

POSTMORTEM: A STUDY OF THE GAMBIAN SECTION  
OF ALEX HALEY'S 'ROOTS'

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## INTRODUCTION

This study arose as a result of reading Thomas A. Hale's Griots and Griottes, 1998, and David Chioni Moore's article: "Revisiting a Silenced Giant: Alex Haley's 'Roots'....." in Resources for American Literary Study, 22(2), 1996, 195-249.

Moore draws attention to the fact that though Roots had been a work which had sold more copies than any other African American fictional work, it had been "utterly banished by the literary academy...[and] not one scholarly article focusing on Haley or 'Roots' was published between 1986 and 1994." (p. 197). So I began to wonder why the book had 'died'.

Hale, on page one of his work, writes: "Haley, went to Jufure....There he encountered a man of griot, or jali, origin who recounted what Haley reported to be a narrative about Haley's family roots in Africa. For the American, the words of this man provided a link between his American ancestors and an African heritage nearly erased by the slave trade." I was somewhat startled by this, for the man Haley encountered did not in fact belong to a traditional griot family, but came from one of religious scholars. In his youth he developed a passion for drumming and gave up scholarship - as other young men did elsewhere. This would be like a young man from a godly family in the USA running off to join a rock band. But learning to be a drummer, however, would not have involved him in the long apprenticeship necessary for acquiring the traditional narratives known to the griot fraternity. His knowledge would have been like that of any other village elder. I thought this matter had been examined and settled more than 20 years ago.

The exposé of Mark Ottaway (London Sunday Times, 10 April 1977, 17 & 21), had first challenged the claim that Keba Fofana was a griot, as well as the accuracy of the data he is said to have provided. In addition Ottaway questioned the date which Haley assigned to his ancestor's capture. Haley was incensed by the article, which gained swift wide-world circulation, because it "attempted to cast doubt on the authenticity of all those years of the most painstaking and meticulous research efforts...." (Playboy Interview, 26(3), March 1979), but never replied to the points raised by Ottaway. He grudgingly conceded that there might have been some errors, but felt that these were of no account, for what he was writing was "a symbolic history", which conveyed a larger truth.

Pōntius Pilate grappled with the problem: "Truth ? What is truth?", but no one gave him an answer. A headline in the Sunday Times (London), 17 April 1977 for a column of letters was "Roots: Who cares about the facts ?"

A historian, Donald R. Wright, who had considerable experience in interviewing both griots and elders in the Nyumi Districts, and had himself talked to Keba Fofana, was the next to write a major article on the subject - "Uprooting Kunta Kinte: On the perils of relying on Encyclopedic Informants," History in Africa, 8 (1981), 205-217, which questioned Haley's research.

Wright states "Haley's first error was to tell his story in great detail to nearly everyone he met in The Gambia....[1967] in doing so he made it all too clear just what he hoped to hear in return...His own oral tradition was available for others to hear and pass on. Thereafter he could never know if what he would be hearing from an informant would be an echo of his own story, retold to him with additions and embellishments, or a story handed down locally over the generations."

There was also a question concerning a tape recording. Did Haley make one or not ? If so, what exactly was on it ? What were the Mandinka words used by Fofana, and how were they translated ? Were leading questions asked ? If others could hear the tape it might solve a number of Ottaway's questions.

Wright believed that there was no tape recording. "Haley's crucial error was his failure to record his interview with Fofana on tape. This is surprising..... Haley was something of an expert at interviewing persons on tape...for him to travel to Juffure and to hire fourteen people, a Land Rover, and a launch for what he described as potentially the most meaningful interview he would ever have in his life without equipment to record the interview is certainly a bit odd..."

Certainly no copy of the tape was ever presented to the Gambia National Archives, for not long afterwards Mr. Bakari Sidibe, the Archivist, himself went to Jufure to interview Keba Fofana and make a recording. The translation of this is the narrative reproduced in the New York Times, etc. (14 April 1977, A14). The contents of this are at variance with what is alleged to have been said at the first interview. In an article in The Gambia News Bulletin, 3 May 1977, p.2, in which he defended Fofana against Ottaway, Bakari Sidibe wrote, however, "the discrepancies in genealogies are not an adequate basis on which to determine Fofana's total reliability. Such discrepancies are common in genealogies given by elders. It must be remembered that oral traditions are not memorised word for word in Mandinka society, but by incidents. Therefore the chronology of events, including genealogies, has a disconcerting way of telescoping or getting jumbled."

The National Archives then obtained a longer interview of Kinte history from Sherif Jobarteh, who came from a family of griots associated with the late District Chief, Janko Kinte, of Kintekunda Janeya. Nine pages of the translated text were published in the Gambian magazine Ndaanan, March/September 1974, 4(1-2), 22-32. Jobarteh, however, did not seem to know the Jufure segment very well, but as Kunta Kinte had become well publicised by then, he was, in what seems to me to be a clear addition, included. Copies of these texts were sent by Bakari Sidibe to Alex Haley, but it seems that he preferred to use the version he himself had heard, and ignore the others.

A Playboy interview , 24(1), January 1977, p.69, states clearly that a tape-recording had been made, though Wright seems not to have come across this reference.

"Playboy: Were you recording all this ?

Haley: Indeed I was, along with the background chatter of monkeys, parrots, goats, chickens, children, and the like. But you could hear him droning through it all. Even in translation, it sounded much like Biblical recitation. So-and-so took unto himself the wife So-and-so, and by her he begat.....and begat... he was talking about people and events 150 or 200 years ago....."

The narrative was said to have gone on for about two hours before he came to mention Kunta Kinte.

After the initial recording Haley kept the tape to himself, and its whereabouts were not revealed to the world until Nobile (The Village Voice, 23 February 1993, 34.) stated that a tape did exist, and was in the Haley Archives. The tape was recorded on May 17, 1967. "As long as he lived, Haley apparently never let anyone hear the tape." Nobile gives a brief account of interaction between Haley and A.B.C.Salla who was his translator, and Fofana.

But it would be interesting if a full transcription of the tape could be published, providing both the Mandinka text and the translation.

As regards the American section of Haley's writings, the work of Gary B. and Elizabeth Shown Mills criticised Haley's work, and his interpretation of various American documents. ["Roots and the New 'Faction' ", The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, January 1981, 89(1), 1-26.]

Nobody so far seems to have said very much about the African section of Roots . Reviewers had pointed out a few errors, but Haley had brushed these aside as mere nitpicking, maintaining that what was important was the "symbolic history" which he was setting forth.

So Roots came to be used as a text in teaching students about Africa, e.g. From Freedom to Freedom: African Roots in American Soil: A Student's Guide. Random House, 1977, and what was in Roots was regarded as being true based on years of serious research.

[cf Martin Rein & Jeffrey M. Eliot: "'Roots': A new approach to teaching black history," Negro History Bulletin, Jan/Feb 1977, 664-667.]

The academic world was strangely silent. Were people just scared to criticise Haley for fear of being thought racist ? Did they just regard Roots as a novel, a work of fiction, and therefore of no interest to historians, anthropologists, etc. and so stayed clear of it ? People like Ottaway came in for a great deal of personal abuse for daring to publish their doubts. When one listened to Haley speaking it was like listening to a powerful sermon. One can say "Amen" or "Halleluya", but who actually criticises the content of a sermon ? People's minds became tuned to uncritical acceptance of all that was said. Only when one is looking at printed matter can one's mind enter a critical mode, but in many instances he is such an effective and dramatic writer that one is inclined to pass over something that is logically impossible.



He writes, for example: "In the issue [of the Maryland Gazette] of 1 October 1767, on page three, was the advertisement of the agents of the ship, saying that the Lord Ligonier had just arrived under Captain Davies from the River Gambia, with a cargo of fresh, choice, healthy slaves for sale, to be sold the following Wednesday at Meg's Wharf. Among them was Kunta Kinte, who had come from the village of Juffure."

It takes an alert reader to realize that slave ships did not have passenger lists, and that the attribution of a particular name to a slave from that ship was something done by Alex Haley.

A German critic writing in Stern said that Haley's book had become the "Bible for U.S. Africans," and criticised the TV production for making a comic book out of the Bible. The Frankfurter Allgemeine newspaper said Haley "loved the figures in his book," but for TV writers they were "only raw material of possible entertainment value". [Quoted in San Francisco Examiner, 10 March 1978, 28.]

So a critic is now faced with a complicated situation. How does one criticise a text regarded as "sacred"? Is one dealing with what is written in the book, or what is shown in the film, or what comes from lectures by Haley himself, and published interviews. One soon finds inconsistencies.

Haley clearly did not regard his book merely as a novel. He wished us to believe that his ancestor had really come from a particular place in The Gambia at a particular time, and therefore what he was writing was a "true" story. "He had spent twelve years researching and writing Roots." [From jacket cover].

So Afro-American readers, in particular, tend to believe that Haley's descriptions of life in The Gambia (Chapters 1-32) are an accurate account of Mandinka life, whereas those of us who know the Mandinka can find many faults.

REMARKS ON THE MOVIE

I looked forward to the first episode of the series, thinking I was going to see The Gambia again. But I was greatly disappointed.

None of the movie scenes were filmed in The Gambia. Gambian actors were not employed, and generally the Afro-American actors did not look like the Mandinka. Gambian music was not used, and the music and dance choreography were taken from other parts of Africa. The actors did not move, speak, or behave in the way that Gambian Mandinka did. When they used Mandinka words they mispronounced them. The producers could not even make a round house that looked like a genuine old Gambian house.

People who heard my grumbling after watching the first episode of the film, tried to soothe me by saying: "Haley is not trying to depict The Gambia, and show Mandinka life. He is making a symbolic statement, to which Afro-Americans, whether their ancestors came from Senegal, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Nigeria, or the Congo, can relate."

On my second viewing of the film, I tried to make a list of the "mistakes", which I observed, but found so many that I could not keep up with the film, and eventually I just tossed my notes.

Here, I am dealing with the Gambian section of the book, and not thinking of the film, which differs in a number of respects from the book. When I first read the book there were a number of things described that I have never encountered or heard about, e.g. the holding of a new-born child up to the sky. The result was that I dismissed the work as "fiction", and not worth bothering about from the point of view of history or anthropology.

When I recently (1999) thought of analysing it, trying to decide where Haley might have obtained his information, it took less than hour to locate three major sources which he had clearly used- Huxley, Niane, and Mungo Park.

So I reviewed the Gambian chapters:

- a noting under different headings things which I had found irritating or questionable when reading the text.
- b trying to figure out where Haley's information originally came from.

I expected to find materials.

- i derived from his library research.
- ii coming from his own experiences in The Gambia - events he had attended, such as wrestling, dances, appearance of a 'kankurang' etc.
- iii derived from interviews with people in The Gambia and elsewhere.
- iv based on his own imagination. Clearly conversations between the characters in the book have to be plausible reconstructions.

- c Then I went back over a substantial number of the printed interviews of his research as detailed in various interviews- trying to determine the dates and sequence of various events.

This showed alarming discrepancies in the story of his research, confirming doubts expressed by Ottaway and Nobile.

HALEY'S QUEST

"Oh, what a tangled web....."

"qui vult decipi, decipiatur." (Old Latin proverb)

"A lie may get off to a fast start, but in the long run, truth catches up with it."  
(A Senegambian proverb).

When one reads accounts of Haley's research, one often finds variations.  
From "The African", New York Times Magazine, 16 July 1972, 17.

"..... I found that the father had come to America in 1799 from his native County Monaghan, Ireland. That rocked me: I'd never felt any Irish within me...But sheer curiosity kept bugging me until I flew to Ireland, tracing the Colonel's lineage finally back as far as 1707 to a little town of Carrickmacross....They were most hospitable- until they learned I'm Protestant."

In Peggy Murrell's article in the Wall Street Journal, 9 March 1972, 1 & 23, we read:

"Col. Thomas Jackson, the owner of the plantation, had descended from County Monaghan (sic), Ireland, so I decided to go over there and investigate further," the author says. "The Irish Historical Society was most cooperative in helping me find what I was looking for, and even made me an honorary member. They didn't seem to think it at all odd that an American black man was there looking for his ancestors." However, Mr. Haley adds, "When they found out I was Protestant, they ran me out of town." This is the version he gives most frequently.

However Jan Vansina's recollection of the tale as told to him gives a different slant to the story: "The funniest story was the description of his rebuff by a rural parish priest in Ireland when he was tracking down the Irish branch of the family. The priest seemed less shocked by the color of this Irishman than by the thought that Haley was about to glorify "the wrong side of the blanket." [Jan Vansina: Living with Africa, 1994, p.149. ] i.e. a child born outside a regular marriage relationship.

# THE AFRICAN RESEARCH

We start with the family tradition handed down from an ancestor originally called 'The African', who passed down a number of words. Mentioned in the early interviews are the fact that a guitar was ko ; the African said his name was Kin-tay, and that he had been captured in the Kambi-bolong. These were the major clues. However there is a problem in that after Haley had made contact with a Gambian and visited the country, the number of Mandinka words appearing in his accounts increases (See for example pp. 280-281 in Roots). Were these words known to him originally ? or were they added later ? I feel that they came later.

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Following Haley's research from the published material - interviews, newspaper accounts, articles, etc. is not easy. One knows that even when an author has written something, editors may re-write it. Newspaper editors condense and shorten. In oral interviews a journalist can interpret what one says in such a way as to give it a different meaning, and so on.

If, for example, we take Tom Carter's article "Journey into Black Yesterdays," Sepia, 21(6), 21 June 1972, as a starting point, we read: pp. 18-19 "Back in the U.S. [after visiting London], Haley started asking African delegates outside the U.N. if they were familiar with the dialect. Then he came across an African student in New York from Bathurst, Gambia's capital, who recognised some of it. Together they went to the University of Wisconsin, to consult a linguist, expert on African dialect. After some research, the linguist identified these words as a Mandingo dialect from Juffure, Three days later Haley and the student were in Gambia."

Clearly the journalist is mis-stating things. No one had thought of Jufure at this stage. Nor could any one identify the speech as coming from a particular village, especially as the words were being pronounced by an African-American with a Tennessee accent. But did Haley meet Ebou Manga before he met Vansina ?

It would seem so,

In various accounts by Haley we have certain stages indicated:

- 1 Haley had been visiting London to carry out an interview for Playboy with Julie Christie. While in London he had visited the British Museum and become intrigued with the Rosetta Stone, and the way it had been interpreted. On the flight home he decided to see if the strange words he had heard from his family could be interpreted.
- 2 He tried asking U.N. Delegates about the words without success.
- 3 Then he met Jan Vansina who identified the words.
- 4 So he made contact with the nearest Gambian he could find - a student called Ebou Manga.
- 5 He makes his first visit to The Gambia, accompanied by Ebou Manga. Ebou arranges a meeting with his family and other notables.
- 6 Second visit - in response to a letter from The Gambia. This results in a visit to James Island and Jufure, and the famous interview with Keba Fofana.

But when one information about the actual dates is given a different sequence is revealed.

Ottaway wrote "A Gambian student, whom Haley was put in touch with by African diplomats, confirmed that his ancestor was clearly a member of the Mandinka tribe from Gambia, where Kinte ....was a common family name, where "Kamby Bolong" was Mandinka language for the Gambia River....." So the first meeting with Ebou Manga appears to have been in 1966. [October 1966 according to Nobile].

The Gambia News Bulletin, 11 April 1967, p.1 gives an account of Haley's first visit to The Gambia, where he stayed at the Atlantic Hotel in Banjul.

He is back in The Gambia within 6 weeks. The Gambia News Bulletin, 18 May 1967, p.1 and this is the occasion when he visited James Island and Jufure.

But the visit to Jan Vansina took place in October - 13 October 1967.

(Jan Vansina: Living with Africa, p. 149. But Vansina states that he had

previously sent Haley a letter stating that he thought Kambi Bolongo was the Gambia River.

### The Meeting with Jan Vansina

The Book Digest version of the story (January 1977) is as follows:

[See also Roots pp. 572-3.]

p .39 "I had a long talk with George Sims, with whom I'd grown up in Henning, and who is a master researcher. After a few days, George brought me a list of about a dozen people academically renowned for their knowledge of African linguistics. One whose background intrigued me quickly was a Belgian Dr Jan Vansina.....

I telephoned Dr. Vansina where he now taught at the University of Wisconsin, and he gave me an appointment to see him. It was a Wednesday morning that I flew to Madison, Wisconsin. That evening in the Vansinas' living room, I told him every syllable I could remember of the family narrative heard since little boy-hood. We talked so late that he invited me to spend the night, and the next morning Dr. Vansina, with a very serious expression on his face, said, "I wanted to sleep on it....." He said that he had been on the phone with a colleague Africanist, Dr. Philip Curtin; they both felt certain that the sounds I'd conveyed to him were from the "Mandinka" tongue.

Then he guess translated certain of the sounds. One of them probably meant cow or cattle; another probably meant the baobab tree...The word ko, he said, could refer to the kora, one of the Mandingo people's oldest stringed instruments. [...he said ] that without question bolongo meant, in the Mandinka tongue, a moving water, as a river; preceded by "Kamby" it could indicate the Gambia River....."

Jan Vansina's recollections, as given in Living with Africa, 1994, p. 149. 1966 ".....one day in the spring of 1966 - I was then in Kinshasa- I received another inquiry about a case involving oral tradition. This one came from....Alex Haley. He wrote that he was engaged in writing the history of his family. It



seemed that the earliest known ancestor in one of his family lines had been an African slave who had bequeathed a couple of African words to his descendants, which Haley listed. One of these called River Gambia to my mind. I replied to (150) this effect and forgot about it. When [we] docked in New York on our return from Kinshasa in 1967, a steward came to tell us that someone was waiting for us on the quay....It was Haley, who wanted to discuss his findings. Obviously, however, the hurlyburly of the wharf was not conducive to talking, and anyway, we had to rush with a mountain of luggage to catch a train. So we arranged for him to visit us in Madison.

On a crisp day in the fall, Friday, October 13, we met Haley at the airport. As soon as we arrived home, he began to talk and to ask questions, sometimes taping the dialogue, sometimes not. He was an excellent storyteller.....

[The words] sounded western African all right, but the family name, Kante, bothered me. Did this American pronunciation stand for Kante, a famous clan, or Kente ? At one point I checked with Phil Curtin by phone. Kambi bolongo as a putative "the River Gambia" did not conflict with the other remembrances.....

At breakfast the next morning I told him that his family saga in the States sounded convincing and suggested that he contact Gambians to check on the clan name of his ancestor. After that I heard nothing from him."

[Note by DPG. In Mali the Kante were often blacksmiths, but I haven't come across the variation Kinte in discussions of Mali blacksmiths. Did Haley pick up the idea that his ancestors were smiths from the Vansina/Curtin conversation ? In an article "The African", New York Times Magazine, Sunday 16 July 1972, p.7, he first attaches this idea to the Vansina/Curtin episode. "Curtin who said that the phonetic Kin-tay was correctly spelled "Kinte" a very old clan that had originated in Old Mali. The Kinte men traditionally were blacksmiths, and the women were potters and weavers." But in the same article, a few pages later, he has this information coming from the interview with Keba Fofana of Jufure. "The Kinte clan began in Old Mali, the men generally blacksmiths, "who conquered fire", and the women potters and

weavers....." So this information ends up in "Roots", p. 90.

Also, in Niane's book Sundiata: an epic of Mali, from which Haley clearly took bits of information, the Kantes were described as men who "first harnessed fire and taught men how to work iron," and were referred to as the "masters of fire." (p.97).

The present day Kintes of The Gambia, though they acknowledge that their ancestors came from Mali (Timbuktu) refer to them as religious scholars, some of whom became successful traders.

It seems to me that Haley has confused two different clans.

MEETING EBOU MANGA

In the first place we have the statement by Ottaway that he met Ebou Manga after talking to U.N. Delegates (in 1966 ?).

On the other hand in the Book Digest account (cf Roots : 573-574) Haley wrote: pp. 39-40 "I was asked to speak at a seminar held at Utica College, Utica, New York. Walking down a hallway with the professor who had invited me, I said I'd just flown in from Washington and why I'd been there. "The Gambia ? If I'm not mistaken, someone mentioned recently that an outstanding student from that country is over at Hamilton." The old, distinguished Hamilton College was maybe a half hour's drive away, in Clinton, New York. Before I could finish asking, a Professor Charles Todd said, "You're talking about Ebou Manga." Ebou Manga tentatively confirmed my sounds, clearly startled to have me uttering them. Was Mandinka his home tongue ? "No, although I am familiar with it." He was a Wolof, he said. In his dormitory room, I told him about my quest. We left for The Gambia at the end of the following week."

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In the account given in The Listener (London), 10 January 1974, p.41, Haley states: "...it was Thursday morning when I heard the words Gambia River [from Vansina]. On Monday morning I was in Africa.

On the Friday morning, I had looked among the names of African students in the United States. From that small country, the Gambia, the one I found who was physically closest to where I was, was a fellow called Ebon (sic) Manga, attending Hamilton College at Clinton, New York. I hit that campus around 3.30, Friday afternoon, and practically snatched Ebon Manga out of an economics class. We got onto a Pan-American that night and flew to Dakar. From there we got a light plane, and flew to Yanda (=Yundum), near Bathurst. We took a van into Bathurst.

On his LP record of a lecture (1977) he states that after seeing Vansina he went to Washington, and there obtained a list of the Gambian students in the U.S.A. 12 were from Gambia, and the nearest was Ebou Manga, at Clinton, New York.

In the Playboy interview (Jan. 1977) Haley states:

"[After visiting Vansina] I was determined to go to [The Gambia], preferably on the next plane, but I couldn't just pop up in Africa ! I wouldn't know where to go, whom to talk to, or how to ask. I knew I had to find someone who knew more than I did about the Gambia....."

