Bahouan. Other theories will be developed alongside

with the analysis in the discussing part. Those are acculturation, assimilation, identity, entrepreneur etc.

3.2. The concept of social field

The work of Grønhaug (1975): *Macro factors in local life: social organization in Antalya, southern Turkey* offers an important tool to analyze the social dynamic in the Mbororo culture and also the identity dilemma which they are facing in Bahouan village. Therefore, social organization occurs during events in everyday life and in different social field. Thus, social field is an aggregate of social relationships which are sets of complementary statuses. (Grønhaug, 1975). According to him, people within their community are also affected by what is going on in their surrounding while tied to their custom and traditions. In other words, Grønhaug presents how social, economic, political and environmental constraints are able to influence even the smallest community that exists in local life in a wider point of view.

Therefore, in this study, I consider the Mbororo of Bahouan as nomadic people who have chosen to settle in this community due to some economic, social and cultural constraints. However, considering the fact that my informants are known as housekeepers who live in people's houses, this approach will allow me also to see the power relationship between the Mbororo and the villagers. The power relation between the Mbororo men and their women will also be taken into consideration. I will also connect their daily condition in the bush which has brought them into a more broad scale field which is difficult to escape from while interacting with people from a different background. Further, following them in their daily life gave me the possibility to understand their behavior in different spheres. For a more systematic presentation of the situation of the Mbororo in Bahouan, the analytical part of this paper will be discussed within three social fields: culture, economy and social. Their contribution will be more focus in the economic field while the change and continuity in their culture will be oriented to the socio-cultural field. In the last part of the analysis, the ethnicity and religious discussion will then cover the cultural aspect of the social field.

3.3. The concept of ethnicity

In every society, individuals have the capacity to elaborate strategies which can allow them to survive in different environment. To be integrated, they sometimes invent a new identity. They try to adapt themselves by selecting some way of behavior in the other group so that they can better incorporate themselves to the other culture for a better understand. So, ethnic boundaries define a group and not the "cultural stuff that encloses it" (Phinney, 2003:63).

Barth has identify an ethnic group as a group of people who are “biologically self-perpetuating , bounded , sharing fundamental cultural values, forming a field of communication and interaction, conscious of a category identity which is recognized by others (Bank, 1996:12 citing Barth, 1969). Ethnicity according to Barth, allows understanding how boundary is maintained beyond contact. During interethnic contacts, there is a barrier that is expressed through ethnic differences. It is when an individual from one ethnic group decide to assimilate himself to the other one that ethnic difference start to be visible. This theory also provides an understanding of how individuals use their ethnic identity to categorize themselves and others for the purpose of social interaction. E.g.: Mbororo versus Bahouan people. To illustrate this, Bahouan is a new environment for the Mbororo migrant workers who represent just a minority group in this environment. In order to be accepted by the host population, the Mbororo people must therefore adjust themselves so that they can easily adapt and interrelate with the Bahouan people. Bahouan is perceived here as the external constraints which the Mbororo must deal with if they want to achieve their aims.

This theory will also help to clarify how some strong element of an ethnic identity serve as a limiting factor for different ethnic groups to isolate themselves or differentiate themselves to others. For example, language is a barrier because by speaking Fulani in Bahouan, the Mbororo are trying to express their similarity with those who share their cultural values. By doing so, it discriminate or exclude those who do not belong to the group. Only people who speak Fulani can understand what they are saying at this particular moment.

3.4. Bahouan, the study area in the Western Cameroon (Bamileke zone)

Bahouan is one of the many villages among the large group of the Bamileke¹⁴ people who are present in the western grass field¹⁵ of Cameroon. Situate at 15 km distance from *Bafoussam* the capital city of the region, the population of Bahouan is around six thousand. Furthermore, Bahouan is surrounded by six other villages (*Bandjoun, Bamendjou, Baham, Batie, Bameka, and Bansoa*). Situated in the department of hauts-plateaux (see the map), Bahouan and its

¹⁴ Bamileke people represent a great majority group of the Western Grass fields divided into many independent kingdoms with different dialects. The Bamileke tribe is governed by a village chief who is supported by a council of elders. In the past, the chief was believed to have supernatural powers that allowed him to turn into an animal (elephant, buffalo, or leopard, lion...).

¹⁵The grass fields are a highland area of western Cameroon with humid vegetation which is dominated by grasslands. Ethnic groups who inhabit this place share similar culture and symbol in their art. Among the geographical features that make this possible, the altitude seems to play a more important role in fixing the wintering site frequently occurring above 1500 meters, which modifies the threshold altitudinal breeding conditions (Boutrais, 1996).

neighboring villages are sharing approximately the same languages. Some words are very similar, but they are different in the pronunciation. In *Bamileke* language, “*ba*” means “*people from...*” This is the reason why all the townships in the West region of Cameroon start with “*ba*.” Unlike the Mbororo whose livelihood revolves around livestock activities, the Bahouan people are mainly agriculturalists, hunters and traders. Women are responsible for planting and harvesting due to the belief that women make the soil more fruitful. The men role is to clearing the land and hunting. The major crops grown in this village are yams, peanuts, beans, banana, vegetables, potatoes and maize. Thus, like the rest of the native of this region, the Bahouan people are well known in Cameroon for being very successful in economic activities. They are even called “*people of business*” because of their ability of easily managing economical activities. They are always in search of new opportunities to start afresh a new activity that will ultimately know success. In case of failure, they hardly get discouraged. Endurance, perseverance, hard work and dynamism are the qualities which are bound into *Bamileke* spirit (Marguerat, 1985; Gautier, 1994).

In this village which is dominated by a patriarchal society, kinship ties are very strong and the society is hierarchically structured. People respect the hierarchy and are much submitted to the community rules. Therefore, the chief who is the owner of the local land is the decision makers. Land is distributed only among men who have reached the appropriate age. But, the priority of owning a land is given to people who belong to the kingdom. Meanwhile, all the empty land which belongs to the family and which are often surrounding the main compound can be used as a farm by any members of the family. Women do not have the right to land because they are supposed to leave their family once they get married. In case they lose their husband, the land and all his wealth go to one of their son who is supposed to manage the house as the head of the family. However, the widow will still be in control of the house in cooperation with the successor (Boutrais, 1996). Most of the Bahouan population believes in Christianity even though they accord a great importance to their ancestors. Ancestral spirits are embodied in the skulls of deceased ancestors which are kept in a specific house. This house where the ancestors are all put together will later serve as a genealogical landmark for the future generation to come. In Bahouan tradition, ancestors are perceived as mediators between the supreme God and people who are still alive.

3.5. The Mbororo historical background

Traditionally pastoralist herders, Mbororo are nomadic group of people with much interest in

livestock activities. Dispersed throughout much of West and Central Africa, they come from the Middle East and Northern Africa and are historically and linguistically related to Fulani (Pelican, 2007). The Mbororo belong to a sub clan of the large Fulani group. The other name for the Mbororo in Cameroon is nomadic Fulani in opposition to the settled Fulani (Burnham, 1996:77). This distinction is very important in order to understand the hierarchical structure among this group of people. The various clans of Fulani ethnic groups entered in Cameroon in the early nineteenth century, all the way from Nigeria, Central African Republic and conquered the Northern region through the holy war¹⁶ (Boutrais, 1999; Adamou, 2007). All the political privilege were then given to the Fulani who decided to follow the Jihad. However, the Mbororo are among the few who refused to follow the Jihad. The political power is more centralized in the settled Fulani community while it is more decentralized in the Mbororo one (Burnham, 1996).

However, the drastic drought of the early 80s in the Northern part of Cameroon has also had a considerable impact on the reduction of the grazing area. Meanwhile, some Mbororo diversified their migration zone by going in some mountainous and forestry areas of Cameroon. Among these regions, it is during the 20th century that they move to the Western Grass fields (Bamenda) which were very suitable for them with the fresh pastures for their cattle. This is what makes the pastoral activity very favorable, although farmers are undeniably prevailing as far as density and decision making are concerned (Boutrais, 1996). The Mbororo of the Grass fields are grouped into two sub clan: the *Djafoun* who arrived around 1920 and the *Akou* who followed later from 1950 (ibid). Due to the favorable ecological conditions of the region as a grazing area which is very favorable to the agro pastoral activities, most of them decided to settle permanently.

From the last data base, the Mbororo population of Cameroon is around 1, 85 million with about 130 000 who live in the Nord-West (Douala Seminar 07-09-December 2009). During the 1990s, Cameroon experienced an upsurge in criminality. Under the influence of the constant insecurity in the bush, many Mbororo were exposed to evils of many kinds.¹⁷ Some of them saw their chances to pursue their cultural lifestyle to be limited. In addition of losing

¹⁶ The Fulani War, also known as the Fulani Jihad was a military contest in the northern Nigeria and Cameroon. Usman Dan Fodio, a studious and charismatic Muslim Fulani scholar, is a reformist preacher who assembled a Fulani army to lead in jihad.

