

CANADIAN THESES ON MICROFICHE

I.S.B.N.

THESES CANADIENNES SUR MICROFICHE



National Library of Canada
Collections Development Branch

Canadian Theses on
Microfiche Service

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada
Direction du développement des collections

Service des thèses canadiennes
sur microfiche

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QU'ELLE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

SEYDOU BADIÂN'S SOUS L'ORAGE:

A COMMENTED TRANSLATION

Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of the
University of Ottawa in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Applied
Linguistics) (Translation).

Presented by

Moses NUNYI NINTAI

Supervised by Dr. Roda P. ROBERTS.

University of Ottawa,

School of Translators and Interpreters, 1982.

© Moses NUNYI NINTAI, Ottawa, Canada, 1982.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page
I. <u>INTRODUCTION</u>	
Choice of text	5
Situation of the extract translated in relation to the novel	8
Life and works of Seydou Badian	11
Conclusion	17
II. <u>GENERAL CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE EXTRACT</u>	
Introduction	19
Geographical setting	23
Ethnic groups	26
General historical background	27
Administrative structure	29
Injustices in the system	33
Specific historical setting	36
Traditional Malian life	37
Religion	39
Family	49
Rites and ceremonies	57
Living conditions	60
Conclusion	63

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd)

III. EXTRACT AND TRANSLATION

Extract 65

Translation 117

IV. NOTES 168

V. CONCLUSION 201

Bibliography 207

I. INTRODUCTION

Choice of text

Most, if not all, translations of African literary works from French into English in the African Writers Series so far seem to be intended for English-speaking Africans. This impression is due to the fact that the translators of these works generally provide no background information or explanatory notes¹ which would enable non-African English-speaking readers to fully understand and appreciate the writers' message. As Donald E. Herdeck² rightly points out, although African literary works are often written in a language familiar to non-African readers (English, French or Portuguese), they describe a world unknown to most readers in the West. They portray village communities, customs and beliefs which are strange and sometimes even unacceptable to Western readers. These

1 A few translations do contain some background information. For example, in Francis Price's English version of Les Bouts de bois de Dieu (God's Bits of Wood) by Sembene Ousmane, an introduction which gives historical information pertinent to the novel is provided by an African, Adu Boahen.

2 Donald E. Herdeck, African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing (1300-1973) (Washington D.C.: Black Orpheus Press, 1973), p.2.

readers therefore need to be provided with pertinent background information if they are to understand the ideas and feelings conveyed.

Being an African, I felt I should take it upon myself to introduce non-African English-speaking readers to African literature by translating and commenting on it in such a way that the culture presented would become clear. Of course, being a Cameroonian, I would have liked to concentrate more particularly on Cameroonian culture. However, since the literary works of well-known Cameroonian writers in French such as Ferdinand Oyono, Mongo Beti, and Francis Bebey, have already been reasonably well translated into English,³ I decided to look for an untranslated

3 Ferdinand Oyono:

Une Vie de Boy, trans. by J. Reed as Houseboy, (London: Heinemann, 1966) and as Boyl, (New York: Collier Books-Macmillan, 1970).
Le vieux nègre et la médaille, trans. by J. Reed as The Old Man and the Medal, (London: Heinemann, 1967).

Mongo Beti:

Mission terminée, trans. by P. Green as Mission Accomplished, (New York: Macmillan, 1958) and as Mission to Kala, (London: Heinemann, 1964. Repr. 1966).
Le roi miraculé, trans. as King Lazarus (trans. anon.), (London: Muller, 1961; London: Heinemann, 1970).
Le pauvre Christ de Bomba, trans. by Gerald Moore as The Poor Christ of Bomba, (London: Heinemann, 1971).

(cont'd)

7

literary work by a French-speaking African writer in which the culture presented is very much like that of Cameroon.

It was at this point that I thought of Sous l'orage, a novel written by Seydou Badian, who is a famous Malian writer. This work, which I studied in an African literature course at the University of Yaoundé, Cameroon, and which, to the best of my knowledge, has never been translated, depicts very well Malian culture and the reaction of Malians to colonial administration. Mali is an African country whose culture is very similar to that of Cameroon and whose colonial masters before independence were, like those of part of Cameroon, the French. Therefore Sous l'orage seemed very suitable for my purpose.

Since Sous l'orage is too long for the purposes of commented translation, I had to choose an extract. In view of my objective of presenting African culture to

Francis Bebey:

Le Fils d'Agatha Moudio, trans. by Joyce Hutchinson as Agatha Moudio's Son, (London: Heinemann, 1971).

non-African readers, I picked an extract which covers mainly life in the village where Malian traditions are still very much alive but also, to a certain extent, life in the town, where change in Malian society is more evident.

Since I believe, as does Georges Mounin, that "le contexte d'une page de roman, c'est le roman",⁴ I will now situate the extract translated in relation to the novel.

Situation of the extract translated in relation to the novel

Sous l'orage is a novel which portrays the conflict between generations and between traditional customs and new ideas. The main theme is the opposition between the concept of arranged marriage and that of marriage for love. Benfa, an old man in a Malian town, wants his daughter, Kany, to marry a rich old man, Famagan. However, Kany refuses to consider the idea, as she loves a school friend, Samou. As punishment for her disobedience and in order to prevent Kany and Samou from seeing each other, Benfa sends the girl and her brother, Birama, to his native village to spend some time with their Uncle, Djigui, who is a hunter.

4 Georges Mounin, Linguistique et traduction (Bruxelles: Dessart et Mardaga, 1976), p. 113.

The extract chosen describes their stay in the village and their initiation to typical African village life and customs. Traditional customs in the village are further highlighted by their contrast with the dramatic changes taking place in town, which the author presents in the extract through the conversations of men returning from the Second World War and through occasional glimpses of Samou in town.

The basic marriage problem begins to be resolved towards the end of the extract when Tiéman, the medical aide of the village dispensary, initiates reconciliation by convincing Djigui to ask Benfa to let Kany continue her studies. When Kany and Birama return to town, Kerfa, a young man who likes the company of old people and is thus considered foolish by the young, educated people, and Samou's mother, Mama Coumba, manage to persuade some elders to talk to Benfa. These elders blame neither the young nor the old; rather, they recognize that times have changed and feel that reconciliation would be more beneficial than a conflict between the generations. After conceding that marriage is no longer what it used to be, given the type

of education the young receive at school, Benfa agrees to let Kany marry Samou. The "storm", that is the conflict between the old and the young, is over, at least for the time being.

The extract I have chosen to translate presents various stages of this conflict, which is one of the primary themes of the novel. The choice and development of this theme in Sous l'orage was undoubtedly influenced to some extent by the author's life and education.⁵ A brief biographical presentation of Seydou Badian is therefore appropriate at this point.

5 Cf. Georges Mounin, Linguistique et traduction, p. 113: "le contexte d'une page de roman, c'est le roman. Mais il existe un contexte de ce roman, qui est la totalité de l'oeuvre du romancier."

Life and works of Seydou Badian

Seydou Badian, whose real name is Seydou Badian Kouyaté, was born on 10 April, 1928 in Bamako, Mali. He received his primary and secondary education in Bamako at the Terrasson Fougères school. Badian later continued his studies at the University of Montpellier, France, where he obtained a medical degree after successfully defending a thesis entitled Nine African Treatments of Yellow Fever.

While studying at Montpellier, Badian wrote the novel Sous l'orage, première partie, which was published by Presses Universelles, Avignon, in 1957. As the title suggests, Badian probably intended to add other parts to the novel later. Moreover, when the novel was subsequently published by Présence Africaine, Paris, in 1963, it bore the subtitle "Kany", which seems to provide further proof of the author's intention to add to the work. However, no other parts have so far been added to the novel, although Badian has written other works.

In this first novel, Seydou Badian, while presenting various views on marriage, portrays the conflict of generations in Malian society under colonial rule. The young

spurn tribal customs and superstitions and challenge the colonial system while the elders respect their ancestral way of life. However, Badian places himself between the two extreme positions. He seems to feel that while Malians should not be enslaved by traditions, neither should they completely embrace the European way of life. A harmonious blend of the good aspects of both cultures would, according to him, constitute a firm basis for peace and prosperity in Malian society. This seems to be the type of society he would like to see in his country, which is shortly due for independence. With self-rule fast approaching for Mali, Badian seems to be asking the Malians to work together towards building a new political and social entity.

Badian thus has a message to convey to his countrymen and he is consequently more concerned with the ideas communicated than with the literary qualities of the novel. For example, his characters are not portrayed in depth: rather, they seem to be his puppets.

Since the novel is written in a European language (French), it is obvious that Badian's message was intended for the Malians educated in the white man's school. These

were the Malians who would become the leaders of an independent Mali, men like Badian himself, who was appointed Minister of Rural Economy and Planning when Mali became independent in 1960 under President Modibo Keita and who later became Minister of Development.

Badian's first literary work was soon followed by another. In 1961, he published a dramatic work, La Mort de Chaka, pièce en cinq tableaux,⁶ at Présence Africaine, Paris. Chaka, a Zulu king who dominated a large part of South Africa before the arrival of the colonialists and who is considered one of the greatest warriors Africa has ever known, is presented in Badian's drama as a man who placed himself at the service of his country to make it powerful. However, as in Sous l'orage, Badian makes no

6 The Chaka theme has also been dealt with by other African writers such as Leopold Sedar Senghor (Chaka, poème dramatique à plusieurs voix in Ethiopiques, Paris, Seuil, 1958), Condetto Nerekhaly-Camara (Amazoulou, précédé de Continent-Afrique, Honfleur, P.J. Oswald, collection: Théâtre africain, 1970), Djibril Tamsir Niane (Chaka, suivi de Sikasso, la dernière citadelle, Honfleur, P.J. Oswald, collection: Théâtre africain, 1971), Abdou Anta Ka (Les Amazoulous in Théâtre, quatre pièces, Paris, Présence Africaine, 1972), Thomas Mofolo (Chaka), etc.

attempt at developing his characters; he seems to have a message or lesson uppermost in his mind. In La Mort de Chaka, written at the time Mali had just separated from the federation with Senegal to form a new republic, Badian seems to be urging Malians to follow the example set by Chaka.

In 1964, Badian wrote a paper, Les dirigeants africains face à leur peuple, on the divergent goals and aspirations of Africans in their attempt to achieve complete independence from the West. This study won the "Grand prix littéraire de l'Afrique Noire" in 1966.

That was the year when Badian gave up his political career and decided to take up private medical practice in Koulouba on the outskirts of Bamako. However, when President Modibo Keita's government was toppled in November 1968, following a military coup d'état led by the present Malian Head of State Moussa Traoré, Badian, because of his association with the former government, was arrested and detained.

While in prison, he wrote another novel, Le sang des masques which was published by Editions Laffont, Paris,

in 1976. This novel presents a young man who, after spending some time in town, returns to his native village but finds that many changes have taken place. His struggle to fit himself back into village society brings out the conflict and behaviour typical of African society today.

As in Sous leorage, Badian in this second novel attempts to depict Malian society as it undergoes changes initiated by the coming of the Europeans. Again, the old and the young respond to these changes differently; the old cling to their ancestral customs and traditions while young educated Malians prefer complete assimilation with Western culture. However, in Le sang des masques, Badian treats in greater detail the problems caused by rural depopulation as young Malians flock, in search of jobs, to the towns where unemployment leads to crime, corruption, and other difficulties. The reader is left with the impression that the author sees the town as a corrupt society despite its material development and that he wants to discourage the young from abandoning the village for the towns.

By the time this novel, written in prison, was

published (1976), Badian had been released from custody.

The imprisonment of the members of Modibo Keita's government had soon sparked off public opposition to the military junta under Lieutenant Moussa Traoré. Intellectuals and students staged demonstrations as early as 1969, demanding the release of political prisoners. In an attempt to silence opposition and seek international approval of his government, Moussa Traoré finally ordered the release of fifteen of Modibo Keita's close collaborators, including Seydou Badian Koyaté, on June 2, 1975. After his release, Badian left the country and went to Senegal where he is at present working with an international organization.⁷

Badian's career has thus been very varied. Although a medical officer by training, he has distinguished himself as a writer and politician as well. He is best known to Africans as a doctor and politician; to the rest of the world, he is above all a novelist, dramatist and political essayist.

7 I tried to obtain information about Seydou Badian's present activities through the Embassy of Senegal in Ottawa, but have had no success.

Conclusion

It is Seydou Badian, the novelist, in whom we are particularly interested in this thesis. However, as I have already pointed out, Badian's literary work is, to a large extent, didactic in nature, in that it seems intended to convey instruction and information as well as pleasure and entertainment. Hence, while trying to ensure that my translation of the extract chosen from Sous l'orage reads well, I have concentrated my comments on the informational aspects of the work to ensure that English-speaking non-Africans understand clearly what Jean Delisle has called "le sens du message."⁸

8 Jean Delisle, L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980), p. 59. He defines "le sens du message" in the following manner: "...le sens doit toujours être construit à partir des significations linguistiques auxquelles s'ajoutent les paramètres non linguistiques."

II. GENERAL CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE EXTRACT

Introduction

According to Danica Seleskovitch, "to understand what is going on around him, every individual depends on two types of knowledge in his daily life: knowledge of words and knowledge of things."¹ The same two types of knowledge are essential to the understanding of a text, as Jean Delisle points out in L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction in answer to the question: "Mais qu'est-ce que comprendre un énoncé?"

C'est (entre autres choses), y reconnaître une phrase de la langue, retenir un, et un seul des sens de cette phrase, donner une valeur aux expressions référentielles, calculer les sous-entendus. Ces opérations intellectuelles s'appuient sur la compétence grammaticale, mais aussi sur la connaissance du monde.²

In other words, an understanding of the linguistic signs of a text is not enough in itself to grasp the total meaning of a text. Knowledge of the subject matter plays a

1 Danica Seleskovitch, Interpreting for International Conferences trans. Stephanie Dailey and E. Norman McMillan (Washington, D.C.: Pen and Booth, 1978) p. 59.

2 Dan Sperber, "Rudiments de rhétorique", Poétique, No. 23-24, 1975, p. 392, cited by Jean Delisle in L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction, pp. 59-60.

major role in the comprehension of a text.

In a culture-oriented text like the one I have chosen to translate, understanding involves in large part a knowledge of the various cultural features alluded to in the text. This knowledge is required not only on my part as a translator,³ but also on the part of the reader. It is up to the translator to decide the best way to present such knowledge to his readers.

The translator may decide to provide the cultural conditioning required by the reader in the translation itself. This may be done, as Eugene Nida suggests,⁴ by using classifiers⁵ to situate unknown or borrowed words in their context. For example, "le Niger" may be rendered in English by "the Niger river" to inform the readers that

3 Cf. Georges Mounin, Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction (Paris: Gallimard, 1963), p. 236: "pour traduire une langue étrangère, il faut remplir deux conditions, dont chacune est nécessaire, et dont aucune en soi n'est suffisante: étudier la langue étrangère; étudier l'ethnographie de la communauté dont cette langue est l'expression."

4 Eugene Nida, Toward a Science of Translating, p. 230.

5 Eugene Nida defines a classifier as "a term used with another term, often a proper name, to make clear what category and/or class it belongs to (the city of Jerusalem)" in The Theory and Practice of Translation, p. 198.

the Niger is a river: or "the safolo" may be presented as "a village fetish known as safolo" to make its function clearer.

However, it is not always easy to classify a term, nor is a classifier, which is at the most a short phrase, always adequate to convey the cultural context of a word. In such cases, the translator may use a descriptive phrase or a definition which either replaces the word in question or is placed alongside it. For example, if the translator feels that his readers will not understand the loan word "dolo", he may substitute for it or introduce along with it the following definition-- "a type of alcoholic drink made of millet". Peter Newmark⁶ suggests that supplementary information may also be added into the translation by using the unknown word followed by a literal translation in brackets; for example, "korote" (poison), "sonni" (sacrifice), etc.

Unfortunately, addition of explanatory information into the translated text very often holds up the flow of

⁶ Peter Newmark, Approaches to Translation, p. 75.

the story or results in clumsy sentences. In any case, there is a very definite limit as to the kinds of explanatory additions and/or expansions one may make in the translation. According to Eugene Nida, "one may make explicit in the text only what is linguistically implicit in the immediate context of the problematic passage.... One may not simply add interesting cultural information which is not actually present in the meanings of the term used in the passage."⁷ For these reasons, some translators prefer to communicate the supplementary information required by the reader to fully understand the message not in the translation itself but outside of the body of the text either in an introduction or in explanatory notes (footnotes or end notes).

Since the purpose of my translation is to provide an insight into Malian culture, I have obviously decided to preserve, as much as possible in my translation, the local colour of the source text. This decision makes it necessary for me to provide the non-African English-speaking readers, who constitute my public, with cultural conditioning in one form or another. Since cultural conditioning within a text is necessarily very limited in possibility

7 Eugene Nida, The Theory and Practice of Translation, p. 111.

and would inevitably interfere with the easy flow of the story, I have decided to provide an introduction giving cultural background information as well as notes with definitions and explanations of specific terms or expressions and their translation.

Geographical setting

For the reader to be able to fully understand the extract, he needs to know where the story of Sous l'orage takes place. Although it is obvious that the setting is Africa, there is no mention in the extract, or in the rest of the novel, of the particular country in which Badian's characters live. However, one can make an educated guess that the novel is set in Mali since the author has spent most of his life in this country, apart from a brief period spent as a student in France where he wrote the novel and these last few years spent in "exile" in Senegal.

Mali is a landlocked West African country bounded to the east by the Republics of Upper Volta and Niger, to the west by the Republics of Senegal and Mauritania, to the north by the Sahara desert, and to the south by the Republics of Ivory Coast and Guinea. It covers an area of about 1,204,000 square kilometres and has a population of more

than six million inhabitants, ninety percent of whom live in rural areas. The population density is about ninety inhabitants per square kilometre in the Niger delta, but it thins out in the desert where the density is only about five people per square kilometre.

The plot of Sous l'orage is set in a certain Malian town⁸ and a certain Malian village. Although the author does not name the town or the village, either in the extract or the novel as a whole, it is highly likely that Badian is describing places with which he is familiar. As Herdeck suggests:

The life described is that of a large unnamed city (no doubt Bamako) and the surrounding villages along the Niger River in the 1930 - 1950 period.⁹

Herdeck is probably right in suggesting that the

8 During the colonial period, urban areas in Mali were called towns because they were not densely populated enough to be considered cities.

9 Donald E. Herdeck, African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing (1300 - 1973), p. 56.

town portrayed is Bamako since Badian was born there and even received his primary and secondary education in this town. Badian gives a partial description of the town as the story unfolds. In the extract, phrases such as "les quartiers de la ville" (p. 131), "les rues des quartiers indigènes" (p.131), "la mosquée" (p.132), "au marché, devant les magasins, sur les places" (p.134), "les salles de danse" (p.134), etc., present some features of the town. However, such information is too scanty for the reader to have a clear picture of it and so more facts about Bamako will help the reader get acquainted with the environment.

Bamako is situated in the south-western part of Mali on the right bank of the Niger river and stretches out for about eight to ten kilometres. It is the capital and largest town of Mali. According to the first census conducted in 1960, the population of Bamako was approximately 150,000. Since then, the population has been growing very rapidly. The town is linked by rail to the Atlantic Ocean and has developed considerably over the last twenty years. Today, Bamako is a commercial centre where modern technology thrives side by side with native traditions and customs.

The story of Sous l'orage is also set in an unnamed village. In the extract, Badian gives the reader an approximate idea of the location of the village: "au bord du fleuve: le village du père Djigui était situé sur l'autre rive" (p.99), "sur la rive gauche" (p.100). To get to this village from the town, two of Badian's characters (Birama and Kany) travel by train, cross the river in a canoe and walk to the village. It is therefore probable, as Herdeck has suggested, that the river referred to is the Niger river and that the village is one of the villages in the Niger delta.

Ethnic Groups

While it is rather difficult to pinpoint the exact village because there are many villages with similar traditions and customs in the area, one can further suppose that the village mentioned in the novel, like other villages in the Niger delta, is occupied by the Bambaras. The Bambaras, along with the Malinkes, the Dioulas, the Dogons, the Sonrais, and other tribes, make up the "black" population of Mali, which is in the majority. The "blacks" are mainly farmers, hunters, fishermen, or craftsmen, who live

in the savanna and sudan areas.

The other major Malian ethnic group, the "whites", composed mainly of Tuaregs, Moors and Peulhs, consists of nomadic tribes engaged in cattle, sheep and goat rearing in the desert area. They are not referred to either directly or indirectly in Sous l'orage as they do not live in the Niger delta.

When Badian does mention the "whites" in the extract (e.g. "...et les Blancs l'ont mis en prison" (p.107), "dites au Blanc que vous avez assez appris" (p.108), "Le Blanc nos oblige à nous découvrir" (p.109), "Le Blanc leur apprend les écrits" (p.116), etc.), he alludes to the Europeans as opposed to the native population.

General Historical Background

The Europeans (i.e. the French) are often referred to because the story of Sous l'orage is set in the period during which Mali was under French colonial rule. This historical background is made evident by several allusions in the extract. For example, in the sentence "...il était allé déclarer au cercle qu'il n'avait plus de fusil" (pp. 104-105), the word "cercle" is significant in that, in this

context, it refers to the administrative centre of an administrative unit created by the French during colonial rule. Reference is also made in the novel to the administrative unit itself (also called "cercle" in a French colonial setting) and to its head, the "commandant de cercle".¹⁰ Furthermore, reference is made in the extract to changes brought about in Mali by the French: "Avant l'arrivée des Européens, les vieux avaient leur mot à dire dans les affaires du village; il y avait auprès du chef un conseil de notables; aujourd'hui il n'y a qu'un chef, lequel reçoit et exécute les ordres de l'administrateur blanc." (p.138). Therefore it is clear that the novel is set generally during the colonial period.

This period, which stretched over many years, began in the late 1800s. This was the time when the former Malian Empire—founded and extended by the Mandingos under Sundiata Keita and his successors from the thirteenth

10 Cf. "Quand le commandant (de cercle) arrive, c'est la panique." (p.93).

to the seventeenth centuries, and later conquered (in 1670) by the Bambara King Biton Koulibali—had broken up into a number of large independent ethnic regions hostile to each other.

