

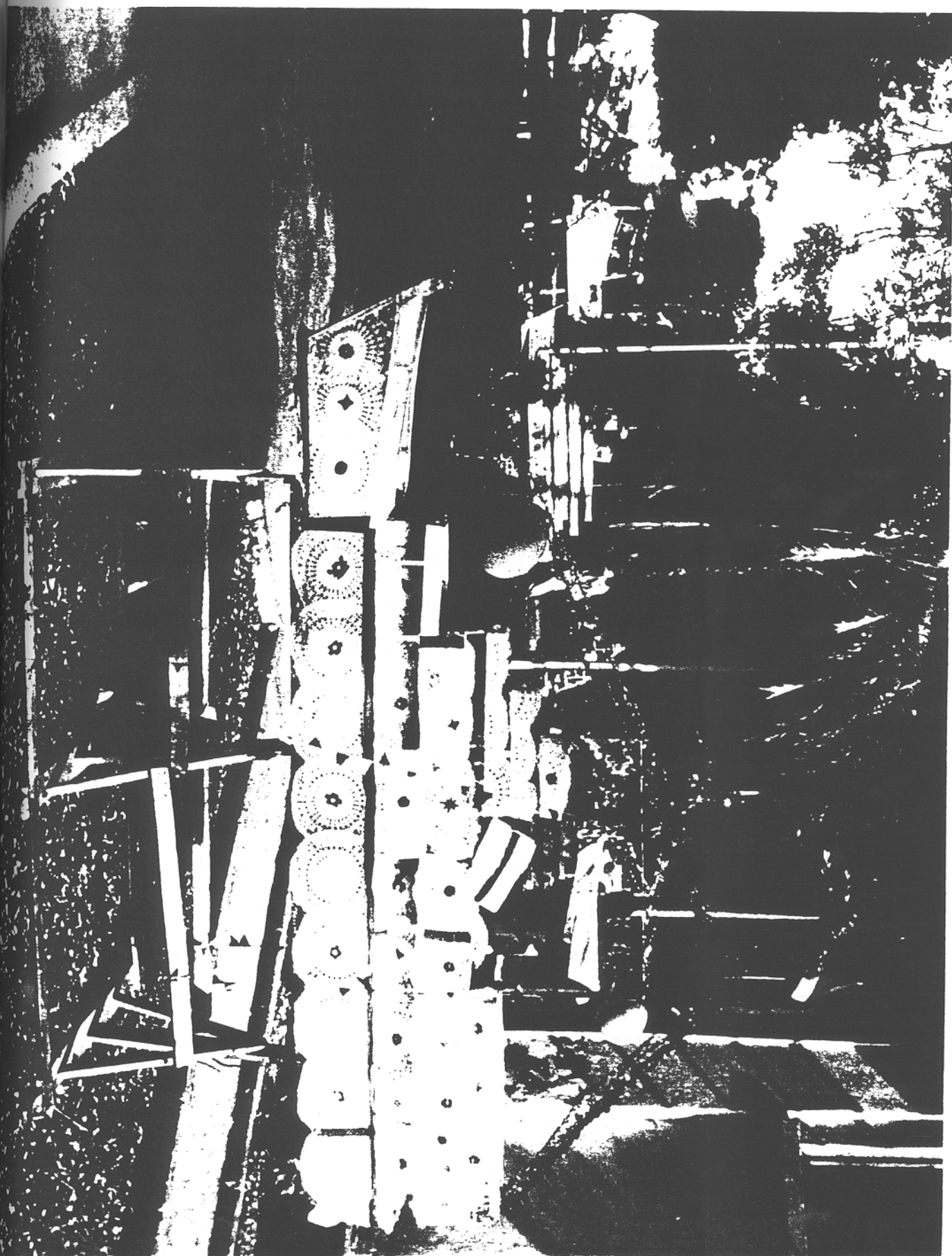
SUMMARY

Oral and written traditions are consistent on a number of points. The custom of lantern-making is found in both Gorée and Saint-Louis in Senegal, and is associated with the Christmas period. These two colonial towns had mixed populations with a few whites (traders, officials, and missionaries), a mulatto population, and blacks. Many mulatto women had accepted Christianity and were also independent traders of substance. They were known as Sinyaras (Signares in French, Senhoras in Portuguese). On Christmas Eve they would attend midnight mass attended by their servants or slaves carrying lanterns. In time lanterns were made in the form of ships and houses, and the makers would go round seeking Christmas gifts from traders and officials.

The English had occupied Goree from 1800-1817, and Saint-Louis from 1809-1817. When these places were restored to the French, and the English had decided to establish a new settlement on the Island of Banjul/which they renamed St. Mary's Island, the new town to be called Bathurst, a number of people from Goree and Saint-Louis were encouraged to settle there, and take up trading or construction work. Some of the settlers were boat builders, and these would seem to have maintained the tradition of building lanterns in the form of ships. Surprisingly there are no references in the accounts of residents or travellers until 1864, when Winwood Reade's account of a visit to the Casamance, south of The Gambia, was published.

The lanterns are made of paper, cut into various patterns, pasted on to a framework of light wood, generally from the raffia palm (tara), often locally called bambu. The commonest forms are ships, which are generally large, built on a wheeled base such as a low hand-cart, or on a framework which can be carried.. Smaller lanterns carried by one person, are often in form of houses. Either commercial glue or a paste of flour and water, or baobab flour and water, is used to stick the paper on to the framework. Much labour is devoted to cutting out the designs, though in recent years some

Photograph by David P. Gamble. Dec. 1986



avoid this by using imported paper doilies which are already cut into patterns. [See photograph by David P. Gamble, 1986]. Formerly they were lit by candles. Nowadays batteries are generally used to light up strings of bulbs.

Though primarily associated with the Christmas period, other major celebrations, such as the Royal Visit of 1961 and Independence Day (1965) have been the occasion for the production of fanaal.

In the accounts from Saint-Louis (1877), and by Lady Southorn (1952), it is implied that the lanterns were also used by Muslims for the festival at the end of the Fast Month (Ramadan), or at the festival of Tabaski (Tenth day of the tenth month). In 1877 it would seem that Tabaski also fell on Christmas Eve, and that Muslims and Christians held their celebrations at the same time. In 1968 the feast of Eid-el-Fitr (held at the end of Ramadan) fell three days before Christmas.

In Sierra Leone, on the other hand, the lantern festival, which was copied from similar activities in The Gambia and in Senegal, is used to celebrate the end of the Muslim Fast Month. In addition to ships and houses, other themes from Islamic tradition, such as Abraham's sacrifice, the activities of noted Muslim warriors, etc. may be depicted.

At the end of a festival the lanterns are presented to the patrons who provided the money for construction. But as the lanterns are made of fragile material, they are often in shreds due to wind damage etc. by the end of the period. In the days when they were lit by candles many were accidentally damaged by fire. The result is that they have rarely survived to find their way into the hands of collectors or museums. There have been surprisingly few illustrations or photographs published from earlier years.

The Gambia National Museum on the 31st December 1986 held a display of eight fanals then being displayed in town, and prepared a four page pamphlet, part of which drew on Judith Bettelheim's article in African Arts. Fanaal have also been revived in Senegal in recent years. The magazine Amina (No. 215, mars

1988, p. 31) published examples of fanaal depicting the Presidential Palace, the City Hall, and the Railroad Station, made as part of the celebrations of the centenary of the city of Dakar.

D.P.G. September 1988.

A WOLOF STORY: THE BUUR AND HIS ATTENDANT'S WIFE.