¹⁷ The Mbororo lost a large amount of their cattle not only because of natural disease or drought but also because of the increasing criminality in the bush highway robbers, disappearance of their cattle and kidnapping of their children and wives against ransom)

their cows, some herders also had to sell their remaining ones in order to secure their future (Breman and al. 1986:38; Bonfiglioli, 1985:30). Some others decided to settle down and look for other opportunities (selling meat, farming, keeping people houses or trading). Other decided to settle due to their wealth and the increasing number of their herd which they left under the care of some salaried herders (Diallo and Schlee, 2000).

For this study, the situation has pushed some Mbororo in the North West region of Cameroon to abandon their nomadic lifestyle and seek for livelihood in Bahouan, in the Western Cameroon. Moreover, my interest is to present the encounter of these Mbororo with the Bahouan people and the consequences for their cultural identity.

3.6. The ethnographic presentation of the informants

Focusing on the Mbororo people who live in Bahouan, the research has been carried out on two Mbororo men: Abdou and Ibrahim. My preference for choosing them as the main characters is based on different reason. The first reason concerns their close relationship to my grandmother. Secondly, I wanted to make a comparative analysis of these two families because of their different behavior during their daily interaction in Bahouan. Ibrahim is very opened minded while Abdou on the other hand is very reserved and conservative. Other informants are also important because they play a specific role for this project, but I will only talk about them as I gradually move on. However, there were only few Mbororo in this village by the time I conducted this research (thirteen Mbororo parents and children included). I choose to present Haman (a non Mbororo Muslim man, married to a Mbororo woman) because of the role that he plays as the contact person between the Mbororo and the Bahouan people.

Ibrahim



Ibrahim is a 65 years old man. He is married to Mairo who is around 35 years old. They live together with one of their seventeenth year's old son and their 5 years old twin daughters. The other children live in the North West

region with their relatives. Unlike his children, Ibrahim has never got the opportunity to attend Quranic School. His dream is to collect enough money to send his children to school and to travel to Saudi Arabia so that he can fulfill all the pillars of Islam. He prays five times a day and identifies himself as a good Muslim. He makes his living by working as housekeeper in the day and gatekeeper during the night in another house. He uses his free times working on people's farms and selling traditional medicine in Bahouan and the neighboring markets. Sometimes he just stay in the house preparing his medicine or helping his wife in house chores. He is specialized in specific diseases such as malaria, yellow fever, breast cancer, stomach pain, cirrhosis and many other). When he is not on the market, he is working on his farm near to his house. He got his medicine skills from his late father as heritage. Where ever he goes (funerals, visiting his relatives, doing "*pambe*".¹⁸)

He always bring with him his famous *menthol* in the bottle from *Saudi Arabia* which looks like water or vodka. It gives a very cold sensation while swallowing it. It tastes like menthe and is very refreshing. According to Ibrahim, this potion is effective for curing liver cirrhosis; by disinfecting body and killing bacteria inside. It also plays the role of blood purification. Many of his customers are people who drink or smoke. His medicine seems to be very much demanded and appreciate by his clients. Out of curiosity, some people ask for tasting it and decide to buy it. I tried it myself on several occasions. The reason why I decided to do this was to develop a client relationship with him. I wanted to show my gratitude in my own way for his willingness for accepting my intrusion in his life. It was also a way to allow him to earn more money and make him forget about my presence as a researcher which could be annoying sometimes. He was very happy about my actions and I was using the opportunity to extract more information from him. I was not forgetting to complement his product each time I got the opportunity.

His wife helps him also to sell some others medicine in the market place. But she only goes to the market together with her husband with his permission. When his father died and let him with only a few cows in inheritance, he has to stop herding and decided to settle down in a village situated in the North West region of Cameroon. He considers this place as his village because of the attachment¹⁹ that he and his family have there. In the past, he has many

¹⁸ Pambe is the name for the activity which consist of working in people farms for money.

¹⁹ Mal, Habou et al (1990:35) defined the place of attachment as "a geographical area which regularly, for the majority of the year, is essential for a group of people and to which they are attached and to which they move back and forth due to transhumance, migration, or exodus done by a part or the whole group"(see Loftsdottir, 2008).

difficulties, especially after the economic crisis of the early 1990s in Cameroon. He had no choice but to sell some of his remaining cows and buy a land where he has built a house to secure his family. In order to sustain his wife, children and extended family, who were waiting for him to provide, he started to struggle for his income and ended up as a housekeeper in Bahouan. He uses his monthly salary to buy more cows and take care of those who herd them. He speaks Fulani with his Mbororo fellow and Pidgin, French or Bahouan with the local population. He uses to clean the house only once a week. Before his landlords come to the village, they have to call him so that he can make the compound ready for their venue.

Abdou



Abdou is about 45 years old married to Adjara who is also a Mbororo like him. They have 5 children, one girl and four boys. But, they live with their two sons two and 6 years old sons. The girl is already married and the others sons are herding in the bush (two hours' drive from Bahouan) with their grandfather. This family has been actually living in the village for only 2 years. Abdou has many cows in the bush which he has confided to his father and brothers. He decided to quit from herding because he was getting tired of it. He wants his first son to be a good herder that is the reason why he allows him to stay with his grandfather to learn the herding job. But he decided to settle because he wanted to look for more money to increase his herd. Abdou and his family do not have any experience in traditional medicine. They are always at home and they do not have enough experience in farming activities. During farming season, some of their neighbors usually visit them and help them to plant their crops. When Abdou is not cutting the grass around his compound he is sitting or wondering around. Like Ibrahim, Abdou and his family pray five times a day.

Haman

Bellow is Haman picture (on the left side) in interaction with Issa, his father-in-law



Haman is a sixty years old man who has been living as housekeeper in Bahouan for almost 16 years. He is actually the first Muslim to move to this township coming from *Gaoundere*, in the Northern Cameroon where he was working as gatekeeper for the same family. He is not a Mbororo, but he is married to a Mbororo women. His social network in this community is very large. All the Mbororo call him their “in law” because he has married a Mbororo woman who is one of their relatives. Haman is keeping the house of one of the richest man in Bahouan. This person who I will prefer to keep the name anonymous in my work owns many factories and supermarkets in Cameroon. The fact that his landlord is well known in this village gives a high position to Haman. Most of the villagers know him very well and his children are very good friends with the young people of the village. The position of Haman as a person who keeps the house of one of the notorious personality of Bahouan gives him the privilege to be in contact with many other rich men of this village. Therefore, whenever there is a need for a housekeeper, he is the contact person. Also, he is very trusted because of his experience and skills as a good housekeeper. He knows the story of this family very well and he also has a lot of cultural experience in Bahouan. During his stay in this village, he has acquired different knowledge. He knows most of the customs and tradition of this community more than I do. He is able to describe the meaning of each sound of a drum in the village. He knows when it is possible to bury people in the village and when it is not. He knows who own which big house in the village. He explained to me how he helped Mbororo people who live in Bahouan to find a job. The first Mbororo to whom he got a job for in Bahouan is Issa his father in law.

Below is the social status of all the Mbororo men who were working as housekeepers in Bahouan in 2013 and how they interrelate to Haman.

Names	Ibrahim	Abdou	Haman, a non Mbororo, married to a Mbororo	Issa, Haman father's in law	Yao
statuses	married	married	married	married	Married
Numbers of children in Bahouan	3	2	4	2	1
ages	60	50	60	70	23
Contact person	Haman	Haman	Haman	Haman	Ibrahim through Haman
skills	Herders, medicine seller	Former herder	Former gatekeeper	Former herder and medicine seller	Former herder
Number of years in Bahouan	5	2 years	16	9	1

From the description of my informants above, to meet the criteria of working as a housekeeper in this village, the social status seem to play an important role. The job seeker must not only be a man but a responsible person. Thus, to gain the trust of the landlord, acquiring this job implies being married with children and well known by a trusted third party. Unlike Ibrahim who is more opened minded and accommodate person, Abdou looks more conservative. While Ibrahim is sending his children (girls) to school, Abdou's children (boys) do not go to school. In addition, the power relation between Abdou and his wife is more visible than in Ibrahim family. Abdou hardly speaks or jokes with his wife and children while Ibrahim interacts more freely with his own family. In opposition to Abdou, Ibrahim assists his wife very often in the house chores (pulling water in the well, fixing firewood in the kitchen, controlling the food on the fire, taking care of his children). Apart from cutting grasses around his compound from time to time Abdou is always sitting on his veranda while

his wife does the entire house works with the help of her children (cleaning the floor, washing dishes, cooking, carrying water from the river, washing clothes). Below is a picture of Ibrahim helping his wife to carry water on her head.



Chapter four: Data and analysis

4.1. The Mbororo of Bahouan and their contribution in this community

This part presents the contribution of the Mbororo in different social field. The services that the Mbororo are providing in this village are very helpful for the villagers who are saved from insecurity.

