Housework and education of Fulani girls in Mbang-Fulbe, Northern Cameroon

SVF- 3903: From Fieldwork Experience to Ethnographic Film and Text

By

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DEDICATION

To

my sister Atikatou Hadja

my mother who taught me kilanta and to all the Fulani women in Northern Cameroon

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the realization of this thesis.

Abstract

This thesis focuses on housework, formal and domestic education in a Fulani community living in a small village located 37 km from Ngaoundere city, North part of Cameroon. By following a family of seven people, the study looks into the historical developmental of Fulani girls linked to the power relation and explains how power is changing in that area. To describe how social fields are connected in the global scale and the consequence of the meeting between these fields, I focused on some key elements. On one side the relevance of *kilanta*, a cultural value which gives power and dignity to the Fulani woman when she is inside the house. The other side, skills acquired from formal school as one of the elements which contributed to the liberalization of the Fulani girl in Northern Cameroon. It is imperative to stress that what gives power and respect to Fulani girl or woman inside is not the same outside. An ethnographic approach is used to understand what is going on regarding the combination of *kilanta* as a cultural knowledge and the new identity or status gained from schooling. However, transformations into this new form of identity come with certain positions and status creating a special career and challenge. Nowadays, Fulani girls are involved in a complex dynamic to negotiate their social identity and belonging.

Keywords: Housework/kilanta, formal school, domestic education, Fulani girls, power, Mbang-Fulbe, Northern Cameroon.
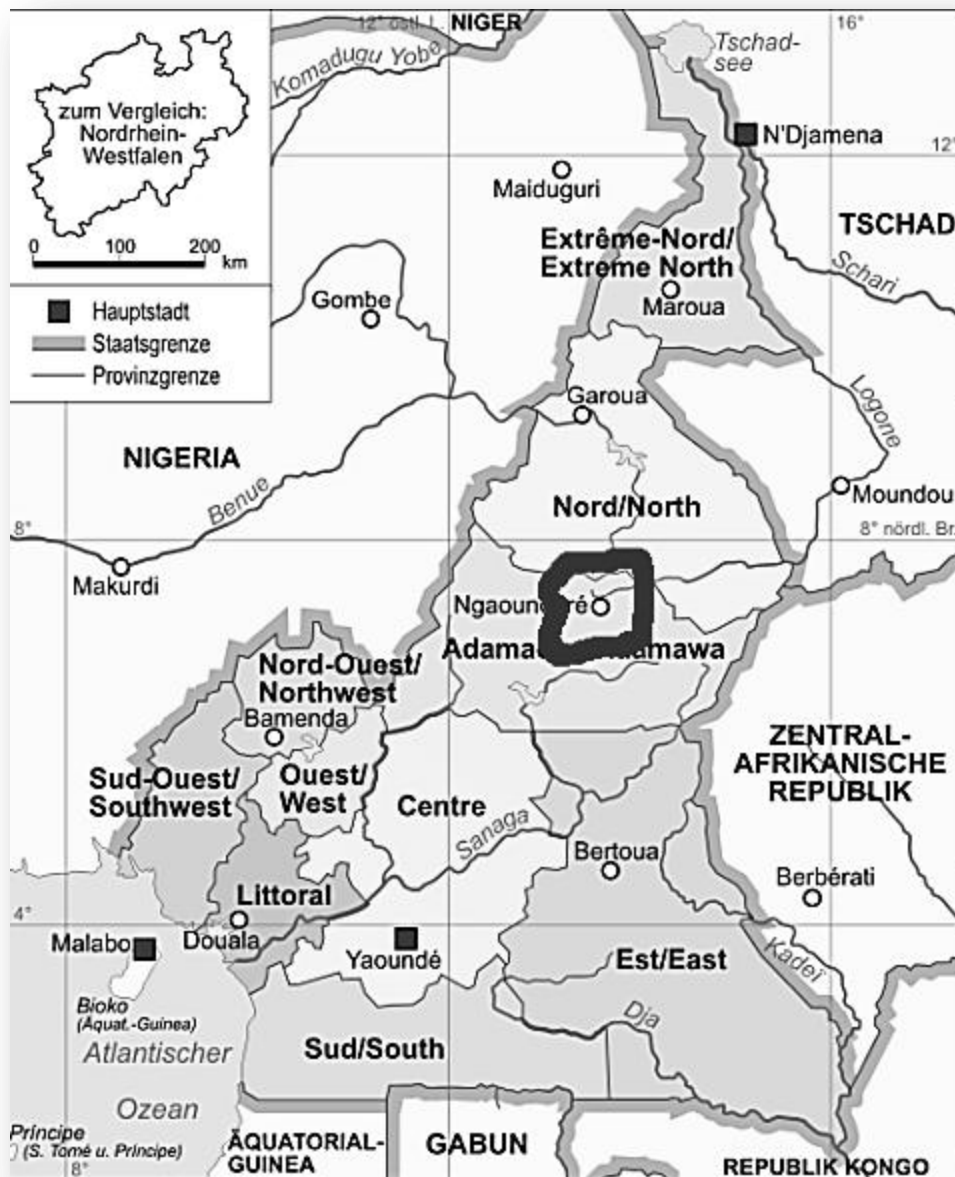
Source: www.univ-ndere.cm

Figure 1: Cameroon map indicating the 10 regions with their headquarters.

Mbang-Fulbe is located in the Adamawa region, precisely in Ngaoundere area.
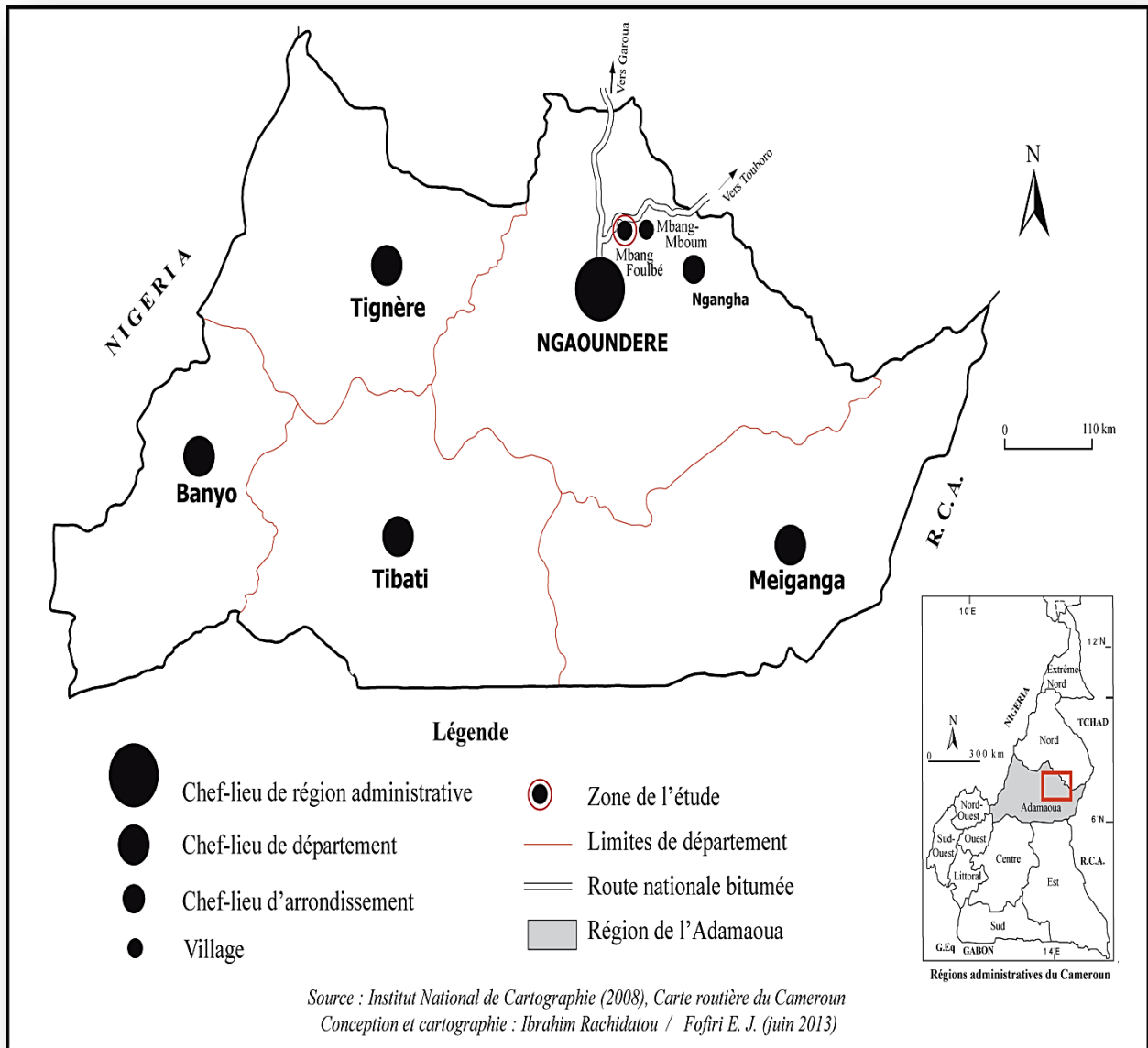
Figure 2: Location of Mbang-Fulbe 37 km from Ngaoundere city.

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Introduction

Assumptions and research questions

Over the past decade, Cameroon has made significant steps in making formal education more accessible to every child. According to the figures from UNICEF[1], the Cameroonian primary enrolment rate is around 84%. Like many other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Cameroon has run up against a number of barriers such as: difficulty to ensure girls education, illiteracy, early and forced marriages, gender discrimination, etc. Therefore, the source of gender discrimination lies in a complex mix of traditional attitudes and economic interest. According to plan International[2], on the one hand some parents prefer to give the priority of schooling to boys arguing that girls will soon get married and will be under the care of their husband. On the other hand, others don't have enough resources and prefer to focus on boys' education. In some cases, girls are regarded as economic burdens and get married as soon as possible, sometimes with the first man who comes to ask for "*theirs hands.*"

Over the years, the government has made efforts with the help of some NGOs[3] such as UNICEF, Plan Cameroun[4] and others in order to improve females' life, especially in Northern and Eastern parts of the country by organizing sensitization campaigns. Several strategies have been set up to encourage girls attending schooling, the building of primary schools especially in the areas with low enrolment; financial and material support such as books, scholarships, food and support for women's advocacy groups promoting girls' education. All of these processes led to progress and crucial changes.

Therefore, these changes in attitudes have led to some transformations in men's life in general and that of Fulani women in particular. The growing impact of Western education has transformed Fulani women careers, their economic criteria and allowed them to reach a high social rank (Holtedahl 1993). The new forms of knowledge acquired from school involve the

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[1] *Unicef: United Nations Children's Fund.*

[2] *www.plan-international.org/girls. Because I Am A Girl: Girls in the Global Economy 2009. Global Campaign, Business Case Summary, June 2011.*

[3] *NGO: Non-government organization.*

[4] *Plan Cameroon International: non-governmental organization tending to promote solidarity, protect children and marginalized people.*

marginalization of cultural values. Thus, formal school appears as a key of social transformations in the Fulani society in Northern Cameroon.

