

A man in a dark suit [Villains in Sembene's films wear suits and ties] shows up and asks the cart owner to take him and his possessions to the Plateau, an area of the city forbidden to horse traffic. [This was a decision of the Municipal Authorities taken after Independence.] He displays money, and says he has influence, so after some hesitation and an appeal to his amulets and a prayer for protection, the cart owner agrees to go, his need for money getting the better of his judgement. As they make the transition the background music of the xalam changes to European music. A number of shots are made at a low angle, emphasizing the height of the buildings and the insignificance of the hero. They reach the Plateau, an area with tall modern buildings and both black and white inhabitants, but before they reach their destination a policeman spots him, and demands his papers. As he takes them out of his pocket, a medal falls to the ground. The policeman puts his foot on it. [The cart owner has served his country, or rather France, well, but this counts for nothing with the authorities.] Meantime his passenger has deserted him, slipping away with his baggage in a taxi which happened to come by. The cart is confiscated until a fine is paid, and he is next seen walking home, leading his horse, his means of livelihood gone.

He is stopped by a red light, his movements now controlled by an impersonal force. He crosses the Place de l'Independence, the symbol of the new Senegal, goes by the Sandaga market, and down the road to the Medina. He reaches home, his wife starts to light the fire for cooking, but he has to tell her that he has brought nothing. Children come to the entrance of the compound to beg, his wife tells them there is no food today. She then hands her own child to her husband, and goes off saying "I promise you we will have something to eat this evening." The husband holds his child who begins to cry, and asks "Where is she going ?" and says "There is nothing to eat."

One finds in this film a series of themes popular with Ousmane Sembene. However pious the cart-owner may be, religion and magic do not protect him against oppression from the authorities. Those who are "educated" ruthlessly exploit those who are illiterate. Those who live in the Plateau area are worlds apart from those in the Medina, and have no concern for them. In an independent Senegal, his own country, the cart owner is not free to go where he wants, i.e. to the Plateau area, colonialism has merely been replaced by class barriers.

Whose fault is it that misfortunes happen to him? If he had never taken the dead child to the cemetery, then he would never have met the man who led him astray. Was it his own greed for money? He had money, yet he gave it away to the griot, and for Ousmane Sembene griots are considered parasites.

His wife, though she appears only briefly, is the sustainer of her husband, it was she who gave him the kola nuts which kept him going through the day, though how she manages is not revealed. How she is going to obtain food when she goes out is left to the imagination: from friends? from relatives? on credit from a Mauretanian storekeeper? through prostitution? We are never told. The conclusion seems to echo a motif in Ousmane Sembene novel God's Bits of Wood (1962), p.67.¹ "One morning a woman rose and wrapped her cloth firmly round her waist and said, "Today, I will bring back something to eat." And then men began to understand that if the times were bringing forth a new breed of men, they were also bringing forth a new breed of women."

1. Anchor Books Edition. 1967.

(Arabic: Burāq)

Albourah - was the name of the winged horse which bore the Prophet Mohammed from Mecca to Jerusalem, and then upwards through the seven heavens into the very presence of God.

(2) MANDABI (Le Mandat. The Money Order). 1968. 1 hr. 45 mins.

Color. Wolof dialog.

This is a story about Ibrahima Dieng, a middle aged man with two wives [Mety and Aram] and seven children, and no regular income, who tries to keep up appearances as a well to do person, a pious Muslim, and head of a large family. The film opens with Dieng at the barber's open air shop, showing him to be a sensuous man concerned with his image. His nephew, working in Paris as a street sweeper, sends back a money order, with instructions as to how the money is to be divided. Dieng is to receive 2000 francs (\$8) out of the 25,000 (\$100) sent. Some is to go to his mother (\$12), and the rest saved. He is not at home when the mailman arrives, so the mailman hands over the notice and letter to his wives. There is a little game played out, for the mailman usually delivers bills or official notices, and the wives don't want to accept the mail until they know what it is, and are unwilling to admit that Dieng is their husband, even though the mailman knows the family perfectly well.

The wives use the information to obtain food on credit, and prepare a superb meal for their husband, which he enjoys without asking what has led to this unexpected luxury. [This is one of the great eating scenes in movie history]. After his siesta they tell him the news. He is angry with them for talking about the money, saying that everyone will now know. Good wives should wait for their husband's decision before doing anything.

He sets off for the Post Office, and has his nephew's letter read by a letter writer/reader, whom he cannot yet pay. At the counter he is asked for his identity card. Though he has other papers (voter's registration), and a friend with him who has an identity card, this is not enough and he is told to go and get one. So a man who is well known and respected in his own neighborhood becomes a non-person outside. When he goes to the police station to get a card, he is told he needs a birth certificate, photographs, and a 50 franc tax stamp.

Meantime, Mbaye, a business man realizes that Dieng is in debt, and hopes to acquire his property to sell to a client. He drops by while Dieng is out.

Next morning Dieng is visited by the Imam (the religious leader) who wants to borrow money, and a neighbor also with the same intent. He explains that he has not yet received anything, but tells his wives to hand over some rice. His wives, thinking of the needs of their own children, cut down the amount that he specifies.

On going to City Hall for his birth certificate, he finds the employees more concerned with their own affairs than with dealing with the public. They insist, though Wolof themselves, in speaking French, and regard having to speak their own language to the public as degrading. He is asked for the date of his birth, but as he does not know it, is sent away. An orderly at the door offers him advice, and tells him how to proceed. On leaving he believes he has caught a glimpse of a nephew in the street, and decides to go and visit him. The nephew, very Frenchified, living in a middle class neighborhood, and married to a French wife, explains to her how his relatives when they come to see him only want to borrow money. Nevertheless he provides a small sum for his fare home and a check, and accompanies him back to the City Hall where he puts him in touch with someone who can help obtain a birth certificate. There is also a shot of a white family leaving the Town Hall, the implication being that they are attended to promptly.

On his way to the bank to cash the check, a beggar woman with a baby accosts him with a tale, saying she has been robbed and asking for money to get home. Hoping that giving alms will help end his problems, he gives her some money.

At the bank a tout seeing that he is ignorant of banking procedures, offers to help him cash the check,¹ demanding 30% commission, because he has no identity papers. [Customers are called up by number when their money is

1 For 1000 francs CFA (about \$4.00).

ready, Ibrahima, being illiterate, cannot read the changing numbers.] Having obtained his money, paid the tout, he sets off and inspects several photographer's shops. He is led into one by a young photographer's assistant, who spots his naivete. He is told to pay 300 francs (\$1.20) in advance, and come back later for the prints. It is clear that no photographs have been taken. Continuing on his way the same beggar woman accosts him again, with a different story. He loses his temper, so she draws a crowd, and accuses him of making advances to her, an honest woman.

Meantime at home, the water supplier (water carrier) asks to be paid. The Imam and the neighbor turn up again. The business man keeps an eye on events. And Dieng's sister, the mother of the young man in Paris, comes for her share of the money, and will brook no delay. She is a dominant character who can thoroughly intimidate her brother, and there is interesting play between the wives and sister-in-law, on the surface extreme politeness, but behind it hostility, with the wives trying to protect their husband. In the end, one of Dieng's wives, Aram, offers her gold ornaments to be pledged with the Mauritanian storekeeper for cash. The Mauritanian takes advantage of him, and gives him less than he expected, and a short time period in which to reclaim the gold. On returning from the store, the Imam meets him on the street, and asks to borrow money. Dieng replies that he has none. The Imam tells him not to let himself be influenced by his wives. Dieng's sister returns to her village, saying that she will return for the rest of the cash.

Dieng goes back to the photographer's place. He is told that his pictures did not come out, and he must pay again. He becomes furious, and knocks over the apparatus. He and the assistant come to blows, and he receives a bloody nose. Spectators hurry him away before the police can arrive.

Among the hawkers that come to Dieng's house is one selling brassières. Aram selects a bright red one, takes it on credit. The

brassiere peeps out of her dress in scenes later in the film.

When Dieng arrives home all bloodied, his gown stained, his wives cry that he has been attacked and robbed. Neighbors come and offer sympathy by bringing small gifts. Dieng is furious with his wives for jumping to conclusions. "What will people say when they learn the truth?" For the women it is simple: "Just say your wives did not tell the truth."

He goes to the corner store of the Mauritians to borrow money. The storekeeper refuses him credit because of his mounting debts. The time on the pledged jewellery has expired. The Mauritanian mentions that someone has been wanting to buy Dieng's property. This makes Dieng furious. The Mauritanian threatens Dieng. Then his wives come to his aid, and unleash the fury of their tongues on the Mauritanian, who now cringes. The businessman, Mbaye, arrives, cools things down, and asks Dieng to come and see him about the money order.

When Dieng visits Mbaye's house, he meets a woman in a black dress, polishing her nails, looking as though she has just come from Mbaye's bed. Mbaye has Dieng sign a power of attorney. When Dieng returns to collect his money, Mbaye tells him he cashed the money order, but was afterwards robbed, and fobs him off with a small amount of rice as compensation. Dieng is sent on his way, stupified by the turn of events. Nearing home, he sits down in the middle of the street, and starts giving away the rice. His wives come out, manage to save what remains, and take him inside. His sister then shows up for the rest of her money.

The film ends with a few words of consolation from the mailman, that ordinary people can change the situation, an idea which Dieng can hardly credit, for there seem to be no honest people in the world anymore, and nobody can be trusted. "Honesty is a sin in this country."

This is a superb film, blending humor with a bitter commentary on the treatment of the ordinary individual by the bureaucracy, and the way in which the literate cheat their illiterate kin. People prey on each other, and even beggars cheat.