David P. Gamble and Linda K. Salmon

In 1974 when Linda Salmon was on her way to visit a particular compound in Banjul, the capital of The Gambia, accompanied by Alhaji Hassan Njie of Radio Gambia, they happened to meet a gèwèl (griot), Matar Ndumbe Faal, from Jaji in Senegal. After greetings had been exchanged, and he had learnt the surnames¹ (clan names) of the two, he began praising the lineage of the Njies (Njay). Alhaji Hassan asked him a question about Njanjan Njie, the ancestor of the Njies. Matar Ndumbe dealt with this briefly, and went on to relate the history of the village of Jaji Al Demba, formerly called Bind Yew, where his own family had lived for several generations. All of them then went inside the compound, and there the griot was asked for a story.

Their conversation in the street had been taped, then the story was recorded. When Matar Ndumbe had finished, Alhaji Hassan repeated the tale in English, and this too was taped. But Matar Ndumbe spoke at such an extremely² fast rate that subsequent transcription of the Wolof text was exceptionally difficult, and nothing was done with it. More than ten years later, in the United States, the tape was studied again, but the first Gambian Wolofs who listened to it had trouble, because of both the dialect and the speed, trying to repeat slowly what the griot had actually said, though they could follow the main lines of the story. A copy of the tape was given to Alhaji Hassan Njie in 1986, and he provided a written translation, indicating that he had had to listen to the recording many times before it could be completed. With his translation in hand, we began going over the tape again, listening to it many times to see if we could decipher the Wolof text, until finally with the help of Ebou O. Ndure who was visiting San Francisco, we were able to produce a reasonable (though not perfect) transcript, spending over two hours on the four minute recording. (October 1987).

Here we give only the translation, and have followed Alhaji Hassan's written version as closely as possible, but changed pronouns such as he, she, etc. to the appropriate nouns, the Buur (King), the father, the young man or attendant (dak), the wife, etc. to clarify the narrative. The rhythm and intensity of the story in the original Wolof, which build up to a climax, are, to a large extent, lost in translation. Early in the story it seemed as if the griot spoke as though he were the young man, using the pronoun I, but then switched to he. This section has been changed to the third person. It could be, however, that the words mu ne, he said, were there, but with the extreme speed of the narrative, cannot be picked up on the tape. Words added for clarification have been given in parentheses [.....]. Alternative translations are indicated by (.....).

Matar Ndumbe Faal's Tale.

3

"There were three people. Their time was not like the time now.

4

During the time before you owned the country, the Buur that should own it, before the country is entrusted to him, must [show that he] excels in the Quran. If he excels in the Quran, then the country is entrusted to him. When the country is entrusted to him, then he holds [power over] the country.

5

After they had given the Buur the country, a certain young man like me came and said he wanted to stay with him. The Buur asked him: "What [work] are you going to do?" The man replied: "I want to be your messenger (attendant, dak). You can send me anywhere you want." The Buur said: "That is exactly what I want, because in my household I have only women to send on errands."

The messenger went to fetch his wife, who also happened to be well versed in the Quran like the Buur. The Buur saw that she excelled (was more beautiful than) any of his wives [and wanted her], yet he hesitated to go against the Quran, because he had read in the Quran that one must not love another man's wife. He kept the prohibition for about four days. Then [the Buur's desires got the better of him and] he came and told the young man that he was going to send him off to a town in a far part of the country. So the dak took leave of his wife saying: "I am going away", and she replied: "Go and come back [safely],"

[When he had gone], the Buur went to the [dak's] wife and said: "Today I am your stranger (guest)." The young woman said: "My guest ?" He said: "Yes." She pointed out that he was trying to usurp the place of her husband. The Buur replied: "Yes indeed, that is what I want."

After a while the wife said that she was going to go to the market. [While she was gone, the Buur lay down on the bed and fell asleep.] At the market the woman bought ingredients to prepare an excellent maafe.⁶ She also went and bought twelve different bowls, of different colors. In each she put some rice and stew, covered them, and placed them on a large table. Then she woke him up from his sleep. When he woke up, he remarked that she had done more than enough, because he was just one person, and yet she had prepared twelve dishes. He looked at the green bowl, and said he was going to open it first. He uncovered the green bowl and it was maafe.⁷ He looked at the black bowl. It was maafe. The red was maafe. The white was maafe. Each bowl that he uncovered was maafe. [He said he was no longer hungry] and told her to take away her utensils. She cleared away the utensils and took them back to the kitchen. Then she ? took down some tulakuna (a bitter oil).⁸

After chatting for a while, he became afraid, took off his ring,
⁹
 put it under the pillow, left it there, and ran off.

After a few days the husband returned. He went to the Buur and greeted him. The Buur said: "You've come back ?" The young man said: "Yes, I've been to where you sent me, and come back." After they had talked for a while, the dak said he was going home to his compound. He returned and found his wife there, and greeted her. Then he sat down [on
¹⁰
 the bed], and his wife started to massage his feet. He pulled the pillow [forward], and saw the Buur's ring under it. He recognized it, picked it up, and concealed it. [His wife, busy massaging his feet, did not see her husband's action.]

Later, when the young woman had gone outside to the bathroom, the husband exclaimed: "I have parted company with the world today. My wife who is so well versed in the Quran, and the Buur also, so that the country has been entrusted to him - I left the two of them when I went on a journey, and they have engaged in an unlawful affair."

[When his wife came back], though he was angry, he did not say anything to her. But when she wanted to lie beside him in bed, he went and lay down on the floor, and when she lay down beside him on the floor, he got up and lay on the bed. [This state of affairs continued for some time, until] finally the wife went to her father and said: "You gave me in marriage
¹¹
 to my husband, but we are not as husband and wife now. He does not tell me what annoys him. Call him and ask him what annoys him about me." Her father went to the Buur, and stated that his daughter had laid a complaint against her husband, and that the Buur should call everyone [to hear the case]. The Buur did so, everyone came. When all had gathered, the wife told the people that she had lodged a complaint against the dak of the Buur. The Buur confirmed it. They asked her what the complaint was about.

Her father said: "I had plenty of land, and the young man said that he wanted a field [to farm]. I told him to go and look, because I did not possess just one or two fields, but many. He looked around until he saw the field he wanted, and when he told me: "This is the farm I want," I gave it to him. He was using it, and was satisfied. Then I discovered that he was not using the field [any more], so since he is not using it, now I want him to return it, so that I can give it to someone who would cultivate it and get benefit from it."

The man got up, and said that he still wanted the field even more than when he first asked for it, but when he went to the farm, he found lion footprints in the field, and he is afraid of the lion, as a lion is more powerful than he is. "If I go to work in the field, and lion finds me there, it will kill me. If I find the lion in the field, it will kill me. Nevertheless I still like the field."

The Buur rose up and told him to go and cultivate his field. The lion went there, but did not want to eat grass, and his farm is¹² still the best among all others.

So the question is - of the three of them - the husband, the wife,¹³ the buur , who is the noblest ?"

With the last question the story is turned into a 'dilemma tale', one in which listeners are invited to discuss the case. Some of the women who had been listening in the background felt that as buurs were all-powerful, a buur could do as he wanted. If he wanted a particular woman, he could just take her, and nobody could do anything about it.

If the question asked is "Who had the sharpest mind ?" or "Who was the cleverest ?" this poses a more realistic question. The woman ?

She did not openly confront the Buur, she fulfilled her duty of making a guest feel at home (the quality of teraanga), yet by providing many bowls with the same maafe, she was in effect saying: "You have many wives and concubines at home, another woman is no different from all the others." The father ? He posed the husband/wife dispute in terms of a farm which had been neglected, had avoided shaming his son-in-law in public, yet had presented his daughter's case, and in the end helped restore the status quo, though the griot seemed to forget him. The husband ? He too had taken care not to offend the Buur, thereby risking his own life, he did not openly accuse his wife of infidelity, but, by neglecting her, forced her to make the next move, and then he was able to express his unspoken fears in the metaphor of lion tracks on his farm. The Buur ? He solved all of the riddles, and though tempted, in the end committed no offence, and gave an honorable decision which set right the misunderstanding.