- The entrepreneur activities of Haman

Although my informants got the job through a third party, they have earned the trust of their landlords. This is probably due to the fact that in Cameroon, there is a socio-cultural reputation that the Mbororo people have the ability to handle knife and ensure the guarding of their herd in the bush. They are able to keep people houses because they have mastered their experience from keeping their own cows. Just by knowing that the Mbororo people are very brave, it will be difficult to an ordinary person to try to steal in the houses that they are keeping. This explains probably why some landlord prefers to leave their house under the care of the Mbororo than to a young villager. However, Haman who is their contact person is perceived as the guaranty person in this village because people consider him already as being part of this community. Because of his social position in the field, Haman is like an entrepreneur. Thus, entrepreneurship *“is the process by which the society is transform and improved through the creation of new activities, it also involves the relationship between individuals of one society with those of another, economically more advanced one. In the situation of intercultural contact, the entrepreneur is the one who uses his position to cease for an opportunity in pursuit of profit by breaking the rules”* (Barth, 1972).

This theory portrays beautifully how Haman has managed to initiate a new institution in Bahouan by contributing in resolving the problem of unemployment in the Mbororo community. With his 16 years of experiences working as a housekeeper in Bahouan, Haman has created new job opportunities to people who he considers as his *“in laws.”* At the same time, he uses his social network in the village to create a new business activity which put him into a constant interrelation with the Mbororo and the Bahouan. Also, by being an outsider from the Mbororo and the Bahouan point of view, Haman gains the respect and the trust of these people who look at him as the perfect mediator. To this, I agree with Barth that: *“goods which are obtained through entrepreneurial activity are clearly not restricted to purely monetary or even material forms, but may take the form of power, rank, or experience and*

skills” (1972:8). So, the entrepreneurial activity of the entrepreneur can elevate the social status of the latter by converting the economical reward that he was supposed to get from his services to people gaining recognition and respect as compensation. By initiating this kind of activity, Haman also take on him the responsibility of the people he is bringing to the Bahouan landlords. As an entrepreneur, Haman must “*initiate and coordinate a number of inter-personal relationships in a supervisory capacity to effectuate his enterprise*” (Barth, 1972). If one fails on his housekeeping duties, Haman will be the first person to blame because he is the one who bring them in to the village. So, my informants have found a job in Bahouan through their connection to Haman. In the case of this study, Haman is seeing as an entrepreneur because he uses his power position to put the Mbororo in contact with the landowners. This joins Barth idea who believes that an entrepreneur is an individual who “*take the initiative to pursuit of profit in some discernible form, manipulate other persons and resources*” (Barth, 1972:6). So, the experience he has in the village as good housekeepers is the tool which he uses to manipulate in some way some other landlords who are in the need of housekeepers.

The contribution and the power relation between the Mbororo and the Bahouan

There exist a power relation between the Mbororo and their landlords. While keeping peoples ‘houses, the Mbororo give to their landlords the possibility to manage their affair in the city in a peaceful mind. Knowing that the house in the village is secure allows the owners to succeed in their business activities in the city. Besides, all the houses kept by my informants are owned by successful Bahouan people, mostly businessmen, who have big factories which are well known at the national and even international level. At the same time, these landlords are having the opportunity to be employers and have a financial power relation toward their housekeepers who need money to survive. They are also perceived as heroes who are helping people in uncertain situations to earn money and improve their living condition. Thus, the relationship between the Mbororo and their landlord seems peaceful. The Mbororo are even consider as a part of their landlords own family. For example, each time the owners of Ibrahim’s house visit him, they bring with them a lot of foods and goods for Ibrahim and his family. When they are returning back to the city, they also give them some extra money as a way of expressing their satisfaction for the job well done. On the other hand, the landlords can also be perceived as being in a weaker position vis a vis the Mbororo who provide them

different services. Therefore, they can decide at any moment to quit their jobs and go back to their villages. In addition, Ibrahim possesses the medicinal knowledge which gives him power over his customers. In return the expectation of his clients is a pressure upon him. People trust his skills and they come to ask for his advices concerning some treatment. He is also the secret person because he knows the disease of many people in the village. Looking at this perspective, his status is raised by the local population who consider him like a medical doctor. Besides, being a notorious medical seller in Bahouan put pressure on Ibrahim, and determines the way he prepares his medicine. He is always seeking to improve his skills or the quality of the treatment he sells to his customers. Because of the expectation of his clients, he tries to make his medicine efficient to cure his customers' diseases. Culturally, while the Bahouan people are teaching Bahouan language to the Mbororo, the Bahouan people are also learning Fulani language from the Mbororo. This intercultural communication allows diversifying the language skills of the both parties and fortifying their relation in peaceful way. On several occasions, I witness people greeting my informants in Fulani and my informants were also speaking both Bahouan and Fulani to them.

By communicating with different kind of customers, they do not just share their skills and experiences but they also learn new kind of behavior and are in touch with modern knowledge and technology which they have to face every day. For example, they have increased their social network through the use of cell phone as the means of communication with their relatives in the bush and with their landlord. They are very familiar with identity cards which they need to collect their money every month in the bank agency. They do not only use the money that they get from trading for house needs, but also to buy modern medicine or pay their children's school fees.

From the above, the Mbororo people are contributing efficiently to the development of Bahouan community as a whole. In return, they are getting money which allows them to face the exigency of modernity. Their monthly salary helps them to perpetuate their herding activities by paying other herders to take care of their cattle in the bush and to buy more cattle. In Mbororo society, the number of cattle determines the level of wealth and power (Boutrais, 1996). This explains the reason why they want to increase their herd. At the same time, recurrent utilization of money as a mean of goods' exchange has "*created new needs and develops the desire to build the currency and giving local property market values* " (Oumarou, 2012: 237). This is the case, for example of their medicinal plant which was not

sold before and today are based on a lucrative scale. Earlier, when someone had the ability to recognize a medicinal plant and was able cure some disease, he was not expected to get something in return (Bocquene, 2002). However, I noticed that even though Ibrahim has broken this rule by selling his medicine, he is still respecting some moral and ethics. For example, Ibrahim does not sell all his medicinal plants. When he was presenting me the plant which is capable of destroying the effect poison in human body (see the film new way of life), he said that it is not allowed in his culture to sell a medicine which was acquired freely from his father knowledge. I also noticed that Ibrahim never asked for money when he gives his medicine to his Mbororo fellows. Among themselves, they exchange services freely. They only sell to those who do not belong to their ethnic group.



Picture of Bahouan market and Ibrahim selling his medicine to a Bahouan woman

5.3. The integration process of the Mbororo to Bahouan community

In today society, individuals are constantly challenged by the changes in their daily life. Considering the fact that the Mbororo are people whose life is generally based on livestock's activities (Boutrais, 1996; Virtanen, 2010), the following enlighten the reasons for the abandonment of this lifestyle. The question addressed in this part is to understand what are the available ways in which the Mbororo must go through in order to adapt themselves in Bahouan? What are the different strategies which they are using to ease this integration process? They have migrated to Bahouan in search of livelihood. However, to survive in this new environment, they have to use their skills to seek for opportunities. To achieve this, they must adjust themselves by incorporating some Bahouan ways of behaviors so that they can be accepted by their hosts. For this reason, they are capable of deconstructing and reconstructing

their culture in order to create a new one which is more suitable for their daily interethnic contact. Therefore, the change occurs in their tradition as the result of their acculturation in process. Acculturation refers to “those *phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups*” (Berry, 2005). Thus, through the analysis of integration, the question addresses here is whether there is continuity or change in the original tradition of the Mbororo who live in Bahouan. In other words, one may say that by settling in Bahouan the Mbororo had acculturated themselves by adapting some of their host community’s culture.

- ***The Adoption of Bahouan way of life***

From the data which I collected in the field, many factors can explain the integration of the Mbororo to Bahouan. As social actors, they have developed new strategies to improve their living condition in this community. According to Bourdieu (1993), a field is a hierarchical social arena where agents use different strategies over the appropriation of certain species of capital. This capital can be social, economic or cultural. By migrating to Bahouan, my informants get their resources through the value they produce from their outside or inside world by labor and others services. Economically, they have diversified their activities. In addition to his monthly salary as a housekeeper (in the day) and gatekeeper (in another house during the night), Ibrahim has an additional income which are generating from his other small activities (selling traditional medicine, working in people’s farm) aiming at earning money. This opportunity allows him to face current expenses (food, clothing). Besides, the job of housekeepers allows all the Mbororo of Bahouan to have a good shelter in a good environment where they share a peaceful relation with the local population. They do not need to pay for the rent; neither do they have to pay for electricity or water. They have a place to farm different varieties of foods (maize, beans, peanut, potatoes, yam...). They also have free furniture and live in this village as if they were the owners of the houses that they are keeping. The only thing that they have to do is to keep the house clean.

