

The Human Body: Cultural Marker And Source Of History Among Bamileke And Moundang Communities In The Twentieth Century

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ABSTRACT

It is possible to read and understand certain aspects of the history of a people based on their wounds. The aim of this paper is to show that the human body is a cultural appendage as well as the source of history. An arts history can be based on the ornaments and motifs of scarificators; a history of religions can be based on authorizations and prohibitions of scarification rituals; a history of gender can be based on female corporeal aesthetics. As such history ceases to be made only with texts whose exactitude is irreplaceable. It is made with thousands of other documentary, mixed sources. They are "signs" which, for example, are symbolic or real wounds on women's laps, backs or else on their stomachs. These "stones" or "metals" are, for instance, scarifications which beautify the physique of queens and princesses. A study of the motivation for their production, of their producers, of their beneficiaries would variously provide knowledge about the economic, social, political or cultural history of a region or of a people.

Keywords: Bamileke, Moundang, Body, Cultural markers, Scarifications, Woman, 20th Century.

Résumé

À travers les blessures symboliques, il est possible de lire et de comprendre certains aspects de l'histoire de ceux qui les portent. L'objectif de ce travail est de montrer que le corps est un support culturel et une source de l'histoire. Une histoire des techniques à travers les savoirs et savoir-faire des scarificateurs ; une histoire de l'art à travers l'ornementation et les motifs de scarifications ; une histoire des religions à travers les autorisations et les interdits sacrificatoires ; une histoire du genre à travers une esthétique corporelle spécifique à la femme. Ainsi, l'histoire ne se fait pas uniquement avec des textes dont rien ne remplace la précision. Elle se fait avec mille autres sources de documentation, d'où la nécessité pour l'historien d'utiliser les sources de manière croisée. Ces "signes" sont par exemple les blessures symboliques ou ludiques sur des cuisses, sur des dos ou encore sur des ventres de femmes. Ces "pierres" ou ces "métaux" sont par exemple les scarifications qui rehaussent le physique des reines et des princesses. Une étude sur les motivations de leur production, sur leurs producteurs, sur leurs bénéficiaires renseignerait à des degrés divers sur l'histoire économique, sociale, politique ou culturelle d'une région ou d'un peuple précis.

Mots clés: Bamiléké, Moundang, corps, marqueur culturel, scarifications, femme, XXe siècle.

Introduction

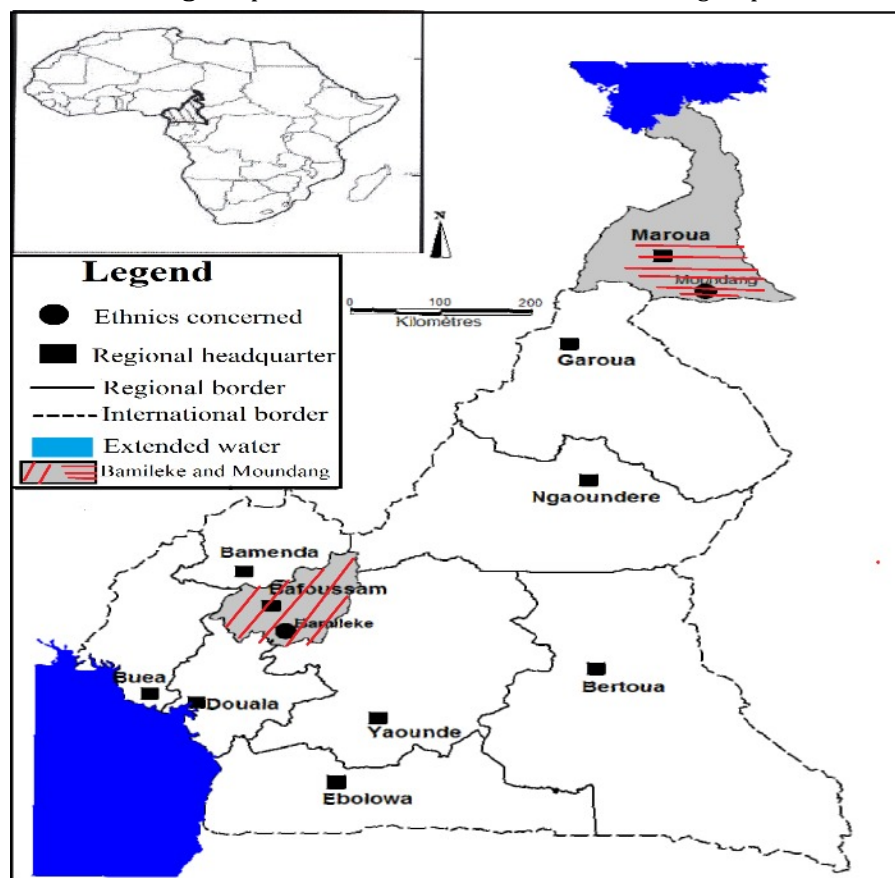
The highlands and lowlands of Cameroon group beforehand the mountainous ensemble which includes the West, the Adamaoua and the Atlantika Mountains and then the low relief areas among which are the plains. The relief, climate, flora, fauna and hydrography are among the main elements of these high mountains, which considerably influence the development of the body. It is in this natural setting that lives a diversity of peoples with rich and varied traditions among which the Bamileke and Moundang who are at the center of this work. The choice of these two peoples is justified by the fact that they live in two different geographical settings, but have similarities in their way of enhancing their beauty. These, like other peoples, are singularly distinguished by bodily mutilations which it is important to decipher in order to better understand their culture. This represents the identity marker of a given group. It is through it that any society is defined and affirmed, which is distinguished from others by its achievements, its art, its beliefs, its customs, its history, its language, its laws, its morality. In addition to these cultural peculiarities, the body, considered as a material part of the human being represents a characteristic cultural trait in any

