

CHAALO, THE VOICES OF MOURNING

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This film deals with the meeting of Jean-Marc Lamoure, the director of this movie, and Chaalo Magarsa, a mystic religious leader living in the rural areas of Western Ethiopia. Mister Chaalo, as he likes to be named, is a man dressed like a woman, worshipping through spirit possession cults the local divinities of the area. Chaalo is the head priest of the *Mo'aata*, a religious group celebrating *Demamiti*, the female spirit who catches individuals affected by the death of one relative. Each year, in the end of the rainy season, the local community gathers around the shrine of the great religious leader of the area incarnated by *Damfa*, the patron saint of the whole valley. During these ceremonies, the religious group led by Chaalo performs a possession ritual to express its devotion to *Damfa*. It is in this celebrating context that Jean-Marc Lamoure met Mister Chaalo for the first time in September 2001. Haunted by the recent death of his brother, Jean-Marc Lamoure found an echo to its pain following the tracks of Chaalo through the sensitive path of mourning.

This film rests on the collaboration of the film maker and Thomas Osmond, an anthropologist studying the local religious practices of this Ethiopian region mainly inhabited by Oromo populations. Jean-Marc Lamoure and he have produced different academic documentaries related to anthropological issues in university contexts. With “Chaalo, the voices of mourning”, they have decided to make an intimate film based on anthropological inquiries but led by the personal experience of Jean-Marc Lamoure. Indeed, this film is more a sensitive testimony than a scientific documentary. This hybrid approach aims to explore new trends in visual anthropology, including the issue of dealing with intimacy, subjectivity and expressions of human traumas.

“Chaalo, the voices of mourning” is produced by Abderrahmane Sissako, Chinguitty Films and Farenji Association. This film both uses numeric and Super 8 mediums. The shooting period was performed in three sessions in 2001, 2002 and 2003, each time in September and October (i.e. in the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the Ethiopian new year). “Chaalo, the voices of mourning” was screened in various film festivals in France (Festival Paris-Berlin 2004, International Film Festival of Amiens 2005, etc), Ethiopia and Senegal.

Duration: 50min, **Medium:** DV, Super8, **Year:** 2004

Production: Abderrahmane Sissako, Chinguitty Films and Farenji Association

Location: Oromyaa Regional State (Western Shoa Zone), Ethiopia

Keywords: Spirit possession, Intimacy, Collaboration between an anthropologist and a filmmaker