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Intégralité est une revue académique de l'Institut Universitaire de Développement International (IUDI), université chrétienne connue aussi sous le nom de Francophone University of International Development (FUID) et affiliée à l'université de Maroua et à plusieurs universités africaines, européennes et américaines. L'IUDI est dédiée à la formation à distance en Afrique francophone dans des filières stratégiques pour le développement intégral et durable. S'inscrivant dans la vision et le cadre des services de l'IUDI, **Intégralité** est une revue scientifique axée sur le développement holistique. Cette revue promeut la réflexion chrétienne et universitaire au sujet du développement et des pratiques qui s'y rapportent. Elle place Dieu au centre et non à la périphérie des questions de développement afin d'impulser une dynamique de transformation positive de toutes les sphères de la vie sociale.

La création de la revue **Intégralité** intervient à un moment où les politiques publiques africaines de développement sont largement contestées et où la société africaine dans son ensemble s'interroge elle-même et reconsidère son approche de développement intégral sur un continent en mouvement dans un monde lui-même en mutation permanente.

À travers cette revue, l'IUDI veut doter les communautés africaines d'un outil de promotion et de l'expérience d'un développement durable qui ne fait pas abstraction de la spiritualité. **Intégralité** se propose de partager les principes, les valeurs et les idéaux interdisciplinaires sous-tendant un développement plus humain et plus social parce que plus spirituel. Elle favorise le débat d'idées et la recherche pluridisciplinaire autour des questions de développement. La pierre angulaire de votre revue est une théologie biblique qui interprète le monde et la vie dans un souci d'équilibre entre la raison et la foi en toute lucidité, honnêteté intellectuelle et fidélité aux vérités scripturaires historiques. Le développement holistique demande, en fait, non pas une réflexion embastillée et alambiquée, mais une approche globale des problématiques sociétales ou transversales.

En tant que revue universitaire d'orientation chrétienne, elle ouvre des pistes de services pertinents pour aujourd'hui et donne à voir les actes que des chrétiens africains posent, dans le concret de la vie, en faveur du développement des individus et des sociétés sur un continent africain paradoxalement riche et pauvre à la fois. Votre revue se trouve donc au carrefour des sciences, notamment les « sciences sacrées », notamment la théologie et les sciences de religions, et les sciences humaines et sociales.

Le but **d'Intégralité** est de contribuer à ce que les intellectuels chrétiens et chrétiennes d'Afrique ou de la diaspora s'engagent mieux en faveur du développement global de la Société et à l'essor des individus et des familles. Elle souligne à grand trait les possibilités développementales en contexte africain. Elle jette une vive lumière sur les besoins des populations africaines et de leur environnement avec les structures d'aliénation spirituelle et socioéconomique contre lesquelles elles se battent aujourd'hui à l'étroit et le rôle que l'Église est appelée à jouer pour l'aider à s'en sortir.

Cette revue œuvre pour que les leaders et les intellectuels, sans discrimination aucune, ainsi que les acteurs ou actrices de toutes catégories sociales et où qu'ils soient, mènent, avec l'audace de la foi et dans l'amour, des actions de coopération économique et culturelle qui concourent au développement holistique qu'appellent de leurs vœux les pays africains et ceux des autres régions du monde qui en ont cruellement besoin.

L'IUDI considère que l'amélioration de la condition de vie des populations est voulue de Dieu, que la Bible et la vision chrétienne doivent être au centre des idées et des pratiques qui y concourent, et que les chrétiens, aux côtés des adeptes des autres religions, peuvent apporter une contribution irremplaçable. Telle est d'ailleurs la conviction de l'équipe de rédaction, et le principe fondateur de votre revue !

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BP 206 Mokolo

E.N. CAMEROUN

Courriel : bongoyok@fuid.org

Tel. +1 626 377 0105 (WhatsApp)

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The use of *kuley* in resolving land disputes among the Mofu in Cameroon

*Jules BALNA¹, ETAME SONE Diabe¹, Jérémie DIYE², Bernard GONNE³ and Moussa BONGOYOK⁴

¹Lecturer and Researcher, University of Maroua, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, Department of Geography (Cameroon)/ University Institute of International Development in Mokolo (Cameroon).

¹Lecturer and Researcher, at the University of Maroua, Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, Department of Geography (Cameroon)

²Lecturer and Researcher at the University of Maroua (Cameroon), Faculty of Arts, Letters and Human Sciences, Department of History and Archaeological Sciences, (Cameroon)

³Lecturer and Researcher at the University of Maroua (Cameroon), Higher Teacher Training College Maroua, Department of Geography

⁴Lecturer and Researcher at the William Carey International University (USA)/University Institute of International Development in Mokolo (Cameroon)

*Contact Person : Jules BALNA ; E-mail : julesbalna@yahoo.fr



Dr Jules BALNA is a faculty member at the University of Maroua in the School of Arts, Letters and Human Sciences. He teaches Geography. He is also the Vice-President, Dean of International Development, and a research fellow in Community development at the Institut Universitaire de Développement International (IUDI).

Abstract

This article examines ancestral worship in the resolution of land disputes among the Mofu community in the Mandara Mountains of far North Cameroon. Since the return of migrants from major metropolis that began in the 1990s, customary courts are now limited in the management of these disputes, as traditional leaders increasingly favor the party that paid well in conflict resolution. It is disputes that divide the society into the descendants of slave-free men, elder-younger siblings, blacksmiths-no-blacksmiths, nephews-uncles, and clan-chieftaincy. The disputes' questioning is brought in front of the village chieftaindom for the legitimate plot owner to have recourse to the ancestral spirits, kuley, with the aim of unveiling the truth. The collection of information from the custodians of tradition underscores the undeniable role played by the ordeal in revealing the truth on land issues in a society where corruption is gradually gaining grounds in customary jurisdictions.

Keywords: Ancestral worship; sacrificial pot; customary courts; Land disputes; Mofu; Mandara Mountains and Cameroon.