This leads us to focus on how Fulani girls negotiate their identity facing the new position gained from formal school. Until recently a Fulani woman is perceived from her ability to manage the house by doing all the domestic activities (cooking, cleaning, taking care of kids, etc.). However, cooking is the most relevant task for Fulani living in Northern Cameroon. In 1997, Isnebo a Cameroonian singer from *Faadah kawtal* (a musical orchestra) came up with "*Kilanta*"[5] a musical album which raised the issue of "*Mayramdjo mo anda kilanta. Aye! Semtudoum*"(Aye! shameful for a girl who does not know how to cook). The song was a great success because of the content or message regarding those who have not been trained to that female knowledge. This shows and explains the significance of this cultural value in the Fulani society.

While observing my host family in the field, I noticed that housework is relevant for them and the fact that I belong to the Fulani ethnic group, help me to identify myself and to have a feeling of involvement while observing these people. Like any Fulani girl, I had also been initiated to the house chores. From this cultural background, I have grasped the opportunity to conduct an anthropological study of myself and Alhadji Daouda's family. By coincidence I have realized that my field partners and I are the right illustrations of the historical perspective of Fulani woman/girl.

Then I came out with the assumptions that we (Hadja/grandmother, Zeinabu /Hadja's daughter, Sumaiya/Hadja's grandchild and I/a Fulani girl) are four typical forms of Fulani women with different careers. Hadja has never been to school, Zeinabu did the primary, Sumaiya has planned to continue until getting the Bachelor Degree and I am higher educated Fulani girl. Therefore, schooling has given Sumaiya and me a new status which is different from Zeinabu and her mother. By borrowing the concept of social fields from Grønhaug (1975), formal school can be

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[5] *The song is about a man newly married talking to his wife: the original version is in Fulani language.*
  "I have managed to bring food and all the necessary for cooking.
  However, I am hungry since six days.
  Why young girl?
  Aye! It's shameful, a girl who does not know how to cook.
  A girl who does not know how to cook.
  Aye! It's shameful."
  Remix

identified as a social field with its own dynamic in the global scale. School has changed the life course of Fulani women. However, house is also another field where all the domestic tasks take place. Into my field partners' house, I have noticed that housework is influencing on girls life. During the interview, Hadja mentioned that "*a girl has to stay inside, close to her mother so that she could be initiated before getting married*". This means that unless she is trained, she won't get married or be a good wife and/or mother. According this grandmother's statement, going to school is not enough to succeed as a Fulani woman; household management is also important for a girl to succeed and get respect from others.

As mentioned above schooling has transformed the life of Fulani women. However the criteria of dignity stressed by Hadja are in dynamic. By using the term "*inside*" while talking about girls' duties, the grandmother refers to the house or being inside the compound by opposite to the outside. From the concept "*inside-outside*", we have two things in confrontation. I mean by "*things*" school and housework which are two different social fields that Fulani girls are facing. Therefore these statements raise the following questions: What does the formal school represent? What can be the impact of formal education in the life course of a Fulani girl? How do these girls manage to deal both with cultural values and the opportunities gained from schooling?

Definition of terms

Housework

As mentioned by Oakley (1974), it's not easy to give the right meaning to the concept of housework. From her studies on housewives and their attitudes to housework carried out in London in 1971, housework could be termed "*sexist*". In this respect, she argued that "*it has treated housework merely as an aspect of the feminine role in the family, as a part of women's role in marriage, or as a dimension of child-rearing, not as a work role*". From my understanding, I think the conceptual approach of house chores in the Fulani community is linked to the term "*sexist*" used by Oakley. When I asked Hadja the difference between girls and boys tasks, she pointed out that "*a girl deals with inside activities while boys tasks are outside.*" This makes us understand the relevance of gender in that community. I want to stress one more again the relevance of the concept of "*inside and outside*" mentioned above. If Fulani women stay at home and provide "*emotional support*" while men go out to work and earn money to

provide the financial support for the entire family. This means that men are those who take decision and manipulate the external environment. In this respect, the grandmother joins Oakley's viewpoint according to whom: "*men perform an instrumental role and women an expressive one*" when writing about *The Invisible Woman: Sexism in Sociology (1974)*.

According to the American context[6], "*housework*" is referring to "*homemaking*" which means the management of a home, otherwise known as housework, housekeeping, or household management. In my conceptual approach, housework refers to house chores, domestic tasks or work done at home by a homemaker or someone else to care, control and ensuring its maintenance and property. It is a set of activities such as cooking, cleaning, laundry, dishes, rearing child and so forth.

Education

The contextual framework of my study is referring both to formal and informal education. The term "formal" which I am using here means modern or western school, established in Africa by missionaries and colonizers; and informal, the Koranic school originated from *jihad* led by Usman Dan Fodio[7] in Northern Nigeria and Cameroon. In addition to that, I will also focus on the domestic education or cultural values that children acquire from their elders.

Education in its general sense is a form of learning in which knowledge, skills, and habits of a group of people are transferred from one generation to the next through teaching, training, or research and frequently takes place under the guidance of others.

Formal education

Formal education or schooling is commonly divided into stages such as primary, secondary and university.

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[6] *http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homemaking*
[7] *Usman Dan Fodio is leader of jihad (holy war), a Fulani war which consisted to conquer people by offensive war to promote Islamic conquests in Western Africa. During the jihad he founded the empire of Sokoto Caliphate, an Islamic spiritual community in Northern Nigeria which was one of the largest and most powerful empires in sub-Saharan Africa until British conquest in 1903.*
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/640491/western-Africa

In general, the systems of schooling involve the institutionalization of teaching and learning in relation to a program, which is established according to a predetermined purpose of schools in a system.

In Cameroon, primary education consists of six years of schooling starting at the age of five or seven; followed by the secondary education which is about seven years of schooling in general. The last step, the higher education or university, includes undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level, as well as vocational education and training. The University is the main institution that provides academic degrees.

Non-formal education

Non-formal education in the context of my study refers to informal learning occurring in a variety of places, such as at home or somewhere else through daily interactions and shared relationships among members of society. This includes language acquisition, cultural norms and manners. There is no specific establishment for this kind of education. Koranic school usually takes place at home which is considered as a meeting space between teacher and students. It is often the learners who go towards the teacher's home. However, domestic education focuses on teaching indigenous knowledge, precisely models, methods, and content of cultural values. It is a kind of learning acquired by practical training (cooking, cleaning and so forth, refer to my film "*Kilanta*" for the details).

Objectives of the study

My main goal is to describe how Fulani girls manage to deal both with traditional values and news skills gained from formal education. I will try to find out the impact of the new knowledge, status acquired from western school and the way that these girls negotiate their new identity. Therefore, I will highlight the historical development of Fulani girls linked to the power-relationships and explain how this power is changing over the generations. In this respect, I will focus on Zeinabu and Sumaiya's lifes, then on mine (as Fulani and higher educated girl) to go deep into my explanation. However, formal school and domestic education will be the main fields of my analysis to underline the sociocultural dynamic in the life course of Fulani women.

Being a researcher at home, what is it?

Native of the Adamawa region, I was born and grew up in the city of Ngaoundere. I decided to conduct my research in a Fulani family living in a rural area. I thought the fact that I belong to the same ethnic group would allow me to easily get access to field. Once I arrived at the field I realized the opposite. For me it was unbelievable to realize to what extend schooling could influence somebody's life from what happened to me during my fieldwork. While others were happy to go back home and meet their people, I was actually facing many challenges to negotiate my identity of belonging. Then I realized how exciting it was to be a researcher at home. My field partners and I became a team mate. My position as a Fulani girl becomes one of the key elements of my research, when collecting data; I realized that I was fighting to be accepted. My informants' behavior made me feel like an "outsider" from the way I had been treated when eating with them and so forth. Sometimes when I removed my shoes in front of the door to enter the room, Hadja asks to children to bring them inside the room so that I keep my feet clean. However, I wanted to behave and be regarded like Zeinabu and Sumaiya. I think that coming from abroad (a student from Norway) is one of reason why I have been treated as an "*international super star or a queen*".

One evening I visited the chief's family, and then I had been invited to eat. One of his daughters put in front of me a plate, spoon and fork while the rest of the family was eating with hand and together inside the same plate. Surprised, I asked her the reason why she acted like that, curiously her sister answered by saying to me "*we know that you are not comfortable eating with hand, you are already familiar with the western culture*". This made me ashamed, frustrated and felt excluded from my own society.

I adopted a proper way of dressing as required by the tradition, I kneeled down when greeting old people by using the right words such as: "*Allah woonanon*" (may God help you!) instead of saying "*djam bandou na?"(*How are you doing?). Despite all the efforts put to behave as an ordinary girl, I was perceived as a foreigner. In this respect, should I say that I am an insider or outside?

Structure of the thesis

In addition to the introduction, my thesis will be structured in five chapters:

In chapter one, I will give a general presentation of the research area. In this part two points will be set up: the historical background of the Fulani living in Mbang-Fulbe and their settlement, where do they come from? Then, I will present the economic and socio-cultural framework to see what is going on regarding the way that Fulani organize themselves.

Chapter two will be about the methodological approach, I will talk about my entering into the field and the methods used for data collection. I will also present my key characters and their main lineage.

Chapter three will be about formal school: the historical background, its establishment and significance in Cameroon in general and particularly, in the North part of the country. In this part, school will be introduced in two different perspectives: from colonial to postcolonial period.

Chapter four will describe how my field partners' household is organized. I will focus on the domestic production and the way that responsibilities are distributed between the family members. I will also stress the contribution of Laka family into this domestic production.

Chapter five will be about my relationship with my collaborators to explain how I came to negotiate my identity of being both a Fulani and higher educated girl coming from abroad.

1- General presentation of Mbang-Fulbe

Mbang is a small village located 37 km from Ngaoundere city (the head quarter of the Adamaoua region), precisely in Ngan-ha area, in the Vina division. This locality is on the road linking Cameroon to chad from a distance of 393 km (Ngaoundere- Touboro - Moundou).

I had the opportunity to visit this village for the first time in 2008. We made a round trip with some friend during the holidays. We were guided by a guy from Mbang-Fulbe who was a member of our group. I remember, I was the only Fulani girl among my peers (boys and girls mixed together) and when we went the local market, almost all of the villagers looked at me bizarrely. When we took part to the football competition, I observed that the stadium was divided as the follows: old men on one side, young boys on the other side and some beautiful Fulani girls isolated in a corner of the space. I was sitting on the same bench with some boys from the city, few minutes after; a guy from the village gets close and suggested me to join the girls on the other side. This drew my attention; I had some prejudices and wondered about the girls' life in that village.

1.1 - Historical background of Mbang-Fulbe

Mbang-fulbe means "*Fulani's property*" and the word "*Mbang*"[8] refers to a large space or a place to stay in Mbum[9] language (local dialect from the indigenous of Ngaoundere area). Thus, Mbang-Fulbe is a combination of two local languages (Fulani and Mbum). From my interviews with Baba *kaigama* and *Imam*[10], they told me that Mbang is an old village settled since 1836 and Fulani are the indigenous of that locality. Commonly called "*Mbang Buhari*", Buhari was the name of the first chief and Fulani nomadic in transhumance from North to the Adamawa region[11]. He was coming from Sebua, a small village close to Bibemi (North part of Cameroon in Garoua region). Helped by a man, he crossed the river and started his career as a herdsman. Over

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[8] *Source: Hamadama, a tailor from Mbum ethnic group living in Belaka neighborhood in Ngaoundere city.*

[9] *Mbum, the indigenous residents of Ngaoundere region. They have close relationship with the neighboring Dii people in the Eastern part of Adamawa region to the extent that it is sometimes difficult to make any distinction between these two ethnic groups. However, their relationship with the Fulani, who entered the region in the early-19th century, is more complex because Fulani were perceived as a ruling class. Thierno Moctar Bah, "Le facteur peul et les relations interethniques dans l'Adamaoua au XIXe siècle," in Peuples et cultures de l'Adamaoua (Cameroun), ed. Jean Boutrais and Hermenegildo Adala (Paris: ORSTOM, 1993), 64-66.*

[10] *Kaigama: one of notables who playing the role of prime minister in the chiefdom of Mbang Fulbe;*
 Imam: one who leads prayers at the main mosque of the village.