society and allows each people to express its vision of the world, including its cultural realities and mentalities. It is often the place on which and in which the images of a particular human community manifest themselves and take shape (Mauss, 1936). In many traditional african societies in general and in the high and lowlands of Cameroon in particular, the body is a true artistic masterpiece. It is the medium of the aesthetic expressions and lends itself to marks destined to several functions. It conveys messages through its physical invoice, its symbols and gives indications on the status of those who wear them. It is really like a historical document. The aim of this work is to make an inventory of the different scarifications practiced by the Bamileke and Moundang women and to show that through these symbolic wounds, it is possible to read and understand certain aspects of the history of those who have them. The central question around which this subject is articulated is: how scarifications tell us about the cultural, religious, artistic and economic history of Bamileke and Moundang people in the twentieth century. Our results come mainly from written sources, iconographic and electronic.

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Fig. 1: Spatial localization of the studied ethnic groups

Cartographic background : Administrative map of Cameroon (INC, 2008)

Cartography : Atoukam T. L. D. and Bouyo N. F.

Cartographic background: Administrative map of Cameroon, (INC, 2008)

Cartography: Atoukam L. D. and Boyo N. F. (February 2014)

Patterns Of Scarification In Bamileke And Moundang Women

A systematic inventory of scarification in Bamileke and Moundang women reveals a variety of shapes, patterns and locations. According to Jean-Pierre Ombolo, symbolic injuries belong to the widespread phenomenon of bodily mutilation. These are observed in all societies and constitute a class of ethnological phenomena in physical anthropology. These are operations of a surgical or mechanical nature and of physiological training by which many peoples transform or suppress certain parts of the body (Ombolo, 1982). This one being considered as the support of the artistic expression. For it is on him that the first men inscribe signs (Jeudi, 2002). Body mutilation is a large-scale anthropological fact that affects many parts of the body. As mentioned in the introduction, we will focus in this article scarifications that designate the art of the scar. They are also perceived as superficial incisions of the skin using a razor or a scarifier. They are obtained voluntarily by incision, then irritation of the skin.

Moundang Women's Scarification

Scarification was a sign of beauty par excellence among the Moundang. More than men, women were essentially engaged in it with the aim of pleasing and seducing. Indeed, the body of the woman was really admired by men only when it was scarified. Research in anthropology reveals that a few years after being performed, scars become more tender and are therefore erogenous and that a woman who has some, would

require more sexual attention than that which does not (Renaut, 2004).