Although European explorers arrived in Mali as early as the turn of the eighteenth century (two English explorers, Major Hughton and Mungo Park in 1795, and three French explorers, Duranton, Raffenet and Leopold Panet between 1828 and 1850), the colonial conquest really began only after the arrival of the French General Louis Faidherbe (1854-1865). Under him, the French annexed Senegal and extended their control as far as the Niger river. In 1880, Gallieni integrated Soudan (modern Mali and Senegal) into French West Africa. By the outbreak of the First World War, the French had crushed all armed resistance in Mali.

Administrative Structure

After occupying Mali, however, the French soon realized that they had to set up an administrative system in order to rule the conquered territory. Mali, like other French West African colonies, was divided into various administrative units headed by French officials and native chiefs. Although the extract refers to only two of these

units which comprise the setting of the novel: the "cercle" under the "commandant de cercle"¹¹ and the village headed by a chief,¹² the administrative system was fairly complex.

The administrative structure resembled, in fact, a pyramid. At the top of the administrative hierarchy in the French West African colonies was the Governor-General in Dakar. He was directly responsible to the Minister of Colonies in France and was assisted by French officials and an advisory council appointed by him. Below the Governor-General and responsible to him were the Governors of the various colonies, each of whom was also assisted by French officials and an advisory council. Each colony was divided into provinces headed by commissioners. Within

11 Cf. "Pourquoi nous oblige-t-on à aller au cercle où le commis nous insulte?" (p.109); "...l'âge ne lui permettant plus le va-et-vient entre les bureaux du commandant et le village" (p.105).

12 Cf. "Dans le village voisin, il a mis un chef qui n'est pas du pays, personne ne le veut, sauf le Blanc." (p.108).

each province were "cercles" under "commandants de cercle". The "cercles" were composed of sub-divisions which, in turn, were divided into cantons comprising groups of villages. The subdivisions were headed by administrative officers while the cantons and villages were under chiefs assisted by councils of notables, who were usually prominent natives in the community. The only administrative officers in the system who were themselves natives of the country were the chiefs.

The chiefs, who were the only administrators in direct contact with the natives, played a very important role in the administrative system because the French found out that they could rule the natives effectively only through their intermediary as they enjoyed the respect and confidence of the people. However, their role, while being important, was also rather ambivalent. In a circular on native chiefs published on August 15, 1917, Governor-General Joost van Vollenhoven defined the position of the chiefs in the following terms:

The native chief is only an instrument, an auxiliary...he never speaks or acts in his own name, but always in the name of the "commandant de cercle" and by formal or tacit delegation of his authority.... In executive matters he should be

left plenty of initiative, but his initiative must be under control.¹³

This ambivalent position of the chiefs is also reflected in the extract I have translated by the following sentence: "aujourd'hui, il n'y a qu'un chef, lequel reçoit et exécute les ordres de l'administrateur blanc." (p.138).

Nonetheless, the chiefs had certain responsibilities: they maintained law and order in their villages, collected taxes, etc. In return, canton chiefs were paid meagre salaries and village chiefs were granted rebates on the taxes they collected. While village chiefs were usually chosen according to native customs, most of the canton chiefs were appointed by French authorities. Thus, the Malians only had their say in the choice of the lowest level of administrator and, to all intents and purposes, none in the way the French ruled the territory.

13 Reprinted in Une Ame de Chef. Le Gouverneur-Général J. van Vollenhoven (1920), pp.189-211. Also in John Hargreaves, France and West Africa (Great Britain: MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, 1969), pp.210-214.

Injustices in the system

The French rule was in fact a type of benevolent dictatorship which controlled most aspects of the life of Malians. While the French guaranteed freedom of religion and worship, they encouraged missionaries to introduce Christianity into the country. Although they promoted education for Malians, this was provided only in French with a view to absorbing young Malians into French culture. The negative effects of the French system of education are clearly brought out by Badian in Sous l'orage: young educated Malians (Kany, Birama, Samou, etc.), influenced by the French way of thinking at school, spurn native traditions and customs and look at marriage from the European point of view.

While the French tried to absorb Malians into the French culture by means of the education system, they were not prepared to absorb Malians into French society. Separate schools were established for blacks and whites, a policy much hated by the blacks. Another cause of resentment against the French education system on the part of Malians was the fact that they were limited to primary, technical and vocational training; very few Malians could aspire to

university education. After the Second World War, the Malians demanded changes in the education system. The hopes and dreams of young Malians in this respect are revealed in the extract by the following statements: "Il y aura les mêmes écoles pour tous les enfants, Blancs comme Noirs," (p.133); "Les jeunes pourront faire les études qui leur plaisent. Ils ne seront plus limités..." (p.136).

Unequal treatment of blacks and whites was not limited to the system of education; it was also evident in the judicial system in which two different codes of law were applied—one for the Europeans and the other for the Malians. In addition, administrative authorities could arbitrarily impose certain penalties upon Malians without a fair trial. These injustices are referred to indirectly in Sous l'orage when Malian soldiers returning from the war, talk about changes they hope to see in the country in the following terms: "Il y aura également la même justice et nul n'ira en prison sans être jugé" (p.134).

Injustices were rife even in the economic sector, where the French promoted agriculture and forestry for export of products to France. While they built roads,

railways, harbours, ports, etc.—a definite contribution to the development of Mali—they did so using forced labour from Malians. The natives had to pay a labour tax which meant either working for up to twelve days a year without pay or paying a certain amount of money. In addition to this tax, Malians had to pay a poll tax, which was a fixed amount paid by every adult Malian, whatever his income. Since most of the natives in the villages were very poor, young Malians had to go to the towns in search of jobs in order to be able to pay their taxes: "J'ai mon fils là-bas, à la ville. Il y est allé travailler pour payer nos impôts" (p.107). But even those who found jobs received wages lower than those paid to Europeans for the same jobs. Discrimination against Malians extended even to the army into which they were conscripted during the world wars to defend France; they could serve only in the rank and file. Again, Badian alludes indirectly to the work-related grievances of the Malians, when Malians returning from the war indicate the changes they hope to see brought about:

Dans l'armée, il n'y aura plus de différence entre soldats. Tous seront habillés de la même façon, tous auront droit au même traitement" (p.133)

Le soldat [noir] sera dans les mêmes conditions que le soldat blanc (p.136).

Il n'y aura plus de travail forcé (p.133).

A travail égal, salaire égal. Nous en avons assez de travailler pour rien; nous voulons la justice! (p. 136).

Specific historical setting

The political, social and economic policies of the French, which had aroused discontent among Malians by the 1930s and 1940s, led, after the Second World War, to a desire for participation in government (cf. "Il faut que nous participions à la gestion des affaires des villes et des villages" (p. 139)), the rise of nationalism and, finally, the demand for independence.¹⁴

14 The demand for self-rule led to the formation of political parties. In 1946, Modibo Keita formed the "Union Soudanaise". In November 1958, Soudan was proclaimed a republic and it joined Senegal in January 1959 to form the Federation of Mali. However, the federation was dissolved in August 1960, and on September 22, 1960, the former French Soudan became an independent State known as the Republic of Mali with Modibo Keita as the Head of State. Keita ruled Mali until he was ousted by a military coup d'état led by Lieutenant Moussa Traoré on November 19, 1968. A new constitution was adopted on June 2, 1974 to replace the one suspended by the military junta after the coup. Moussa Traoré was elected president of Mali in 1979 and he formed a civil government which included only two military officers.

It is the manifestation of this discontent in Sous l'orage that makes us feel that the novel is set between 1930 and 1950. In fact, we can narrow down still further the part of the colonial period during which the story takes place by the references therein to the war ("les premiers soldats qui étaient revenus de la guerre" p.133). There is little doubt that Badian is alluding to the Second World War and that his novel is therefore set towards the end of the colonial period.

Traditional Malian life

At that time, colonial policies, which had been enforced for a period of over eighty years, had brought about some changes in the Malian lifestyle. But these changes were evident only in the towns. Native customs and traditions still predominated in the villages and rural areas, where the village elders resisted any attempt to change their way of life.

In his presentation of the village in Sous l'orage, Badian refers to many aspects of traditional Malian culture. He attempts to show that, like most societies,

Maliens had their own lifestyle and culture,¹⁵ even before colonialism. In fact, in the extract I have translated, the white teacher, Donzano, is reminded by one of his pupils that "Il n'y avait certes pas de machines avant l'arrivée des Européens, mais il y avait une organisation sociale." (p.138). And Badian makes reference throughout the novel

15 The term "culture" has been defined differently in various disciplines. In the social sciences, attempts at defining the term have often been inadequate. Researchers have been concerned in turn with culture as the product of human interaction (e.g. Taylor E.B. in Primitive Culture (London: John Murray Publishers Ltd., 1871) p.1), the symbolic aspects of culture (e.g. Leslie A. White in the article "Culturological vs. Psychological Interpretations of Human Behaviour", in American Sociological Review, 12: 686-698, Dec. 1947, p. 693), the learned quality of culture (e.g. Carleton S. Coon in The Story of Man (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1954), p. 5), culture as a basic constituent of behaviour (e.g. David Bidney in Theoretical Anthropology (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 30), etc. Noting that existing definitions of culture were incomplete, Kroeber and Kluckhohn summarized all the statements made by earlier researchers on culture and proposed a definition which embodies the various aspects of culture outlined by earlier researchers (cf. A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, Culture: A critical review of concepts and definitions, Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology (47: 3-223, 1952), Parts II & III, p. 181).

to specific institutions such as religion and the family that characterize the traditional social organization of Mali and more particularly that of the Bambaras in Mali.

Religion

Badian alludes on several occasions in the extract to the religions of Mali. There is no one religion that predominates in this country. Rather, traditional, Muslim and Christian beliefs exist side by side, although Badian's novel presents only traditional and Muslim beliefs.

The traditional beliefs are founded on animism which Richard Adloff attempts to define in the following words:

Animism denotes a body of beliefs which may vary in detail from region to region, but which all have certain basic elements in common: the world was created by a single god; however, this god is not worshipped directly—because he is too remote and indifferent—but only in the form of spirits, which are masters of the persons and things that they enter and which possess intelligence and will.¹⁶

The Bambaras worship two types of spirits: the spirits of

16 Richard Adloff, West Africa: The French-speaking Nations, Yesterday and Today (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964), p. 70.

their ancestors and invisible spirits which represent supernatural forces.

The Bambaras worship the spirits of their ancestors mainly because they believe in life after death. For them, there is constant communication between the living and the dead. They believe that dead ancestors become powerful spirits which come and live near them in marshlands, hills, thickets, etc. In fact, it is believed that these spirits walk, eat, drink, dress, etc. just like human beings on earth. These human-like spirits are provided with nourishment in the form of sacrifices of goats, sheep, eggs, kola nuts, etc. The sacrifices are offered not only to sustain the spirits but also to obtain their protection against enemies, disease, and other harmful influences. Badian refers in the extract to the offering of sacrifices to ancestral spirits: "Le père Djigui, à quelques heures de la veillée annuelle des chasseurs, venait de saluer les anciens. Il venait de leur-offrir le coq rouge traditionnel accompagné des mots rituels." (p.122).

In addition to ancestral spirits, the Bambaras believe in the existence of invisible spirits which do either good

or evil. In most cases, these spirits are evil and usually inspire fear, cause diseases, and even kill people. This belief is evident in the extract when the old people feel that cerebro-spinal meningitis is caused by an evil spirit: "Après avoir satisfait ses macabres désirs, le génie de la cérébro-spinale se retira, laissant derrière lui le deuil et le désespoir." (p.133). The invisible spirits are often associated with particular places; for example, trees, mountains and, as indicated in the extract, clearings. (cf. "Kany pensa à la grande clairière, non loin de l'arbre; lieu où se réunissent les mauvais génies de la région." (p. 112)).

Ancestral and invisible spirits are believed to enter into fetishes, amulets and totems. Whereas evil spirits are dreaded and avoided, the good ones are worshipped through fetishes (cf. "Elle voyait les fétiches, étranges statuettes, masques aux mille tatouages sur les petits murs d'argile." (p. 111)). Fetishes are objects of various sizes and shapes which represent spirits after a special ritual has been performed. The Bambaras believe that fetishes have the power to protect them, make their soil fertile, ensure victory for them over their enemies, etc. Fetishes are of various types: there are fetishes

reserved only for the royal family, family fetishes, individual fetishes, and fetishes worshipped by the whole village.

Each village has a sacred tree (usually a mahogany, baobab or tamarind tree) which is regarded as a fetish tree.¹⁷ It is believed to protect the village, its inhabitants and their property against all enemies. Each year during the dry season, sacrifices are offered to the fetish tree by the village chief, who is sometimes assisted by a religious advisor. On such occasions, there is much feasting and rejoicing in the village.

Family heads and individuals offer sacrifices to family and individual fetishes. These fetishes are kept in huts or worn by the individual and are believed to protect their owners from disease and misfortune. However, some fetishes may be used by individuals to cast spells on their enemies (cf. "Un malin lui a sans doute lancé un mauvais sort " p. 130).

In addition to fetishes, families and individuals

17 In some villages, the fetish may be a rock, but this is rare.

sometimes also have amulets to protect them from evil spirits. In the extract I have translated, Badian refers to the people's habit of wearing amulets (cf. "Les hommes du village, couverts le plus souvent d'amulettes, défilaient sous ses yeux." (p. 112)) and their belief in the magical power of amulets (cf. "Les vieux assis sous le grand arbre au tronc orné de cornes de buffles et d'amulettes" (p. 111)). Amulets are small objects which are attributed magical powers by religious authorities or magicians. There are many types of amulets serving different purposes. Some of them are used for evil purposes such as killing enemies, destroying crops, etc. Some amulets are reserved for secret societies and certain occupational groups; for example, hunters often wear amulets which are believed to make them invisible to wild animals.

Just as amulets are believed to protect their owners, some animals such as crocodiles, snakes, lizards, sharks, etc. are often looked upon as the protectors of certain families and individuals. These animals, usually referred to as totems, are ascribed human souls and are therefore thought of as persons with supernatural powers and abilities.

Although it is difficult to figure out why particular animals are selected as family or individual totems, it is generally believed among the Bambaras that the family ancestors ordered their descendants to respect and even worship the entire species of certain animals with which they had favourable experiences. Families and individuals view their totems as companions, relatives, ancestors or helpers and therefore treat them as such. In the extract I have translated, the lizard is considered a member of Papa Djigui's family: "Le lézard fait partie de notre famille" (p. 116). It is prohibited to kill, eat or touch totems.

The Bambaras attribute supernatural powers not only to totems, amulets and fetishes, but also to certain individuals. These are the sorcerers and witches, who are dreaded and considered the main causes of diseases and death. People are not born sorcerers; they become sorcerers, although it is not known how. As Pollet and Winter point out, sorcerers are always evil:

Les sorciers se rendent invisibles et font du mal;
ils vous prennent dans le rêve; ils suscitent
des rêves où la victime rencontre quelque chose

qui lui fait peur, ou encore ils se transforment en animal et, provoquant la peur, ils tuent.¹⁸

People therefore need to protect themselves from unknown enemies. They consult soothsayers and fortune tellers to know what the future holds in store for them and to obtain remedies, amulets, talismans, etc. to ward off misfortune.

In order to protect the people against sorcerers and witches at the village level, secret societies are formed. Badian alludes to these societies in the extract: "les sociétés secrètes, contrairement à ce qui se disait en ville, n'étaient pas mortes" (p.114). The societies are restricted to initiated members; women and children cannot be members and so do not have the right to witness the ceremonies of the societies. Each village has its own secret societies, usually led by blacksmiths. The societies have their own masks and music. The masks are made by blacksmiths and are used only in ceremonies. The masks are believed to transform those who wear them into the

18 Eric Pollet and Grace Winter, La société Soninké (Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1972), p. 475.

animals they represent, thus making them very powerful. Each society has its own feast days, meetings by night, sacrifices, etc. Society members usually go to thickets for sacrifices and worship. On their way to the thickets, they play music to call out their members and to warn non-members not to venture out. Thus in the extract I have translated, the secret society calls out its members: "Sortez, l'heure arrive." (p.114), while Kany and her grandmother, who are not initiated members, are frightened and make sure that their door is securely locked. Some of the most important secret societies among the Bambaras are the "Komo", the "Nama", the "Koré", etc. Some occupational groups (e.g. hunters) have their own societies.

Apart from the restricted and mysterious societies, there are other non-secret, magical and religious societies, whose ceremonies are public (except for initiation rites), although only members are allowed to dance. In these societies, no god is symbolized by a fetish or mask and there are no strict rules to be followed by members. The members offer sacrifices, not to fetishes but to invisible spirits, which are generally believed to live in water.

Belonging to such societies does not prevent members from being muslims, because Islam also recognizes the existence of spirits to which sacrifices are offered. It is perhaps the similarities between some traditional and islamic beliefs (e.g. belief in soothsaying, the protective powers of amulets, etc.) that facilitated the acceptance of Islam by some of the Bambaras when it was introduced from North Africa across the Sahara early in the eighteenth century.

Muslims believe in "Allah" as God and in his prophet, Mohamet. They also believe in life after death, in which the soul will go either to paradise or to hell depending on the individual's actions on earth. In addition to saying prayers individually every day, the men go to pray collectively in the mosque every Friday afternoon (cf. "Debout sur le toit de la mosquée, la silhouette blanche de Fadiga..." (p. 132)). Only men enter the mosque; women remain at the door and pray in low voices.

Among the religious authorities of Islam is the imam, who is the spiritual leader and guides the faithful in prayers, sacrifices and ceremonies; he is replaced

by the khalifa when he is unable to perform his duties. The muezzin is the "loudhailer", who calls the faithful to the mosque; he also repeats the words of the imam during prayers. Reference is made in the extract I have translated to this religious authority: "Il se souvint de Fadiga le muezzin" (p. 123) and "On fit des offrandes, on organisa une prière publique et, ce soir-là, la voix de Fadiga, le muezzin, avait quelque chose de pathétique." (p. 132). Reference is also made in Sous l'orage to marabouts. Marabouts spread the teachings of the Koran, the sacred book of the Muslims. They also make amulets in the form of small leather bags containing verses from the koran. In addition, by reading the position of the stars, marabouts foretell the future. Badian refers in the extract to the healing capabilities of marabouts: when it is feared that a spell has been cast on Samou, his mother is advised to seek the help of a marabout: "Coumba, tu devrais en parler à Ousmane le marabout." (p. 130).

According to islamic beliefs, the rich are required to give alms to marabouts and to the poor, especially on Fridays and feast days. During religious feasts, public

prayers are organized and there is much feasting and rejoicing. Muslims are forbidden to drink alcohol and eat pork. Those who can afford it are encouraged to go on pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy land of the Muslims, at least once during their lifetime.

Although some Bambaras are totally muslim in their beliefs, there are many who still respect traditional beliefs. Generally speaking, the Bambaras view religion as a means to cope with the difficulties and dangers of life; they need the protection of the spirits—both the supernatural spirits and the spirits of their ancestors.

Family

The Bambaras' worship of the spirits of their ancestors is an indication of the importance accorded by them to the family. The family in Mali is, as in most other parts of the world, the basic unit of society. However, for the Malians and other Africans, the word "family" refers to a unit quite different from that in, for example, Europe and other countries with European traditions and customs. The African family is generally a much larger unit than the typical European family made up of the husband, his wife and children. As Richard

Adloff points out, the African family "consists of all the living, as well as the dead, descendants of a common ancestor who live in the same small area or have close contacts with each other."¹⁹

There are in fact two types of families in Africa: the nuclear family and the extended family. The nuclear family, which comprises the husband, his wife or wives and children, is usually considered as part of the extended family and is therefore scarcely regarded as a family on its own. The typical family in Africa is the extended family comprising several nuclear families.

Among the Bambaras, the extended family is based on patrilineal descent and marriage. Diango Cissé explains that the patrilineal extended family requires that married sons remain with their families in the father's household:

"La famille partrilinéaire étendue est née d'une coutume selon laquelle les fils restent dans le groupe familial de leur père, y amenant vivre leurs femmes, de telle sorte que leurs enfants appartiennent aussi au groupe."²⁰

19 Richard Adloff, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

20 Diango Cissé, Structures des Malinké de Kita (Bamako: Editions Populaires, 1970), p. 65.

This means that married men belong to two types of families: the nuclear family consisting of themselves, their wives and children, and the extended family of their fathers. In Seydou Badian's Sous l'orage, Papa Benfa, his wives and children form a nuclear family which is part of the extended family which includes the nuclear families of his brothers (e.g. Papa Djigui). Since the extended family comprises several nuclear families, it can sometimes be quite large.

Despite its size, the extended family is generally easy to manage. This is because each family member has a specific role to play to ensure the subsistence of the family. These roles differ for the children (boys and girls), the women, the heads of nuclear families and the head of the extended family.

The extended family is under the authority of a family head who is very often the oldest man in the family. In Badian's novel, one can guess that Papa Djigui is the head of the extended family in the village since he is the oldest of Papa Benfa's brothers and his permission is sought before Kany is given away in marriage (cf. "Ne pouvant désobéir au père Djigui qui était son aîné, il décida

d'accepter Samou chez lui, un moment." (p. 157)).

The family head is the representative and spokesman of the family in relation to other families, especially in the settlement of disputes. He is also a member of the village council which assists the village chief in his effort to solve the problems of the village. During family worship, he offers the sacrifices and acts as intermediary between family members and the gods. He meets the needs of family members; for example, he pays the bride price and arranges marriage for the men who want to get married, buys clothes for the family, etc. To do this, he manages the family property, which usually consists of cattle, horses, asses, sheep, poultry, etc. He also controls the land leased to the family.²¹

The family head is also responsible for keeping order and harmony in the family. He settles disputes between family members with the help of a family council comprising the heads of the nuclear families. He takes

21 For the Bambaras, the land is a collective property which belongs to the whole village. Arable portions are distributed to the various families for farming. Active family members work on the land and its yields are considered as part of the family property.

important decisions only after consultation with the family council. Badian refers to the consultative role of the family council in the novel when Papa Benfa convenes his brothers in town to inform them of his intention to marry Kany off to Famagan: "Je suis votre guide, il est vrai, mais sur les questions d'avenir, votre avis doit primer le mien. Je suis le plus proche de l'au-delà, les ans me mènent de plus en plus vers nos ancêtres et, quand je ne serai plus, vous aurez la charge de tout ce qui a trait à notre famille" (p.35).