When the film was shown to Senegalese audiences there were mixed reactions. People who lived in the city recognized too well many of the situations. There was a positive effect, making people aware of the petty corruptions that were going on. Government authorities were not pleased with what was being depicted, and felt that this was too negative a film, showing virtually everyone as corrupt.

The actors in the film are amateurs, not professionals. To western eyes the roles may seem to be overplayed, and the pace slow, but the film is meant to appeal also to those who are not Wolof speakers, and have to follow the story from the acting. In terms of pace, the film has in fact to speed up a great deal of the customary interaction and speech exchanges, and conversations are more abrupt than is customary in everyday life. In ordinary life public display and little performances are part of the normal Wolof style. Ibrahim's wives go through a display of subservience when their husband is angry, yet they know how to manipulate him to their best advantage, and, when they are out of his sight, modify his instructions to deal with reality. Though they are different in character, they collaborate in order to control their husband, and stand up for him against the outside world. In one scene when Ibrahima is getting ready for prayer, a glimpse of his youngest wife as she is bathing, turns his mind from prayer to something else. The Mauritanian trader was reduced to cringing before their tongues. As in many Ousmane Sembene films the wives and mothers are shown as strong and vital characters.

The men that are seen in the most favorable light are those in subordinate jobs. The street sweeper in 'Paris' is rich compared with his relatives in Dakar,

and tries to take care of his kinsfolk. The people who help and give Ibrahima sound advice are such people as the mailman, and the orderly at City Hall.

(3) TAUW (Eldest son). 1970. 27 minutes. Color. Wolof with English subtitles.

This film was sponsored by the National Council of Churches, even though Sembene is a professed atheist. It deals with certain major social problems in Dakar, the high unemployment rate among young people, the conflict between generations, and the inadequacy of government institutions to deal with it all.

The film opens with an old fashioned father chastising his small son, until his mother, an indulgent and long suffering character, intervenes. The eldest son is still in bed, and when he emerges is scolded by his father who tells him that sleeping late and spending his time listening to pop music are not ways of finding work. In Tauw's room one sees a little red book (Chairman Mao's Thoughts ?) which does not seem to have had an effect.

The younger brother and sister hurry off to a Koranic school, where the teacher, reclining in a chair, maintains discipline with a short whip. The children repeat verses from the Koran, and then are sent out to beg as part of their duty, being told to bring back 50 francs each. He keeps the small girl behind to massage his feet and toes.

Tauw finds his friends, chatting, and dancing to the sound of a record player, and flirting with their girl friends. He persuades two of his companions to go with him to the Employment Office. On the way they steal food from a hawker carrying a load on her head. Meantime his younger brother is earning some money by carrying back purchases from the market for some elegantly dressed Wolof women. He hands the money over to his mother to keep.

The young men find there is no work for them, but hear that laborers are being hired at the docks. They set off down one of the main boulevards. On arrival at the docks they discover that they have to pay 100 francs each to enter the dock area. One has enough money and is able to go inside. The other leaves. Tauw returns home to borrow money. The Koranic students have been begging money from passengers in cars stopped at a traffic light. One well dressed man asks how old one of the boys is. When he replies "Ten", the man says "That is how long our country has been independent," and drives off without giving him anything.

Tauw reaches home, exhausted by running, and asks his mother for money. She has none, but takes a pair of his father's trousers, and tells him to sell them. As the trousers symbolize masculine authority, this is a risky act.

The Koranic students return with what they have collected, rice, biscuits (crackers), coins, etc., the teacher thanking God for his mercies.

Tauw runs into his girl friend, Nafi. She lets him have 100 francs which she was going to use for her fare to the maternity clinic.

Tauw reaches the docks, pays the entrance fee, but discovers that he is too late, for all the work crews are complete. He is angry at having paid 100 francs for nothing, and goes back slowly in a despondent mood. As he rests on a park bench holding the trousers, a man (A bana-bana, or dealer in any thing that comes his way) asks if he is selling the trousers and offers 500 francs, then 600. Tauw turns down the offer, then stretches out and falls asleep, using his father's trousers as a pillow. He dreams of possible fates - will he end up in prison for stealing, the mental hospital, or the Chamber of Deputies (National Assembly). A hand shakes him awake, and he is told that the police are rounding up vagrants. He runs off, and joins his friends around their record player, dancing or playing cards. Nafi comes up, shows him a prescription which will cost 2000 francs. He refuses to accept responsibility for her pregnancy, and accuses her of playing around. She bursts into tears and leaves.

Tauw returns home. His mother provides something for him to eat, borrowing money from her small son to buy bread, which is soaked in sugar and water. His father appears and asks what they are doing with his trousers. The mother says she was drying them. He snorts.

Finally Nafi shows up carrying a suitcase, saying her parents have turned her out because she is pregnant. Tauw's father and mother have never seen her before, and are shocked. Tauw tells his father that he is an adult, that this is his "wife", that she is pregnant, and that they are going off on their own. His mother is distressed at the thought of his leaving, his father says "Let them go," and holds back the mother who wants to prevent her son from leaving. The young couple disappear into the night.

In this film the story is minimal. Ousmane Sembene is setting out a problem for discussion, and the characters seem more like stereotypes than real people. An anti-religious view comes through in the way the Koranic teacher is shown, living off the poor, and encouraging begging, teaching nothing of use for daily living. Western education has also failed. The father is old fashioned, and his ideas are remote from "real" urban problems. Those who are educated and prosperous turn their backs on the poor and unemployed. Government itself, though it has an Employment Bureau, is not coping with unemployment. Things that youth value, card playing, listening to records of pop music, dancing, are unproductive activities. At times Ousmane Sembene seems to be reflecting western values - I personally doubt if a pregnant girl would ever have been turned out of her home by her parents.

Not one of the best of Ousmane Sembene's films, but at any rate providing some colorful background on Dakar.

(4) XALA (The Curse of Impotence). 1974. 135 mins. color.

French and Wolof with English subtitles.

This film is a satiric allegory in which every scene is loaded with
¹
 symbolism. It is a commentary on the corruption that has come about
 through the adoption of a bourgeois life-style, the impotence is that of
 an independent Senegal, which is losing its traditional culture, and has
 no economic control, with the banks, the import-export business, etc. being
 controlled by foreigners.

The tale concerns El Hadji Abdoukader Beye, a middle aged businessman,
 who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca, but has sold out to alien values.
 He had humble beginnings as a primary school teacher, was involved in trade
 union activities, lost his job, and turned to business. Now he is an
 independent trader, but he rents his "warehouse" from a Lebanese, and acts
 as a front for foreign businessmen, dealing in such commodities as imported
 rice. A Mercedes is always waiting for him, he has a glamorous secretary,
 who wears a Wolof mbuba in the street, but takes it off to show a dress
 when she is in the office. He speaks French (except to his first wife),
 and will drink only imported Evian water. Evian water is also used to fill
 the radiator of the Mercedes.

He has two wives. The senior wife, whom he married while he was
 still unimportant, is Adja Awa Assatou. She originally came from a
 Catholic family on the Island of Goree, but converted to Islam and broke
 off relations with her father when she married. She went on the pilgrimage
 to Mecca. She finds consolation for her troubles in religion, and lives
 for her children, six in number, the eldest of whom, Rama, is at the

1. For example in one scene where Rama is talking to her father, there is
 a map on the wall showing the different countries of Africa, colored,
 blue, green, yellow, red, and so on. Her dress has stripes of the
 same colors, but there is no division into separate nations.

and University, is a political activist, [One sees pictures of Samori, a leader of resistance against the French in the 19th century, and of Cabral of Guinea, in her room]. Rama is articulate and outspoken, is against polygyny, and wishes to see the Wolof language replace French. She has a small Fiat of her own. Her fiancé is a young doctor.

Adja Awa now cares little about sexual relations with her husband, though customary law dictates that he shall divide his time between her house and that of his second wife. Whatever feelings she has, she keeps under control. Her philosophy is expressed in the saying "Patience does not kill." In short, she symbolizes a traditional conservative Islamic viewpoint.

The second wife is Oumi N'Doyi, the mother of five children. She wears low cut dresses, a fashionable wig, dark glasses, speaks French, cooks French dishes, and even uses imported meat. She runs her house according to the latest French magazines. She is outspoken, her feelings of anger, irritation, hostility, and suspicion, are immediately expressed. She is sexually demanding and possessive. Her conversations with her husband concern only sex and money. Apart from sex, she likes movies and night clubs, where she can flaunt her attractiveness.

Each wife has, as is customary, her own villa. Rivalry exists between each group of children. In the mini-bus which takes them to school, each group has its own row of seats. Each tries to extract the maximum from their father.

The film opens with a scene at the Chamber of Commerce. It has now become completely African, and the symbols of the Europeans, the busts, etc. are being removed. But whites are seen handing out briefcases filled with money, showing that they still control these "puppets" behind the scenes.

El Hadji announces to his colleagues that he has just been married to a new bride. [The ceremony does not demand his presence at the Mosque, representatives of the families act instead.] He invites his colleagues to the reception. There is a parade of expensive vehicles to the grand affair. An abundant supply of expensive foreign liquor of all kinds is provided. Politicians and businessmen, who are supposed to be good Muslims, indulge freely. Over drinks, politicians and businessmen make deals. Young people dance to pop music, and this drowns out the playing of the traditional kora player.

The new bride, Ngoné, is a teenager of the same age as El Hadji's daughter. Her contriving aunt, Yay Bineta, realizing that the girl is not doing well at school, wanted to get her married off. The mother, Mam Fatou, agreed. Under the pretext of having him help find a job for her, she threw the girl and the businessman together. She invited him to eat at their house, saying that as he is a man, he does not have to ask his wives' permission. After a time she says that people are talking about the girl's association, and if his intentions are honorable, he should marry the girl. As a Muslim, he does not have to ask his wives' permission. He is flattered that a young woman might still find him attractive and agrees. The bride has had no say in the matter, she is a mere commodity whose virginity is being traded by her mother and aunt for future wealth. In the film she never speaks, and is only one stage away from the tailor's dummy on which her wedding garments are hung.