The operation was equally painful because of the use of a very sharp knife from the work of blacksmiths called *nya massalam*. The wounds were watered with juice from the leaves of plants called *na zoke* or *na tekouri*. By healing, they gave rise to beautiful drawings admirable in the sight of men. This responds to three essential concerns reported by Luc Renaut when he writes that "irreversible", the body brand that sustainably the link that unites "individual to his tribe," "painful", it offers him the opportunity to show courage and finally "aesthetic", it makes it more desirable socially and sexually (Renaut, 2004). The location of the motifs was to the taste of the volunteer who had the choice between the cheeks, the bust, the forehead, the back, the nose and the belly. In contrast to the massa¹ patterns reduced in dashed lines (Fimigué, 1998), those of the Moundang consisted of long lines arranged in various ways. Scarification of the bust and belly were closed chevron features giving the appearance of a frieze. Those of the cheeks were long broken concentric lines, thin or thick according to the desire of the adept. Those of the nose were made in a black line going from the forehead to the end of the nose. For therapeutic reasons, the Moundang made scarifications below the eyebrows to fight against the pain of sight. At the temples and forehead, these marks were intended to treat headaches (Fanta, 1997). This element refers to the therapeutic role of scarification in black Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular. In Ivory Coast, for example, some scarifications seem to work like a vaccine, since the wound is

¹In the Massa community, scarification existed in the form of *djira* and dotted lines known as *toumna*. The patterns in lines were made by means of a knife while those in the form of dots were drawn with the help of a spine.

put in contact with a small dose of local poison. This is what Susan Vogel says when she affirms: "Others are made at the corner of the mouth and rubbed with remedies in a similar group. This type of mark is given to children whose elders died in infancy for death to find them undesirable" (Vogel, 1998). In Bamileke people also, the therapeutic role of scarification was known. Thus, the sick children and armored persons against witchcraft were the only ones to wear patterns in the form of small dashes or sticks on the face. Women of royal descent wore them only as distinctive.

What is the origin of scarification in the Moundang? From concordant sources, the practice stems from exchanges between the different peoples living in the Lake Chad Basin neighbourhood whose absence of natural obstacles has considerably favored contacts within people. In fact, the Moundang have not evolved in a vacuum. They would have copied the scarifications through the exchanges and through the neighbors. They themselves say that the reasons for the arms and back were borrowed from their neighbors, the Guisiga.

Scarification Of Bamileke Women

Georges Balandier defines scarifications in Bamileke community as being linear, depressed or raised scars. According to the author, they are salient and range from isolated points to real graphic sets whose composition and execution cannot be denied (Balandier, 1968). They are called *sah* and provide information on a woman's marital status, indicate her ethnic group, her age, her social status even her personality. These corporal marks, have been known as Bamileke's since the early twentieth century (Buisson, 1931).

The more or less long operation was the work of blacksmiths who used instruments including a long iron needle, a wooden knife, a blade and a razor of rectangular shape. The drawing was done first with a knife, and then retouched with a razor or a needle to lift the skin. The razor then intervened to cut the necessary length (Balandier, 1968). When the work was finished, the blacksmith passed over the wounds of the padouk powder to prevent the skin from becoming irritated. In the localities of Bangou for instance, this powder was replaced by the juice of an appropriate plant (Hakou, 2007). This quest for beauty has many consequences. Sister André-Marie du Sacré Coeur notes on this subject:

Coquetry also intervenes to inflict on the African some sufferings not demanded by custom, and which she cheerfully supports ... to be beautiful! The neck, the torso, the back, the abdomen, are sometimes decorated with multiple small cuts forming geometric designs, and intended to enhance the beauty of the elegant ones (André-Marie du Sacré coeur, 1939).

This was indeed the case in Bamileke area. It was the price to pay to be a woman and stay beautiful. The practice of scarification was compared to normal childbirth. Married women were assisted for months. Like parturients, they were in the care of the nurses who were in charge of massaging them daily with lukewarm water and feeding them. Newly scarified young people only came out of their homes and

exhibited their beauty only after their final healing. Indeed, this body trace is comparable to the "traditional" passage rituals that are painful, but which mark the change in social status as it is (David Le Breton, 2003):

The rite of passage of traditional societies solicits, through often painful episodes, the moral resources required by the communities. It sets out the founding values of the social bond, and above all it gives its members an experience of pain in a ritual framework that prepares them to endure the vicissitudes of existence. In a hostile environment, courage is indeed a virtue essential to the survival of the group. The pain suffered internalizes a memory of resistance to adversity that makes the initiate less vulnerable to the trials inherent in his condition (Le Breton, 2003).