In Bahouan, people organize their daily activities based on the local calendar. Each day of the week have a symbolic meaning for the population. Market and farming are not allowed during sacred days. In this community, there are days for farming, days for the market, days for funerals etc. Friday, Saturday and Sunday are reserved for rituals and others traditional practices. My informants seem to be used to the system and their daily life is organized

according to these rules. Therefore, in order to get integrated in Bahouan, the Mbororo have to accept the norms of the community. So, they go to the farm only during farming days and they sell medicine at the market place during market day. The market day is only once a week in this community and in most of its neighboring villages. Thus, when Ibrahim is not selling his medicine in Bahouan market, he does it in the neighboring villages. By not ignoring the socio-cultural rules of this community, the Mbororo avoid being in conflict with their host population. The respect of the socio-cultural rules of Bahouan by the Mbororo reflects their willingness to adapt themselves to this community. The second factor of their integration is that they are trying to adopt the way of life of their hosts. For example, Ibrahim is sending his children to school. Going to school allows these children to mingle with the children of this locality. Therefore, through their daily interaction, they are learning new ways of behavior. They all speak the Bahouan language with the local population and they eat Bahouan traditional foods. All of them have established a peaceful relationship with their neighbors who used to visit them and give them some food. Ibrahim's and Abdou's children eat in their neighbor's house very often. Further, their way of farming is also similar to those of the Bahouan people. Like the farmers of Bahouan, they plant crops according to season (potatoes, yam, groundnuts, maize and beans). Sometimes, their neighbors help them in their farm, especially the children of those neighbors.

Another example of this integration is their attendance in the traditional rituals of Bahouan. Even though my informants do not share the same cultural value with the Bahouan people, they are attending their funerals. Thus, assisting the local people during their funerals is a mark of sympathy, a way for these Mbororo to express their belongingness to this community. Meanwhile, attending those funerals also allows them to adapt themselves to the new environment by learning the local customs and tradition of the Bahouan people. To this, I agree with Cohen (1974:2) that: *“There is a reality, or several realities, to which man must adapt if he is to survive, reproduce, and perpetuate himself. Population must adapt to the reality of the physical world; They must do this not only in terms of acquiring livelihood...but they must maintain a proper ‘fit’ between their biological makeup and the pressure of the various habitats in which they seek to live.”*

- *The integration in the socio- cultural field*

Furthermore, one other aspect of this integration can be perceived through the social status of Ibrahim and his wife. Most of the people who know Ibrahim and his wife in this village use to call them *tagni* and *magni*²⁰. They are very popular because of their status as parents of twins and medicine sellers. A particular attention is given to twins and their parents in Bahouan society. This importance is even greater because it is perceived as something rare, a divine favor an “*extraordinary event*” (Albert, 1943:150). In fact, having twins generate the pride of parents because it is followed by the respect, praise and admiration of the entire community. As for the twins, they are regarded as being endowed by supernatural power (ibid: 152). In addition, by addressing Ibrahim as *tagni* and Mairo as *magni*, the Bahouan people are trying to express their desire to share their cultural values and tradition with them. Consequently, accepting to be called as such denote the integration of the latter in the Bahouan. However, according to Barth (1969) point of view, ethnic group and boundary is also relevant while taking into consideration not only the cultural differences, but also the similarity between two or different ethnic group in contact situation. Apart from the name that people give to parents of twins in Bahouan society, I noticed that what Ibrahim, Mairo and their children share with the Bahouan is a common bracelet which they should wear in their everyday life to symbolize their differences with ordinary parents and children. So, the Mbororo and the Bahouan people have in common a bracelet which twins and their parents should always wear on them. On the picture bellow, it is possible to see the bracelet on the hand of Ibrahim and his twins.



²⁰ *tagni* and *magni* are surnames of the father and the mother of twins in Bahouan. It is the more rewarding form of address which marks the honor gives to every parent of twins in Bahouan society. Therefore, they are given automatically a surname, having twins in this village symbolize the social promotion of the parents.

- *The adopting way of eating*

In comparison to Abdou house where children are still eating in the same dish, Ibrahim's children have adopted the Bahouan way of eating. Everybody in his house eat in his own dish. Yao (a young housekeeper), who is Mairo nephew eat in the same space with his wife. He even serves himself directly from the pot in the presence of his wife who is not a Mbororo, but a Bamoun girl. He does not seem to care so much about the Mbororo customs and tradition. To this effect Yao told me that:

Before, we were eating in the same dish men in one side and women on the other. But when we came here we saw that Bahouan people were eating in the dining room, everyone in his own dish. That is the reason why we are also mingling together to eat in the kitchen since we do not have a dining room.

According to Ibrahim and Abdou, it is a taboo in Mbororo tradition for a father to eat with his children in the same dish. This is a way of expressing their superiority upon the rest of his family. If the father eats with his children, he loses his status and even his dignity and respect vis a vis all of them. However, they can eat together with their male visitor of the same age. Concerning the mother, she is relegated to the same status as her children because she can eat together with them if she wants to. This way of behaving is regulated by the Mbororo *pulaaku*.²¹



Ibrahim and his friend



children eating alone

²¹ This is the code of conduct in Fulani culture. This concept will be develop further in the part concerning the definition of *pulaaku*.

In addition, many people in this village seem to have adopted the culture of the Mbororo too. One particular case captures my attention when I was filming my informants in the market place. Issa is Abdou's father in law. Abdou was buying some goods for his house when Issa arrived and greet him with a hand shake. Right after the greetings, he put his hand on his chest and continued the discussion. Few hours later, a man from the local village who is Ibrahim's friends came and did the same gesture as previously described. From this it appear clear that the Mbororo people are not just getting integrated in Bahouan but they are also sharing their codes of behavior with the local population who seems to have adapted some element of their culture. Thus, putting the hand on the chest right after the greetings symbolizes peace and love as demanded by the principle of *pulaaku* in their tradition. Some Bahouan people speak Fulani with the Mbororo²².

- *The economic field and the relationship based on trust*

Another strategy of integration can be observed trough the daily encounter between Ibrahim and his customers. To succeed in his business activities, Ibrahim has managed to build up a strong relationship base on trust with his customers. For example, to gain their sympathy, he willingly gives his products on credit to those who do not have money to pay immediately. Each time someone demands to try his medicine, he gives a sample with a smile knowing that they will appreciate it and want to buy. His customers seem to trust his medicine and they are convinced about it efficiency. This trust is probably related to the fact that the Mbororo people are well known in Cameroon for having a good knowledge concerning medicine plants. On several occasion, I witnessed people coming to their houses to buy some traditional medicine. Many of these plants are growing around their houses. But some of them come from other regions of Cameroon and some came from Saudi Arabia. From my observation, many people seem to appreciate the efficiency of Ibrahim medicine. He has a lot of faithful customers.

In addition, Ibrahim social status as a medicine seller imposes him to be able to speak Bahouan language very often. When Ibrahim is at the market place he tries to play with the knowledge he has in languages. He speaks Bahouan with the elders because he is aware of the fact that it is their only means of communication. But, with the young people, he speaks either French or pidgin and when he is among his Mbororo fellow, he speaks Fulani. He changes his behavior depending on the setting and people he interact with. Linguistically, the fact that

²² In the film *new way of life*, I present a man from the local village interacting with Ibrahim in Fulani.

Ibrahim is able to speak and understand both French and pidgin and even the local language raise his social position in the village compare to the other Mbororo who do not have the same skills. In fact, this *cultural capital* (knowledge of languages) allows him also to increase his social network by having many customers from different backgrounds.

My informants seem to be well integrated in this village. They are also very satisfied with their job which is physically less demanded in comparison to herding. The following is Ibrahim's statement when I asked him what he thinks about his life in Bahouan: *"I thank God for bringing me to this place... Here in Bahouan we are very happy. We are not suffering, we are not hungry, we are getting whatever we need in this village. We do not have any problem with the Bahouan people. We are not suffering from any disease. We are healthy and this is a better environment for my children."* However, despite this integration, none of them is married to a Bahouan woman. The explanation for this is probably because all of them are from the first generation. They all came in this village when they were already married. However, their children are already mingling with the villagers and most of their friends are from Bahouan. Therefore, there is a probability that the next generation of Mbororo could get marry with the Bahouan people.

5.4. The changing livelihoods in Mbororo's culture

The settlement of my informants in Bahouan has greatly affects their lifestyle. Unlike Guihem (2005) who believes that cattle are important for the pastoralists more than anything else, the job of housekeeper has replaced the herding lifestyle of these Mbororo. While a true Mbororo will rather prefer his animals than money, my informants have put the priority on money first and pay people to herd their cattle for them. This way of behaving is also in contradiction to Guihem (2005) and Loftsdottir (2008) when they argue that life in the bush is preferable to life in the city for the pastoralists. Instead of herding in the bush these Mbororo can be seen as *"social actors who make choices, pursue goals, and maximize values"* (Grønhaug 1975:2). Below is a statement of Ibrahim concerning the reason of this rapid transformation in their lifestyle:

Sometimes human's body becomes weak for some kind of job. The herding job is not for retired people like us (referring to him and his Mbororo fellow of same age). The herding job is for young people who still have enough strength. Before, we were nomads. Where ever there was pasture, we went there. But nowadays, there is no more pasture. The population has increased; insecurity has increased in the bush. There are different kinds of dangerous disease which are killing the cows in the bush. We had no other choice now

than to settle down. We have our basement in Bamenda. There, we have fence for farm and fences for cows. During the dry season, we bring the herd far in the mountain for pasture. They just return during the rainy season. The young men are responsible for taking the herd to pasture. Old people like me are just resting in the transhumance camp²³ and doing farming activities... Today, we even have the possibility to go ahead and seek for livelihood elsewhere. This allows us to provide for our family, increase our herd and pay some people to take care of them. We did not have this kind of opportunity before. Now we have time to rest and our way of life is better than before.