[11] *In fact, Northern Cameroon is divided in three main regions which are the following: Far-Northern, North and Adamawa*

the time, he acquired skills and was among the most qualified herdsmen, so that the *Lamido*[12] gave him a parcel of land and the responsibility of some cattle. Then, Buhari was followed by his relatives (mother and brothers) and chose as wife one of *Belaka's*[13] daughters.

1.2 - Sociocultural and economic organization in Mbang-Fulbe

Cattle and farming are the main activities in Mbang-Fulbe. The village market usually takes place every Saturday from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Cattle's trade makes this locality an attractive area; many people are coming from the neighboring villages. However, Fulani women do not get access to the cattle market, it is only men business. Fulani girls usually go to the village market just for buying. Meanwhile some young boys use to help their father or find something else to sell. Alternatively there are others jobs such as motorcycle's mechanics, shoemakers or tailors, etc. Women from others ethnic groups (Mbum, Dii, Laka...) sell a variety of items such as tomatoes, dry meat and fish, maize and cassava flour, vegetables, honey and others. Thus, non-Fulani women are experienced merchants. In contrast to girls, boys are educated in the sense of virility and of discipline in order to deal with all the social expectations and tasks that require the division of labor as conceived by the tradition.

Most of the people living in Mbang are Muslim. The society is strongly hierarchical, a leader (*Jawro*) assisted by three men (notables) in his functions: *Kaigama* (playing the role of prime minister), *Imam* (religious leader, one who leads prayers at the mosque), *Sarki Tikke* (who runs the cattle market). They operate according to the religious rules and Islam is taught to children from infancy. The chief has to ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

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[12] *Lamido: singular of lamibe in French and means chief in Fulani language.*
[13] *Belaka: means chief in Mbum language.*

2- Methodology and theoretical approach

2.1 - Access to the field

I went to the field for the first time with Ismael, my brother's friend. He introduced me to my host family. Once inside, Hadja welcomed us warmly, then Sumaiya came to us respectfully with a bowl of water and plates full of food. With particular attention, Hadja told me "*In this locality, water is drinkable; you can drink without any doubt*". This sentence seemed provocative to me, especially since the villagers knew I came from another environment different from their own.

As required by the tradition, I negotiated with the chief first and we discussed about my project and asked for his permission to use the film equipment around the village. The rest of village had been informed about my arrival. They got really passionate and excited toward me, other stood in front of their compounds to look at me passing by. Here and there, children called me by name. Everybody wanted to see how I look like and to know more about my life. My first days on the field was annoying, as I have mentioned above, I was regarded and treated as an international superstar by all the villagers. I felt shameful and embarrassed because I wanted to be regarded like an insider. As a researcher, I had to build my own personality between my culture and anthropological research and that turned out to a big challenge for me.

2.2 - Selecting my characters

I went to the field the first two weeks without film equipment. With my private camera I took, printed out and offered to my informants some pictures of them. Gradually, I became friend with almost the entire village. People called me from right to left and asked for the pictures. After two weeks, they started to wonder about the film equipment I was going to use and were curious to see it. I started to observe the surroundings to understand how inhabitants interacted among themselves and with events in their daily life. I visited some Fulani's houses; I observed that almost all the villagers have the same way of managing the house, females inside dealing with housework while males are outside.

When observing my host family, I noticed that domestic tasks are divided according to the gender and activities such as cooking and cleaning play an important role in that family. In addition to the fire wood, girls (Zeinabu and Sumaiya) often use the cooker to make tea or

coffee, but I noticed that the grandmother is feeling comfortable when using the fire wood. I think that the concept of *kilanta* is in dynamic because of this new tool (cooker) adapted for cooking. Every day Zeinabu starts by sweeping the court yard while the other girls clean the floor, sometimes Sumaiya is required to repeat the same task twice or thrice in order to keep the house clean so as to avoid being embarrassed whenever a visitor comes because it is very shameful to live in a dirty house. This attitude of cleanliness is common to my family also; I remember my mother used to tell me that: "*Ensure that the house is cleaned even at midnight because nobody ever knows what will happen to you at night. If you die or get an accident, you will be proud of yourself, you will avoid getting ashamed towards the first people who are coming to you*".

From that observation, I decided to focus on my host family particularly on Zeinabu and Sumaiya's life.

2.3 - Presentation of my field partners

During my fieldwork, I focused on a family of seven people: father, mother, three girls and two boys.

Alhadji   Hadja

Zeinabu ———— *children* ———— Habubakar

Sumaiya ———— *Grandchildren* ———— Aliu
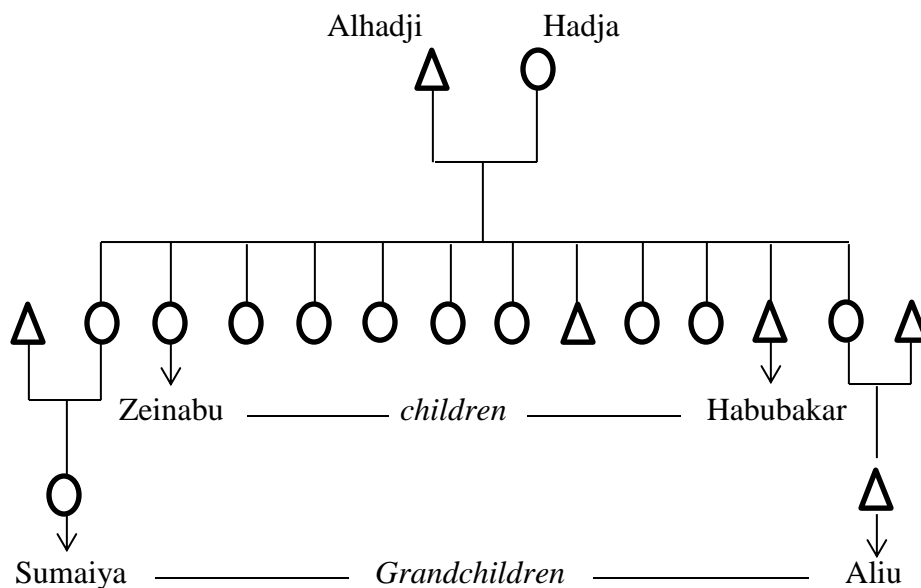
*N.B: One of my characters (*Hapsatu*) is missing from the drawing above.*

She is one of Alhadji's daughters but her mother is divorced.

Figure 3: Main lineage of my characters

2.3.1 - Zeinabu one of my main characters

Zeinabu (about 23 years old) is one of Hadja's daughters. She stopped schooling for about 10 years now after her primary education. She told me that there was no secondary school in the village then and her parents did not want to let her go to the city for further studies. It's only boys who had the opportunity at that time. However, she has been waiting to get marriage for many years now, but she has not yet found someone who wants to marry her. Meanwhile, Zeinabu is going to the adult Koranic school twice a week. She spends the rest of the time looking after the house when her mother and the other family members are absent. She usually gets busy by doing *kilanta* (cooking the daily meal) and receiving visitors, when her parents leave to the city.

2.3.2 - Sumaiya

Sumaiya is 14 years and living in Mbang with her grandparents since she was five years. Her mother is one of Zeinabu's sisters and has been married in the city. Sumaiya is going to school and learning *kilanta* from her grandmother so that she could succeed to be trained as required by the tradition before getting married. Her life is filled with ambitions; she is supposed to be in secondary school and has planned to continue until getting the bachelor. Sumaiya hopes to find a job before getting married.

2.3.3 - Hapsatou

Hapsatou one of Alhadj's daughters and Hadja is like her second mother, because her mother got divorced long time ago. She is living with the other family members and treated in the similar way as Sumaiya. At 11 years, she has already acquired some knowledge in the management of the house. She is going both to the formal and to the Koranic School.

2.3.4 - Habubakar

About 12 years, Habubakar receives a lot of affection from the whole family. People often call him "*kaou*" which means uncle in the Fulani language. In the evening, he usually eats some bread and takes some juice with his father while others eat fufu. He is also going both to the formal and to the Koranic School, manages his free time between music, football and swimming. Like many boys in the village, he is dealing with outside tasks.

2.3.5 - Aliu

Aliu is 18 years; his parents live in Douala, a city in the Southern part of Cameroon. He is one of Hadja's grandchildren and has been sent to his mother's family. Aliu is a third year student in the college of Mbang. He behaves completely different from others, always with headphones and a cap looking like the young city boys.

2.3.6 – Alhadji

In his sixties, Alhadji is the father of the family. He is cattle owner, trader and farmer. Married since forty years with thirteen children, eleven girls and two boys, Alhadji has never been to school. He often joins the others villagers sitting close to the main road when he is free and gets home at the eating time. He sometimes takes part to the cattle market in the neighboring villages or the main market in Ngaoundere city to find out if there is a good business.

2.3.7 - Hadja

Hadja is Alhadj's wife and has been married since the age of fifteen. As wife, mother and grandmother, she is illiterate like her husband and takes care of the house and children. At 55 years, Hadja is perceived as a model of a successful housewife. She is one who teaches the girls by transmitting some cultural values (from practice) and codes of conduct according to the Fulani culture. She spends all day long getting in and out, giving instructions to children and to Laka women.

2.4 - Data collection

I had been in the field for a period of three months (Avril, May, June) to carry out my research. In this process of data collection, I used the following methods: Participant observation, field notes, interview and the video camera as a tool for recording.

2.4.1 - Participant observation

According to Bogdan and Taylor[14], participant observation is defined as the following: *"research characterized by a period of intense social interaction between researcher and subjects in the milieu of the latter, during this period data are systematically collected (...) Observers immerse themselves personally in the lives of people and the situation they wish to understand"* (1975:05). Throughout the fieldwork, the participant observer by taking part in the

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[14] *Bogdan, R., Taylor, S J., (1975), Introduction to qualitative Research Methods: A Phenomenological Approach to the Social Sciences, New York, John Wiley and Sons.*

collective lives of those he observes, must look, listen and converse with these people. He has to let himself be involved into this action, in order to collect information. In others words, it consists of spending time with the people, participating in their daily life in order to understand the culture meanings and social structures of the group and how these are interrelated (Davies 2008).

My identity as a Fulani and researcher exposes me to two roles, both as insider and outsider (Spradley 1980). Beyond the fact that I have been perceived as an outsider, I think that the knowledge of *kilanta* is incorporated into my mind and body. From that cultural background, I identified myself and had a feeling of involvement while observing my field partners into their daily life. I was engaged into girls' activities by helping them. Most of the time we cooked together; I often swept the yard early in the morning, I helped them to fetch water from the well, followed them to the maize mill. I behaved as a subject to understand and feel the same emotions like those girls when doing housework.