Introduction

In his famous collection of poems, Birago Diop said in 1960: "*Those who died never left; the dead are not underground; the dead are not dead.*" This poem highlights the presence of a spirit among the living in traditional African societies. In these societies, endogenous mechanisms to detect a culprit have proven themselves in time and space (Dekané, 2015; Diyé, 2012; Vidal, 1990; Rouch, 1989; Vincent, 1976; Retel-Laurentin, 1974; Monfouga,

1972). They have undoubtedly helped to rebuild the social fabric torn apart by tribal, ethnic, and even wars within clans.

In the Mandara Mountains of far North Cameroon, ORSTOM researchers (Barreteau, 1988; Vincent, 1981, 1976, 1975, 1971; Barreteau and Sorin, 1976) had sufficiently laid the groundwork for studies of ordeal practices in Mofu communities. Recent work has highlighted the importance of sacrificial rites in the society (Chétima and Gaimatakwan, 2016; Chétima, 2016, 2015) and particularly their role in resolving and managing social conflicts (Diyé, 2016, 2012; Dekané, 2015). However, these authors have not adequately addressed the place of *kuley* in the settlement of land disputes. For this reason, this study focuses on the importance of *kuley* in the resolving conflicts related to access to land resources where village land saturation is strongly pronounced.

Located on the eastern edge of the Mandara Mountains and around the mountain-islands dotted in the Diamaré plain (Maroua, Mindif, Moutourwa), the Mofu inhabit the mid-altitude mountain region (700m -1000m). The Mofu community is divided into 04 circumscriptions: Mofu South (Zidim), Mofu North (Mokong), Douroum and Douvangar. Administratively, she straddles Mokolo subdivision in the Mayo-Tsanaga Division and the Meri subdivision in the Diamaré.

The Mofu community is a neighbor to other mountain village groupings and those of the Diamaré plain (Figure 1). In the North, she shears boundaries with the *Muktélé*, *Mura*, *Podoko*, *Mada*, *Ouldémé*, (no-Islamic villages); and he Islamized *Wandala* and *Kanuri*. In the West, with the Islamic *Andels* and the *Guiziga*. In the East, with the *Mafa* and Kapsiki; and in the South, with small ethnic groups of *Bana*, *Gudé*, *Daba* and *Hina*. Most of these ethnic groups have somehow stayed in *Gudour*, one of the current villages in the northern *Mofu* Township. Referring to the influence of the *Gudour* chiefdom over time, Podlewski (1947) points out that it is impossible to speak of the Mofu without alluding to the Gudour massifs, which seems to have long been the center of this important chiefdom.

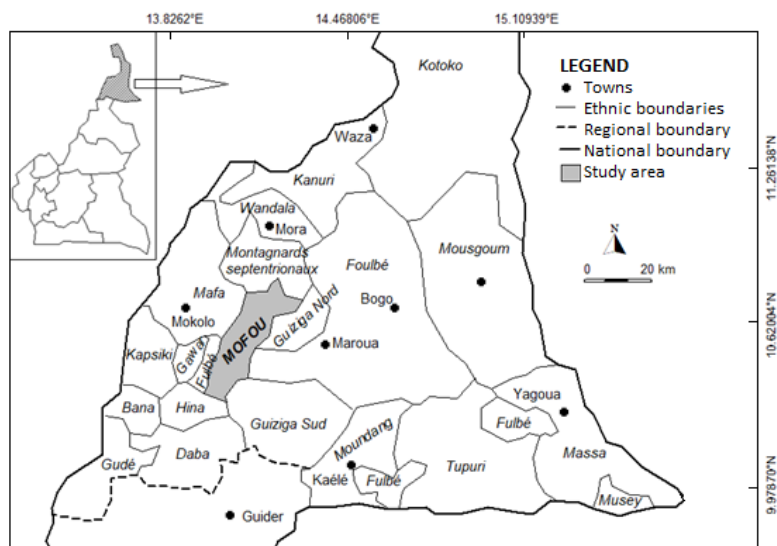


Figure 1. Distribution of the geographical area of Mofu and other ethnic groups in the Far North of Cameroon (Seignobos, 1996)

The Mofus are found all over the country. Due to a high level of land saturation, some had to leave their territory in the 1970s in search of a vital space. The return of migrants from

Cameroon's major metropolises, like Yaoundé, has further amplified inter/intra-family and generational land conflicts (Iyebi-Mandjek and Seignobos, 1995).

The Mofus form a cultural assembly with other ethnic groups of the Mandara Mountains called *Kirdi*. It is necessary to recall the context in which the man Mofu remained perching on his massif. Indeed, the territorial expansion of the emergence of the kingdoms of Kanem Bornu, Bagirmi and Wandala has been accompanied by a series of violence that led to migratory waves to major defensive sites, notably the Mandara Mountains (Chétima and Gaimatakwan, 2016). In this context, the occupation of the mountain peaks had been the main strategy to avoid the threats of raiders. However, as Boutrais (1973:53) pointed out, the end of slavery at the beginning of the 20th century, and especially the sub-prefectural decree of 1963 making it mandatory for mountaineers to descend, which provoked movement of people towards the plain. In this logic of "forced-down movement from the mountains", only the last-born descended, for their role in the conduct of religious rites and ceremonies was relegated to the background. For most of the elders, they remained on the mountains to ensure the continuity of the family and ancestral worship that takes place there (Chétima, 2015: 243).

To firmly highlight the role of ordeal practices in the resolution of land disputes, field surveys by interviews with resource persons selected according to the role and class occupied in society supplemented by observations was carried out. They include traditional leaders, mountain leaders, and blacksmiths, fortune-tellers, rainmakers in Mofu community living in the massifs, on the plains and even in the scattered mountain-islands. In addition, these interviews were conducted in 05 village (Zidim, Mokong, Mowo, Douroum, and Douvangar) with 10 family heads ranging in age from 54 years to 79 years with agricultural plots. The theme focused on ordeal practices related to land disputes.