In many human societies, corporal marks are associated with rites of passage that occur at different stages of life. They are related to specific meanings within the community (Le Breton, 1999).

Motifs And Symbolism

Contrary to moundang scarification enriched with geometric patterns in dashed and dotted lines, those worn by Bamileke women were more complex and obeyed multiple functions. Element that comes from their cosmogonic experience. From the opinion of Louis-Marie Ongoum,

The symbolism of Bamileke, like that of all people, is the fruit of his cosmogonic experience. The resulting representations are not entertaining and fanciful pastimes, but express, under ordinary appearances, the highest faculties of his intelligence, his finest knowledge of the universe. It is for having lost touch with the initiations and their mysteries that we take for simple decorations imagined for the pleasure of the eyes which, above all, belongs to a language in unison with that of the World. It is thus the symbolism that determines the Bamileke in the choice of the elements that make up this motif (Ongoum, 1979).

They were composed of varied and complex drawings in geometric shapes (circles, simple diamonds, doubled, quadruplets, dotted lines, small sticks, solar and lunar disks), zoomorphic (lizard) and floral (rosettes, leaves, petals, garlands, Maltese crosses).

The petal flowers (Fig. 4, pl.) referred to the flowers of the kola nut. To understand the language of the kola is also to study its intrinsic character. From its scientific name *Cola acuminata*, the kola tree grows in Bamileke country. It produces fruits for consumption and marketing. The kola fruit symbolizes friendship, respect, reconciliation, courage, offspring, marital union, and its bitter taste means the test of life. The consumption of the kola by the future spouses in front of their parents showed their will to live together²

Another reason sent to a sealed canary (Fig 1 and 3 pl.3) Marked on the belly of the woman, it translates its inaccessibility by its closed character³. It is cabled to make it impassable and prevent evil spirits from having access to it, since among the Bamileke, one generally believes in

²Kola nuts with numerous cotyledons symbolize a large number of offspring. In the chieftaincy of Bana, the woman who went to marriage was rewarded with a nut that she had to eat alone or with her husband. This gift of kola was a good luck sign, a blessing so that the new bride can by many gestures leave a large descendance.

³In the Bamileke woman, the first drawings were sketched on the belly, assimilated to a pottery, a calabash whose supreme being endowed the woman and filled her with all the potentialities, but then sealed it so that he remains secret. This belly contains everything, "good" or "bad". It thus determines the nature of the human being and shelters all that is intimate and secret. This belly is also a carrier of life through the pregnancies that the woman carries within her. It is finally and in most cases cause sterility if the woman can not procreate.

vampirism. In addition, this fragile canary was supported at its base to prevent it from breaking, because it is the belly that carries the children. This motif symbolized motherhood, fertility and procreation. In men, dashes appeared on the breast (Fig. 1, pl. 2), an element which refers to maturity and consequently to the seminal fluid which expresses virility, fertility and maturity. There were also zigzag lines (Fig 1, pl.2.) Indicating the expansiveness of the man through his aggressive and conquering attitude.

In addition, female symbols differed from male symbols in their forms. If men have simple patterns that reflect signs of masculinity such as harshness and aggression, strength and activity, openness and expansiveness, the female forms are round, reclining and closed. These are images that symbolize gentleness, passivity, peace, security, mysteries that are characteristic traits of women (Pl.3). In addition, male patterns consisting of lines, spears and barbs are dangerous objects of attack. They are also weapons used by the Bamileke for hunting and wars of incessant invasion and expansion. Finally, we must mention that the male patterns in the form

of serpents that run all over the abdomen, reflect the virility and bitter activity that characterize the male in general, as well as masculine beauty. These forms evoke the image of the phallus and symbolize total fertility on a human body. As for the other motifs that are small lines and rafters, they evoke a liquid surface waving between two sandy beaches (Ongoum, 1979). These undulations represent the symbol of cosmic waters and underlie the idea of the seminal fluid contained in the belly. Isolated forms and typical forms are distinguished. Isolated forms are common to both men and women. These are solar discs, petal flowers, garlands, Maltese crosses and lunar discs (Plate 1). Typical shapes refer to patterns that are only worn by the woman. They are figurines of geometrical shapes such as simple diamonds, doubled and even quadruplets, squares, dotted lines and small sticks (Pl.3). It is also zoomorphic forms only represented by the lizard. Father Engelbert Mveng, who has done a major study of African arts and crafts, notes that these various representations find an explanation in the wide range of patterns, rich in symbols (Mveng, 1980).