El Hadji is expected to carry out certain traditional rites by his in-laws, to secure marital success, but he refuses. His colleagues joke with him, and tell him they have brought him some 'medicine' from The Gambia to ensure potency..

Adja Awa and Oumi, though they live separate lives, both attend the wedding reception, to maintain the public appearance of harmony. When left together their mutual dislike of each other is apparent. When drinks are brought Oumi dips the little finger of her left hand in the drink and sprinkles some on the ground. This is a gesture to ward off witchcraft, and shows extreme distrust of the relatives of the bride, and also shows that in spite of her "western" life style, old beliefs are slow to disappear. Adja Awa leaves early, while Oumi remains to enjoy herself for a while.

El Hadji and the bride go to the bedroom. She lies down on the bed. He takes a shower and is ready for action, but between leaving the shower and reaching the bed, he loses his erection, and realizes he has become impotent. In the morning the aunt and an old woman arrive to obtain the blood-stained marriage sheet, proof of the virginity of the bride, but discover to their horror that nothing has happened. El Hadji is castigated for not carrying out the traditional rituals earlier.

El Hadji is deeply troubled and asks himself who has done this, one of his wives ? a jealous colleague ? He goes off to his office, and calls his friend, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, who comes round. He then takes him to his private "marabout", but this does not effect a cure. Then his father-in-law comes to visit him, and takes him to a seer. He is given a device with an animal like mouthpiece to wear while crawling on his hands and knees towards the bed. He goes through with this act. His bride is terrified and screams. Again no sex. He visits a series of 'charlatans, spending money wildly in an attempt to get a cure. Then he turns to the hospital for a "pick-me-up," where Rama's fiancé learns of the trouble.

Next his driver takes him to a marabout in a remote village. As it is off the motorable road, they have to hire a horse and cart. El Hadji is

still unwilling to drink local water or eat village food. After a long wait, the marabout is able to attend to him, and brings about a cure. Payment is made by check. El Hadji rushes back happily to his new bride, only to find that her menstrual period, when sex is forbidden, has started. Frustrated he goes to Oumi's place, where she enjoys the pleasures she had been missing.

Meantime his business had fallen apart; his warehouse becomes empty, his bills are unpaid. When he goes to his office next day, his secretary complains that she has not received her salary, utility bills also have not been paid, and so on. He goes to the Bank for a loan until he can get on his feet again. They turn him down. He receives a summons to appear before the Chamber of Commerce, and is expelled for giving them a bad name, having failed to pay for rice delivered to him on credit by the National Grain Board, the money from the sale having been spent on his wedding. The firm that supplied his cars (including the one given to the bride) is ready to repossess them, as he has fallen behind in his payments. The check that he gave to the marabout bounces. The marabout comes to see him, but is not recognized. Just as the marabout can remove the curse of impotence, so he can restore it. And as soon as he leaves he does. The bailiffs now begin to move in.

His new bride and her mother load up a taxi with furniture and crockery, and depart, demanding a divorce. The bailiffs come to the villa of the second wife. She returns when they are not there, and loads up a truck, taking curtains, the refrigerator, the carpets, etc. Only his first wife stands by him.

A beggar who has been sitting opposite El Hadji's office reveals to his driver that he can bring about a cure. He collects up a host of beggars, the blind, hunchbacks, cripples, lepers, etc. whom the authorities had previously rounded up and dumped outside the city. They go to El Hadji's house in the

suburbs and invade his house, helping themselves to whatever they see. The police who see them call for reinforcements, neighbors phone the authorities saying there is a riot taking place. It is revealed that the leader, the beggar, who used to sit outside El Hadji's office, is a person whom El Hadji had deprived of his land, and had put in prison unjustly.

When the police come to the villa, Rama talks to them in French, [reversing a previous scene in which she would speak only Wolof when stopped for a traffic violation], saying that the beggars had been invited by her father to receive alms. The police say that they will respect private property, and withdraw from the premises. [But are they waiting in the street for the beggars?]

The beggar states that the cure will involve El Hadji standing naked and being spat upon by all the beggars. [It should be remembered that spittle is in some contexts regarded as a purifying substance, the blessing of marabouts can be conveyed in their spittle. But spitting can also be a sign of deep disgust. People then tend to spit sideways, making a deep sound from the throat.] Awa Assatou and Rama are horrified, but powerless. As El Hadji wishes to regain his manhood, he feels he has no option, and the process begins.*

The corruption of the new bourgeoisie is removed only by the actions of the most despised section of the community, who have managed to survive through the old fashioned virtues of co-operation and sharing, and attaching no importance to the material things desired by the elite.

In the film, though not mentioned in the book, El Hadji's place in the Chamber of Commerce had been taken by a pickpocket who made his wealth by stealing from an unsophisticated man from a rural area entrusted with funds from his community.

* As the film ends, and only darkness is shown on the screen, the sound of the spitting continues. [Will the audience feel that this might be happening to them ?]

(5) CEDDO . 1976. 120 mins. Color. Wolof with English subtitles.

This is a historical film of a symbolic nature, set in perhaps the 18th century when slave traders, Catholic missionaries, and the proselyters of Islam were competing for the Wolof.

A Muslim cleric persuades a weak-minded ruler to adopt Islam and change customary laws. The matrilineal system, in which the nephew is the heir, is to be changed to one in which the son inherits. People are to convert to Islam, otherwise they will be killed or sold to the white slave-trader, who provides guns and ammunition used in slave raiding.

The animists (^{s.}ceddo - ^{pl.}sebbe)^{*} are compelled to sell some of their own people into slavery to obtain arms for self-defence. The priest has no success in converting the people, apparently having only one convert, but has a vision of a time when Catholicism is accepted. There is a remarkable futuristic view of a time when African drumming and singing are combined with Catholicism.

With increasing oppression a representative of the ceddo kidnaps a daughter of the king, and sends a message to that effect, using a challenge staff (samp). A cord is set up to limit the area in which she may move. -if she moves beyond it she will be killed. Honor demands that someone be sent to fight him singlehanded. He has prepared a trench from which he can fight, and his attendant tells him of the approach of an opponent. Biram (The King's son) - a royal warrior, comes first, fires off his guns too soon, and is shot by an arrow. His body is sent back to the king, and is buried by the Muslims. Next the king's nephew, betrothed to the captured princess, sets off. He fires at the ceddo's hat. When he approaches close he is blinded by sand thrown in his face, and shot with an arrow. His body is sent back, but as he rejected Islam, the Muslims refuse him burial.

The king then dies under mysterious circumstances, and the Muslim cleric announces that he is now the ruler, and will marry the late king's

**Fula words. Spelled Tiedo in many French texts, this was a term used in Wolof also for mercenary warriors attached to various chiefs.*

daughter when she is brought back.

Fighting breaks out during which the Catholic priest is killed.

One sees the forcible conversion of the people. Sembène himself plays the part of a man who has his head shaved, and is given a new name, which he is required to repeat. The position of women is also changed. Formerly they sat with the men. Now they are forced to sit with the slaves.

News of the king's death is brought to the kidnapper and the princess by a passer by, and the cord limiting the area is removed. Meantime representatives of the converts have gone to confront the kidnapper, but the rules are broken when two of them go, and the kidnapper is slain in a treacherous fashion. There is a vision scene in which the princess offers water to the ceddo, a gesture performed by a wife to her husband or to a distinguished stranger - an acknowledgement that she too is involved in his destiny, and respects what he has tried to do.

When the princess is brought back, and reaches the cleric she seizes the gun of one of his bodyguards and point it at him. Her supporters seize the guns of guards watching them, and place the muzzles in their mouths, to prevent them being turned on her. She then calmly shoots the cleric dead (aiming at his genitals), and then turns to face the audience.

Just as in the film Emitai, which concerns the Jola people of the Casamance, and where the women lead the resistance to colonial oppression, here too a woman of royal blood rises to the occasion and leads her people, when the men have failed.

In a state which is 90% Muslim, this was a highly controversial film, and was banned, ostensibly on the grounds that ceddo should have been spelled cedo in conformity with the new state approved orthography. [The Fula word from which the Wolof term is certainly derived has definitely two

d s.] Ousmane Sembene is raising the question of the elimination of traditional African culture and the destruction of personal identity by forced conversion to an outside religion. To what extent have religious leaders the right to assume control over the minds and bodies of everyone ? One might also ask: "Or politicians either ?"

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WOLOF PROVERBS

By

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- 1 Collections of proverbs.
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(1) Collections of Proverbs.

There are substantial collections of Wolof proverbs. J. Dard in his Grammaire Wolofe (1826) provided a list of 231 sayings with a French translation. These were translated into English by R. F. Burton in his Wit and Wisdom from West Africa (1865). About 35 examples were given by Boilat in Esquisses Senegalaises (1853). In the 1923 edition of Mgr. A. Kobes Dictionnaire Wolof-Francais over 250 proverbs (though not all are marked as such) are used to illustrate the meaning of various words. It is clear that the compilers used Dard's work, sixty-four per cent, if not more, of Dard's proverbs appearing in Kobes' dictionary. The authors of many articles and the compilers of various anthologies of Senegalese literature drew heavily on these major sources. Rene Basset in an article "Folklore Wolof," Mélusine, IV, 1888-89, gave the French version of nearly fifty proverbs, but these clearly come from an early edition (1873?) of the Kobes dictionary, as they follow the alphabetical order of the Wolof key words. Similarly three quarters of the proverbs in Andre Demaison: Diaeli: Le livre de la sagesse noire (1931) are found in Kobes, with some forty per cent coming, directly or indirectly, from Dard.