A week or so later when lecturing at Utica College, he heard of Ebou Manga at Hamilton College, and drove over to visit him..."when I asked him to accompany me to the Gambia- at my expense - his face lit up and he said yes on the spot." But it seems that Haley had not yet the money for the air fares.....

Two weeks later he received payment for a Playboy interview, and was ready to go. "I'd already obtained a visa and the very next day, Ebou and I were off to Dakar, where we changed to a lighter plane and flew on to a small airfield in the Gambia...."

However, in many lectures, saying that he heard of the Gambia for the first time on a Thursday, met Manga the next day, and was in Bathurst (Banjul) on Monday made a more dramatic story. Just how does one obtain visas so quickly (at the weekend too ! ) ?

"Ebou Manga and his father [Alhaji Manga] helped to assemble a group of about eight members of the Gambian Government, mature men who met me in the patio of the Hotel Atlantic in Bathurst. There I sat with them, telling them the stories that had been passed down..... They showed [an interest]...that my 1760s ancestor had insisted his name was "Kin-tay." "

[So it would seem that he already had a date in mind for the time when his ancestor was captured, even though he had not yet heard Keba Fofana's version. This is confirmed in the account of his visit in The Gambia News Bulletin, 11 April 1967, p.1. He told people of the book he was writing, the story of 200 years of an American family from the time an African slave was taken from The Gambia to work in the plantations of South Carolina in 1766. He was spending only 3 days in The Gambia, and planning a longer trip later in the year. ]

They stated "Our country's oldest villages tend to be named for the families that settled those villages centuries ago," Sending for a map, they pointed: "Look, here is the village of Kinte-Kundah. And not too far from it, the village of Kinte-Kundah Janeh-Ya."

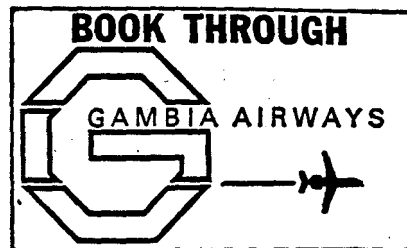
Then they told me something of which I'd never dreamed: of very old men called griots, still to be found in the old back-country villages, men who were in effect living, walking archives of oral history.

Since my forefather had said his name was "Kin-tay" properly spelled "Kinte", they said - and since the Kinte clan was old and well known in The Gambia, they promised to do what they could to find a griot, who might be able to assist my search."

[Haley then returned to the United States and began to devour books on African history.]

# GAMBIA NEWS BULLETIN

19



Published every Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday

TUESDAY APRIL 11th 1967

PRICE 1D.

## BE OUR GUEST!

### Programme For State Visit Announced

Programme for next week's State Visit by President Leopold Senghor of Senegal was announced

who will have three official days in The Gambia, arrives at Yundum Airport during the morning where he will be met by the Governor-General and the Prime Minister.

#### Town-Twinning

Guard of  
the Field  
Gambia  
President will  
come by the  
then have  
presented to  
Bathurst

On Wednesday morning, the last official day, President Senghor will visit the Nurses Training School at Marina and later will lay the Foundation stone of the new Ecole du Foyer which has been sited near Crab Island School.

At a noon ceremony at Government House the President will confer decorations and following an Official Luncheon given by the Speaker of the House of Representatives a town-twinning ceremony between Dakar and Bathurst will take place at MacCarthy Square at 3.30 p.m. at which the Mayor of Dakar and the Mayor of Bathurst will be present.

there will  
of Govern-  
representa-  
Bathurst  
and a Civic  
Bia High  
a dinner  
Minister.

A final communique will be signed later that afternoon and the Visit will officially end with a Reception given by the President followed by a State Dinner at Government House.

The President and his party, which is expected to include several important members of his Government, will leave Bathurst sometime Thursday morning for Yundum Airport where they will make their official farewell.

#### SEN BREAK SENEGALESE RECORDS

Silver medals went to Cherno Touray (hop, step and jump) and Anna Coker (100 yards girls). Bronze medals were awarded to

goals and in the end five penalty kicks were awarded to each side to determine who the winner would be. The Gambia scored three of theirs and Cap Vert four, and thus were declared winners.

The Gambia's next match was against Region du Thies whom they defeated.

#### Performance

The performance of our football team was described by an eyewitness as impressive. As a team, they were on top form. He made special mention of the performance of Alhaji N'Jie (Biri) whom he described as "master of the game" and quoted another source as calling him "one of the best men in Africa".

#### FINANCIAL TALKS DELEGATES RETURN TODAY

The Prime Minister, the Honourable Sir Dawda Jawara, the Minister of Finance, the Honourable S. S. Sisay, and the rest of the delegates to the financial talks in Britain, return to Bathurst today. The talks opened in London on Monday, 3rd April and dealt with question of British aid to The Gambia for the period after June 1967.

In a radio interview on the popular Morning programme introduced by Pete Myers yesterday, the Prime Minister said that he hopes

to see developments in the Gambian economy, educational system and a gradual improvement in the standard of living of all Gambians.

#### TOP AMERICAN WRITER HERE ON WORKING VISIT

Gambian background to next book

Mr. Alex Haley, one of the top magazine writers in the United States, and perhaps the best known Negro journalist in America, is here on a short working visit — and with the news that The Gambia will be one of the most talked about African countries once his next book "Before This Anger" appears next spring.

Alex Haley, who was the co-author of the best seller "The Autobiography of Malcolm X" and who currently has been reaching millions of readers through his interviews with the famous and controversial in "Playboy Magazine", has also been a regular writer for "Readers Digest" and "Saturday Evening Post" — and already his book, which will tell the story of how an American Negro family rooted itself in the United States over a 200 year period from the time an African slave was taken from The Gambia to work in the plantations of South Carolina in 1766, has been contracted to appear in a condensed version in "Readers Digest". One of America's leading film directors has also announced plans to make a major motion picture from the book and a sizeable portion will be filmed in The Gambia.

Mr. Haley has been researching the story for the last five years and although only here for three days plans to make a longer trip to The Gambia later this year.

HALEY'S SECOND VISIT TO THE GAMBIA - FIRST VISIT TO JUFURE.

Digest p. 40. Roots p. 575.

"After some weeks, a registered letter came from The Gambia, it suggested that when possible I should come back. The same men with whom I had previously talked told me now...that they had caused word to be put out in the back country, and that a griot very knowledgeable of the Kinte clan had indeed been found- his name, they said was "Kebba Kanji Fofana."

[Elsewhere he writes Kebba Kanga Fofana. The form Kebba Kangye appears in The Gambia News Bulletin. I find from my rough notes that I often write Keba Kanyi Fofana.]

There would have been no great problem in discovering details of the Kinte clan. The District Chief of Lower Badibu from 1925 to 1948 had been Janko Kinte, formerly renowned as a trader. Griots tend to gather around chiefs. The District Chief at Pakalinding in Jaara was Lang Kinti, appointed in 1935. The chieftainship in Lower Badibu had originally been in the hands of the people of Saba (Singates), but because of factional disputes, the chieftainship had been given instead to Janko Kinte. The position reverted to Saba in 1948, but came back to Kintekunda in 1965.

There were a number of Kintes, prominent in the civil service and teaching professions, e.g. Saim Kinte. Other villages had members of the clan resident, Jifarong in Kiyang, and Jufure in Nyoomi (Niumi), but Jufure had not been a 'royal' village, nor had it provided chiefs under the British. So historical information there would have been in the hands of elders, rather than griots. Such information is often limited. Details of village heads may be recorded in Arabic script and/or remembered, but the names of lesser individuals are quickly forgotten. Anyone who has attempted to carry out a census in a Mandinka village and create genealogical tables soon discovers that beyond the grandparents of the present generation things get very murky.

Jufure was in past eras vastly more important than in recent years, when it had passed into obscurity. It had moved from its original site closer to Albadaar. But it was accessible both by river, and by road from Baara. It was opposite the old fort on James Island, controlled by the Royal African Company in the 18th century.

We have an account from contemporary newspapers of Haley's visit, and various versions are given in interviews, but these do not always fit.

First of all he had to make preparations for his trip from Banjul. From the Listener account, p.45, we read:

"I had to get together a total of 14 people, three of which were interpreters [Apparently one each for Mandinka, Wolof, and Jola], and four musicians - they told me that in the back-country, the griots wouldn't talk without music in the background." From the article by Alex Haley: "The African," New York Times Magazine, Sunday, 16 July 1972, p.1:

"To reach [Kebba Kanga Fofana], I discovered required a modified safari: renting a launch to get up river, two land vehicles to carry supplies by a roundabout land route, and employing 14 people, including three interpreters and four musicians, since a griot would not speak the revered clan histories without background music."

[On the way the launch stopped at James Island, and Haley went ashore to see the ruins of the old fort. Then he went to Albreda on the north bank [=Albadaar], and walked down the road to Jufure, about a mile distant.]

"Juffure village children, sighting us, flashed an alert. The 70-odd people came rushing from their circular, thatched roofed, mud walled huts, with goats bounding up and about, and parrots squawking from up in the palms....."

One of the interpreters was A.B.C. Salla.



His visit was reported in The Gambia News Bulletin, May 18th, 1967 (a Thursday)

AMERICAN AUTHOR PAYS RETURN VISIT

"Mr Alex Haley, the well-known American writer, who is now working on the publication of a book which traces his ancestry back to The Gambia, is visiting the country for the second time in six weeks.

Mr, Haley who is accompanied by his research assistant, Mr. George Sims, has been investigating the probable areas and settlements from where in 1766, an ancestor of his was captured and shipped off, as a slave to the United States.

On Wednesday, he visited historic James Island (= May 17th) and yesterday\* he travelled up to Mansa Konko before returning to Bathurst via the North Bank.

Mr. Haley, who hopes to publish his book early next year, has also contracted film-making rights. He thinks that an important part of the film will eventually be made on location in The Gambia.

He and Mr. Sims will leave Bathurst tomorrow for Dakar."

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\* Yesterday This does not seem to fit.

Wednesday he went to James Island and on to Jufure where he interviewed Keba Fofana. This agrees with the date given by Nobile for the tape - May 17, 1967.

Thursday 18th. He could have completed the trip on the south bank via Mansakonko.

If he did do this he could have visited all the Kinte villages, stopping briefly at Jifarong in Western Kiyang, then on to Pakalinding (near Mansakonko), crossing on the ferry (at that time Yelitenda to Balingho), visiting Kinte/Marong Kunda in Central Badibu) and Kintekunda Jane-ya (Lower Badibu) before continuing on to the ferry crossing (Baara to Bathurst). But I have not found that he mentions this anywhere.. Did he not make the planned trip ?

He could then leave on Friday for Dakar, to catch the Pan-Am plane which used to leave Dakar (if my memory is correct) about midnight (19th.)

Maybe someone working through his diaries and notes could solve this problem.

At Jufure, Haley was introduced to Keba Fofana. The Playboy Interview, 1977, p.70 states: "I'll just sum up his story as briefly as I can. The Kinte clan, the griot said, began back in the 1500s in a land called Old Mali.<sup>a</sup> After many years, a branch of the clan moved to Mauritania and, from there, one son, Kairaba Kunte Kinte, a Marabout - or holy man of the Moslem faith - traveled south to the Gambia, where he eventually settled in the village of Juffure.<sup>b</sup> There he took his first wife, a Mandinka maiden, named Sireng, by whom he begat two sons, Janneh and Saloum. He then took a second wife, Yaisa, by whom he begat a third son, Omoro. When Omoro had 30 rains, he took a wife named Binta Kebba, by whom he begat four sons, named Kunta, Lamin, Suwadu and Madi. Here the griot added one of the many time-fixing references in the narrative that is how they identify the date of events: "It was about the time the king's soldiers came...." Then, as he had done 50 times earlier in the course of his monolog , he added a salient biographical detail about one of the people he was discussing: "The eldest of these four sons, Kunta, went away from this village to chop wood- and he was never seen again."

This Haley immediately identified with the story he had heard in his family from Kizzy, who had been told by her father, the man who called himself Kintay,"that he had been out, not far from his village, chopping wood, intending to make himself a drum, when he had been set upon by four men and kidnaped into slavery."

a I doubt if Keba Fofana would have spoken of 'Old Mali'. 'Old Mali' figures in the title of D.T.Niane's work on Sundiata, which is one of the works that Haley used. (See p. 87 ).

b Elsewhere Haley indicated that Kairaba Kunta Kinte had stayed first at Pakalinding; then he went to Jifarong (in Western Kiyang), and then crossed the river to Jufure. His two eldest sons- Janneh and Saloum - went off and founded a new village called Kinte-Kunda Janneh-ya, leaving Omoro behind in Jufure.

When the reconstruction of Haley's first visit was shown as Roots II, it drew scathing comments from Eugenia Collier in First World, 2(3), 1979, p.30.

"There is Haley, somewhere on the Gambia River, nodding while an ancient Black griot recites the history of his African forebears. Can you imagine- nodding ? Hears the name of Kunta Kinte and straightens up like someone hit with a bolt of electricity. Proclaims loudly "I've found you! Kunta Kinte! African! " Blesses a lot of African babies. Embraces a long-lost cousin, [This would have been Binta Kinte], but doesn't visit that cousin's home or ask any questions about his current family. Learns nothing whatsoever about Africa. Bursts into tears. And sails away into the sunset. To gather fame and fortune from his ancestors' agony. He has been in Africa for all of 15 minutes."

[Of course the videotape lasted only 15 minutes. Haley was there longer.

But we can regard it as a symbolic statement of an actual problem.]

Eugenia Collier would have given anything to know who her African ancestors were- to know where they lived and what they experienced-- to be able to tell her children who they are.

In various interviews he states that he was so emotionally overcome that all he wanted to do was to go back to America ! So he went by road to where he could get a taxi to Dakar (i.e. Baara), and then got on the first plane home.

This is at variance with the account in the Gambia News Bulletin, where the plan seems to have him visit other villages where the Kinte clan lived....

Clearly someone studying the Haley Archives needs to figure out when he did actually visit these villages, so that we can separate fact from story-telling.

There are a number of points about this version of Keba Fofana's story which give pause for thought.

(1) The name Kunta. Was Keba Fofana the first person to introduce the name ? In Roots, Haley has Kizzy told by her father that his name was Kunta Kinte<sup>a</sup> (p.365). Was this just added retroactively after Haley had heard Keba Fofana, for in earlier interviews all that is mentioned is Kin-tay.

As regards the form Kairaba Kunta Kinte for the ancestor. In Mandinka names where a personal name is given, then a second name, and a clan name, the second name is very often the name of the person's mother, especially when most first born sons in the same clan will have the same name. A man will be called Lang Mariama Sise, to distinguish him from another Lang Sise with a different mother, named Fili, then known as Lang Fili Sise. Does this apply in form Kairaba Kinte ? Maybe not.

But most people of the Kinte clan seemed to feel that Kunta, or Kunte was just a variation on the word Kinte- that the clan name had been Kunta in Mauritania, but it was changed to Kinte after they had migrated to the Gambia. Kairaba Kunta Kinte would seem to have both the Mauritanian form of his origin, and the Kinte form of his country of adoption. But this is speculation.

So did Haley tell the people in Banjul he was looking for an ancestor called Kunta Kinte, and to so-called griot eagerly provide it ? or did the griot produce a Kunta, whom he said had disappeared. (In the Keba Fofana version he did not say he was captured by Europeans.) It is Haley who establishes the essential link, a Kunta who disappears, becomes a Kinte who was captured by slavers.

a Penthouse Interview, Dec. 1976, p.145. "Eventually he married, and when his daughter Kizzy, was old enough, he told her his name was not Tobey (sic), but Kunta Kinte.....

- (2) "The time when the king's soldiers came..."

Haley makes a big deal of finding out that this was when Col. O'Hare's forces came to James Island 1766. In the first place the name should have been O'Hara.

But what words did Fofana use ? Ottaway states that we do not know that the soldiers were not the forces of the King of Barra, but the King of England. All through Gambian history garrisons of different nationalities had come to the Gambia - to protect the Courlanders, English soldiers who came to displace the Courlanders, to protect the traders of the Royal African Company, to fight the French, etc. So why would the small force in O'Hara's time have been specially significant. From Gray's account the detachment would seem to have consisted of about forty men, and a few years on the island would have reduced their number considerably.

I found in my own notes, when I had been enquiring about the disappearance of bamboo forests in the Kombo region, that I was told it occurred "at the time the soldiers came." This I interpreted as either round about the time when the expedition took place against Fode Kaba Dumbuya (1901), or when troops were 'displaying the flag' at the beginning of the 1914-18 war. It seemed to me that the phrase "when the soldiers came" was like the term used in Irish folk tradition, "the night of the big wind"....a long time ago, with a very flexible interpretation possible.

An appendix sets out Haley's accounts of tracing the sending of the forces.  
(See p. 29 )

On the other hand I think there is a much simpler explanation. Haley had on arrival told Gambians of the capture of his ancestor in 1766. Haley knew that Mandinka villages did not use the European calendar. But reading Mungo Park's Travels indicated to him that Mandinka calculated the years of their lives by the number of rainy seasons, but Park goes on to write "[they] distinguished each year by a particular name, founded on some remarkable occurrence which happened in that year. Thus they say the year of the Farbanna

war; the year of the Kaarta war; the year in which Gadou was plundered, &c, &c." So Haley let it be known that he was looking for an event which happened in 1766.

All that had to be done was for someone to look up Gray's History of The Gambia, readily available in many places in the Gambia, and he would have found on p.237 that in April 1766 Col. O'Hara (then in St. Louis in Senegal) sent a detachment of his troops to take possession of James Island from the Committee of Merchants. [He seemed to regard it as a place to which he could send troublesome people.]

This information could easily be passed on to Fofana, who could add a couple of sentences to his narrative. "Kunta Kinte went out to cut wood, and was never seen again. It was about the time the King's soldiers came."

So Haley got what he came for - a link - and in all senses a link was forged.

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It is not at all unusual even for well known griots to be briefed by their hosts, when they are called on to perform outside their own home area. A griot resident in Brikama on the south bank would be expected to be familiar with the history of the ruling family and major clans in that area. But if he had been invited to perform in Nyoomi, it was not within the area of his expertise, and he would have to do his own research there, by talking to elders, before performing. So he would learn which major people would be present, and who should be honored in his praises.

I remember also that I went to a concert in San Francisco where a Mandinka koora play<sup>er</sup> was performing. I went with a Gambian friend, and we noticed that there were inaccuracies in what he was singing. After the performance we asked him about it. He replied : "You know that in America none of the people understand Mandinka; so what is important here is the music; the words mean nothing to them; so I was just singing whatever came into my head. You were the only two people [out of an audience of perhaps a thousand] who understood the words. But if I had

been performing for a Gambian audience, the words would then have been important, and I would have had to take care that what I said was accurate." We just replied " "Tonyaa" -(that's the truth ).

So the audience and the occasion determine how accurate the performance is to be. Sometimes accuracy matters, but there are occasions when it does not. If the aim is to please a particular person in the audience, then the truth can be stretched.

I'm also reminded of a passage in Andrew M. Greely's Irish Mist... 1999, p. 200 : "People in the west of Ireland have long memories. There'll be plenty of stories floating around. We'll have to figure out what ones to believe." "You mean you can't believe all the stories they tell out here in the real Ireland, Nuala Anne !"

"Sure, Dermot, you know very well that they're not told to be believed."

Much the same could be said of the Gambian situation.

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An important article is:

Judith T. Irvine: "When is genealogy history ? Wolof genealogies in comparative perspective," American Ethnologist, 5(4), November 1978, 651-674.

See also :

Gordon Innes: "Stability and change in griots' narrations," African Language Studies, 14, 1973, 105-118.

Donald R. Wright

"Requiem for the use of oral traditions to reconstruct the precolonial history of the Lower Gambia,"

History in Africa, 18, 1991, 359-408.

Plus reference given on page 2.

## APPENDIX A.

All the King's Horses and All the King's Men.....

Regarding the phrase "About the time the King's soldiers came"...

In "Search for an ancestor," (New Community, 3(4), 1974, 325, Haley says "That was one of the time-fixing references which griots use . I found the British Parliamentary records, because I had to know the date. He was talking about a group called Colonel O'Hare's forces, which had been sent from London, to the Gambia River to guard the then British -held fort, James Slave Fort, and the date was right on."

[Haley always writes O'Hare, instead of the correct form O'Hara.]

In Readers Digest, "My search for Roots," May 1974, p. 77.

"I went then to London. I searched and searched, and finally in the British Parliamentary records, I found that the "king's soldiers" mentioned by the griot, referred to a group called "Colonel O'Hare's forces," which had seen sent up the Gambia River in 1767 to guard the then British-operated James Fort, a slave fort."

In Ebony, August 1976, p. 106.

"Returning to London, midway during a second week of searching in records of movement assignments for British military units during the 1760s, I finally found that the "King's soldiers" had to refer to a unit called "Colonel O'Hare's forces." The unit was sent from London in 1767 to guard the then British-operated Fort James, a slave fort in the Gambia River."

But what documents did he look at and where were they held ? We are never told.

The unit that was sent to The Gambia, however, was a detachment from the garrison at St. Louis in Senegal, despatched by O'Hara in April 1766. (Gray: History of The Gambia, p. 237), taking over from the Committee of Merchants. It was supposed to keep an eye on the activities of the French in the River Gambia, and probably consisted of about 40 men, which would soon be reduced by fever and other illnesses. O'Hara seemed to regard James Island as a place to send troublesome characters that he wanted rid of.

So why would Haley have had to do all that searching when it was all set out in Gray's History. ?