Observation

The fact that my informants are getting tired of their herding activities has developed among them a desire to look for another way of living which has connected them directly to the global world. Their social network is increased and their way of communication is more extensive now than before. They use the mobile phone to be in touch with their relative back home and also with their landlords. To safeguard the tradition, they are looking for money to increase their herd and pay people to herd them in the bush. Ibrahim considers the change positively because the condition in which they are living now is better than before. All of them seem to have lost interest on the pastoral lifestyle which they find exhausting. To this, I agree with Grønhaug (1978) that “*events in one structure deliver pre-requisites for events in other structures.*” Therefore, “*specific individuals’ opportunities situations are affected by organizations of larger dimension lying beyond the actors’ own control*” (Ibid). So, while living in the bush, the life became unsustainable for them and they decided to change their

²³ The Pastoral nomads follow a seasonal migratory pattern that can vary from year to year. The timing and destinations of migrations are determined primarily by the needs of the animals for water and fodder. These nomadic societies do not create permanent settlements, but rather they live in tents or other relatively easily constructed dwellings the year round.

The transhumant pastoralists move only seasonally with their herd. “Seasonal movement is a consistent feature of Fulani pastoralism in the Savanna.” (Stenning, 1959:20). They have a regular basement in some villages where they often build permanent houses. Adolescents usually take cattle to cool highland valley for pasture during the dry season. The oldest ones stay behind to keep the house and prepare for the next season. During the wet season, they congregate back with the herd to the basement camp. There, the animals have enough pasture until the end of the season. Their constant movement to the South region is due to the “shortages of pasture and water during the dry season” (Stenning, 1959). The transhumance pastoralists usually depend somewhat less on their animals for food than do nomadic ones. They often do small scale vegetable farming at their summer encampments, which is also their place of attachment. Thus, the place of attachment is “a geographical area which regularly, for the majority of the year, is essential for a group of people and to which they are attached and to which they move back and forth due to transhumance, migration, or exodus done by a part or the whole group” (Loftsdottir, 2008). They are more likely to trade their animals in town markets in exchange to other things that they do not produce themselves (Ndoudi, 1986; Boutrais, 1996).

livelihood in order to survive and achieve their dreams. With his monthly salary, Ibrahim has the possibility to pay his children school fees. He has managed to establish a good relationship with the population of Bahouan, especially with his customers. In addition to his extra income, his salary is enough to feed his family and send some money back in the village. He has a free house with free electricity and free water. He has times for his daily prayer and he want to be considering as a Fulani. For them, having settled down is a prestigious achievement because they are now in contact with the modern world. They seem to be more proud of their status today. While on the other hand, a typical pastoralist will rather prefer transhumance with his herd.

Women dependency, a sign of change in Mbororo culture

Back in the old days, Mbororo women used to be financially independent from their husbands. They also used to contribute considerably in their household (Adamou, 2007:10; Regis, 2003). Bernardet (1984:13) has presented milk as the mean for Mbororo women emancipation because of the economical right that they possess to the cow's milk products (see Sow, 2006). In accordance to this, Dupire (1997:7) also argued that the Mbororo woman was "*in charge of cows and distribution of the bovine's stock to her sons. She is still now in charge of survival of the family*" (see Adamou, 2007:14). Apart from farming with their husbands while living their nomadic life, women were usually those in charge of the house chores²⁴ and the financial support for the whole family. For example, to sustain their life in the bush, they used to exploit the traditional skills that they have as a strategy to provide their services (selling medicine plant, braiding people hair, selling milk products) in the neighbor villages. Every day, these women have to walked many kilometers in search of money to buy others expenses like matches, petrol, lamp and some other modern primary staffs (Sow, 2006). Unlike in Adamou's (2007) description, where women are free to go to the market and where they play a key role in the household, those of my studying field have lost this power and depend more financially on their husband. There, women tasks are more home based

²⁴ In Mbororo tradition, each member of the house has specific duties. The men's responsibilities include herding the cattle, treating illnesses, and making plans for traveling. The women's duties include taking care of the house work such as milking the cows, preparing butter and cheese, making the clothes and preparing the daily meals (Loftsdottir, 2008). Like in many other African traditions, women are also required to obey their husband's and give them their respect. Although the wife must follow the husband when he decides to move to another place, she must never be seen in close proximity to him. The men are masters of their households, and women gain their dignity and self-satisfaction from serving and obeying their husbands (Sow, 2006; Loftsdottir, 2008). Children learn values and Fulani pride from their fathers or mother. This is the way their tradition is being transmitted from one generation to another. The younger boys help their older brothers and father with herding while the older girls help their mothers and take care of the younger children.

while the men's task is to provide for the whole family. Men are the mediators, those who are in direct contact with the global world while trading during their everyday life with different customers and bring back the money and provisions for house necessity. They are more present than women in different social fields due to their different occupation and role. Their customers and landlords are coming from different socio-cultural background and might be anyone (peasants, teachers of their children, officers or policemen, local authorities...). Although Mairo is helping her husband to sell his medicine, the revenue go back to her husband. Ibrahim is the decision maker in his house. Mairo, his wife cannot spent money or go to the market without his consent. Regarding Adjara who is Abdou's wife, she has no right to go to the market place and her husband, who does not have any knowledge in medicinal plants is the one who buy food products in the market. From this, I agree with Simpson (2005) that: "*Pastoralist societies around the world are patriarchal. Men own the animals, the women and most decisions. Women typically have little say over their own lives*" (see Flintan, 2008).

However, by seeking for a new form of livelihood, the Mbororo of Bahouan had decided to change their lifestyle. Consequently, they have deviated from their Mbororo tradition which is normally base on "livestock activities." But they are preserving it through a third party in order to face unpredictable situation. This kind of attitude joins Blumer (1969) idea when he said that: "*Humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things...The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of the social interaction that one has with others and the society...These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.*" For example, while living in the bush, it was very normal for my informants' wives to walk freely in public spaces, because they were providing their services to the neighborhood so that they can contribute financially in their houses. Freedom, dignity and mobility are the main characteristic of Mbororo culture (Burnham, 1996). But now that they have settled, they want to live like their Fulani pairs by keeping their wives in door. In the *settled Fulani* culture, a man own his respect and dignity by not allowing his wife to walk freely in public spaces. Instead of the women going to the market to buy food staffs, men become those responsible for this task, while the role of the woman is to cook and take care of the compound (Virtanen, 2010). This way of behaving portrays the flexibility of *pulaaku* which change whether the actor belong to the Mbororo or to the settled Fulani ethnic group. The Mbororo of Bahouan

seem to appreciate the transformation in their lifestyle. More, they are trying to assimilate themselves to the *settled Fulani* by adopting their way of behavior. Just like the *settled Fulani* women, they depend more financially on their husband and their outdoors activities are limited. To illustrate this, by being always indoors, the wives of my informants, especially Abdou's wife is trying to behave according to the Fulani *pulaaku* and the Islamic rules. While in the bush they used to sell milk and braid people hair to survive, now they are just staying home, playing the role of the housewife. Owning herd is very important for them but they prefer to pay other people to do the job for them because they consider it tiring and degrading. Despite the fact that the Mbororo have adapted themselves in Bahouan; they have still not embrace totally the culture of their host community. Thus, what are the factors explaining this reluctance of the Mbororo to get integrated completely in Bahouan?

5.4. The Pulaaku, a limiting factors for change in Mbororo culture

The *pulaaku* is a code of conduct which is bound in Fulani consciousness, independently of their will. Thus, it is very difficult for a stranger to identify or understand the *pulaaku* because it is full of codes, values and symbols which constitute its principles that only those within this community are able to decode or interpret. *Pulaaku* is accompanied by hospitality, respect for the nature and the animals. Fulani people are very sensitive to public judgments. As Oumarou (2012:222) has pointed out, this cultural behavior can be expressed, interpreted and understood differently by different social actors in time and space. So, once out of his society, a Fulani or a Mbororo individual who continue to practice *pulaaku* as a way of behavior will definitely not be understood by an outsider. The practice of *pulaaku* can easily change its significance depending on the setting and the origin of the people involved. Moreover, the *pulaaku* is acquired during the process of socialization and education from the childhood and passed from one generation to another.

However, this practice came to be enrolling in the subconscious of the individual over time and is deeply motivated by the sense of shame (Regis, 2003; Baba, 2004). Some of them are difficult to change, while others are beyond the actor's control. For example, my informants hardly looked at me or the camera. Each time I asked them a question, they always answered by looking somewhere else. This way of behaving does not only describe the influence of my presence or the camera among them. But it can also be interpreted as the permanent shame of the *pulaaku* that the Mbororo always carry with them when interacting with people. My informants hardly look into people's eyes when they greet or talk with them. By not looking

in their interlocutors eyes, they manifest the respect that they have for them. Women and children kneel down when they great their elders, especially old men. As for the old women, they always benefited from the same privilege that men have. They interact freely with men of all ages. In Fulani tradition, “*pullo debbo*” is the name of address to old women to signify her belonging to a Fulani community (Djingui, 1993). In this society, it is only when a woman reach a certain age that she can be considered as a Fulani. Young, women are considered like people who cannot control their emotions. They are perceived in this community like people without the sense of *pulaaku* (wisdom, shame, patience, reserve). It is only in her advanced age that she is considered like a Fulani. At this age, she supposed to have incorporated the *pulaaku* enough through the process of initiation.