The heads of the nuclear families represent their families in the (extended) family council. They are responsible for harmony within their own families and seek the advice of the head of the extended family before making important decisions. In addition, they perform the functions typical of other adult male members of the family.

Adult males work on the land leased to the family and participate in the building of huts. Some of them are hunters, fishermen, etc. During seasons, days and hours not suitable for work in the fields, the men engage in handicrafts such as weaving, alluded to in the extract of

Sous l'orage I have translated: "...le père Djigui confectionnait des nattes dans sa case" (p. 115); "Mais le père Djigui, imperturbable, cousait ses bandes de coton..." (p. 104).

Like the men, the women also work on the land leased to the family. However, they only sow and harvest the crops, the clearing and tilling being done by the men. Usually, while the men go to work in the fields, the women attend to such household tasks as preparing food, washing clothes, pounding millet, etc. (cf. "Une de ses femmes pilait le mil et chantait" (p. 115), "Maman Tené et Kany, qui venaient de se lever, préparaient leurs ustensiles pour la cuisine du matin." (p. 19)). Sometimes, they also spin cotton: "Filant son coton de tous les soirs, elle jetait de furtifs regards sur le père Benfa" (p. 42).

Women very often try to reduce their dependence on their husbands by engaging in other activities; Badian refers to some of them in his novel: "Elle voyait sa mère vendant des pagnes au marché, ...faisant de la teinture, tressant pour les femmes du quartier et tout cela pour pouvoir habiller ses enfants" (p. 74).

The responsibilities of the children are also determined by their sex. The boys fetch firewood to be used in cooking, herd sheep and goats, and drive away animals and birds from the crops in the fields as indicated in the extract I have translated: "Quelques enfants, la fronde à la main, debout sur des terrasses de fortune, défendaient par leurs cris et leurs pierres le maïs contre les perroquets, infatigables voleurs" (p. 103).

The girls draw water from the streams and wells, sweep the floor of the huts and the courtyards and help their mothers in other household duties such as cooking.

Generally, the boys are taught their role in society by their fathers because of the close relationship between them, while the girls are taught their functions by their mothers. The boys are taught to be brave and fearless: "Ne crie jamais, un homme ne crie pas" (p.116); "L'homme ne doit avoir peur que de la honte, il ne faut jamais accepter la honte " (p.117). The girls are taught how to cook, spin cotton, be good housewives in the future, etc. (cf. "Elle doit pouvoir maintenir la famille unie. Elle doit savoir offrir l'hospitalité aux gens qui viendront

dans ta maison..." p.83) .

Much of the learning process in the family is done through observation and imitation of the parents and other family members. Badian refers to this learning process in his presentation of Kany: "Elle n'était plus celle qui jouait à la maman avec d'autres petites filles, s'affairant entre la cuisine et les puits et imitant maman Téné dans ses moindres petits gestes." (p.21). Children also learn their role in society by listening to conversations of older family members and to comments by these members on what is considered desirable behaviour: "Quand tu seras grand, tu ouvriras ta porte à l'étranger, car le riz cuit appartient à tous. L'homme est un peu comme un grand arbre: tout voyageur a droit à son ombre. Lorsque personne ne viendra chez toi, c'est que tu seras comme un arbre envahi par les fourmis rouges: les voyageurs te fuiront." (p.118) .

In addition to the home, age-group associations also play a major role in the education of children. These associations are made up of children of the same age-group and sex. Within these associations, children acquire the spirit of co-operation and discipline which they need in

order to live in harmony with the other villagers.

Rites and ceremonies

The passage from childhood to adulthood is marked by definite stages. Some of these stages are "celebrated" by special rites and ceremonies; the most important are excision (for girls), circumcision (for boys) and marriage.

Excision takes place when girls are about fifteen years of age. It is accompanied by a special ceremony and much festivity. After excision, the girl is considered a woman and so can get married. Very often, the excision ceremony for girls is arranged to coincide with the circumcision ceremony for boys.

Boys are circumcized at the age of 18 or 20. As during excision, a special ceremony is performed and there is much festivity which begins about a week before the day of circumcision. Boys are usually circumcized by blacksmiths; they are expected to bear the pain without flinching. After circumcision, the boys are taken to a hut in the bush where they learn the history of their people, the skills of their ancestors and are taught morals. As is the case with girls who have undergone excision, circumcized

boys are considered as having attained adulthood. Badian alludes to the significance of circumcision in Sous l'orage: "C'est seulement après avoir séjourné dans la 'case des circoncis' que les cadets sont considérés comme des hommes. Ils sont alors censés avoir acquis tout ce qui fait l'homme. Ils ont appris à vaincre la peur. Ils savent souffrir, endurer sans se plaindre. Ils savent veiller sur un secret en résistant aussi bien à la corruption qu'aux tortures. Ils ont appris à se sentir liés à leurs semblables, car "l'homme n'est rien sans les hommes, il vient dans leur main et s'en va dans leur main". (p.27). It is only after circumcision that a boy can declare his intention to get married.

Among the Bambaras, there are two types of marriages: marriage with bride price and marriage by exchange of women. In marriage by exchange of women, the man who intends to get married gives or promises to the prospective bride's family a woman to replace the one he is about to marry. This type of marriage is very rare as most people prefer marriage with bride price. In marriage with bride price, a bride price in the form of gold, cloth, cattle, services or money is paid by the man or his family to the bride's

family to compensate it for the loss of a daughter (cf.

"L'argent symbolise l'effort que fournit Famagan pour accéder à notre famille" (p.55)). However, the payment of bride price does not give the husband absolute control over his wife. If the marriage breaks up, the woman is free to go back to her family, which refunds to the ex-husband the bride price he paid or its equivalent. If the couple have children, the man gains custody of them, except if they are very young, in which case they stay with their mother until they can be separated from her without inconvenience.

Polygamy is widespread and there is no limit to the number of wives a man can have. In Badian's novel, Papa Benfa and Papa Djigui have several wives; Famagan, who wants to marry Kany, already has two wives: "Et puis, il a déjà deux femmes." (p.53).

The fact that Kany is not attracted to Famagan does not stop Papa Benfa from trying to arrange a marriage between them. For marriage is considered a contract between two groups of individuals (two families) rather than between

two persons (husband and wife). Marriage is often arranged between members of two families in order to strengthen the ties between them. In fact, the preferences of the persons directly concerned are usually ignored. It is felt that the judgment of the family is often better than that of an individual. This is what Sibiri has in mind when he asks Birama the following question in Sous l'orage: "Crois-tu que Kany, à elle seule, puisse mieux juger que nous tous réunis?" (p.55).

Living conditions

Once the marriage is arranged and takes place, the woman becomes part of the husband's extended family and moves in with it. The members of the extended family live in a compound made up of several huts surrounded by a protective wall or fence. The Bambaras build two types of huts: rectangular or square huts with flat roofs, and round huts with conical thatched roofs. Whereas rectangular huts are usually found in towns, round huts are common in the villages where the few rectangular huts are owned by rich villagers. In the extract of Sous l'orage

that I have translated, Badian portrays the huts in the village as having roofs of thatched straw: "...ses petites cases couvertes de chaume" (p.111). The huts are built of sun-dried mud bricks or bamboo and sticks tied together and covered with clay in the interior and on the exterior. Furthermore, the walls are whitewashed with kaolin as indicated in Sous l'orage: "Tous les murs ont besoin de kaolin" (p.20). The conical roofs are constructed on the ground before they are put on top of the walls.

In the huts, furniture and utensils consist mainly of bamboo or wooden beds, mats and animal skins on the floor, calabashes of various shapes and sizes, low stools and water jars made of clay. In the extract from Badian's novel, reference is made to some of the furniture and utensils: "Je me trouve mieux sur la natte, à même le sol" (p.110); "Kany, allongée sur le tara d'une de ses tantes n'arrivait pas à s'endormir" (p.110); "... la vieille prit sa calebasse et demanda aux citadins de la suivre." (p.102).

Near the huts, in some areas of the Niger delta far from the river, which is generally the main source of water supply for the inhabitants, there are deep wells which

provide water for several families. The villagers portrayed in Badian's novel have wells near their compounds: "Après quelques minutes, ils aperçurent des femmes et des enfants groupés autour des puits." (p.101).

Also near the huts are barns used for storing millet and corn (cf. "...ses greniers au toit conique" (p.111)). They are round and built of mud bricks; they are raised above the ground on stones and branches to protect them from rodents such as rats, mice, squirrels and from termites. Barns have an opening at the top with a lid through which grain is passed.

Grain is a major component of the Malians' diet. The principal dish of the Bambaras consists of millet or sorghum paste and a sauce of baobab leaves. Sometimes millet is eaten as porridge (cf. "...la bouillie de mil se mange salée; pas de sucre." p. 112). Rice is usually eaten with groundnut sauce. Other dishes are prepared with beans, yams and potatoes. The most common drink is an alcoholic drink made of millet.

Meals are generally eaten three times daily (morning, afternoon and evening), although not at specific hours.

Men and women eat in different groups; children eat with their age-groups.

After the evening meal, men and women chat in different groups while grandparents tell stories and fables to the children. In fact, most activities—eating, working, etc.—are carried out in groups or by the extended family as a unit. This goes to emphasize the fact that the extended family is considered a unit in which members have to work with each other. Badian refers in his novel to this spirit of communal life ("Nous faisons une bonne chose chez nous: lorsque quelqu'un dit "moi, moi, moi", nous l'envoyons à la ville. Il n'a plus d'amis parmi nous." p.118) and to the respect for seniority on which this communal life is based.²²

Conclusion

The close family ties, the respect for elders and the belief in spirits still persist in Mali today in spite of the many political changes that have taken place since

22 Cf. "...toute la vie est régie par une seule loi, celle de la hiérarchie de l'âge, de l'expérience et de la sagesse." (p.27).

the 1940s which form the historical setting of Sous l'orage.

Under Moussa Traoré's rule today, Mali is rapidly acquiring Western technology and the Malian lifestyle is undergoing some change, especially in the towns. However, native customs and traditions still predominate in the villages and rural areas, where the pace of change is rather slow. The departure of the French, the attainment of independence and a military government have done little to destroy the "social structures" of rural Mali, structures that existed before the coming of the colonialists and will still endure for many decades.

III EXTRACT AND TRANSLATION

Le train entra en gare de K... Birama et Kany descendirent après avoir salué leurs compagnons. Leurs valises à la main,¹ ils se rendirent au bord du fleuve: le village du père Djigui² était situé sur l'autre rive.

La berge était aussi animée que les marchés du soir³ de la ville. Les femmes étaient les plus nombreuses. Elles circulaient, discutaient, marchandaient et riaient aux éclats. Un peu plus loin, les laveuses étaient à leurs besognes et là encore on discutait et on riait aux éclats. Les filets mouillés étaient étendus par endroits sur le sable. Les enfants nus ou court vêtus en étendaient d'autres. Des gendarmes circulaient. Les piroguiers s'affairaient. Certains réparaient leurs vieilles pirogues et le bruit de leur cognée se percevait de temps en temps à travers le brouhaha. D'autres appelaient les voyageurs.⁴

D'autres encore, déchargeaient les chalands lourds d'oranges, de bananes ou de poissons fumés. Les femmes se ruaient sur eux et cherchaient à marchander. Birama s'installa avec Kany dans un chaland après avoir discuté avec les piroguiers. La traversée ne fut pas longue. Sitôt qu'ils furent dans le chaland, les deux

citadins se sentirent envahis par de tristes et amères pensées. Ils n'avaient plus leurs compagnons du train. Or, les compagnons du train représentaient un peu la ville. A présent, ils étaient seuls, entourés de gens qui n'ont rien de commun avec eux: piroguiers au torse nu, villageois vêtus de grossières cotonnades. Non, ces figures ne représentaient rien pour Birama et Kany. Elles leur étaient absolument étrangères. Aussi, ne s'intéressaient-ils à rien. Ils étaient indifférents à tout, et tout contribuait à leur faire comprendre qu'ils étaient loin de la ville, loin de mille choses qui font le charme de la ville. Ils restèrent donc silencieux et ne portèrent aucun intérêt, ni aux bruyantes conversations, ni même au chant monotone des piroguiers.

Ils débarquèrent sur la rive gauche et suivirent un petit sentier bordé de hautes herbes, contournerent de nombreux bosquets, des termitières géantes. A leur passage, l'herbe craquait. Les oiseaux se taisaient ou s'envolaient. Ils marchaient tous deux silencieux, l'esprit chargé d'appréhension. Après quelques minutes, ils aperçurent des femmes et des enfants groupés autour des puits. C'étaient là les femmes du village du père Djigui. Ils se dirigèrent

vers le petit groupe. Les enfants qui jouaient à quelques mètres du puits s'arrêtèrent à la vue des deux citadins. Ceux qui étaient assis se levèrent, ceux qui parlaient se turent et tous, immobiles, regardaient avec une curiosité mêlée de crainte. Voyant que Birama et Kany venaient à eux, les enfants prirent la fuite et rejoignirent leurs parents autour du puits. Les femmes qui tout à l'heure bavardaient avec tant d'entrain ne disaient plus rien. Toutes regardaient curieuses, inquiètes, craintives, ces deux étrangers qui, de par leur allure, ne pouvaient être qu'un commis et sa compagne.

Immobiles, elles restèrent figées dans leurs mouvements: debout sur la margelle du puits, la corde du seau à la main, ou même la calebasse⁵ d'eau sur la tête.

Birama, qui précédait sa soeur, alla droit à une vieille qui se tenait un peu à l'écart. Celle-ci marcha hardiment à sa rencontre.

— Nous cherchons la maison du chasseur Djigui, fit Birama d'une voix qu'il s'efforçait de rendre rassurante.

— Il n'y a pas de chasseur Djigui dans notre village, répondit la vieille d'un ton agressif.

Birama et Kany se regardèrent, perplexes, tandis que quelques enfants fuyaient déjà vers le village.

— Nous sommes les enfants de Benfa, le frère de Djigui, fit la douce voix de Kany.

La vieille les regarda un moment. Son visage s'épanouit.

— Hou! Hou!⁶ s'exclama-t-elle en se tapant les mains. Vous êtes mes petits-enfants. J'ai vu votre père chasser les singes et grimper sur les tamariniers.

~~La~~ grand-mère prit Birama par les bras, se retourna vers ses compagnons et s'écria:

— Ce sont les enfants de Benfa, les frères de Djigui. Ils viennent de la ville.

D'autres femmes se précipitèrent, au milieu des exclamations diverses. Chacune d'elles cherchait à dire un mot sur la gentillesse et la bonne conduite du père Benfa, puis la vieille prit saalebasse et demanda aux

citadins de la suivre.

Tout le nord de ce petit village était comme cerclé par la forêt. Il ne s'agissait pas d'un arrangement fait par la main de l'homme, mais de la forêt elle-même avec sa vie, son mystère et ses légendes. Des buissons épais couverts d'épines et de nids d'oiseaux, formaient l'avant-garde. Puis venaient les grands arbres aux branches rares et au feuillage clairsemé. Quelques-uns avaient autour de leurs troncs toute une tignasse de lianes qui s'imbriquaient et cherchaient à atteindre les cimes. Enfin, venaient de géants rôniers.⁷

Les oiseaux étaient là. Leurs chants se mêlaient. Les mange-mil s'abattaient en rafales sur les buissons.

Les champs occupaient le sud et s'étendaient à perte de vue. Quelques enfants, la fronde à la main, debout sur des terrasses de fortune, défendaient par leurs cris et leurs pierres le maïs contre les perroquets, infatigables voleurs.

A l'est, le soleil dorait les cimes des collines.

A l'ombre d'un grand arbre, le père Djigui, au milieu d'autres vieux du village, cousait des bandes de coton. Il savait déjà que deux étrangers le demandaient, les enfants le lui avaient dit. Certains avaient même précisé "un commis et sa femme". Mais le père Djigui, imperturbable, cousait ses bandes de coton et crachait son tabac. Les autres vieux se demandaient, inquiets, ce qu'avait pu faire Djigui, tandis que le maître des chasseurs s'efforçait de garder tout son calme. Il était non seulement un homme, mais un chasseur, c'est-à-dire un de ceux qui, d'un coup de bâton, peuvent mettre le lion en fuite. Mais là, il ne s'agissait ni de lion, ni de panthère, ni même de grands êtres de la nuit.

Le père Djigui se rappela que l'année dernière il était allé déclarer au cercle, qu'il n'avait plus de fusil, l'âge ne lui permettant plus le va-et-vient entre les bureaux du commandant et le village, va-et-vient dont son seul fusil était la cause.⁸ Mais le père Djigui était chasseur. Tout le village voyait en lui le fils et le petit-fils des chasseurs dont les noms figurent encore dans les chants des veillées.⁹ Il n'était donc pas question d'abandonner la tradition familiale.

Le père Djigui peut tout ce que peut un chasseur, mais son pouvoir, il l'use contre les fauves. Pour les hommes, il doit demeurer homme. C'est pour cela qu'il ne faisait appel à aucune des forces surnaturelles qui, depuis son arrière-grand-père, s'étaient mises au service de la famille.¹⁰

Birama et Kany arrivèrent avec leur escorte. Les vieux qui les avaient aperçus tournèrent le dos. Le père Djigui feignit de ne rien voir.

— Les enfants de Benfa sont venus te voir, s'écria la vieille, à une vingtaine de mètres de l'arbre.

Le père Djigui se redressa, sourit et tendit la main. Birama accourut.

— Si tu viens nous voir, fit le vieillard, il faudra porter nos habits.

Birama sourit. Les autres vieux se levèrent et vinrent entourer le père Djigui et ses neveux. Alors commencèrent les salutations un peu de partout.

— Comment va Benfa?

— La paix est chez nous.¹¹

Et chacun là encore disait ce qu'il savait de Benfa, de sa gentillesse et de son courage. Quand tout le monde fut satisfait, le père Djigui conduisit ses enfants à la maison.

Birama et Kany avaient fait connaissance avec tous leurs parents. Certains parmi les anciens leur avaient parlé avec force détails de l'enfance du père Benfa, leur énumérant les qualités de leur père. Ils avaient rendu visite aux chefs et notables du village.¹² Le père Djigui, infatigable, les avait guidés de porte en porte, de case en case. Il ne voulait oublier personne, car dans pareille occasion, on se fait facilement des ennemis.

— Ah! il ne les a pas amenés chez moi, je ne suis donc rien à ses yeux.

Les vieux que Birama et Kany abordaient leur parlaient de la ville et de mille choses.

— J'ai mon fils là bas, à la ville. Il y est allé travailler pour payer nos impôts.¹³ La première année, il a envoyé quelque chose; depuis, plus rien. Le connaissez-vous?

— Le mien n'a pas eu de chance, il n'a pas pu trouver du travail et les Blancs l'ont mis en prison parce qu'il n'avait pas de travail; est-ce sa faute?

— Ici au village, nous n'avons pas d'argent,

nous ne pouvons pas payer d'impôts; nos enfants vont travailler à la ville pour nous envoyer de l'argent, mais ils ne reviennent plus. L'herbe gagne les champs. Ne pourriez-vous pas dire aux Blancs que nous ne sommes pas bien! Les jeunes ne sont pas comme nous. Ils préfèrent la ville. Ils disent qu'on y est plus tranquille. Ils disent que là-bas on est plus heureux. Est-ce vrai?

— Dites au Blanc que vous avez assez appris, qu'il vous laisse à présent, vous êtes en âge de fonder un foyer. Soyez commis et venez nous protéger.

Le père Djigui lui-même avait dit:

— Le chef Blanc vient au village avec ses gardes.¹⁴ Il veut qu'on le salue, la main à la tempe; nous sommes vieux, cela nous fatigue, ne le sait-il pas? Dans le village voisin, il a mis un chef qui n'est pas du pays, personne ne le veut, sauf le Blanc; les gens ont peur, alors ils tremblent. Le Blanc ne sait-il pas que quand on tremble devant un chef, on désire secrètement le voir trembler à son tour?

"Un chef qui fait trembler est comme une grosse

pierre qui barre une piste. Les voyageurs l'évitent, la contournent, puis un jour ils s'aperçoivent que le chemin serait moins long s'il n'y avait pas la pierre, alors ils viennent en grand nombre et la déplacent. La force ne crée pas un chef, mais un adversaire à abattre.

✓ "Le Blanc nous oblige à nous découvrir pour le saluer; dites-lui que, chez nous, un vieux ne se découvre pas. Dites-lui aussi que c'est au jeune à saluer le vieux. Avant, les affaires du village ne sortaient pas du village; pourquoi nous oblige-t-on à aller au cercle où le commis nous insulte? Dites-lui que nous ne sommes pas bien. Nous lui donnerons encore plus de poulets, nous lui donnerons encore plus de mil, s'il le faut, s'il le veut, mais nous ne sommes pas bien."

Kany, allongée sur le tara¹⁵ d'une de ses tantes, n'arrivait pas à s'endormir. La vieille lui avait dit :

— Je me trouve mieux sur la natte, à même le sol. Je sais qu'à la ville vous n'aimez pas cela; je t'ai donc aménagé le tara, tu seras bien ainsi. D'ailleurs, pourquoi fuir le sol? N'est-il pas le lieu qui nous attend tous?

La vieille avait ri, montrant ses gencives garnies de quelques dents. Une foule de pensées se pressait dans l'esprit de Kany; si Birama était à ses côtés, elle aurait parlé de beaucoup de choses.

Mais le père Djigui avait dit: "Birama, tu resteras du côté des hommes."¹⁶ Et Kany se trouva seule au milieu de ses tantes et cousines.

Kany se tournait sans cesse et soupirait quelquefois. Elle voyait le village, ses petites cases couvertes de chaume, ses greniers au toit conique, elle pensait à l'odeur de karité que dégageaient la plupart des habitations. Elle voyait les fétiches, étranges statuettes, masques aux mille tatouages sur les petits murs d'argile; les cours où

déambulent moutons et chèvres, tandis que la volaille s'affaire au pied des greniers.