However, I behaved also like an outsider to the extent that I was learning from my own culture. I think that my position as a researcher made me as an outsider. I acted as an observer by listening what they were saying and observing what they were doing. As mentioned by Spradley, our experience of participating in a social situation takes meaning and coherence from the fact that we are "insider" to the situation. In this respect, he argued out that: "*the participant observer will experience being both insider and outsider simultaneously*" (1980:57). This allowed me to produce a critical knowledge and find out what is going on regarding the issue of housework in a Fulani community nowadays.

2.4.2 - Video camera

According to MacDougall (1998:129), *"the filmmaker and the camera are imperceptibly attributed with the power to witness the totality of an event"*. Omniscient and omnipotent, this tool allows the filmmaker to participate into the daily life of his subjects and to read or learn the way how these people perceive their world.

When I asked my field mates the approval of bringing the camera, they happily agreed. The next day I prepared the equipment and went to spend the night with them. I woke up at 6:00 am and installed my equipment in the courtyard. At the beginning, Aliu was suspicious. When I showed

him footage he was really fascinated and invited me to film the football competition. Aliu and I became friends since that time; he followed me almost all the time. He often takes my book notes and tried to read what I was writing. Every evening, the family gathered around my camera to watch the footage. At times, Aliu also invite some of his friends to comment and discuss upon.

When I was following children outside, many people thought that I was a journalist and asked me which media company I was working for.

Therefore, it is important to stress the relevance of the camera while filming. Camera is not only a tool for recording; it allowed me also to be integrated into my characters' action and in synchrony with the viewers as described by MacDougall (2006)[15]. In this respect, he pointed out: "*Filming is fundamentally acquisitive in incorporating the bodies of others. The bodies of the subject, the filmmaker and the viewer become interconnected and in some ways undifferentiated*" (2006:28). Thus, the image is affected as much by the body behind the camera as those before it. I think that my presence behind the camera was fruitful; it promoted my access to the field. This tool has changed my status I was regarded as a star; it gave me particular consideration towards the villagers because they see it like a prestige. They often ask the following question: "*when are you going to come into my house?*". Sometimes, I made them believe that the battery was empty and they have to wait for next time, because the entire village wanted to be filmed.

2.4.3 - Field notes and interview

I decided to conduct some of the interviews by taking down note to save the battery due to the lacking of electricity in the village. I took notes from the interview with people who are concerned with my project. Questions were asked to some women and children (boys and girls) in the village regarding the way they managed the house and discussed about issues linked to the Fulani culture such as *pulaaku*, girls and boys duties, perception of a Fulani woman and so forth. It was semi-structured and individual interviews. I decided to organize these interviews as a

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[15] *While filming, Rouch experiences ciné-trance. "Filmmaking for me is to write with one's eyes, one's ears, with one's body; it's to enter into something…I am ciné-rouch in ciné-trance in the act of ciné-filming…It's the joy of filming, the ciné-plaisir". Rouch notes the synchrony of himself with his subject, the "harmony…which is in perfect balance with the movements of the subjects" (2006:27). "The body in cinema" in MacDougall, D.(2006) The corporeal image. Film, Ethnography and the Senses. Princeton N J, Princeton University Press.*

dialogue so that they can also ask questions and express their thoughts freely. In addition to this, I have also interacted with people from other ethnic groups (Laka and Dii) living in the same locality to know how Fulani are perceived by others.

3 - What does the school represent?

According to Serpell, the concept of schooling can be defined as the following: "*the promotion of economic progress, the transmission of culture from one generation to the next and the cultivation of children's intellectual and moral development*" (1993:01).

3.1 - Perception of Western school in Africa

Formal school appears as one of the main drivers of changes in Africa. This institution had two main objectives. First, to fulfill the civilizing mission, this was the ideological basis of colonial expansion and the will to promote progress. Secondly, to the development of education was a prerequisite for colonial exploitation. At the beginning, formal education was only for those working in the colonial administration. Some disciplines such as teaching, medicine, journalism and law were the most relevant. In the first half of the 20th century, a lot of staff had been trained in Africa and since then education became a means to illuminate the black continent. However, African people sent their kids to school for several reasons. Hesitations expressed by the family of Samba Diallo in *Aventure ambiguë* (Kane 1961) seem to characterize the attitude of most of the Muslim elites. Samba Diallo was not sent to school to assimilate Western values or to enjoy it, but to learn the secrets of Western culture and to resist to their ideology. This attitude of self-defense can explain Muslim's motivation to defend their faith and values. If Western school raised concerns for some, the situation was the opposite for others who were fascinated by writing (Goyemide 1985). In his book, *Le dernier survivant de la caravane* (The Last survivor of the caravan) Goyemide describes the Yetomane chief's behavior toward the colonial administrator. When he came, the chief submitted only one request: "building a school at home". Thus, the desire to know the script and language of white men can also be explained as a relevant aspect among the reasons that pushed African people to send their children to school.

3.2 - Formal school in Cameroon: from colonial to national school

The introduction of western school in Cameroon in general and particularly in Ngaoundere is part of missionaries and colonizers' works (Gullestad 2007). However, formal school has been established in Adamawa region by the French colonial administration after the second war and the first school was built in Ngaoundere in 1931 (Abdoulaye 1997, in *The power of knowledge* by Holtedahl 1999). In this respect, Gullestad argues that the missionaries came in Northern

Cameroon with charitable gifts: "the gift of Gospel; of medical and educational works". In fact, the activity of the civilization revolved around medical and educational works, many schools and health centers have been created. The purpose of school was to teach foreign languages to the local people and make them able to interpret the Bible in order to preach the Gospel. Therefore, evangelizing implied attracting and keeping people's attention. Indeed, formal school reflects Western culture which is completely different from Fulani culture. Muslims in Northern Cameroon were against western school at the beginning, "*they were afraid that school converted their children into Christians*".

Over time, formal education was introduced all over the country, the idea of schooling has gradually gained acceptance in majority and the new system of knowledge has been set up (Georges and Christiane 1978). Around 1990's, the situation has completely changed in all over the country. Women living in Northern Cameroon including those from the Fulani ethnic group in Ngaoundere city started to negotiate their identity and positions (Holtedahl, 1993). While facing many challenges, Fulani girls are conscious about the opportunities they can get from school. While following Hapsatu (one of Alhadji's daughters) taking food to people (from Laka ethnic group) working on her father's farm, we suddenly started a discussion. Fascinated by my film equipment, Hapsatu opened the floor discussion by telling to Laka people where I came from and how I got back home by flight, as well as the weather conditions in Norway by laying emphasis on snow. Then, she expresses her desire to become a film maker like me stating that: "*After my studies, when I will grow up, I will be like Rashida, I'll bring my camera ... and film people in the village*". From that discussion, I realize that she has a lot of ambitions for the future and aware of the higher social status that she could gain from schooling.

When I asked the grandmother the reason why they are sending their kids to school, she gave me the following answer: "*Today there is a great difference between my daughters and I. They have to go to school to make their life easier. They may read the prescription when going to the hospital and avoid risk. In our case, it's not easy to deal with language when we go to the hospital. We have to find help because we have not been to school. Otherwise, the doctor has to make drawing to explain how to take the medicine. This is one of the reasons why we send our kids to school.*" Due to some political and economic challenging (Waage 2013), the prospect of a privileged position in society is certainly one of the main reasons. School has become a mean of

success in life, therefore being educated implies a prestige. The desire to go to school or to send children arises like a dream to escape poverty. For a poor father, the prospect of seeing his son/daughter getting a job in the administration may be the peak of his dreams. For a time, the education ensured a stable and relatively high income. Over time, the requirements were becoming larger and people's ambitions have also increased. So, hopes persist while the labor market is saturated, the prospect of finding a job and grade becomes very limited. Families are ready to ruin themselves in order to send their children to school.

3.3 - Situation of girls' schooling in Mbang-Fulbe

In those days, almost all of the Fulani girls living in Mbang stopped their studies at the primary level. After the primary, girls stayed at home waiting for the first man who wishes to marry them, while boys moved to the city to attend the secondary school. Then the situation changed with the building of a secondary school in 2010. Hadja has twelve children, ten girls and two boys (Feyssal, 31 years and Habubakar, 12 years). Feyssal has been sent to the city after the primary school so that he could continue schooling. However, Zeinabu's sisters got married right after or even before attending the primary school. Hawa, 25 years (one of Zeinabu's sisters) got married in the same village at the age of 16. From what she told me, two of her younger sisters got married before ending the primary. Zeinabu, one of my main characters has abandoned school in 2003; she says that her parents did not want to let her go to the city. At 23 years, Zeinabu thinks that it is too late to go to school and prefers to help her mother with housework while waiting for a husband.

My footage contained materials of some situations wherein Fulani girls were interacting at school; they looked happy and more open. However, they behave completely different when at home or at the Koranic School. At the Koranic School, girls and boys sit separately, this is part of basic rules and each of them focuses on his slate or book. With a stick in hand, the teacher plays the guide role by following the apprentices into their reading and reminds them all the time to raise the voice. Therefore, this situation is more or less difficult for the children because they do not have any break time as it is the case with the formal school, and a learning session takes at least two hours.

Figure 4: Girls playing football during break time at school

Source: Rachidatou Ibrahim, May 2013.

3.4 – Formal School: factor of change and social mobility

In many African societies children are regarded as "gift from God, prestige and abundant labor". In Cameroon in general and particularly in Ngaoundere, parents' expectations towards their kids depend on the level of income of the family that one may belong to. If you belong to the middle or poor class for instance, you should be aware about the financial support provided by your family so that this act could generate feedback. When discussing about the issue with the grandmother, she draws my attention by saying the most important is "*blessed kids, who will assist you with housework and take care of you later*". She took an example by saying "*parents contribute to their kids' success by sending them to school. Therefore, these children may also take care of them later*".

From my analysis, the conceptual meaning of school can be understood as "life-journeys and metaphor of travel" (Serpell 1993). According to this author, school can be identified as a staircase up which the students must climb in a predetermined direction, I have borrowed the concept "predetermined direction" to refer "success". From my understanding success may be

linked to the schooling and this can be regarded as a system or canal from which one may get a better life. In this respect, Serpell describes schooling as "*a wheelchair in which education is construed as horizontal* ". He pointed out that: "*a wheelchair may afford to its owner access to certain resources which result in a significant increase of power*" (1993:298). Formal school can be understood as described by Grønhaug (1975) when talking about the concept of "social fields". Into my analytical concept, school can be identified as a tool from which Fulani girl can gain a new position or social status for good career and better life. In those days, higher education was regarded as a source of deviation which can generate bad reputation such as disobedience, prostitution and so forth. Higher educated girls are called "*long pencil*". Over the time, everything had changed when boys started to move from the village to the city either to continue their studies or to find a job. This has an impact in the life of girls living in rural areas in the extent that it becomes difficult to find a husband.

Since 2010, the situation of girls schooling has changed with the establishment of the secondary school in Mbang-Fulbe, they have finally gotten access. Into my informants' family, Sumaiya is the first girl who has gotten this opportunity. She is supposed to be in her first year of secondary school in Mbang-Fulbe. Today, formal school opens new possibilities for social advancement both in urban and rural areas. Fulani girls have acquired new knowledge and skills from schooling; however, this has a impact on their life, way of thinking and negotiating their new social identity. Contrary to her relatives (mother, aunts and grandmother), Sumaiya's life is full of ambitions. She has planned to go as far as possible into her studies and wishes to find a job at the end of her career. As pointed out by Waage (2013), formal education became a key to get a position in the state apparatus or being able to operate in an increasingly globalized society.