To understand the place of *kuley* in the endogenous mechanisms of conflict resolution, this study is drawn on disputes that involve the divisions of blacksmith/no-blacksmith society, descendants of captives/free men, elders/young people, clans of the chief/commoner clans, nephews/uncles and the poor/rich. Throughout this study, we refer to "X", the legal or legitimate owner of the land with the means of acquisition as a gift, inheritance or clearing; "Y" one who wants to snatch the land by any means for example through financial means or by force.

This work is articulated around three main points namely, sacrificial pot or *kuley* among the Mofu, its practice in the search for truth and the place of foods that contribute to the return of peace.

I. Sacrificial Pot or *Kuley*

The cult of ancestors is one of the religions practiced by the mountain people of Cameroon's Mandara Mountains. It refers to the respect of a god, *mblom*, represented by an object (stone, tree, pot, animal, etc.). The god we represent is revered and given a sacrifice when invoked during the ceremonies of atonement of faults, conflict resolution, vows of marriage, procreation, harvest, etc.

A. The delineations of the concept of *kuley*

An ordeal is a concept with geometric variable. In North Cameroon, oaths and ordeals have always made their way together (Dekané, 2015). In the Mandara Mountains, it is called

kuley and is written in different ways: *Kuli*, *kouli* or *kuley* and pronounced the same in most ethnic groups. In the dictionary of ancient terms, the *kuley* represents the spirit of the ancestors, the receptacle of the spirit (clay pot or stone), the action of the sacrifice itself; it is also both the sacrificial gesture and the "altar" (Seignobos and Tourneux, 2002; Vincent, 1976). Some of our informants liken it to a sacrifice; others refer to it as a self-immolation, the consultation of a soothsayer or the fact of venerating ancestors. It can also refer to an ancestral spirit because after death, the *kuli* (*kuley* plural) continue to roam among the living but just that we do not see it.

An Ordeal is also defined as a mechanism for detecting culprits and resolving conflicts involving natural elements (Diyé, 2012). It is a question of proving the innocence or guilt of one or the other to resolve the conflict or to repair the damage (Niagalé and Fafiraman, 2017). Any sacrifice that uses supernatural forces is referred to as *kuley* among the mountaineers of North Cameroon. This work involves presenting the ordeal practices between two persons regarding a land dispute in a situation where the dispute persists.

Kuley is a mediation made by ancestors represented by a pot. The most significant meaning given by these same authors and capable of reporting on all others would be that of a "vital force". This definition does fit with the meaning we would have liked to give to the notion of *kuley* represented by pots in several forms.

B. Typology of sacrificial pot

Among the Mofu community, there is a diversity of sacrificial pot (Figure 2) depending on the sex, clans, and the divisions within the clan. The number of clay points is not the same everywhere.

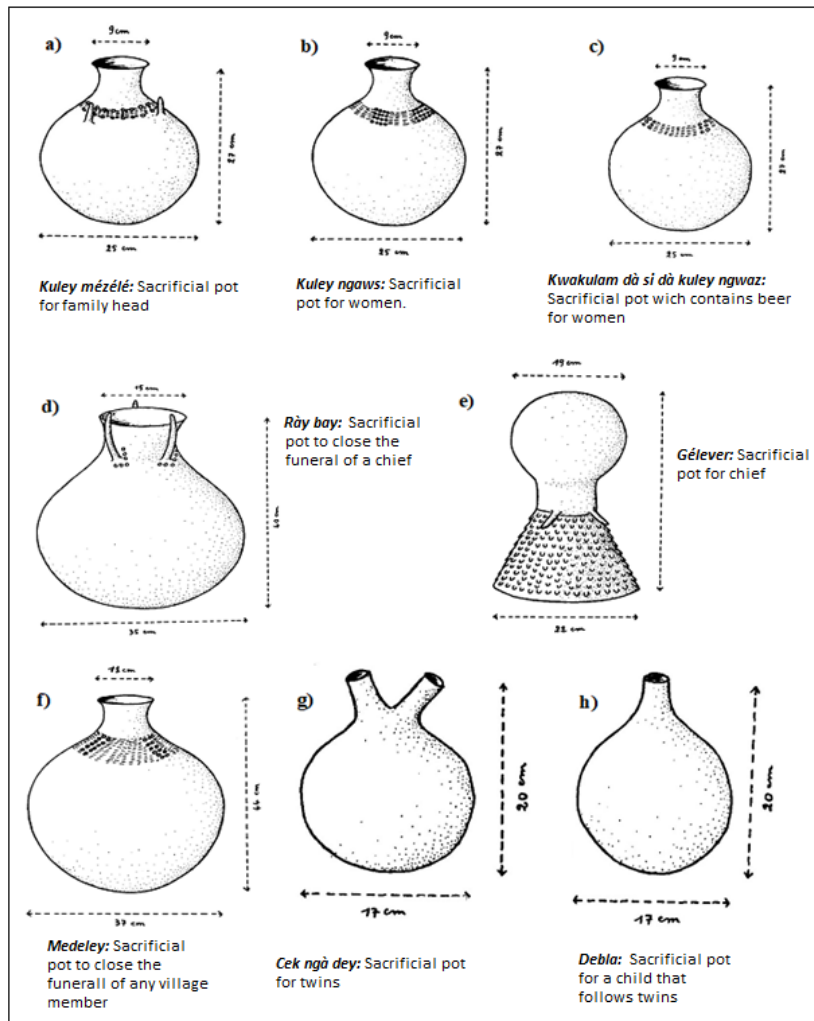


Figure 2. Different types of sacrificial pots in Mofu community (Barreteau et al. 1988)

The godly practice among the Mofus is based fundamentally on proper names, names of worship and above all ritual figures (even or odd) according to the considerations of the clan. Thus, the number of rows, horns, or penises (horns) decorated around the pots depends on both gender and proper names. For example, the name of *Majamay* worship in men or *Dele* worship in women in the *Mokong* land for all Mofus bearing the proper name *Béré* have as a ritual number 3 in both men and women. During divination by a fowl, the fowl must be thrown three times on the ground so that the soothsayer can give a most plausible interpretation. In *Zidim*, the name of *Bay lambang* worship in men or *Dam lambang* worship in women has ritual figures of 3 and 4 respectively.