Elle pensait aux femmes, aux éclats de rire fusant autour des puits, aux pagnes de cotonnades et aux histoires qui se racontent au cours de la journée, histoire des semailles, de grandes pêches,¹⁷ de battues¹⁸ ou de feux de brousse.

"Quelle vie! soupira Kany. Les vieux assis sous le grand arbre au tronc orné de cornes de buffles et d'amulettes. Singulier arbre! Est-ce vrai que, le soir venu, il se change en vieille femme et, à travers le village, vient choisir ceux qui doivent mourir? Kany eut un frisson. Les chiens du père Djigui se mirent à aboyer. Qu'y a-t-il? Car les chiens n'aboient jamais sans cause. Il y a toujours quelque chose quand un chien aboie: un animal, un monstre, un étranger ou un des grands êtres invisibles pour les humains. Serait-ce le grand arbre? Kany ferma les yeux. Des éclats de rire s'élevèrent dans la rue; un peu rassurée, la fille de Benfa se redressa, jeta un coup d'oeil dans la cour.

"Tout est calme, se dit-elle. C'est peut-être les passants qui font aboyer les chiens."

Kany pensâ à la grande clairière, non loin de l'arbre; lieu où se réunissent les mauvais génies de la région et d'où s'élèvent, la nuit, d'étranges clameurs! fatales clameurs, car qui les entend a ses jours comptés. Quelle vie!

Les hommes du village, couverts le plus souvent d'amulettes, défilaient sous ses yeux: vieux taciturnes au regard sombre; jeunes dans leurs boubous¹⁹ jaunes de cotonnade. Non, ce n'est pas la ville, rien ici ne la rappelle. Le feu s'obtient avec le silex; la bouillie de mil se mange salée; pas de sucre, pas d'argent; ici, on n'achète pas, on échange.

Les femmes ne connaissent rien des mille choses avec lesquelles on se pare si bien. Elles ont leur pagne autour des reins; quelques-unes ont une camisole,²⁰ et quelle camisole? Kany soupira.

Les vieux ont interdit le port des perles et le père Djigui trouve cela très sage.

—Oui, disait le vieux, quelques marchands de la ville

sont arrivés, les corbeilles remplies de perles; chaque femme a voulu posséder le plus joli collier, le plus fin bracelet, les femmes se sont jalousées, les hommes se sont donnés des coups; alors nous avons décidé: plus de perles!

Quelle vie! Kany se retourna. Et pour se distraire, ils n'ont que le tam-tam. Les fêtes? Semailles, battues, grandes pêches... Tout le village est alors sur pied; les vieux dirigent, tout le monde s'affaire, du plus jeune au plus âgé, et les tam-tams grondent.

Tam-tam partout et toujours.

Kany se mit à bâiller, dégoûtée.

Tout d'un coup, un épouvantable hurlement rompit le silence; Kany se crispa.

La vieille, qu'elle croyait endormie, se leva en sursaut, mit une natte devant la porte de la case, s'assura que la porte était bien fermée, se gratta le dos à grand bruit et se recoucha. Les chiens n'osèrent aboyer. Glacée de peur, Kany disparut sous les couvertures.

Le hurlement s'éleva de nouveau, puis une voix
d'une puissance extraordinaire tonna:

"Totem des morts!
Linceul des vivants!
Je frappe l'insolent,
Je frappe sans trace,
Mais où je frappe s'installe la mort!"

Kany tremblait de tous ses membres.

La voix reprit:

"Sortez, l'heure arrive."

Kany comprit ce qui se passait; les sociétés
secrètes, contrairement à ce qui se disait en ville, n'étaient
pas mortes. Elle se blottit sous les couvertures et ferma
les yeux, car elle savait que la mort était là, devant elle.
Les trompes sonnèrent, graves, et firent place peu à peu
à de lugubres tam-tams. C'est "la danse de la mort", se
dit Kany. Mon Dieu, protégez-nous, mon frère et moi!

Birama et Kany s'étaient levés plus tôt. Ils s'apprêtaient à rendre visite à quelques amis du père Djigui dans le village voisin. Il était environ sept heures.

Déjà, le père Djigui confectionnait des nattes dans sa case. Une de ses femmes pilait le mil et chantait. Kany se lava le visage, se cura les dents²¹ et se dirigea vers les bagages posés dans un coin de la case. Mais à peine eut-elle fait quelques pas, qu'elle courut, hurlant, vers son frère.

— Birama, Birama, Birama! Un lézard! Un énorme lézard!

Sur la valise de Kany, un lézard d'environ quatre-vingt centimètres de long se reposait, tranquille. Birama sauta de son tara, et tous deux s'élancèrent vers la cour. Kany vint au père Djigui, tandis que Birama prenait une hache.

— Que fais-tu? lui cria le vieillard.

— Un lézard! répondit Birama, la frayeur dans les yeux.

— Tu es fou! hurla le vieillard retenant son neveu. Le lézard fait partie de notre famille.

Birama, bouche bée, fixait tour à tour Kany et son oncle. Ce dernier, catégorique, tourna le dos. Kany prit la main de son frère.

— M'est avis que le Blanc ne vous apprend pas assez de choses, fit une des vieilles femmes du père Djigui.

— Non, la vérité est qu'ils ne voient plus les choses anciennes. Le Blanc leur apprend les écrits, pas autre chose, observa le père Djigui.

— Faudrait le lui dire alors, vaudrait mieux qu'il sache tout, lança la vieille en s'en allant vers la cuisine.

— C'est toi Birama qui as crié?

— Non, je n'ai pas crié.

— Ne crie jamais, un homme ne crie pas. Certains chefs ne s'adressent à leurs administrés qu'en criant; ils crient et ils menacent. Or, vois-tu, un chef qui crie pour se faire craindre, sent qu'il lui manque quelque chose

On te l'a appris, cela, la-bas?

— Non.

— Alors, retiens-le, ne crie jamais. Ne crie jamais et ne fuis jamais, quel que soit ce que tu auras en face. Un homme ne court pas. Quand on doit la vie à la fuite, on ne vit plus qu'à moitié. On est dominé soit par le souvenir de la peur, soit par la honte. On n'est plus un homme libre.

— Mais face à un ennemi puissant, n'est-il pas plus sage de reculer pour mieux se battre plus tard? me disait Tiéman-le-Soigneur.²²

— Non, il faut se battre, le destin l'a voulu.

— Doit-on se battre les mains nues, même contre un fauve?

— La seule arme que craignent les fauves est le courage. Tous fuient devant le courage, mais quand ils voient la peur dans vos yeux, c'est votre perte. Pour l'homme, c'est pareil.

Si tu as peur, ton ennemi n'en a que plus de

courage. L'homme ne doit avoir peur que de la honte, il ne faut jamais accepter la honte.

Tu as beaucoup de choses à apprendre encore. On m'a dit: "A la ville, les enfants disent "Moi". Ils ne parlent que d'eux." J'ai ri et j'ai répondu: "Nous faisons une bonne chose chez nous: lorsque quelqu'un dit "Moi, moi, moi", nous l'envoyons à la ville. Il n'a plus d'amis parmi nous."

Quand tu seras grand, tu ouvriras ta porte à l'étranger, car le riz cuit appartient à tous. L'homme est un peu comme un grand arbre: tout voyageur a droit à son ombre. Lorsque personne ne viendra chez toi, c'est que tu seras comme un arbre envahi par les fourmis rouges: les voyageurs te fuiront.²³

Tiéman-le-soigneur m'a dit: "Si tu ouvres ta porte à tout le monde, les paresseux seront nombreux."

Je lui ai dit: "Avec tes paroles, tu détruiras le village. Il est des pensées qu'on doit taire. Nous sommes comme des guerriers sur un champ de bataille. La peur est en chacun. Lorsqu'on voit le voisin courir à l'ennemi, on se dit: "il est fou", puis on fait comme lui,

et on devient brave. Si chaque guerrier avait dit sa peur au voisin, on aurait palabré et peut-être décidé la fuite."

Tiéman-le-Soigneur m'a dit à propos de bataille:

"Les Blancs ne sont pas d'accord; il y a encore des différends entre eux, une autre bataille est à craindre."

• Je lui ai dit: "Les Blancs se battent toujours car ils ont fait fausse route, ils se sont mesurés aux dieux et ils ont perdu; vouloir défaire ce qui était fait par les dieux afin de mettre à la place ce que désirent les hommes, voilà le geste audacieux dont rêvent les Blancs, voilà aussi la source de leurs litiges."

"Si les laboureurs, les bâtisseurs de case, le pirogier, le tisserand et le chasseur travaillaient pour le village, il n'y aurait pas de litige."

— Mais il y a eu des guerres entre villages, m'a dit Tiéman-le-Soigneur.

— Oui, dans les terres du Nord, cela est arrivé. Deux villages ont voulu se mesurer pour savoir lequel avait les plus intrépides guerriers; des villages voisins s'y sont mêlés, prenant parti selon les liens de parenté.

Les meilleurs laboureurs, les meilleurs piroguiers moururent dans la bataille, et la famine s'abattit sur la région. Cela me rappelle ce que disaient nos aînés: "Les dieux aident surtout ceux qui veulent détruire."²⁴

— Il faut agir sur la nature comme les Blancs, m'a dit Tiéman-lé-Soigneur. Les Blancs suivent le progrès, c'est cela la bonne voie.

— Et où cela mène-t-il?

— Les machines finiront par tout faire, l'homme se reposera.

— L'homme n'est pas fait pour se reposer, lui ai-je dit. Sans les travaux des champs, il n'y a pas de bonne musique.

— Il y aura de belles maisons, de belles villes, de belles autos. On se trouvera bien.

Alors j'ai ri et je lui ai dit:

— Suis le progrès, les litiges te suivront et ces maisons, ces autos, ces machines, tout cela t'écrasera un jour et tu regretteras le village et la fatigue des champs, les chants des piroguiers, le va-et-vient des

tisserands. Car l'homme doit pouvoir dominer ses créatures. Si, par le progrès, vous supprimez l'effort des laboureurs, vous vous trouverez de nouvelles besognes et vous vous sentirez moins bien à l'arrivée qu'au départ. Par le progrès, vous croyez dominer la nature, alors que vous devenez prisonniers de vos propres créations.

Le père Djigui cracha son tabac et se remit à confectionner ses nattes. Birama et Kany se levèrent.

Sur le toit d'une de ses cases²⁵ le père Djigui, la tête déjetée en arrière, le cou tendu et les joues gonflées, soufflait puissamment dans une corne armée d'amulettes. Les femmes se retirèrent dans leurs cases, les animaux domestiques, moutons et chèvres s'effuient. Le père Djigui sonna trois coups, s'arrêta et sonna à nouveau longuement, cette fois, promenant sa tête d'une épaule à l'autre. Quelques instants après, d'autres trompes retentirent, les unes puissantes, les autres faibles, lointaines. Le père Djigui descendit lentement du toit et vint s'arrêter au milieu de la cour. Il resta immobile, les yeux fermés, le front plissé. Il toussa trois fois, puis se dirigea à petits pas vers sa case et en revint avec un coq rouge aux pattes solidement liées.

Deux autres vieux rejoignirent le père Djigui; tous deux portaient le bonnet rouge des chasseurs²⁶ et tenaient à la main, insigne de leur dignité, une queue de buffle ornée de cauris.²⁷

Le frère de Benfa posa le pied droit sur les ailes du coq et tira son couteau. Il y eut une minute de silence;

solennels, les compagnons du père Djigui se tenaient à ses côtés et fixaient le coq d'un regard profond et songeur.

Après quelques mots qu'ils échangèrent à voix basse, les trois hommes s'accroupirent; le vieux égorgea le coq, puis le lança le plus loin possible. La bête se débattit. Le vieux chasseur mâcha une noix de cola²⁸ rouge et cracha sur les traces de sang. Birama et Kany, du seuil de leur case suivaient, stupéfaits, les gestes de leur oncle. Ils se sentirent envahis par une sorte de peur à laquelle se mêlait un sentiment religieux.

Le père Djigui, à quelques heures de la veillée annuelle des chasseurs,²⁹ venait de saluer les anciens. Il venait de leur offrir le coq rouge traditionnel accompagné des mots rituels:

"Recevez-le en même temps que notre salut." "Vous êtes toujours parmi nous dans les cases et dans la brousse."

Pendant le repas du soir, Birama et Kany, dont les trompes avaient éveillé toute la curiosité, voulurent en savoir plus long sur la chasse et sur la science des chasseurs. Mais Birama n'osait, en pensant au coq rouge,

parler de chasse. Il voyait encore le front plissé du père Djigui debout au milieu de la cour. Le coq se débattait sous ses yeux alors que son sang tout chaud imprégnait le sable; les deux vieux étaient là et Birama les voyait murmurant aux côtés du père Djigui. Ce tableau lui inspirait une peur religieuse. Il avait peine à imaginer que c'était le même Djigui qu'il avait devant lui, ce vieillard qui, maintenant, disait des mots qui font rire et riait le premier.

"Si je lui pose des questions, il se mettra en colère", pensa Birama. Pourtant Birama aurait voulu savoir des tas de choses sur les animaux et même sur les "Grands Êtres" de la nuit. Certes, il avait lu les ouvrages sur les "animaux sauvages", mais il savait que ces livres ne disaient rien de sérieux et le père Djigui devait en savoir beaucoup plus que n'importe quel auteur.

Il se souvint de Fadiga le muezzin et de ce que ce dernier racontait un jour qu'il avait vu Nianson malmener Boubouny, le petit singe.

— Sois gentil avec lui; dans la forêt, ce petit

singe est le salut du chasseur; oui. Le connaisseur qui entend son cri, sait qu'un danger est proche. Le singe prévient le chasseur de la présence de "Ourani Kalan"³⁰ — la panthère. Ah! la panthère, qu'elle soit trois fois maudite, avait ajouté Fadiga en crachant.

Après une pause, le muezzin avait repris:—La panthère ne connaît pas d'amis, elle tue par plaisir.

Birama avait entendu également les propos que tenait le père Benfa sur l'hyène, dont le cri sinistre éveille toute la forêt, l'hyène, la peureuse. Mais tous ceux qui parlaient d'animaux, de chasse, traitaient avec respect le lion, le maître, noble jusque dans sa démarche. Birama fixa longuement le père Djigui; il remua les lèvres, mais aucun son ne sortit. Un temps s'écoula.

Puis encouragé par la bonne humeur que son oncle manifestait, le jeune citadin, sans relever la tête, lui dit:

— Je voudrais assister à la veillée de ce soir.

Le père Djigui devint sombre.

— Non, fit-il d'un ton sec, que voudrais-tu y

faire?

— Je voudrais aller avec toi comme Sibiri quand il était là.

Le père Djigui ne répondit pas. Il devint soucieux.

— Oui, se disait-il, tu es mon neveu, au même titre que Sibiri. Mais toi, tu as fréquenté les Blancs. Tu parles leur langue, tu as leur manière. Il est vrai que je suis le maître; si je t'emmène, nul ne trouvera à redire.

Le père Djigui se disait également que ses compagnons l'admireraient encore plus s'il pouvait leur dire: "Voilà mon fils, il a été chez les Blancs sept ans, maintenant il nous revient." Il sourit à cette idée et se lissa la barbe.

— Oui, se répétait-il, je leur dirai: "Il a été chez les Blancs sept ans durant et à présent il nous revient."

Et j'ajouterai: "Le séjour dans l'eau ne fait jamais d'un tronc d'arbre un crocodile."³¹ Le père Djigui, s'il

n'avait rien contre les Blancs, ne voulait rien d'eux non plus. Il eût préféré, ainsi que les autres vieux, que le Blanc restât dans les villes et ne vînt jamais dans le village. Le Blanc veut tout savoir, il n'oublie même pas les vaches.

— Tu as combien d'enfants, combien de boeufs, as-tu un fusil? etc.

Les jeunes du village avaient fini leur danse. Il était environ une heure du matin. Tout était calme. Les crapauds, par leur coassement continu, appelaient la pluie. Le fleuve gémissait. Le père Djigui, étrangement habillé, vint trouver Birama.

— Il est temps, viens.

Une trompe venait de retentir, suivie de sept coups de tam-tam. Birama avait été "préparé" par son oncle. Il s'habilla aussi étrangement que lui. Sur le seuil de sa case, il répétait maintenant ce que lui disait la voix solennelle du chasseur:

"Mes yeux verront, mais ma bouche restera close."

"Rien de vous ne m'étonnera."

"Vous m'avez précédé en tout."

"Que votre pouvoir un jour m'habite afin que je le transmette à l'enfant obéissant."

A ces mots, la case se remplit de fumée. Des voix s'élevèrent.

— Mais... fit Birama.

Le père Djigui se mit à rire.

En un clin d'oeil, la fumée se dissipa.

Birama fixa curieusement son oncle. Ils échangèrent un sourire et le père Djigui se mit en route. Déjà, la peur naissait en Birama. Mais il se rassurait. Devant les pas fermes et le bonnet rouge de son oncle, il semblait se rappeler les mots de l'Aède³² "Celui qui est sur le dos de l'éléphant ne doit pas craindre la rosée"³³

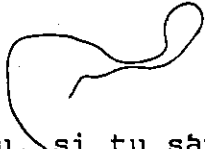
"Je suis contente d'avoir fait la connaissance de Tiéman, se dit Kany quand elle fut seule. Il est vraiment gentil, il donne de bons conseils. D'ailleurs, s'il a pu gagner l'amitié du père Djigui, c'est qu'il doit connaître beaucoup de choses. Ah! si tous les aînés de la ville étaient comme lui, les jeunes auraient de sages guides. Le père Djigui l'aime bien."

— Voilà mon ami Tiéman-le-Soigneur, nous fit-il; nous ne sommes pas toujours du même avis, car il n'y a pas qu'une seule piste pour aller à la rivière.³⁴ Tiéman a souvent la sagesse des vieux; il avait raison celui qui disait: "Le jeune qui a parcouru cent villages est l'égal du vieux qui a vécu cent années."³⁵

Oui, Tiéman est un sage; il est instruit, il a voyagé étant soldat, à travers l'Europe. Mais diable, pourquoi Tiéman, qui était à deux pas d'obtenir son diplôme d'instituteur, a-t-il préféré rester infirmier dans un village? Il est certainement beaucoup plus instruit que la plupart des commis que nous voyons à la ville. Ah! Tiéman! Pourquoi donc ne l'ai-je pas connu plus tôt? Il m'aurait parlé longuement de tous les pays qu'il a vus. J'ai

confiance en lui, Il m'a promis de parler au père Djigui;
il m'a dit:

— Je ferai mon possible auprès du vieux afin que
tu puisses continuer tes études; ainsi, Famagan ira chercher
ailleurs et tu seras avec Samou. Ah! Tiéman! que je suis
heureuse de pouvoir continuer mes études et rester avec
Samou.



Samou, si tu savais ce qui se prépare en ce moment!
Oui, quelque chose se prépare. Si encore je pouvais t'écrire,
mais dans ce trou, il n'en est pas question. Le "courrier"
passe tous les quinze jours et les lettres arrivent rarement
à bon port. J'aurais pu envoyer un mot par un voyageur,
mais depuis mon arrivée, personne n'a encore quitté le
village.

J'aimerais tant savoir ce qui s'est passé depuis
mon départ, j'aimerais tant savoir ce qu'est devenue la
ville depuis mon départ. J'aimerais tant savoir ce que tu
fais, Samou.

— Le petit n'est pas bien; un malin lui a sans doute lancé un mauvais sort; Coumba, tu devrais en parler à Ousmane le marabout.

Massa la marchande de fruits était venue voir maman Coumba. Elle trouvait Samou bizarre depuis quelque temps; des voisines avaient fait la même constatation; elles avaient longuement murmuré entre elles; et Massa, en raison de ses liens d'amitié avec maman Coumba, avait décidé du lui en glisser un mot.

En effet, depuis le départ de Kany, lui qui d'habitude aimait tant plaisanter les vieilles, qui écoutait patiemment leurs histoires, leur disait tout juste bonjour. Il ne fréquentait plus les places où se réunissaient ses jeunes compagnons.

Maman Coumba savait bien de quoi il s'agissait. Elle essaya en vain de raisonner son fils, mais Samou répondait invariablement qu'il n'avait rien et qu'il se sentait très bien. Il demeura en dehors de la vie du quartier³⁶ jusqu'à ce que deux événements aient secoué la ville.

Le premier fut une épidémie de méningite cérébro-spinale. Elle avait commencé par les quartiers du nord et avait petit à petit gagné tous les quartiers de la ville. Cette maladie, disaient les vieux, n'avait été connue en Afrique que durant cette guerre. Ils disaient également que les soldats noirs l'avaient ramenée du pays des Blancs.

— Nos pères ne nous en avaient jamais parlé, c'est une maladie de l'ère européenne.

"La nuque de bois", comme fut surnommée la cérébro-spinale, fut pour la ville une véritable calamité. L'enfant se plaignait de la tête, vomissait et mourait sans que rien n'ait pu y faire. Des cris de douleur, de consternation se multiplièrent et toute la ville revêtit une physionomie de deuil.

Les rues des quartiers indigènes, ordinairement éclairées par les petites lampes des marchandes de fruits, étaient devenues sombres, ténébreuses; les marchandes ne vendaient plus. Les tam-tams aussi s'étaient tus. Et les enfants qui organisaient leurs rondes joyeuses et criardes après les repas du soir, ne se montraient plus. Les vieux,

désespérés, criaient à la malédiction, car la cérébro-spinale semblait surtout en vouloir aux jeunes.

"Malédiction, disaient les anciens, ceux qui devraient nous enterrer meurent avant nous, qu'allons-nous devenir?"