KINTE HISTORY AS TOLD BY SHERIFJOBARTEH - A GRIOT TO THE KINTES OF KINTEKUNDA<sup>1</sup>

The account by Sherif Jobarteh differs from that given by Alex Haley. The first member of the clan to come was Jane Kinte, a Muslim, a successful marabout from Mauritania. He was brought to Badibu by the Mandinka ruler Sankalang Marong, who had heard of his reputation. He lodged him with his brother Bakari Marong at Marongkunda, not in his own village of India, so that people would not know that he was really working for him, preparing supernatural aid for his success in wars and battles. Bakari Marong had a sick daughter, and Jane cured her. So she was given to him in marriage, and had a son by him. Jane's reputation spread, and the king of Jaara, Jasi Banna, wanted him to come and be his court marabout.

There was increasing opposition to Jane in Badibu, so he crossed to Jaara, and settled at Sankuya, leaving his son, Lang Kinte, behind. Lang Kinte also had to move from Marongkunda, but did not go far, making his own village close by. Later as the two villages both grew, they became one, now known as Kinte-Marong-Kunda or Kintekunda-Marongkunda.

In Sankuya also, a man offered Jane his daughter, and he married her. She too bore a son, whom he named Muhammadou. His wife's parents left Sankuya and went to Pakalinding, and Jane Kinte followed. It was predicted here that one day the Kintes would rule. His wife had a daughter Jabu. [All first daughters of the Kintes are called Jabu].

Then Jane moved on to Kiang-Jifarong, taking his wife and Jabu, but leaving his son behind with his maternal uncles. He grew up, and had a son Lang Kinte, who became chief at Pakalinding. Lang Kinte begat Bua Kinte, who succeeded his father.

At Jifarong Jane was given another wife, and had a son by her, also named Lang Kinte. Jane continued moving, but left the son behind. In time the son became the senior court member in that district, and so would be Acting Chief whenever the post fell vacant.

<sup>1</sup> Based on the account published in Ndaanan, 4(1-2), March/September 1974.

From Kiang, after 8 years, Jane crossed to Nyoomi, to Mankalung, close to Albreda. His wife from Jaara still accompanied him with his daughter Jabu. People came to meet and welcome him, and he went to live in Jufure. There were few village in Nyoomi at this time . There was a place called Kasewa, then no village until Same, and none between it and Jufure. There was no village between Jufure and Sitanunku, nor between Sitanunku, and Bakindiki. None from there till Kanuma.

The people of Jufure wanted Jane to live permanently with them, but he told them he was a traveller. But they gave him a wife there, and she had three children, a daughter Jabu, a boy who died young, and a third- a boy called Bamba Kinte, who later gave birth to Bamade Kinte and Yusufu Kinte. Bamba's wife, Jalanding Dabo, also had children by him.

[Sherif Jobarteh now brings in the name of Kunta Kinte, who got lost, and became the ancestor of the American Kintes- making him a grandson of Bamba Kinte. As Kunta Kinte had by now become well known, it seems to be a later insertion, rather than a real tradition. But maybe I am wrong. ]

Jane Kinte left Jufure leaving his wife behind, stayed briefly at other places in Nyoomi, and then went to Badibu, lodging at Saba. The people grew unfriendly, so he asked them to show a place where he might build his own village. They were anxious to be rid of him, so they showed him a place to the west of Saba, which they believed to be the dwelling place of powerful spirits (jinn), but the Kintes were strong marabouts able to prevail against the jinn. So they built their village, which was named Kintekunda-Jane-yaa.

[Sherif Jobarteh continues with the modern history of the Kintes of that town, the rise of Janko Kinte, a great trader, but also a scholar, who became District Chief, after a quarrel which had split Saba, the people of which had previously held the position.]

I should hate to try to attach dates to the people mentioned. But what the account does is to emphasise the unity of the villages mentioned, and the fact that many members of the clan were destined for high positions.

1972

I have found no mention of Haley again in The Gambia News Bulletin until 13 July 1972, when he paid a brief visit on his way home after the Manding Conference in London. After his return to Washington the Haley Foundation was created. The newspaper states:

"An American Foundation with Gambian connections has been established. It is the Kinte Foundation in Washington established by the American author, Mr. Alex Haley and his brothers.

Mr. Haley, a black American traced his origin to The Gambian village of Juffureh and says that there is overwhelming evidence that his African ancestor came from the Kinte family of the village. He has paid a number of visits to the village, the last time being last week when he visited The Gambia on his way home from the Manding Conference in London.

The Kinte Foundation was set up to collect and document material about the past, present and future of the black American. Mr. Haley said that the story of one black American is the story of all black Americans, only differing in details.

Mr. Haley said in Bathurst that the Kinte Foundation was to make a grant to the Public Records Office to assist it to carry out research into and documentation of the country's cultural history and to set up a museum.

Mr. Haley is currently engaged in writing a book on his ancestry which he expects to finish this year. The book, ROOTS, will be the subject of a film by Columbia Pictures in 1974. The author is hoping that a Gambian, Mr. Charles Thomas, will play the role of his ancestor who was captured while chopping wood in Juffureh, and taken to Annapolis, Maryland, where he was sold as a slave. Parts of the film will be shot in The Gambia."

Gambian Delegation to New York January 1977.

In connection with the launching of the film "Roots," a high powered delegation from The Gambia came to New York. Swaebou Conateh, Director of Information and Broadcasting, along with Kunwar Raj Singh, Tourism Advisor, came first. Then the Minister of Information and Tourism, B.L.K. Sanyang, accompanied by his Permanent Secretary, A.M.B. Jagne, and his Parliamentary Secretary, Landing Jallow Sonko ; an assistant Secretary from the President's Office, Charles Thomas ; a griot of renown - Alhaji Bai Conteh ; Fatoumatta Sallah (Tourist Department) and Mainmuna Bah of Radio Gambia. (GNB: 6 January 1977).

The delegation carried out their own promotion of The Gambia, showing films for journalists and those in the travel business. Then an invitation was extended to Alex Haley to visit The Gambia as an official guest of the Government (GNB 8 Feb. 1977).

Alex Haley made an Honorary Citizen of The Gambia .

This took place at a ceremony in New York. (GNB 5 April 1977).

Gambian Cultural Mission.

In the summer of 1977 a Gambian cultural mission was organised by Eric Christensen, Secretary General at the Office of the President.. Dr. Lenrie Peters was in charge. Included also were Bakari Sidibe (of the National Archives); Saim Kinte (then an education officer), Charles Thomas (from the Office of the President, Junaidi Jallow, Director of Tourism, as well as Fatmatta Touray. Jay Saidy was in charge of press and public relations matters, and in 1997 published a series of articles in the Daily Observer, describing the activities of the Mission. Musu Kebba Drammeh brought a stock of tie-dyed materials. Musicians included Faba Kanuteh (xylophone player), Abdulai Samba (xalam player), two kora players Manjago Susu (who played a classical style), and Yankuba Sawo (modern style). A vocalist was Nurse Kanuteh, the wife of Fabala Kanuteh. The Mission received wide attention wherever it went.

THE TRIUMPHAL RETURN IN APRIL 1977

The Gambia News Bulletin of 19th April 1977 states:

"Alex Haley, the black American writer who put The Gambia on the map with his book "Roots " went to Juffure at the weekend to see the village from which his ancestor was seized as a slave 200 years ago.

Mr. Haley, whose trip was part of a four-day visit to The Gambia, was accompanied by the Permanent and Parliamentary Secretaries at the Ministry of Information and Tourism, Mr. Alieu Jagne and Mr. Landing Jallow Sonko, the American Ambassador in Dakar, Mr. Rudolph Aggrey, the American Charge d'Affaires, Mr. Michael Wygant, and a large crowd of reporters and photographers.

[These included an American film crew, and a Senegalese television crew. Haley was also accompanied by his brothers George and Julius, and his lawyer Louis Blau.]

The party travelled up-river on the Mansa Kila Ba [The Presidential Yacht], and made a brief stop at James Island, which, as Mr. Haley pointed out, played a key role in the "Roots" story.

After another quick stop at Albreda, the party reached Juffure, where Mr. Haley and his brothers Julius and George were given a tumultuous welcome of drumming and gunfire.

The author expressed his gratitude to the villagers, and said that it was with the greatest privilege that he had returned to his ancestral home.

He presented the village elders with the traditional kola nuts and a copy each of the "Roots" album and book.

The alkalo thanked Mr. Haley and his brothers for the gift, and said that although it was 200 years since Kunta Kinte left their village, they were glad to be reunited with the seventh generations of Kintehs from the United States. This was an honour not only to Jufure but to The Gambia as a whole.

The welcoming ceremony was followed by traditional drumming and dancing which was filmed by the American television crew.

Earlier, soon after his arrival on Friday, Mr. Haley had been driven straight to State House to meet the President, Sir Dawda Jawara.

In the evening he and his party were entertained at a reception given by the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Lamin Jabang.

On Saturday night part of the "Roots" TV film was shown at the Gambia High School, and the following night it was presented to the public at MacCarthy Square. Meanwhile Mr. Haley was the guest of honour at a dinner given by the Minister of Information and Tourism, Mr. Howsoon Semega-Janneh at the Sunwing Hotel.

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The magazine Ebony July 1977, has a major article on the event, with 13 photographs.

It describes how "On the second and last day of Haley's visit, villagers re-enacted before film camera, events that occurred when the author first came to the village." The role of interpreter was re-enacted by B.K.Sidibe, Gambia's Cultural Archivist. Chief Taal (The village alkalo) portrayed the deceased Keba Fofana, and one of the Gambia's major kora players was brought in to play the instruments. This film was to be used in Roots II.

On this occasion Haley also talked about help projects for Jufure, one of first being a new mosque, to be designed by his younger brother Julius, an architect with the U.S.Navy Dept. in Washington, D.C. He also hoped to help in the field of education, working through the newly formed Roots Foundation.

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The Insight Guide - The Gambia and Senegal (1998 reprint), shows the alkalo holding a copy of Alex Haley's album "Alex Haley and the story of his search for Roots." (p.34); Binta Kinte standing beside the signpost 'Jufureh' (p.160); and the visitors' book, signed by Alex Haley, Louis C. Blau, and various officials and journalists on the 16th April 1977 (p.161).

[The visitors' book shows both the American system of dating 4/16/77 and the European and Gambian 16/4/77.]

1980

There seems to be a gap of several years in which Haley did not return to The Gambia. But the Gambia News Bulletin for 29 November 1980 mentions his visit with a photographer from GEO Magazine. The visit was intended to be a low-keyed one, the villagers not being expected to put on any great celebration.

The article based on this visit (text by Alex Haley) was published in GEO, Vol. 3, November 1981, "Return to the Land of Roots".

Published every Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday

SATURDAY 29TH NOVEMBER, 1980

PRICE 10b

## European Commission is promised support EDF-financed projects

The team visited Albreda-Juffure and the Buniadu-Albreda-Kuntair roads in the afternoon and was hosted at an official dinner at Tropic Bungalows Hotel in the evening. The visit ended on Thursday morning.

Speaking at a press conference at Atlantic Hotel after the Juffure trip, Mr. Zutphem, said the purpose of their visit was to enable them to have an idea of existing problems in the ACP States. This he said, would make it much easier for them to be able to arrive at something positive when cases for funding of projects were being considered.

He said that the group which represented the Committee of the EDF, the advisory body of the

European Commission on all projects submitted for financing, from the ACP States, normally visits ACP States every two years to meet government authorities and people in these countries to know from them what their problems were.

Mr. Zutphem said that in general, the members of the mission had been impressed by what they had seen of EDF-funded projects in The Gambia.

"The information obtained during our visit, can and will help, when we have projects to be considered for implementation," Mr. Zutphem said.

Asked what they were doing as representatives of their people to improve the lot of people in the developing countries, Mr. Zutphem cited the Lome Convention

as unique in its aid-giving nature to help development in these countries. "This," he said, "brings the countries of Europe and ACP States closer together". He said that another device used to help in this direction was the duty-free concessions enjoyed by commodities of ACP States entering the EEC market. He also cited the Stabex scheme under which ACP States are paid compensation for loss of earnings in respect of commodities, as another means of helping these countries.

## Alex Haley pays visit

Mr. Alex Haley, author of 'Roots' who was able to trace his ancestry to the Gambian village of Juffure, is in Banjul for a week's visit.

Mr. Haley who arrived on Tuesday, accompanied by a photographer from GEO magazine, a US publication, will collect photographic material that will be used to further enhance The Gambia's tourism efforts in the United States and European markets.

A release from the Tourist Office in Banjul, said that this was in addition to the tremendous promotion activities undertaken by our National Tourism Office in New York.

Mr. Haley who leaves today, is due in Banjul early next month to attend the inauguration of the new Atlantic Hotel.

## Local organisation plans to write a wolof dictionary

IN its commitment to fulfil its objectives, a Gambian organisation, the M o o a i Xamxami Wolof—has decided to write a Gambian Dictionary embracing all the other Wolof dialects, the secretary general of the society, Mr. Emmanuel Williams, said yesterday.

This dictionary will be a joint effort of the Mbootayi's advanced class and its research committee of which Alhaji A. E. Cham Joof is the chairman.

When completed, Mr. Williams said, the dictionary will serve both children and adults learning to read and write Wolof. It will become more useful to the primary schools as it is

Government's decision to introduce the teaching of the three national languages—Mandinka, Wolof and Fula in all the Primary Schools in The Gambia.

The Mbootayi Xamxami Wolof realising the fact that there is at present no Gambian Wolof dictionary, feels committed to this important exercise.

The public is invited to make contribution by preparing word lists lexicon or glossary in Wolof and send them to the secretary general or the chairman of either research or central committee of the Mbootay c/o 39 Lancaster Street, Banjul.

## October consumer price index drops

The consumer price index for the low income population in Banjul and Kombo St. Mary, after rising for the last four consecutive months, dropped to 213.6 in October, 1980

"The decline in the group index for "Food and Drink" was due to decreases of 11.2 and 0.7 percent in the sub-group indices for "vegetables and fruits" and "roots, pulses

## LADA CARS

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Though Haley had traced his Irish ancestors, he stated that he could never feel Irish, but the same also seemed to apply to his Gambian relations. He could not feel Gambian. Numerous Afro-Americans when visiting West Africa have felt that they were going home. Haley, on being asked "Would you consider returning to Africa as a permanent resident?" replied [Interview in Celebrity Monthly, June 1977] "No, it's a very different culture. I would have to readjust in too many ways. They think differently and act differently from the ways I'm used to. Their customs are different. It's a whole different way of viewing life- not just the middle-class creature comforts, most of which are available, but many of their ways."

How did he feel when he first set foot in Africa? (West Africa, 28 July 1972, p. 983). "Bewildered - simply in the sense I was in a new culture. I was seeing people I have never seen before. I felt a kind of strange pull of knowing this is where I ancestrally came from, and that I had never been there before. I didn't understand many things I saw, yet I had this awareness that this is where I came from - so it's that strange thing of knowing that you had become alien to your source, you know, psychically. I am looking at people who are black but whose native language I could not understand, and even when they spoke English, often I couldn't readily understand what they were saying. There was therefore that ambivalence of feeling the tug, the pull of knowing that's your ancestral home, but not really feeling comfortably at home as I would have liked to feel."

We don't hear of him learning the Mandinka language so as to be able to communicate directly with the people of Juffure.

HALEY, THE MANGA FAMILY, AND THE MOSQUE .

The article in GEO written by Alex Haley contains some interesting information. "The Manga family, of the Wolof tribe, have been my close friends since early 1967, when I met the student Ebou Manga at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York. Ebou had accompanied me to The Gambia and had introduced me to his father, Alhaji Manga, who became my mentor in matters Gambian. Ebou's younger brother, Joe, was then about 14 years old. Joe is now 29, a Gambian district engineer who knows the village of Juffure very well. Now once again I talked in Banjul with the Mangas, and with his father's approval, I asked Joe to take over both the architectural design and the physical building of the new mosque for Juffure. After he queried my basic ideas, Joe made some rough first sketches. I liked them and thought the Juffure villagers would, too. Alhaji Manga, Joe and I discussed the probable cost, and I wrote Joe a check with which to get started.

Since my return to the United States, Joe Manga has sent me beautifully detailed blueprints of the Juffure mosque, with which, he writes, the villagers are "very happy". Exactly on the site of the old mosque the somewhat larger new one will service the worshipers from Juffure, Albreda and elsewhere.

I am anxious to return to Juffure as soon as the mosque is finished and ready for dedication to the memory of my ancestor Kunta Kinte. I feel deeply that he would approve."

But when Alex Haley died in February 1992, no progress had been made on the mosque, and villagers felt strongly about the non-fulfilment of his promise.

From the foreword to "From Freedom to Freedom: African Roots in American Soil,"  
Edited by Mildred Blain and Ervin Lewis, 1977.

"Kunta Kinte, born in Juffure, remained there, growing up, until he was captured when about sixteen years of age. A purchase was made of sixteen large three-ring binder notebooks, each thickly filled with unlined sheets of paper. I labelled the notebooks "Kunta, Age One," "Kunta, Age Two," and so on, through age sixteen.

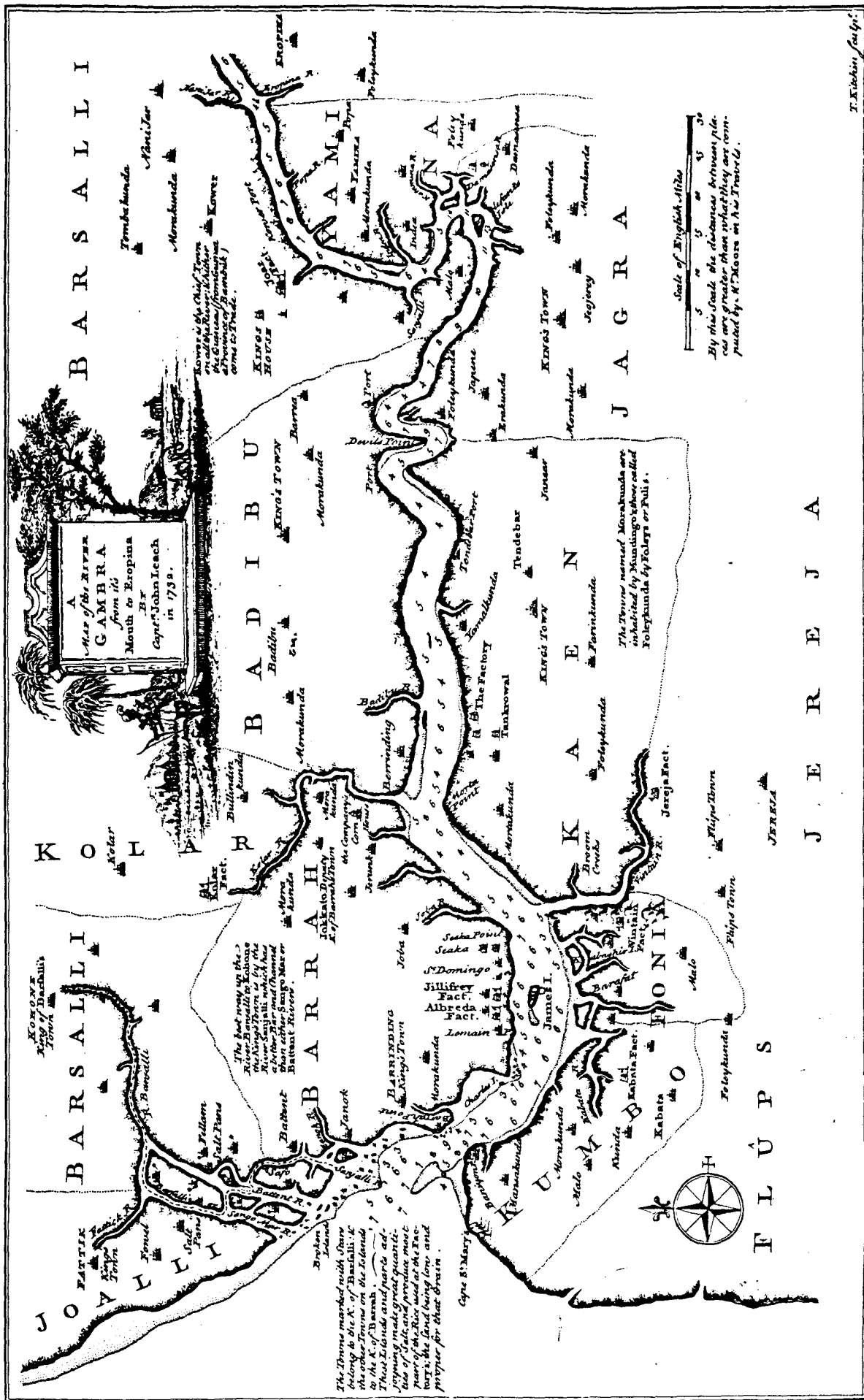
The vast array of static, researched, cultural material was now laid out on nearly any flat surface available in my home, on tables and shelves, covering almost every square foot of floor, with only a walkway remaining.

The idea was to siphon into each notebook, representing each successive year, whatever the boy Kunta plausibly could have experienced through any one or any combination of the human senses. Starting with notebook "Kunta Age One," I went through the entire vast array of material distilling for use that which was applicable as the reactions of a baby of that age, as registered through his faculties of sight, sound, smell, and taste.

That notebook filled, I turned to the notebook for age two, and so on. By the time Kunta was four, in my plausible reconstruction, his mental faculties were portrayed as increasing enough that he could comprehend some more involved things.

The sixteen notebooks eventually were thick with materials. The previously intimidating array of static materials had been distributed across the life of a Gambian boy and youth who lived two centuries ago, yet whose life was just as real to him as yours or mine today....."