The manufacturing of sacrificial pots is the prerogative of the wives of blacksmiths, *ngwas meslà*, called potters. These pots are never sold in markets like other usual pots. In this society, they hold an important part of the tradition. The consultation of each pot is in relation to the person responsible for the evil. These pots are not randomly arranged in a home.

C. Sacred positioning of pots in a home

The position of sacred objects in a home (Figure 3) is not haphazard. The sacrificial hurt (2), *ver kuley*, is one of the elements that give the home its sanctity. The pots for the various sacrifices are placed, on the one hand on the side of the family head's hurt (3), and on

the other hand next to the attic (5). Whoever represents the supreme god is always placed next to the attic (5), *wuded ngazel*, of the head of the family.

In the stereotype of a dwelling of most homes among the *Kirdi* of the Mandara Mountains, the attic occupies a capital place. In this regard, research works have shown that the closest ancestors are directly involved in the management of the home's day-to-day affairs sitting at the bottom of the attic (Seignobos, 1982; Vincent, 1976). On the sacrificial hurt, Chetima (2015) points out that: "*The pot hurt is the second element that gives the house its sacred character. It houses pots of ancestors ensuring continuity between deceased people and the current occupants of the house*" (op.cit. 2015: 184).

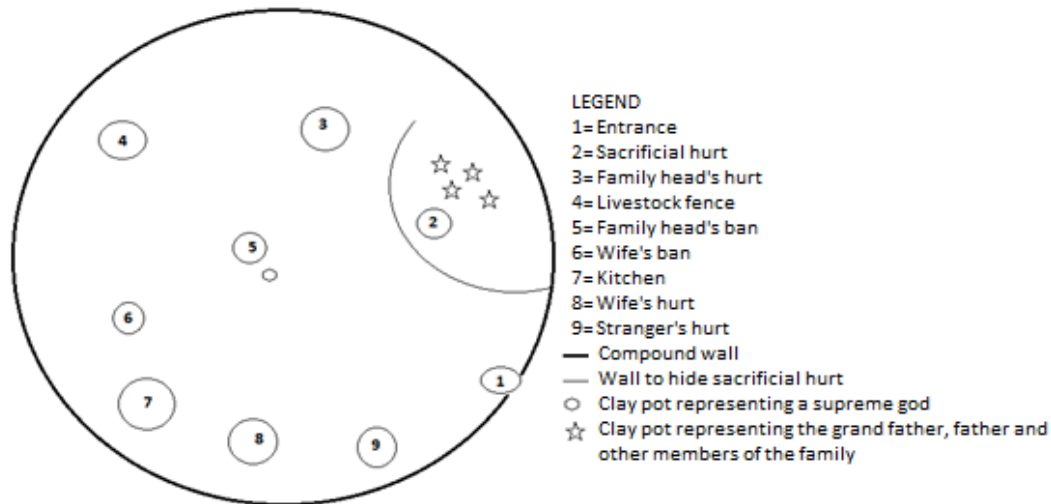


Figure 3. Stereotype of a Mofu dwelling based on a scheme of actors

This means that pots are men and represent the gods. Indeed, in the Mofu, when a family head dies, he is buried directly at the entrance of his home. After a year, a pot in which his soul rests is made to him by a woman from the clan of blacksmiths. The said pot is symbolically placed next to the main attic, as he is the head of the family just as the central attic is the head and central position of the house (Chetima, 2016).

The role of the cult of ancestors in seeking social harmony and protection from witchcraft is thus very common among all mountain ethnic groups in North Cameroon. The rites are made at each beginning of the rainy season as well as at the beginning of the harvest season and occupy, as Amsata (2007) emphasizes, a central place in the Black-African social life.

D. Pot and Sacrifice

Pots occupy an important place in the Mofu society especially for divination and possession of spirits. The population, even the so-called Christianized or Islamic, practice the worship of ancestors. Thus, the latter still called gods are represented by pots. All divination has always been associated with the invocation of a *kuley*. Regarding sacrificial pots, Barreteau and Sorin (1976) mentioned that: speaking of oral traditions among the *Mofu-Gudour*, we cannot forget to mention the importance of their religious traditions based mainly on the worship of ancestors to whom they grant a spirit, *kuley*, a term that also encompasses the sacrificial pot representing this spirit and the various sacrifices that can be made (sheep, goats, chickens, millet, barley, millet beer, etc.). The great sacrifices, *kuley*, *mà-whùra*,

concerning the whole massif, are annual (or caused by great events) and led by the "leader of sacrifices" *bày (nga) kuley*, who can also be "master of the earth", *ndaw masa hwayak*, (literally means: "that of the earth"); other sacrifices, on the other hand, are individual, as in the case of diseases, and dictated by the soothsayers.

To this effect, the layout of pots in a clan of rainmaker (Plate 1A and 1B) is not the same as in a rain repellent clan (Plate 1C and 1D). Regarding pots among the *Mofu*, Delneuf (1987: 98) pointed out that: "*Socially, one does not tolerate a potter outside the blacksmith clan (called gudi in Giziga as in fulfulde, mbezla in Mofu-Gudour) within certain members of the first pottery assembly. While all mofu-gudour pots is owned by blacksmith, only Giziga potters from Loulou (south of the mofu-gudour region) are gudi and no giziga pottery originating from Moutourwa.*"

Plate 1 above highlights the layout of the pots for *kuli*. Thus, each pot designates a supreme or ancestral being or simply the members of the family. It is noted in photograph A that (a) refers to the father, (b) the grandfather, (c) the pot for drinking traditional wine, (d) the elder brother, (e) the ritual stone on which the head of the family sits to do family or ethnic rites; in photograph B (f) the supreme god and (g) the attic.