The posing and solving of puzzles, and face saving mechanisms, are found in a number of classic Wolof tales, particularly those involving Kocce Barma, a Wolof sage believed to have lived in the 16th century. More recent examples of this type of tale are found in Emil A. Magel's Folktales from The Gambia (1984).¹⁴ Yet Matar Ndumbe's tale is not to be found in any published collection of Wolof stories, though all who heard it for the first time felt it to be typically Wolof.

A search of the tale types and motifs revealed that it was in fact a tale common in Near Eastern and Southern European traditions, and is to be found, for example, in the Arabian Nights,¹⁵ in Boccaccio's Decameron,¹⁶ in the Hebrew Tales of Sendebat,¹⁷ in Folktales of Israel,¹⁸ (though here originating in Yemen), and in the Spanish collection The Book of the Wiles and Contrivances of Women.¹⁹ In the

European/Near Eastern versions we have two main ways in which the woman preserves her honor, by conveying the message through multiple dishes of the same food, or by giving the king a book to read in which adultery is condemned, or more rarely, by a cleverly phrased rebuke. Here, with the stress that both are learned in the Quran, the book motif is implied. In most European/Near Eastern versions the king has to have the meaning of the multiple dishes explained to him. In the Wolof version he (as well as the listeners) has to work it out in his own mind. Some of the versions have the motif of "The Lion's Track." This seems particularly appropriate in the Wolof version where the royal line of Njie has the praise name of gaynde (lion), and lion's clan name is Njie. The use of multiple dishes to show that all women are the same is given by Rene Basset quoting Arabic sources, and is found in the Magrib and Morocco.

20

The following table shows a comparison between the major versions of the tale.

	<u>Arabian Nights</u>	<u>Boccaccio Decameron</u> 14th cent.	<u>Folktales of Israel</u> (Ex Yemen) 1956	<u>Wolof</u> (Senegal) 1974
Characters	King Vizier Vizier's wife Wife's father	King of France wife	King Sage (<u>haham</u>) Sage's wife Wife's brothers	<u>Buur</u> Attendant (<u>Dak</u>) Attendant's wife Wife's father
Wife is beautiful & virtuous	x	x	x	x
Husband	Sent away	On Crusade	Out	Sent away
King visits wife	x	x	x	x
Wife prepares multiple dishes of same food	x	x		x
Wife provides book dealing with morality			Torah	Knowledge of Koran implied
Wife has to explain meaning of multiple dishes	x	x		
King in his confusion leaves	ring		gold coins & rosary	ring
Man sent off reports to King	x			x
On going home discovers object left by king	x		x	x
Refuses to speak to wife have sex	x x		x x	x x
Wife complains to	father		brothers	father
Riddle of garden that is no longer cultivated	x		x	x
Husband says he found lion's prints in garden	x		x	x
King understands riddle; indicates that husband has nothing to fear	x		x	x

From this table it is clear that the Wolof version is very close to that in the Arabian Nights, though there are a number of purely Wolof features in addition. It would seem that the Wolof have done here what they have done with many cultural elements, made as their own items which are ultimately derived from far off places. When the tale was recorded it was assumed that it was a traditional Wolof tale, and the narrator was not asked where he had learnt it. It did not cross anyone's mind that he might have read it in a book, and it was supposed that this was a traditional tale handed down orally. Among the Mandinka and Fulbe David Gamble has found an instance in The Gambia where a written version of one of Aesop's fables went back into oral tradition, with the animal concerned ^(a bear) being changed to a lion. The source - a school textbook - was now forgotten, and unknown to most of those who subsequently learnt the tale.

When one examines the various collections of published tales derived from the Wolof one generally finds a number of close parallels to Near Eastern and Southern European tales, and these presumably spread with the coming of Islam to Senegambia from North Africa, rather than coming from European sources. Those who published African tales did not attempt to relate them to the tale types of the folklorists.

One finds for example that a story given by Béranger-Féraud in his Recueil de contes populaires de la Sénégalie (1885), "L'homme qui avait beaucoup d'amis [The man who had many friends] " , is one which is derived from Arabic sources, and became widely known in Europe through Petrus Alfonsi's²¹ (1062-1110) Disciplina Clericalis. It also appears in A Treasury of Jewish Folklore (1948).²²

Birago Diop in his Contes et Lavanés (1948) has the tale of "The cat who went on the pilgrimage to Mecca," a story found also in Berber and Syrian traditions.²³

In a recent collection of Wolof stories edited by Lilyan Kesteloot and Sherif Mbodj, Contes et Mythes Wolof (1983), out of fourteen stories three, and possibly more, are found internationally.

- (1) The story Lan mooy addina [What the world is like] is one which is found in the writings of Poggio Bracciolini of Florence (1380-1459)²⁴
²⁵
 [Please All-Please None], and was widely known in Europe in the 15th and 16th centuries.
- (2) The story of the "Three Hunchbacks" (Netti xuuge yi) has close similarity to the tale Gibbosi in the Tales of Sendebbar,²⁶ (The Hebrew version of the Seven Sages.)
- (3) The story of the "Sorcerer and the Young Woman," (Jinne ji aq
²⁷
Ndaw si), is found in both Arabic sources, and Italian
²⁸
 Renaissance Tales.

29

Isabelle Leymarie in her dissertation provides a tale about the wife of a king and her lover, which reads like a story from the Decameron, though at the same time being typically Wolof. It includes both the themes of the successful escape of the lover hidden in a trunk, and the wife swearing an
³⁰
 oath to assert her innocence.

Clearly collectors of Wolof tales now need to pay attention to the way in which Wolof stories are transmitted. In the urban situation there can undoubtedly be feedback from written sources into oral tradition. At any rate the reader is left with an additional dilemma to solve: "How did a traditional Wolof griot learn this tale of the Buur and his attendant's wife?"

NOTES

1. Linda Salmon was an honorary member of the Njie clan.
 2. The telling of the tale took 4 minutes 15 seconds. Expert griots talk at a much faster rate than ordinary people.
 3. There were actually four characters in the story.
 4. Linda Salmon is here seen as a "European."
 5. In reality most Wolof rulers were resistant to Islam, which threatened their powers. The term Buur is the general word for King or Ruler, and was also used in the title of the rulers of various Wolof states, the ruler of Jolof being the Buurba Jolof, the ruler of Saalum, the Buur Saalum. Wolof rulers were generally elected to the position from among eligible candidates by a small electoral body of officials. (See additional note on page 13).
 6. Maafe is a dish of rice with a sauce made from groundnuts, tomatoes, onions, peppers, etc. and meat.
- In the absence of her husband the wife has a duty to honor distinguished visitors. On the other hand in polygynous households the wife whose turn it is to sleep with her husband cooks his dinner on that day. Cooking specifically for a man who is not a stranger generally implies that the woman is agreeable to sleeping with him.
7. Enamel bowls with lids are commonly used in serving food.
 8. This was omitted in Alhaji Hassan's translation. Tulukuna is a Mandinka word meaning bitter oil, and is derived from the seeds of a tree of the Carapa sp. The oil is bitter and nauseous, and is used in soapmaking. One person suggested that tulukuna was used in the detection of witches, which might explain why the Buur suddenly seemed to feel afraid, though this element might have been a motif from another tale which slipped in.
 9. At first it was thought that while the wife was at the market, and the buur rested on the bed, his ring slipped off his finger accidentally. In leaving hastily he did not notice that it was missing. On listening to the tape later, it seemed that he took off the ring deliberately and left it there (perhaps as a reward for her virtuousness?). Both situations occur in various versions of the tale.
 10. This is a traditional wifely duty when the husband has been on a long journey. In Ousman Sembene's film, Mandabi, there is a scene in which Ibrahima Dieng's youngest wife, Aram, performs this task for her husband as he lies on his bed.
 11. By traditional Wolof law women have a right to regular sex, and failure to provide it is grounds for divorce.
 12. It is implied that he will not find the 'lion' there again, and that the character of his wife is unstained.