THE GAMBIAN BACKGROUNDEIGHTEENTH CENTURY DESCRIPTIONS



ALBRED A

Michel Adanson, who was in The Gambia in 1750 (the alleged year of Kunta's birth) waxes lyrical about conditions at Albreda, which was only a few miles away from Jufure. [A Voyage to Senegal, the Isle of Goree and the River Gambia, 1759]

"The soil is rich and deep, and amazingly fertile; it produces spontaneously and almost without cultivation, all the necessaries of life, as grain, fruits, legumes, and roots. On the high and somewhat drier grounds you see guavas, acajous, two sorts of pawpaws, with orange and citron trees of exquisite beauty... The roots of manioc, igname, and batatee [sweet potato] multiply greatly in open places. The black and moist clays are taken up with forests of bananas, at the feet of which both pepper and ginger grow. Every thing matures to perfection, and is excellent in its kind. They likewise make a great deal of date wine, which is very delicious. [This would have been from the dwarf date palm, koroso in Mandinka, which is tapped close to the ground. DPG]....Pepper....grows in small bunches on a shrub three or four feet high. (pp. 164-165).

Rice is almost the only grain sown at Gambia in the lands overflown (166) by the rains of the high season. [i.e. rainy season]. The negroes cut all these lands with small causeys (causeways, bunds), which with-hold the waters in such a manner, that their rice is always moistened...[The fields had dried out by Feburary when Adanson was there.]

Leaving the river (168), we found a rich soil, of red sand (= laterite), extremely fine, and unconceivably fruitful; this appears by the trees with which it is covered. Here you see thickets impenetrable...by reason the trees stand so close. [He goes on to mention] the benten (bantango (169) [silk-cotton tree] from which canoes are made....farobier (neto)... its fruit a kind of cod or husk, containing a black flat seed, like large lentils, enveloped in a yellow farinaceous substance.... the wild fig tree. [He himself had constructed a working place] under a tamarind tree.

Earlier (p.157), he mentions the "plenty of excellent fish, thornbacks, soles, monstrous large rock fish, and a great many tree-oysters...[which attach themselves to mangrove roots- a single branch sometimes bearing two hundred.]

THE VILLAGE OF JUFURE<sup>1</sup>

The village of Jufure was well known to early Europeans, the name being spelt in various ways- Gilfrey, Gillyfree, Gilofre, Jilifri, Jillifree, etc.

The Courlanders acquired land there along the river front in 1651, and at the same time took possession of St. Andrew's Island (later named James Island by the English). This was fortified, and became the center of the Courlander's operation.

The village is also mentioned in documents relating to Prince Rupert's expedition in 1652.

The Courlanders were ousted by the English, who took over effective control in 1664.

In an account by Le Sieur de la Courbe (Premier Voyage à la Côte d'Afrique....) who visited Albreda in 1686, he paid a visit to nearby Gilfroid, passing many banana trees on the way. He states that there were some Portuguese in Gilfroid, and mentions that there was a very large tree- presumably a baobab, in the middle of the village, which would indicate that it was already an old village. The English had a trading establishment nearby, built in the Portuguese fashion. This would have been a square or rectangular building with a veranda, in contrast to the traditional Mandinka round houses. It was surrounded by a fence and had a well cultivated garden in which there were European vegetables such as cabbages, cauliflowers, and water-melons, as well as sweet potatoes, yams, cassava, and pineapples. This would seem to indicate that the north bank was an area where many plants of South American origin had been introduced by the Portuguese. (198-199).

William Smith, engaged in mapping in 1726 (A New Voyage to Guinea), describes the difficulties he had in getting through the deep swampy mud of the shore at Gillifree. Other members of his party who "walk'd..within the verge of the wood", had trouble from "great black ants, and strange venomous wasps" which badly stung one gentleman. (13-14).

1 The present site of Jufure is not the original one, which was several miles further east.

A detailed description comes from Francis Moore in the 1730s - Travels into the Inland Parts of Africa. Gillyfree was about a mile and a half from St. Domingo, through tall grass. [The name St. Domingo would have come from the Portuguese San Domingo, the Portuguese having a church there.](55). St. Domingo lay on the shore opposite James Island, about 3 miles from it, and consisted of a few round huts occupied by slaves who were there to cut wood for the Fort, and take care of the well which the Royal African Company maintained there. (54).

Women at Gillyfree used to do the laundry for the traders on James Island (46).

A spit of sand and rocks ran out to the N.N.W from Gillfree and many ship were apt to run aground on it (19-20). The Company had a trading factory and a garden at Gillyfree, and a burial ground nearby.

The town was "inhabited by Portuguese, Mandingoes, and some Mahometans, who have a pretty little mosque to pray in. This town is used to supply all private shipping with linguisters (interpreters) but the King of Barrah, in the year 1733, made it no less than slavery for any of his subjects to serve as linguisters on board of any vessels, but what pay his customs, and trade in his country. The Company have a factory here pleasantly situated, facing the fort, and likewise some gardens which supply the fort. About the town is fine shooting, and were it not somewhat too sandy, it would be pleasant walking. Here are great number of plantain and banana trees... There are also guavas...there are a great many orange-trees and lime trees with the produce of which the fort is supplied to make punch, etc. (67-68).

Moore also mentions local trees such as taba (tambacombas), and the "physical nuts" which induce purging. (68)

When the captain of a visiting vessel had failed to pay his customs, and was rash enough to go on shore, he was immediately seized and held to ransom, not being released until a promise was made to pay the customs, the Royal African Company acting as an intermediary in the negotiations. (56)



S.M.X. Golberry: Fragmens d'un voyage en Afrique, visited Albreda in 1786, and mentions the baobab trees he saw near Gylfrey, describing the soil as rich and fertile and the vegetation as singularly beautiful and abundant. (Vol. 41, 97.)

Mungo Park: Travels in the Interior of Africa, indicates the importance of the town in 1795. He writes: "The kingdom of Barra, in which the town of Jillifree is situated, produces a great plenty of the necessaries of life; but the chief trade of the inhabitants is in salt; which commodity they carry up the river in canoes as high as Barraconda, and bring down in return Indian corn, cotton cloths, elephants' teeth (i.e. tusks), small quantities of gold dust, etc. The number of canoes and people constantly employed in this trade, make the King of Barra more formidable to Europeans than any other chiefain on the river; and this circumstance probably encouraged him to establish those exorbitant duties which traders of all nations are obliged to pay at entry, amounting to nearly £20 on every vessel, great and small. These duties, or customs are generally collected in person by the Alkaid, or governor of Jillifree, and he is attended on these occasions by a numerous train of dependents, among whom are found many who, by their frequent intercourse with the English, have acquired a smattering of our language; but they are commonly very noisy and very troublesome; begging for every thing they fancy...." (5-6).

At the beginning of the 19th century this part of the river was still an area where slaves were loaded for shipment, though they would generally have been brought from elsewhere in the interior, or from the south; and this ceased only after the establishment of Bathurst in 1816 to control the mouth of the river.

Early 19th century writers, such as Durand, generally have little to add of their own, and merely repeat what previous authors wrote. However, Mrs Bowdich, whose account of Bathurst was published in 1825. [T.E.Bowdich: Excursions in Madeira and Porto Santo, to which is added...."A description of the English settlements on the River Gambia," by Mrs Bowdich. 1825.] mentions that a factory had been established at Jillafree (or Gillyfree) "for the inland trade, about a

mile from the French factory at Albreda. It would seem that a number of traders moved to this area after the Ceded Mile Treaty in 1826.

The Rev. William Fox, in his A Brief History of the Wesleyan Missions, p.394 describes a visit in, I think, 1836. He writes "Jillifree is a small Mandingo town on the north bank....It is situated on a rising plain, five or six hundred yards from the river, is well stockaded with strong, tall mangrove timber, and has four entrances. The houses are built of mud, covered with grass, and are tolerably substantial and comfortable. It contains a population of about one thousand souls... The house in which we are staying is a stone building belonging to Messrs Chown and Messervey, of St. Mary's - the only stone house here; it is situated between the town and the river, contiguous to both, and is surrounded by shrubs, flowers, and evergreens of various descriptions; the guava, banana, paupi (i.e. pawpaw, or papaya), lime, and orange are among the number of fruit-trees which are in great abundance."

Governor Ingram in 1842 refers to Jillifree as a "small village, though one of the best on the banks of the Gambia. Here were great numbers of very fine orange trees, lime trees, and groves of bananas. Many of the native Mandingoes speak English..." (J.Roy.Geog.Soc. XVII, 1847, 150---)

But soon the town began to decline in importance, the rivalry of Albreda, (later handed over to the English), the growth of Sika, the Soninke-Marabout wars, the development of trade further up river, all being factors involved. It became a place the steamer passed on its way up river. In the days of sailing vessels it had been a useful point to pick up fresh water, before going further .

The Rev. T.E. Poole, visiting the Gambia, some time between 1846 and 1848, refers to it as a small native village, with two stone houses and factories, while neighbouring Sika was a large native town, with two English establishments. (Vol. ii p. 95).

The first foreign traveller to seek out the town in modern times was Richard Owen, following the route of Mungo Park (Saga of the Niger, 1961). He describes it as a small village of about a dozen mud-walled huts. Most were thatched, but two or three had corrugated-iron roofs. His main interest was in old remains, which an elder showed him. "We followed him along an overgrown path across some well-wooded ground, and, there as much part of the scene as the trees and tall grass, was a large iron-stone [laterite] structure, weathered and mellow, with the patina of age, tufts of grass sprouting from the crevices between the stones, it had been a two-storied building but the roof, the first floor and the one side wall had fallen. Trees and a varied plant-life had taken advantage of the shelter of the broken walls and had thrived, but undoubtedly, in this overgrown ruin, we had found old Jillifree- all that remained of it.

"The building must have been used as a stronghold as well as a store, for the walls were very thick and contained long apertures for musket-fire. I was interested to note a number of bricks in the structure, mainly over the doorways: many of the English sailing-ships trading to Gambia carried bricks as ballast. There were traces of other buildings in the vicinity and a caved-in well which had to be searched for in the shoulder-high grass. Conspicuous was a heap of stones, which the old man said, had been a dome-shaped baking oven; it had collapsed only fifteen or <sup>twenty</sup> ~~ten~~ years ago. He added that the place had been deserted as long as he could remember and he himself had been born in the new Juffure, but as a boy had brought the village cattle to a pond here. He pointed to a shallow depression, now dry..." (pp. 27-28).

Alas, I think the building he believed had sheltered Mungo Park was the ruin of the Chown and Messervev trading store built many years after Mungo Park had been in the area.



OLD TRADING STATION- JUFURE - EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY.

(Photo: Aug. 1972)

The above material formed the basis of an earlier article which I had written, which was published in The Gambia News Bulletin ["The Historic Village of Jufure in Nyomi," 16 September 1971, 3-5 & 18 September 1971, 2.], and a copy was sent to Alex Haley.

At one stage in 1971 he was wondering whether he should use in his book a fictionally named village, since different Kinte branches lived in a number of villages. He wanted to use Jufure, but at the same time he did not want to "ignore" the other Kinte home places. [Correspondence dated 12 September, 1971]

Portuguese traders had married local Mandinka and Wolof women, and their descendants were for a long time also spoken of as "Portuguese."

Douglas Grant, collecting material for his account of Job ben Solomon, The Fortunate Slave, visited the scene in 1965 and writes: "The headman.... pointed out in detail where each of the Portuguese buildings had once stood, few of them marked at all, or only by broken walls. He even indicated the directions in which the roads had crossed, the good roads required by such a busy centre of trade as San Domingo. Only after he and his friends, each complementing the others' information, had disposed of the Portuguese- who were the relations of several of them through ancient marriages, after all, did he lead me down through a dense wilderness of elephant grass towards the river and the burial ground of the English of James Fort. Stones with writing on them, he explained, were to be found when the grass was burnt off annually, but now the thick grass hid all...." (p.203).

[Note by DPG "Local people have a tendency to attribute any old remains to the 'Portuguese' . I have had remains of structures which were clearly army houses of the WW II period pointed out as being from 'Portuguese times'. ]

Intermarriage with the Portuguese had taken place since earlier times. The Portuguese traders had often married into ruling families, which gave the rulers some control over the traders, and the Portuguese greater security. From this a class of women known as senyoras developed, wives and daughters of the Portuguese who became traders in their own right, often becoming rich and powerful.

Francois de Paris writing in 1683 of a visit to the Gambia says:

"There are among others at Hieulefroid [=Jufure] , which is a league from Albreda, a woman of this nation (Portuguese), called Marie Mar, who is among the most renowned of the country, after the king, having, it is said, more than 40 thousand pounds in wealth, either in gold, slaves or cattle, who gives a good welcome to the French who come to see her, and treats them very well, in the European fashion...."

The Sieur de la Courbe also mentions her in his Premier Voyage...fait a la Coste d'Afrique en 1685, 270-271.

He describes a quarrel which arose between the King of Barra and the Governor of James Island - Clif (Cleeve), as a result of a drunken brawl involving her. "A certain Portuguese woman, named Maguimar, went to the English Fort (= James Island) with several other women of little virtue. They were entertained splendidly, but after having drunk well, one of them quarrelled with the English, apparently over some "gallantry" which was rejected, so far that one of them named Captain Agis (= Hodges), having apparently more wine in his head than necessary, struck her with his knife; but the others having put a stop to the quarrel they returned home. The King of Barra having learnt that, arrested the English clerk who lived at Gilfroid (=Jufure), with all his merchandise, claiming great compensation for this action, which, in truth, was a bit excessive. The Governor of the fort, called Clif (Cleeve) having come unwisely to shore to confer with the king on this matter, he had him arrested also....."

Elsewhere the Sieur de la Courbe mentions the Belinguere at Albreda.

"Then they took me to see the Belinguere; she is a famous courtisan of this country, daughter of a king; she is beautiful, large and well built, though aging a little, and is the reef where many whites of several nations have become wrecked. She received us civilly, in a Portuguese type house, that is to say, with whitened walls, and a little porch before the door where they had to sit down in the open on mats.

Some times after, they brought us dinner. There were two fowls boiled with rice well prepared, and in which there was much pepper, which is a sort of red and green (vegetable), like a little cucumber, but having a taste similar to pepper. Then they brought us a galina pecade that is to say a fowl which was cut up and seasoned and put back in its skin for boiling, which has almost the taste of saveloy. I also ate there for the first time, batangue, which is bread made from millet flour, round and flat like a thin cake, which one eats hot, and which is not bad. They also served us a desert which I had not eaten before; it was a pineapple.... it is eaten with wine and sugar. They also served us bananas. They gave us palm wine as drink, and we had brought brandy, of which the lady drank a little.

She was dressed in a very fine man's shirt, and a little corset in the Portuguese fashion which emphasized her height, and had for a skirt a fine local cloth, which they call pagne else, that is to say a cloth of importance, which comes from Saint Jago and the Cape Verd Islands. She had around her head a very fine Muslim which made several turns in the form of a turban, with a little elevation behind. She had a noble air, and a glib tongue, and spoke good Portuguese, French, and English, a clear indication of the great dealings she had with all these nations.

Having made her a present of coral and amber, I left this place as Ulysses did from the house of Circe; and was taken to the village of Gilfroid (Jufure) where the English had an establishment."

Was she the same as "Marie Mar" ? Belinguere seems like a variation of the Wolof title 'lingeer' - used for the leading woman in a Wolof state, e.g. the sister, or mother of the ruler.



THE SLAVE TRADE

In the 18th century most slaves were loaded into vessels at ports further up river, and only a small number were brought down to the Jufure area, though some may have been brought across the river from the Fonyi area. The King of Nyoomi had taken action to prevent local people being captured and sold as slaves unless they were criminals, or, I suppose, those whom he regarded as his enemies. Most slaves were war captives from the interior. So a local captive would rarely have been sold to the English on James Island, unless he had been a convicted criminal.

It could happen that an independent trader who had not obtained a full cargo up river, would try to complete his cargo by seizing some people just before he sailed, but there was a very high risk in doing this, as slave catchers could easily be seized on land. Usually locals seem to have been enticed on board and seized there rather than on shore. Cases were recorded up river of a captain breaking an agreement by holding on to a person, when a transaction had not been completed to the satisfaction of the seller, and in such a case the people had no hesitation in attacking the ship and killing the captain. (Francis Moore, p.112-3).

If a ship was known to have kidnapped people, then if it returned to the river again, retaliation was sure to follow. Basil Davidson in The African Past, 1964/1967, quotes from the "Observations on the Slave Trade...made in 1787 and 1788 in Company with D'A Sparrman and Captain Arrhenius," London, 1789.

"When I was at Gorée, in the year 1787, accounts came down by some French merchantmen from the Gambia of the following particulars. The captain of an English ship, which had been some time in that river, had enticed several of the natives on board, and finding a favourable opportunity, sailed away with them. His vessel, however, was, by the direction of Providence, driven back to the coast from whence it had set sail, and was obliged to cast anchor on the very spot where this act of treachery had been committed.

At this time two other English vessels were lying in the same river. The natives, ever since the transaction had determined to retaliate. They happened, at this juncture, to be prepared. They accordingly boarded the three vessels, and having made themselves masters of them, they killed most of the crew. The few who escaped to tell the tale, were obligated to take refuge in a neighbouring French factory (Albreda ?). Thus did the innocent suffer the same punishment as the guilty....."

The Europeans on James Island were few in number, and depended on the mainland for food, fuel, and water, so they had to take care not to offend local rulers. Gray's History (p.240), for instance, describes sanctions imposed by the King of Barra in 1768, when Europeans on the mainland were seized and the inhabitants of James Island were not allowed to fetch wood and water from Niumi, because of an offence that had been committed. [Those on the island had also the possibility of obtaining supplies from the south bank.]

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[ William S, Pollitzer: The Gullah People and Their African Heritage, University of Georgia Press, 1999, p. 42 quotes an item from the South Carolina Gazette for 1743 -

"The Ship Mary Galley, Capt Robert -- , belonging to Mr. Samuel Wragg of London, was on the 4th Day of September 1742 drove ashore, plundered, and destroy'd in the River Gambia, by the Natives, of which she had a Cargo on board. The Slaves rose, in the most barbarous Manner murdered the Ship's Crew, and obliged the said Captain and the Mate, Mr. David Donahew, to confine themselves in the Cabin for 27 Days, whence they at last made their escape, by the Help of a Stage, to the French Island Senegale." ]

### INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS

In the 18th century the Albreda-Jufure area was a point of entry into the Gambia for international shipping.

Judging from the data given by Francis Moore (1732) ships came to the Gambia from Holland ; from the Azores, with salt and horses; from England with miscellaneous goods ; ships on their way to the Gold Coast might call in for repairs; ships from the West Indies would bring rum and sugar; those from New England rum and salt.

Leaving the Gambia. English ships carrying slaves might go to Lisbon, with slaves destined for Brazil; the French took slaves to the Mississippi valley; the English to Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia...and to the West Indies, especially Jamaica.

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### HALEY'S VERSION

The historical reality depicted in the preceding pages did not appeal to Haley, who decided to create for his ancestor a village untainted by the outside world. He therefore shifted Jufure in his book to an imaginary location, and denied the people any first hand dealings with foreigners - Portuguese or others.

Adanson, after his brief stay, suggested that life at Albreda, must have been something like life in the Garden of Eden. Food was available for eating with the minimum of work...abundance of fish in the river oysters on the mangrove branches; fruit on the trees; palm wine ready to be tapped; and many edible plants growing freely with the minimum of cultivation. Haley presents a gloomier picture with an annual hungry season and troublesome diseases. But did the scourge of the 'hungry season' come later in the 19th century, with an increase in population, the growth of a cash crop (groundnuts) taking precedence over food crops, and the ravages of local wars - as the struggle for power between animists and Muslims became rampant? Haley felt he should present a life of innocence (even if there were hardships at times), where a village is saved by faith, and the arrival of a 'holy man'.

Personally I find Haley's chapters on The Gambia very difficult to read. A section that seems at first to be a reasonable reflection of Gambian conditions is suddenly followed by a sentence that is manifestly absurd, sometimes because he has not understood what he has read or been told, or confused roles, making a woman do something that only a man does in this region. Or he has something from the 20th century appearing in the 18th century.

A description or a word would seem wrong, but it sometimes took my mind a while to figure out exactly what it was. For instance he describes a 'water buffalo' being killed (p.578), but this is an Asian animal and is not one found in Africa. If one was led to believe that this is just a work of fiction, then it would not matter, but/consistently the work is alleged to have been based on accurate information derived from long research then one becomes intensely troubled by it.

In any historical novel it is easy for errors to slip in, but the number of mistakes in Haley's work is alarming. Did no one check the early chapters for such errors at the publishers' level. Was the draft shown to Gambians for their comments ? [Ebou Manga was around. Did Bakari Sidibe see <sup>it</sup> when he was visiting the U.S.A. ?] . Were any African experts consulted ? If so , did he take anyone's advice ?

We are told (article in People, 18 October 1976) that "His research took him to three continents. He spend 6,500 hours in 57 libraries and archives, pored with a magnifying glass over 1.023 shipping documents, travelled to remote villages in Gambia, and listened for hours through interpreters to the tales of tribal historians...." Altogether he spent nine years researching and three years writing. As regards the African section he states : "I spent a year combing through countless documents to learn about the culture of Gambia's villagers in the 18th and 19th centuries....."

In the Playboy interview of January 1977, p.75, on being asked "How long did it take you to collect that kind of firsthand research ?" he replied : "Perhaps four years; another six months organizing it into dozens of notebooks, including one for each year of Kunta's life in Africa, distributing every shred of information I'd been able to find on everything from weapons to kitchen utensils, from morning prayers to evening campfires, from birth to death, into what I feel is as comprehensive and authentic a profile of African cultural life as has ever been assembled."

This being so, I feel we are surely entitled to greater accuracy in the results.

THE LOCATION OF VILLAGES

One of the first things one discovers is that Alex Haley has changed the location of Jufure, to remove it from European influence and place it in a zone untouched by outsiders. The text has "Juffure, four days upriver from the coast...." (First sentence). The real Jufure is only about 22 miles by river from Barra, and 15 miles overland. On page 47 he has it "4 days from the nearest place on the Kambi Bolongo where slaves were sold." whereas in fact it is and was, on the north bank just opposite James Island which had become one of the major European bases.