A recent work by Cisse, Gueye and Toure: Proverbes Wolof, Dakar: CLAD, 1982, lists 1212 proverbs, but provides no translations, explanations, headings, information about sources, or index.

A major defect of all of these works is that there is no explanation of the meanings of many of the proverbs, or discussion of the contexts in which they are typically used.

1. An exception is Assane Sylla in La philosophie morale des Wolof, 1978, who makes use of proverbs in his analysis.

(2) Proverbs in Wolof Tradition.

Proverbs are embodied in a number of traditional Wolof tales and legends. In one of the classic legends² about Kocce Barma [Faal], who lived in Cayor in the 17th century, he left four tufts of hair on his head which he secretly named:

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) | <u>buur du mbokka.</u> | A king is not a relative. |
| (2) | <u>soppal sa jabar te bul olu.</u> | Love your wife, but do not trust her (with your secrets). |
| (3) | <u>doom u jitle du doom.</u> | A stepson is not a son. |
| (4) | <u>mag bax na ci reew mi.</u> | An old man is good [to have] in a country. |

The king heard of the tufts and desiring to discover their meaning bribed Kocce's wife with gifts. She learned the secrets from her husband one night in bed. The king then had him arrested for disrespect (even though he was a relative), and sentenced him to death. When he was about to be executed his step-son told him to take off his gown so that it should not be stained by blood, instead of behaving as a son should by trying to prevent the execution. At the last moment an old man intervened and saved Kocce, who was thus able to prove the truth of his four statements.

Kocce Barma is regarded as the source of many Wolof proverbs. Boilat in his Grammaire de la langue woloffe (1858) gives a number of sayings attributed to Kocce (pp. 372-376). Some of the examples are:

- | | |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (5) | A friend is unique....one cannot have several [true] friends. |
| (6) | There is no path to a fruitless tree. [i.e. people will cease to visit someone who is not generous.] |
| (7) | There are two causes of disorder in this world: contrariness and intolerance. |
| (8) | Two things bring peace in the world: honorable behavior (<u>ngor</u>) and piety (<u>njulit</u>). |

² This legend, however, is also found in Mali.

- (9) A wise man does not drink to excess. [Boilat explains that this statement applies not merely to alcohol but to water, and indicates that moderateness in one's behavior and desires is desirable.]
- (10) Every man is mortal . nit ku nekka xasaw na niiw.
- (11) Where you fear, send you possessions there, and when you go there, you will find courage.

- Others introduce proverbs by referring to a mythical Olof Njaay
- (12) i.e. Olof Njaay ne: ku muñ, muuñ. Olof Njaay says: he who is patient smiles [in the end]. i.e. all good things come to those who wait. After explaining the meaning of a proverb an informant might say: "That is why Olof Njaay said....." repeating the saying.

A number of proverbs and proverbial sayings take the form of a simple statement but imply further knowledge of a tale or legend from which they are derived. If proverb #1 buur du mbokka is used the listener is expected to know the legend involved. The statement "He is beating a dead donkey," for example, refers to a story in the Hyena/Hare cycle in which Hyena finds a donkey lying dead on the road, but thinks the exposed teeth are laughing at him, and starts to beat the animal. The proverb #5 that one can only have one true friend is illustrated by a story, also found in medieval Europe. [See Gambian Studies No. 10A, pp. 163-172 : "The man who had many friends", quoting Bérenger-Féraud's version.]

(3) The Use of Proverbs.

Proverbs are generally regarded as embodying the wisdom of the ancestors. Most are learnt during normal everyday interaction, though there may be some specific training during the course of boys' initiation ceremonies. When used by younger people they are often a comment on, or ridiculing someone's behavior. They may be spoken to no one in particular on the principle 'If the cap fits, wear it.'^{*} If a proverb is clearly directed at one person, it may produce a counter proverb in return.

When used by elders proverbs are generally intended to give advice and influence behavior. By using traditional words, the personal opinion of the speaker is minimised. People heed what is said, and appropriate use by a speaker may bring consolation, cool tempers, restrain action, help settle disputes, or reach decisions. In a speech such as a presentation in a legal case they may be used to make effective points.

In a relaxed social situation the exchange of proverbs may be in the nature of verbal sparring between two people of equal status. In Ousman Sembene's Xala (English edition, 1976), we find the following exchange between Yay Binta and El Hadji concerning Yay Binta's daughter.

EH "..... a pleasant harbour for the eyes,"

YB "You say 'for the eyes'. You speak in the plural. I am talking in the singular. One owner only."

EH "One-eyed then ! " The man laughed, relaxed.

(13) YB "You don't tell a person with one eye to close it."

(14) EH "No more than you need to show the hand how to find the mouth."

YB "You have to prepare something for the hand to take to the mouth."

Proverbs and proverbial phrases are used by griots (oral historians) in their narratives as comments on the characters or actions of the people described. For example in the oral praise song for Semu Coro Wende of Kayor (Senegal),³ the singer uses the sentence "Lunch, no one eats it at lamplight, when it is ready before noon." (Lines 156-7), which the author says refers to the straightforwardness, lucidity, and clarity of the man concerned. Sometimes in griots' narratives the comments are clear, at other times the outsider needs further explanation of an obscure reference. In their songs and narratives the singers use the opportunity to urge their listeners to behave honorably and appropriately following traditional Wolof values, telling what happens to those who fail to live up to expectations, and praising those who acted honorably.

Much can be learnt about the use of proverbs from novels by Senegalese authors. In Abdoulaye Sadji's Nini⁴ we find: "Another proverb explains the case of Nini, who like all those reduced to extremities have recourse to means that they freely characterise as barbarous...It is brief, pungent, and realistic. 'kou beug ga dē vēhou' (He who feels death coming reacts against it). This signifies, in clear terms, before necessity, there is no shame, decency, nor reticence. This proverb corresponds with those of the Europeans which say 'Necessity knows no law', or 'The end justifies the means'." (16)

3. George Joseph: "The Wolof oral praise song for Semu Coro Wende," Research in African Literature, Vol. 10, No.2, Fall 1979, pp. 145-178.
4. Presence Africaine, 4, 1954, p. 647. Translated by DPG.

In his later novel, Maimouna, (1958), a long section is devoted to trouble and suffering. "To those who are suffering physically or in their minds, in whom despair is gaining the upper hand, one says

- (17) 'What makes one suffer does not last.' A charitable statement which attenuates suffering and limits gratuitously and vaguely its duration. These proverbs have been said and re-said, repeated by so many generations that they are accepted as magical formulae about whose efficacy there can be no doubt.....

- Those who are uncertain about tomorrow, and for whom the problem of
- (18) hunger is severe, are soothed with the idea that 'In every mouth that he has made God puts millet'; that is to say that Providence is working endlessly for people, and at the last moment, without our having to intervene, unexpected provisions will come in some manner or another. Another instance of this proverb is given when a mother writes to her daughter: "You have left me alone with your brothers. Thank God, now they are big enough to go to the bean and pumpkin fields. They also go to the cassava field. Without them I would be dead of hunger. Thank God, for each time that he creates a mouth, he puts millet in it..."

Even for those humble people who must often be content with meagre fare, of a meal fit only for a beast, a means of consoling themselves is reserved. It is sufficient for them to tell themselves, as with all the past generations of ancestors, old people, men, women, and children.

- (19) 'The belly does not betray one'. One can, in other words, under cover of darkness and in secret, eat no matter what, so long as it enables one to stay alive. The quality of the dishes devoured, their tastelessness, and even their inadequacy are not known to anyone else.

There are special cases which happen, defying all comparison. They are the family scandals, betrayals, problems, which fill with shock even the wisest and most stoic. An old man with a white beard turns up at the last moment and ends the moral doubts of all by telling them 'What has happened, has happened before.' (pp. 154-155)." (This is not the first time such a thing has happened.)

Consolation is given by reference to destiny and the will of God. Also from Maimouna (p. 150) when a girl has found herself pregnant, her friend says: "My dear sister, bear with your grief and try to sleep. God alone is the master of the destiny of his humble creatures. As for me I sympathise with you and feel for you...."

When she returns to her mother, her mother criticizes her sister's behavior, but accepts the inevitable. ".....she would have preferred you to follow in her footsteps, married from her mother's home, with honor. But children are born where God has pre-ordained, and in the manner he has foreseen. We can do nothing....."

When disaster hits a family in Ousmane Sembene's novel White Genesis, a griot woman consoles her patron with: "I can understand the suffering you feel as a mother, and your disappointment, but what can you do now? No one can escape his destiny. If it is true, as is written, that our every act is recorded before we are born, that we are only unfortunate actors in this life, then you ought to put your confidence in Yallah. (God). Yalla sees everything, knows everything. He alone is judge. Only he is qualified to judge each of us...."

The mother whose daughter had become pregnant also told her: "I warned you, but, by your attitude you persuaded me that I was a foolish old woman. But now you realize the truth of the Wolof proverb which states 'The word of the old may remain long in the bush, but it will not spend the night there.'"

When a quarrel has arisen between husband and wife, a proverb may be used to smooth matters over. In Nafissatou Dialo's book A Dakar Childhood, a wife is advised: "Marriage is not a game. It is difficult to live together; clashes will occur, for as you know the tongue and the teeth cohabit, but it sometimes happens that the teeth accidentally bite the tongue. It is the same in the life of a couple. Be understanding, be tolerant.....(p. 118).

A man suffering from the curse of impotence is consoled : "The xala is nothing to worry about! What one hand has planted, another can pull up. Get up! You have no need to feel ashamed." (Ousmane Sembene: Xala, 1976 ed. p. 28.)