One other example of *pulaaku* can be observed when Ibrahim and his wife are interacting in the market. During the time I spent with my collaborators (informants), I noticed that apart from the Bahouan market, Mairo never provides her services in the neighboring village. During the market day of the neighboring village, Ibrahim goes alone. But during Bahouan market day, Mairo and her husband go to sell their medicine together. However, even though Mairo and Ibrahim, her husband live together in the same house, Ibrahim is always the first to arrive in the market and Mairo follows later. They never walked together in public. At the market place, Mairo and her husband sell in different direction. But it is possible to see them together in the market only when Mairo wants to ask for some money to her husband or when she wants to give him the money that she has collected from her customers. When it is time to leave, Mairo is the first to go home and her husband follows half or an hour later.

The following is the difference between the *pulaaku* of the Mbororo and the *Pulaaku* of the *settle Fulani* according to Djingui (1993). This distinction is very important in order to understand the relationship between these two groups.

Mbororo	Settle Fulani
<i>Pulaaku dumnganinaka bee sauru</i> (the herder and his stick)	<i>Pulaaku dum daangol haa mangol ngol kujje bode fuh feddi</i> (calf rope with which good things are bound)
<i>Pullo hebri pulaaku diga na'i</i> (the pulaaku of the Pullo came from cows)	<i>Pulaaku dum asli Fulbe</i> (pulaaku is the root of the Fulani)
<i>Pulaaku dum tokkugo ladde</i> (pulaaku is the constant movement of the Mbororo in the bush with the herd)	<i>Pulaaku dum lenyol ngol maraaka</i> (pulaaku are people who are not dominated by anyone)

The attachment of the Mbororo to the bush, a limiting factor for change

Another main reasons which explain why my informants have not yet totally immersed themselves in Bahouan culture is because they are still bound by a strong relation that they have with the bush. For example, Ibrahim's house is surrounding by different kind of medicine plants. By planting this medicine plants that he has knowledge on around his house, Ibrahim is trying to rebuild the bush which represents for him the world that he is used to. Also, by perpetrating the tradition of selling medicinal plants, Ibrahim has not only transferred his cultural knowledge in Bahouan but he is also going to transmit it to his children from one generation to another. By doing so, selling medicine plants in Bahouan will always be a part of their cultural identity. In fact, due to the greatest skills and experiences that they have accumulated while herding in the bush, Mbororo people are like one with the nature. This explains the greatest knowledge that they have in traditional medicine plants (Boutrais, 1992; Regis, 2003). In addition, the importance of cows as symbol of the ethnic identity of Mbororo appears to be one of the main limit factors for the Mbororo integration in Bahouan. According to my informants, owning cattle in Mbororo society is a symbol of health and well-being. In this regards, Schlee (2000) and Adamou (2007) have also noticed that in their tradition the level of a man's respect is based on the number of cattle that he owns and how much he knows about herding. This is probably the reason why they have to look for money so that

they can increase the number of their herd in the bush. (This part will be developed further in the next part to explain the identity dilemma of the Mbororo in Bahouan.) Also, the fact that they have not adopted the Christianity which is the dominant religion of Bahouan community is an element of their resistance to changes.

Another interesting aspect of my informant's reluctance to behave like their hosts can be perceived in the following example. One day, when I accompanied Adjara (Abdou's wife) in Ibrahim house to braid her hair, we met Ibrahim and his wife putting *henna*.²⁵ I was very surprised when I saw Ibrahim putting it on his hand. When I asked if men put it as well, his answer was: "yes, I put it to make my hands soft". He also added that Fulani people do not like when their hands are strong and even told me a joke about Bahouan men. To quote him "when you great Bahouan men their hands are strong like stones." This case is very significant to understand why pastoralists do not like farm work which most of them consider as degrading. But now that they do not have any other choice than doing farm work for their daily survival, they are putting *henna* to avoid getting strong hands like the Bahouan farmers.

Despite the fact that my informants want to change their lifestyle, cows remain their cultural heritage which is given to one generation to another. For this reason, they are not yet ready to cut the link with the bush. Ibrahim informed me that during their nomadic lifestyle, his father refused to send his children to school because they were supposed to help their parents with the herd in the bush. But today that the situation has changed, Ibrahim prefers to send his children to school at the expense of herding. But at the same time he does not want to stop dealing with the herding business because it is very important for the future of his children. Below is a discussion concerning the importance of cow for my informants:

-Mairo: *I keep cows for my children. I can sell one of them only in case of emergency. In our culture, when the father died, his cows are unequally distributed among his children. Women own only half of their brother's share.*

-Ibrahim: *Yes, what she said is true. I keep cows to secure my life and the life of my children. After their studies, if they are not able to get a job, they can still return in the bush to herd those cows.*

-Moussa: *My father has not given my own share of the herd yet because I am still a student. When I will finish with my studies, my father will give mine.*

²⁵ *Henna* is a cosmetic plant use by the Muslims women in Cameroon to paint and tattoo their hand and body for traditional ceremony or as fantasies.

Then, I continued by asking that: Is it true that Mbororo people do not sell their cows?

-Moussa: Yes, it is true that the Mbororo don't like to sell their cows. Cow is like a human being for us. When we sell our cow, we start remember that cow and this make us sad.

As the discussion was becoming interesting, I asked: Do Mbororo people not eat cow meat?

-Ibrahim looked at me with a smile and said: We do eat cow meat. But we kill a cow only during special occasion, when the cow is too weak or sick. For example, during birth ceremony, we kill cow because this is a happy event. When we kill a cow for a happy even like this, we cannot be sad because, instead of remembering the cow which is dead, we keep in our memory the new born baby. Just by looking at this wonderful gift from God (referring to the baby), make us forget about the cow.

From the above, the first discussion is in some way controversial. Ibrahim wants his children to succeed in life. For this reason, he sends them to school so that they can look for a better job in the government. At the same time, owning cows for him is a cultural heritage which is supposed to provide a herding job to his children if they do not have others opportunities. This way of going back and forth shows the challenges that they are facing to rebuilt a new identity for themselves. They are in between adopting the Bahouan way of life and go back to their original culture. In relation to symbol, Mbororo people have a way of maintaining a kinship link with their herd which is perceived as “supreme animal” (Virtanen, 2010). From this point of view, kinship does not only concern individual within a family member in Mbororo tradition, but also between individuals and their environment. They consider cow as being part of their family. To this effect, Adriansen argued that: “A *Fulani without cattle is like a woman without jewelry* (2002). This way of living is in accordance to Tonah (2005:7) idea that: “*Cattle are a fundamental part of the Fulani symbolic repertoire as well as livelihood... In the eyes of others, Fulani and cattle cannot be divorced: they are synonymous.*”

5.5. The identity dilemma of the Mbororo in Bahouan

Identity discussion is an important issue when it comes to social interaction and vice-versa. Therefore, social interaction cannot be possible if people do not develop their identities enough. Reversely, an individual's identity cannot be approved or disapproved if they do not

interact with others (Jenkins, 2004). Concerning the origin of the pastoralists Fulani, Hampate Ba (1984), believes that: “*Dieu crea la vache et il se demanda a qui il pouvait la confier, c’est ensuite qu’il crea le Peul pour s’occuper de la vache. La vache ou le Bovide devient la raison d’etre du Peul: sans la vache, pas de Peul*” (in Sow, 2006). The English translation for this will be that: *God created cows for Fulani and not the opposite way around. Therefore, Fulani cannot exist independently to cow.* Looking at this perspective, cows are then perceived as the cultural heritage in excellence for all the pastoralists Fulani. In addition to this, the first principle of *pulaaku* in Mbororo society is to always give the privilege to their cattle (Dupire, 1996; Diallo and Schlee, 2000). Thus, considering the fact that Mbororo and cattle are inseparable, is it still relevant to consider a settled Mbororo without his cattle as a Mbororo?