Un lourd silence planait sur toute la ville, interrompu quelquefois par le chœur sinistre des pleureuses. Le deuil allait de porte en porte et chaque famille attendait passivement son heure. On fit des offrandes, on organisa une prière publique et, ce soir-là, la voix de Fadiga, le muezzin, avait quelque chose de pathétique. Tous les vieux étaient là, recueillis, le visage marqué par l'angoisse. Debout sur le toit de la mosquée, la silhouette blanche de Fadiga le muezzin avait quelque chose de divin. Certes, les mots étaient les mêmes que ceux des autres jours, mais dans sa voix, on sentait quelque chose de profond, et ces paroles avaient le souffle d'un dernier espoir. Tous les vieux priaient et s'adressaient à Dieu. Ils n'avaient pas peur de mourir, les anciens. Ils avaient déjà vu des choses et des choses, ils demandaient donc ce soir-là au Tout-Puissant de frapper plutôt parmi les vieux, d'orienter la cérébro-spinale vers eux qui n'attendaient plus rien,

vers ceux qui avaient connu la jeunesse et la sagesse, mais d'épargner ceux qui avaient sur leurs épaules les charges des jours à venir. Ainsi, l'ordre des choses serait respecté.

Samou était sorti de sa réserve. Les vieux lui demandaient sans cesse des explications sur cette curieuse maladie; ils lui demandaient aussi des moyens pour se garantir. Mais Samou, qui n'était pas instruit en ce domaine, se contentait de leur dire ce qu'il savait de l'école.

C'est-à-dire que la maladie était due à un microbe et qu'il fallait arroser les cases avant de les balayer.³⁷

Après avoir satisfait ses macabres désirs, le génie de la cérébro-spinale se retira, laissant derrière lui le deuil et le désespoir.

Le second événement couvait déjà depuis longtemps. Il fut d'abord annoncé par les premiers soldats qui étaient revenus de la guerre.

— Bientôt, tout le monde sera citoyen,³⁸ disaient-ils. On nous a parlé là-haut. Il n'y aura plus de travail.

forcé. Dans l'armée, il n'y aura plus de différence entre soldats. Tous seront habillés de la même façon, tous auront droit au même traitement. Il y aura les mêmes écoles pour tous les enfants, Blancs comme Noirs. Il y aura également la même justice et nul n'ira en prison sans être jugé. Bientôt, tout le monde sera bien.

Les gens s'étaient emparés de la nouvelle, mais les vieux, qui disaient être habitués à des bruits de la sorte, demeurèrent sceptiques, et leur attitude contrastait fort avec l'enthousiasme que connaissaient les jeunes; les dires des soldats avaient été commentés et recommentés par ces derniers; tout cela était si merveilleux...

Il y eut un peu de remue-ménage dans la ville, puis on n'en parla plus, ce fut l'oubli.

Sitôt l'épidémie de cérébro-spinale éteinte, les premiers voyageurs venus de l'Ouest avaient annoncé de profonds changements. Quelques commis avaient cette fois-ci confirmé la nouvelle et la foule avait pris la chose à coeur.

Au marché, devant les magasins, sur les places, on

discutait, on gesticulait, on se passionnait.

Dans les bureaux, il n'était plus question que de cela, c'était sûr; certains commis assuraient avoir lu la nouvelle dans les communications.

On se passionna de plus en plus; les jeunes dans les salles de danse, les femmes sur les routes du marché, les vieux eux-mêmes dans leur cercle, partout où l'on pouvait se voir, il n'était plus question que de jours sans travail forcé, de jours de liberté et de justice.

Un dimanche matin, sur la grande place du quartier, une assemblée se forma. La foule était de plus en plus remuante, de plus en plus dense. On parlait des jours de misère dont on annonçait l'agonie et chacun disait à son voisin ses souffrances particulières. Des murmures s'ajoutaient en une sorte de grondement sourd. Visiblement, ces gens-là attendaient quelque chose. Tout d'un coup, et comme par enchantement, il y eut un grand silence. On leva les yeux. Makhan, un fils du quartier, venait de grimper sur un toit, face à la foule.

— Nous sommes pour la justice et l'égalité!

hur-la-t-il. Nous ne voulons plus être d'éternels subordonnés.
Nous ne voulons plus qu'il y ait deux poids et deux mesures.
Nous ne voulons plus être des sujets!!!

C'est le coup de tonnerre. Le mot est lâché,
on regarde autour de soi, personne ne bouge, les policiers
sont là et ne font aucun geste à l'adresse de Makhan, ils
écoutent et acquiescent eux aussi. Est-ce possible? Dire
ça tout haut!

Mais toujours rien, rien ne bouge. Makhan est là,
pas en prison; décidément, les temps ont changé!

— A travail égal, salaire égal. Nous en avons
assez de travailler pour rien; nous voulons la justice!

La foule tonne, mains et visages se tendent vers
Makhan.

Makhan a parlé, il a dit tout haut ce qui hier
encore ne se disait qu'entre frères, et rien n'en est
résulté. Makhan est un homme; les temps ont changé.

Temps nouveaux! Temps nouveaux! Le villageois
qui s'était réfugié dans la ville envisage le retour parmi

les siens, car le travail forcé va mourir et il sera désormais protégé par les lois, il devient un homme libre. Le commis est heureux, il ne sera plus l'éternel subordonné, il aura le salaire qu'il mérite. Les jeunes pourront faire les études qui leur plaisent. Ils ne seront plus limités... Le soldat sera dans les mêmes conditions que le soldat blanc. Oui, tout le monde sera bien, et le tam-tam gronde de plus belle.

Sidi avait couru chez Samou: "Viens, avait-il dit, l'heure sonne..." Ils avaient écouté avec transport la voix de Makhan. A côté de Sidi, un Blanc fumait sa pipe et écoutait. C'était Monsieur Donzano, leur ancien directeur d'école. Après le discours, Monsieur Donzano se tourna vers ses anciens élèves.

— Bonjour jeunes gens.

— Bonjour Monsieur.

— Vous avez entendu?

— Oui, Monsieur.

— Qu'en pensez-vous?

— Eh bien...

— Il a raison, je suis de son avis.

Surprise chez Sidi et Samou.

— Vous devriez venir chez moi, reprit Monsieur Donzano, on discutera de tout cela.

— Vraiment tout a changé. C'est la première fois que Monsieur Donzano s'entretient si familièrement avec ses élèves... Il est question d'élire des représentants...

— Voyez-vous, jeunes gens, je suis entièrement d'accord avec Monsieur Makhan*, mais je trouve qu'il nous faut aller doucement. Il ne faut rien précipiter.

— Monsieur, c'est une question de vie ou de mort. Les gens souffrent....

— Certes il y a beaucoup d'erreurs qu'il faut réparer, mais il est question de créer des assemblées ici, n'est-ce pas trop tôt?

— Mais, Monsieur, il y a toujours eu des assemblées en Afrique. Il n'y avait pas que l'anarchie et l'esclavage avant l'arrivée des Européens.

— D'accord, mais nos méthodes sont toutes nouvelles

pour vous.

— Oui, mais le tort est de vouloir implanter toutes vos méthodes ici; à ce compte-là, il nous faudrait des siècles. Il n'y avait certes pas de machines avant l'arrivée des Européens, mais il y avait une organisation sociale.

— Oui, je suis de votre avis, mais dites-moi ce que désirent les vieux.

Et Monsieur Donzano prit un carnet et un crayon.

— Voyez, Monsieur, avant l'arrivée des Européens, les vieux avaient leur mot à dire dans les affaires du village; il y avait, auprès du chef, un conseil de notables; aujourd'hui il n'y a qu'un chef, lequel reçoit et exécute les ordres de l'administrateur blanc.

— Oui, mais les vieux sont illettrés, comment voulez-vous qu'ils puissent gérer les affaires du village?

— Le chef est aussi le plus souvent illettré, Monsieur. D'ailleurs, les vieux, s'ils ne savent pas lire, connaissent mieux que quiconque les besoins de leurs communautés.

Pourquoi ne pas constituer des conseils de notables et adjoindre à chacun d'eux un agent de l'administration pour traiter des questions modernes. Il faut que nous participions à la gestion des affaires des villes et des villages.

Il faut abolir le travail forcé pour qu'il y ait la bonne entente, il faut qu'il n'y ait plus de discrimination du tout.

— D'accord, vous pouvez compter sur moi. Je vous ai toujours estimés. Dites-le autour de vous, vous avez un ami en moi.

— Tu vois, Samou, ce que je te disais, tout va changer à présent, nous pourrons connaître enfin la belle vie.

Sidi parlait et gesticulait dans la rue. Il faisait des projets, il parlait de ses études. Mais Samou était moins enthousiaste. Il pensait à Kany. Sidi finit par s'en apercevoir.

— Ne t'en fais pas, lui dit-il, le père Benfa comprendra à présent que l'avenir est de ton côté.

Famagan aura sûrement peur, tu vas voir.

"Sidi a peut-être raison, pensa Samou quand il se trouva seul chez lui. Le père Benfa comprendra que les temps ont changé. Il comprendra que je peux être quelqu'un, que je serai quelqu'un. Tout s'arrange. Ah! si je pouvais annoncer cette bonne nouvelle à Kafy, si je pouvais lui parler de tout cela, comme elle serait heureuse!"



— Je suis venu vous chercher. Je vous emmène au tam-tam. Aujourd'hui commencent les préliminaires de la troisième danse: la fête des piroguiers.

Tiéman parlait tandis que Kany le dévisageait. Birama bavardait avec le père Djigui. Le ciel était aussi bleu que le fleuve au crépuscule. La lune infatigable fuyait les nuages.

De loin parvenaient les cris lugubres de l'hyène, la plus peureuse des bêtes.

Quelques femmes, le torse oint de beurre de karité, passaient rieuses à côté de Tiéman et de ses amis.

Un rugissement se fit entendre. Des moutons et des chèvres qui rumaient contre les petits murs de maisons s'éparpillèrent, effarouchés.

— La brousse est à toi. O crinière d'or, toi que jalouse la foudre du chasseur!

Birama et Kany se retournèrent. A quelques mètres d'eux, celui qui venait de parler ainsi, était un petit

vieux couvert de haillons et tenant en main sa petite guitare, sorte de calebasse couverte d'une peau de lézard sur laquelle s'étire un crin de cheval. Le lion rugit de nouveau et le petit vieux, visage épanoui, les narines dilatées, reprit:

"Si le roi a son sceptre, tu as ta crinière, et ta démarche est aussi belle que la danse royale."

Un monceau de bois flambait, pétillant au milieu du cercle que formait une foule enthousiaste et bruyante. Les tam-tams ne battaient pas encore. Les femmes s'impatientaient, chantaient et dansaient. Tout était désir de rythme et soif de mouvements! Soudain, un homme, torse nu, un masque étrange sur le visage, s'avança au milieu du cercle, tirant derrière lui un bouc qui avançait à grand-peine. Le silence se fit comme par enchantement. L'homme fit face aux tam-tams, posa le pied sur la corde à laquelle était attaché l'animal, leva les bras au ciel, se tourna vers les femmes, fit le même geste et quitta la scène. Immédiatement après lui, des battements de mains crépitèrent. Les trompes retentirent. Le sol parut trembler, les arbres frémirent, les flûtes sifflèrent et le tambour gronda; tous ces instruments mêlant leurs sons annonçaient aux villages environnants les préliminaires de la troisième danse.

Une demi-douzaine de jeunes filles avançaient en dansant. Une demi-douzaine de garçons marchaient vers elles. Autour du feu de bois évoluaient des torses noirs, s'épanouissaient des visages noirs éclairés par la lune et des sourires joyeux.

— Vous n'avez pas ça à la ville! dit Tiéman avec une enfantine fierté.

— Je n'allais pas au tam-tam, répondit Birama, sans quitter des yeux la danse et les danseurs.

— Pourquoi?

— Euh!.... Eh bien...

— Ah oui!... Je vois, ça ne t'intéresse pas.

Tu n'es d'ailleurs pas le seul, tous les jeunes évolués sont comme toi.

Tiéman s'approcha et mit la main sur l'épaule de son ami.

— Mon vieux! vous avez tort. Nous avons de très belles danses, une très belle musique.

Birama fit l'étonné. Il regarda Tiéman sans mot dire.

— Oui, oui, insista l'infirmier, vous avez tort de vouloir tout laisser tomber. Vous avez tort d'essayer d'imiter les Européens en tout. Comprends-moi bien. L'homme européen n'est qu'un des multiples aspects de l'homme. On ne vous demande pas d'être Européens. On ne vous demande pas de vous défigurer.

Birama essaya de placer un mot. Mais Tiéman ne lui en laissa pas le temps.

— Il n'est pas question pour vous de fuir votre milieu. Cherchez plutôt à agir sur lui. Cherchez à sauver ce qui doit être sauvé et essayez d'apporter vous-mêmes quelque chose aux autres: une figure dans l'ébène, le paysage rutilant de chez nous sur une toile de peintre!

Tiéman oubliait le tam-tam. Il prononça ces dernières paroles avec une chaleur toute particulière. Puis, il bourra sa pipe de terre cuite et frotta une allumette.

— Il ne s'agit pas évidemment de tout accepter.

Mais faites un choix... Les coutumes sont faites pour servir les hommes, nullement pour les asservir. Soyez réalistes; brisez tout ce qui enchaîne l'homme et gêne sa marche. Si vous aimez réellement votre peuple, si vos cris d'amour n'émanent pas d'un intérêt égoïste, vous aurez le courage de combattre toutes ses faiblesses. Vous aurez le courage de chanter toutes ses valeurs.

J'étais comme vous. Quand j'avais ton âge, je ne connaissais rien de ces choses-là. Mais, crois-moi, j'ai compris ma bêtise, un jour. J'étais alors soldat en Europe. Il y avait eu une fête au régiment; on nous avait demandé de présenter un numéro folklorique. Je ne savais rien; ni danse, ni chant de chez moi; je n'étais d'ailleurs pas le seul; presque tous ceux de mes camarades qui avaient fait l'école étaient dans ma situation. Les Blancs ont dansé; avocats, professeurs, ingénieurs, médecins avaient revêtu les costumes de leur région et avaient chanté dans leur dialecte.

Nous étions là dans une sorte d'angoisse, et le

plus fort, c'est que nous avons honte de dire aux Blancs que nous ne savions rien de chez nous!

Heureusement, nous n'étions pas les seuls représentants de l'Afrique; il y avait d'autres soldats. Ceux que nous nommions avec mépris les ignares. Nous étions fiers d'eux ce jour-là; fiers de les voir bondir le visage épanoui au son des tambours. Nous avions le sentiment qu'eux au moins apportaient quelque chose aux Européens, nous avions le sentiment que notre pays vivait en eux.

Sans eux, qu'aurions-nous fait? Des danses européennes peut-être! Cette soirée m'a fait comprendre la vérité. L'humanité serait vraiment pauvre si nous devions tous nous transformer en Européens. Il est souhaitable que dans des rencontres de ce genre chacun puisse apporter son chant, sa danse.

Birama écoutait sans perdre de vue un pas de la danse; les tam-tams ralentissaient; il se tourna vers Tiéhan.

— C'est la fin?

— Non, c'est le commencement; maintenant les vieux vont danser leur danse à eux, vous allez voir défiler les maîtres des corporations. Écoutez!

Les tam-tams reprirent sur un rythme nouveau et toute l'assistance se mit à genoux.

Un vieux, armé d'une houe, avança vers la scène.

— Les laboureurs, murmura Tiéman.

Les tam-tam jouèrent en sourdine, le vieux vint au milieu du cercle, poussa une sorte de hurlement, jeta la houe et leva les bras au ciel; l'instrument se mit à tourner sur lui-même comme si des mains invisibles le maniaient.

— Formidable! lança Birama à l'adresse de sa soeur. Tu as vu?

Les tam-tams grondèrent, le vieux ramassa la houe, la jeta en l'air sept fois et hurla de nouveau. Les visages se levèrent. La houe ne retomba pas et, tandis que les yeux semblaient la chercher à travers l'espace,

le vieux alla s'agenouiller, immobile, devant les tam-tams.

On le vit se relever quelque temps après, sa houe sur l'épaule.

— Terrible! s'exclama Birama.

Des murmures s'élevèrent parmi les spectateurs.

De petits tam-tams sonores annoncèrent les tisserands.

Un vieillard sec, de haute taille, apparut sur la scène, un pagne à la main. Les tam-tams jouèrent en sourdine.

Le pagne se ramassait en boule, se tordait et s'étendait au cri du maître. Birama ne disait plus rien; à quoi bon! Il ne put réprimer un mouvement de surprise lorsque, les trompes sonnant, le père Djigui dans ses habits de chasseur parut avec son fusil.

— C'est lui, c'est lui, dit-il à Kany, regarde-le.

Translation

The train arrived at K... station. After saying goodbye to their fellow travellers, Birama and Kany got out. Carrying their suitcases in their hands,¹ they walked up to the bank of the river. Papa Djigui's² village was on the other side.

There was as much activity along the bank as in evening markets³ in town. Women dominated the scene. They were moving about, arguing, bargaining and bursting into laughter. A little farther on, washerwomen were busy at their work; they too were arguing and bursting into laughter. Wet nets lay stretched out here and there on the sand. Naked or half-dressed children were spreading out still more. Policemen were moving about. Boatmen were bustling about. Some of them were repairing their old dugout canoes and the hammering of their hatchets could be heard from time to time over the uproar. Others were trying to attract passengers.⁴ Still others were unloading large barges packed with oranges, bananas or smoked fish; they were surrounded by women trying to bargain with them. After negotiating the fare with the boatmen, Birama and Kany took their places in one of the barges. It did not

take long to go across the river. As soon as they were settled in the barge, the two young people from town were overwhelmed by sad and bitter thoughts. They were no longer with the other train passengers, who, in a way, were representative of the town. Now, they were alone, surrounded by people with whom they had nothing in common, by boatmen stripped to their waists and villagers wearing coarse cotton clothes. The people around them did not represent anything familiar to them; they were complete strangers. Consequently, Birama and Kany showed no interest in anything. They were indifferent to everything, and everything tended to remind them that they were far away from town, away from the many things that give the town its charm. They therefore remained silent and displayed no interest in the noisy conversations or even in the boatmen's monotonous singing.

They got out of the barge on the left bank, walked along a narrow path lined with tall grass and skirted many clumps of trees and giant ant-hills. Grass rustled as they passed by; birds stopped singing or flew away. Both of them walked in silence, their hearts filled with apprehension. After a few minutes, they caught sight of women and children gathered around the well. These were

women from Papa Djigui's village. They headed for the small group. The children playing a few metres away from the well stopped short when they saw the young people from town. Those who were sitting stood up, those speaking fell silent and all of them, standing motionless, looked on with curiosity and fear. Seeing Birama and Kany coming towards them, the children ran over to their parents, who were standing around the well. The women, who a few minutes earlier had been engaged in lively conversation, also became silent. All of them stared with curiosity, misgiving and fear at these two strangers whose appearance gave the clear impression that they were a clerk and his wife. Unable to move, they stood frozen around the well, holding ropes attached to buckets or even carrying calabashes⁵ filled with water on their heads.

Birama, walking ahead of his sister, went straight toward an old woman standing somewhat apart from the group. The woman walked fearlessly to meet him.

"We're looking for the house of Djigui, the hunter," said Birama in a tone which he tried to make reassuring.

"There's no hunter named Djigui in our village,"

replied the old woman aggressively.

Birama and Kany looked at each other, perplexed, while a few of the children raced off toward the village.

"We're the children of Benfa, Djigui's brother," said Kany gently.

The old woman looked at them for a moment. Then her face brightened up.

"Houl'hou!"⁶ she exclaimed, clapping her hands. "You're my grandchildren. I saw your father hunt monkeys and climb up tamarind trees."

The grandmother grabbed Birama's arms, turned to her companions and shouted:

"They're the children of Benfa, Djigui's brother. They're from town."

Other women then rushed toward the youngsters, exclaiming. Each of them was trying to say something about Papa Benfa's kindness and good character. Finally, the old woman picked up her calabash and asked the two young people to follow her.

The entire northern part of this small village seemed to be surrounded by the forest. This was not man's doing, but that of the forest itself, with the creatures living in it, the mystery surrounding it and the legends concerning it. Thick bushes covered with thorns and birds' nests were at the forefront. Next came tall trees with very few branches and sparse leaves. Some of their trunks were covered with thick intertwined creepers striving to reach the top. Finally came very tall palm trees.⁷

There were birds everywhere. Their songs intermingled. Red-tailed queleas swooped down on the bushes.

Fields covered the southern part of the village and stretched out as far as the eye could see. Children, standing on makeshift platforms with slingshots in their hands, were driving off parrots from maize plants by shouting and throwing stones at the untiring thieves.

In the east, the sun cast a glow upon the hilltops.

In the shade of a large tree, Papa Djigui was weaving strips of cotton with other village elders. He already knew that two strangers were looking for him, for the children had told him so. Some of them had even specified that the strangers were "a clerk and his wife". But unmoved, Papa Djigui kept on weaving his strips of cotton and chewing his tobacco. The other elders were worried, however, and wondered what Djigui had done, while the chief of the hunters tried to remain calm. He was not only a man but also a hunter who could chase a lion away merely by striking it with a stick. But, in this case, the danger to be faced did not come from a lion, a panther or even the great creatures of the night.

Papa Djigui recalled that the previous year he had gone to the administrative centre to declare that he no longer owned a gun since he was too old to walk all the way to the commandant's office and back just to get a gun permit.⁸ But Papa Djigui was a hunter. Everyone in the village regarded him as the son and grandson of hunters whose names continued to be mentioned in songs during evening get-togethers.⁹ Abandoning the family tradition was therefore out of the question.

Papa Djigui had all the courage and power of a famous hunter. However, he used his power only against animals. Among men, he had to be a man. This explains why he did not resort to the supernatural powers which his family possessed from the days of his great grandfather.¹⁰

*

*

*

Birama and Kany arrived with their escort. The old men who had noticed them turned away. Papa Djigui pretended he had not seen anything.

"Benfa's children have come to see you," the old woman shouted, when she was about twenty metres away from the tree.

Papa Djigui stood up, smiled and held out his hand. Birama ran over to him.

"When you pay us a visit," the old man said, "you should wear clothes like ours."

Birama smiled. The other old men stood up, gathered around Papa Djigui and his nephews, and started greeting the newcomers all at once.

"How is Benfa?"

"Peace is with us at home."¹¹

And again each person talked about Benfa, his kindness and his courage. When everyone had had his say, Papa Djigui took his children home.

Birama and Kany had come to know all their relatives. Some of the elders had talked to them in minute detail about Papa Benfa's childhood and his good traits. They had visited the chiefs and notables of the village.¹² Papa Djigui had taken them untiringly from door to door, from hut to hut. He did not want to forget anyone because that would cause offence and make enemies. "Ah!", the forgotten men would say, "he didn't bring them to my hut; so he must feel I'm unimportant."