A woman whose daughter has grown up writes to a friend: "I felt that my child was being detached from my being, as if I were again bringing her into the world. She was no longer under my protection. She belonged more to her boyfriend. A new family was being born before my very eyes. I accepted my subordinate role. The ripe fruit must drop away from the tree. "

When she is thinking of leaving her husband because he has suddenly taken a second wife without consulting her, she is told: 'You don't burn the tree which bears fruit.' (Mariama Ba: So-Long-A-Letter, pp. 86 & 31.)

In social interaction, therefore, knowledge of proverbs and skill in using them, is the mark of a person who is both mature and sensitive to the problems of others.

(4) Examples of Wolof Proverbs

A Proverbs based on the behavior of animals etc.

Many proverbs make use of animal behavior and features of the natural world as a means of referring indirectly to humans.

BEES

- (28) ku bĕgga lem Whoever wants honey,
 ñeme yamba. should brave the bees.

GRASSHOPPER

- (29) lu wanxa di dox noor? Why is the grasshopper walking
around in the dry season.

(The wanxa is an insect which feeds on growing millet. The proverb may be used to inquire about a stranger, presumed not to know Wolof, in one's midst, or to warn about a stranger's presence.)

HYENA

(The hyena is symbolic of all that is undesirable in Wolof character- greed, lack of control over one's appetite and emotions, gullibility, failure of carry out social obligations, etc. Being compared to hyena is not flattering.)

- (30) ku boot buuki, xaj baw la. Whoever carries a hyena on his back,
the dogs will bark at him.
(If you associate with bad people, others will despise you.)

- (31) lu bukki wiir-wiir,
 jaari ndaari.
- However much a hyena wanders about,
he will eventually come to his den.

(This was used of a young man who had been away from home a great deal, but eventually returned.)

- (32) fu nag nekka bukki dee fa. Where the cows are, there hyena
dies.

(Excessive greed leads the hyena into dangerous situations, i.e. encounters with bulls and herdsmen.)

GOAT

See No. (80).

DOG

- (49) xaj buy baw du matta. A barking dog does not bite.
- (50) xaj bu sesul du baw. A dog does not bark if it is not secure (in a safe place).
- (51) xaj bu xeexa amul boroom. A mad dog has no master.
bu gena
- (52) ku daxa xaj be ca ker am, He who chases a dog right to its home,
nga baayi ko. should leave it (then).
(Or else its master will come and protect it.)

FOWL

- (53) ganaar gu bu ñu gaddu, The fowl you are carrying on your
xamul yoon wu sore. shoulder does not know how long the road is.
- (54) ganaar deegat na doom am, The fowl treads on its chicken,
waaye bañu ko. but does not hate it.
(A parent punishes a child, but still loves it.)
- (55) ganaar ak i nen am yepp, The hen and all its eggs,
boroom ganaar a moom. the owner of the hen owns them all.
- (56) The fowl alone in the pounding place,
will dance on one leg.
(will becomes excited and reckless ?)

PARTRIDGE

- (57) ncokeer bëgga sēb,
wande du sēb ya ño baxal
ci ncin la.
- The partridge likes beans,
 but not when they are cooking
 in the pot with it.

BIRDS

- (58) picca anga ca kow,
waaye xel am angi ci suuf.
ci dugub.
- The bird is high up
 but its thoughts are on the ground.
 on the millet.
- (59) lu picca wax /di woyi
ca kow garab,
do ko wax
ci loxo gune.
- What the bird says/sings
 high in a tree
 it will not say
 in the hands of a child.
- (60) picca moom boppa am,
garab gu ko neex, la dal.
- The bird is independent,
 the tree that pleases it,
 will be its lodging.
- (61) lu picca naw naw,
dal ci garab.
ci suuf.
- However much a bird flies,
 it will (eventually) light on
 a tree/the ground

TREES/FRUIT

- (62) garab gu romba, mu sanni
la mburu, su elege
nga rombati fa.
- If you pass under a tree which
 drops bread on your head, next day
 you will pass under the same tree.
- (63) ba nga sēnat ron,
ron a la jēkka sēn.
- Before you have seen the rhun palm,
 it has already seen you.
- (64) lu guy rey-rey,
gif a di ndey am.
- However large the baobab tree,
 its mother was a small seed
- You don't burn the tree that
 bears fruit (p. 118)
- You don't fell a tree whose shade
 protects you.
- The ripe fruit must fall from the
 tree. (p. 118)

CHILD TRAINING

- (70) lu xalel wax, What the child says,
ca ker am la ko degge. it has heard at home.

(Jacqueline Rabain in L'enfant du lignage provides a variant.-

lu naar hu ndaw ba wax, ca berkelle ba la ko degg.

"What the little Mauritanian says, he has heard in his tent."

and writes that this stresses the need for discretion..the words of the family should be kept secret..a distinction should be maintained between the private and public aspects of the family.

The Gambian version seems to stress the fact that the child reflects family opinion.)

- (71) cakante doom, To make your child prosperous,
moo di yar. train him well.

(i.e. spare the rod and spoil the child.)

- (72) The child whose hands are clean,
 can eat with the elders.

(A well behaved child can associate with the elders.)

FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES

- (73) won ma sa xarit, Show me your friend,
ma wax la sa jikko. and I will tell you your character.

- (30) ku boot bukki, He who carries a hyena on his back,
xaj baw la. the dogs will bark at him.

- (74) gej, ko ko xus, toy. He who wades in the sea, gets wet.

(A variant - he who walks in the rain....)

RELATIVES

- (75) 'sa gemmeñ xasaw na'
sa doom u ndey a ka koy
wax. Your mother's brother's child
has the right to tell you
'your mouth smells'.

*(One's cross-cousin has special privileges (a joking relationship).
One should not take offence at what such a relative says. But
a cross-cousin equally well has a duty to criticize when
necessary, and say what it would be offensive for others to say.)*
- (76) ku amul ndey,
nampa maam am. He who has no mother,
suckles his grandmother.

(i.e. one should make the best of circumstances.)
- (77) ligeey u ndey,
ci doom la feñ. The work of the mother
appears in the child.

*(Given by Jacqueline Rabain: L'enfant du lignage. No one
should boast of his/her own success...it is due to the merit
of one's mother and her training...a child is wished the
good luck (wërsëk) of its mother at its naming ceremony.)*
- (3) doom u jitle du doom. A stepson is not the same
as a son.

(See page 112.)

STRANGERS

- (78) lu gan xam ci dekka,
ku fa dekka ko ko wax. What a stranger knows about a town,
someone living there has told him.
- (79) ku yagga ci teen,
baag fekka la fa. If a person stays long enough at
the well, a rope owner (lit. well
bucket) will (eventually) come
there.

(i.e. be patient.)
- (80) gan du yewwiw bey. A stranger does not let out the
goats.

(A stranger has no business becoming involved in family affairs.)

IN-LAWS

- (81) 'bala nga uti jabar,
utal goro. Before seeking a wife,
look for good in-laws.

*(Marriage does not involve only the husband and wife, but
also the two groups of kinsfolk.)*

4 C

Proverbs Reflecting the General Wolof Value System.

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE

- | | | |
|------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (84) | <u>bala nga xam,</u>
<u>xamadi haw la rey.</u>
<u>gaan.</u> | Before you know,
ignorance will almost have killed you.
injured you. |
| (85) | <u>xamul aay na,</u>
<u>wande lajtul a ko raw.</u> | Not to know is bad,
but not to ask is worse. |
| (86) | <u>weddi, bo gise, gëm.</u> | Deny, but when you see, believe. |
| (87) | <u>ku tey xam on njalbeen,</u>
<u>muj di noflaay.</u> | He who knows the beginning,
the end will not worry him. |
| (88) | <u>deeg i poot xam na,</u>
<u>du ko naan.</u> | The pool where the clothes are
washed, those who know will not
drink there. |
| (89) | <u>bet du yenu (ennu),</u>
<u>waaye xam na lu boppa attan.</u> | The eye does not carry a load,
but it knows what the head can carry. |

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

- | | | |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (90) | <u>xam sa boppa, mo gen a</u>
<u>ku la ko wax.</u> | It is better to know oneself,
than to hear about it from others. |
| (91) | <u>ku xamut fi nga joge,</u>
<u>do xam fo nga dem.</u> | He who does not know where he came
from, will not know where he is going. |

TRUTH.

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (92) | <u>baat u dega yomba na xam.</u> | Truth is easy to know. |
| (93) | <u>lu nar heyhey,</u>
<u>bu dega ga gonate,</u>
<u>jot ko.</u> | However early the lie sets out,
if truth sets out in the evening,
it will catch up with it. |

has one of the characters say:

(In White Genesis Ousmane Sembene ~~writes~~ (p. 49) "Any truth that divides and brings discord among the members of the same family is false. The falsehood that weaves, unites and cements people together is truth."

PATIENCE, PERSEVERENCE

- (12) ku muñ, muuñ. He who is patient, smiles (in the end).
 (94) muñ a gën. Patience is good.

See also: (79)

WORK

- (95) Yalla, Yalla, bey sa tool. Pray to God, but cultivate your farm.
 (96) pend u tanka, Dust on the feet is better than
moo gen a pend u tat. dust on the behind (from sitting).

SOCIAL INTERACTION/MANNERS

- (97) jikko gen a taar. Good manners are better than beauty.
 (98) fakka naa laa gen a 'I have forgotten your name' is better
masuma laa gis. than 'I have never seen you before'.
 (99) ku wax ne ko xam, If you speak what you know,
def li mun, and do what you can,
so tedda, nelaw. you will sleep soundly when you go to bed.
 (100) nit, nit ay garab am. The best medicine for a person is (another)
 person.