On page 76 he describes the "new village" founded by Janneh and Saloum, which he says was 5 days walk from Jufure. Giving people a moderate pace of 15 miles a day, I estimated that it might be near present day Kau-ur. This is in Lower Saalum District, and close to Kau-ur is the present day village of Jaanekunda. But in various articles, Haley states that the village founded by Janneh (following Keba Fofana's account) was called Kintekunda Jaane-yaa, which is in Lower Badibu, beside Saaba. Going by land one would have to travel a roundabout way to avoid mangrove swamps, say 20 miles from Jufure to Kuntayaa, and 13 miles from Kuntayaa to Kintekunda. So this would be within a couple of days walk. If one travelled by river, twenty miles would bring one to a point four miles from Kintekunda..

So in the book one has villages in imaginary places, and journeys following imaginary routes.

But Haley complicates matters by putting them in their correct places on pages 104 & 105, where he writes "Barra, a day and a night of walking from Juffure," and "his uncle's new village, where he couldn't understand what some people were saying, although they lived two or three days away from Jufure."

ISLAM IN THE 18th CENTURY

Haley seems to me to greatly overestimate the influence of Islam at this period.

If we judge from place names on the early map of 1732 only between 15 and 20 percent of the villages were Muslim, the rest still being Soninke (animist). It is only in the mid 19th century that widespread conversion took place with a series of jihads.

Trading centers normally had a number of Muslims, for those engaged in long-distance trade were generally Muslim, who could count on hospitality and help from their fellow-co-religionists. Jufure is recorded by Francis Moore as having a little mosque, but this does not mean that all the people were Muslim.

The Soninke rulers often relied on the help of Muslim moros (scholars), to provide charms, amulets, etc. for protection and success; and cures for illness. Often a moro was chosen to be resident at the ruler's village ; sometimes he might be settled in a different village, so that people would not suspect he was working for the king.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF GAMBIAN WORDS

Haley often picks up a word used in The Gambia, but does not clearly understand its meaning and so uses it in an inappropriate manner.

Couscous. In Gambian English the word "coos" is a collective noun which includes both sorghum and millet. One can therefore talk of "a coos farm". Couscous, on the other hand, is the name given to a dish prepared from pounded grain (sorghum or millet), which is then steamed, generally being flavored with the baobab leaf. It is commonly eaten as the main meal in the evening. One cannot plant or harvest 'couscous', any more than one can plant or harvest 'flour', yet Haley writes of 'couscous seeds' (6), a 'farm of couscous' (24), 'harvesting of couscous' (26), 'pounding couscous' (16), etc.

Arafang (p.2 and elsewhere). Haley uses this Mandinka word as if it meant 'teacher'. But it is in fact a title, indicating that the individual has completed the first stage of Islamic studies. It is used with a person's name e.g. Arafang Kemo, Arafang Bakari, just as one might speak of the possessor of a Ph.D. degree as Dr. So and So. Nobody uses the term to refer to the village teacher, which they would normally call karamo, a pupil being karandingo.

Kintango. This is not the term for an elder in charge of boys' training after circumcision. A common title for such a person is karamba. Instead kintango is used for the initiate's companion, who is just a few years older than himself, and has been through the training. He is expected to be with the boy at all times, escort him if he needs to go outside to urinate etc., attend to his needs, instruct him, and discipline him if necessary. The kintango would often be a cousin - a mother's brother's child. Haley makes the kintango an elderly man, who behaves like a marine drill sergeant.

Slatee Mungo Park describes the slatee as "free black merchants, of great consideration in this part of Africa, who come down from the interior countries chiefly with enslaved Negroes for sale." (p.11) "....besides slaves, and the



mechandize which they bring for sale to the whites, supply the inhabitants of the maritime districts with native iron, sweet smelling gums and frankincense, and a commodity called Shea-toulou. (Shea-oil)..." (p.37).

As long-distance traders, they had to be very knowledgeable about routes, river crossings, availability of food and water along the way, and have ties to people in various villages where the travellers might stay. They had to keep abreast of local wars, and dangers that might arise therefrom. The term comes from sila-tiyoo - master of the road, leader, and was a term of honor and respect.

Haley transforms it into a term applicable to those who helped the whites capture slaves, and speaks of slatee traitors, etc.

Sasso borro. On page 145 Haley writes "The despised tan-colored sasso borro children of toubob fathers..." On page 199 "many of them have lain down with the toubob, for I see their children who are cursed with the sasso-borro half color." I simply don't know where he found the term sasso-borro. The only meaning of this in Mandinka that I know is "medicine for a cold" or "medicine for sickness", (saasaa-booroo). The only term I have heard for a light skin color is mampata-balo, the color of mampato fruit. The Mandinka I have known were indifferent to the shade of skin color- though the Wolof were normally regarded as having blacker skins, the Fulbe lighter skins, and the Mauritaniens a still lighter color.

Tubaaboo      Haley    Toubob.

The word Tubaab (Wolof), or Tubaaboo (Mandinka) was the ordinary word for a European, perhaps derived from Arabic (meaning doctor ?). It was also used for 'European language'. Dega nga tubaab ? (Wolof)    Do you speak French/English ? The term could also be applied to Africans who had adopted a western style of dress and housing. (lawyers, doctors etc.)

In Mandinka it could be attached to other nouns , e.g. tubaa-nyoo - maize (an introduced crop), tubaab-dutoo - mango, tubab-karoo - European month, calendar month, as distinct from the lunar month.

But after reading Roots many visitors came to give it a different slant. e.g. Newsweek, 14 March 1977, a traveller writes "Children came running and yelling as I neared the village, and their words left me numb. "Toubab! Toubab! " they cried. A Gambian adult tried to tell me that the word meant "Hello, friend". But anyone who is familiar with "roots" knows that toubab was the word that Haley's ancestor, Kunta Kinte used for "white man", and most of the whites he knew were slave traders and slave owners....But then I realized that the word had lost its hateful meaning...."

The New York Times, 14 April 1977, has "Whites are met with the cries of "toubob", the dreaded word for "white slave hunter" in "Roots", but it is exclaimed with smiles."

So Haley's use of the word has given it a meaning which was never there in the first place, and now has to be unlearned by visitors !

# HALEY'S USE OF MANDINKA WORDS

Haley is fond of combining both a Mandinka word and its translation, writing saphie charm, tan-tang drums, tiko headwrap, munko cakes, kurburung bees and wuolo dog.

The root of the Mandinka word for dog is wulu, with an oo (long o) ending it becomes 'the dog' , wuloo. Wuolo is a weird distortion, though sometimes the printer has woulo. The endless 'wuolo dog' I find irritating, but one can at least be thankful that Haley never learnt the Mandinka word for 'goat'.

If he was wanting to distinguish the different types of drums - tabulo drum, which was an alarm drum ; tantang drum, used at dances and wrestling matches; tama drum , an underarm drum with strings which enable the tone to be varied, combined phrases are then useful.

Occasionally a Mandinka word is used without any translation e.g. fudano, p.29, which would be more intelligible to readers if he called it 'henna'. Out of delicacy perhaps, the term foto is not translated, and readers are left to guess that it means penis.

HALEY AND THE GAMBIAN ENVIRONMENT

Haley when he visited The Gambia seems to have a mind set derived from Tarzan movies, and movies of game in East Africa. He writes of "hundreds of thousands of seafowl" (p.4), and on p. 59 "[Elephants] had been among the thousands of forest animals that ran together, sounding like thunder, ahead of frightening black smoke clouds when a great fire had swept across the brushland..."

Even with his own travels he has emerged with a very confused picture of the landscape and animal life. The Nyoomi area in the 18th century had still fairly thick woodland, and was bordered by mangrove swamps - definitely not lion country, for these prefer savanna grassland with scattered trees. Early writers never mention lions in the lower river area. Stibbs in 1723 found a lion's den in the area opposite present day Basse. Francis Moore, a few years later, found a carcass, which he surmised had been killed by a lion, again in the upper river area.

Francis Moore states that he had never seen a fully grown elephant, though a young elephant had been brought down river as a present for the Governor of James Island. By the 18th century elephants were still to be found in the Wuli District, but not lower down river as they had been when the early Portuguese had given Elephant Island its name in the fifteenth century. Haley mentions the rhinoceros (p.35), but this was an East African animal, and as far as I know, was not found west of Lake Chad.

He also mentions in the translation of Keba Fofana's story the killing of a 'water buffalo'. But this is an Asian animal, not African. Was this an error on the part of Haley's translator? Perhaps he meant a 'sitatunga' (Water buck)?

Early travellers who went by river write a great deal about crocodiles and hippopotami, but these are only mentioned once in Haley.

One of Haley's favorite phrases concerns the noise in the treetops "monkeys chattered and parrots screeched overhead" (p.57) cf pp 64, 77, 99. Though the tourist trade may have meant that many parrots are now caught and shown to tourists, my own recollection is that parrots were in the past difficult to find.

HALEY'S REMARKS ON AGRICULTURE

I don't think Haley was ever in The Gambia during the farming season, and therefore he never saw anything of agricultural work. So his information is based on what he had been told, and generally the facts given to him have been distorted.

Preparation of fields:

p.3 "The men...had piled tall stacks of dry weeds and set them afire, so that the light wind would nourish the soil by scattering the ashes."

p.39 "Farmers set afire the tall piles of weeds they had raked up....."

Usually the heaps of weeds and brushwood to be burnt are small, maybe three feet high at the most.

p.6 "Farmers hoed the softened earth into long, straight rows in readiness for the seeds."

Seeds could be planted on the flat if the land had been cleared, but ridges could also be made. For ridging a tool called the darambo, with a sharply angled blade was used to turn over the sod, and dig out the soil between the ridges.

The hoe used for weeding was of a different shape.

Planting:

P.7 "...farmer as he moved along each row, punching a hole in the earth every few inches with his big toe. Into each hole a woman dropped a seed, covered it over with her own big toe, and then moved on."

If farmers were planting on the flat, then a long handled hoe with a blade at the end was used to make a line of holes, turning the soil over like a hinge. The sower (man or woman) dropped the seed in, and turned back the soil with their toe, and pressed it down with a foot, as they moved forward to the next hole.

If they were planting on ridges, then a rounded stick was used to punch holes, into which the seeds were dropped.

Harvest

Haley is very vague as to the techniques involved.

In the case of millet and sorghum, the stalks have to be flattened, simply by

pressing on the base of the plant with the foot. Then those following behind cut off the heads, usually by grasping a blade between the thumb and the first finger, and grasping the stalk with the four fingers and pressing.

For groundnuts, the soil has to be loosened with the darambo, or a tool called a dibongo, a metal blade on the end of a sharply angled handle, then the plant can be pulled out and shaken to remove the attached soil. Mostly a spreading type of groundnut was planted, so one could hardly call them "bushes".

#### Dry season work

Haley : p.39 "In the dry season...farmers were chopping the weeds that had grown up.

40 "The farmers now began busily chopping with their hoes..."

If the farmers were chopping anything it would be the small bushes that had grown up. For this they would not be using a hoe, but a machete (cutlass), along with an adze shaped tool to cut out the roots.

As regards rice, there were various techniques employed depending on the type of swamp in which the rice was planted,

Rice was normally planted in seedbeds on the boundary area between the swamp and higher ground; and then pulled up and transplanted into deeper water swamps. These could in some circumstances be hoed with a long handled hoe to clear weeds and break up the soil; they if weeds grew later they could be pulled out by hand. In other types of swamp a system of underwater weeding was followed before transplanting. At harvest Haley describes the women as "bending in their ripe fields and chopping off the long golden stalks." but most rice can be cut with the women in a standing position, holding a small knife in their hands, and cutting the rice ear by ear, and making it into bundles which can be head loaded to take home.

Horse Haley has Kunta not knowing what a horse is, when he sees one in America. But horses were being brought by ship to the Gambia for sale in the 18th century, and would be purchased by local chiefs, in particular by the Wolof. They had renowned cavalry, which enabled them to move fast and maintain dominance in open country. Armed horsemen could also swoop down on villages and seize children as slaves. [This is commonly depicted by the glass painters in Dakar].

Mungo Park also describes how, when he landed at Karantaba, he was provided with a horse to complete his journey to Pisanian.

Cattle Haley describes how bullocks were sacrificed when there was a drought, but says nothing about them otherwise. He does not indicate whether the Mandinka looked after their own cattle, or left them to be managed by Fula herdsmen.

Sheep Haley does not mention any sheep. Yet looking at photographs taken when he was visiting Jufure, one sees a number of sheep roaming around the village. A special type of sheep (Sahelian sheep) was the animal of choice to be sacrificed at major Islamic ceremonies.

Goats These are mentioned all the time. It is a very simple matter to distinguish sheep from goats - the tails of sheep are larger and hang down; those of goats smaller and stick up. [Drivers on Gambian roads have to be able to make quick recognition when they encounter animals on the roads. Goats get out of the way quickly, sheep are reluctant to move.]

From Haley's account one would think that goats were the concern of the men. Yet in present day communities, it is the larger animals - horses, cattle, donkeys, which are the concern of the men; sheep and goats are largely owned and looked after by women. When they are not allowed to run free, the women would take the animals out when they went to their farms, and tether them nearby so that they could feed. In some villages the animals might be herded communally, and this was done by boys.

Ass This useful animal is not mentioned.

- 1 He writes of 'bread' - though this was not made traditionally. e.g. p.59.  
Europeans imported flour, and in the case of such groups as the Royal African Company, often had a baker among them. Many traders trained their mistresses to make bread. It is only in modern times that one finds bread being baked up-river.
- 2 He has the women set out food for visitors on tables (p.65). He must be thinking of the tradition in the southern states, for such tables did not exist in 18th century African villages, though undoubtedly Europeans had small tables made for their own houses.
- 3 Groundnut farms . Though small quantities were undoubtedly grown as a "garden crop" groundnuts did not become a major farm crop until the 1840s, when export of the crop was developed.
- 4 Another phrase which jars on my mind is "baskets of fruit" provided for visitors. One sees these in modern hotels, but never in traditional villages.
- 5 He mentions 'plates' several times.  
e.g. p.30 "...offered a variety of food in open invitation to anyone who passed by and wished to stop a moment and enjoy a plateful."  
p. 103 In Kunta's house - he mentions 'a plate'.

Portuguese and Europeans undoubtedly used plates for food, but I doubt if they would have been found in Mandinka villages at this time. Tin plates that one sees in present day houses are often used for such purposes as covering the mouth of a water pot.

- 6 He mentions 'money' (p.47) , but there was no currency in use in the 18th century.
- 7 Haley writes of the women having 'sewing baskets'. True women have small baskets with a lid in which they can keep needles, beads, cords, etc. But tailoring was man's work, and the sewing of elaborate designs on gowns was done by men.  
[If girls attend Catholic Mission Schools, then they are taught 'sewing'.]



HALEY AND WOMEN

Haley has a very sexist attitude towards nubile women. He talks of "Prime maidens" (13), "choice virgin" (13), "guaranteed virgins" etc. as if he were describing produce in a meat market.

He does not seem to like the sound of the women's voices. Of older women he writes of "tongue-clacking bargaining", "noisy defiance", "shrieking wildly." Of Kunta's mother, he describes her voice as:

"yelling at Kunta" (14), "snapping 'yes' " (40) "shouting at him," (39), "bemoaning her troubles at the well," (103), "shrieking and wailing," (107).

The only person to whom he seems sympathetic is old Nyo Boto.

Old women were described in unflattering terms (30).. "stumbling out on spindley legs, their wrinkled arms flapping, their rheumy eyes squinting.."

When Kunta Kinte reaches America he does not think much of white women. He saw "...a she-toubob, her stringy hair the color of straw. After seeing the hungry way the toubob on the great canoe had lusted after black women, he was amazed to see that the toubob had women of their own; but looking at this specimen, he could understand why they preferred Africans." (162).

On p. 187 "the she-toubob who lived with "massa" in the big white house was [called] "the missus." Kunta saw her as "a bony <sup>1</sup> creature the color of a toad's underbelly."

1 But there is also a popular song "the closer to the bone, the sweeter is the meat..."

### HALEY'S DEPICTION OF THE MANDINKA FAMILY

Traditionally the Mandinka lived in large compounds comprising an extended family- an elderly man, his wives ; his sons and their wives and children, or a group of brothers with their wives and children. Often there would be three generations present. Each group would have its own section of the compound, and wives will in most cases have separate houses for themselves and small children. Each married woman had her own cooking place. In some villages, there was a large 'women's house', which contained a number of women of different ages.

Haley, however, has Kunta growing up in a nuclear family, father, mother, and children only. Kunta's grandmother, who figures briefly in the narrative at the beginning of the book, lived in a different part of the village, and died when Kunta was still young.

Haley has Binta unwilling to have a co-wife, but her husband could have married another wife regardless of her wishes. Is this just Haley's American prejudice ? It means that Binta is left to perform everything single-handed.

- work in the rice fields - planting, weeding, guarding against birds, harvesting, bringing home the crop.
- domestic work. Pounding grain each day, collecting firewood, cooking, bringing water from the well, washing utensils - pots and calabashes, washing clothes for herself and the men-folk.
- looking after her garden, with various crops, peppers, okra, bitter tomato, etc.
- picking cotton, spinning thread, dyeing cloth.
- collecting wild fruits (e.g. manankaso, neto, baobab, etc.) and leaves (baobab), edible roots, and medicinal plants.
- making soap.
- cleaning the compound, sweeping, taking out garbage.
- looking after a sick mother.
- looking after small children , bathing them when small.

In Haley's narrative she does not have any daughters to help her with domestic chores. Nor is there any word of a younger sister who might come to help at critical moments.

So Kunta has no "sisters". Nor is there any mention of any female 'cousins', father's brother's daughters, or mother's brother's daughters. In traditional society the sister-brother relationship is an extremely important one. An older sister is an important care giver when a child is young, and plays a crucial part in his socialisation. In a number of epic tales it is a sister who by her magical and other skills, is able to save a brother who is in danger. In family narratives one often hears of brothers who have gone to extraordinary lengths to save sisters who have been captured.

It is also strange that in the reconstructed narrative of Kunta's life, the story does not have him speaking to any girl, or any girl talking to him. Which is most peculiar. The only time he addresses a woman, apart from his mother, his grandmother, or old Nyo Boto, is in a wet dream. After returning from initiation Haley also indicates that he had spoken to a widow, but we are given no clue as to what might have been said.

When he speaks to his mother his speech is very restricted. He says "yes ma," or "Yes, mama". He does ask if his younger brother could join him in an errand. When he comes back from initiation he just asks where his father is. When he is in his own house, and she brings him food, he merely grunts in acknowledgement. When he was young she would sing a lullaby (5). Later she tells Kunta his father wants to see him in the morning (22). When he has his own house, she grumbles about the articles he has.

Kunta's father is also depicted as a stern character. On a journey Kunta is supposed never to speak unless spoken to. So all Kunta can say is "Yes, fa." On one occasion he tries to ask his father about accompanying him, but cannot get the words out. Luckily his father can guess. Haley, however, has Kunta ask his father "What are slaves ?" which enables Haley to describe both domestic slavery and the overseas slave trade.

Conversations initiated by the father are very limited. He talks to him as a baby about his future deeds; tells him of the birth of a new brother; consoles him on the death of his grandmother. Otherwise he is generally given instructions - to guard crops, to herd goats, to attend Koranic school; not to drink too much water at once when he is on a journey. His father does ask him if he is all right after his encounter with a 'panther'. He gives him a "graduation present" of goats (73)- [This is surely derived from an American practice.], grants him permission to go on a journey accompanied by his younger brother [Highly unlikely in my opinion] and congratulates him "You did well", when he returns with a substantial amount of gold.

The whole account lacks the warmth and understanding that characterises, for example, Camara Laye's book The African Child (The Dark Child), and the adult support that is there for a child in a critical situation. A child is part of a wider network of kinship relations, and much of his life is spent learning the proper Mandinka way of behaving. Speech is the mechanism by which appropriate behavior is taught. When a child is being weaned for example, there is a great deal of talking- 'persuasion, cajoling', as well as providing alternatives- a child is encouraged to eat with others, instead of just receiving a spanking as Haley describes.

The theme of violence runs through Kunta's upbringing.

- 6 [Mother] gives her son a sound spanking [for wanting the breast].
- 14 Child awakened by being "shaken roughly by his father."
- 17 His every move drew Binta's irritated finger-snapping, if, indeed, he wasn't grabbed and soundly whipped. When he was eating he would get a cuff on the head if Binta caught his eyes on anything except his own food..... For him to stare at her, or at his father, or at any other adult, would earn him a slap, as when he committed the equally serious offense of interrupting the conversation of any grown-up.
- 18 Almost every night he got spanked for doing something bad to his baby brother. Threat that a "toubob" would come to get him.
- 20 Kunta gives [the toddler] a good whack when no adult was watching.
- 25 When he goes to school, the teacher "began laying about them with his limber stick."
- 33 Description of violent seizure of those about to go for initiation.....jerked roughly by the arm a trembling boy...
- 34 [Teacher] rapped their heads for their lack of interest."
- 38 [Parents] were yelling more often than usual...and whipping them for no good reason.
- 39 Binta kept shouting at him and beating on Lamin.
- 40 Binta was quick to whack both her sons. [Short-tempered because she was pregnant.] Kunta took Lamin away, but "gave Lamin a good kick and a cuffing as soon as they got beyond Binta's earshot..." Kunta now feared a beating if he did not take his younger brother along with him.
- 41 Binta...might whack Kunta for something, but not as often as she used to....  
....Boys ready to exchange blows...
- 42 Kunta would give Lamin a slap if he was too much of a pest.
- 43 Kunta might whack Lamin for not jumping swiftly enough to do anything his mother had ordered him to do..