Plate.1: Isolated forms of scarification in men and women, Buisson, 1931

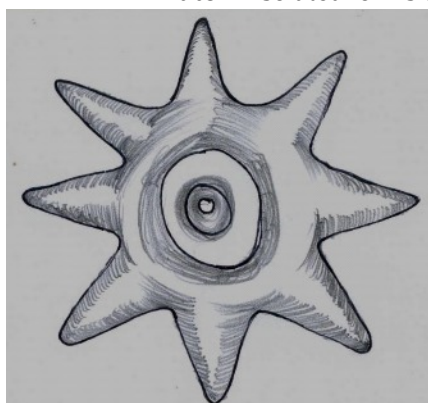


Fig.1: rays



Fig.2 : star with four branches



Fig.3: branch carrying leaves and buds

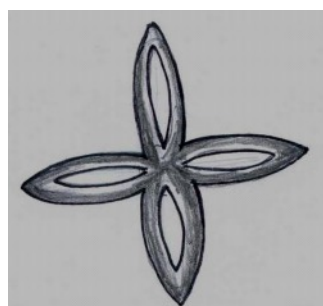


Fig. 4 :four-petals flower

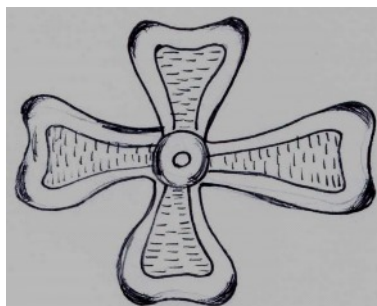


Fig.5 : maltese cross



Fig.6: palm leaf



Fig.7: lunar disc



Fig.8 : broken lines

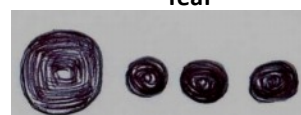


Fig.9 : seasoned ornaments or picketing

Reproduction and drawing: Atoukam Tchefenjem L. D. and Mbézélé P., 2007

Geometric figures such as diamonds, squares, dotted lines, disks are defined according to their shapes. The author notes that in African symbolism, the rhomb represents the woman, because of its shape and its four sides. It is the expression of

fertility par excellence, a vital function sought by Bamileke in women. When the rhombus is reinforced by an eye situated at its center, the whole gives the sexual form of the orifice, of the vulva.

Plate 1: The typical forms of scarification in the men of Bana, Bandjoun and Bangou,



Fig.1: Seasoned ornamentation with staked borders, series of broken lines formed of juxtaposed V, dashes (seminal

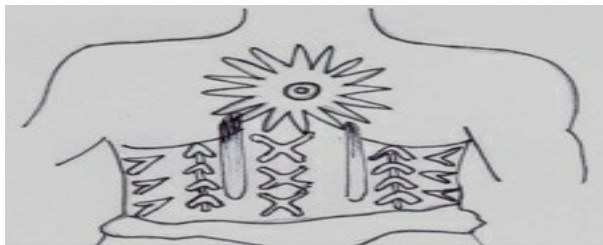


Fig.2: Geometric sculpture (door ornament) horizontal door herringbone, four-pointed star

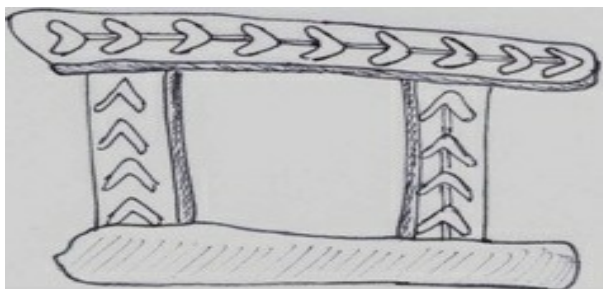


Fig.3: Door ornament, herringbone strips resting on the same edge

Reproduction and drawing: Atoukam Tchefenjem L. D. and Mbézélé Parfait, 2007

The square represents boxes or an element of nature such as the back of the turtle. This symbolizes wisdom, prudence. In Bamileke country, it plays a fundamental role in orderlies. In chieftaincies, it can detect the culprits. Dotted lines are similar to millet grains or the leopard dress. Millet grains are linked to agricultural production. They evoke the fertility of field work and reflect the pride of harvests. The leopard represents the blind and stupid force. It is the royal animal, a sign of power. Finally, lunar discs in concentric circles (Fig 2, pl 1) refer to the sun or the eye.