SECRETS/GOSSIP

- (2) jigeen soppal, te bul oolu. Love your wife, but do not trust her
 with your secrets. (See p. 112)
 (101) jigeen doyul a wolu, A woman is not worthy of confidences,
ndege lu mu la wax, for what she has told you,
wax ko sa moroom. she has already told her (woman) friend.

GREED

See (32)

TRAVEL

- (102) doxkat du fekke dee u baay am. One who travels too much will not be present at his father's death.

(Jacqueline Rabain in L'enfant du lignage writes: "...he does not undertake his share of family responsibilities, he does not defend his heritage. To know how to 'travel' for a man, is to move for useful purposes - to act as an intermediary, to settle differences...."

- (103) ku yagga dem, He who travels for a long time
yagga gis. sees a lot.

- (104) ku dox gis loo musuta gis. He who travels sees what you have never seen.

BEAUTY

- (105) jongama benn lal jombu ko. A beautiful woman is not unworthy of any man (lit. bed).
(A beautiful woman, even from a low ranking or poor family, can marry upwards.)

- (106) jongama di nyakka da??uwale. A very beautiful woman is often not complete (in her behavior).
(i.e. she may lack other necessary qualities.)

See also (97)

- (107) ku la ne sangul, The one who asks to wash your skin,
sa taar la bëgga. it is your beauty he/she wants to see.

4 D

Proverbs Involving Parts of the Body.

HEAD

see (67)

EYE

see (89)

- (108) bët, la koy fatta, The eye, what goes into it/
 du ko gis. injures it, it does not see.

MOUTH

see (18)

TONG UE

see (24)

TEETH

see (24)

HAND

see (25) (72)

STOMACH

see (19)

- (109) ku amul mbuuba, He who has no gown,
 sa biir feeñ. his belly shows

BACKSIDE

- (110) bala nga xam
 lí taat di jeriñ
 toog jot.
Before you know
the benefit of the backside
you have already sat down.

variant: One only knows the value of the backside when one has to sit down.

- (111) lu pursa muus muus However wise the needle,
 wẽñ jaar/dox ca taat wa. the thread goes through its hole.

- (112) sagar u tubey Ragged trousers
a gëna taat i neen. are better than a bare backside.

KNEE

- (113) sukka du tere Kneeling will not prevent
 yobbu sa oom. you carrying your knee.

FEET

see (96)

BACK

- (114) gannaaw du bañ dara, The back will not refuse
 lo am jela1. anything it is given to take away.

- (115) lu nēbba ci juddu,
feen ci jikko. Whoever hides his origin,
will be revealed by his habits.
- (116) lo yobbu tēgga,
du bayyi uppa. He who carries off the blacksmith,
will not leave the bellows behind.
- (117) gallaj i nit,
moy jub. The (best) amulet for a human being
is honesty.
- (118) nēēw na a gena
na ŋu ko bayyi. Something is better
than nothing (leaving it).
- (119) guddi, bala ay ber set. The darkest hour comes just before dawn.
- (120) gannaaw aay, jamma. After trouble comes peace.
- (121) rēbba ca coow la. Hunting is where the row is.
- (122) janga du wees. It is never too late to learn/study.
- (123) bala nga oyu,
nekka fa. Before you answer,
you must be there.
- (124) saabu du fōót boppa am. Soap does not wash itself
- (125) saatu du wat boppa am. A razor does not shave itself.
- (126) so gise yappa,
lakka daay. If you see meat,
light a grass fire.
- (127) nen du bēre ak doj. An egg does not wrestle with a stone.
- (128) ku am kuddu du lakka. He who has a spoon does not burn himself.
- (129) bu for yombee,
segga jafe. When picking up is easy
bending is hard.

su segga yomba,
for jafeñ. If bending is easy,
picking up is hard.

- (130) wax yomba na,
wande def yombul. Talk is easy,
doing is not.
- (131) so gise lëf,
lëf a tax. If you see something,
there is a reason for it.
- (132) ku laaxut lekka,
du laax jaay. She who doesn't cook laax to eat,
does not cook laax to sell.
- (133) ku la mag,
eppa lay sagar. He who is older than you,
has more rags.
- or ku la jekka juddu
eppa la i sagar. He who was born before you,
will have more rags than you.
- (134) lu Naar gis ci mbuus am,
be sanni ko,
ku ko forit
du am njeriñ. What the Mauritanian has seen in his
bag, and has thrown away,
whoever picks it up again,
will have no benefit.
- (A comment on the stinginess of Mauritanians.)
- (135) sammakat mbotta
mo xam soox i mbotta. The frog's shepherd is the only one
who knows if the frog is lame.
- (136) cin su nar neex,
su baxe, xeeñ. A pot which is intended to be sweet,
when it boils will smell good.
- (137) or sa paamankat a gena
or sa leetakat. To deceive one's circumciser is
better than to deceive one's hair-
dresser.
- (i.e. one deals with the circumciser only once.)
- (138) noppa i selu
mag bejjin am. The ears of a calf
are older than its horns.
- (139) bala nga jitu,
nga jot. Before preceding,
you must reach.
- (140) la jarak am di yuux,
so ko niw amon jel. What a sick man refuses
would give pleasure to the dead.
- (141) ku xamul buur saay na,
dees na ko wax
buur dee na. He who does not understand "The king
has passed away," should be told
"The king has died."

(Someone who cannot take a hint in polite language should
be told plainly what is necessary.)

Some riddles have the same intent as proverbs, and here too there may be a play on sound.

"What are the three essential things to have?"

<u>saxle</u>	<u>saxxa</u>	<u>saxami</u>	(Kobes)
to have crops	a granary	to chew; to have a good set of teeth	

"What are three things that make a person happy?"

<u>am</u>	<u>mën</u>	<u>xam</u>	(Kobes)
to have	to be able	to know	
= possessions	power	knowledge	

(6) Cross-cultural comparisons.

In view of the mixture of peoples in the Senegambian area one would expect a certain number of proverbs to be found widely among different language groups.

Henri Gaden in Proverbes et Maximes Peuls et Toucouleurs, traduits, expliqués et annotés. 1931, gives 1282 proverbs and sayings from the Fulbe of Senegal. Of the 141 Wolof proverbs in this chapter, 19 (13%) were also given in the Fula collection. (1, 3, 24, 28, 40, 44, 58, 66, 72, 75, 76, 83, 93, 108, 119, 136, 137, 138, 196).

From my own field work among the Mandinka I gathered a certain number of proverbs. Fourteen of these are also found among the Wolof (35, 40, 48, 49, 57, 66, 76, 79, 89, 125, 127, 130, 36, 64.) (10%.) This percentage is probably underestimated as I did not record such items as "In every mouth that he has made God puts millet" (18) or (22) "No one can escape his destiny." which are also feelings expressed by the Mandinka.

A few belong to the Near Eastern/European tradition. e.g.(49) "A barking dog does not bite," "The darkest hour comes just before dawn," (119), "Great oaks from little acorns grow," (cf. 64), "Something is better than nothing (cf. 118)", Three to four per cent of the proverbs are in this category.

On the other hand the list has nothing in common with the proverbs of a people of the Cameroon rainforest as exemplified by those given in A Leaf of Honey and the Proverbs of the Rainforest by Joseph Shepherd, 1988.

sources of proverbs given.

- HN Alhaji Hassan Njie. Taped conversation. (1987).
- DPG David P. Gamble. Field notes (mainly from the 1950s).
- Boilat Boilat, Abbe
 Grammaire de la langue woloffe. 1858.
- Kobes Kobes, Mgr. A
 Dictionnaire Volof-Francais. 1923.
- Dard Dard, J.
 Grammaire Wolofe ou methode pour etudier la langue des noirs...
 1826.
- Sylla Sylla, Assane
 La philosophie morale des Wolof. 1978.
- Cisse Cisse, Mame Thierno, Gueye, Mamadou; Toure, Mangone
 Proverbes Wolof. 1982 (Dakar: CLAD).

	HN	DPG	Boilat (1858)	Kobes (1923)	Dard (1826)	Sylla	Cisse et al.	Novels
1	x	x	x			#55	185	
2	x	x	x			56	184	
3	x	x	x	x		57		
4	x	x	x	x		58	186	
5			x					
6			x			x		
7			x				(218	
8			x	x		x	(60	
9			x					
10			x	x				
11			x	x				
12	x						39	x
13								x
14								x
15								
16								x
17								x
18								x
19								x
20								x
21								x
22								x
23	x			x		65		x
24								x
25								x
26								x
27								x
28				x	x		77	
29		x					306	
30				x	x	x	847	
31		x					279	
32				x	x			
33							88	
34		x					1053	
35	x	x		x			486	
36				x	x		196	
37	x	x						x
38							116	x
39		x					(34)	
40	x	x					144	x
41		x						
42		x					57	
43		x					916	
44				x	x		841	x
45				x			280	
46				x	x		953	
47				x				
48		x						
49							213	
50				x	x			

	HN	DPG	Boilat (1858)	Kobes (1923)	Dard (1826)	Sylla	Cisse et al.	Novels
51				x	x			
52				x	x			
53		x						
54		x						
55							710	
56		x						
57				x	x			x
58		x		x			217	x
59	x	x					840	
60		x						
61		x		x	x			
62				x	x			
63				x	x			
64				x	x		178	
65				x	x		656	
66	x				x	32		
67	x							
68	x						782	
69				x	x			
70		x		x	x			
71	x							
72	x							
73	x							
74		x		x	x			
75	x						458	
76				x			660	x
77								
78	x							
79						x	395/712	
80						x	207	
81	x							
82	x					x	714	
83								x
84		x				x	25	
85				x	x			
86				x	x			
87				x	x			
88				x				
89				x	x	x	248	
90				x	x			x
91		x						
92				x	x			
93				x	x			
94				x				
95						x	46	x
96		x						
97	x					9		
98				x	x			
99	x					69		
100	x			x		81	21	x
101				x				
102								
103								x
104		x						

	HN	DPG	Boilat (1858)	Kobes (1923)	Dard (1826)	Sylla	Cisse et al.	Novels
105								
106	x							
107							459	
108							96	
109				x	x			
110		x					298	
111		x					471	
112							802	
113		x					828	
114		x						
115	x					x	864	
116	x	x					52	
117	x							
118				x				
119							585	
120							1200	
121		x					1206	
122		x					754	
123				x	x		166	
124				x			252	
125				x	x		291	
126		x						
127	x	x					497	
128				x			513	
129		x					1043	
130				x				
131		x				x		
132		x		x	x			
133				x	x	x	463	
134		x						
135		x						
136		x						
137				x				x
138				x				
139				x	x			
140				x	x			x

A WOLOF NAMING CEREMONY: HUMAN INTERACTION AND ITS

AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

David P. Gamble
with
David Ames et al.