It should be noted that sacrificial pots among rainmakers is always placed outside the huts, because "*water can do nothing to us, we are the rainmakers, and we are able to bring down the rain even in the dry season*" one of the *Mowo's* respondents affirmed. The pot representing the supreme god or guardian angel is always placed next to the attic of the family head. A link is directly established between the pot designating the supreme god and this attic. Indeed, at each beginning of the rainy season and before sowing, the family head consults the said pot asking it to protect his land from any misfortune.

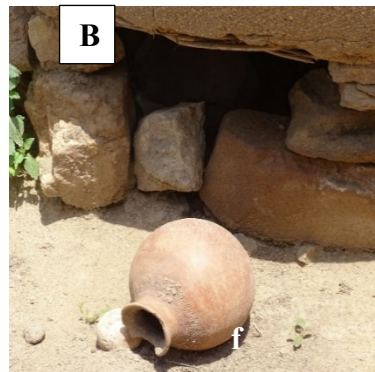


Plate 1. Sacrificial pottery in a rain-making clan (photograph A: 10-33' 35" N, 14-04' 25" E and photograph B: 10-33' 35"N, 14-04' 25'E) and rain repellent clan (photograph C: 10-33' 46"N, 14-03' 51'E photograph and rain

repellent clan (photograph C: 10-33' 46"N, 14-03' 51"E' Photograph and Rain Regrowth 10-33' 46" N, 14-03' 51" E) in Mowo. (Fieldwork, September 2018).

On the contrary, in those who stop the rains, the pots (photograph C) that represent the cult of ancestors have rather a shelter. A small house, *gay kuley*, is built to keep them. The father's hurt (photograph C) is separated from the mother's hurt (photograph D). When a misfortune occurs, the pots can be consulted in the father's hurt if it is recognized that the father is responsible for the misfortune or in that of the mother if the mother is the author of the misfortune. At the time of this consultation, the tripod pot is used to put the millet beer to share with other family members if the ancestors have answered the prayers. For the pot (D) placed next to the attic of the family head, it directly represents the supreme god and plays a crucial role in the search for the truth.

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II. The practice of *kuley* in the search for truth

Among the *Kirdi* of Cameroon and especially the Mofu, *kuley* has always been associated with the immolation of an animal or placed object in the farms. The choice of the animal to atone or object to be placed is not by chance. This subsection aims at highlighting the search for truth through the *kuley* procedure, the use of animals in the ordeal, attacks on the wrongdoer and the place of sacred forests in the detection of the wrongdoer.

A. How is *kuley* done?

The procedure for making a *kuley* depends on the design given to it. It turns out that the choice of the animal varies from one place to another. In general, a fowl is highly used among Mofus, as it is easily accessible. The immolation of an animal's blood is often done with a fowl. To this effect, the *kuley-laden*, *ndaw mata kuley*, sitting in front of his "gods" represented by the pots takes the fowl that he slaughtered in an extraordinary way. Indeed, he cuts the head from the beak with a slat of millet stem. Then he holds the chicken's head by the right hand and paws by his left hand and pours blood on the pot following an order established in the clan (great-grandfather, grandfather, father, etc.).

One informant used to say this when a fowl is being sacrificed: "*Go to bed normally! Don't go to bed badly because we're counting on you.*" Thus, an order is given to the fowl about the position it should take. However, another informant stated that "*sometimes we cheat by getting the fowl take the desired position.*" The other members of the family of "X" and "Y" are seated behind him ("X"). Then he throws away the rest of the fowl according to the ritual figure (even or odd) indicated according to the name of worship, then the final position of the atoned animal is observed by all members to give an interpretation to that position. If the right leg is above and forward, this translates that "X" has excused "Y" hence the end of the conflict.

At the beginning of each rainy season and before harvest, the pots are consulted by the family heads (Plate 2) to implore the help of the ancestors. This consultation is made so that the farms and produce of the harvest are protected by the bad spells often cast in those farms. The family head can also consult his ancestors in case of a misfortune in the family. He can also do so following a conflict mismanaged by a traditional authority.



Plate 2. Rites performed in a rain-making family (photograph A: 10-33' 35" N; 14-04' 25'E) and in another that repels rain (Photograph B: 10-33' 46"N; 14-03' 51' E) in Mowo to summon the spirits of the ancestors to protect harvest products. (Fieldwork, September 2018).

As for divinations among the Mofu, Zimakay in Douvanger made an inventory stating that: "In our country the Mofu, we have several kinds of divination. I can quote you for example: divination by fowl legs, by sheep and goat, by beans, by straw spray, by pebbles and by calabash." There is no better type of divination. Their choice depends on the soothsayer or each purifier. But in general, the choice is more focused on animals like the case of a fowl.

B. Use of the animal's heads in ordeal practices

The ritual use of animals is numerous in space. They vary by ethnicity and clan. Among the mountaineers of North Cameroon, sacrificial rites play an important role in the detection of the culprit following a dispute between two individuals. Whether it is the black goat in the *Mura* (Dekané, 2015), the dog in the *Masa*, *Tupuri*, *Musey* (De Garine, 1997) or in the *Mofu* (Diyé 2016, 2012; Iyebi-Mandjek and Seignobos 1995), the rituals made from the dog are so varied. They are well known in the scientific literature. However, when it comes to the sacrifice performed with a dog's head, it is less known. The aim is to highlight its contribution to the settlement of land disputes between two people. Beyond the sacrifice performed with a dog's head, we present the case of the head of the guinea fowl, the snake and the swarm of bees which are also used to prove innocence.

1. The sacrifice with the head of a dog

To prove that "X" is truly the rightful owner of a plot, he buries in the said plot the head of a rabid dog, *ray nga gedey boudey* so that in turn the rabies first of all attacks 'Y' during the harvest period, then the members of his family and his two to three generations if the conflict persists. It should be noted that the dog's head is previously kept at a corner of the house by the family head. But with certain family heads, the dog's head is sought only when need arises.