- 53 Binta grabbed him without a word and began to cuff him so hard that Kunta fled, not daring to ask what he had done.
- 76 When Kunta was being taken for initiation, "his wrists were grabbed, and roughly he was snatched up, and jerked through the hut door....Hands knocked him and feet kicked him....
- 78 Assistants to the 'kintango' began to lay about them among the boys with limber sticks, pumeling their shoulders and backsides smartly....  
[On the march] sticks fell steadily among them....
- 81 In wrestling practice, Kunta seized the chance to grab...the boy and throw him roughly to the ground.
- 83 The kintango ordered the boys "to lie on their bellies in a row, and all of the visiting men walked along the row, and flailed the upturned backsides with their walking sticks."
- 84 Boys got another beating for sulking about the preparation of their evening meal.
- 85 Visiting older wrestlers left them "bruised and hurting."
- 107 Binta picked up a nearby piece of wood and struck Lamin with it.

Did Haley pick up this theme of violence in *The Gambia* ? Did he actually see any of it ? Or did it derive primarily from the Afro-American background ? In Willie Lee Rose's book Slavery and Freedom, 1982, pp.44-45, she describes the harsh treatment of children by their own people. "...slave mothers believed that sparing the rod spoiled the child. "What the Lord Almighty made trees for," inquired one experienced Mamma gravely, "If it ain't fur lick boy children". Adult slaves often assumed community responsibility in chastisement of misbehaving children, and a sympathetic northern schoolteacher at work in the South during the Civil War objected that children were "invariably spoken to in harsh and peremptory tones" and "whipped unmercifully for the least offense."

She also describes the "slave nurseries" where on a plantation an old woman is in charge of all the small children whose mothers are at work.

I wonder whether Haley derived his old Nyo Boto with her "nursery hut", where children would gather, from American tradition rather than Gambian.

KUNTA KINTE'S JOURNEY WITH HIS YOUNGER BROTHER (Chapter 30)

Here Haley creates a situation which would be highly improbable in terms of traditional Mandinka values. First born sons were expected to stay at home, and be trained for the time when they would take control of the compound. If the compound had grown large, then it would be younger brothers, who would be encouraged to travel, seeking their fortunes elsewhere - sometimes going to their mother's brother's people (if she came from a different village, and they were short of manpower), sometimes founding a new settlement on their own. I cannot imagine permission being given to an eldest son aged 16/17 to go off on a long journey, taking a younger brother with him.

Haley states in an interview that as the time came for Kunta to be captured, he did not want to see him go, and so created another journey for him, so as to postpone the evil day. [Interview with Jeffrey Elliot, Sepia, November 1977, p.24 .]

On this journey Haley mentions as a landmark, a baobab in which griots were buried. This was a feature of Wolof/Serer culture, and there is a famous tree in Senegal of which photographs are frequently published (e.g. Daniele Gosnave, Babacar Fall & Doudou Gaye: Sites et Monuments en SÉNÉGAMBIE: Images et esquisses historiques. Dakar, 1988. Photo No.20.), which show the remains of griots inside the hollow of a baobab tree, This custom was described by Alvarez d'Almada (1594), Alexis de Saint Lo (1637), Dapper (1668), and many others.

However, I am unaware of any such tree in present day Gambia. Normally the reason given for disposing of the body in this way is the fear of contamination of the ground - crops failing, or wells drying up, if the bodies were buried in the soil, not the reason given by Haley "that both the trees and the histories in the heads of griots were timeless." (p.112).

Haley has the young men panning for gold. But though men normally dug holes, the work of separating out the gold particles was normally done by women, who used techniques similar to those used in food preparation, separating husks from grain etc.



HALEY AND DRUMMING

Haley is somewhat obsessed by the idea of "talking drums."

The tabulo, which he calls tobalo, is the 'alarm drum', normally held at the Mosque. It is used to indicate an outbreak of fire by a series of rapid strokes. In the event of the death of an elder there are six or seven strokes made more slowly. These signals recall men from the farms. However the drum cannot indicate the name of the person who has died.

When there has been a prohibition on gathering certain wild products, e.g. manankaso fruit, until an announced time, the sound gives permission to go out and collect the fruit. In one instance, when I was at Kerewan, the drummer was indicating a fire, but the people mistook it for the signal to gather manankaso, and every one rushed out of the village to pick the fruit. Luckily the fire was a small one, and was quickly brought under control.

At the Muslim feast of Tabaski, when the Imam has ritually made the sacrifice of a sheep (commemorating Abraham's action), a drumbeat indicates to other compound heads that they can now offer their own sacrifices in their compounds. A drum beat also indicates that the new moon has been sighted at the end of the Fast Month.

The word tantango is a general one for drum. The long drum, slung round the neck of the drummer, which is used at dances, wrestling matches, and communal farm work, is called the sabaroo. It is played with the left hand, and a stick held in the right hand. This enables the drummer to move around when playing, and direct his rhythm to specific dancers. The sabaroo is accompanied by two short drums, jukurandingo, (a small tenor drum), and the kutiiribaa.

The tamoo (tama) is an underarm drum with strings on the sides, beaten with a curved stick. The strings are pressed with the arm to give varying tones.

At wrestling matches the tantango (sabaroo) is used to give signals, such as 'get ready', 'take hold', as indicated by Mungo Park. Thompson, Robert L. in his thesis "Calloused Hands and a Drummer's Toolkit: Mandinka Drumming in The Gambia," 1994, p.115 indicates that drummers can signal such sentences as "give me a cigarette" and "a stranger has come" (luntango naata), and that other drummers who have wandered away can be called back by name. or a rhythm indicating "bring it here" urging a women to come into the dance circle.

As regards Haley's view that drums give peoples' names, most Mandinka surnames are bisyllabic, therefore the most one can have is high-low, low-high, or even tones. Any of these combinations could apply to a number of names. When praises are being given, jindirangolu - complimentary phrases may be echoed in the accompanying drumbeat- "Siisee Ingana ning Manding Mori, Saane Balamang kumbaling fing, Daraaame Kanyi, etc!"

When one hears a drum being beaten in a neighboring village, one can recognise from the general sound whether a serubaa dance is being planned, or a wrestling match. The appearance of a kankurang is also indicated by a special rhythm. But all of this is on the same level as being able to distinguish a waltz from a quickstep or from a tango, from the opening bars of music, or of distinguishing various bugle calls, reveille, chow, taps etc.

With the nature and tonal structure of the Mandinka language it is not possible to send and receive the types of messages Haley envisages. On page 18, Haley tells how Kunta learnt 'drumtalk'.

"Kunta remembered the times that drums talking at night from different villages had troubled his sleep. Awakening, he would lie there, listening hard; the sounds and rhythms were so like those of speech that he would finally understand some of the words, telling of a famine or a plague, or of any raiding and burning of some village, with its people killed or stolen away."

The text of 'Roots' is full of 'drumtalk news', e.g.

- p.2 Drumtalk news of 'nephew's birth' sent to uncles 'far away.'
- 13 Talking drums spread news of an effective holy man.
- 18 Haley has the jaliba acting like Western Union. "On a branch of the baobab, beside the jaliba, was a goatskin inscribed with marks that talk, written there in Arabic by the arafang. In the flickering firelight, Kunta watched as the jaliba began to beat the knobby elbows of his crooked stick very rapidly and sharply against different spots on the drumhead. It was an urgent message for the nearest magic man to come to Juffure and drive out evil spirits."
- 18 "pounding on drums" at the rising of the crescent moon.
- 21 Tobalo drum announces moment to begin harvesting.
- Tan-tang and souruba drums..beat rhythms to match movements of [harvesters].
- 29 Drumming...for 'harvest festival'....tobalo at dawn marks beginning.
- 31 Visiting drummers come to village.
- 32 'Singing griot' reminds people that a 'drumtalk message' would bring him back to Jufure.
- Drums - issue commands at wrestling match.
- accompany visiting wrestlers, telling of their prowess.
- 33 Drumming for soruba dance [after wrestling].
- 36 In Kunta's day dream 'distant drumtalk' begged him to save the people of his village from a buffalo.
- 47 Drums of other villages warned of the toubob [white man].
- 48 Drumtalk from Jufure told Janneh and Saloum of Kunta's birth.
- 49 Drumtalk from other villages warned of the toubob.
- 52 Drumtalk from the next village tells of a new village built by Janneh and Saloum, five days away.
- 54 Drums of different villages report people missing.

- 62 "Omar went to the village jaliba and arranged for a talking drum message to his brothers. He told them to expect him by the next sundown and that travelling with him was his first son."
- 63 Drumtalk messages...now filled the air with word of the arrival of griots, jalibas, senior elders, and other important people...
- 64 Man...squatted over his drum and announced on it: "Omoro Kinte and first son."
- 72 Talking drum.
- 76 Big drums and small drums...were pounding as initiates were taken out.
- 81 Drum message reported return of an initiate sent into the bush.
- 85 [In a historical account] "the talking drums of every village followed the marching progress of the victorious forces."
- 86 Drumtalk reached the jujuo telling of new visitors to be expected.
- 102 "I listen to the drums and count the lost."
- 125 Talking drum....announced the names of the persons called before the village council.
- 143 Village drums beat out the words to inform whoever might hear them far away that a son of the village named Kunta Kinte now was considered gone forever.

[The river estuary is from 5 to 8 miles wide, and in mid stream, one hears nothing from the land. So no one in a vessel could pick up a drum message ! ]

Going through Haley's narrative, my initial reaction was to think that Haley had been reading too many Tarzan stories, or watching too many Tarzan movies. It was perhaps over 65 years since I had last read a Tarzan novel, but I eventually found the first in the series - Tarzan of the Apes, and re-read it. Edgar Rice Burroughs packs his jungle with animals of all kinds. But Haley matches him, almost animal for animal. Burroughs has lions in the thick forest (not savanna land) ; so does Haley. Elephants. Panther and leopard. [Though I can't recall the term 'panther' being used in The Gambia.]. Monkeys chatter in both Burroughs and Haley. Snakes, jackals, boar (B) = wild pig (H), deer, antelope; hyena. In other books about Tarzan there are rhinos, crocodiles, hippos, etc.

In the Tarzan narratives the viewpoint is stated that the lion will not attack humans if it is already full (p. 125). Haley has this on page 60.

Tarzan seizes bows and arrows and the poison used - a "thick, dark, tarry substance" from the villagers. It is clear that Haley took his account of poisoned arrows from Mungo Park's account (See page 99 ), but maybe a recollection of the event in the Tarzan narratives made him pick up on Park's footnote.

In Tarzan of the Apes, we have the grub worm being sought as food. Haley (p.11) has the villagers of Jufure search for the grub worm also. None of my dictionaries define this item.

Burroughs has people call a gun a 'thunder stick' ; Haley has it as a 'fire stick'.

Burroughs refers to Tarzan as a man-child, females of various species have the word 'she' preceding the type, e.g. she-ape. Haley talked of a manchild being born to Omoro and Binta Kinte. [Margaret Walker uses boy-child, which would seem preferable] When Kunta Kinte sees a white female, he calls her a she-toubob. Are both using a dialect with which I am unfamiliar ?

However, I think that what Haley was trying to do was to reverse the picture presented in the Tarzan narratives. Here the hero was white, of high ranking origin who was able to overcome all sorts of obstacles. Africans were presented as savages, often governed by evil chiefs, or under the control of witchdoctors.

In Haley's work the hero was black, but came from a distinguished lineage, even though he ended up a slave, while the whites were all depicted as 'savages', through their involvement in the slave trade.

The classic conversation: "Me Tarzan, you Jane", is echoed in Haley's "Me Samson....You Toby." (180-181).

The reversal tendency may also be the reason why Haley brings in such an adverse attitude towards a light skin color. Southern whites obviously despised any one who had even a suspicion of "black blood". Haley reverses this, and makes his Africans despise anyone who had a white ancestor.

HALEY'S "BORROWINGS" FROM OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

It is clear that Haley in his research, or his assistants, made extracts from books, sorted them out, and then they were incorporated into his general text, using more or less the same words. Hence the plagiarism suits by H. Courlander and others. Nobody, however, seems to have looked at or commented on the sources Haley used for the section of his book dealing with The Gambia.

In academic writing one uses other people's material, but it is put in quotation marks, and references given showing where it originated. But this does not happen in novels.

Similar words have to be looked at carefully. In some cases Haley and writer X might have used the same source. In other cases Haley seems to have taken his material directly from writer X. Also in the case of folklore, folktales, riddles, puzzles, proverbs, etc. the same form occurs widely in oral tradition. There is also the situation that different people describing an identical feature can come up with almost the same words.

But it seems clear that Haley consulted three printed works:

- 1) Elspeth Huxley: Four Guineas, 1954.
- 2) D.T. Niane: Sundiata : An Epic of Old Mali. Translated by G.D.Pickett.  
1965 edition.
- 3) Mungo Park: Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa....  
in the years 1795, 1796, and 1797.

- (1) Elspeth Huxley: Four Guineas. 1954. Chapter on Gambia, pp 9-45.

[Using the 1955 reprint].

- (a) First of all she gives a mathematical riddle (p.24) :

"If a baboon has nine wives, and each wife has nine children, and each child eats nine nuts for nine days, how many nuts will be stolen from the farm ?"

She states that she was told this riddle by a "young Irishman who speaks Mandinka" (p.24). He is later named as [George] O'Halloran (p.33), an Education Officer.

Haley writes (p.72):

"If a baboon has seven wives, each wife has seven children, and each child eats seven nuts for seven days, how many nuts did the baboon steal from some man's farm ?".

Other sources indicate that O'Halloran also talked to Haley (See p.109 ), or provided him with material. Did he tell the same story to both Huxley and Haley ? He is no longer living, so we cannot check with him.

The Mandinka version with which I am familiar, and is widespread, does not have the baboon as the lead character, but the starling (wiya-wiya), and starts off "Wiya-wiya kononto ..... Nine starlings....."

- (b) When one reads Huxley's account to see if there are any other verbal similarities in Haley one finds:

Huxley (18) "On the fire between three stones...in the rounded black pot.... simmered...porridge."

Haley (1) "Traditional breakfast of porridge that was cooked in earthen pots over a fire built among three rocks..."

Clearly anyone describing cooking must inevitably mention the fire, with a pot supported by three stones, but not that porridge was item being cooked.



- (c) On the next page of Haley:

p.2 [The men]....took up their short, bent-handled hoes.

cf. Huxley p.23 "...their tools consist of the bent, short-handled hoe."

- (d) Huxley p.15 describes women's hair:

"wigs...They are made of hair mixed with black four-ply wool and wound into buns , standing out from the temples like horns, or of a soft, silky very fine substance derived from the bark of the baobab tree, beaten into downy fibres."

Haley has p.27

"Buns, plaits, and full wigs were woven of long fibres picked from rotting sisal leaves or from the soaked bark of the baobab tree. The coarser sisal cost less than the softer, silkier fiber of the baobab."

[The fashion of using imported black knitting wool was found in Huxley's time, but has disappeared by the time Haley visited The Gambia. But Haley would not have expected to find black knitting wool being used in the 18th century ' However sisal puzzled me. I could not recollect the word ever being used in The Gambia. I searched in a book of West African plants for it, and failed to find it. An American dictionary, however, told me that sisal was a Mexican plant. What Gambian women would have been using was one of the types of hemp.]

But we have in common to the two descriptions the words: buns, wigs, fibres, bark of the baobab tree, soft, silkier (silky) . ]

- (e) Huxley p.29 describes going up a creek from the river in a motorized canoe, passing through mangroves, then reaching the rice fields....birds seen on the way were kingfishers, herons, spur-winged geese, egrets, and ringdoves. Mention is also made of crocodiles and mosquitoes (30).

Haley p.4 has a similar description, but has it backwards - women going down the creek through the mangroves to get to the rice fields. Haley has a longer list of birds, but it included kingfishers, herons, egrets, and ringdoves.

No crocodiles are mentioned, but the mosquitoes are.

[The way Haley has it results in nonsense, for by going down a creek one gets to more saline swamps, where it is not possible to grow rice.]

(f) Huxley's book also seems to provide an explanation for one of Haley's statements that has worried those who know this part of The Gambia -describing women paddling canoes to get to the rice fields. At Jufure the rice fields are close to the village, and within walking distance, and in The Gambia one never sees woman "paddling canoes".

But in "Four Guineas"after five photographs of The Gambia, there is one which shows "a 'company' of farmers off to harvest rice," with women clearly helping to paddle the canoe. But it is labelled..."Up the Great Scarcies river" and this river is in Sierra Leone. Huxley does not refer to it until more than 40 pages later. The printers had bound the Sierra Leone photographs following the Gambian scenes, and in the book they appear in the middle of the Gambia chapter.

If Haley simply mistook the photograph for one of The Gambia, we have a logical explanation for a piece of nonsense which has baffled readers ever since 'Roots' was published.

- (2) D.T. Niane: Sundiata: an Epic of Old Mali. Translated by G.D. Pickett, Longman's, 1965 edition.

Kunta's daydreaming about killing a buffalo (pp.35-36) at once brings to mind the classic narrative of the killing of the Buffalo of Do, in the epic of Sundiata. As the French spelling is used for Sundiata, it is clear that Haley used a French source or an English translation thereof, and not an English work such as Gordon Innes: Sunjata: Three Mandinka Versions. London, 1974, where the name is spelled with a j, not di.

Niane's version in the Longman's translation is clearly Haley's source.

(a) On page vii of the preface Niane gives the names of important villages which conserve historical tradition- Keyla, Djeela, Kangaba... Haley has these names on page 12. Ka-ba, which Niane also names, Haley brings in on page 123.

(b) The title of Simbon, which Kunta was dreaming of, is dealt with in detail in Niane. It was first given to "the sons of Kalabi Bomba, who had been initiated into the art of hunting (p.3)". An endnote on page 86 explains the term..."It literally means 'a hunter's whistle' but it is also used as an honorific title to denote a great hunter, a title which Sundiata later bore." Innes states (p.106, note 154) that in The Gambia there is disagreement among griots about the meaning of the word. Bamba Suso thought that simbong in the eastern dialect corresponded to jata (lion) in Gambian Mandinka. Bamba suggests that in phrases such as Simbong ning Jata be Naareng, Jata was added as a kind of gloss on Simbong for the benefit of Gambian Mandinka speakers .

But in Gambian Mandinka simbong occurs as a praise name for lion. "The word occurs also in the children's game simbong tulungo. One child crawls on all fours, with a piece of cloth draped over him, trying to roar like a lion. The other children run about near him, singing the song associated with the game. When the 'lion' catches one of the other players they change places."

- (c) In Niane's work Alexander the Great is commonly mentioned. He uses the Mandinka name 'Djoulou Kara Naini' (p.90, note 32), which is a corruption of the Arabic 'Dhu'l Qarnein'. In Mandinka tradition Sundiata was often compared to Alexander. A soothsayer revealed that Sundiata was to be the successor of Alexander (p.37), and Sundiata who had often been told about Alexander, wanted to outdo him in the extent of his territory and the wealth of his treasury. (Pages 23, 32, 35, 37, 48, 90). Alexander was referred to as "the mighty king of gold and silver, whose sun shone over quite half the world", (p.23).

So Haley brings in the story of Alexander. On page 89 he writes of Djoulou Kar (sic) Naini, known to the toubob as Alexander the Great, a mighty King of gold and silver whose sun had shone over half the world."

Haley has his story being told, not by a griot, as might be expected, but by a moro (holy man).

- (d) The names of the major characters in Niane's work - Sogolon, Sundiata, and Sumaoro, are brought into Haley's work on pages 45 and 85.

For some unknown reason he transforms Sundiata from a royal figure into a runaway slave who became a general. In local tradition Sundiata derives his origin from two powerful clans - his mother's which had as its totem the buffalo, and from his father's clan - the Keita, with the lion its totem. Sundiata had been forced into exile by a half brother and his scheming mother, who had plotted against Sundiata and his mother Sogolon.

Several minor items in Niane also appear in Roots.

- (e) Niane uses the proverb "A silk cotton tree springs from a tiny seed," a couple of times (pp. 5, 16). Haley has this proverb on p.41.

- (f) The editor of Niane's work give a note on owls (p.89, Note 23).

"Owls are birds of ill-omen...supposed to contain the spirits of the dead."

Haley writes (p.43) "Our dead ancestors are in owls."

[My own experience indicates that owls were commonly believed to be witches.]

- (g) The word bourein is used by Haley in a description of a case brought to the village council (p.115). "A young wife declared that her new mother-in-law had hidden some bourein shrub in the wife's kitchen, causing whatever was cooked there to turn out badly."

The name was used in Niane (p.67) as 'a tree of destruction in Sumaoro's capital. An endnote (p.94) states "The bourein is a dwarf shrub which grows in poor ground. It is a savanna variety of gardenia. Its use in the kitchen is forbidden, and it is a shrub of ill-omen."

I have not come across the name elsewhere.

- (h) The description of the procession of prisoners with booty given on p.76 of Niane is echoed in Haley's description of war (p.35), and the grisly fetishes of Sumaoro (pp. 39, 76) in Haley p. 85. Sundiata's restoration of power to former chiefs (Niane 77-78) is reflected in Haley (p.86).

- (i) Divination using cowrie shells    Haley 110-111  
Niane p.5

[The words 'hunting bag' occur in both accounts.]

- (j) Divination involving the sacrifice of a white cock. [Favorable if they died on their backs, facing upward].

Niane p.71

Hailey p.50

For Haley, if the cock dies on its breast hope remains, when it flaps to death on its back, then no hope remains.

(3) A major source of information for Haley was Mungo Park's book

"Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa: performed under the  
Direction and Patronage of the African Association in the years 1795,  
1796, and 1797."

My references are to the sixth edition, published in London in 1810, in  
two volumes.