Introduction

This account is based primarily on a ceremony seen at Buntung near Njau, in Upper Saalum in 1950 . Both Dr. David Ames and myself attended. We exchanged field notes, and his contribution to the account is therefore substantial. His wife, Barbara Ames, attended women's ceremonies at Njau which involved jumping over fire and the handing back of the baby. Interviews were held afterwards with informants at Njau, and later Alhaji Hassan Njie (who had been Dr. Ames' assistant) carried out a series of interviews to clear up a number of points raised by the author. There have been many contributors to the basic data.

The material was also used in classroom discussion on field work, and many students, among whom I would like to mention Jean Ward (now Jean Colson), Linda Salmon, and Mary Ludwig, made constructive suggestions.

David P. Gamble

Birth

According to informants a woman gives birth in a kneeling position on sacks spread on the floor of her house. The midwife is an elderly village woman, untrained in modern medical practice, who is assisted by other adult women of the compound. She first performs a rite in which part of a broken clay pot is cut into seven pieces. One piece is put under each corner of the sacking, and the rest placed on the afterbirth. During the birth the midwife places a calabash upside down in her head like a hat. When she has cut the cord, she picks the baby up, and rubs it with oil, and then washes it with cold water and soap.

Before the child sucks the mother's breast it is given a liquid charm (safara) to drink. This consists of water which has been used to wash off Koranic verses (Al Fatiha) written on a wooden writing board with locally made ink. Some salt is rubbed on the baby's mouth, as it is believed that this will enable the child to talk soon. Next a large pan of hot water is brought so that the mother can bathe and cleanse away the blood.

The afterbirth is buried in the back yard, never burnt or thrown away. It is considered to be part of a human, and is therefore buried in the same way as a body. A women interviewed by Alhaji Hassan Njie described the procedure as follows: "The afterbirth is buried together with salt, broken potsherds, cotton, and kola nuts. A hole is first dug, then the broken potsherds are put in first, a bit of salt next, then millet, cotton, with the kola nut on top. The kola may be split or left intact. The afterbirth is placed on top of all these. It is put in such a way that the part cut from the umbilical cord is folded and placed on top of the sack. It is important that this part is not left lying on the side, but placed on top of the sack in the middle. If the cord is not properly placed and left loose at the sides it may cause irregularities in the mother's later pregnancies."

A stone is placed to mark the burial spot, but this place is known only to the mother, the midwife, and the husband's mother. The father has no concern in this, and does not necessarily know.

Men normally keep away from births except in special cases where the woman is in extreme pain, and the midwives cannot help. Then, if there is a man thought capable of helping, he is asked to do so by providing traditional medicines - roots, herbs, leaves, barks, amulets, safara, etc. If the birth is normal, the husband would not be present, and if he were out at his farm or sitting at the village meeting place, it would not be considered necessary to inform him that his wife was in labor. No informants specified what would happen to a man who came into contact with the blood of childbirth, just saying that it was "not proper for men to see the blood of childbirth because this is a secret for women only....it is a woman's concern and not for a man."

Before going back to lie on her bed and receive the baby, the mother is made to jump over the fire, which has been kept burning in the house since her labor started, in four directions - east/west, west/east, north/south, south/north - a rite repeated on the naming day. If she is weak she would be helped to perform the task. Informants could give no specific reason for this ritual, though it is clearly both a purifying and protecting rite. The fire is kept burning day and night during the first week, and is extinguished only on the morning of the naming day.

The midwife next holds the child in her arms and stretches it out towards the mother, then draws the child back. This is done three times, the fourth time the mother receives the child. She offers the child her right breast in a token gesture, then the child is laid down on the bed beside her. Water, in which an early millet (sunu), considered blessed, has been placed, is sprinkled over the baby.

The knife used to cut the umbilical cord is kept under the baby's pillow - some informants say any knife will do - as iron is considered to have a strong protective value against witches and evil spirits. A baby normally sleeps on its mother's bed. This may be either a regular iron bedstead, a locally made wooden bed, or a rough framework of sticks, on which is placed a thick mattress of sacking filled with straw. The bed is screened by a curtain of thin white or gray cloth, intended to keep out mosquitoes and ensure privacy, but it also serves to hide the child from evil spirits (jinne), (seytaane, etc.), witches (dema), people with the evil eye, and so on.

The first week.

Most of the rites performed during the first week are concerned with protection, there being a high mortality rate due primarily to malaria, though tetanus also takes its toll. Each day during the first week the infant drinks a little of the safara. Any learned man who knows how to write Arabic can provide this, but in small villages it is normally the Imam who is called on to do so. A branch of the rat (*Combretum* sp.) tree is stuck in the ground at the right hand side of the door when entering. Various reasons are given for this. Such a branch indicates that a new born child is there, and therefore the house should be avoided by people carrying powerful amulets, particularly those designed to render them impervious to knife attacks (tul), or by women who have had severe pains themselves after childbirth. Wolof feel that a certain mode of behavior, avoidance, is required from such people, and the sign indicates that they conduct themselves accordingly. At the same time there is a magical element involved for the plant is believed to ward off malicious forces, whether

1 In recent years plastic mats

from humans, or spirits. The rat branch remains by the doorway until the naming ceremony when it is removed. It may then be placed on the thatch above the door until it rots away. Branches of wen (*Pterocarpus erinaceus*) and dogot (*Anona Senegalensis* ?) are placed across the entrance to the compound and the doorway of the hut to keep out witches and remain there until they decay.

During the first week a jelem (an iron rod used by women to roll the seeds out of cotton) is stuck in the ground beside the fire. Visitors who have stomach pains place a foot against the jelem to prevent transference of the pain. A clay bowl containing rat leaves is kept near the fire. This is regarded as a general medicine for stomach complaints, and some is drunk by the mother if necessary. Amulets, small leather packets containing pieces of paper on which have been written verses from the Koran, are tied round the baby's wrists or hung round its neck.

For seven days the child remains indoors, usually lying well covered up on the mother's bed. When the mother goes out she takes the knife from under the baby's pillow and places a broom (or strands from it) near the child's head. On her return she replaces the knife. There appear to be minor variations in such procedures from lineage to lineage. The significance of the power of the broom is not clear, but at any rate it is associated with women, and had magical properties, for a man struck by his wife with a broom is believed to become impotent, but the commonest explanation suggests that certain evil spirits are believed to avoid dirt, and will turn aside from a broom, associated with uncleanness.

Visitors who come to congratulate the mother have to be careful not to praise the child, especially where previous children have died, lest evil befall it. A child affected by trouble after lavish praise is said to be caught by gemmeñ (mouth) or lammeñ (tongue). In rural areas a mother is

better pleased if one says "Ah, it is an ugly child", than if one says: "It is a beautiful child," for then she has to protect herself and the baby by saying: "kaar, kaar, kaar." [In the urban situation, on the other hand, one might get into trouble for calling a child ugly !]

In the Wolof view a newly born child is very vulnerable during the first week, and therefore protective forces of all kinds have to be employed -from the world of nature, using plants invested with protective value), from established religion (verses from the Koran and prayer), from human craft (manufactured iron), and from the human spirit, in the form of spoken prayers, good wishes, and appropriate comments.

The naming ceremony.

The actual naming ceremony is itself based largely on Islamic tradition and the procedures have much in common with those of neighboring Muslim peoples such as the Mandinka and Fuuta Toro Fulbe. It takes place on the morning of the seventh day after birth - if the child was born on a Wednesday, it will be named the following Wednesday, and the essential features are the shaving of the child's head¹, the saying of the appropriate prayers, the sacrifice of an animal, and the distribution of "charity". "Mohammed's daughter Fatima gave the example of bestowing in alms the weight of the hair in silver...the sacrifice is meant, as the Prophet himself² says, to avert evil from the child by shedding blood on his behalf."

1. This may be modified in special circumstances. It might, for instance, be omitted if several previous infants had died.
2. W. Robertson Smith: Kinship & Marriage in Early Arabia, p, 180.

Friends and kinsfolk in neighboring villages are informed of the birth. The father himself, if a young man, may go round to a number of villages and send his younger brothers to others as messengers. An older man would send his sons or nephews. The person to whom a message is sent formally praises God and prays for health and long life for the child and mother, and protection from evil. A small gift, usually some kola nuts or a few coins, is handed to the messenger as a reward for his trouble. No special word is sent to the gewel, the musician and praise singer caste, but they eventually hear that a ceremony is about to take place, and turn up to play, sing and praise the parents. In return they are given presents by the parents, relatives, and friends. The parents are also under an obligation (if freeborn) to make small gifts of food, money, cloth, etc to leatherworkers, and blacksmiths, who ^{always} ~~also~~ make it a point to turn up to claim their dues.