2. The sacrifice with the head of a guinea fowl

The head of a guinea fowl, *tsavar*, is buried by "X" in the plot. If "Y" sows the said plot, the soil becomes flooded. To prevent the evil from spreading to other plots, the said plot is demarcated using *Euphorbia unispica* locally called *hweleng*. With this plant, the millet is poured under the place where it will be planted and at harvest time "Y" and his family will be

suffering from an epidemic (diarrhea, headache, itches, or even sudden death). It should be noted that *Euphorbia unispica* is used to manage boundary conflicts.

3. The sacrifice with the snake

Like that of a dog, the head of a snake, preferably that of a cobra, is buried in the farm. The snake is tied to the rope of *Hibiscus cannabinus* and is drawn by "X" all over the farm. If it turns out that "X" is right to complain then, the area in question becomes a stream following the spot marks made when the snake was being drawn in the farm.

4. The sacrifice with a swarm of bees

For the swarm of bees' sacrifice, "X" keeps the sorghum seeds in a swarm of bees, *amam*. Once "Y" has sown his plot, "X" will also seek to sow these seeds kept in the swarm. During the harvest season, the bees will attack "Y" or even the other workers belonging to the family of "Y". Indeed, this attack takes place when "Y" and his family cut the stems of the millet that were sown by "X".

C. Direct attacks affecting the wrongdoer

In case "Y" is not right, i.e., he wants to force the plot to be ripped out of "X" by giving money to the traditional authority; ancestors inflict several types of diseases on "Y" directly.

1. Makamba in the Djamay clan

The *makamba* concerns only the Djamay clan of *Mowo*, *Zidim* and *Gudour*. It is an attack that manifests itself in the form of leprosy on the victim. Whoever wants to cast the spell takes one of the branches of *Ficus platyphylla* and throws it into the disputed plot. For it to have an effect, it would have to be absolutely cast by one of the members of the Djamay clan, because this clan had to swear with this species. To obtain healing, the victim is forced to abandon the plot by resorting to a sacrifice based on a fowl. To this effect, "Y" must first consult a seer who must tell him whether it is a cock or a hen that "Y" must offer in sacrifice to "X." This sacrifice must be performed at "X" place in the presence of a few members of the family of "Y".

2. The *mamberdes* in the Mawourza clan

The *mamberdes* is an attack observed mainly in the Mawourza clan located in Mokong and Mowo. It's both the bloating and the itching of the sex organ of "Y." The antidote consists of "X" placing a piece of pot in the plot after consulting the ancestors. For this purpose, an okro-fowl- soup sacrifice is made with or *gubudo-ladde*.

3. The *Manjavang*

Manjavang (supreme god) is an attack that manifests itself in chronic diarrhea in "Y". The antidote is to cut a branch of *Acacia sieberiana* in the shape of the handle of a hoe. The back is removed from several places of the said branch, and then a red powder (*mesak*) is put in those places. This gives the appearance of a corpse. This handle is attached to a tree branch in the plot of land. Here, the fowl sacrifice is made at "Y's" place. The person in charge of the

chicken goes to the plot and removes the branch in the form of the handle. The latter is thrown into a stream.

4. The *Kuley* of the Mofu

As a practice, *kuley* among the Mofu of Cameroon represents an attack. It manifests itself in "Y" by the bloating of the stomach. The antidote is to take the shell of a walnut *Babazla*, composed with *mesak*. This powder is put in the shell of the nut and placed by "X" in the disputed plot. This practice is only observed in women. For men, a mat is woven from a few stems of *Andropogon gayanus*. The *mesak* is brushed on this mat and the mat is placed in the conflict plot by "X." For this, "Y" must seek the solution before three months, or he will die. To avoid this attack, "Y" must ask for an apology from "X". In this case, a sacrifice is made by "X." The cock or hen sacrifice is made by "X". The choice of a cock or a hen is indicated beforehand by a soothsayer, *mbilda*. The latter gives indications as to the interpretations to be made. It is a matter of reading the orientation of the paw and the head.

It should be noted that the right leg represents "X" and the left leg "Y". If the right leg leans to the side of the left leg, it reflects the correct position of the fowl. Otherwise, the position is wrong. Here, you need a fowl to atone for a goat or a sheep. The choice of a goat or sheep as well as the dress is always indicated by a soothsayer. If the evil persists on "Y" it is necessary in addition to a fowl, a sheep, goat, or an ox. The date of the sacrifice is set by "Y". The sacrifice takes place at "X's" place. If this persists, the sacred forest is used.

D. Sacred forests in the detection of the wrongdoer

In traditional Africa, the presence of sacred forests has long been reported in the scientific literature (Jones 1963; Aubreville, 1937). The air, water and bush that houses geniuses (Tourneux, 1999) are also present in Asia and tropical America (Garcia, Pascal and Kushalappa, 2006) and have been reported in classical Greco-Roman literature (Chandran and Hughes, 2000; Juhé-Beaulatan and Roussel, 1992). Sacred forests are the places of residence of gods and ancestors to whom people assign a protective role of their communities or villages (Kokou and Sokpon, 2006). They are the lodges of the gods and spirits of the ancestors (Dekané, 2010), the ultimate judicial body responsible for identifying the perpetrators of immoral acts (Retel-Laurentin, 1974).

Among the Mofu of Cameroon as well as in other ethnic groups, men live next to their sacred forests whose cultural functions are crucial in social regulations. In these forests are encountered species that are certainly revered by populations (Table 1). In the sacred forest of Mowo (Plate 3A), 12 most representative floristic species are encountered. The most revered and considered places where locally called *mblom* geniuses take refuge are *Ficus platyphylla*, *Tamarindus indica*, *Ficus gnaphalocarpa*, *Celtis integrifolia* and *Acacia sieberiana*. An informant thinks that "*our ancestors also live-in trees. They are used for problems that are often difficult to solve. Our sacred forest protects the whole village. It is considered a shield.*" A stream (plate 3B) crosses the said forest. It also plays an important role in consulting geniuses.