PLACE NAMES

Jonkakunda	Park 9	Haley 63
Kasson Kasoon	44, 104	101
Kootacunda	49	63
Plsania	9	63
Simbani (wilderness)	50	110
Wooll	49	110, 63
Barra	5	63, 49

MANDINKA WORDS

tabala tobala	alarm drum	Park 415	Haley 19
tantang tan-tang	drum		2 etc.
tobaubo fonnio	white man's lie	17	English only
jong sang doo	land where slaves are sold	407	51
koomi	cannibal	407	51
koona	a poison	419	85
slatee		37	24, 50
saphie	amulet	56	5
a muta	take hold	62	English only
shea-toulou		38	2 (shea tree butter)

Park (pp. 401-2)

"A child is named when it is seven or eight days old.

The ceremony commences by shaving the infant's head:

and a dish called dega, made of pounded corn and sour milk is prepared for the guests.

If the parents are rich, a sheep or goat is commonly added.

The feast is called ding koon lee 'the child's head shaving.....

.....

The schoolmaster, who officiated as priest on these occasions.....

first said a long prayer over the dega, during which every person took hold of the brim of the calabash with his right hand.

After this the schoolmaster took the child in his arms, and said a second prayer,

in which he repeatedly solicited the blessings of God upon the child, and upon all the company.

When this prayer was ended, he whispered a few sentences in the child's ear, and spit three times in its face,

after which he pronounced its name aloud, and returned the infant to its mother....

..the father divided the dega into balls, one of which he distributed to every person present,

In The Gambia it was sweet rice cakes, made of rice flour and sugar, which were distributed.

Haley (pp.2-3)

Naming ceremony, traditionally on the eight day of his life.

A small patch of his first hair was shaved off.

The women brought calabash containers of ceremonial sour milk, and sweet munko cakes made of pounded rice and honey.

[Sacrifice of animals not mentioned]

The alimamo

said a prayer over the calabashes

As he prayed each guest touched a calabash with his or her right hand.

Then the alimamo turned to pray over the infant.

[Omar] whispered the name three times into his son's ear.

[Omar]told the alimamo the name, which he announced to the crowd.

[Distribution of 'charity', not mentioned.]



Park pp.58-59      "...near the entrance [to a town]...I observed, hanging upon a tree, a sort of masquerade habit, made of the bark of trees, which I was told...belonged to Mumbo Jumbo. This is....much employed by the pagan natives in keeping their women in subjection....[when]...the authority of the husband can no longer preserve peace in his household.

This strange minister of justice....disguised in the dress....and armed with the rod of public authority, announces his coming....by loud and dismal screams in the woods near the town. He begins the pantomime at the approach of night....as soon as it is dark he enters the town, and proceeds to the Bentang, at which all the inhabitants immediately assemble.....every married female suspects that the visit may possibly be intended for herself, but they dare not refuse to appear when they are summoned; and the ceremony commences with songs and dances, which continue till midnight, about which time Mumbo fixes on the offender. This unfortunate victim being thereupon immediately seized, is stripped naked, tied to a post, and severely scourged with Mumbo's rod, amidst the shouts, and derision of the whole assembly; and it is remarkable that the rest of the women are the loudest in their exclamations on this occasion against their unhappy sister.....

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Haley p.62      ....the townspeople watching a masked and costumed figure brandishing a rod over the bare back of a screaming woman, whom several other women held. All of the women were shrieking with each blow of the rod. Kunta knew how a husband, if annoyed by a quarrelsome, troublemaking wife, could go quietly to another village and hire a mumbo jumbo to come to his village and shout fearsomely at intervals from concealment, then appear and publicly discipline that wife, after which all of the village's women were apt to act better for a time.

WRESTLING FOLLOWED BY A DANCE

Park      "A neobering, or wrestling match at the Bentang (= bantabaa)...

61      The spectators arranged themselves in a circle, leaving the intermediate space for the wrestlers, who were strong active young men, full of emulation and accustomed I suppose from their infancy to this sort of exertion. Being stripped of their clothing, except a short pair of drawers, and having their skin anointed with oil, or shea butter, the combattants approached each other on all fours, parrying with, and occasionally extending a hand for some time, till at length one of them sprang forward and caught his rival by the knee. Great dexterity and judgment were now displayed; but the contest was decided by superior strength...

It must not be unobserved that the combatants were animated by the music of a drum, by which their actions were in some measure regulated....

62      ..When the wrestling match is <sup>about</sup> ~~soon~~ to begin, the drummer strikes what is understood to signify ali bae see - sit all down...when the combattants are to begin, he strikes amuta, amuta -take hold, take hold."

Dance

"The wrestling was succeeded by a dance, in which many performers assisted, all of whom were provided with little bells, which were fastened to their arms and legs, and here too the drum regulated their motions."

-----

Haley (32-33) also has a description of wrestling followed by a dance. Undoubtedly he had seen both wrestling and dancing himself, while in The Gambia, for his description of the wrestling is much longer. But he includes the drums speaking "Ready", and "Take hold", and tells how unmarried maidens tied small bells around all of the wrestlers' ankles and upper arms.

USE OF A WHITE CHICKEN AS A SACRIFICE

- Park 105 " We came to a species of tree, for which my interpreter..had made frequent inquiry. On finding it he desired us to stop; and producing a white chicken, which he had purchased..for the purpose, he tied it by the leg to one of the branches, and then told us we might now safely proceed, for that our journey would be prosperous."
- Haley 108 " At the travelers' tree, Kunta prayed for their journey to be a safe one. So that it would be a prosperous one as well, he tied the chicken he had brought along to a lower branch by one of its legs, leaving it flapping and squawking there as he and Laminset forth on the trail."

TREE WITH RAGS ATTACHED

Park p.64 "We came to a large tree, called by the natives Neema Taba. It had a very singular appearance, being decorated with innumerable rags or scraps of cloth, which persons travelling across the wilderness had, at different times, tied to the branches.... nobody now presumes to pass without hanging up something..."

Haley p.55 "Reaching the travelers' tree, they stopped, and Omoro added two more narrow cloth strips to the weather-tattered hundreds already hanging from the lower limbs, each strip representing the prayer of a traveler that his journey would be safe and blessed."

Park wrote (pp. 148-149)

".....tomberongs..... These are small farinaceous berries, of a yellow colour and delicious taste. These berries are much esteemed by the natives, who convert them into a sort of bread, by exposing them for some days to the sun, and afterwards pounding them gently in a wooden mortar, until the farinaceous part of the berry is separated from the stone. The meal is then mixed with a little water, and formed into cakes; which, when dried in the sun, resemble in colour and flavour the sweetest gingerbread. The stones are afterwards put into a vessel of water and shaken about so as to separate the meal which may still adhere to them; this communicates a sweet and agreeable taste to the water, and with the addition of a little pounded millet, forms a pleasant gruel....

The fruit is collected by spreading a cloth upon the ground, and beating the branches with a stick....."

[If I remember correctly there are thorns on the tomborongo tree, which is why the branches would be beaten with sticks to shake the fruit loose...DPG].

But it seems to me that Haley has confused this with the gathering of manankaso, which he calls mangkano (p.16). This is a small bush, 18-24 inches high, so that one has to bend over it, and the fruits are simply picked off and put into a calabash or any other similar container.

Haley writes "The women busily collected the ripened reddish mangkano berries, shaking the bushes over cloths spread beneath, then drying the berries in the sun before pounding them to separate the delicious futo flour from the seeds. Nothing was wasted. Soaked and boiled with pounded millet, the seeds were cooked into a sweetish breakfast gruel...."

Park (pp. 467-8)

" I discovered that the Negroes are in possession...of an Arabic version of the Pentateuch of Moses, which they call Taureta La Moosa.... They have likewise a version of the Psalms of David (Zabora Dawidi); and, lastly, the book of Isaiah, which they call Lingeeli la Isa, and it is in very high esteem. .... They have acquired an acquaintance with some of the remarkable events recorded in the Old Testament. The account of our first parents; the death of Abel; the deluge; the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the story of Moses, David, Solomon, &c....."

Haley (pp. 38-89), describing the visit of a moro (holy man) writes:

"He opened his books and began to read - first from the Koran, then from such unheard-of books as the Taureta La Musa, the Zabora Dawidi and the Lingeeli la Isa, which he said were known to Christians as the Pentateuch of Moses, the Psalms of David and the Book of Isaiah....

He spoke to them of Adam and Eve, of Joseph and his brethren; of Moses, David and Solomon; of the death of Abel.

And he spoke to them of great men of more recent history, such as Djoulou Kar Naini, known...as Alexander the Great...."

*(The latter would have been related by a 'griot', not by a Muslim scholar. See page 88 for the source of Haley's material on Alexander.)*

Park (p. 419) "Poisoned arrows are used chiefly in war. This poison, which is said to be very deadly, is prepared from a shrub called koona (a species of echites), which is very common in the woods. The leaves of this shrub when boiled with a small quantity of water, yield a thick black juice, into which the Negroes dip a cotton thread; this thread they fasten round the iron of the arrow, in such a manner that it is almost impossible to extract the arrow, when it has sunk, beyond the barbs, without leaving the iron point, and the poisoned thread, in the wound. "

Haley (p.85)

"Tramping into the woods, the boys found some koon a shrub, whose leaves they picked to be boiled back at the jujuo. Into the resulting thick, black juice, they would dip a cotton thread, and they were shown how that thread, wound around an arrow's barbs, would seep a deadly poison into whatever wound the arrow made."

GIRL DRINKING WATER IN WHICH HER BELOVED HAD WASHED HIS HANDS

Park (p.518) ...."a young woman (his intended bride) brought a little water in a calabash, and kneeling down before him, desired him to wash his hands; and when he had done this, the girl, with a tear of joy sparkling in her eyes, drank the water; this being considered the greatest proof she could give him of her fidelity and attachment."

Haley (p.36) relating Kunta's day dream:

"... the most graceful, and most beautifully black of all maidens in Juffure ...[came]..and kneeling before him, offered a calabash of cool water, and Kinte, not thirsty, merely wet his fingers, to favor her, whereupon she drank that water with happy tears, thus showing to everyone the fullness of her love."



DISPLAYAL OF NUPTIAL SHEET

This is described in many sources:

Park 399

"The new married couple, however, are always disturbed towards morning by the women, who assembled to inspect the nuptial sheet (according to the manners of the ancient Hebrews, as recorded in scripture), and dance round it. This ceremony is thought indispensably necessary....."

Niane p. 12

"The old women who had come early to seek the virginity pagne, had been discreetly turned away. " (An editorial note on this, p. 89, states "a bloodstained cloth which showed publicly that the marriage had been consummated and that the bride had been a virgin."

Haley p. 120

"Everybody knew how the next morning the newlyweds' two mothers went to the hut to put into a woven basket the white pagne cloth the couple had slept on, taking its bloodiness as proof of the girl's virginity to the alimamo, who only then walked around the village drumtalking Allah's blessings on that marriage..."

[DPG: I have never heard of the alimamo being involved in this ritual, only the women of the families involved.]

Huxley 15-16

"It is the custom for the bride's elderly female relations to hide near the marriage bed and, after consummation, to carry out the bridal sheet for inspection by the waiting crowd. Loud applause greets the bloodstained always to be found upon it." Huxley cynically adds "As it seldom happens that a Wolof bride is actually a virgin, one of her aunts is ready to cut the throat of a chicken."

ATTACHMENT TO HOME VILLAGE

Park pp.435-6 describes the desire of people, even after their village had been destroyed by war, to return to the place of their nativity.

"To him no water is sweet but what is drawn from his own well, and no tree has so cool and pleasant a shade as the tabba tree of his native village."

Haley p.59 echoes these words:

"This is our village. No other well has such sweet wwater.  
No other trees shade is as pleasant..."

GRIOTS

Park p. 416

"They consist of two classes: the most numerous are the singing men, called Jili kea.....

One or more of these may be found in every town. They sing extempore songs, in honour of their chief men, or any other persons who are willing to give "solid pudding for empty praise."

But a nobler part of their office is to recite the historical events of their country; hence, in war, they accompany the soldiers to the field in order, by reciting the great actions of their ancestors, to awaken in them a spirit of glorious emulation.

The other class are devotees of the Mahomedan faith, who travel about the country, singing devout hymns, and performing religious ceremonies, to conciliate the favour of the Almighty, either in averting calamity, or insuring success to any enterprise. "

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I feel there are echos of this in Haley's writings on p. 31

" Every day brought different traveling musicians - experts on the Koran (kora ?), the balafon, and the drums. And if they were flattered enough by the gifts that were pressed upon them....they would stop and play for a while .

When the story-telling griots came, a quick hush would fall among the villagers as they sat around the baobab to hear of ancient kings and family clans, of warriors, of great battles, and of legends of the past.

Or a religious griot would shout prophesies and warnings that Almighty Allah must be appeased, and then off to conduct the necessary...ceremonies in return for a small gift..."

"In his high voice a singing griot sang endless verses about the past splendors of the kingdoms of Ghana, Songhai, and Old Mali, and when he had finished, some people of the village would often privately pay him to sing the praises of their own aged parents at their huts. "

## SLAVERY

Park devotes a major chapter to an account of slavery and its causes pp. 428-444.

He distinguishes two major classes. Those who ~~were~~ slaves from birth, having been born to enslaved mothers, and secondly those who were born free, but became slaves. The majority of these were prisoners of war.

But a person could also become a slave in famine conditions, when he/she attached themselves to someone who had food. In the case of children, they could be sold for food.

Next people could be seized because of an unpaid debt. They might not be the actual debtors, but persons related to the debtor - who was then expected to pay up in order to ransom them.

Finally slavery was a punishment for crime - treason, murder, witchcraft, sometimes adultery, the choice being to some extent in the hands of the person offended.

Park had seen a caravan of slaves on its way to be sold in North Africa (Morocco) (p.287 ), and also travelled with a caravan to the Gambia, so he provides a vivid description of conditions on the march.

Haley bases a high proportion of his remarks on Mungo Park's material. He has a chapter when Kunta Kinte asks "What is a slave?", and is given information by his father and old Nyo Boto, who herself had been sold as a slave. Haley tries to distinguish African slavery where the slave (if born a slave) had certain defined rights (and could not be sold unless they had committed a crime) - from slavery in America where the slave was stripped of all his identity, and had no rights..

## MINOR ITEMS

		Park	Haley
A	Use of bullock's hide for bed [Not found in modern times, beds are usually mattresses of sacking stuffed with straw.]	31	1, et al.
B	The phrase "a white man's lie"	17	48
C	Sounds of frogs, jackal and hyena at night	13	9
D	Stone thrown as "a scapegoat"	63	112
E	Flogging for adultery- 40 strokes less one	116	117
F	Encounter with a lion	310	60
G	Call to prayer using an elephant tusk horn	145, 283	110
H	The terms - jong sang doo (Place where slaves are sold) - koomi (cannibals)	407	51
I	Praise for son who 'never told a lie' [Haley says that Kunta would never have lied]	153, 395	17
J	Age calculated by 'rainy seasons'	405	13, 64
K	Eating of bamboo seeds in time of hunger	501	6
L	Child weaned when able to walk	395	2
M	Broken elephant tusks found in the woods	459	113
N	Hunters living on wild honey	462	36
O	Attack by disturbed bees	492	82
P	Dyeing bullock's hide red using millet stalk	422	43

In an article by Peggy Cartwright: "Kunta Kinte and Mungo Park," The Crisis, 84(7), August/September 1977, pp. 373-4, she writes mainly of Mungo Park.

"In Mungo Park's Journal we find descriptions in great detail of every phase of life in the Mandingo countries, almost exactly as depicted two hundred years later by a descendant of Kunta Kinte, [i.e. Alex Haley]."

She simply did not realise that the descendant of Kunta Kinte had lifted his descriptions wholesale from Mungo Park's Travels.

In fact there is very little relating to Mandinka life and customs in Mungo Park's work, which has not been lifted and incorporated into Roots. The exception is the passage describing Jufure itself !

MATERIAL BASED PRIMARILY ON INFORMANTS.



GEORGE O'HALLORAN AS A MAJOR INFORMANT ?

George O'Halloran had been associated with Gambian children since he first held at position at the Nutrition Field Working Party in Jenyeri in 1948. Here he began to develop techniques of making children and adults literate in Mandinka using English script. As part of this work he arranged to have published certain works in the Mandinka language, among which was the story of "The Boy and the Crocodile". (Haley p.7).

In all the versions that I have heard, the crocodile is caught far from the river, and asks the boy to carry him back to the water. Also when the humans try to catch Rabbit (or rather Hare, as he is in The Gambia), he outwits them and escapes. Haley's version is the only one where hare gets caught. [So it looks as though Haley got both the traditional beginning and ending wrong ! ]

The numerical puzzle quoted by Haley (p.72) was one which O'Halloran had told to Huxley, and he may well have told it to Haley.

In the end O'Halloran transferred from the Nutrition Field Working Party to the Education Department. He was very familiar with the traditional systems of teaching in the Koranic schools and in 1979 published an article on the subject (Journal of Reading, March 1979, 492-497. The editorial introduction to this article states that much of the information in the Gambian section of Haley's Roots was based on material provided by O'Halloran. I think it is safe to say that a great deal of the material relating to Kunta's childhood came from O'Halloran. Did they meet in London? perhaps at the Manding Conference in 1972, or in The Gambia ? Was the information derived from interviews or did O'Halloran provide him with written material ? Maybe someone working through the Haley Archives could come up with the answer.

5 pressing of head to shape it.

stories being told to small children.

unripe mangoes giving children bellyache.

16 children's games. racing beetles, chasing squirrels & monkeys.

[But Haley also experienced this: "When we got within sight of Jufure the children who were playing outside gave the alert, then the people came flocking from their huts.]

21 children chasing pests from farms (birds, monkey, baboons, etc.)

23 goat herding.

20/25 attending Koranic school.

fetching firewood for school.

23/27 using slingshots

35 learning to use bows and arrows for hunting hares, squirrels, etc.

30 joining in adult dancing - imitating adults.

40 climbing trees.

17/32/41 wrestling.

61 catching crabs near creek.

27 stomping mud for housebuilding.

28      playing flutes etc.

83 maybe a few details of initiation rites - secret signs, secret language.

91 - stealing food from village.

INSTANCES WHERE HALEY'S MATERIAL IS DERIVED FROM MIXED SOURCES

INFORMANTS & WRITTEN MATERIAL.

The primary source for Haley's knowledge appears to be what he was told in Banjul when he first went there...."Then they told me about something I never had any concept existed in this world. They told me that in the back country, and particularly in the older village of the back country, there were old men called griots, who are in effect walking, living archives of oral history. They are the old men who, from the time they had been in their teen-ages, have been part of a link of men who tell the stories as they have been told since the time of their forefathers, literally down across centuries. The incumbent griot will be a man usually in his late sixties, early seventies, and underneath him will be men separated by about decade intervals, sixty, fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, and a teen-aged boy, and each line of griots will be the experts in the story of a major family clan; another line of griots another clan; and so on for dozens of major clans. Another line of griots would be the experts in the history of the empires which had preceded it, and so forth. And the stories were told in a narrative, oral history way, not verbatim, but the essential same way they had been told down the time since the forefathers. And the way they were trained was that the teen-aged boy was exposed to that story for forty or fifty years before he would become the oral historian incumbent." (Oral History Review, 1973, 1-25.)

Haley tends to assume that fixed material is passed down; whereas performances vary, depending on the audience and the occasion; over time elements are dropped and more are added, and there may be differences between the performance on one day and another.

From his library researches he could also have read a great deal about the griots who specialized in such narratives as the Sundiata/Sunjata epic (Niane etc.). Mungo Park describes how griots act in different situations (See pp. 113-114, 483 and 488 in his Travels. )

Haley gives an account of griots when he describes a visit to the initiation ceremonies by a griot.

The old griot ... "told them how, over years of study from young manhood, every griot had buried deep in his mind the records of his ancestors. 'How else could you know of the great deeds of the ancient kings, holy men, hunters, and warriors who came hundreds of rains before us ?.....The history of our people is carried to the future in here.' and he tapped his gray head...

Only the sons of griots could become griots. Indeed it was their solemn duty to become griots. Upon finishing their manhood training, these boys-like those grandsons of his own who sat beside him here today - would begin studying and travelling with selected elders, hearing over and again the historical names and stories as they had been passed down. And in due time, each young man would know that special part of the forefathers' history in the finest and fullest detail, just as it had been told to his father and his father's father. And the day would come when that boy would become a man, and have sons to whom he would tell those stories so that the events of the distant past would forever live.

....he thrilled them until late into the night with stories his own father had passed down to him - about the great black empires that had ruled Africa hundreds of rains before..... "

Haley has him tell of Benin, Songhai, Ancient Ghana, and finally Mali, "the greatest of all its cities being the fabled Timbuktu."

Haley, however, it seems to me, is just using his imagination when he has an elder griot visit the jujuo, and relate the historical narratives to the initiates.

My own experience indicates that a griot (generally a younger griot) may accompany a boy when he is being taken for circumcision, urging him to be brave, and singing the type of song that was once used to encourage warriors going into battle. At the moment of circumcision, the griot may praise him for his courage and steadfastness.

But in the areas I know a griot was not involved in the training in the jujuo, and the old historic narratives would only be performed on special occasions, for a chief, perhaps on the occasion of his installation, or for a village head and elders, and not for what was basically an audience of small children. [See note on page 123].

KORANIC SCHOOL

L.O. Sanneh wrote a long description "The Muslim Education of an African Child: Stresses and Tensions," for the Conference of Manding Studies, which Alex Haley attended in London, 1972. But he does not seem to have obtained or used a copy.

There is a good account by Mungo Park, and certainly Haley had read this:  
cf. Park: "...the last page of the Koran was put into his hand, and he was desired to read it aloud; after the boy had finished this lesson, he pressed the paper against his forehead, and pronounced the word 'Amen....' (p.4)

and Haley: "Standing up he read a verse from the Koran's last page, finishing it, he pressed it to his forehead, and said Amen !" (p.72).

cf.