During the first week all the sweepings from the mother's house are kept under her bed until the morning of the naming day, the assumption being that evil could be worked against the child by an ill-disposed person who got hold of such materials. A woman interviewed stated: "In the early morning [of the naming day] the house is swept before people start coming. Then this refuse is placed in a hole in front of the door. In this hole is also poured water used for washing the baby's cloths. When the hole is filled, the mother places her right foot thrice on the spot. After this ceremony neither mother nor child will contract sickness from a [visitor]. Another informant stated: "On naming day the house is swept and the dirt placed in three vessels. This dirt is then placed on top of the spot where the sack (with the afterbirth) is buried, and the mother bathes on this spot.

To feed the numerous guests expected, pounding of millet and rice is started very early in the morning. The husband provides the millet, his sisters, mother's sister's daughters, etc. give rice from their stocks.. The senior woman in the compound organizes the work, the husband's elder sister, if available, playing a prominent part. Most of the actual work is done by the younger women and girls. Friends, neighbors, and age-mates hear the sound of intensified pounding and come over to help, joining in the conversation of a light-hearted nature that goes on at such a times. Those who cooperate in this domestic work are generally connected by multiple ties--nearness of residence, ties of kinship or affinity, friendship, similarity in age, etc. and as a rule no one dominant tie is discernable, though the fact of living in adjacent compounds is clearly highly important.

Before the ceremony the mother bathes and puts on her best clothes and ornaments and has her hair done. The water she uses contains protective substances, rat leaves, a red bark (santang) which is considered a protection against witches and evil spirits, especially those that cause fits, and salguf, good against diarrhoea among other virtues. A silver ring may also be put in the water. This is done either because of a dream, or at the suggestion of a religious teacher, and is to bring good luck. The baby is washed with the same water after the mother has bathed, though it may have been washed with ordinary soap and water as well.

Visitors to the compound bring small gifts which are presented with formality and graciously received, no matter how small, turning the handing-over into a minor ceremonial. Women come with sour milk, chickens, pounded millet, bundles of unthreshed rice, etc. which they hand to the senior woman present in the mother's house, who may either be a grandmother or father's sister. Adult men usually bring small gifts of cash, millet, or kola nuts, and hand them to the father. These gifts help to balance the expenses incurred by the parents.

Old men gather at the house of the compound head, sitting either inside or on the veranda. Young men either collect at the village meeting place (dat) in the village square, or else go round greeting friends and talking to girls. Women go to the mother's house if they are kin or close friends, or to the women's section of the compound, if they are less close to the mother.

In a ceremony witnessed at Buntung, when the main party of visitors came over from Njau, about a mile away, and where the mother used to live, the men waiting at the dat joined them and filed into the compound for the ceremony to begin, but many people from Njau continued to arrive even after the actual ceremony had been completed. Messengers were then sent round to various compounds in the village to call any compound heads who were absent. Certain close kinsfolk, father's sisters, grandmothers, etc. should be present before the ceremony can appropriately proceed, but otherwise there is no significance attached to turning up early or late, especially where people are coming from villages at varying distances.

Here the actual naming ceremony began with the paternal grandmother carrying the baby out in her arms followed by the maternal grandmother's representative who carried a mat and a clay pot which contained water and red and white kola nuts. Red kola signifies long life, white kola, good luck. The pot also contained sunu (early millet), salt, and some cotton. Though metal utensils may be in common use in the household, a small traditional clay pot is used in the ceremony. The mat was spread out in the middle of the compound, and the grandmother, her head covered with a shawl of locally woven cotton cloth, sat down on it with legs outstretched, holding the baby well wrapped up in local cloth. This cloth is considered appropriate to rites of passage. It is used for certain garments worn by boys in circumcision school, the shawl with which a bride covers her head, and

the shroud with which a body is buried. The clay pot was placed beside the paternal grandmother, and a pestle was brought and laid alongside. This had a practical rather than a ritual purpose, for it was used in sharpening a knife. The maternal grandmother's representative also sat on the mat, but took no further active part in the ceremony.

The first stage involved shaving the baby's head. This task was entrusted to a young man with the reputation of being a skilled shaver. He was related patrilineally to the father, but this seemed to be irrelevant. He muttered "Bisimilaahi" (In the name of Allah), rubbed his hands lightly over the child's head, and then soaked the hair with water from the clay pot. He touched the hair symbolically with the knife used to cut the umbilical cord, and then took a sharper European-made penknife for the actual shaving, steadying the head with his left hand and holding the knife in his right, silently muttering verses from the Koran as he worked. In Mandinka naming ceremonies an animal is sacrificed, its throat being cut, at the exact moment that the knife shaves the hair, but among the Wolof of this area, it is customary to have the sacrifice later, when the name is announced.

At this time the elders and young men were sitting on the platform in the center of the compound or standing around in a rough semi-circle watching, while the women had gathered either in the mother's house or in the women's section of the compound where food was being dished out. A few stood in the doorway of the house, and at the entrance to the women's section to watch. Small children gathered in a group on one side of the compound to watch and wait for the 'charity' (sarax) or cakes of millet flour sweetened with sugar which they knew would be distributed. People present had now divided themselves into the major segments of society - men, women, and children, and a man who went into the women's area, as an anthropologist did to see what was going on there, had to put up with a great deal of banter.

After the shaving the child's name was publicly announced. The formal name is chosen by the father or father's sister, but the mother also picks a name by which the child is commonly known. A first child is formally named after Mohamed if a boy, or after Fatima if a girl. The elders, led by the Imam, came over to the baby to pray, conveying blessing by spitting on the right hand and rubbing it lightly over the baby's head, and spitting into its ears. The Wolof concept of saliva and its power has been aptly expressed by Birago Diop "Like honey in water, speech, good or bad, dissolves in saliva which retains part of its power." Accordingly the saliva of a religious teacher is infused with baraka (blessing). The call to prayer (noda) was recited into the baby's right ear, followed by lihan, the same sequence but in which the Arabic phrases are said only once, into its left ear.

The kola nuts from the clay pot were given to the two elderly women and the shaver. The grandmother then chewed a piece of kola and placed some on the fontanelle, as it is believed that this will ensure protection for a delicate spot. The hair shaved off was carefully gathered up lest any one with ill intent should get hold of it to work evil magic, and the child was taken back to be handed over to the mother. The baby's hair may be kept by her in a place of safety, or made into an amulet to be worn by the child either in the form of a cord round the waist, or on the wrist. The other articles in the pot are kept for a while by the mother, but no great significance is attached to them.

A ritual similar to the one noted after birth takes place in the mother's house. We did not expect it at the Buntung ceremony as no one had mentioned its existence to the male anthropologists, and it was first described by Barbara Ames who remained all the time in the women's hut during another ceremony at Njau. When the old woman comes to the door with the baby she gives the normal greeting: "Salaam aleekum." (Peace be with you), the women inside responding "Maleekum salaam" (On you be peace). She

enters and passes the baby four times over the fireplace, the fire now being extinguished. She stands in front of the mother with the baby in her arms, and gives it her blessing by spitting on its face and then kissing it. She holds it in outstretched arms to the mother, but then brings it back to her body. This is repeated three times, and the fourth time she hands the child over, pronouncing its name. The mother has to maintain a serious demeanor during this ceremony. If she laughs it is believed that the child will become crazy. A second old woman was standing by during this rite holding a head of suna (early millet). The mother takes the baby and gives it her right breast, right being the side considered blessed. Then she lays it down on the bed, and the suna ear is dipped in water, which is then sprinkled over the child.

Where there is a large crowd the child is generally hidden away, frequently in a kitchen, lest any one with evil intent should harm it, whether a witch or an evil spirit.

In general rites which involve women seem to comprise more pre-islamic elements, those involving men are more influenced by Islamic practices.

At Buntung, as soon as the child's name was announced the gewel (praise singers) started singing and chanting the praises of the child's parents. Next the millet flour cakes were distributed to the children, a few older boys coming from the men's section to claim a share, and kola nuts to adults, men of slave origin and the gewel taking over the distribution, making sure that guests from each village received an appropriate share. Dishes of food, mainly laax, millet porridge, were brought for guests who had come from a distance.

The sacrifice of a goat followed, the Imam saying the words of blessing, and cutting the animal's throat as it lay neck turned towards the east. The person who kills the animal normally receives the neck. Cross-

-cousins of the father can take any part of the animal they wish, but are expected to help prepare the food. The liver normally goes to the oldest men of the lineage. This suggests that the sacrifice represents an old and probably pre-Islamic tradition, such as is described by Marcel Griaule for the Dogon, in which the life forces in the world are set in motion by the shedding of blood which passes through the ground, while beneficial powers flow back through the stream of blood into the liver of the animal, and on to the elders who consume it. The father has the right to the skin, which may be made into a mat for the baby.

Some of the gewel were playing tama (underarm drums), and chanting the praises of the mother in the house where the child was born, using the beat of their drums to add authority to their voices. Female relations and friends were chatting and dancing, and from time to time, a young woman would beat out a rhythm on a tin basin, or clap out of sheer pleasure. Later a young man came over from Njau with a sabar drum to play for the entertainment of those who wished to dance, but this was stopped out of consideration for the child's maternal grandmother who was ill, even though she was not in the same village. For a brief moment a male cross-cousin of the father manifested the joking relationship, making an appearance in a dress borrowed from one of the teenage girls in the compound, and performing a few steps in honor of the mother. This was a procedure commonly followed, but the youth looked somewhat sheepish about the whole thing and soon stopped. People just stayed around chatting until mid-afternoon when further food was brought out, and then, when the sun began to get cooler, started to drift away to their home villages.