The old people whom Birama and Kany met talked about the town and many other things besides.

"My son is in town. He went there to work so that we could have the money to pay our taxes."¹³ The first year, he sent us something; since then he hasn't sent us anything. Do you know him?"

"My son wasn't lucky; he couldn't find a job and the white men put him in prison because he had no job. As if that was his fault!"

"Here in the village, we have no money and we can't pay our taxes; our children go to town to find work and send us money, but they don't return. Our fields are being covered by weeds. Couldn't you tell the white men that we aren't happy? The younger generation aren't like us. They prefer the town. They say they have fewer problems over there. They say they are happier there. Is that true?"

"Tell the white man that you've learnt enough and that he should leave you alone now; you're old enough to start a family. Take up jobs as clerks and come and take care of us."

Papa Djigui himself had said:

"The white chief comes to the village with his body-guards.¹⁴ He wants us to salute when we see him. We're old and saluting is tiring. He should know that. In the neighbouring village, he has installed a chief who isn't a

native of the village; no one but the white man wants him there. The people tremble with fear. Doesn't the white man know that when people tremble before a chief, they secretly long to see him tremble in turn?"

"A chief who inspires fear is like a large rock which blocks a path. Travellers avoid it and walk around it until one day they realize that they would have a shorter distance to cover if there were no rock; so a good many of them come and move it away. A chief who intimidates his subjects is usually regarded as an enemy to be eliminated."

"The white man forces us to remove our hats before greeting him; tell him that, according to our traditions, old men don't remove their hats. Tell him also that it's the young people who should greet the old. Formerly, village affairs were dealt within the village; why are we forced to go to the administrative centre where clerks insult us? Tell him that we aren't happy. We'll give him more chickens, we'll give him more millet if necessary, if he so desires, but we aren't happy."

Kany, stretched out on the tara¹⁵ belonging to one of her aunts, could not sleep. The old woman had said:

"I'm more comfortable on the mat on the ground. I know that people from town don't like sleeping on the ground; so I've prepared the tara for you; that way, you'll be comfortable. But I don't see any reason for avoiding the ground. Isn't it the place which awaits us all?"

And the old woman had laughed, exposing her almost toothless gum. A multitude of thoughts flashed through Kany's mind at once; if Birama had been beside her, she would have had much to say.

But Papa Djigui had said: "Birama, you'll be with the men."¹⁶ So Kany was therefore left to her own resources among her aunts and cousins.

Kany tossed and turned and sighed from time to time. In her mind's eye, she saw the village with its little thatched huts and its barns with conic roofs. She smelled the shea butter nut odour emanating from most huts. She saw the fetishes - strange little statues - and heavily tattooed masks hung on the low clay walls; she saw the courtyards in

which sheep and goats roamed while the fowls kept busy around the barns.

She thought of the women, their laughter around the wells, their cotton loincloths and the stories they often told during the day about sowing, group fishing,¹⁷ collective hunting¹⁸ or bush fires.

"What a life!", Kany sighed. "The old people usually sit under the large tree whose trunk is adorned with buffalo horns and amulets. An extraordinary tree! The story goes that in the evening it changes into an old woman and goes through the village to pick out those who must die. Is there any truth in this tale?" Kany shuddered. Papa Djigui's dogs began to bark. What was wrong? Dogs never bark for nothing. A dog always barks for a reason: an animal, a frightful creature, a stranger or one of those great creatures invisible to human beings. Could it be the large tree? Kany closed her eyes. She could hear people laughing in the street; slightly reassured, Benfa's daughter stood up and glanced out at the courtyard.

"Everything's calm," she told herself; "Perhaps the dogs were barking at passers-by."

Kany thought of the large clearing not far from the tree, the place where the evil spirits of the region meet and from where strange cries emanate in the night; the cries warn of death because the days of those who hear them are numbered. What a life!

The villagers, who were usually covered with amulets, filed past in front of her eyes: silent, gloomy-looking old men and younger men wearing yellow cotton boubous.¹⁹

No, this is not the town; nothing here smacks of it. Fire is made with flint; millet porridge is eaten with salt; there is no sugar and no money; here, goods and services are not bought but bartered. The women know nothing about fashion. They tie their loincloths around their waists; some of them wear blouses,²⁰ but what blouses! Kany sighed.

The old men have forbidden the wearing of jewelry and Papa Djigui feels the decision is a wise one.

"Yes," the old man said, "some tradespeople arrived from town with baskets full of jewelry. Every woman wanted to own the finest necklace and the most exquisite bangle. Women became envious of each other and men came to blows.

We therefore decided that pearls would no longer be worn in the village."

Kany turned over, thinking: "What a life! Their only source of amusement is the drum. Their only festivities are during periods of sowing, collective hunting, group fishing and so on. The entire village bustles with life during such periods; the old men give orders, everyone from the youngest to the oldest is busy, and drums rumble. Drumming can be heard everywhere and all the time."

Kany began to yawn, fed up.

Suddenly, a frightful howl broke the silence; Kany tensed.

The old woman, who she thought was asleep, woke up with a start, placed a mat against the door, ensured that the door was securely locked, scratched her back noisily and went back to sleep. The dogs dared not bark. Petrified with fear, Kany hid under the blankets.

Another howl was heard and then an unusually strong voice thundered out:

"Totem of the dead!
Shroud of the living!
I strike the insolent,
I strike leaving no trace,
But where I strike, so does death!"

Kany trembled all over.

The voice continued:

"Come. The time is near."

Kany understood what was happening; secret societies, contrary to what was said in town, were not dead. She crouched under the blankets and closed her eyes, because she knew that she was in the presence of death. Horns blew; then little by little, their solemn sounds gave way to dismal drumming. "It's the dance of death", Kany said to herself. "Dear God, protect my brother and me!"

Birama and Kany had got up earlier than usual. They were getting ready to visit some of Papa Djigui's friends in the neighbouring village. It was about seven o'clock.

Papa Djigui was already busy making mats in his hut. One of his wives was pounding millet and singing. Kany washed her face, picked her teeth²¹ and moved toward the luggage which was placed in a corner of the hut. However, no sooner had she taken a few steps than she ran towards her brother, yelling.

"Birama, Birama, Birama! There's a lizard in here!
A huge lizard!"

On Kany's suitcase there tranquilly lay a lizard about eighty centimetres long. Birama jumped off his tara, and both of them made a dash for the yard. Kany ran to Papa Djigui, while Birama picked up an axe.

"What are you doing?", the old man shouted.

"A lizard!", Birama answered, looking frightened.

"Don't be a fool!", the old man roared, as he pulled his nephew back. "The lizard is part of our family."

Birama gaped at Kany and his uncle in turn. His uncle turned away briskly. Kany grabbed her brother's hand.

"I think the white man doesn't teach you enough," said one of Papa Djigui's old wives.

"No, the truth is that they no longer know our traditions. The white man teaches them how to read and write, but nothing else," Papa Djigui remarked.

"I think he should therefore be told; it would be better for him to know everything," said the old woman, heading for the kitchen.

—"Birama, did you shout?"

—"No, I didn't".

—"Don't ever shout; a man never shouts. Some chiefs always yell at their subjects; they shout and threaten. However, a chief who shouts to inspire fear feels that he lacks something. Were you not taught that in town?"

—"No."

—"Bear in mind then that you must never shout. Don't

ever shout or run away, no matter what you have to face.

A man never runs away. When one flees in order to save one's life, one is only half alive thereafter. One is dominated either by the memory of fear or by shame. One is no longer a free man."

"'But when one is confronted by a powerful enemy, isn't it more sensible to retreat and return to fight better another day?', Tiéman, the medical aide, 22 asked me."

"No, one has to fight; that's what fate decrees."

—"Does one have to fight empty-handed, even against wild beasts?"

—"The only weapon feared by wild animals is courage. Courage makes them all flee. But if they see fear in your eyes, that's the end of you. With men, it's the same. If you're afraid, your enemy will become more emboldened. Men must be afraid only of shame; shame must never be accepted."

"You still have a lot to learn. I was told that in town children are egoistic. They talk only of themselves.

I laughed and answered: 'Our way of dealing with this problem in our village is a good one; when anyone proves to be self-centred, we send him off to town. The person no longer has any friends among us.'

"When you grow up, you must open your door to strangers, because cooked rice is for everyone. Man is somewhat like a large tree; every traveller is entitled to its shade. When no one comes to your door, that's because you are like a tree invaded by red ants; travellers will stay away from you."²³

"Tiéman, the medical aide, said to me: 'If you open your door to everyone, many people will tend to become lazy.'"

"I said to him: 'Words like yours will destroy the village. Certain thoughts must not be voiced. We are like warriors on the battlefield. All of us are afraid. When we see our neighbour running toward the enemy, we say to ourselves: "He's mad."; however, we imitate him and thus become brave. If each warrior were to confess that he was afraid, we'd talk matters over and perhaps decide to flee.'"

"Talking about battles, Tiéman, the medical aide, said to me: 'The whites still aren't in agreement with

each other and it is feared that there will be yet another battle."

"I said to him: 'The whites always fight because they have taken the wrong course.' They have tried to compete against the gods and they have lost. They dream of undoing what was done by the gods and replacing it with what men desire; this audacity is the source of their disputes."

"If farmers, builders, boatmen, weavers and hunters worked for the village, there'd be no disputes."

"'But there've been wars between villages,' Tiéman, the medical aide, said to me."

"Yes, in the northern villages this has happened. Two villages wanted to oppose forces in order to see which of them had the more intrepid warriors; neighbouring villages got involved in the contest, taking sides according to family ties. The best farmers and boatmen died in the battle and the area was struck by famine. That reminds me of what our elders used to say: "The gods often help those who are out to destroy."²⁴

"We should improve upon nature as the whites do,"
Tiéman, the medical aide, said to me. 'The whites follow
the path of progress; that's the right track.'"

"And where does it lead?"

"In the end, everything will be done by machines
and men will be idle."

"Men aren't made to stay idle,' I said to him.
'Without work in the fields, there'd be no good music.'"

"There'll be fine houses, beautiful towns and cars.
We'll be comfortable."

"I then laughed and said to him:

'Follow the path of progress and disputes will follow
you. All those houses, cars and machines will lead to your
downfall one day and you'll long for the village, hard work
in the fields, the songs of the boatmen and the motions of
the weavers at work. Man must be able to have complete
control over what he creates. If, through progress, machines
do the work usually done by farmers, you'll find other
tasks awaiting you and you'll be worse off in the end than

you were at the beginning. Through progress, you think you will have complete control over nature; in reality, however, you are controlled by what you create."

Papa Djigui spat out his tobacco and began making his mats again. Birama and Kany got up to leave.

Papa Djigui, standing on the roof of one of his huts²⁵ with his head tilted backwards, his neck stretched out and his cheeks puffed out, was blowing hard into a horn covered with amulets. The women went into their huts and the domestic animals - sheep and goats - ran off. Papa Djigui blew the horn three times, stopped and blew it again for a long time, moving his head from side to side. A short while later, other horns could be heard; some of them loud, others faint and distant. Papa Djigui came down slowly from the roof. In the middle of the yard, he stood still with his eyes closed and his brow furrowed. He coughed thrice, then walked towards his hut and returned with a red cock whose claws were firmly tied together.

Two other old men joined Papa Djigui; both of them were wearing the red caps usually worn by hunters²⁶ and holding cowry-adorned²⁷ buffalo tails, the insignia of their position in society.

Benfa's brother placed his right foot on the cock's wings and pulled out his knife. There was a minute's silence as Papa Djigui's companions solemnly stood by him

and stared, musing, at the cock.

After muttering a few words to each other, the three men squatted down. The old man cut the cock's throat and flung the bird in the throes of death as far away as he could. The old hunter chewed on a red kola nut²⁸ and spat on the traces of blood. Birama and Kany watched their uncle in amazement from the door of their hut. They felt overwhelmed by a kind of fear mixed with a religious sentiment.

Papa Djigui had just greeted his ancestors a few hours before the annual vigil kept by hunters.²⁹ He had just offered them the customary red cock, reciting the ritual words:

"Accept it along with our greetings." "You are always with us in our huts and in the bush."

* * *

During the evening meal, Birama and Kany, whose curiosity had been fully aroused by the horns, wanted to know more about hunting and hunting techniques. However, when he thought of the red cock, Birama dared

not talk about hunting. He could still see the furrowed brow of Papa Djigui as he stood in the middle of the yard. The cock was writhing before his very eyes as its hot blood sank into the sand; the two old men were there and Birama could see them murmuring as they stood beside Papa Djigui. The scene inspired him with a religious fear. He could scarcely believe that it was the same old Djigui who was now in front of him being amusing and even being the first to laugh.

"If I ask him questions, he'll be angry," Birama thought. Yet Birama would have liked to know many things about animals and even the "Great Creatures" of the night. Admittedly, he had read books on "wild animals", but he knew that such books contained no important facts and Papa Djigui must know more about them than any author.

He thought of Fadiga, the muezzin, and recalled what the latter had said one day on seeing Nianson maltreating Boubounny, the small monkey.

"Be kind to it; in the forest, this little monkey saves the lives of hunters. On hearing its cry, an

experienced hunter knows that danger is at hand. Monkeys warn hunters of the presence of "Ourani Kalan",³⁰ the panther. Fadiga had spat and continued: "Ah, may the panther be cursed for ever!"

After a moment, the muezzin had gone on to say: "The panther has no friends; it kills for pleasure."

Birama had also heard what Papa Benfa had said about hyenas whose ominous cries arouse the entire forest. Hyenas were considered timid animals; however, all those who talked about animals and hunting showed regard for the lion, the master, whose nobility is evident even in the way he walks. Birama stared at Papa Djigui for a long while; he moved his lips but no words came out.

After a while, encouraged by the fact that his uncle was in a good mood, the young man from town said to him, without looking up:

"I'd like to be at the vigil this evening."

Papa Djigui's face fell.

"No," he replied curtly, "Why do you want to go?"

"I'd like to go with you just as Sibiri used to when he was here."

Papa Djigui did not answer. He looked worried.

"Yes," he thought, "you're my nephew just like Sibiri. But you've been with the whites; you speak their language and behave like them. Of course, I'm the leader, and if I take you along no one will question your presence."

Papa Djigui also felt that his companions would admire him even more if he were to say to them: "Here's my son; he was with the whites for seven years and now he has come back to us." He smiled at the idea as he stroked his beard.

"Yes," he said to himself again, "I'll tell them: 'He was with the whites for seven years and now he has come back to us.'"

And I'll also say: "No matter how long a tree trunk stands in water, it will never change into a crocodile."³¹

Although Papa Djigui had nothing against the whites, he did not expect anything from them either. In fact, he and the other old men felt it would be better for the whites to stay in town and never come to the village. The white man wants to know everything; he forgets nothing, not even the cows..

"How many children and cattle do you have? Do you have a gun? etc. "

* * *

The younger villagers had finished dancing. It was about 1 a.m. Everything was still. Toads were croaking repeatedly for rain. The river moaned on. Dressed in an unusual way, Papa Djigui came to get Birama.

"It's time, come along."

A horn had just blared out; seven drumbeats followed. Birama had been "prepared" by his uncle. He was also queerly dressed. At the door of his hut, he repeated what the hunter said in a solemn voice:

"My eyes will see, but my mouth will remain shut."

"Nothing about you will surprise me."

"You came before me in everything."

"May your power one day live in me so that I can pass it on to my obedient child."

When these words were uttered, the hut filled with smoke. Voices could be heard.

"But...", said Birama.

Papa Djigui began to laugh.

In a split second, the smoke disappeared.

Birama stared inquiringly at his uncle. They smiled at each other, and Papa Djigui set off. Birama was already becoming afraid. However, he plucked up his courage. Seeing his uncle's firm treads and red cap, he seemed to recall the words of the griot:³² "He who is on the elephant's back should not be afraid of the dew."³³

"I'm happy I met Tiéman," Kany said to herself when she was alone. "He's really kind and gives sound advice. Moreover, he must be very knowledgeable to have gained Papa Djigui's friendship. Ah! if all the town elders were like him, the younger generation would have good counselors. Papa Djigui likes him very much."

"This is my friend, Tiéman, the medical aide," he had said to us. "We don't agree on everything; however, this is normal, because there is usually more than one path leading down to the river."³⁴ Tiéman is often as wise as the old folks. It has been said, and rightly so, that "the young man who has travelled through a hundred villages is as wise as the old man who has lived for a hundred years."³⁵

Tiéman is indeed a wise man; he is educated and, as a soldier, he travelled across Europe. However, it is hard to understand why, on the verge of obtaining his teacher's diploma, he preferred to be a village nurse. He is certainly far more educated than most clerks in town. Oh, I wish I had known him earlier. He would have talked to me at great length about all the countries he

visited. I have confidence in him. He promised me he would have a talk with Papa Djigui. He said:

"I'll do my best to convince the old man to allow you to continue your studies. Famagan will then turn his attention elsewhere and you'll be with Samou again." Ah Tiéman! I am indeed lucky to be able to continue my studies and be with Samou."

Samou, if only you knew what is brewing now! For something is certainly brewing. If only I could write to you! However, in this secluded place, it is impossible. The postman delivers mail only once a fortnight and letters often get lost en route. I would have sent a letter through anyone going to town, but since my arrival here no one has left the village yet.

I would so like to know what has happened in town since I left, what changes have taken place and what you are doing!

"The boy doesn't look well. Some wicked person must have cast an evil spell on him. Coumba, you ought to consult Ousmane, the marabout."

Massa, the fruit vendor, had come to visit Mama Coumba. She had noticed that Samou had been behaving queerly for some time. Other women living nearby had also noticed the change in him. They had been whispering about it among themselves for a long time. Massa, being one of Mama Coumba's friends, had decided to have a word with her about it.

Since Kany had left the town, Samou, who usually liked teasing the old women and listened patiently to their stories, did no more than greet them. He no longer joined his young companions at their favorite haunts.

Mama Coumba was quite aware of the reason for Samou's strange behaviour. She tried to talk to her son about it, but Samou always maintained that nothing was wrong and that he was quite well. He refused to take part in the activities of the quarter³⁶ until two events caused quite a stir in town.

The first event was the outbreak of cerebro-spinal meningitis. It had started in the northern quarters and had gradually spread to all the other quarters of the town. According to the old folk, this disease had been unknown in Africa before the war and had been brought back from the white men's country by black soldiers.

"Our ancestors had never mentioned the disease; it is a European disease."

"The wooden neck", as cerebro-spinal meningitis was nicknamed, caused deep distress in town. Children complained of headache, vomited and died, and nothing could be done to help them. There were more and more cries of pain and panic and the whole town was plunged into mourning.

The streets in the native quarters, usually lit by the fruit vendors' small lamps, now remained very dark. The vendors no longer sold their produce in the streets. Drumming could no longer be heard and the children, who usually danced with joy after the evening meal, could no longer be seen. The old folk, not knowing what to do

next, complained bitterly about what they considered a curse because the disease seemed to attack mostly the young.

"This is a curse!", the elders exclaimed, "Those who are supposed to bury us are dying before us; what is to become of us?"

A heavy silence, broken from time to time by the cries of women in distress, hung over the town. Mourning spread from hut to hut, and each family could do nothing but wait for its own turn. Sacrifices were offered, a public prayer session was organized and that evening, the voice of Fadiga, the muezzin, sounded pathetic. All the old folk were there, deep in meditation and looking distressed. As Fadiga, the muezzin, stood on the roof of the mosque, his white figure looked somewhat divine. While his words were no different from those he usually uttered, his voice communicated deep emotion and his words seemed to express the last hope. All the old people prayed and entreated God. The elders were not afraid of death; they had already lived a good long life. They were asking the Almighty that evening to select cerebro-spinal

meningitis victims from among the old people who had nothing more to look forward to after having gone through childhood and acquired wisdom, and to spare the young who still had much to accomplish in the future. In this way, the law of nature would be respected.

Samou had broken through his reserve. The old folk repeatedly asked him what caused the disease and how it could be prevented. Since Samou was not familiar with this branch of knowledge, he could tell them no more than what he had learnt in school.

He had learnt that the disease was caused by a microbe and that it could be prevented if people watered their floors before sweeping them.³⁷

After achieving its evil goals, the spirit of the disease withdrew, leaving behind people plunged in mourning and despair.

The second event had already been brewing for a long time. It was first announced by soldiers returning from the war.

"We were told in Europe that we would all be granted

citizenship³⁸ soon," they said. "There'll no more be forced labour. In the army, there'll be no discrimination between the soldiers. All soldiers will wear the same uniforms and will be entitled to equal treatment. White and black children will attend the same schools. Justice will be dispensed without discrimination and there will be no imprisonment without trial. We'll all be happy soon."

The news had quickly spread. However, the older generation remained sceptical because they felt this was just one of those rumours with which they had grown familiar. In this respect, their attitude was the direct opposite of the enthusiasm shown by the young people who commented over and over on the news. For the younger generation, all this was so marvellous...

The news caused a bit of a stir in town; then, all of a sudden, no one talked about it again. It seemed as if people had forgotten all about it.

Once the cerebro-spinal meningitis had been eliminated, the first travellers from the West had announced that there

would be far-reaching changes. This time, the news had been confirmed by some clerks and the people took the issue very seriously.

In the market, in front of shops and in the squares, people discussed the matter animatedly, excitedly.

In the offices, everyone talked only about the changes, which now seemed certain. Some clerks even claimed to have read about them in official dispatches.

The town grew more and more excited. Young people in the dance halls, the women on their way to the market, the old folk in their group, in short, people everywhere, talked about nothing else but the days when there would no longer be forced labour, about nothing but the age of freedom and justice.

One Sunday morning, people gathered in the large square of the quarter. The crowd became increasingly excited and dense. They recalled their days of misery, which were said to be coming to an end. They talked to each other about their own special troubles. They murmured and muttered. It was obvious that they were waiting

for something. Suddenly, as if by magic, everyone fell silent. The people looked up. Makhan, one of the boys who lived in the quarter, had just climbed up on to a roof opposite the crowd.