Sumaiya does not have the same project as Zeinabu who is thinking only on finding a husband. In our context, I think school can be identitied as a new skill by which Fulani women could make themselves free and responsible. Therefore, this has an impact on the cultural values in the sense that a Fulani woman would not be perceived only from her ability of doing *kilanta*, but also from the other side. What I mean by "other side", is the new position or status acquired from schooling. I think the grandmother is also conscious about the fact that Sumaiya is going to school, maybe that is the reason why she is expecting much from Zeinabu's assistance. I remember when Zeinabu was away for a couple of days, she was always complaining saying that

"I am the only person who cooks when Zeinabu is away. I have to find a domestic worker when she will get married. I cannot manage alone, my knees and feet hurt when walking around while cooking."

4- Organization of my informants' household

According to Goody (1958), a household can be identified as a unit of production, consumption and residence interrelated and changing over time. This concept also refers to a "common unit where members live under one roof and eat together or share catering facilities" (Wallman 1984). However, Fulani households can be understood as a model constructed around "forms or a series of regularities" as mentioned by Barth when talking about the models of social organization. To give meaning to the conceptual approach of household in the Fulani community, an analytical perspective will be highlighted on the way how household tasks and activities are organized into my collaborators' house. I will focus on Barth's theory (when describing the relationship between the skipper, net boss and fishermen in the analysis of a fishing vessel to explain the relevance of status) to gradually explain the role or contribution of each family member into that domestic production.

4.1 - Domestic production

4.1.1 - Father's role: Alhadji, the head of household

According to Fulani culture, the relationship between man and woman is based on marriage. From this partnership, a woman is free to live under one roof with her husband. As a head of household, the man is one who provides the livelihood for the whole family. This gives him the power of management by saying: "*saare am*"/ "*my house*", ie his ownership (wife and children) and a good reputation of being a "*baba saare*"/"*head of house*" with honor and prestige into his community.

In my informants' house, Alhadji is one who manages the domestic economy. As a cattle owner, trader and farmer, he usually wakes up around 5:00 am to join the prayer group at the mosque. Then he gets home to see if everything is in the right order with his wife and children. Alhadji used to sit in the courtyard, while waiting for the breakfast, Laka men join him to discuss farm business and Garba (the herdsman) brings milk and news regarding the cattle. After the breakfast, Alhadji follows the cattle to the river for drinking. Then together with the herdsman, he selects some cows for sell and gives instructions for the next market. Indeed, the herdsman is charged to follow the cows to the market every Saturday. During the week, Alhadji visits some cattle owners and takes part to the cattle markets in the neighboring villages to arrange other

business. In addition to this, Alhadji is also a big farmer. People from the Laka ethnic group serve as a cheap hand labor in the Fulani farms during the farming, seedling, and harvest periods. Maize is produced in big quantity and the harvest divided in two, one part is transformed in flour to feed the family and the rest in stored in order to ensure that they have enough to eat until the next harvest season (part of the stored ones is transported to the city to be sold).

Figure 5: Illustration of a negotiation between Alhadji and a Laka man in the courtyard

This picture is an illustration of the relationship between Fulani and Laka ethnic group.
Sitting on the chair, Alhadji bent down to count farm products against bad grasses.
Holding a plastic bag, a Laka man is bending to follow the instructions.

If my informants live "*under one roof*" and eat in a "*common pot*", it is because the economical production provided by Alhadji is relevant for the livelihood of this entire family. I have borrowed the concept of "*under one roof*" and "*common pot*" from Wallman approach in order

to explain how my field partners are gathered by these two physical markers. Without any income, it will be difficult to gather the family members or to bring them together for a common sharing. I want to underline Alhadji's role to describe how units of production and consumption are linked to one another. Therefore, this also shows the relationship between the family members, the way that they are related to each other and the significance of the household around them. In this respect, a man can be identified as a key element to maintain family and residence. Look into figure 6 for illustration of Alhadji's role.
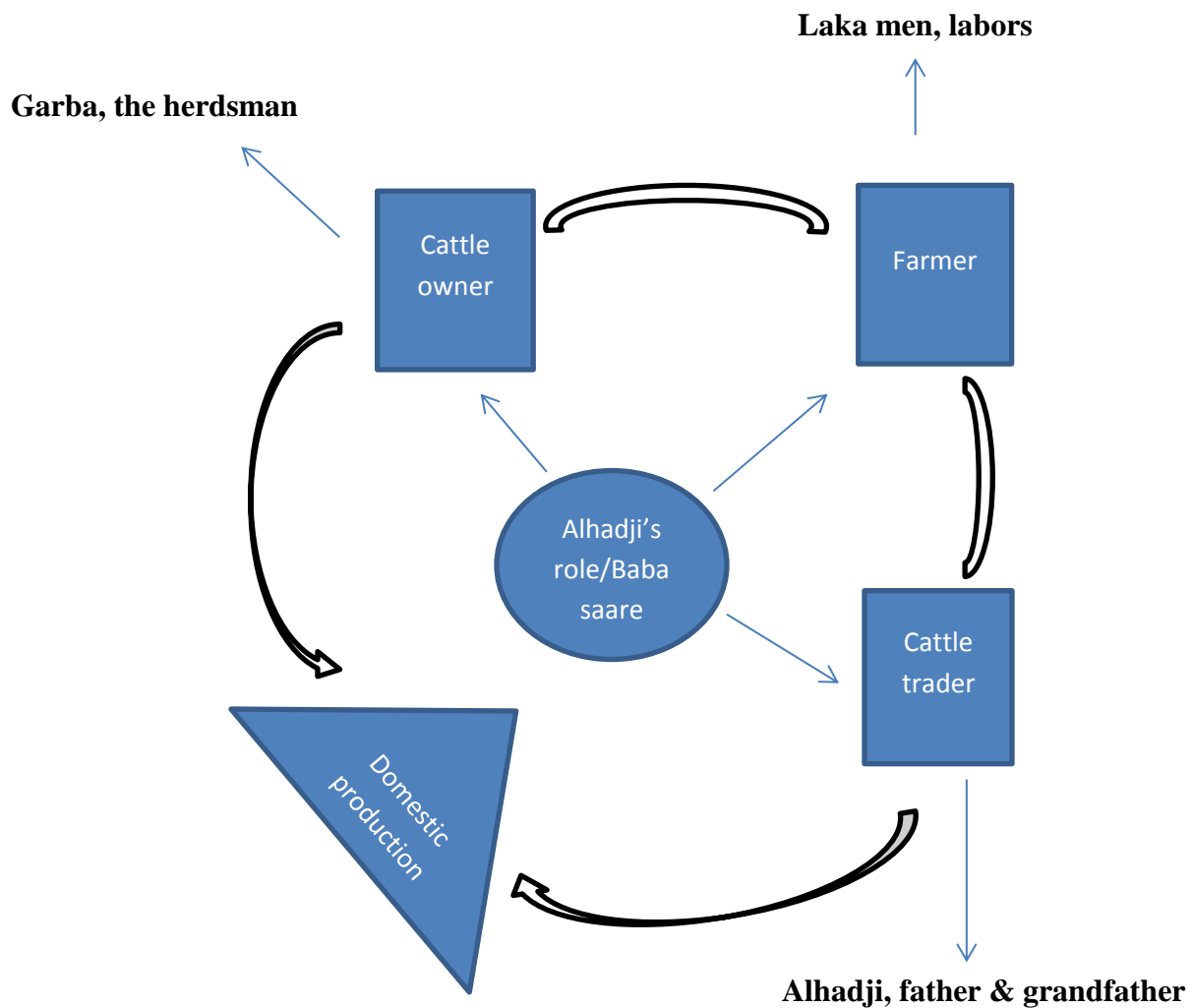
Laka men, labors

Garba, the herdsman

Cattle owner

Farmer

Alhadji's role/Baba saare

Cattle trader

Domestic production

Alhadji, father & grandfather

Figure 6: Alhadji's responsibilities in the domestic production.

4.1.2 - Hadja's responsibilities: Wife, mother and grandmother

In Fulani language, the concept "*debbo*" (*rewbe*, plural), ie woman or wife refers to "*submission*"/to submit and "*debbanaago*" means to "*submit to somebody*" (Djingui in Boutrais1993). When a wife behaves properly toward her husband, one says that "o *debbani goriiko*"/ "*she is a good wife for her husband*". As I have mentioned above, a Fulani woman is perceived from her ability to manage *kilanta*, a key cultural value proper to this ethnic group. This cultural knowledge gives to Hadja a powerful position inside the house. During the interview she raised the relevance of closeness between girl and mother by saying "*a girl must be close to her mother, so that she can be initiated before getting married*". This means that Hadja has a power over the girls and activities going around. Hadja is one who trains the girls and tasks are divided according to her.

In addition of being *daada saare*/housewife, Hadja makes money from selling kerosene at home and farming on a piece of land she has gotten as heritage from her father's. Look into figure 7 for the description of Hadja's responsibilities and the way tasks are divided.
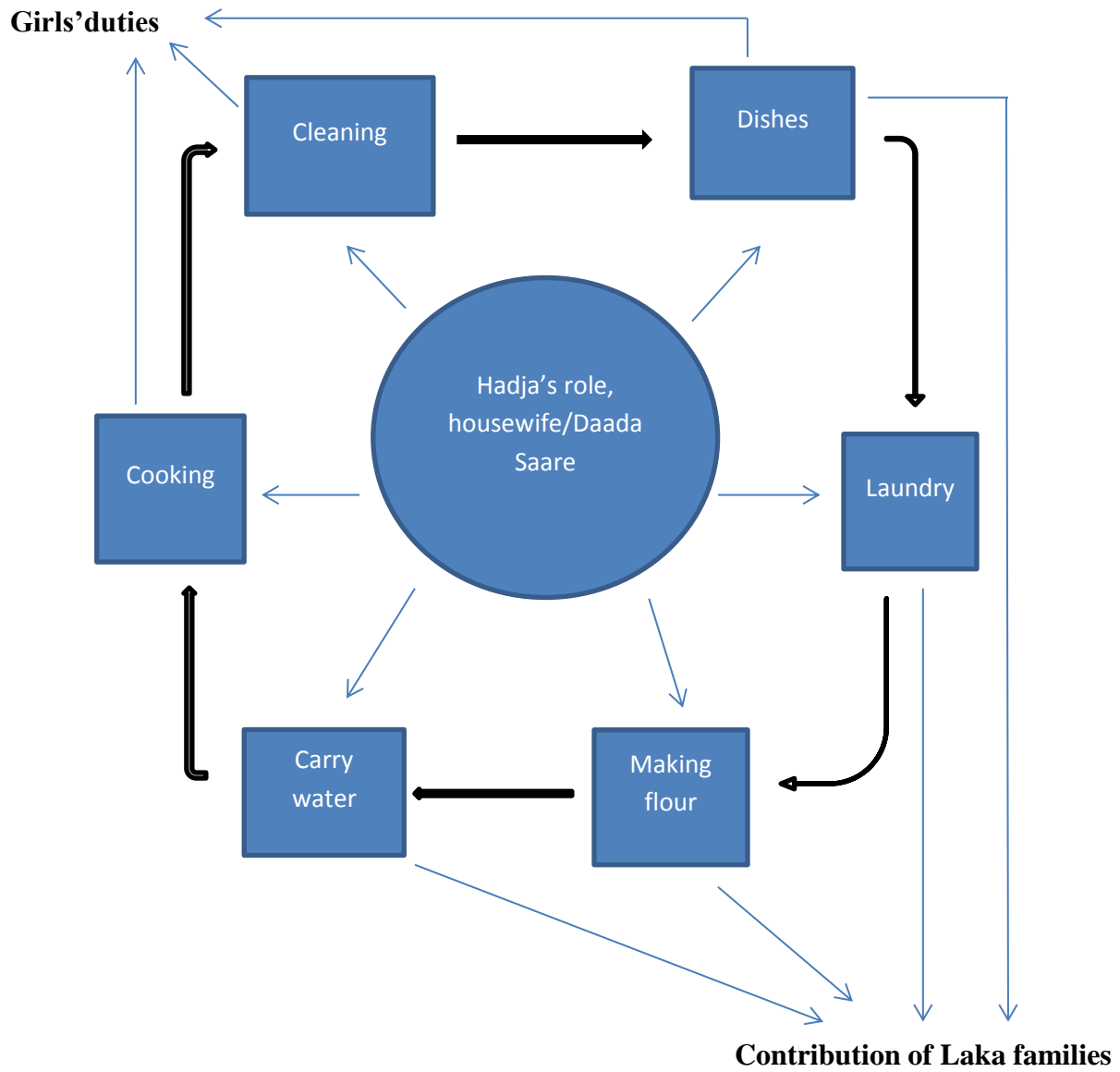
Girls'duties

Cleaning

Dishes

Hadja's role, housewife/Daada Saare

Cooking

Laundry

Carry water

Making flour

Contribution of Laka families

Figure 7: Distribution of housework in Alhadj's house.