13. Alhaji Hassan translated the last question as "Who is the noblest ?" D.P.G. was less certain of the last word used, thinking it might be "Who was quickest on the uptake ?"
14. Emile A. Magel: Folktales from The Gambia, 1984, pp.163-171.
"The Marriage of Two Masters of the Wolof Language, I & II."
The question and response on pp. 170-171 also occur in Jewish folklore.
15. The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night, translated by John Payne, Volume 5, 1914, p.263, "The King and his Vizier's Wife."
16. Decameron, Fifth Tale of the First Day.
17. Tales of Sendebär, an Edition and Translation of the Hebrew version of the Seven Sages, based on unpublished manuscripts, by Morris Epstein. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1967, pp.92-101.
18. Folktales of Israel, 1963. Edited by Dov Noy, #59.
"The Lion Who Walked in the Garden," told by a person from Yemen in 1956.
19. The Book of the Wiles of Women, translated by John Esten Keller. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1956, pp. 21-22.

The Spanish version: Libro de los engaños e los asayamientos de las mugeres, (1253), translated from an unidentified Arabic version.
20. René Basset: Mille et un contes, récits & légendes arabes. Paris, 1926. Vol.II, Toutes les femmes se ressemblent, pp. 25-26.
El Khaouarizmi: Mofid el 'Oloum, p.74.
21. Petrus Alfonsi (1062-1110) was a Spanish Jew, familiar with Arabic scholarship, who converted to Catholicism in 1106, and wrote the Disciplina Clericalis within a few years of his conversion.
22. A Treasury of Jewish Folklore, 1948, pp. 570-571.
"The Test of a True Friend," (Adapted from the Midrash.)
23. Marguerite Taos Amrouch: Le grain magique: contes, poèmes et proverbes berberes de Kabylie. Paris: Maspero, 1966, pp. 211-213.

Arab Folktales : Translated & Edited by Ineb Bishnaq. New York, Pantheon Books, 1986. p. 216. (A Syrian tale.)
24. A Treasury of Italian Folklore and Humor. Edited by Henry D. Spalding, 1980, pp. 18-19.

The Facetiae of Giovanni Francesco Poggio Bracciolini. A new translation by Bernhardt J. Hurwood. New York: Award Books, 1968, pp. 93-94, Tale XCIX.
25. Motif J 1041.2 ["The miller, his son, and the ass."], "Trying to please everyone."

- 26 Tales of Sendebar Ed. Morris Epstein, pp. 301-309.
- 27 "The Maiden of the Tree of Raranj and Taranj," in Arab Folktales, Translated and edited by Ineb Bishnaq. New York: Pantheon Books, 1986, pp. 109-114.
- 28 "The Three Citrons," A tale by Giambattista Basile (1575-1632) in Janet Levarie Smarr: Italian Renaissance Tales, Rochester, MI: Solaris Press, 1983, pp. 260-268.
- 29 I. Leymarie: "The Role and Functions of the Griots Among the Wolof of Senegal." Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1978, pp. 202-203.
- 30 Motif K 1513 - Wife's equivocal oath. Tale type 1418.

Final note on translation problems. In the third sentence of the third paragraph, Alhaji Hassan wrote: "He kept the book (tééré) for four days," though the sentence did not fit well. D.P.G. thought that the word tèrè (to prohibit) might have been the word used.

Addition to note #5.

Fluency in the reading of the Quran was ruled as the sine qua non for the accession to the throne of independent Kajoor. Amadu Bamba Diop. Bull.I.F.A.N. ser. B. 28(nos 1-2), 1966, p. 494.

STORIES TOLD BY KEBÄ XADI SISE OF NJAU, UPPER SAALUM

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STORIES TOLD BY KEBA XADI SISE of NJAU, UPPER SAALUM

INTRODUCTION

Keba Xadi Sise, when I first met him in 1947, was a teenager who was then the lead drummer (sabarkat) and singer at Njau, Upper Saalum District, the accompanying drums generally being played by youths from the blacksmith's family. As his reputation and experience grew he would visit neighboring villages in both The Gambia and across the border in Senegal, for dances, wrestling contests, and wedding and circumcision ceremonies. He also participated in traditional rituals like the ceremony to bring rain. Like other villagers his basic occupation was farming, growing millet as the main food crop, and peanuts as the cash crop. Most of the entertainment took place in the dry season, but he would occasionally be called on to drum for a work group that had been called out to work for the chief, or a trader.

In later years, when he had given up drumming (predominantly a young man's activity), he was known as a story teller, and when Emil Magel¹ visited Njau in 1973 he provided him with a number of folk-tales. Magel wrote that he was a griot (gewel). My own early notes, however, indicated³ that his family was of slave descent, his father being of Bambara origin. But Keba Xadi, so far as I am aware, had been born and grew up in a Wolof community, and I never heard him speak any language other than Wolof.

When I visited Njau in 1979, he was recommended by the chief, Alhaji Omar Sise, as the best story teller in the village, and I spent several evenings visiting his compound. On two occasions he decided that besides telling me the tales, he also wanted to teach his small daughters, telling them that they were to be prepared to tell me stories when I came back in future years. His technique was to have them repeat each phrase or sentence as he went along. This was the first time I ever encountered actual instruction in story telling. One result was that

transcription of the tapes was made much easier. If a word was obscure in his telling, then it would often be clearer in the girl's repetition. However, he sometimes used words with which the child was unfamiliar, and had to stop and correct the mistake, or explain the unusual words. For example, he used the old word for a lance (xeej), a weapon no longer to be seen, and the little girl thought that the hero was taking along his dog (xaaj). In another story he asked her a question which she repeated instead of answering. Then using the same tones that he was using in the story he said "You, Chaane, leave....Henca..{come}" The child repeated the first phrase automatically, before she realized she was supposed to give way to her sister.

Most evenings too, perhaps as a result of the money given for his first story-telling session, he had drink taken (as the Irish expression goes), in spite of being a Muslim. This affected his speech slightly, perhaps led to some repetition, but on the whole seemed merely to increase the intensity of the narration.

2

David Ames, in a review of the Tales of Amadou Koumba refers to the absence of a western climax or a punchline in traditional Wolof tales. Keba Xadi definitely liked to end a number of his tales with an unexpected ending, usually one in which the traditional Wolof value system was outraged, and which would cause his adult audience [the women of the compound who had been going about their normal work, and other men who happened to be around, who generally had been listening intently while pretending not to], to break into embarrassed laughter. Keba Xadi definitely enjoyed his story telling and the reactions he produced in listeners.

A few years later I was told that Keba Xadi had died.

1. Emil A. Magel: Folktales from The Gambia.
Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1984.
p. 114, note 1.
2. David W. Ames "Review of the Tales of Amadou Koumba,"
Journal of the New African Literature and the Arts,
Fall 1967, p. 85.
3. Modu Sise was aged well over 60 in 1947. He came from Bandiagara,
in Mali, 'as a boy'. Keba's mother, Kadi, seems to have died in
the late forties or early fifties, certainly before 1956.

Special thanks are due to Lisa Barlow, who provided the first drafts
both of the transcriptions, and the translations.



Keba Xadi Sise
1947

THE MARABOUT AND HIS MAD SON

There was once a marabout (seriny). This marabout, whoever was mad, he would treat. This marabout, whoever was mad, if you went to him, he would write a special charm (saafara), he would give it to you, you would drink it, he would touch you lightly with his hands. Before a week had passed you would be well.

However, unfortunately, he had one son, and this son, between the time he was born, and the time he was ready for circumcision, became mad. When he became mad, his father tried to treat him. He used all his written charms (xaatim), all the medicines to be drunk (¹saafara), he did everything he could, but to no effect. The boy went off into the bush, and never came back.