"We want justice and equality," he yelled. "We don't want to remain subordinate for ever. We want equal treatment for everyone. We no longer want to be subjects."

The words came as a bombshell to everyone. Everyone looked around; no one moved. Policemen were also there, but they did not react to Makhan's speech; they merely listened and even seemed to agree with him. It was indeed hard to believe that anyone could voice such ideas aloud and not be arrested. But nothing happened and no one moved. Makhan was still there in front of them, not in prison. Times had indeed changed.

"Equal pay for equal work. We're fed up with working for nothing; we now want justice."

The crowd roared and everyone turned towards Makhan.

Makhan had spoken. He had shouted out in public what

just the day before was said only among very close relatives. Yet nothing had happened. Makhan was indeed a man and times had indeed changed.

It was the dawn of a new era. The villagers who had escaped to town were already planning to go home to their relatives because forced labour was going to be abolished. They would become free men and would, henceforth, be protected by the law. The clerks were happy because they would no longer be treated as inferiors and they would be paid the wages they deserved. The young people would be allowed to study in fields of their choice; they would no longer be limited only to certain fields. Black soldiers would enjoy the same privileges as white soldiers. In fact, everyone would be happy. The drumbeats grew louder.

Sidi had run over to Samou's hut. "Come", he had said, "the time has come..." They had listened with delight to what Makhan had to say. Next to Sidi stood a white man, smoking his pipe as he listened. It was Mr. Donzano, their former school headmaster. After the speech, he turned to his former pupils and had a short conversation with them.

"Good morning, young men."

"Good morning, Sir."

"Did you hear what he said?"

"Yes, Sir."

"What do you think about it?"

"Well..."

"He's right; I agree with him."

This last statement surprised Sidi and Samou.

"You should come to my house," Mr. Donzano went on. "We'll talk about all this."

Indeed, everything had changed. It was the first time Mr. Danzano talked so familiarly to his pupils. They talked about electing representatives.

"You see, young men, I agree completely with Mr. Makhàn but I think we should proceed with caution. We must not rush things."

"Sir, it's a matter of life and death. The people are suffering."

"There is no doubt that many wrongs have to be redressed, but don't you think it is too early to set up councils in this country?"

"But, Sir, we've always had councils in Africa. Anarchy and slavery were not our only heritage before the coming of the Europeans."

"Yes, I agree, but our system is totally new to you."

"Yes, but you are wrong in trying to establish your system integrally here; it would take us a very long time to adapt to it. Admittedly, we had no machines before the coming of the Europeans, but our society was well organized."

"Yes, I agree with you, but what do the old people want?"

And Mr. Donzano took out a notebook and a pencil.

"You see, Sir, before the coming of the Europeans,

the old people had their say in village affairs and the chief was advised by a council of notables. Nowadays, however, we only have a chief, who receives and carries out orders from the white administrator."

"Yes, but the old people are illiterate; how do you expect them to manage village affairs?"

"In most cases the chief is also illiterate, Sir. But although the old people can't read or write, they, more than anyone else, know the needs of their communities. Councils of notables should be set up and a government employee appointed to each of them to deal with modern matters. We need to be involved in the management of town and village affairs.

Forced labour must be abolished and discrimination eliminated if we want people to live in harmony with each other."

"Yes, you can rely on me. I've always held you in high esteem. Tell everyone that they can count on me as a friend."

"You see, Samou, I told you that everything would change. We can now enjoy the good life."

Sidi was speaking and gesticulating in the street. He was making plans and talking about his studies. Samou, on the other hand, was not as enthusiastic; he was thinking of Kany. Sidi finally noticed his lack of interest.

"Don't worry," he said to Samou, "Papa Benfa will now understand that you have a bright future. Famagan will certainly be afraid; you'll see."

"Sidi may be right," Samou thought, when he was alone at home. "Papa Benfa will understand that times have changed. He'll understand that I can and will be somebody one day. Everything is turning out all right. Ah, if only I could tell Kany the good news, if only I could talk to her about everything, how happy she'd be!"

"I've come to take you along to the festival. The prelude to the third dance, the boatmen's festival, begins today."

As Tiéman spoke, Kany stared at him. Birama was chatting with Papa Djigui. The sky was as blue as the river at twilight. The moon was constantly playing hide and seek with the clouds.

From afar, the ominous cries of the hyena, the most timid of the wild animals, could be heard.

A few women whose torsos were coated with shea butter, laughed as they walked past Tiéman and his friends.

A lion roared. Sheep and goats ruminating along the low walls of the huts dispersed in fright.

"You are the master of the bush. With your golden mane, you are the envy of the hunters."

Birama and Kany turned around. A few metres away from them stood the person who had just spoken. He was a short, shabbily-dressed old man, who held a small guitar, a type of calabash covered with lizard skin over which a

horse's mane was stretched. The lion roared again and the little old man, with his face radiant and his nostrils dilated, continued:

"While the king has his sceptre, you have your mane and you move as gracefully as dancers performing the royal dance."

A pile of wood was burning and crackling in the middle of the circle formed by an excited and noisy crowd. The drumming had not yet begun. The women were growing impatient; they were even singing and dancing. Everyone was anxiously waiting for the drumming and dancing to begin. Suddenly, a man stripped to his waist and wearing a strange mask moved into the centre of the circle, pulling along a reluctant ram. As if by magic, everyone fell silent. The man stood opposite the drums, placed his foot on the rope to which the ram was attached and raised his arms to the sky. He then turned to the women, made the same gesture and left the scene. Immediately after he was gone, the spectators applauded. Horns sounded. The ground seemed to quake, trees shook, flutes were blown and the drums rumbled. The sounds produced by all these instruments intermingled

and signalled to neighbouring villages that the third dance had begun.

About half a dozen girls danced forward. An equal number of boys walked toward them. Around the fire, black torsos were dancing and black faces were beaming, lit up by the moonlight and radiant smiles.

"Of course, you don't have such festivals in town," Tiéman said with childlike pride.

"I didn't usually take part in festivals," Birama replied without taking his eyes off the dancers.

"Why?"

"Well,..."

"Really! I can see it doesn't interest you. Of course, you're not the only one; all educated young people are like you."

Tiéman drew closer to Birama and put his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"You're wrong, my dear fellow! We have very fine dances and beautiful music."

Birama feigned surprise. He looked at Tiéman dumbly.

"You really are wrong in abandoning everything traditional and imitating the Europeans in every aspect," the nurse insisted. "You see, the European represents only one of the many human races. You don't have to be European. You don't have to change your identity."

Birama tried to put in a word, but could not, as Tiéman went on:

"You need not abandon your own environment. Rather, you should try to improve on it. Try to save what should be saved. Try and add your own contribution to our culture. You could carve an ebony figure or paint our beautiful scenery, for instance."

Tiéman seemed to be oblivious to the drumming. He uttered his final words with a very special emotion. He then filled his clay pipe with tobacco and lit it.

"Of course, you need not accept everything. You

should make a choice. Customs are intended to serve man, not enslave him. Be realistic; do away with everything that ties man down and hinders his progress. If you love your people as you claim and are not saying so merely to serve your own selfish ends, you'll be courageous enough to overcome their shortcomings and praise their good qualities.

I was once like you. When I was your age, I didn't know these things. However, one day I realized my mistake. At that time, I was a soldier in Europe. There was a party in the regiment and we were asked to perform a traditional dance or song. I didn't know any of our dances or songs. Nor was I the only one in that situation; almost all of my educated friends were like me. The whites danced; lawyers, teachers, engineers and doctors wore their traditional dresses and sang in their languages."

"We were somewhat distressed and what is more, we were ashamed to tell the whites that we didn't know any of our traditional songs and dances."

"Fortunately, we weren't the only ones from Africa

in that regiment; there were other soldiers to whom we scornfully referred as ignoramuses. However, on that day, we were proud of them; we were proud to watch them dancing joyfully to the drumbeats. We felt that they at least had something special to offer the Europeans; we felt that our country was well represented by them."

"What would we have done if they hadn't been among us? We would perhaps have joined the Europeans in their dances! That day I realized that mankind would indeed be poor if all of us became Europeans. On such occasions, each person should be able to perform the songs and dances typical of his culture."

Birama listened without taking his eyes off the dancing. The drumming slowed down. Birama turned to Tiéman and asked:

"Is it over?"

"No, it has just started. The old folk are now going to perform their own dance; the leaders of the occupational groups will file past. Listen!"

The drumming resumed with a new beat and everyone knelt down.

An old man, carrying a hoe, came up to the stage.

"These are the farmers," Tiéman murmured.

The drumbeats became faint. The old man moved to the centre of the circle, yelled, threw away the hoe and raised his arms to the sky. The hoe began to spin as if invisible hands were controlling it.

"Fantastic!", Birama shouted out to his sister. "Did you see that?"

The drums rumbled on. The old man picked up the hoe, threw it up into the air seven times and yelled again. The people looked up. The hoe did not fall back to the ground and, while the people looked for it in the air, the old man knelt down, motionless, in front of the drums. After a moment, he stood up, carrying the hoe on his shoulder.

"That's terrific!", Birama exclaimed.

The spectators began murmuring.

Small loud-sounding drums signalled the arrival of the weavers. A tall wizened old man holding a loin-cloth made his appearance on the stage. The drumbeats became faint once again.

The loincloth twisted and stretched out as the leader shouted. Birama watched in silence; there was no use his speaking. He could not help starting with surprise when Papa Djigui, wearing his hunters' clothes, made his appearance with his gun as the horns were blown.

"That's him," Kany said, "look at him".



IV. NOTES

1. In English, it is normally not necessary to specify that people are carrying suitcases "in their hands" since this information is implied by the fact that suitcases are usually carried in this manner.

However, in Mali, as in the rest of Africa, suitcases are carried either on the head or with one's hand depending on their size and weight. Small and light suitcases are carried in hand while large and heavy suitcases are carried on the head. Thus, in this context, it is necessary to specify that Birama and Kany are carrying their suitcases in their hands as this information gives an idea of the size and weight of their suitcases.

2. The word "père" is used before a proper name in French to refer to a reverend father or an old man (cf. the Petit Robert and Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary). In Africa, the use of the word "père" before a proper name, when the person named is not a priest, is a sign not only of old age but also of the respect due to old age. Hence the venerable old characters of Badian's novel such as Djigui and Benfa are called "le père Djigui" and "le père Benfa".

The English equivalent of "le père X" given in Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary, "old X", does not cover the element of respect which is very important in the African context. I have therefore rendered "le père Djigui" by "Papa Djigui" because the word "papa" followed by a proper name is often used in English-speaking Cameroon as a sign of respect for old men.

3. The concept of "marché du soir" is typical of African towns. In the towns, markets are held everyday all day. However, the section of the market where foodstuffs such as fish, vegetables, and fruits are sold is usually particularly busy in the evenings when farmers and fishermen from surrounding villages bring their produce to sell in town. Late in the evening, vendors sell their produce along the busy streets because people usually leave the market by this time. Seydou Badian refers to this late "marché du soir" in his novel: "Les rues du quartier indigène s'animaient. C'était l'heure où s'organisent les-marchés du soir. Les jeunes filles passaient, nonchalantes, des paniers d'oranges ou de bananes sur la tête. Dans le brouhaha de la foule, on distinguait de temps en

temps les cris des marchandes." (pp. 63-64).

In the extract, there is so much activity on the bank that Badian compares it to the market in town in the evenings when people are busy selling and buying freshly arrived produce and food. I have decided to translate "marché du soir" by "evening market" to distinguish it from the normal market held all day.

4. In Africa, especially in the villages, transportation fares are not fixed but are negotiable between the passenger and the vehicle owner or boatman. There is much competition among the owners and boatmen to attract passengers. This is done by lowering fares and calling out the "bargain fares" to passengers. Passengers tend to bargain over the fares and obviously choose to travel with the one offering the lowest fares.

5. The term "calebasse" is defined in the Petit Robert as "fruit du calabassier et de cucurbitacées qui, vidé et séché, peut servir de récipient." Calabashes may be used as containers for fetching water, storing cowries, seeds, etc. (cf. "Tiekoura s'agenouilla devant une des idoles, se releva et vint prendre derrière la femme du père Benfa

une calebasse remplie de cauris.", Seydou Badian, Sous l'orage, pp. 48-49). A calabash may be shaped as a bowl or a cup (cf. "... prit une calabasse taillée en gobelet...", Ferdinand Oyono, Le vieux nègre et la médaille, p. 42).

I have rendered the term "calebasse" by "calabash" in English, which is one of three equivalents proposed by Harrap's: calabash, gourd and water-bottle. "Water-bottle" is clearly inappropriate, if one wants to preserve local colour, since it suggests neither the form of the "calebasse" (the shell of a fruit) nor the multiple uses it is put to in Africa. While "gourd" and "calabash" both designate the shell of a fruit that can be used as a utensil, I have opted for "calabash" as this is the term used in other good translations of African works. Thus in his translation of Mongo Beti's Mission Terminée, Peter Green renders "Ce matin-là, je venais juste de terminer mon petit déjeuner lorsque notre homme entra, portant une calebasse suspendue à son épaule par une cordelette" (p. 142) by "I had just finished breakfast that morning when in he came, a calabash slung from one shoulder by a cord." (p. 100). In John Reed's English translation of Ferdinand Oyono's Le vieux

nègre et la médaille, "calebasse" is also rendered by "calabash": "...prit une calebasse taillée en gobelet..." (p. 42) is translated in The Old Man and the Medal as "... picked up a calabash which had been shaped to serve as a cup..." (p. 26).

6. This exclamation, which is typically African, has been maintained in the translation in order to preserve the local colour of the original text. The exclamation usually expresses a combination of surprise and happiness. In this context, it reveals the grandmother's feelings on meeting her grandchildren, whom she has not seen before and whom she did not expect to see.

7. The term "rônier", which is not found in common French dictionaries such as the Petit Robert, is described by Mildred Mortimer in Contes Africains as "a type of palm tree." (p. xv). This tree is valued for its durable wood, its fruit used for making oil and its sap which yields a type of drink. It is a tree native to Africa.

Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary proposes "palmyra" as the English equivalent for "rônier".

However, "palmyra", which is not commonly used, seems too scientific a term for a literary text like the present one.

I have therefore based my translation on the definition of "rônier" and rendered it by the generic word "palm tree" (although "rônier" is a specific type of palm tree).

This modulation (the whole for the part - cf. Vinay et Darbelnet, Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais, §75-76) facilitates comprehension on the part of the reader without lengthy explanations, and still preserves local colour to a large extent.

8. During the colonial period in Mali, hunters had to have gun permits before they could use their guns for hunting. These permits were valid only for short periods of time and so had to be renewed when they expired. As the extract implies, these renewals took place at the commandant's office.

I have decided to make this information explicit in the translation of "va-et-vient dont son seul fusil était la cause" (cf. Vinay et Darbelnet, Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais, (§ 151), since a literal.

translation of this would be meaningless to most readers and since I could make the explicitation in this context without any lengthy explanation.

9. The term "veillée" is defined in the Petit Robert as "temps qui s'écoule entre le moment du repas du soir et celui du coucher, consacré à des réunions familiales ou de voisinage (surtout dans les campagnes)". In Mali, the "veillée" is held in groups based on sex and age. Very often, the men form a group in which they talk about the day's activities and plan the next day or even the future. The women also form a group to talk about affairs that concern them. The children listen to stories and legends told by their grandparents; the stories usually recount the deeds of courageous and famous men and their morals contribute to the children's education, encouraging them to imitate the good characters. Sometimes, members of two or more families join together for the "veillée" and the groups may sit either by the fire, in the courtyard or in one of the huts.

Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary proposes "evening (spent in company) sitting over the fire"

as the English equivalent for "veillée". However, this equivalent is a rather long phrase difficult to integrate into the sentence. Moreover, it does not totally cover the complex concept of "veillée" in Africa (evening, get-together, discussions or stories, by the fire or in the courtyard or in a hut).

Although the term "veillée" designates a complex concept, it is not necessary in this context to transfer all the elements covered by the term, which would result in a lengthy explicitation. I have therefore decided to render "veillée" by "evening get-together" which brings out the important elements of the term in the context and has the advantage of being shorter than the descriptive equivalent proposed by Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary.

10. In Mali, hunters are believed to have supernatural powers which enable them to kill wild animals. (cf. Bokar N'diayé, Groupes ethniques au Mali, p. 126). They possess amulets which make them invisible to wild animals. Although hunters have to undergo an initiation rite to be accepted as members of the occupational group, the super-

natural powers and amulets of great hunters are usually passed on to their children. These powers therefore become a property of the family. In this context, Badian indicates that, although the powers have already been passed on to Papa Djigui, he does not use them.

11. Usually, in French, in response to a question about the family's health, the answer is "tout le monde se porte bien." In this context, however, Badian puts into the mouth of Birama the Bambara form of response "la paix est chez nous". In other words, Badian has translated literally into French the response used in the Bambara language, probably to provide local colour.

In keeping with Badian's intention and my own to maintain local colour, I have translated the Bambara form of response presented in French literally into English, rather than render the meaning underlying "la paix est chez nous" by a more natural English equivalent such as "everyone's fine".

12. In this context, "les chefs et notables du village" include the village chief, the quarter heads ("chefs de quartier") who head the various quarters which make up the village (cf. Pollet and Winter, La société Soninké, p. 273), the leaders of occupational groups such as hunters, weavers, etc. ("les maîtres de corporations", Seydou Badian, Sous l'orage, p. 145), and heads of extended families.

I have rendered the general expression "chefs et notables du village" by the equally general equivalent "chiefs and notables of the village", which allows for the inclusion of all the persons referred to above who are regarded as distinguished persons in the village.

13. The taxes referred to in this context are the poll taxes which were paid by every man. The poll tax was a fixed amount of money which had to be paid every year. Since most men in the villages were poor, their children had to go to the towns in search of jobs in order to be able to pay their taxes.

14. The word "garde" in French normally refers to a guard, watchman, guardsman, etc. (cf. Petit Robert and Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary). In this context, "gardes" has a more specific meaning. The term refers to the policemen whom the administrative authorities during the colonial period in Mali took along on their visits to the various villages of their administrative units. These policemen served as their bodyguards and symbolized their power.

I have rendered "garde" by "bodyguard" in this context taking into account the colonial situation even though "bodyguard" is usually rendered in French by "garde du corps".

15. "Tara" is defined in the Petit Robert as "en Afrique noire, lit bas fait de fibres végétales." However, Bernard Courteille in Nés de la brousse describes "tara" as "chaise longue en bambou, de fabrication locale." (p. 188). In Sous l'orage, it is evident that "tara" is a chair which is long and large enough to be used as a bed and is sometimes used by women as a place for storing their calabash bowls and cups. (cf. "Le père Benfa s'installa sur le petit

tara qui dans la journée portait les calebasses de maman Tené." p. 13).

The word "tara" is not found in Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary, and in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, "tara" is given only as a variant of the totally different word "taro". Since a "tara" is found only in Africa and there is no English word that covers the concept conveyed by the term, I have decided to borrow the term in English.

16. Among the Bambaras in Mali, men and women of the same family live in separate huts. Usually, the women share huts with the girls and young children while the men and boys lodge together. Mongo Beti in Mission Terminée alludes to this practice which is also very common in the villages in Cameroon (cf. "la case des hommes", p. 244).

In this context, Birama is considered a big boy and so he is asked to stay with the men, while Kany stays with the women:

17. The English equivalent of "grande pêche" is given in Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary as

"high-sea fishing". However, in Mali, "grande pêche" denotes quite a different type of fishing.

Pollet and Winter indicate in La société Soninké (pp.327-328) that it is fishing done by a large group of people in the river, at one particular time of the year. The date for the "grande pêche" is fixed by the village chief when the level of the backwaters of the river is low, and everybody is informed of it, for it is a special group occasion. Before the fishing starts, sacrifices are offered to the spirits to ask for their protection and an abundant catch. At the end of the "grande pêche", everyone takes his own catch home.

The "grande pêche" is different from ordinary fishing which is carried on when the level of the backwaters is high. When the water level is high, villagers are allowed to fish as and when they like. However, when the water level is low, they are only allowed to fish all together on a fixed day which becomes a ceremonial occasion.

There is no fixed English equivalent for "grande pêche" in the sense I have described. My translation is based on the description given by Pollet and Winter.

Although "grande pêche" covers a complex concept (fishing, collective, sacrifices, once a year, low water level), it does not seem necessary in this context (which enumerates various festive occasions) to get across all the elements covered by the term, which could only be done in the text by a lengthy explicitation. So I have decided to render it by "group fishing" which allows a distinction to be made between this type of fishing and the other main type of fishing in Mali - individual fishing.

18. The term "battue" is defined in the Petit Robert as "action de battre les taillis, les bois pour en faire sortir le gibier". However, the word "battue" in Mali denotes a much more complex concept. "Battues" are hunts practised by a group of people, mainly in the dry season, using different methods. They are usually accompanied by ceremonies and involve priests as well as hunters. Bokar N'diayé explains in Groupe ethniques au Mali (pp. 339-341) that, before the hunt, a priest, who is a member of the hunting party, offers a sacrifice to ask the spirits to protect the hunters against wild animals and any other accidents and to make the hunt successful. Then the hunt

begins. Different methods are used to scare out wild animals: hunters may beat the bushes, they may shout and make a noise with various instruments, or they may decide to encircle an area of the forest or bush with fire in order to drive the animals out towards the hunters who then kill them. After the hunt, the priest offers a sacrifice to thank the spirits for a successful hunt, and the game is shared according to traditional customs. The hunt may go on for several days. "Battue" in Mali therefore involves killing, group work, fire or shouts, sacrifices, the dry season.

Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary

proposes "battue" as the English equivalent of "battue" in French. "Battue" in English is defined by Webster's Third New International Dictionary as a hunt which involves "the driving or drawing out of game from cover, especially by beating woods and bushes." However, as its definition reveals, "battue" in English does not adequately cover the Malian concept of "battue". I have therefore decided to render "battue" by the term "collective hunting" which, although it does not present all aspects of "battue" as

practised in Mali, does serve to distinguish it from the other type of hunting practised in Mali - private or individual hunting.

19. "Boubou" is defined by Bokar N'diaye in Groupe ethniques au Mali (p.169) as "genre de tunique courte s'arrêtant aux genoux ou un peu plus bas." In Mali, there are boubous for specific occasions; usually, coloured boubous are worn to work while white boubous are worn to celebrations and festivals.