The flower-shaped motifs (Fig. 4, pl.1), which are not related to the flowers, are rich codes of messages that need to be deciphered. It is about the flowers with petals or rosettes. In the universal symbolism, the rosettes form triangles whose tip upwards symbolizes the fire, the virility; the tip downwards evokes water and symbolizes femininity⁴. As a result of this analysis of the symbolism of scarification patterns in Bamileke country, it should be remembered that corporal incisions basically obeyed a plastic surgery with a decorative purpose that was a genuine artistic need. This is what Christiane Falgayrettes-Leveau mentions in these terms:

These compositions satisfy the requirements of a plastic order involved on a skin surface that is more or less extensive. In the multitude of patterns, constants are asserted and characterized by fleshy elements, points, squares, rectangles, chevrons, bulging lines and

Plate 2: The typical forms of scarification in the men of Bana, Bandjoun and Bangou, Buisson E., 1931

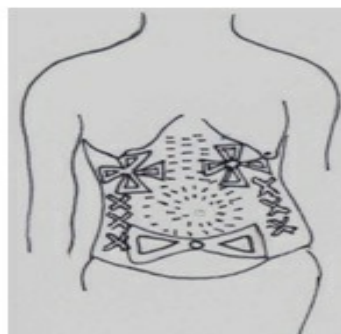


Fig.1: Wide-necked gourd-shaped pottery supported by a cushion (maltese cross, two side lines of dots)

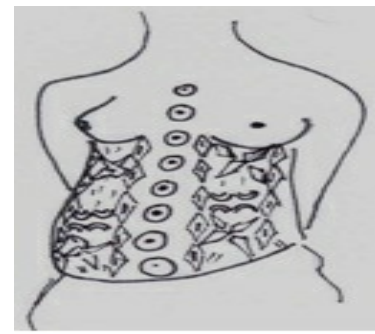


Fig.2: Succession of rings symbolizing lunar discs, diamonds, four-leaf rosettes)



Fig.3: Lines, rosettes, pottery, doubled diamonds (carrying a point)

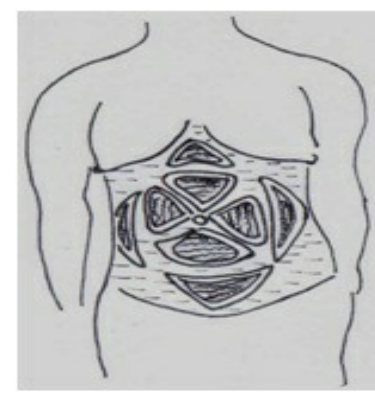


Fig.4 : Dots, rosettes, triangles

Reproduction and drawing: Atoukam Tchefenjem L.D. and Mbézélé Parfait, 2007

concentric figures constitute the basic figures of a decorative art constructed from projections and d (Falgayrettes-Leveau, 1994).

In the same vein, Abdou Sylla highlights African culture and art, highlighting their fundamental importance in traditional Africa, an art that, far from being aesthetic, is deeply embedded in a whole range of cultures. Other factors. The author reports it as follows:

From its origins, art has emerged as the manifestation of the needs of trends and abilities deeply entrenched in human nature; it is much more than a mere playful activity or a strictly utilitarian occupation. But it is initially activity only because it involves the imagination and the spiritual faculties, the aesthetic consciousness and the talent, the technique and the work. Art is the aspect of man's creative activity when it is inspired by a concern for beauty that is added to or substituted for that of utility⁵.