He was gone about ten years. After that he went off to another country. After ten years he went to another, then ten years in another. Does that make thirty? Then after thirty years he went to another country for ten years, which makes forty. For those forty years he had left his father, his father the great marabout who could cure anyone who was mad. However, the father who had not seen his son for forty years was troubled. He said "I have no idea where my son is in the world." [He called people together] and said: "I do not know where my son is. You should all help me. I would really like to know where my son who is mad is now." There was one man who called him and said: "I met your son once in a certain country. He was wearing rags, and chewing on them. While he was chewing, I recognized him, but he was just a youth then. It was a long time ago now." The madman they were talking about hadn't been seen for a long time.....

Time passed, and his father's health became poor. He became very sick alas (ndeysaan), and God wanted to take him away. He died suddenly, the father of the madman. The news spread about his death. Everyone started coming to the funeral. For example, it was just like the market at Kau-ur,

with everyone coming to the funeral. Some were in motor-vehicles, some were in horse-drawn vehicles, some were on bicycles. The madman happened to be in the Kau-ur market. He saw all the people setting off, slipped into the middle of them, and away they went.

It happened that his father lived in Njau. Everyone was going to Njau. When he arrived there, they were laying his father down at the entrance to the mosque. They were praying, and speaking about him. They said that the marabout was a man of great learning, whoever was crazy he would cure, whoever had leprosy he would treat, whenever anything happened he was there. He was an honest man, and a good man. Everyone agreed, expressing their regret (²ndeysaan). Just as they they were saying 'Ndeysaan', it happened that the madman was in the crowd at the funeral of his father. He suddenly stood up and said: "Everyone listen ! Do you know me?" Everyone replied: "No". He said: "You don't recognize me?" They said: "No". He said: "The man who is lying there was my father. I used to be crazy. I don't know why you did not let me know my father was ill, and why you did not tell me when he died. Now he is dead, and is lying there. He had two daughters and a son, and I am that son. I am the heir. You thought that I was truly mad. I was mad, I was mad, but I am no longer mad. You who are announcing the death, you are saying fine things about him, but you should take him up, and carry him away, and bury him, before he defecates here." ³

- 1 The xaatim are written charms and formulae which are made into amulets etc.

Saafara are charms written on a wooden writing board which is then washed off. The resulting liquid is drunk by the patient, thereby absorbing the power of the writing.

- 2 Ndeysaan - an expression of regret and sympathy.

- 3 The remark indicates that the son is still completely mad; as no son would ever make any public remark about the excretory functions of his father.

Defecation in the mosque or in the area where the people assemble for prayers amounts to sacrilege. The motif, however, occurs in a number of Wolof stories, e.g. "The young man and the talking skull" in Emil Magel: Folktales from The Gambia (1984), p. 81-83.

Disrespect for the dead father is also the ending of one of the tales Keba Xadi told Emil Magel, "The bag of money", p. 109-114, where the sons talk of opening their father's grave and beating him.

THE TWO SNAKES

Once upon a time there was a large snake, of the kind they call python. This python was the head of a village. There was another snake, called nyangoor [a black venomous snake]. They lived in the same village. However, the python was the village head. After they had been together for a while, the python took a wife. The wife had a child. The nyangoor also fell in love, married, and had a child. After he had a child, every day, he would go and spend the afternoon with the python at his compound. They would chat and exchange ideas. From time to time the python would quarrel with the nyangoor. They would disagree, and stay that way, until the elders would come and settle the dispute.

Not long after, there was a chief of another village close to theirs. The chief of that village was over all the other village heads. He announced: "Tomorrow morning there is a meeting." It happened that this was during a disagreement between the python and the nyangoor. When they quarreled the python said: "I am stronger than you, you know. I am bigger, and I'm over you, and if I take my head and lay (?) it on you, you won't be able to get up again. The nyangoor said: "Really?" Then he said: "All right, tomorrow when the head chief of all the villages calls his meeting, you, python, should go, but I, the nyangoor, am not going....." In the early morning the python set off. When he arrived, he found the chief as well as all the young men sitting down. When they saw the python, they exclaimed "La-illah, isn't that a python? Men, catch him and kill him." The python at once ran off. One of the young men ran after him, caught up with him, and beat his sides with a stick, breaking two ribs. But he escaped and reached home, and went inside. The nyangoor left his home to come and welcome him back, and found him grimacing. He asked: "What is the matter?" The python said: "I just went to the meeting, but they beat me up, and two of my ribs are broken."

The nyangoor said : "I have a plan." He went to get some branches, gathered them in a bundle and tied up his ribs. Then he said: "Those who started something will end by seeing something greater."

When the village chief called another meeting, the nyangoor said: "Good, I am the one who is going to the meeting. You are bigger than I am, you are stronger than I am, but if I go today and attend the meeting, before I come home, you will hear my name." He went off the the village square and found the chief sitting, and all the young men also. When the nyangoor appeared, they cried: "Run, the nyangoor is here." All of them at once ran off, and the chief started to get up, but the nyangoor bit him on the foot. They all cried: "Lai, lai, it bit him, it bit him." Then the nyangoor went and hid in a hole in a tree and listened. He heard the men saying: "Go and call the Curer*." He came, and worked, and worked, and worked. They began to play drums for him (jinnal) . They played the drums for the man who was bitten by the snake. Their thoughts were of death...whether he would live or whether he would die..all their thoughts were of death. The python heard the sound and raised his head. He said: "Ah, this must be the nyangoor." Just then the nyangoor arrived. When he entered he said: "Do you hear the drumming. From now until the day you die you won't have the like, you with your size will not be so outstanding. You see how small I am. My baby born today has more poison than you."

At this point in the conversation, that's when I left there. I had
 ** crossed three bridges
 --(~~munched?~~) ~~three apples~~ and was on the fourth when I arrived back at Njau,
 I, Keba Xadi.

* i.e. a man who specialized in the treatment (luga) of snakebite which also seems to have involved calling on spiritual powers though drumming.

** The word used was thought by some to be "pass over, cross." which does not seem to make sense.

Subsequently it was realised that the word used by Keba (pom) which everyone took to be apple (pomme) instead was derived from the French pont (bridge). Saalum Wolof pronoucing both words in the same way....!

THE THREE SUITORS

Once upon a time there was a young woman who was very, very beautiful.... Her beauty was such, you would compare her to God's wife.

As she was growing up the girl had three female slaves who took care of all her needs, She also had three male slaves to run all her errands. She had merely to send them off. This young woman, her father was the King of the country.

Eventually the son of the King of Jolof heard of her beauty. He said: "As for me, this woman I have to marry." That was on a Thursday. The Damel [of Cayor] also heard of her. He said: "I have heard of her beauty. I have to marry this woman." He too said this on a Thursday. The son of the King of Siin, he too said: "I have to go and see this woman about whom I've heard so much." He too thought of this on the same day as the others, a Thursday. All of them thought of this woman on the same Thursday, each of them independently.

So then the son of the King of Siin with his drums and xalams¹, the son of the King of Jolof with his drums and his xalams, and the Damel with his drums and his xalams, all of them set off, and came together at the entrance to the woman's compound. Everywhere the drums were beating. The son of the King of Siin had his drums beating, the Damel had his drums beating, the son of the King of Jolof had his drums beating. It was on a Thursday that they arrived to see the woman, each without the knowledge of the others.

Then the young woman sent one of her male slaves and said: "Go and see the strangers for me." He saw the three parties there, greeted each one, asked him where he was from, and what his name was. One of them said he was the Damel, another the son of the King of Siin, and the third the son of the King of Jolof. He reported it all to the young woman. She then said they should be received hospitably, and that each should be given his own house. So each had his own place to stay. Everything they needed was brought to them, their

1. xalam - a stringed instrument.

water and everything. But as for the young woman, none of them saw her.

After a while, she called her three male slaves, and said: "Each one of you should run and go to the herd, and select a bullock, and lead it back, and go and stand at the door of each house where you know the important strangers are, and call the head, and say to him: "Here is your lunch." The slaves carried out their instructions. They were told to kill the animals. They had them cooked, and everybody ate. Evening came, each was waiting at the door of his house....They were given their evening meal.