4.1.3 - Girls' duties: Cooking and cleaning

As mentioned by the grandmother, girls deal with inside activities. After the Morning Prayer everyone focuses on her duty. Sumaiya and Hapsatu usually clean the floor before going to school. They are also those who make the evening meal and dishes after coming back from school. Sumaiya told me that she started doing chores since her childhood, cleaning and dishes when she was seven and cooking at ten.

Zeinabu has a busy timetable; she leads the cooking. She plays the role of a housewife, sweeps the courtyard every morning, makes food, tea and cleans some dishes. After the breakfast everyone goes to carry out their daily activities (children to school and father into his business), Hadja often goes to the city after giving her some instructions. Zeinabu walks around between the kitchen, the courtyard and the rooms while making the daily meal. However, rooms and yard are swept many times to keep the house clean. When the visitors come, she receives them with a cup of tea to make them feel comfortable and keeps them company as long as possible to avoid loneliness.

Figure 8: Zeinabu making tea for a visitor. She uses a modern cooker to do it fast.

Source: Rachidatou Ibrahim, May 2013.

4.1.4 - Boys' activities

Aliu and Habubakar are the only two boys in my partners' house. Aliu usually wakes up during breakfast time and just prepares himself for school. The youngest Habubakar goes to the Koranic school early in morning and gets home around 7:00 am, then prepares himself for the formal school. Like many other boys, Aliu plays football in the evening with some friends or take part in the swimming during weekends. Alternatively, the two boys enjoy themselves at home by listening to music, while girls are involved in the housework. Sometimes, Habubakar follows his father to the cattle market or goes to the farm to keep the birds away from destroying the crops.

4.1.5 - Laka families' contribution: Dishes, laundry, fetching water, farming and making flour

There is a powerful relationship between Fulani and Laka, being "*non-Fulani* or *non-Muslims*" exposes the Laka ethnic group to the Fulani domination[16]. Therefore, there is an ethnic boundary between these two groups, regarded as drinkers, smokers and sinners, Laka are isolated in a corner of the village. However, these people play an important role in the Fulani domestic production. They serve as a cheap hand labor into Fulani's houses and farms. Women do laundry

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[16] *Fulani ideology identifies a division between Muslim and "non-Muslim" individuals who correlate to the division between the Fulani and "non-Fulani" and between free and not-free status. Therefore ethnic identity and social status limited the role of "non-Fulani" groups even if they were not technically slaves. In the logic of the Fulani-dominated world, slaves and marginalized groups were associated to others, in opposition to the Fulani. I mean by others "non-Muslims" regarded as "Haabe"/pagans (Interview with the chief in Mbang-Fulbe, Djingui 2000, Waage 2013, etc). Several authors commented on this. According to the Anthropologist Quentin Gausset (1998), the maintaining of ethnic boundaries between Fulani and others is marked from ethnic divisions and the distinction between "slave" and "free". These populations who were subjects rather than the slaves were subordinated to Fulani, because many forms of collaboration and exploitation in pre-colonial Ngaoundéré occurred in reference to Fulani power. Even when the colonial state imposed itself on the region, the existing social structure remained the same and added another layer to the hierarchy already in place. Froelich (1954), "Le Commandement et l'organisation sociale chez les Foulbé de L'Adamaoua (Cameroun)," Etudes Camerounaises; (Ibid) "Ngaoundéré: la vie économique d'une cité peul". VerEecke (1994), "The Slave Experience in Adamawa: Past and Present Perspectives from Yola (Nigeria)". Walker (1980), "From Cattle Camp to City: The Changing Roles of Fulbe Women in Northern Cameroon". Djingui (2000), "Le pouvoir, le savoir et la richesse : Les Fulbe de Ngaoundéré face au processus de modernisation". Saliou (2004), "Pouvoir et autorité des chefs dit traditionnels au Nord Cameroun : cas de Belaka Mboum et Mbere XVIII-XXe siècles. Holtendahl (1988), "Women's Control over Women: Women's condition in the Development of Urban Culture in Ngaoundéré, North-Cameroon".*

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and dishes, in exchange for these services the Fulani pay them money, food and sometimes clothes. Many of Laka women come into my field partners' house for helping. Maama, an old woman comes twice a day to wash the dishes(except on Sonday). Victorine and Dada Merci take care of the laundry and flour (one of the most difficult tasks consist of transforming maize to flour). Men carry water and work in the farms during the farming, sowing, harvesting periods. At times, they are assisted by their wives and children.

Figure 9: A Laka family working in Alhadj's farm   **Figure 10:** Laka ladies helping Hadja to make corn flour

Source: Rachidatou Ibrahim, May 2013.

4.1.6 - Koranic school

The establishment of Koranic school in Cameroon goes back from the Islamic conquest or *jihad*[17] led by Usman Dan Fodio

The training takes at least three years for those who work hard and a life for the lazy people. Classes are held five days a week and children have a large slate on which they learn to read and write. In Mbang-Fulbe, the Koranic school is organized around extended family, neighbors and

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[17]*Jihad: holy war led by Modibbo Adama and Usman Dan Fodio (Eldridge 1981; Boutrais (1992). According to Eldridge (1978), Fulani who settled in Ngaoundere are coming from Nigeria through jihad. They had been converted to Islam since the eighteenth century (Regis 2003), which explains today their commitment to this religion.*

anyone who has read the entire Koran can also be a guide. Hapsatu and Habubakar are those who did not complete the Koran, they usually go twice a day (except on Thursday and Friday), early in the morning and the afternoon. The learning techniques involve repetition, memorization, recitation and copying of Arabic texts from the "holy book" to a wooden slate. The purpose of the Koranic school is to make sure that children should learn at least the five pillars of Islam (prayer, fast, pilgrimage, etc). In this specific training, education of girl remains a priority. The involvement of girl into this discipline aims at gaining moral and spiritual values including self-control and respect as written in the Koran. Kids are sitting separately, boys grouping on one side and girls on the opposite. Zeinabu goes to the adult Koranic school and learns a lot from hadiths (complementary books in the Koran). Fulani culture is much linked to the region, so that it is sometimes difficult to make a distinction between these two.

Figure 11: A Koranic school. Girls are seated on one side and boys on the other.

Source: Rachidatou Ibrahim, May 2013.

The teacher in the middle with a stick in hand to remind the students to read loudly

4.1.7 - Description of Alhadj's house

At the entrance there is a room called "*djaoulerou*" where Alhadji takes a rest, eats and receives the visitors. On the market day, he usually invites some friends (from the city) to share a meal. There are three buildings inside the house; Hadja's room and that of her husband's next to. The children rooms are found on the opposite side, then the kitchen and the store room in the last building on the right. A shed is built in one corner in front of the main entrance and serves as maize stock. There are three stones outside and behind the kitchen room to make fire for cooking; it is also a common place for breakfast. The grandmother and children usually eat at that place but the midday and evening meals are ate in the girls' room. As for the grandfather, he eats in his room. There are two cleaning places: the laundry's place close to the kitchen and the dishes' behind the father's room. (Illustration in Figure 12)
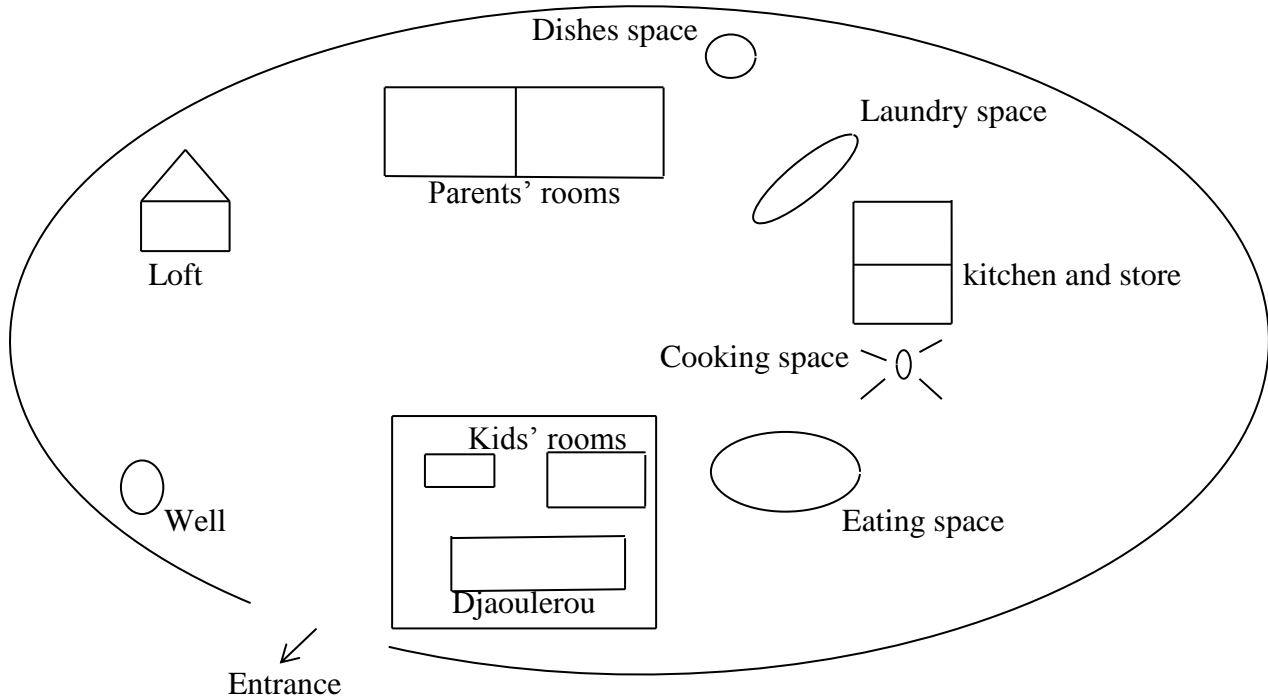
Figure 12: The plan of Alhadji's house

5- My relationship with my informants: both as a researcher and a Fulani girl

"*Any successful interpretation requires common ground between author, subject and audience*", Serpell (1993:280). Mentioning the reflexive triangle, Serpell argues that the relationship between author, subject and audience is the following: author has to explain to the audience his findings from the subject. However, the author can also play the subject's role (reflexivity) by interpreting self-behavior to the audience. As far as the potential of changing roles is concerned, I would like to stress upon the challenging reflexivity of being both as a Fulani girl and researcher. To explain the behavior of others I will also focus on mine.