Scarification: Identity Markers And Signs Of Social Distinction

Scarification was a kind of rite of passage from childhood to adolescence. This ritual prepared the girl for marriage and changed her status in society, because all the girls suffered them. Scarification thus has an identity value. These are marks that recall in the flesh the belonging of the subject to the

⁴«Tatouages », <http://www.kustomtattoo.com/tatouage-piercing-paris-tattoo/tatouage-tattoo-histoire-symbole.htm>, consultation du 29/09/2006.

group, to a social system. David Le Breton remarks to this effect:

In some societies, tattoo informs on which lineage someone belongs, on what clan he comes from, an age class, it indicates the age, status and strengthens the alliance. It is impossible to blend into the group without this integration work that the skin signs print in the flesh (Le Breton, 1999).

If Emile Buisson believes that among Dschang-Bafou, Bafoussam-Bandjoun or Bana-Bangangte, tattooing is not an isolated event or accidental and that its practice is mainly related to the fact that these people are anxious to maintain and to preserve their customs and their ancient traditions (Buisson, 1936), it must be emphasized that this practice also reflected the status of women in society. This is why the choice of their locations was not fortuitous. Unmarried girls were identified through scarification on the thighs. These drawings were generally accompanied by a small ring of grains fixed around the navel made during adolescence (Ghomsi, 1972). Married women who did not have children had the same motives as teenage girls, especially between their thighs and stomachs. Indeed, even if the location of the grounds was not identical, the ventral patterns were almost the same. That is to say represented by flowers with petals (rosettes) encrusted with dotted lines and assorted geometric shapes such as circles and rhombuses. In addition to the ventral motives worn by married women, their backs were also scarified as soon as the first child came into the world. It is for this reason that women who had already given birth to many children had scarred stomachs and backs at the same time. Body incisions in the arms and shoulders were more fanciful. The motives of married women grew as they gave birth. They also wore around the navel a circle of motifs called *baham soh kwaah* dialect made specifically on women who have just had a child, thus indicating the number of procreate children (Atoukam, 2009). At the second birth, the chest was scarified (*veuh keuhkop*). The back bore the scarifications called in *baham veuh nkaatse*. Two kinds of *kapah* and *nkaa tse* motifs were specifically represented. The first means lizard. It is plated on the chest, precisely between the lower contours of the breasts. The second term relating to the disposition of motives is printed on the backs of women who have given birth to several children (Atoukam, 2009). However, many sterile women used the sculptors themselves to scarify their backs. The scarifications also reflected the social belonging of the carrier. Because the motives of women from the chieftaincy such as princesses, queens and even slaves were different from those of ordinary women. Apart from the very expressive motifs on the belly and back, the queens wore simple vertical incisions in the middle of the forehead or oblique on the two cheekbones. It was exclusively the privilege of the women of the chiefs of which it constitutes the distinctive mark. This differentiation protected the women of the chiefs from all desire. It was in fact forbidden to make advances to them under penalty of serious sanction, usually the killing.

Scarification finally appeared as a sign of honor as much for women as for men because having a tattoo was not only a difficult test that had to be endured, but it also guaranteed the honor and beauty of the followers. As such, they introduced

the girl into a new life (Hakou, 2007). It should also be noted that the scarifications could give the indications the tribal identity of an individual. It is to this effect that Clementine Faik-Nzuji writes:

I mark you this sign of your village, Without him you would lose yourself, You would not be recognized, We do not know where you come from (Faik-Nzuji, 1993)

The Origin Of Scarification In Bamileke

The origin of scarification in Bamileke remains difficult to elucidate. To the question of when exactly date the practice of scarification in this locality, the informants answer that it is a practice whose use goes back in time. Women who still wear these drawings on the body say that before them, their mothers already knew the use. Indeed, in the opinion of some scarifiers this trade would be specific to Bamileke. However, it would be risky to believe that they have evolved in a vacuum. Other informants claim that the said practice was copied among the Bamenda people. If it is accepted that the skin incision technique in the Bamileke has been copied among the peoples of the North-West with whom they have cultural affinities, this is an implausible assertion. More than it is about the same people separated only by an arbitrary border⁶. In fact, they present on the cultural level important similarities with Bamileke. Many even consider them brothers. It is also the element which justifies their common designation under the term Grassland or Grassfield, terms used by the Germans and the English to designate them. However, it is important to remember that in Northern Cameroon, scarification was also known (Atoukam, 1998). But, unlike Bamileke motifs incorporating various forms (geometric, zoomorphic and floral), those worn by northern women were essentially enriched with geometric patterns in the form of lines, dotted lines, zigzags and even sticks. In the end, it must be said that tracing the history of scarification is an extremely difficult task, although it is an ancestral practice. Because we can not yet locate it accurately in time. However, we note that "the taste for ornamentation and body modification seems to go back to the origins of civilization: the Neolithic bronze jewels attest to it" (Heuze éd., 2000). Indeed, few historians have devoted themselves to the study of scarification and its evolution. Although anthropologists, or tattoo artists in a personal approach, try to trace the origin of body decoration, the research is not limited to tattooing as an intradermal design, but involve all types of mutilations of the body.