This part helps understanding the contrast between the Mbororo and the settled Fulani people. Saying in other word, the following portrays how the Mbororo of Bahouan are trying to adopt some cultural patterns of the Bahouan people and also how they are assimilating the morality and social norms of their Fulani pairs. Therefore, the question address here is to understand why these Mbororo are trying to deny their own ethnic identity at the expense of the *settled Fulani* one? Furthermore, as the result of their integration in Bahouan and due to their close historical background with their Fulani pairs, the Mbororo of Bahouan seems to be challenged by a triple identity. For a better understanding of this dilemma situation, the following will be divided into three sections. As a result of the different factors limiting their integration in this community, this part presents my informants in a situation of a split identity. They want to be integrated in Bahouan. At the same time, while trying to adopt the Bahouan way of life, they are also keeping the back door open for their original tradition. This can be explained through the relationship that they are maintaining with their relative in the bush. Each month, they have to send half of their salary to the latter so that they can secure their tradition and perpetrate their herding lifestyle. The other dilemma is the fact that they are consciously or unconsciously denying their Mbororo identity. A careful attention on their daily behavior and aspiration shows that they want to be perceived as “*true Fulani*”²⁶ and not Mbororo. Thus, the controversy behind this tendency of my informants to claim their *Fulani* identity comes probably from the fact that the Fulani ethnic group as a whole is hierarchically structured. Moreover, their constant marginalization by the others ethnic groups, especially the

²⁶ This is the name for the settled Fulani who live in the Northern part of Cameroon and who are economically, socially and politically powerful than the Mbororo. True Fulani here is used in opposition to the Mbororo people.

subordinated position which the settled Fulani have placed on the Mbororo by looking down on them is also relevant to take into consideration. Let us dig a little bit in their past to see the roots for this confusion.

- *The controversy behind the Mbororo and Fulani' identity*

The Mbororo and the settled Fulani belong to the same large ethnic group. Like the Mbororo people, the settled Fulani were also pastoralists before they converted into Islam (Boutrais, 1999:350). Over 99% of Fulani are Muslims (Anter, 2011). When some of them decided to follow the Jihad during the Islamic saint war, the Mbororo resisted Islam and maintained their pastoralist lifestyle. At the same time, those who refused to follow the Jihad were not considered as Muslim. According for the scriptures in the Quran, a true Muslims cannot serve God and cows at the same time (see Bocquene, 1986; Burnham, 1996). At the same time, conferring to “*Islamic norms, women are not allowed to sell milk anymore*” (Virtanen, 2010). Those who decided to settle down and stop herding were given all the social, political and economic privilege in exchange. While the Mbororo on the other hand were given low statuses and were considering non-Muslims. When the settled Fulani conquered different towns and peoples in the Northern Cameroon, they took captives from those tribes and used them as slaves to do their house tasks, herding and farming for them (Anter, 2011).

The settled Fulani addresses the Mbororo as “*Fulbe ladde*” (Fulbe of the bush) or “*Ful'be na'i*”(Fulbe of the cow) who are slaves of their cattle because always walking behind them with their stick (Diallo and Schlee, 2000). In addition, the Mbororo are also considered as foreigners,²⁷ late comers in all the peripheral community in which they decide to settle with their herd. People always see their lifestyle as bizarre, strange to the other ethnic group practices. Where ever they are moving with their cattle, they are not welcome. There is always a conflict between the pastoral and the farmers because of their moving animals which always eat and destroy the farmer's crops (Tonah, 2005).

²⁷ Tonah (2005) presents the situation of the Fulani who are being marginalized in Ghana, especially in the southern Ghana where they are not welcome by the local people. They are perceived as late comers among the already sedentary farmers because they do not have a settlement of their own.

The Mbororo in return addresses their Fulani pairs as “*Ful’be siire*” which means the Fulani of the town or village. This appellation refers to the settled Fulani who has lost all their cattle and choose to settle down instead of herding (Virtanen, 2003; Sow, 2006; Adamou, 2007).

One day, when we were discussing in the kitchen concerning this issue, Ibrahim stated that:

It is very important to send children to school. If Mbororo people had decided to settle down long time ago, they would have got the opportunity to go to school. Today we are perceived by the others as bush people²⁸ because of our herding activities. Going to school allows people to be opened minded, to have knowledge about what is going on around the world. School opens doors for opportunities. Parents who refuse to send their children to school do not care about their wellbeing. I send my children to school because I do not want them to lose their eyes as I have loose mine.

From this, Ibrahim is very aware of the importance of the modern education. Going to school provide to his children the opportunity to be connected to a more wide social network and improve their chances to get a better job in the future. One of the future aspirations of his sons is to be able to work as a civil servant, medical doctor or a teacher.

- *Islam versus Fulani*

What my informants do not want to lose in their tradition are “*teegal*” and “*djanguirde*”. “*Teegal*” is the Fulani name for marriage. In Fulani tradition, marriage is considered as a social ascension of a man and a woman who have decided to live together according to Islamist rules (Djingui, 1993). Therefore, by getting married to a woman before living with her, the Fulani people are expressing their *pulaaku* which expects them to behave worthily.

“*Djanguirde*” on the other hand is a Fulani name for the Quranic School. To be considered as a good Muslim, Fulani people should attend Quranic School from their childhood until they are able to memorize the words of the Quran. Like the *pulaaku*, these words are supposed to guide the child on how to behave in everyday life. Therefore, *teegal* and *djanguirde* are both considered as Islamic principles. Moreover, this preference of my informants is even more relevant while knowing the importance of cow in Mbororo tradition. In the film “*Cows are better than money*” by Baba (2003), cows represent wealth and wellbeing of the characters who themselves are also Mbororo. However, the fact that my informants consider Islam before cows explains the reason behind their cultural dilemma situation. Instead of trying to

²⁸ The term bush people for him were in reference to the Mbororo who in Cameroon are still perceived as people who are not civilize and who live in the bush with their cattle.

be good Mbororo, their future aspiration is to be good Muslims. Thus, what has become of the cultural identity of the Mbororo who has always been related to pastoralist's activities?

In fact, by settling down, the lifestyle of these Mbororo is gradually turning into the settled Fulani way of living. Although distinct *clanically* from the *true Fulani*, their identity is now so intertwined with them that they want to be called *Fulani*. They all pray five times a day and their dream is to travel to Saudi Arabia to fortify their faith in "Allah" (God of Muslims people) and fulfill one of the Islamic pillars. Therefore, Islam become a mean to my informants to upward their social mobility and claim their *Fulani identity*. To this effect, Burnham (1991) argued that for many Fulani, the culture of *pulaaku* has come to be integrated into the Islamic principles, making the definition of Fulani culture more complex. Following the same vein, Lacroix (1966:402) stated that: "*Pour les Peuls...l'Islam se confound volontier avec le fait d'etre Peul*" (see Burnham 1991). Meaning that the Islamic religion has took over the Fulani culture in a way that it has become very difficult to talk about Fulani culture without taking Islam into consideration. Thus, being a *Fulani* requires certain condition which the Mbororo have to deal with in their daily life. Therefore, once a Mbororo convert himself into Islam can he become a Fulani?

Ibrahim has never presented himself to me as a Mbororo. On the contrary, he insisted on the fact that he is a Fulani. Below is his explanation when I asked him why he does not consider himself as a Mbororo was that:

Mbororo and Fulani are the same people. A true Fulani is a person who respect his five prayers a day and who behave accordingly to Islam. If a Fulani does not behave as a proper Muslim, he will not be considered as a Muslim. But a non-Fulani who prays five times a day automatically become a Muslim.

- *Ethnic identity, an individual construction*

Identity "is a human capacity rooted in language to know who's who and hence what's what. This involves knowing who we are, knowing who others are. Them knowing who we are, us knowing who they think we are and so on" (Jenkins, 2004: 5). Moreover, as this paper is dealing with the Mbororo ethnic group, ethnic identity is a means to create boundaries that enabled a group to distance themselves from one another (Barth, 1969). So, ethnic identity is the identity of a group of people living in the same environment and bound by a common customs and traditions which they obey and respect. As individuals become aware of their cultural identity, they have the ability to modify it while living within a large socio-cultural environment. So, ethnic identity is not something which is fixed; on the contrary, it is a

human construction which can be transformed as much as possible depending on the social actors in time and space. From this, I agree with Phinney (2003:63) that “*ethnic identity is a dynamic, multidimensional construct that refers to one’s identity or sense of self as a member of an ethnic group.*” Ethnic identity can also be used as a tool for social exclusion or inclusion of the people belonging to one ethnic group.

By presenting himself as a Fulani in opposition to the Bahouan, the intention of Ibrahim is to be treated as such. While talking about the Fulani, he tries to categorize all the Mbororo who live in Bahouan as being similar to him and the Bahouan different. By referring to them as being Fulani in contrast to the Bahouan, he is expressing his wish to be addressed as a member of the Fulani group. At the same time, addressing himself as a Fulani implicitly shows that he is also trying to deny his own identity which is Mbororo. However, ethnic identity becomes relevant when it comes to individuals interest. Because Ibrahim and his family came to Bahouan to seek for livelihood, they have to use some strategy to be accepted by the local people. When it comes to his personal interest he assimilates himself to the Bahouan people. He eat their food, speak their language, send his children to school and express himself publically as being part of them. But, among themselves, the Mbororo are talking in terms of “us” and “them.” By doing so, they try to differentiate themselves as much as possible as being different to the Bahouan. On the other hand, instead of behaving like Mbororo people they are trying to assimilate themselves to the Fulani. Moreover, the “us” in this perspective will be perceived as the Fulani in opposition to “them” (in reference to their Mbororo relatives who are still herding in the bush).