Then they spread out pillows, and the xalams (guitars) played until midnight, but still none of the guests had seen the woman.

She was still in her mother's house, and had not come out. Late in the evening she called one of her female slaves and said to her: "Take my pagnes (heavy cloths)², and take a bottle of perfume, and an incense pot, and take them to the Damel's house. Before you take them inside his house, curtsy, and present them to him discretely, and say that I am coming to sleep there tonight." The slave girl came with the incense pot, and the perfume and the pagne and said: "You hostess sends me, and says I should give you these, and put them in your house, and let you know that she is coming to spend the night here." He said: "Good. Put them in my house." She took them there. It was for the Damel she did this.

The (slave) girl left and returned back. The young woman told her to go to the King of Siin's son, and say to him: "This pagne and this bottle of perfume and this incense pot, I am the one who sends it, and I am sleeping there tonight." The slave-girl said: "Very good." She went to him and gave him the message, and the son of the King of Siin said: "Good."

2 Pagne - a heavy cloth of locally woven cotton. Can be worn as a skirt, used as a bed covering, or as a blanket etc.

She also went to the son of the King of Jolof and said to him: "Your hostess says she will sleep here tonight. Here is her pagne, and a bottle of perfume and the incense pot." He said: "Good."

So the messages ended, but guests grew tired and went to bed. They lay in bed until far into the night. The woman herself went and opened the door of the house where the son of the King of Jolof was staying, and lay down with him in the dark. The son of the King of Jolof spoke with her, but they could not reach an agreement [to have sex], and they both fell asleep before the conversation was finished.

While they were sleeping the Damel slipped out and went to the son of the King of Siin's house and knocked on the door and said: "Did the young woman spend the night here?" The King of Siin's son said: "No." The Damel reflected for a moment, and realized that she must be sleeping with the son of the King of Jolof. He slipped away, went to the house, opened the door and found them asleep. He took his knife and killed the woman who was lying behind the king's son. He then left here there, closed the door, and went back to sleep in his own house.

In the morning they would beat the drums. When someone beats drums the person inside would get up, and raise his hand as a signal to stop drumming. They woke up the son of the King of Siin, and he got up. They woke up the Damel. The son of the King of Jolof, the one who slept with the woman who was killed behind him, woke up, but he did not open his door, because when he awoke, he found the woman dead behind him. He picked up the knife and sat there. The drummers continued for a long time. Then they went to the Chief, greeted him and said: "The one for whom we have been beating the drums since the sun rose, has not woken up. We spent the morning drumming, but we have not seen him, he has not opened his door." The Chief came and knocked on the door. The Chief, you remember, was also the father of the young woman.

The King's son opened the door, and the Chief entered. His foot was soaked in blood at the doorway. He exclaimed: "In God's name, what is this?" The guest said: "I was sleeping with the girl until the middle of the night. She refused my desires and I killed her." The Chief said: "Is that so?" The King's son said: "Yes." The Chief said: "So that was it." He then called the drummers and said to them: "He is the reason why the woman did not come out. He killed her. Now I want us to have a discussion immediately to decide what his fate should be. " They called a meeting, and it was proposed that he should be executed in the afternoon. They discussed it until they reached a decision, and agreed to kill him that afternoon. "After our afternoon prayer" (tisbaar), they said, " we will execute him." The son of the King of Jolof merits death.

The son of the King of Siin, to whom the woman never went, took charge of him. He said: "Now I want you to give me the Jolof King's son, whom you are to kill in the afternoon, so that he can say farewell to his father." They answered: "And what if he goes to say farewell to his father and then doesn't come back?"³ He replied: "When you leave the mosque, if you don't see him, then you can kill me instead."

Right there where they prayed and where they had their meeting, the Jolof King's son got on his horse, and went to his father's house, dismounted and greeted his father. Then he said: "I won't be long here. I came to say goodbye." His father asked: "What happened?" He said: "I was lying down with the woman whom I went off to marry, up till midnight. Then I told her my wish. She refused, and I killed her. The people discussed the case and decided to kill me in the afternoon. And I don't want to be late, because the Siin King's son is responsible for me and we have an agreement." The father answered: "Then go, hurry, and when you get there, go through with the marriage agreement."⁴ " He ran his horse till he was in front of the mosque as far away as the distance from here to the doorway.⁵

- 3 In this story distance between the kingdoms mentioned have been greatly shortened.
- 4 Keba Xadi uses the phrase 'jel ngoro'. One translator suggested it might mean 'die because of love.'
- 5 From the tape it is not clear how far is meant. If he meant the door of his own house, he was sitting just outside it ! The story demands a slightly greater distance !
-

At that moment people were leaving the mosque. He was galloping his horse. Over there though, when they were leaving the mosque, they said: "Ah, the Jolof King's son hasn't come back. Son of the King of Siin, you were in charge of him. The afternoon is over. We have finished praying. Come and lie down so that we may kill you (cut your throat). He came and lay down where they showed him the man who was to kill him. This man took his knife ready to kill the Siin King's son. That's when they saw the galloping horse. "Ah," they cried: "There he is coming, there he is coming..."

The Siin King's son said: "Kill me. I was in charge of him, but the time has passed. I don't want my word to be broken. Kill me."

They said: "No. The proper one is here. He's right there coming."

He stopped the horse abruptly, got off and lay down where the son of the King of Siin had been lying. They picked up the knife that had killed the woman, with which they were going to kill him, when the Damel appeared and took the knife away, saying: "Don't kill him." They asked: "Why shouldn't we kill him?" He said: "The knife you are using has its rightful place." He gave them his sheath and put the knife into it and said: "You see, this is where the knife belongs. I am the one who killed the woman."

Of these three, who was the most honorable?

Commentary

The general motif [An individual commits an offence which merits the death penalty; he is allowed to return home to settle his affairs; a friend stands as surety; the friend is on the point of being executed when the offender appears at the last moment, and he is saved] is one widely known in Western Sudanic tradition. A Mandinka legend in which kings from The Gambia were involved while on a visit to the Emperor of Mali, was written out by A. K. Rahman (Gambian Studies No. 9, pp. 6-11). The tradition is also known in the Near East, an example being the folktale "The Bail," given by Dr. Angelo S. Rappoport in The Folklore of the Jews (1937), pp. 138-139.

Keba Xadi has made the Wolof version into a dilemma tale in which a question is asked of the audience at the end...who was the cleverest, who was the noblest, who was the worst, etc. and listeners are invited to discuss the matter. In this case, because the story was being told to me, and most of those listening were small children, there was no subsequent discussion.

So the problem is whose sense of honor is the strongest ?

We have three individuals of high rank -

- (1) The man with whom the woman slept, though no intercourse actually took place, who confessed to the killing. Though he could have escaped he did not do so, and returned to face death rather than be dishonored.
- (2) The man who stood as bail for his friend, then argued that his friend had been late in arriving, and wished to be killed rather than have his word tarnished.
- (3) The real murderer, who had no need to confess, as the blame had been accepted by the man who had been sleeping with the woman.

One might argue that he had been the first to be told by the woman that she was coming to sleep with him, setting up an "engagement". Instead he found her with another man, his honor had thereby been violated, and her action would have merited death.

In the Mandinka and Jewish versions the Emperor/King is so struck by the loyalty of the two friends that he pardons both and the matter is resolved. In Keba Xadi's version we are left with a problem still to be solved.

A similar tale is given in A. Marche: Trois Voyages dans l'Afrique Occidentale.... 1882, pp. 63-64.

Here the final opinion is that the woman was to blame...if she hadn't tried to have several lovers simultaneously, her death would never have happened !

FATUMATA OF MASINA

Keba Xadi has his child, Aysatu Jama, repeat each phrase or sentence as he told the story.