As I mentioned above, I think the fact that I am highly educated has generated changes on my social identity. I had never imagined that going to school or coming from abroad with a camera video could affect my life. I thought I was like anybody, an ordinary girl until I reached the field. Then I realized that I was not treated similar to my characters Zeinabu and Sumaiya or like any Fulani girl living in that locality. I became aware about my new identity once on the field. When walking around in the village with my film equipment, my identity of belonging was hidden behind the video camera and I was perceived like a "star". As a research's tool, my camera was a mean by which the ethnographic knowledge would be constructed. So, the knowledge built up could be identified as a capital or resource highlighted by Bourdieu when talking about the concepts of power and relationship between social actors. According to him, cultural capital can be defined as "resources of an individual" which can be incorporated from knowledge, skills or speech, objectified from the possession of cultural objects and institutionalized from titles or academic grades.

 I do hereby use Bourdieu's approach to stress on both the relevance of the skills which I have gained from my schooling and on the film equipment I was using (on behalf of the knowledge acquired from school). Thus, being a researcher and bringing a camera were the two things which gave me a new social rank and power on the field.

5.1 - Similarity and difference/powerful relationship

When looking into the page cover of this thesis, there are two girls (Zeinabu and I) wearing traditional clothes. From our physical appearance, we are almost similar. However, my position as a higher educated gave me the power to behave differently from Zeinabu. For example I got access to the male space (cattle market) which is not open to other girls living in that area, thus my choice is influenced by the constraint and incentive (Barth 1981) of being a researcher.

Under constraint of being a student and a researcher, I generate a different pattern of social forms than Zeinabu. Despite our cultural background of being "*pullo*[18]", we do not have the same way of thinking and perceiving the world. It was a bit difficult for me to interact with Zeinabu, she was shy and sometimes embarrassed. I felt more comfortable when interacting with Sumaiya because she is full of life and ambitions.

I will borrow Goffman's concept of performance and self-presentation to make myself clear. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Goffman defines performance as "*all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (1959:22).* By employing the terms of performance and self-presentation, I refer to Goffman's approach to describe how Fulani girls present themselves, construct or negotiate their identity and reconstruct their culture. I can refer to my own experience to explain what I mean. From the way I behave during my fieldwork by adopting the "proper" way of dressing, by kneeling down and using proper words to greet the elders, by assisting girls in doing housework and so on. I wanted to show them my ability of being a Fulani woman. Therefore, this gave me credibility towards my field partners; I was regarded as a model. I was treated with a lot of honor and respect in that village; people were fascinated by my presence. Look at figure 13 for the illustration of my interaction into my field partners' house.

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[18] *Pullo: singular of Fulbe which means Fulani in local language.*

Figure 13: I myself making food in my informants' house

Source: Rachidatou Ibrahim, May 2013.

I think Sumaiya's ambitions are generated from the pattern of "self-confidence", it seems that she is conscious about skills and status she may gain from school in order to be self-independent. School appears to me as a kind of performance from which Fulani girls come to perform their new identity. By analyzing my presence on the field, I noticed that my new status gained from western school gave me a powerful relationship towards my field partners. My new position can be understood as a powerful tool when it comes to define my social identity. The combination of cultural values and new knowledge from formal school gave me a new status and the power to redefine the rules in that area.

To go deep into my explanation, I will stress on the concept of micro-macro relations described by Grønhaug (1975). To give a definition to the concepts of micro and macro relations, I am going to refer to the concepts of social fields, status and roles to describe the position of my field partners and myself. As a researcher, I was involved in various fields and the scale of our interaction varies from case to case. Being a Fulani allowed me getting access to that village, to my informants and to the neighboring houses. As a student, I had been in touch with the local and public administrators; and also took part to the cattle market which is relevant for me. Meanwhile the grandmother just get access only to other Fulani's houses either as a neighbor or a

relative and her power is only limited "inside" the house. Like her mother, Zeinabu has access to the neighbors and Koranic school. However, Sumaiya's floor is wider than those of her relatives; she is involved in three different fields: home, Koranic and formal school.

Look into the figure 14 to summarize the social fields of my partners and I, and our interactions at the micro-macro level (small and large scales).
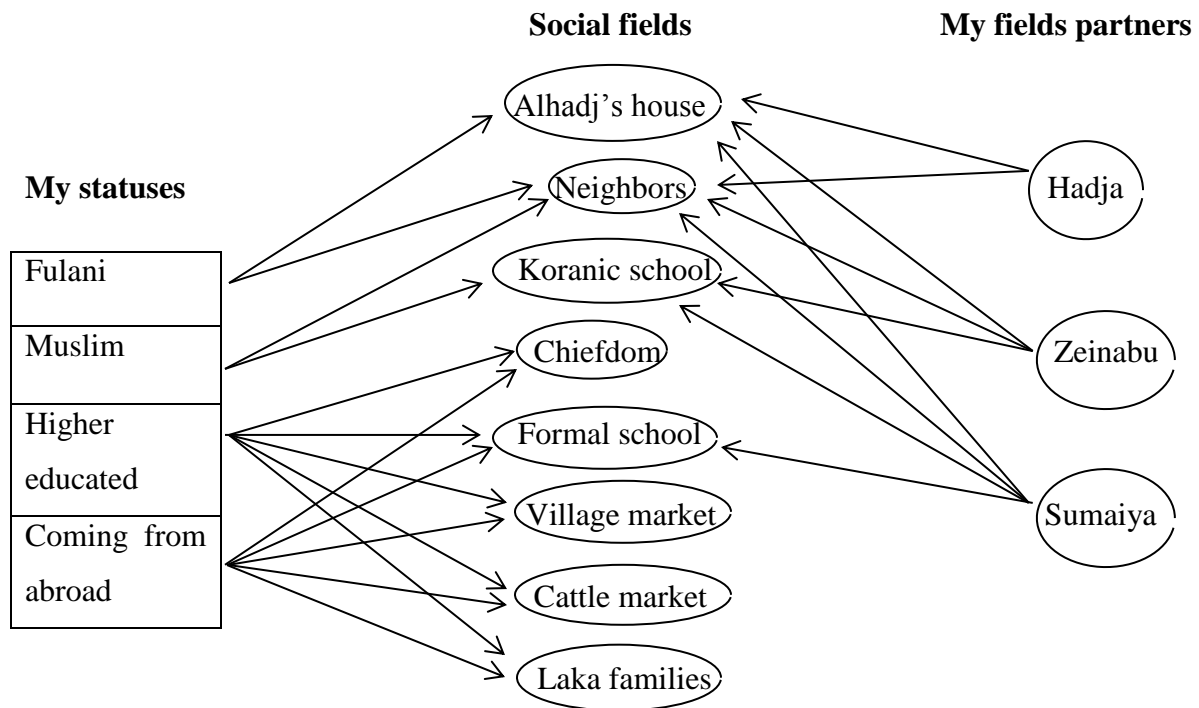
Figure 14: Statuses and interaction among Fulani women with four different careers

5.2 - Fulfulde/local language: a common point

 According to Oumarou (2012), language is a mean of differentiation which allows people to identify themselves to others and appears as "cement" for the members of a community. *Fulfulde*[19] is the main spoken language in Northern Cameroon in general. However, it is not easy for young people living in the city to speak the language fluently without mixing with French, particularly those who are literate. From this attitude, people from rural areas are not comfortable when interacting with youths from urban. Aware of that, a lot of efforts have been made to improve my speech when interacting with my field partners. One day I met by coincidence a lady from Mbang-Fulbe in a city neighborhood, after a long discussion she lets me know that the villagers appreciate the fact that I manage to speak Fulani without mixing with French like others. Then she continues "*you know Rashida, you are humble and have no complex, you make friend and joke with everybody. You manage the dialect like us, none can image you have been to the school and coming from abroad.*"

By using *Fulfulde* as a common language, my informants and I are sharing more or less the same "conceptual map" (Hall: 1997). What I mean by "sharing the same conceptual map" is that we belong to the same culture because the local language is used as a key tool to give a meaning to our interaction. According to Hall; sharing the same conceptual map means to be able to represent or to exchange meanings and concepts, therefore people can easily do that when they share a common dialect. Language is fruitful for me in the sense that I could easily interpret my informants' speech. This allowed me to avoid some complexities of limitations into the process of translation as underlines by Davies (2008) when talking about language and ethnographic interviewing.

Sometimes my informants use some connotations when answering to my questions. When I asked the grandmother the reason why girls have to stay close to their mother, she answered by saying: "*this is part of mother responsibilities to teach them things before getting married because most of the men consider that as part of domestic education*"...

She mentioned the word "*things*" by referring to the religious norms regarding the concept of woman purification after having sexual relations or menstruations. From my cultural knowledge,

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[19] *Fulfulde: Fulani language*

I understood what she meant as she was ashamed to use the proper words for that. Therefore, it means that she and I share the same codes of language.

5.3 - Pulaaku: a cultural value in dynamic

Ndudi pointed out:

" *Un pullo peut se passer de la religion, mais il ne peut pas vivre affranchi des règles qui font que le peul est ce qu'il est [...]. Ce code de vie est notre héritage. Nous le connaissons bien avant la religion de Mahomet. Mais il est parfois bien difficile aujourd'hui, dans certaines familles peules de faire la part des choses et de distinguer ce qui relève du pulaaku et ce qui relève de la religion musulmane[20].*" Bocquene (1986:308).

Defined as a moral code of conduct or way of being proper to Fulani ethnic group (Riesman 1974), the concept of *pulaaku* can also be understood as a set of behavior that occurs in many area of life (language, privacy, human relationships, etc.) through deeds, behaviors or attitudes. According to Oumarou (2012), *pulaaku* can be grasped in many ways depending on the social space in which one is involved. Thus, it is a dynamic that may change according to the milieu and social contexts. Although I belong to the same ethnic group as my informants, the fact that I was born and grew up in the city makes me different from them. However, we do not have the same way of perceiving *pulaaku*. Some Fulani cultural values are perceived differently from urban to rural area. People living in the city do not focus on the way of dressing as mentioned by my field partners when describing their perception of being a *pullo* and values such as "*semteende* or *munyal*" (sense of ashamed or self-control) are less valued. Nowadays, being a Fulani or a Muslim has become synonymous (Holtedahl 2010) in the city. Many researchers (Ver Eecke 1988, Schultz 1984) stressed on the aspect of "*fulanization*"[21] in Northern Cameroon

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[20]*The translation is from me: (A pullo can do without religion, but he cannot live freed rules that make this language, that it is [...]. This code of life is our heritage. We know it long time before the religion of Mahomet. But sometimes it is very difficult today, in some Fulani families to separate things and distinguish what is pulaaku and what is the Muslim religion). In Missa H (2011) : "Anthroponymie et culture chez les Fulbé du Cameroun", a thesis by Habiba Missa (2011), teacher grade (DIPES II), Université de Yaoundé I, Cameroun.*
www.ens.cm

[21] *Concept used by Hamadou Adama (fulanization of Arabic and Arabization of Fulfulde: 2008) to explain the impact of cross-cultural communication between Fulani and Arabic language in northern Cameroon.*
Adama. H (2008): "Linguistic choices and Islamic modernity in Cameroon: Case of Fulfulde and Arabic". In Langues, religion et modernite dans l'espace musulman. No 124, pp 47-68. Edited by Catherine Miller et Nilufar Haeri.
http://remmm.revues.org

where different actors change their identity when moving to town or convert to Islam (Waage 2013). Fulani in Mbang identify themselves from physical appearance, language, purity and civilization in contrast to non-Fulani (Laka ethnic group) considered as dirty, lacking of religion, sinners, etc.