Table 1. List of floristic species represented in the sacred forest of Mowo

Scientific Name	Local Name (Mofu)	Botanic Family	Refuge for spirits
<i>Ficus platyphylla</i>	Bazlawar	<i>Moraceae</i>	yes
<i>Vitex doniana</i>	Sked	<i>Verbenaceae</i>	no
<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>	Douway	<i>Combretaceae</i>	no
<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	Mambar	<i>Cesalpinaceae</i>	yes
<i>Diospirus mespiliformus</i>	Hewer	<i>Ebenaceae</i>	no
<i>Acacia ataxacantha</i>	Zlezlevek	<i>Mimosaceae</i>	no
<i>Khaya senegalensis</i>	Meter	<i>Meliaceae</i>	no
<i>Ficus gnaphalocarpa</i>	Goudov	<i>Moraceae</i>	yes
<i>Celtis integrifolia</i>	Sobow	<i>Ulmaceae</i>	yes
<i>Acacia polyacantha</i>	Golam	<i>Mimosaceae</i>	no
<i>Acacia sieberiana</i>	Deguedjew	<i>Mimosaceae</i>	yes
<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i>	Dagwar	<i>Balanitaceae</i>	no

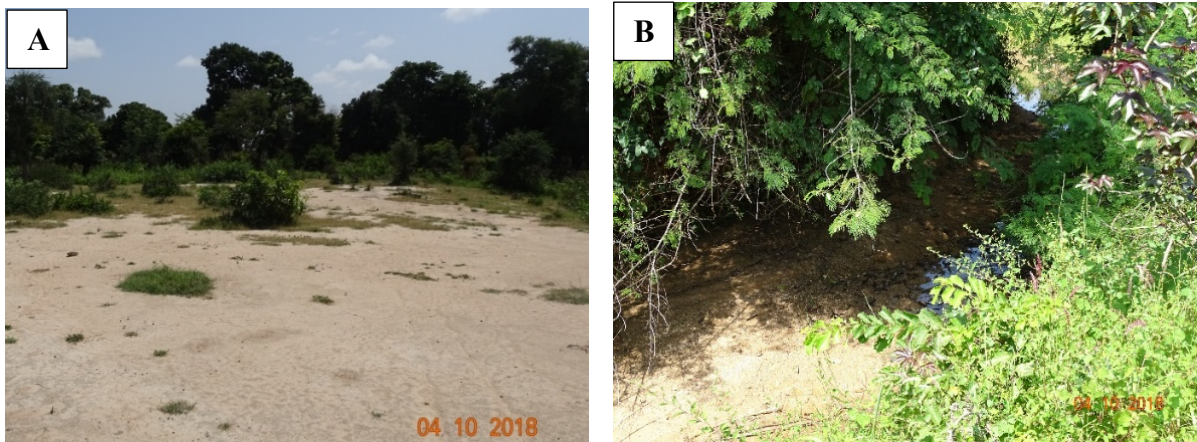


Plate 3. The Sacred Forest of Mowo (photograph A: 10-34' 44"N, 14-02' 52"E) crossed by a stream (photograph B: 10-34' 46"N, 14-02' 56"E) where the population enters to seek the truth. (Field work, October 2018)

In the case where misfortune persists on "Y" the latter must make a sacrifice based on a hen, a sheep, a chick, or an egg in the sacred forest. "Y" places these objects by talking to the ancestors. But he must first consult a soothsayer who must clearly indicate the procedure to be followed and the parties to be used. If it is an egg, it is deposited without being broken in the forest at any place. Otherwise, the leg to be broken will be specified by the soothsayer, *ndaw mankadass* or *ndaw matsadas*, literally known as the one who consults the pebble. Consultations are done in good hours of the day and preferably before daylight. Once the sacrifice is made with the help of a pot, the whole thing is thrown into the stream. After the rains, these objects will be washed away and thrown into the mainstream. To this effect, it shows that the water has washed away the stains. The sanctity of some trees, among the Mafa, a neighboring people to the Mofu; Balna (2016: 207) reported that: the sacred wood or *di mblom* literally translated as "the eyes of the gods," reveals socio-cultural functions. In an event of a disaster (drought, locust invasion, grain-eating birds, caterpillars, etc.), the soothsayer is called to make invocations at the foot of the said tree to implore the help of gods. In the case where this tree is cut down, the god is also affected. The man who cuts down the tree is obliged to bring a goat that would permit the soothsayer to shed blood at the trunk of the tree.

In both the Mofu and the Mafa, sacred trees exist either in a forest or in isolation in the bush. Every family has its own tree. In case of misfortune, they are consulted to implore the favor of the *mblom* (the genius) especially in case of difficulties related to famine, locust invasions and caterpillars. Kokou and Sokpon (2006) mentioned that *"the sacred tree is a particular tree to which a follower is bond for life. It is a double role plant of an individual or a family which is both a symbol and a guardian angel."* It is true that sacred forests contribute in solving social problems explained in a supernatural way; it is believed that there are certain foods that contribute to the definite return of peace.

III. Peace Building foods: a definite proof of the return of peace

In May 1987 UNESCO's monthly letter, De Garine (1987) pointed out that *"cultural super-foods" frequently appear as the products of divine consideration and the cultural operations and rituals that accompany them punctuate the society's annual cycle.* Food consumption during rituals is a particular and above all circumstantial food model (Mebanga Tamba, 1993). This is exactly the case observed in the Mofu of Cameroon when a *kuley* is made with the aim of resolving a dispute. The food rituals discussed in this study focus on three elements: the meal, the kola nut (also spelled colanut) and the millet beer.