Although "boubou" is found in the Petit Robert ("longue tunique portée par les Noirs d'Afrique."), the word is not found in Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary or in the Robert Collins. So there is evidently no consecrated English equivalent for the term. Since the type of clothing denoted by "boubou" is typical of Africa, I have decided to use the word "boubou" in the sense of a particular type of clothing in English. It should be noted that the word "boubou" exists in English (cf. Webster's Third New International Dictionary) but with a different meaning: "any of several African shrikes." However, the context in which I have used "boubou" with

the meaning of "a particular article of clothing" eliminates any possibility of "boubou" being considered as a type of bird (cf. R.P. Roberts, "Context in Translation", Proceedings of the 10th Symposium of the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics, May 1979, pp. 117-132).

20. The word "camisole" is defined in the Petit Robert as "vêtement court, à manches, porté sur la chemise." However, in Mali, "camisole" is "une sorte de blouse avec ou sans manches." (cf. Bokar N'diayé, Groupes ethniques au Mali, p. 201). It is worn by Malian women over loin-cloths which are tied around their waist and which reach just below the knees.

I have translated "camisole" by "blouse" which Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines as "a usually loose-fitting garment covering the body from the neck to the waist or just below, made with or without a collar, sleeves, or belt and worn over or tucked inside a waistband (as of a skirt)". "Blouse" is obviously an approximate English equivalent for the type of clothing worn by Malian women. However, it is widely used in English-speaking Cameroon to designate an article of clothing similar to the Malian "camisole".

21. In Mali and most of Africa, especially in the villages, people do not clean their teeth using toothbrushes and toothpaste. They use small sticks with pointed tips to remove particles of food from their teeth early in the morning or whenever food particles get stuck between their teeth. They "pick their teeth" instead of "brushing" them.

22. The French word "soigneur" is defined in the Petit Robert as "celui qui est chargé de soigner un athlète, un sportif (boxeurs, catcheurs)". In Africa, however, a "soigneur" has nothing to do with sports; the term denotes a traditional healer or a person in charge of a village dispensary. The "soigneur" usually gives first aid treatment, attends to minor diseases and dresses wounds. He is not a highly qualified medical professional; very often, he has received only primary school education, after which he has undergone a short training in first aid.

It is obvious that Badian's "soigneur" in the novel is in charge of the village dispensary (cf. "Kany ne quittait pas des yeux le sentier du dispensaire", p.149 Kany is waiting for "Tiéman-le-Soigneur").

I have based my translation on the functions of a "soigneur" in Africa, and have translated it as "medical aide", which gives an idea of his rôle.

23. Papa Djigui gives Birama advice on hospitality and generosity to strangers using images which are quite familiar to Malians. Strangers should be offered food (symbolized here by rice which is a common food of Malians) and shelter (symbolized by a large tree whose shade is a refuge from the heat of the sun for the traveller). A selfish man is compared to a tree invaded by red ants, which is a familiar sight in Mali; people avoid the shade provided by such a tree because of the ants.

I have rendered the advice literally, in order to preserve the "flavour" of Mali, by "...you must open your door to strangers, because cooked rice is for everyone. Man is somewhat like a large tree; every traveller is entitled to its shade. When no one comes to your door, that's because you are like a tree invaded by red ants; travellers will stay away from you."

24. This is a Malian proverb which has been translated literally into French by the author of the source text.

It means that evil deeds or actions usually succeed or prosper, because they seem to be fostered by the gods.

The proverb is rooted in the Bambara belief in one sovereign and infinite God (see General Cultural Context of the Extract) and in several secondary gods. As Bokar N'diaye indicates in Groupes ethniques au Mali, these secondary gods are the ancestral spirits: "Ces divinités auxiliaires, bienveillantes ou malveillantes, de puissances variables, sont hiérarchisées. Les...animistes et spiritualistes les confondent souvent avec les esprits ancestraux." (p.271).

I have rendered the proverb literally into English by "the gods often help those who are out to destroy" in order to preserve the local colour of Mali.

25. As indicated in the general cultural context of the extract, the Bambaras build two types of huts: rectangular or square huts with flat roofs, and round huts with conical thatched roofs. The few rectangular or square huts in the village are owned by the rich villagers. Since Papa Djigui is a distinguished person in the village, it is very likely that he has this type of hut. One can therefore guess that he is standing on one of the flat roofs.

Bokar N'diayé in Groupe ethniques au Mali describes how square or rectangular huts with flat roofs are built (p.123). They are built with sun-dried mud bricks. The roof is supported by Y-shaped sticks which are stuck into the ground and on which wooden beams are placed to prop rafters on the walls. The framework is covered with mats on which is applied earth mixed with shea butter. The flat roof is slightly inclined to let rain water drain away through wooden spouts.

26. Among the Bambaras, hunters are given red caps at their initiation into the hunters' society. Members of the society are recognized by their red caps and, as indicated in this context, a buffalo tail.

27. "Cauri", rendered by "cowry" in English (cf. Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary), is described by Mildred Mortimer in Contes Africains (p.164) as "coquillage utilisé pour ses propriétés magiques et pour embellir; souvent attaché aux sculptures et aux masques africaines." In traditional African society, cowries were used as money. Today, cowries are used mainly in fortune telling or as part of the bride price in certain

cases. Charles Monteil, in Les Bambara du Segou et du Kaarta, describes how cowries are used in fortune telling:

"Pour consulter le sort, ... le Bambara prend ses cauris en main et, à faible hauteur, les répand au sol: il lit la réponse dans la disposition générale de l'ensemble et aussi dans la position relative des cauris les uns par rapport aux autres..." (p.136). Badian also alludes to the use of cauris in fortune telling in his novel: "Assis sur une vieille peau de mouton, le regard fixé au sol où s'éparpillaient des cauris, Tiekoura s'entretenait avec les puissances invisibles" (p.45).

28. "Noix de cola" is described by Bernard Courteille in Nés de la brousse as "produit tonique et stimulant, d'un goût amer très apprécié. Se présente sous la forme d'une grosse noix. Sert à la fabrication du coca-cola." (p.187).

In Mali, kola nuts are offered in traditional religious rites and sacrifices. They may also form part of the bride price, and are usually offered to strangers and visitors as a symbol of hospitality. In Sous l'orage, Badian refers to its use on solemn occasions and at festivals (cf. "La vue de ces fruits [noix de cola] orienta les esprits vers

une cérémonie, probablement un mariage...", p.34; "La cola avait donné à l'assemblée un cachet de solennité", p.34). In addition, kola nuts are used in fortune telling; Charles Monteil in Les Bambara du Segou et du Kaarta (p.136) describes how Malians use the nuts in foretelling the future: after breaking the nut into pieces, the fortune teller throws them on the ground and his interpretation depends on the position of the pieces.

Although in Peter Green's translation of Mongo Beti's Mission Terminée "noix de cola" (p.95) is rendered by "chewing gum" (p.64), I have decided to translate "noix de cola" by "kola nut" which is a term that exists in English with a meaning that corresponds to the French term: "the bitter caffeine-containing seed of a kola tree that is approximately the size of a chestnut and is chewed as a condiment and stimulant" (cf. Webster's Third New International Dictionary). The word "chewing gum", although obviously used by Peter Green as a means of adapting an African text to suit non-African English-speakers, is in fact a mistranslation of "noix de cola".

29. Each year, Bambara hunters organize a special event which lasts a whole night ("veillée"). During the "veillée", new members are initiated into the hunters' society and there is much feasting and dancing. Sacrifices are also offered to the spirits to thank them for their protection during hunts in the past year and to ask for protection during the coming year. In an earlier section of Sous l'orage, Seydou Badian tries to capture the atmosphere at this special "veillée", which usually takes place in the bush far away from the village: "Il revoyait l'atmosphère chaude, passionnée et parfois hallucinante des veillées secrètes au cours desquelles les chasseurs rivalisent d'adresse et de magie." (p.18).

Since the "veillée" described above is different from the usual "veillée" mentioned on page 105 of the novel, I feel it is necessary to translate "veillée" in this context differently from the way I have done in the previous context (where I have rendered it as "evening get-together"). I have thus used the term "vigil", which Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary proposes as an English equivalent for "veillée". Webster's Third New International Dictionary defines "vigil" as "the act or

action of keeping awake especially at times when sleep is 'customary.' Although the "veillée" kept by Malian hunters involves much more than keeping awake (wakefulness, dancing, feasting, sacrifices, initiation, etc.), the most-important element in this context seems to be the fact that the "veillée" goes on throughout the night. I have therefore translated "veillée" by "vigil" which brings out the all-night factor.

30. "Ourani kalan" is the Bambara name for the panther which is much feared by hunters because it is a fierce animal.

31. This is another Malian proverb which has been translated literally into French by the author of the source text. The proverb means that it is impossible to change one's nature or identity even when exposed to strong outside influences. The images used are those familiar to the Malians: tree trunk and crocodile. The tree trunk, despite its rough bark which is similar to the crocodile's rough skin, cannot change into a crocodile. Similarly, despite efforts to imitate outside influences, one cannot become identical to the influences.

I have translated the proverb literally into English as "No matter how long a tree trunk stands in water, it will never change into a crocodile" in order to preserve the local colour it provides.

32. The term "aède", which, according to the Petit Robert, denotes "poète épique et récitant, dans la Grèce primitive", is used by Seydou Badian to designate what is termed a "griot" in West Africa. A "griot" is a modern-day "poet, singer, historian and story teller in West Africa" (cf. Mildred Mortimer, Contes Africains, p. xv). Griots are defenders of native traditions and are well-versed in the history of their regions and the genealogy of royal and prominent families. They tell stories and earn their living by singing the praises of wealthy families; their accompanying instruments are the lute, xylophone and drum. The word "griot" was first used in French by French anthropologists, but it is now accepted in English in West Africa although it is not found in Webster's Third New International Dictionary. I have therefore decided to translate "aède" by "griot" instead of by the equivalent "minstrel" proposed by Harrap's New Standard French and

English Dictionary, since the word "minstrel" evokes a by-gone era (cf. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, "lyric poets and singers of the Middle Ages..."), which is a connotation that the "aède" in our context does not possess.

33. This proverb is not a French one but a literal translation of a Malian proverb into French. Generally speaking, it means that one need not fear any danger if one is well protected. The choice of the images of danger (dew) and protection (elephant) reflects the Malian environment where dew is usually found on the grass early in the morning and elephants are common. People often try to avoid the dew on the grass because it is very cold and wets clothes; however, seated on an elephant's back high up from the ground, one need not fear the dew since it is far below.

I have rendered the proverb literally into English by "He who is on the elephant's back should not be afraid of the dew" in order to preserve local colour.

34. This saying is a literal translation from the Bambara language into French. It means that not everyone sees things in the same way. The image of the river (which

stands for the things we see) and the various paths leading down to it (which symbolize the various ways in which we see things, or our opinions) is rooted in the daily life of the Bambaras, who usually go to the river to fetch water or to bathe; there are several paths leading down to the river and each person takes the path most convenient to him.

I have translated the saying literally into English as "there is usually more than one path leading down to the river" in order to preserve local colour.

35. This proverb is a literal translation of a Malian proverb into French. It points out that much experience and wisdom is gained from travelling. The proverb is rooted in the Malians' belief that old men are wise because of their experience in life. Experience and wisdom acquired through extensive travels is comparable to that acquired with age.

I have decided to preserve the local colour provided by the proverb by translating it literally into English as "the young man who has travelled through a hundred villages is as wise as the old man who has lived for a

hundred years."

36. During the colonial period, towns in Mali, and most of French Africa were often divided into European and African areas or districts called "quartiers". The European "quartier" was usually clean, with wide tarred streets lined with beautiful houses; while the African or native "quartier" stood in sharp contrast with its poverty and filthiness. Badian alludes to this contrast in Sous l'orage: "Quel contraste entre ce quartier et le nôtre. On ne se croirait pas dans la même ville. Ici au moins les yeux servent à quelque chose. Regarde-moi ces rues. Elles sont larges, goudronnées, alors que les nôtres... Ici, une demi-heure après la pluie, les rues sont nettoyées et plus propres que jamais. Après la pluie, les rues des quartiers indigènes deviennent des mares, des borbiers... Je viens de compter trois lampes en moins de cent mètres et, dans tout notre quartier, il n'y en a pas une". (pp. 66-67).

In John Reed's translation of Ferdinand Oyono's Le vieux nègre et la médaille, "quartier" is rendered by "quarter" (cf. "Tous ceux qui se rendaient au travail au

quartier blanc...", Le vieux nègre et la médaille, p. 15):

"Everyone who went to work in the European quarter..."

(The Old Man and the Medal, p. 5) and "location" (cf.

"Chez Mami Titi qui habitait le quartier indigène..."

(Le vieux nègre et la médaille, p. 14): "Madam Titi lived in the African location..." (The Old Man and the Medal, p.

5). Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary proposes "district" as another equivalent for "quartier".

Both "quarter" and "district" are suitable equivalents for "quartier" in all contexts in the novel for both terms may be used to designate an area occupied by particular groups (cf. Webster's Third New International Dictionary), a very important element in the meaning of "quartier". "Location", on the other hand, has a more specific meaning: it designates a segregated area of a town or city in Africa in which natives are required to live (cf. Webster's Third New International Dictionary); it would therefore only be appropriate in certain contexts where "quartier" is used.

Since I wished to render "quartier" by the same equivalent in all contexts in the novel (in order to avoid confusing the reader by a change in terminology),

I could not use "location"; which would not have been appropriate when the "quartier" referred to was European. I was left with a choice between "quarter" and "district", both of which are equally good from the purely semantic point of view. If I have opted for "quarter", it is because the term is used more frequently in the African context than "district".

37. In Mali, the floors of village huts are usually of beaten earth. Much dust is often raised from the floors when they are being swept. To prevent the dust from rising, people have to water their floors before sweeping them.

38. During the colonial period, the great majority of Malians were considered, and treated, as French subjects and not as French citizens. They did not enjoy the rights of French citizens and suffered many injustices of colonial administration (cf. introduction to this translation). As Allan Carpenter observes in The Enchantment of Africa: Mali (p. 34), Malians could only become French citizens if they fulfilled several conditions such as having worked for ten years for the French, being French-educated, having

served in the French army. This, of course, meant that, to become French citizens, Malians had to give up their lifestyle and become "black Frenchmen".

However, by the end of the Second World War, opposition to colonial injustices led to the holding of the Brazzaville Conference in January 1944, in which "the distinction between citizens and subjects was abolished and citizenship was conferred upon all subjects of the French African Empire. Above all, the hated 'indigenat' and forced labour were also abolished." (Adu Boahen, Introduction to Francis Price's translation of God's Bits of Wood by Ousmane Sembene, p. 29).

V. CONCLUSION

A culture-oriented text may be translated, as Georges Mounin¹ suggests, either by adapting the translation to suit the readers' culture or by conveying the local colour of the source text so that readers are constantly reminded of the foreign culture described by the source text. It is this latter option that I have chosen in my translation of the extract.

My task has been both simplified and complicated by the fact that the source text in French itself presents a culture other than "French". It has been simplified to the extent that certain "translation" techniques such as "borrowing" and "calquing" have already been used by the author of the original text who is trying to present, through the medium of French, a very different type of culture. However, in certain cases, my task has been complicated by the fact that what seem to be normal French terms have been used in a particular sense by the Malian author. Be that as it may, my intention throughout has

1 Georges Mounin, Linguistique et traduction, pp. 119-120.

been to preserve the local colour of Mali, not only as evidenced in the source text but also as known by me.

In order to preserve the local colour in my translation, I have used particular translation techniques or procedures. The first and most obvious of these is borrowing². In other words, I have used in my translation certain words and expressions that are not found in general dictionaries of the English language but which have been "borrowed" from an African language.

However, most of the loan words I have used have been previously "borrowed", however infrequently, by others. Some of the loan words are already found in the French text, which itself "translates" Malian culture into French. These include the exclamation "Houl houl", which is African, and the word "tara", which depicts a typically African reality. In addition, my translation contains loan words I found used in translations of French African.

2 Peter Newmark uses the term "transcription" which covers "loan words", adoption and transfer. (Approaches to Translation, pp. 30, 75).

literary works; for example, "griot" and "boubou".

Furthermore, I have used in my translation terms which, while found in English dictionaries, are low frequency words in English. Examples of this are "calabash" and "marabout".

French terms in the source text used in a particular sense in the Malian context have been translated by me, not by the normal equivalents proposed for these terms in bilingual dictionaries, but in the sense in which they are used in the Malian context. For example, I have translated "battue", "grande pêche" and "soigneur" not as "battue", "deep-sea fishing" and "welfare man" as proposed by Harrap's New Standard French and English Dictionary, but as "collective hunting", "group fishing" and "medical aide", since the concept covered by each of these terms is more complex and even different in the Malian context. Of course, in most cases, the term I have chosen in English is only a partial rendering of the African concept, for I found it impossible to find English terms that would cover all the complexities of the "African meaning" conveyed by the French terms.

In addition to the above procedures used to translate words and terms, I have also used what Vinay and Darbelnet call "calque d'expression"³ to convey the local colour through phrases and sentences. Proverbs and greetings were already "calqued" in French from the Bambara language and I, in turn, have "calqued" in English, using the French text as a basis. Thus the Malian proverb presented in French as "Le séjour dans l'eau ne fait jamais d'un tronc d'arbre un crocodile" has been translated literally as "No matter how long a tree trunk stands in water, it will never change into a crocodile", and the Malian form of greeting presented in the source text as "La paix est chez nous" has been rendered literally by "Peace is with us at home" rather than by a more natural English equivalent.

Finally, where explicitation⁴ could be introduced without too much expansion, I have used this technique.

3 See Vinay and Darbelnet, Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais, § 33.

4 See Vinay and Darbelnet, Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais, § 151.

For example, the information implicit in "va-et-vient dont son seul fusil était la cause" is made explicit in the translation "walk all the way to the commandant's office and back just to get a gun permit".

However, instances of explicitation are rare in my translation since in most cases this procedure would have resulted in an impression of digression from the story. The techniques I have employed most frequently are borrowing and the use of low-frequency words, which could make the translation difficult to understand for readers unfamiliar with the Malian context. To help them understand the extract, I have provided an introduction placing the extract within its cultural context, as well as notes which explain specific terms and expressions. I hope that my translation with its introduction and notes will interest English-speaking Westerners in West African literature and in West Africa on the whole.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. WORK TRANSLATED

BADIAN, Seydou. Sous l'orage. Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963, pp. 99-146.

II. WORKS ON TRANSLATION

DELISLE, Jean. L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction. Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1980.

MOUNIN, Georges. Les problèmes théoriques de la traduction. Paris: Gallimard, 1963.

_____. Linguistique et traduction. Bruxelles: Dessart et Mardaga, 1976.

NEWMARK, Peter. Approaches to Translation. Oxford: Pergamon Press Ltd., 1981.

NIDA, Eugene A. Toward a Science of Translating. Leiden: Brill, 1964.

_____, and TABER, Charles R. The Theory and Practice of Translation. Leiden: Brill, 1969.

ROBERTS, Roda P. "Context in Translation". Proceedings of the 10th Symposium of the Canadian Association of Applied Linguistics, May 1979, pp. 117-132.

SELESKOVITCH, Danica. Interpreting for International Conferences. Trans. Stephanie Dailey and E. Norman McMillan. Washington D.C.: Pen and Booth, 1978.

VINAY, Jean-Paul and DARBELNET, Jean. Stylistique comparée du français et de l'anglais. Paris: Didier, 1958.

III. WORKS ON AFRICAN LITERATURE AND MALIAN CULTURE

ADLOFF, Richard. West Africa: The French-speaking Nations, Yesterday and Today. Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1964.

BAZIN, H. Introduction to Dictionnaire bambara-français. Ridgewood, New Jersey: Gregg Press Inc., 1965, pp. vii-xvii.

BENNET, John. "Culture". The Encyclopedia Americana: International Edition. 1973 ed.

BLAIR, Dorothy. African Literature in French. London: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

BOAHEN, Adu. Introduction to Francis Price, trans. God's Bits of Wood. By Sembene Ousmane. New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1970, pp. 13-32.

CARPENTER, Allan et al. The Enchantment of Africa: Mali. Chicago: Children's Press, 1975.

CISSE, Diango. Structures des Malinké de Kita. Bamako: Editions Populaires, 1970.

Connaissance de la République du Mali. Bamako: Secrétariat d'Etat à l'Information et au Tourisme, 1960.

COURTEILLE, Bernard. Nés de la brousse. Paris: Les éditions ouvrières, 1974.

DECRAENE, Philippe. Le Mali. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980.

HARGREAVES, John. France and West Africa. Great Britain: Macmillan, St. Martin's Press, 1969.

HERDECK, Donald E. African Authors: A Companion to Black African Writing (1300-1973). Washington D.C.: Black Orpheus Press, 1973.

JANHEINZ, Jahn et al. Who's Who in African Literature.
Tubingen: 1972.

KLAUS, Ernst. Tradition and Progress in the African Village. Trans. Salomea Genin. Ed. Jurgen Herzog.
London: C. Hurst and Co. (Publishers), 1976.

MONTEIL, Charles. Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta.
Paris: Larose, 1924.

N'DIAYE, Bokar. Groupes ethniques au Mali. Bamako:
Editions Populaires, 1970.

POLLET, Eric and WINTER, Grace. La société Soninké.
Bruxelles: Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1972.

TSANGU, M.V. La tradition négro-africaine et la nouvelle génération. Thèse de doctorat à l'Université de Fribourg, Suisse, 1971. Zaire, 1972.

IV. FRENCH AFRICAN LITERARY WORKS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

BADIAN, Seydou. Le sang des masques. Paris: Editions Robert Laffont, 1976.

BETI, Mongo. Mission terminée. Paris: Editions Buchet/Chastel, 1957.

_____. Mission to Kala. Trans. Peter Green.
London: Heinemann, 1969.

OYONO, Ferdinand. Le vieux nègre et la médaille. Paris: Union générale d'éditions, 1973.

_____. The Old Man and the Medal. Trans. John Reed.
London: Heinemann, 1967.