As mentioned by Waage when he wrote about globalization in urban Africa, Ngaoundere is an attractive city with more than 500 000 inhabitants and many cultural values of various origins mixed. Therefore, it is difficult to read Fulani identity just from the way of dressing as described by my informants during the interviews. In contrast to the rural area, young girls from the city have a common way of dressing whether they belong to Mbum, Kanuri, Hausa or Fulani ethnic group. Nigerian and West African styles are much fashionable in the city. Fulani girls from the city dress differently from those living in rural areas. During my field, I wore some traditional adapted dresses (loincloth and scarf) in order to preserve my dignity otherwise I would be regarded as "*mo wala semteende*" (lacking of *pulaaku* or shame). This was also part of my strategies to negotiate my identity.

Conclusion

In the society where I was born and grew up, the knowledge of housework was relevant for a woman. However, the life course of Fulani women living in Northern Cameroon has changed since the establishment of formal school. Nowadays people living in urban areas are less and less interested by cultural practices and the knowledge of *kilanta* is less valued. From the acquisition of new identity within this context of globalization, most of the Fulani girls have gotten access to the higher education and this has generated changes in our society. I was really interested about the issue of power linked to the female knowledge. From my research carried out in the Fulani community living in a rural village, I wanted to stress the power relation linked to the value of *kilanta* for a Fulani woman inside the house. If you are inside, that knowledge is what gives you power. This can be explained by the meaning and use of the term "*Daada Saare*", referring word for word to the "mother of the house". Figures: 6 & 7 in chapter four makes us understand how household tasks and activities are divided in the house. Figure 7 shows the grandmother in the middle of the drawing and how tasks are distributed among girls and Laka women. Knowing *kilanta* gives her the position of *Daada Saare* as a Fulani woman and the power of managing and sharing tasks as she wants.

I would hereby like to remind that the concept of power (as earlier mentioned) which I am using is linked to the position of woman inside or outside. From my own experience on the field, I understood that what gives power to the woman inside is not the same outside. Thus, this cultural knowledge is not enough. Therefore, power is also linked to the social field of school when you are outside. Being higher educated gave me the power to redefine the rules in men's arena. As a researcher, I got access to the restricted cattle market opened just for men. When I installed my film equipment, Alhaji came straight to me and wondered about my presence there. This raised a lot of comments; people came to me because they wanted to find out by themselves what they have been hearing about me. The rumors reached to the city, it was unbelievable for some and others asked me questions like: "*Did you get ashamed? How did you manage? Do you think it is normal?...*"

I think the hypotheses raised in the introduction may be credible in the sense that schooling appears as a system which can change the life course of a Fulani woman. We can easily understand how different social fields meet and also see how power is changing in that area. To

be married and be respected by others, one needs the knowledge of *kilanta* and skills from school to get higher rank or position outside. The grandmother is one of the powerful key persons inside the house and Sumaiya behaves like one who owns the world when describing her ambitions during the interview:

Sumaiya: *I have planned to go the university after the secondary school.*

R[22]:   -   *Will your parents let you go?*

Sumaiya: - *Yes!*

R: -   *If not, what will you do?*

Sumaiya: - *I will try to find a job.*

R: -   *What if you are asked to get marry?*

Sumaiya: - *I will try to sort it with my husband.*

R: - *Do you think he will agree?*

Sumaiya: - *Yes!*

R: -   *What will happen if you fail?*

Sumaiya: - *He should help me to find something to do.*

In our context, the degree of power varies from inside to outside. Illiterate Fulani women have power as housewives, wives and mothers; their capacity is limited on the actions happening "inside" the house. Meanwhile, the degree of "the outside" control linked to male orientation and domination increases for those who have been to the school. Thus, the first power which I have just mentioned as "*inside*", can be identified as informal power as also mentioned by Oakley when analyzing the kind of power generated by women in *The Invisible Woman*. In this respect, she argued that: "*This kind is more often exercised in private than in public places, the concept of legitimate authority tends to be irrelevant to it, and it is less visible and less easily amenable to sociological analysis*" (1974:14). I borrowed words from Oakley to underline the relevance of

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[22] *R: Rachida*

the second power constructed from schooling. I think that the field of "outside" is too narrow. Looking into figure 14, which is the summary of the social fields and interactions at micro-macro level between my partners and me, I noticed that I got access to five different fields due to my status as a student, and apart from me, it is only Sumaiya who has managed to reach one of those arenas because she is still going to school.

Beyond the fact that the Koranic school remains the continuity in the historical development of Fulani ethnic group; the life course of the Fulani girl or woman has undergone several changes over the time. These changes may be retraced in five main phases: Firstly, girls did not have access to the formal school; they were trained to the domestic activities and asked to get married by force. Secondly, they started going to primary level. Thirdly, they got access to the secondary school, but just for four years. In the fourth phase they have started to combine formal school or job and marriage. In the fifth phase which is the last one, they finally got access to the university, free to find a job and choose a husband. However, being higher educated still remains a dilemma for Fulani girls. This fact leads me to raise the violence of the meeting of social fields, the challenge of finding a husband and hesitation from men to accept a wife without, less or higher educated.

Relationship between the film and the text

I kept in mind some prejudices as far as gender discrimination in the Fulani society is concerned: girls and boys do not have the same opportunities; Fulani women are dominated by men and considered as slaves because all the house chores go to them. It is one of the reasons why I decided to conduct the research at home and to use reflexivity as one of the analytical approaches. Being both a researcher and a Fulani girl allowed me to discover my 'real' identity as it is emerging and changing through my current life in different contexts. The data collected by using of camera have contributed to the building of this ethnography. The fact that I walked around in the village, holding my film equipment provoked many reactions from local people which made me understand quite a lot about the impact of that tool on the field. It gave me the opportunity to get access to the whole village. The situation would have surely been different if I did not have the camera or if I was less educated like Zeinabu who acquired mainly the knowledge of *kilanta* and more traditional female knowledge.

This study allowed me to understand the knowledge I had acquired from school as well as my travelling abroad. I discovered that I have lost my identity of belonging. I was a bit frustrated when I realized that I was not treated equally like Zeinabu or other Fulani girls living in Mbang-Fulbe, but rather as a "star" coming from abroad with a modern tool. From this experience, I found out that one may gain and loose something at the same time. Therefore, I can conclude that social identity is a value which is always in dynamic, constructed and reconstructed by actors themselves into their own environment under pressure and influence from different social, political, economic and other dynamics.

In addition to this thesis, my film *"kilanta"* is also the result of a study built up between an anthropological curiosity and my own culture, with the purpose of sharing knowledge through the visual. The involvement into my characters' daily life makes me blind in front of the material. I realized that I knew everything from what girls are doing and I was not able to discover something new from my footage during the editing. Frustration and stress were my feelings towards this project, I wondered if the research carried out and the material collected could be considered as anthropological data. When analyzing my position on the field (i.e. my relationship with my collaborators), I discovered quite a lot of things. Then, I started seeing the difference between us and set out to understand this female knowledge from a new perspective; I mean the implications for girls of knowing *kilanta* and if this knowledge is recognized in the new social settings.

In this respect, I can conclude that the perception of the power linked to the knowledge varies depending on the context or circumstances in which the individual may be involved. Being illiterate for the grandmother does not mean that she is excluded from the society. As a housewife, she is respected and has the authority over the girls and Laka women. However, this lacking of education has an impact on her life when she confirmed her inability to communicate or reading a prescription at the hospital. I think the knowledge of *kilanta* is not enough for Zeinabu. Less educated may also be a limitation for her integration towards the globalization and its emergence.

Sumaiya's future is uncertain and will depend on the way how things will develop. Does she going to get the opportunity to be higher educated and fulfill her ambitions as emancipated woman?

However, being higher educated does not mean that I am away from the challenges of globalization and its dynamics (new technology, media and so forth). Thus, the power of knowledge can be perceived as a perpetual dynamic which is always in continuous process of reconstruction.

Following the discussions between staff and my classmates during the film and text seminars, I discovered that each of us has our own way of interpreting images. It varies according to our cultural background. In my opinion, I think it is normal for a girl to learn or practice the house chores like it is the case in the film though others do not share this view. From these perspectives, I can conclude that a film may contain and generate many meanings depending on how the viewer reads the images. Whatever you do during the editing, the audience cannot have the same way of interpretation. It is thus difficult to convey ideas. One has to know how people interpret visual materials, signs and symbols if one wants to succeed in sending a specific message.

The film material allows me to learn about Fulani people and other readings of my visual materials, which in turn made me learn and get to know about the social contexts in which the girls have to live and be evaluated or understood.

Glossary

Alhadji: Name or title given to anyone (a man) who performed the pilgrimage to Mecca

Allah woonanon: May God help you

Baba saare: Father of house

Belaka: A chief in local language from Mbum ethnic group, the indigenous of Ngaoundere city

Daada saare: The mother of house in Fulani language

Debbanago: Refers to the concept of being somebody's wife in Fulani language. Up to the expectations of a man

Debbani: To be up to the expectations of a man or be a good wife for your husband

Debbo: Woman, wife in Fulani language (singular of rewbe)

Djaoulerou: Reception hall, parlor, living or eating room in Fulani language

Fufulde: Indigenous dialect spoken by Fulani ethnic group

Fulanization: Concept used by Hamadou Adama (fulanization of Arabic and Arabization of Fulfulde 2008) to explain the impact of cross-cultural communication between Fulani and Arabic language in northern Cameroon. Adama. H (2008): "Linguistic choices and Islamic modernity in Cameroon: Case of Fulfulde and Arabic". In Langues, religion et modernite dans l'espace musulman. No 124, pp 47-68. Edited by Catherine Miller et Nilufar Haeri.

Goriiko: A husband in Fulani language

Hadja: Name given to a woman who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca

Imam: someone who leads prayers.

Jawro: A chief in Fulani language

Jihad: Muslim holy war

Kaigama: One who plays the role of prime minister in a chiefdom

Kaou: Uncle

Kilanta: Fulani value proper to woman, a cultural knowledge or practice linking to housework

Munyal: Patience

Pulaaku: Fulani code of conduct, public behavior that refers to restraint and self-control

Pullo: Singular of fulbe (plural), indigenous name of Fulani ethnic group

Rewbe: plural of Debbo (singular) in Fulani and means women or wives

Saare: House in Fulani

Saare am: My house in Fulani

Sarki Tikke: one *who runs the cattle market*

Semteende: Modesty, reserve, shame

Semtudoum: Shameful

List of abbreviation

NGO: Non-Government Organization

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

VCS: Visual Cultural studies

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