However, while interacting with the Bahouan people, they use the terms *brothers, family, sameness, oneness* to express their sense of friendship and belonging to Bahouan community. These entire attitudes are used willingly in order to create the illusion of similarity between the Bahouan and the Mbororo. All these behavior contribute to a social harmony and a pacific relation during their everyday interaction with the other group. To this, I agree with Goffman (1959) that individuals always perform in his daily life. As social actors their actions are shaped by the type of interaction that they make with others. According to him, individuals always perform in their “frontages” while the “real” self is presented at the back stage in a different way (*ibid*). Besides, by categorizing themselves in social spaces, the Mbororo want to express their cultural differences with the Bahouan. Some elements can be elucidate here as the key factor of differentiation between the Mbororo and the Bahouan people. Therefore, even though the Mbororo do not have a common cultural background with their hosts, the

difference between them is more visible when it comes to their social interaction. Thus, despite the effort of the Mbororo to assimilate themselves to the local people, the difference is inevitable when it concerns their physical appearance. The Mbororo are thin and slender while the Bahouan people are more fleshy and shorter. Unlike the Bahouan who are very flexible in their outfit, (jeans, suit, wrapper, *boubou*, skirt, dress), the Mbororo men wear only *boubou*²⁹ with a hat while their women attach *wrapper* on their body and head. Some other cultural traits are also important to identify an ethnic group in a society. These characteristics which bound the members of the same ethnic group are what Barth identifies as boundary. Boundary here is the common patterns which define all the Mbororo who live in Bahouan. Those could be language, religion, social behavior. However, ethnicity is not relevant until individuals of one group entered in contact with a different group (Barth, 1969). The interrelation between the two groups is therefore interesting to consider because it allows understanding how actors try to assimilate and differentiate themselves from others within their interethnic relation.

Therefore, by assimilating or differentiating themselves among the Mbororo and to the Bahouan people, the Mbororo show their capacity to invent their identity. They are always performing depending on the setting. When they interact with the Bahouan people, they try to behave like them. But among themselves, they present their real self. At the same time they are struggling between being themselves and behaving like the settled Fulani by assimilation. By doing so, they are trying to transform their original identity to the new one. From this, I agree with Barth that “actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others” (1969). In other words it is through multicultural confrontation, that people can be aware of their cultural differences and identities. Ibrahim's aspiration is to live like the settled Fulani. However, his need for money is the reason why he is still struggling between the Mbororo way of life and the Fulani way of life. By working for the Bahouan people and allowing his wife to go to the market, Ibrahim is breaking the rules of the *Fulani pulaaku*. Customarily, “a real Fulani” will never accept to work for Christians' people like my informants are doing in Bahouan. Instead, he will rather prefer to preserve his dignity and pride than subordinating himself to the latter. In history, Fulani people used to have slaves and they believe that they are superior to the other ethnic groups. On the other hand, in comparison to Adjara who stay in the house while her husband is the one going to the market to do the shopping, Mairo can

²⁹ Mostly made from cotton and synthetic cloths, the *boubou* is a 3 pieces of clothing: a pair of tie-up trousers that narrow towards the ankles and a long-sleeved shirt and a wide, open-stitched sleeveless gown worn over these. They are generally

go to the market as long as she has her husband's permission. By doing so, Abdou is trying to adopt the cultural patterns of the already settled Fulani where women activities are home based. This role is in accordance to Islam which requires that woman tasks are limited inside their husband compound. Therefore, disobey to this law by going to the market is to be disrespectful to the later (Oumarou, 2012:226-227). By allowing his wife to go to the market, Ibrahim is in some way breaking the rules of *pulaaku*. In terms of rules, Abdou's wife is behaving in a more Fulani way than Mairo. But, in the eye of the Bahouan people, Ibrahim and his family are living an ordinary lifestyle. But, they do not understand Abdou way of life because; it is very strange in Bahouan culture to see a married man going to the market to buy food staff for his wife. While on the other hand, it is perceived as a taboo for a woman to go to the market in Fulani culture.

The Islamisation of my informants is the main reason explaining their identity dilemma in Bahouan. As a result, being a Fulani implies being a good Muslim and adopt the value of *pulaaku*. The main challenge here is that to behave as good Muslim and embrace the Fulani way of life, the Mbororo must leave behind certain cultural values that define Mbororo. So, what is happening now in Bahouan is that the Mbororo has to permanently struggle with their own identity in order to be perceived as the settle Fulani and to be integrated in Bahouan. On the other hand, the Mbororo are also trying to preserve their tradition which is based on owning a herd. By doing so, they are perpetuating their herding tradition trough a third party in the bush. This gives them the possibility to live a settled Fulani lifestyle. Consequently, adopting the Bahouan way of life and the settle Fulani lifestyle pushed them into acculturation.

Conclusion:

In this paper, I have addressed the question of socio-cultural and economic change in the tradition of the Mbororo who have migrated to Bahouan in search of livelihood. This transformation in their lifestyle is related to three main challenges. First, they are trying to adopt the Bahouan way of life. Secondly, they are living with a constant indirect pressure of being good Muslims like the *settled Fulani*. Thirdly, they are trying to preserve their original tradition. This paper exposed the question of continuity and change in the sense that they are in between their old way of living and the new one. Therefore, all those factors are contributing in reinventing a new identity for themselves. The adaptation of the Mbororo in Bahouan culture is a sign of their integration in this community. However, there are some limit factors which prevent them to immerse themselves completely in this community. At the same time, by trying to be good Muslims, they are getting closer to the *settle Fulani* trough assimilation. To this, I agree with Balandier (1971) that every society is a “field of change” and within the society, any social fact is a set of transformations, continuities and discontinuities. The Mbororo people of Bahouan have changed their lifestyle (nomadic herders) to a sedentary way of life. Instead of herding, they are now working as housekeepers. Their daily survival does not depend on livestock anymore, but on the host agricultural population who are their landowners and their customers. The herding has been substituted by housekeeping jobs.

Despite their cultural and religious differences, they have been able to maintain a peaceful relation with their hosts by giving up some of their daily habits to adapt and adjust themselves to the new culture. This includes many changes in what they eat, the language they speak with others and what they do in their everyday life. Therefore, by changing their way of living, they are disconnecting themselves from the bush and their children will not get the knowledge relate to the herding life. Consequently, the possibility for parents to transmit the pastoral tradition to their descendant is being diminished. Also, unlike the classical Mbororo where women have the possibility to actively contribute financially in the household, my informants are behaving differently. Men are now in charge of all the finance concerning the house while women are taking care of the houses chores. During their social interaction with the Bahouan people within different social fields, my informants are not just gaining profit from their hosts. They are also contributing to the life in this village. They are assuring the security of

the houses that they are keeping and are very helpful for the local people because of their medical skills and traditional knowledge. Their cross cultural interaction in this village allows them to learn and share new forms of behaviors with the local people.

Thus, following my informants and their family in different social fields helped me to see them involved in different activities. Most importantly, it allowed me “*to discover some of the interactional content and the range of activities and relation*” (Grønhaug, 1974). However, a literature review concerning the Mbororo people has contributed considerably in this study. It allowed me to make a comparative discussion between what many authors have written before and the data which I collected in the fields. Thus, the time I spent with my informants with or without the camera allowed me to learn some basics of Fulfulde language. By doing so, I was able to participate and understand their daily life from their own point of view. The use of the camera allowed me to understand what is really important for the informants because after the field, the researcher has the time to visualize the images from the video camera as much as possible. What actually comes out repeatedly during the different interviews are aspect that really matter for the informants. This research helps me to see how to collect data with a video camera and make sense out of it. In addition, the theory of symbolic interactionism was used as guideline to illustrate the contribution, the integration and the different challenges of my informants, including the changes and their cultural dilemma. As migrant labors, Mbororo people are individuals who are also determined by the interactions in which they participate. They are facing two level of social dynamic. At the internal level they are dealing with the constraints of their original tradition which is to perpetrate their herding tradition. At the external level, they are trying to incorporate themselves in Bahouan culture by firming up the intercommunity link with them. At the same time, they are also trying to assimilate themselves to their Fulani brothers so that they can benefit from all the social prestige. The cultural dilemma occurs therefore as the result of the tension between their original tradition, the Fulani way of life and the new requirements of their host community.

This paper has not only discussed how the Mbororo are trying to negotiate their *Fulani identity* through their behavior and declaration in Bahouan. It has also portrayed how a multicultural person would choose to identify with a particular group, regardless of how others may perceive them. In fact, they appear as people with a double identity in the sense

that they share the same historical background with their Fulani pairs. So, the *sedentarization* of these Mbororo in Bahouan has accentuated their *Fulani identity*, because they define their identity in a more Fulani lifestyle. Therefore, by living in a community where people do not know so much about the complexity behind the Fulani identity as a whole, these Mbororo are freely addressing themselves as Fulani. Thus, their physical appearance and their religion alone are all a taking for granted elements which give the impression to the local people that they belong to the settle Fulani group. Therefore, knowing the fact that the *settle Fulani* look down on the Mbororo and considering the proximity between these two ethnic groups, the thesis asks: to what extent can a Mbororo be considered by the former as a *real Fulani*?

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