1

Well, this Fatumata was the daughter of the King of Masina (Ndeysaan)
Fatumata was beautiful. Her beauty was such that all the heroes of Masina
heard of her, and each of them wanted to marry her. However Fatumata said
she would not take one who was cowardly, she would only take one who was
daring (Ndeysaan). So Fatumata waited, and while she waited each of the
heroes of Masina came to court her. To each one who came, she said: "If
you don't have courage I will not marry you. I will take only a real hero.
Each one would return [unsatisfied]. So it continued until her father said:
"On Thursday all those who want to marry Fatumata should come, and there will
be a meeting." The meeting time came, they set up chairs, and all the heroes
of Masina gathered. They came and sat down. Then each one who was present,
got up, and shook hands, one by one, so that Fatumata might see them. But
when Fatumata saw them, she still had no desire for any of them.

While the meeting was going on Samba Gilajegi happened to be in his
father's compound. For about twenty years he had never gone out, he hadn't
seen the world (lit. sun), until one day he said: "Father, in the morning I
am going off to the east. I am going to travel until I find trouble."
A person does not sit in his father's place till he's a man without
encountering trouble. Nobody can say to him: "There's sand in your eye".
[You haven't seen anything ?] I don't want this at all. I'm going off to
find danger.

1 Ndeysaan: an exclamation of regret and sympathy.

2 Nakat, naxat (naqat) -adventure, trouble, danger.

The next morning he got up early, mounted his horse called Amula Tooma, [Literally 'He has no namesake', tooma being the Mandinka word for 'namesake'.] gathered up his lance, and his gun, and his sword. He mounted his horse, and travelled east all morning till the sun was overhead, when he arrived at the foot of a tamarind tree ³, and rested from the heat of the sun. As he was sitting at the foot of the tree, a man suddenly came out of the tree, and was about to give him his hand. He said: "If you give me your hand, I'll shoot you." "What have I done to you, from where do you know me?" "Get back," [the youth said]. The man said: "Come now, son. I'm just greeting you. Let us greet one another." He said: "Are you an evil being?" The man answered: "No, come on then, let's just greet each other." Then he agreed, and they greeted each other. After the greetings, the man said: "You, with your horse, I know your mission." "What is my mission?" The reason you are going out is to seek trouble. What you want you will soon have." "That is just what I want." He went back and gave him his hand again.

He said: "I am very glad that I will meet with trouble." The man confirmed it, and continued: "Where you have come from, if you go straight on (in the same direction), tomorrow is a meeting the whole world is attending, and the King has a daughter whom all the warriors of Masina want to marry. But you, leave your horse, leave your lance, leave your gun, leave your cutlass, and I'll give you rags to cover yourself. Put on the dirty rags. And I'll give you two pulloox [An aside to the child - 'If you hear pulloox, it is the same as cassava roots'.] With the two roots of cassava you should go to the meeting, and join the people. You should take these two roots, and find where the King is sitting, and greet him, and give him the roots and say: 'I want to marry Fatumata.' With all your dirt, you will find trouble. "

3 In traditional Wolof belief a tamarind was often the abode of spirits.

The youth said: "All right." He got up early, put on the dirty rags, and set off on foot. When he reached the place, he found the people lined up, and tried to enter. Whenever he tried to get through, the people blocked him, and said: "Crazy man, go away." But as soon as the King saw him, he told them: "Let him come forward." When he approached he gave him both roots, greeted him, and said: "As for me, these two cassava roots are my offering. I want to marry Fatumata. your beautiful daughter about whom I have heard so much." Fatumata at the time was wearing silver bracelets on her arms, each weighing about a kilo. She turned around and struck him with her left hand.⁴ He fell down flat, unconscious. People came running with water, poured it on him, and revived him. Fatumata said: "Take him to my compound." They took him away. The meeting continued to the end.

When it was over, she went home and found the youth sitting there. She asked him his name. He replied "Mbaari." She said "Mbaari?". He said: "Yes." She said: "Good, my goats and my sheep, every day you should feed them, or else get out of my house. If you don't I'll have you killed." He said: "Good, that's what I want."

He got up very early in the morning to feed the animals. He mixed the bran, and said: "Here's your food." He took the bran into the enclosure,⁶ and gave it to the oldest goat which ate it. He slipped away and returned to the spirit, ate until he was full, and came back to the house, and lay down among the goats till daylight.

Each day he would rise early to feed the animals and give the bran to the oldest goat which ate it. He would return to the spirit who gave him food, the most delicious food, which he would eat until he was full.

4 By using her left hand she was adding insult to injury, the left hand being used for ignoble purposes.

5 Mbaari- apparently a Bambara name, meaning 'person' 'human being'. *

6 Keba Xadi used a term kering gu dang which the child did not know. He added that it was fifteen years old. Lisa Barlow translated it as the 'oldest billy goat'. I have not found the expression in any dictionary.

* But in Cheikh Hamidou Kane: L'Aventure Ambigue, p. 160. we find: "Mbare, nom typique d'esclave au pays des Diallobe..."

Early that night though, the King of Mauritania called his young men and said to them: "All of you go and bring me Fatumata. She is a beautiful girl and I want her. You should take your guns and go and bring me Fatumata. They left in the night. As for Fatumata she was in a storied house⁷. They arrived in the night and found her getting fresh air. But the whole village was asleep. They [kidnapped her] and brought her down to the ground, and put her on a camel, and took her to Mauritania.

Early next morning the drums sounded [See p. 73 -i.e. to wake people up], but they did not see Fatumata. A slave climbed up and looked in her house, but did not find Fatumata. He cried: "Fatumata is not here !" One of the slaves went out behind the village and saw the camel's footprints, and said to them: "Those camel footprints I've just seen are those of the ones who took her to Mauritania." They then beat all the [alarm] drums, and all the warriors of Masina gathered. They were told that Fatumata had been taken to Mauritania. Each man grabbed his gun and his ammunition, and said that he would get her back from Mauritania. When they reached there, they found that Fatumata was lying with the King, and she was massaging him,⁸ and the warriors were ready for war. So [the men of Masina] stayed behind the town waiting. They did not know how to get into the town.

Mb̄ari who had been looking after the goats, went to the Spirit of the Tree and said: "Sir, because the King of Mauritania has taken my young woman, give me my horse, and my lance, and my gun." As soon as he had everything, he went off into the bush, and rushed to Mauritania. When he got there, he found all the men of Masina who were afraid to go in, because all the Mauritanians were ready for them. They were scared and hiding behind the trees. Mb̄ari was about to pass by when

7 Keba seems to suggest a flat roofed house, with Fatumata 'taking the air' on the roof, which explains why she was lowered down, and why the slave had to climb up rather than open a door.

8 Usually refers to massaging the feet and lower legs.

they shouted: "Hey, where are you going?" He said: "I am just travelling." They said: "If you pass you will be killed. All the Mauritians are standing [ready] with their guns." He then asked: "What happened here?" They said: "They have stolen Fatumata, and we've come to save her, but we don't dare enter Mauritania. He said to them: "As for me, if you pay me, I will bring you back Fatumata." They said: "What are we to pay? " He answered: "Each of you must cut off a finger, or an ear, and I'll put it in my [horse's feed] bag, and I'll bring you back Fatumata, and give her to you, and you can all go off with Fatuamata and I'll continue on my way. They asked: "Can you do it?" He said: "Certainly." Each of them cut off a finger and gave it to him, or else gave him an ear. He said to them: "Now you all should remain here." Then he went into Mauritania, and fired his double barreled gun. The Mauritians shot off their guns again and again until they [created a cloud of dust ?]. He went in and seized the girl from the feet of the Mauritanian King, and brought her back to the men of Masina. They left with her.

Now, after that happened, she was at home for only three days. On the fourth day the Mauritanians stole her again. Mbari went to save her again, and each of the men paid him by cutting off a finger or an ear. He brought her back again, but she said nobody should escort her home, but the one who saved her, and she went along with him.