A. Sharing a meal of forgiveness

On ritual food, Gauthier (1993) said: *"There is no strict ritual food: all food is a gift from God, it is also valued when it is introduced into a ritual as an offering."* The statement made by this anthropologist highlights more the qualitative than quantitative character of what is offered during the rites. When "Y" notices that the plot belongs to "X" the latter prepares a meal of forgiveness even though he loses his plot. This meal consists of rooster (cock), okra and red millet *fufu*. This meal is eaten at "X's" place. If it's "X" that takes over his plot, "Y" can be invited for the meal to find a common ground since he made the tussle. After finding that the position of the fowl is good, a meal is made on the spot. To this effect, a fowl is prepared in one of the tripod jars at "Y's" place. The meal is accompanied by a local wine (*bili-bili*). Here, the wine is put in a tripod pot locally called (*kwakulam massa salaye*). Once prepared, a small lump of food is taken by 'Y', then by 'X'; they make a hollow on the said lump in order to place a piece of meat in it, they dipped in the soup. This lump is placed above or below the pot which first represents his grandfather, then his father as well as other people represented by those pots.

During this meal, "Y" must be excused by explicitly explaining that he was just misled and simply followed the advice of other people. If it's "Y" who loses, "X" makes the meal to make new decisions. To this effect, "X" may invite the members of the commission and his neighbors. After the meal and the sharing of kola nut, the family members will make new decisions. After the commission has sat, the farm may belong to "X" or "Y." If this farm goes back to "X" after deliberation of the advisory committee, *bili-bili* and kola nut are shared at his home.

If food can therefore satisfy a vital need, it is also a primary compliment of the cultural identity of the people. We paraphrase Glissant (1987) that eating together appears is a way to build and maintain relationships between individuals. Culinary dishes are full of meaning. The world's major religions give a symbolic character to food and drink; the act of eating is

related to initiation rites, funeral rituals or other ceremonies. At the end of the meal or liquor, a conflict is finally resolved. Whoever comes back on that memory is struck by a curse or calamity from the ancestors. The visible signs of this curse are poor harvests, incurable diseases, etc.

B. Kola nut and its power in social regulation

In North Cameroon, kola nut is locally called *goro* consumed by both Muslims and *Kirdis* in the Mandara Mountains. Its consumption occurs in almost all ceremonies (festivals, baptisms, weddings, etc.). It is also used in ritual practices among the so-called "pagans" or those who practice the worship of ancestors. In this regard, Ouattara (2013: 11-12) states that "*the gift of a cola remains one of the most common in that it appears to be the ideal mode of maintaining relationships between the living and the dead; the ancestors.*" Aloko-N'Guessan (2000: 33-34) adds water to Ouattara's mill in his statement that:

"The use of colanut is crucial in conflict resolution and social intermediation. Loaded with profound meaning according to its shape, color, or appearance, colanut is used as a medium to bind the subconscious and interpret dreams. To this effect, colanut appears as a central element that binds Sudano-Sahelian-Muslim-dominated societies, through common references to values, to a shared conception on a certain way of life, to a unique vision of the world, to say everything, a cultural repository and an affirmation of identity that does not exclude the openness of the other."

In the Mofu community, as well as in other mountain communities and even among the peoples of the lowlands, the *goro*, is a factor of cohesion and social regulation, a proof of the will of reconciliation and forgiveness, it is used in sacrifices and ceremonies. Its insertion into social life makes it one of the most sought-after and revered NTFPs (Non-Timber Forest Products). The statement below gives a clarification on this:

In our place, we the mountaineers attach great importance to the *goro*, because it possesses an exceptional power that goes beyond human comprehension. We have always been told that the *goro* tree, (cola tree) has a mystical power because it always needed to be poured human blood first before fruiting. That's why colanut is respected and revered. The importance of the *goro* in the resolution of social conflicts is no longer to be demonstrated, because as *Kabzidaw* so aptly said:

"In our mountains, after settling a dispute between two people, two clans, two families or two neighboring villages, the *goro* is given in turn to all those who witnessed this resolution. The kick-off is given by the *marahay*, the oldest man amongst the aged, who bites it first, then gives it to the two parties in dispute. Any refusal to accept the *goro* by any party probably reflects the refusal to forgive the other."

It is therefore obvious that the colanut plays a role of social regulation. Sharing it probably reflects the search for reconciliation, forgiveness, the definite return to peace. This is also exactly the case with millet beer.

C. When two mouths drink the bili-bili in the same calabash

In North Cameroon, beer made from millet or sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*) preferably red is called *bili-bili*. The wine brings together the villagers who help each other when renewing the roofs of huts, during the construction of houses or community work. This liquor is essential in almost ceremonies such as the festival of *maray*, harvests, purification,

offerings, etc. In the same line, Lembezat (1961) argues that "this beer which is a sacramental drink also plays an important role in religious life, whether it is libation to the intelligence of the Ancestors or to divinity, it is a common drink or a sign of alliance between individuals or groups."

Many researchers have stressed the importance of this beer in North Cameroon among the *Kirdis* for whom festivals and rituals are not possible without it (Seignobos, 2005). The "drinking" of millet wine was first reserved for the sphere of the sacred. Drinking millet beer in the same calabash symbolizes above all a contract or agreement signed between the two people who had a dispute. If 'X' refuses to drink in the same calabash with 'Y', it would simply imply that the problem persists, and that 'X' does not agree at all with the settlement method put in place. There are still disagreements over the land.

Conclusion

Finally, it is revealed that among the Mofus of Cameroon, the mechanisms of being "inside" in terms of land dispute resolution have undergone a temporal evolution. If in the past the community tried to resolve its social conflicts with war, today; they are mostly settled by the mediation of supernatural spirits. Here, the elderly, *marohay*, occupies an important place in the conduct of this mediation. When resolving land disputes, astrological narratives are involved. In other words, they are incorporating the cohabitation charter. Rites and meals are a major part of the return to peace. Since land is linked to social, political, and economic, it's difficult to resolve a conflict once and for all. It turns out that the devices of the "inside" to settle conflicts mainly related to land are often limited, because it is the oral that prevails over the written. Traditional land law, which derives its source from custom, is sometimes exposed and threatened by codified law.

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