The Abandonment Of Scarifications

The scarifications were gradually abandoned. Several reasons justify this decline: the arrival of missionaries, the influence of modernity with the advent of clothing, the improvement of health care and the development of application techniques. With the arrival of the missionaries, they oppose this ritual considered "savage", undermining the body of man, considered the temple of God that is forbidden to torture. From then on, they preach Christian morality, fighting against nudity and demanding the wearing of clothes. The Bamiléké, Christians in general, thus adopted European dresses consisting of corsages, skirts and dresses initially characterized by their sobriety, that is to say having a limited

⁵Abdou Sylla, " Sur l'ornementique de la femme africaine ", Cultures et civilisations, http://www.refer.sn/éthiopiennes/imprimer-article.php3?id_article=991, consultation du 25/05/2007.

⁶The delimitation of the African territorial borders in general and Cameroonian in particular by the Europeans did not take into account the ethnic affiliations. As a result, many peoples with cultural and religious affinities have been separated and sometimes found in different countries.

length at least below the knees. About this Christian influence, Stéphanie Heuze writes:

(...) The church considers the corporeal art of these tribes as violences made to the "natural" body: marks and decorations are an insult to creation. Divine works, man and woman can not claim to dispose of their bodies. You will not make incisions in your flesh for a dead man, and you will not print any figures on you. We read in Leviticus (14:28). A little farther on, the scarifiers will not make a tonsure on their heads, nor shave the corners of their beards, nor make incisions in their flesh (Heuze ed., 2000).

In addition, faced with the expansion of tattoos, the prohibition of colonizers was more severe. In the opinion of the colonizers, bodily changes mark the uncontaminated wild world. Concerning the changes observed following colonization in Bamileke country, Albert Pascal Temgoua writes:

With the advent of European colonization, socio-economic transformations have occurred in most societies in Black Africa. They challenge a series of values and practices consistent with traditional society and group logic. The status of members of West Cameroon's Bamileke society, and consequently that of women, is modified, as other laws and new beliefs impose other forms of interpersonal relations (Temgoua, 2002).

Moreover, the advent of dressing is an outstanding factor that leads to abandon the scarification tradition. The body is now covered (hidden), it was no longer necessary to practice scarification. The opening of health centers with improved hygiene rules has also been a factor limiting this practice, as health services claim that contaminated tattoo needles spread infectious diseases, especially hepatitis. In addition, body paints and adhesive images, called transfers or decals, are easily removed and become more common. Finally, thanks to new techniques, tattoos applied with a needle can be erased by laser beam. So many reasons that have gradually affected manners and annihilated uses.

Conclusion

At the end of this work, it appears that bodily mutilations are a real phenomenon that occurred among the Bamileke and Moundang peoples. In the rank of these symbolic wounds are the scarifications which remain and remain marks of socialization intervening at the different stages of the life of man. Far from being mere ornaments with a purely decorative purpose, the scarifications were true artistic masterpieces intended for several functions.

They included a variety of forms, patterns located on different parts of the body, and information on a woman's marital status, group, age, gender, and social status. They also an identity value, recalling the subject's belonging to a global social system. They appeared as a sign of honorific distinction for both women and men because of the pain of the operation. Compared to a new birth, they were synonymous with combativeness, resistance to pain, ability to please and to procreate. They were indelible marks reminding each one of his homework all his life. Several factors contributed to its abandonment, an element that does not in any way detract from the beauty of the sets of these corporeal marks that have now become real parchments, unpublished documents, undeniable sources of history.

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