When he got to the foot of the tree he found that the Mauritanian had shot him in the finger. The bullet wounded him, but did not go in. The girl, Fatumata herself, ripped a piece from her dress, and bandaged up the finger. When they got to the foot of the tree, she said: "I want to rest here." She wanted to deceive him, so that he would meet the men of Masina [following behind], and they would identify him, this Mbāri. She thought he was just a stranger who was passing through.

When they were resting, she said: "Massage me." He massaged her a little, and said: "Wait, I have to go and urinate, but I'll be back." When he got up he found his horse Amul Tooma, harnessed him, put on his saddle, jumped on, and went off [into the woods?], and left the girl for the men of Masina [to find].

When they all got back home with her, each man said: "I am the one who brought her back. It was I who took her from the King of Mauritania." But they were all lying. The next day there was to be a meeting. In the morning they all assembled and said: "Today is the day we give away Fatumata." When they all met, and all the men were there, the King said: "Today, I'm going to give her to the one she tells me she wants." Fatumata said: "Let them all assemble." All of them gathered. When they started speaking, one of them said: "It was I who went and brought her back from the King of Mauritania." Another said: "It was I who went and brought her back from the King of Mauritania." Another said: "It was I who brought her back from the King of Mauritania."

As for Mbari, he went to the Spirit, put on his own clothing which was there, took his horse and his gun, and his lance, and his machete, and his ⁹ tambasembe. He came back, pushed through the crowd, and said: "All of you gather round now." When he dismounted he said "Chep" [an expression of contempt] , and shook hands with the Chief [King]. They gave him a seat. He said: "Have you all spoken?" They answered: "Yes". "What have you said?" he asked. They said: "So and so, and so and so, and so and so, said they saved her from the King of Mauritania." He said: "You, here's your ear, you, here's your finger.... you, here's your ear; you, here's your finger..." This was when you were in Mauritania, and each one of you cut off a finger or an ear and gave it to me." Fatumata said: "This is my husband." Thereupon they performed the marriage ceremony.

⁹ An expensive heavy locally woven cloth worn over the shoulder.

After the ceremony they stayed until night-time, till cock-crow. Then he said to Fatumata: "Do you see my horse? Do you know his name- Amul Tooma? Hold tight because he is going to eat meat..... The distance between here and where he lives is a month's journey, but if I want I can do it in a day." Then he bought a strong rope, and tied the girl up in a mat, and galloped off dragging the girl behind until she died. He continued till he brought her to his own compound, and announced: "This girl is the most beautiful one in Masina. I'm the one who has taken her away, and got all the advantage."

That's where I left him, and met with Gamble, here in my house, I, Keba Xadi, and we had this conversation.

The tale of a hero who goes off to seek adventure, disguised in rags, and is ill-treated by a princess, but is able to rescue her (generally on more than one occasion), has a wound bandaged by a piece of her dress, and finally emerges, not as a beggar, but as the prince he really is- is one of the classic tale types known in countless variations in West Africa and the Near East.

The name Keba uses for his hero - Samba Gilajegi - is that of one of the greatest Denyanke princes of Futa Toro, who lived in the first half of the 18th century and died around 1850-60. A cycle of tales centers around his exploits. His horse's name, according to F.V. Equilbeq, was Umulatum. It was born on the same day as Samba. [See La legende de Samba Gueladio Diegui Prince du Fouta , by Francois Victor Equilbeq. 1974. Nouvelles Editions Africaines.] Keba would seem to have borrowed the name of Samba Gilajegi for his tale. An article in Afrique Histoire US, Vol.2 No.3, 1984 summarizes his career, and has two illustrations - Samba with his weapons (p.27) and Samba on

his horse (p.28) which could apply equally well to Keba's hero.

The expression "until he nearly died", or "until he died", is commonly used as a very emphatic form in Wolof [cf. "He laughed until he nearly died."]. But Keba was not saying "He tied her up tightly in the mat until she almost died," he used the phrase literally... "dragged until she died." So Samba obtained no benefit from his adventure. Was it his naivete ? or was he getting revenge, punishing her for her ill treatment of him? Do we just have another of Keba's 'outrageous endings' to his stories, instead of the 'living happily ever after' ending one might have expected? The listener is left thinking "Did Keba really say what I thought I heard him say ?"

Many months after the above had been written, I came across a French translation of a Fula version of the story in:

Monique de Lestranges
 "Contes et légendes des Fulakunda du Badyar,"
Etudes Guineenes, 7, 1951, 31-35.

The ending here is that the jinn who had helped the man in search of adventure had urged him to be forgiving to his new wife, but, on his journey home, he threw her into a river to be devoured by crocodiles.

Interestingly, a later story given by Monique de Lestranges deals with the cycle of Gueladyo.

OUSMANE SEMBENE'S FILMS ON THE WOLOF

(Summaries and commentaries)

1	BOROM SARRET	1963	87-90
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OUSMANE SEMBENE'S FILMS ON THE WOLOF

Ousmane Sembène's films are intended to go beyond entertainment and educate his fellow countrymen. They are comments on social conditions and designed to raise questions for discussion in the minds of the audience.

- (1) BOROM SARRET (The Cart Owner), 1963. 20 mins. Black and white.

French dialog, presented as the voice of the cart owner.

This is a short film, covering a day in the life of a cart owner, but is one which contains many ideas elaborated in later films. It opens with shots of a Dakar mosque and the road between the Medina and the European type city. The film is set in Dakar after independence, indicated by a shot of the Independence Monument. The morning call to prayer is heard. A man, never named, is seen in his compound, saying his prayers and putting on his amulets [but religion and magic do not save him from subsequent misfortune], while his wife pounds grain in a mortar on the veranda. He harnesses his horse¹, and attaches him to the cart. His wife hands him some kola, saying "May God be with you, remember we have no lunch." He sets off from home, which is in the Medina, a crowded area with poor housing and sandy roads. He passes a weaver preparing his thread on his way to the main Dakar market.

First a young man jumps on without paying. Then he stops for a regular customer, a market woman, but as times are hard, she does not pay either. An unemployed man hails him. He has been out of work for a long time. The cart owner does not stop, but the man jumps on anyway. The cart owner makes a comment on unemployment, why does the man bother. When his passengers disembark at the market a handshake is all his reward.

1. The horse bears the name of Albourah, one of the heroes of Wolof resistance to colonialism. (See also note on page 90.)

As he waits for further work, a cripple comes up and begs for alms in the name of God, but is ignored. He is then hired to carry oil drums and cement building blocks. Next he is hired by a pregnant woman and her husband to take them to the maternity hospital. The wheel of his cart is squeaking and wobbling, and he wonders how he can afford to have it repaired. The pregnant woman puts her head on his shoulder/leading to thoughts about "modern women." After reaching the hospital he is paid.

He decides to remain in town during the midday period, when few people are active anyway, sustained by the kola nuts his wife had given him earlier. He wonders about what his family will have to eat. A griot comes up, wearing a wrist watch and dark glasses, well dressed and fat,/and starts singing the praises of the cart owner. A crowd gathers round to watch, and he gives the griot all the money he has earned. The griot then stops. A little side drama is played out in the crowd. A bootblack,(unasked), starts to clean the shoes of a young man, but the latter walks off without paying. [Honest labor receives no reward, dishonest work, i.e. praising by the griot, is richly rewarded.] Yet we see that for a brief moment the griot gave him a sense of pride and happiness.

Next a man carrying a dead baby wants to go to the cemetery, and is told "If you pay." On arrival at the cemetery the cart owner takes the baby in his arms. [The father with his child going alone to the cemetery symbolizes the isolation of strangers in the city.] The official at the gate stops them and asks for the necessary papers. The father does not have the right document, and is told he cannot enter. The cart owner puts the baby on the ground and walks away, abandoning the father. At least he does not claim his fare. He drives off a little, and then stops to "relieve himself", [to urinate].