But other pieces of information undoubtedly came from O'Halloran (Journal of Reading March 1979, 492-7). "The instrument used for writing is a pen cut with a sharp knife from a long sliver of bamboo, or a reed, or a stem of dried grass... The ink (duwa) is made from potblack- the scrapings from the outside of the big, black three legged cooking pots. The scraping is crushed in water and sometimes boiled with the juice of the bitter orange."

Haley has ".....to write with grass quill pens dipped in the black ink of bitter orange juice mixed with powdered crust from the bottom of cooking pots...." (p.20). [Potblack is mentioned in many sources. O'Halloran is the only one I can think of who also mentions the bitter orange.]

O'Halloran describes the rest of the pupil's equipment:

"A large number of wooden tablets (wala) on which the lessons are written. These tablets are cut in slices from the buttresses of the silk-cotton tree..... the ink is often evaporated to powder and stored in a small specially carved wooden container, or in an antelope's horn."

Haley has : "The new [pupil]...carrying a cottonwood writing slate, a quill, and a section of bamboo cane containing soot to mix with water for ink." (p.25).

Mungo Park describes a Koranic school as follows (p.466):

"The schoolmaster...was a man of a mild disposition and gentle manners... He spent much of his time reading and teaching appeared to be his pleasure, as well as employment. His school consisted of seventeen boys, most of whom were sons of Kafirs (unbelievers), and two girls, one of whom was his own daughter. The girls received their instruction in the daytime, but the boys always had their lessons by the light of a large fire before daybreak, and again late in the evening, for being considered during their scholarship, as the domestic slaves of the master, they were employed in planting corn, bringing fire-wood, and in other servile offices through the day....

471. When any one of them had read through the Koran, and performed a certain number of public prayers, a feast is prepared by the school-master, and the scholar undergoes an examination, or (in European terms) takes out his degree. I attended at three different inaugurations of this sort, and heard with pleasure, the distinct and intelligent answers which the scholars frequently gave to the Bushreens, who assembled on those occasions, and acted as examiners. When the Bushreen had satisfied themselves respecting the learning and abilities of the scholar, the last page of the Koran was put into his hand, and he was desired to read it aloud: after the boy had finished this lesson, he pressed the paper against his forehead, and pronounced the word Amen ; upon which all the Bushreens rose, and shaking him cordially by the hand, bestowed upon him the title of Bushreen.

When a scholar had undergone this examination, his parents are informed that he has completed his education, and that it is incumbent on them to redeem their son, by giving to the schoolmaster a slave, or the price of a slave, in exchange; which is always done, if the parents can afford to do it; if not, the boy remains the domestic slave of the schoolmaster until he can, by his own industry, collect goods sufficient to ransom himself."



As regards discipline teachers clearly varied. The teacher described by Park was a mild mannered man. One described by O'Halloran also showed mild control.

"There are not many disciplinary problems, and corporal punishment is rare. When it becomes necessary, it is administered on the back with three little strands of rope, each with three single knots at the end....The most dreaded punishment is to be expelled or driven away." On the other hand the Teacher described by Sanneh was a strong disciplinarian, who believed that flogging was essential in molding his pupils.

Haley's teacher believed in "laying about among them with his limber stick."

Haley goes astray in his descriptions of the final examinations, where he has the teacher ask questions about Kunta's ancestors, and gives a mathematical problem to solve. These have nothing to do with Koranic school, and would not be added. The mathematical puzzles are things that are passed around among children.

Haley has the teacher state that as the boys' education is complete they are advanced to the next kafo. The kafo organisation and Islamic school are in no way related. After completing the elementary stage the pupil (karandingo) may go on to more advanced studies (becoming a talibo). Eventually "the teacher will summon learned men and scholars from the surrounding area to test the pupils proficiency. They will come to the town mosque, staying with hosts for several days, while they question their fledgling colleague.....If he is considered fit, his head is shaved, solemn prayers will be said, and he will have a white scarf tied around his head as a mark of his new distinction. He will be given the title of Arafang. ....He is now the owner of a many branched skill, he is a theological, but not a priest or a minister; a lawyer, a scholar, and, if he wishes, a teacher." (O'Halloran, p. 497). "The new Arafang may continue with his studies, until he is considered fit to be called a Karamo or Fodeo."

As Mungo Park states, the parents of the graduating student are expected to present the teacher with a payment. Haley, on the other hand, has the father give his son two goats as a school finishing present. This is not in the Gambian tradition, whereas a gift to graduating student is a common American practice.

HALEY'S EXPERIENCES IN THE GAMBIA

As Haley seemed to move around accompanied by a vast number of people, it would have been difficult for him to observe very much of everyday village life.

But children playing outside the village would have observed him coming and rushed to tell people of a visitor- and this he makes an element in the responsibilities of children everywhere.

He would have been taken to see wrestling matches - consequently his description in Roots is fuller than other sources.

He would also have observed women dancing - but I don't feel he had much understanding of the art, or of the differences between one form and another.

The kankurang- a leaf clad masked figure - apparently welcomed him also, but this function for the kankurang is a relatively recent one, developed since tourism became important in The Gambia. In old traditional villages the appearance of the kankurang was a serious matter connected with functions of protection of initiates, and stimulating people to perform certain tasks such as well digging. In the eastern end of the country, it has not become the figure of entertainment that it is in the Kombo and Nyoomi districts - where it has become a means of gathering money from spectators.

HALEY'S OWN FIELD RESEARCH IN THE GAMBIA.

In the Playboy Interview (January 1977) p. 74.

"Most of what I'd read so far (on Africa) had been written by outsiders, predominantly white missionaries and anthropologists and even among the most knowledgeable and well-intentioned of them the tone was somewhat paternal and condescending. Their insights and observations were inevitably limited by the cultural chasm separating them from their subjects. [I feel that there was also a real cultural chasm separating Haley from the Mandinka of The Gambia.] So I began going back to Africa, maybe 15 or 20 trips. [It is not clear when these visits occurred. Maybe a search of the Haley Archives would throw some light on these visits.]. Setting out with my interpreters into the back country, I'd arrive in a village with a gift of kola nuts or something and ask to speak with the most honored elders. And I'd sit for hours with three or four of those old men, asking them about their boyhoods- and about whatever they could recall their fathers telling them about their boyhoods. I was digging not only for firsthand cultural history, but also for personal anecdotes that would illuminate the lifestyle and the character of these people, sensory impressions of taste, touch, smell and sight that would help me bring the story to life...."

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In the foreword to "From Freedom to Freedom: African Root in American Soil, edited by Mildred Bain and Ervin Lewis, 1977, he writes:

xiv "Across the next two years, I researched eighteenth-and nineteenth-century African culture, seeking out the most primary sources available in the middle of this twentieth century. Travelling at irregular intervals to The Gambia, I would make trips into various back country villages, usually with two interpreters. I did not seek out griots now, but merely the most senior elders. Through interpreters I asked these elders a great many questions, always trying to push further back in time, what did they remember their fathers having told them of the time when their fathers had been boys ?

How was honey taken from the beehive trees ? How were the various crops planted ? Harvested ? With what ceremony ? What were the day-to-day tasks of women ? How were girls trained for the roles of wives and mothers ? What about manhood training for boys ? How would one best describe the Council of the Elders ? And so on, across many hours, in different villages.

Leaving a village, generally I would next fly to London to pore through documents helpful to my search for the threads of African culture, such as The Travels of Mungo Park, and other adventurers' written accounts, including the extremely detailed personal diaries of Quaker and Wesleyan missionaries- keen observers who wrote candidly of what they saw in The Gambia....."

My thoughts on the above are:

Regarding the "extremely detailed diaries of Quaker and Wesleyan missionaries," I am not familiar with these, but have studied the numerous books and articles published by them. Fox's monumental work on the Methodist missionaries' work is based on the reports, letters, etc. received by the Methodist Missionary Society, as well as on his own experiences and travels. But in their published material missionaries have very little to say about daily life in up-river villages. In any case there were no missionaries in the Gambia until the 19th century, well after Kunta Kinte's time. In reading Roots, no material strikes me as coming from a missionary source.

Roots does not mention anything about the training of girls, and when Haley describes "manhood training" and "the council of elders" they bear little resemblance to the real situation.

### TRAINING FOR MANHOOD

Haley's account of 'manhood training' owes more to his imagination than to any account of what happens now, or might have happened in the past.

In the first place a jujuo where the boys stay does not consist of huts within an enclosure, but is normally a large shed, roofed over near the walls, which are of matting, or millet stalks etc., open in the center. The boys sleep around the sides, with heads towards the walls. At the end of the ceremonies the shed is completely destroyed so nothing is going to be left to be rebuilt or repaired.

The first thing to happen is the actual circumcision (unless a boy has been circumcised earlier, which is often the case nowadays). It is not towards the end of the training as Haley has it. There is no hood placed over a boy's head the night before. As he is taken out for circumcision in the early morning his head is covered in a shawl in the same way that a bride's head is covered. This is designed, not to terrify the boy, but to ward off the gaze of evil spirits, witches, anyone with the 'evil eye', etc. The kankurangs do not dance when the boys are going out. They reappear later when they have certain protective functions to perform.

A griot would accompany the boys, singing the type of songs used to encourage warriors going into battle. They would generally be younger griots. They would also extol the bravery of the boy during the operation, but griots do not visit the jujuo to perform there.

Each boy has an attendant, called a kintango, often a cross-cousin who has been through the ceremonies already. He remains with the initiate at all times, escorts him if he has to go out to urinate etc., helps instruct him in learning what he has to learn. The old man in charge of the jujuo is called a karamba.

While the wounds are healing the boys are instructed primarily by means of songs, which can have multiple meanings, a literal meaning, and a deeper symbolic meaning (i.e. a secret meaning). Thus a non-initiate can hear the words, but not be aware

of the deeper meaning. The songs often contain archaic words which are explained, and obscure symbolism which has to be understood.

The training essentially emphasises traditional Mandinka values, which the child has already learned- respect for elders, obedience to those older than oneself, cooperation with those of one's own age group. Elders should be kept informed of what is happening and their approval sought for any special activity. One should avoid deception, be generous to others, not be selfish. Don't throw away a good reputation, don't be excessively proud, learn to endure hardship when it comes, even when things seem prosperous, be prepared for hunger tomorrow. Little by little achieves much in the end, etc. etc. Instruction is given about behavior towards women, and about sex.

Part of the training is to provide individuals with material which they can use later to comment indirectly on inappropriate behavior by an age mate. On hearing the words of a song that fits the situation, sung quietly, the offender will know that his actions have been noticed and are drawing disapproval. This avoids direct face-to-face confrontation, and shaming the person before others. Various signs are taught to the initiates to enable them to communicate without outsiders knowing.

In reality most boys have already learnt how to hunt small animals, and make traps and snares etc. The hunting of larger animals is a skilled occupation and is learnt by apprenticeship to a master hunter, or passed on in his family. Similarly boys have already learned the essentials of wrestling before they are of an age to be initiated.

There are no visits by famous griots to perform epics...they are still an audience of children,<sup>1</sup> and epics are reserved for occasions like the installation of a chief, or for elders on a special occasion. Nor would a moro - an Islamic notable visit the boys. Their religious instruction had been done by their teachers in the village. Traditional ceremonies in fact contain a number of elements predating Islam, which staunch Muslims do not always approve of. Children of religious

teachers etc. would often be withdrawn soon after circumcision, and undergo separate training.

The initiates are not released at the gate/door of the circumcision shed, but brought back to town in a formal procession, before being returned to their families. In many places a visit to the Mosque is also obligatory.

And the initiates would certainly not hug the old man in charge, as Haley has them do.

I I am aware, however, of the fact that when Gordon Innes had Bamba Suso perform so that he could make a recording, an audience was provided by the "senior pupils at the school, together with some of their teachers, and a few men from nearby compounds who drifted over to hear Bamba." Mr. Sidibe was then headmaster of the school, and worked with Gordon Innes in translating the text.

Other recordings e.g. when Banna Kanute performed, he came to Innes' house accompanied by several members of his family.

A third recording by Dembo Kanute, was recorded by Seni Darbo. Seni Darbo had attended a naming ceremony for the daughter of Banna Kanute, Dembo's younger brother, and Dembo Kanute afterwards indicated that he would like to perform for Seni Darbo. Here the subject was chosen by the griot, not by a European, and directed to a man who belonged to the culture involved.

The description of the council of elders in Roots is something largely out of Haley's imagination, in which he has everything controlled by a council of elders-wise old men who make all the major decisions and whom everybody obeys, creating an ideal golden age.

In reality government within a village is a much more elaborate affair with a series of checks and balances.

In the first place when a village was founded the head of the founding family allocated land to those who settled with him, and those who joined him later; and once this was done, these people then had to right to decide how the land would be used, and who would use it. Only if a kin group died out or moved permanently would control revert again to the founding family under the satewo-tiyo. Wives would obtain rice farms on marriage, from their husbands; and continue to use this as long as the marriage lasted, and the land might pass to their daughters. So women could also obtain rights to land from their mothers. The principal that whoever cleared unclaimed land became the owner, operated both for men and women. So land matters were decided by the heads of compounds, or at the ward (kabiloo) level.

Marriage arrangements were also made at the compound and lineage level, not at the village level. If a point of Islamic law were at issue, then the Imam or a person learned in Islamic law might be asked to clarify the situation.

Villages normally had an alkalo (concerned with external affairs)- representing the district chief (or nowadays Government), collecting taxes, fees from traders, etc. dealing with outside officials; and the satewo-tiyo, dealing with internal affairs, land, domestic affairs, etc.

Decisions at the village level - usually organised by the alkalo - involved firstly "public works" - maintenance of the mosque, and the bantabaa (the village meeting place) generally under a shady tree ; wells ; the clearing of paths near the village after the rainy season and the repair of bridges. When a decision was made



then the task was allocated to the 'young men's age set' kafo. The kafo leaders set the days of work, organize the labor, and generally do this without any further instructions from the elders.

The alkalo and elders could also impose a tong , a prohibition on gathering certain wild fruits before a certain time, and make decisions regarding a time after which livestock could no longer wander about loose.

At present , if an outside agency (government department) wishes to discuss  
(i.e. its spokesperson)  
any matter with the villagers, it/speaks first to the alkalo , who calls the heads of the compounds, and either they or their representatives gather. Often the matter to be discussed will have been mentioned to the people concerned, and the people in each compound given time to form their opinion. At the meeting different viewpoints may be put forward, usually the younger men speaking first, then the elders conclude and sum up. Once a decision is reached, then all, including those who initially opposed a project, are expected to support the decision. Otherwise they would be regarded as 'troublemakers' and no longer respected. It was considered important to maintain unity within the village. If the people were about equally divided on an issue, then the matter was generally put aside and quietly dropped, rather than disturb village unity.

Nowadays many matters are decided informally at a gathering of the elders after the Friday afternoon service at the Mosque. The men are not engaged in farm work at this time, and most are present. Certain ceremonies are also conveniently performed at this time.

Haley has regular council meetings being held once a month, with people being called by name by the "talking drum", neither of which correspond to reality.

He brings together a great hodge-podge of cases:

allocation of rice plots; rights to fruit from a tree now on someone else's land; compensation for a lent article which had been damaged ; people accused of practicing evil magic; debtors ordered to pay up ; disputes between masters and slaves ; permission to marry; cases of adultery ; divorced couple wishing to re-marry; divorce where the husband is alleged to be impotent; approval for "friendship" with widows; what to do with a child by a tubaab father, and so on.

The domestic affairs would normally have been settled at the compound or kabilo (ward) level. In many cases the rules were well known, e.g. a husband could not remarry a wife whom he had divorced, unless she had been married again and been widowed or divorced, and at most a reminder was necessary.

At the present day criminal and civil cases are decided in the district chief's court, but this tends to occur mainly when the parties are from two different villages. If possible matters are decided within the village, and the main aim is to settle the affair, and make people realise where they had gone wrong, rather than to punish the party concerned. After all they were still connected by ties of kinship, marriage , or neighborhood....and had to continue living close to each other.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

- Page 1    #1    By writing 'Omoro and Binta Kinte', Haley implies that a wife takes her husband's surname, but on marriage a wife retains her own clan name. Marriage between two people with the same clan name is rare.
- #2    Location of Jufure. See DPG p. 9 .
- #3    "Couscous" - Term misunderstood. See DPG p. 61
- #4    "Omoro rushed among them...to tell of his firstborn son."  
              [I have never seen a young father behave this way.]
- Page 2    #5    The description of the hoe is not clear. Maybe confusion between the weeding hoe (jalo) - a short handled hoe with an iron blade, and the ridging hoe (darambo), which has a wooden blade at a sharp angle to the handle, the wooden blade being tipped with metal.
- #6    Groundnuts...Though a small amount of groundnuts were grown in the 18th century as a garden crop, they did not become a major farm crop until the 1840s.
- #7    Selection of a name. This would not require such a effort as Haley describes. A firstborn son would be named after a grandfather, or Mohamed if a Muslim.
- #8    Omoro goes round to invite people to the ceremony. Messengers are normally sent.
- #9    Silla - not a usual surname for a griot (jali).
- #10    Arafang - term misunderstood. See DPG p. 61
- #11    'drum talk news' - See DPG pp. 77- From Haley's imagination.
- #12    'beat his drums'. If he was a tantang-jalo with a sabaro, he would have only one drum.
- #13    In the naming ceremony words from the Koran would be recited into the child's ear by the Imam or a religious teacher, if present, making him a Muslim. The father would have told the person concerned the name of his son, and this would also be spoken into each ear.
- When the child was named, a griot would generally announce it to the crowd. The religious scholar would not be the one to recite a genealogy, this would be the task of the griot.
- But Haley misses out two important elements - the sacrifice of an animal, a sheep or goat, if the family was rich; a fowl, if poor, at the moment of naming, and the distribution of alms (charity), such as rice cakes, afterwards, enabling the community to participate in the event.

- Page 3 #14 Lifting the baby to the heavens. This was an impressive scene in the film, and a statue was later made in the USA commemorating it. Cards were sold depicting the event.

But I have never heard of such a rite among the Mandinka of The Gambia. A brief mention of lifting a child up towards the morning star is given in Marion Kilson "The Ga Naming Rite", Anthropos, 63/64, 1968/69, 909, describing a ceremony among the Ga of the then Gold Coast (now Ghana).

A similar rite is also described in Laurens Van der Post's The Heart of the Matter, 1961, describing the Bushmen of South Africa.

- #15 Haley seems confused about rice farming. Though rice seedlings might be planted early in seed beds, they would not be transplanted until heavy rains had fallen, and there was abundant water in the fields. After writing about planting, a few paragraphs later he describes weeding.

- Page 4 #16 I have never seen women paddling canoes. In Jufure the rice fields are just beside the village. If one paddled down a bolong it would bring one to saline water where rice could not be grown.

For a possible explanation as to why Haley might have gone astray see DPG P. 86

- #17 Fish that might fall into a canoe were the so called "flying fish," I can't see how large fish would have come into the canoe to be clubbed by a paddle.

- #18 Each woman's plot would be indicated by a low earthen wall which helped retain rain water, and on which weeds could be piled up.

Regarding the allocation of such land, when a woman married she was normally allocated land by her husband, which remained hers throughout the marriage, and could also be worked by her daughters.

- Page 5 #19 I have never heard of a husband taking an infant away from the mother into his own house. Small children were the concern of women- mothers, grandmothers, aunts- not of men.

- #20 Cowrie shells indicating the number of animals killed. I have never come across this.

- Page 6 #21 A mother would tend to nurse her child as long as possible. Weaning was a gradual process, and part of the socialisation of the child. There was a great deal of talking to the child, persuasion, cajoling, and the child was also encouraged to eat with other children. If verbal threats were made they were very rarely followed up, and physical violence, spanking, slapping was not part of the process. Often physical separation helped to complete the process- the child going to stay with a grandmother, or being separated for long periods when the mother was working in the rice swamps.

- Page 6 #22 Baobab leaf is the major flavoring for steamed millet, and nutritionally very important, high in calcium etc.
- #23 Women in traditional fertility costumes of leaves...going round every farmer's field three times...chanting prayers in the process. [I don't know where Haley got these ideas.]
- 7 #24 Planting techniques. Clearly Haley had never seen the process and became confused by the verbal descriptions.  
When making holes for the seeds of millet etc. a long shaft 6-7 ft. long, with a blade at the end is used to dig into the soil, which may be still fairly hard. It is given a twist and turns over the earth like a hinge. The sower following behind drops in the seed, and turns back the earth with the toe, and treads it down, as he/she steps forward to the next hole.  
  
If planting is done on freshly made ridges, then a strong stick (3-4 ft. long, with a rounded end) is used to punch the holes in the loose soil.
- #25 first kafo (age set) . My experience has been that small children are not regarded as belonging to any kafo, the group being formed maybe when the children have reached the age of 10-13.  
I am used to the kafos being called by the name of their original leader, not as first, second, third, etc.
- #26 Crocodile story. See DPG p. 109.
- 8 #27 "toasted beetles and grasshoppers as a noon meal." I seriously doubt this. In the evening children may sometimes collect swarming flying ants, which have been attracted by a light. When their wings dropped off, they would be parched over a fire. They taste rather like shrimp.
- 9 #28 Rain "turning village into a mudhole." Usually villages are built on higher ground so that the rain drains off.
- 10 #29 "Monkey apples." I don't recognise the term. Does he mean "monkey bread" an old term for baobab fruit? But these are large pods, very unlike apples.  
  
Green mangoes will definitely give children a bellyache.
- 10/11 #30 In the 18th century only a small proportion of the people were Muslim, so pigs could be eaten by many people.  
  
Eating rodents - highly improbable. But the "bush rat" which feeds on rice etc. is a very tasty animal. [I have eaten it in Sierra Leone].  
  
Roots and leaves were not something to be despised. They were quite important nutritionally.

- Page 11 #31 The collection of fish dropped by birds. Here the contribution to the food supply was negligible. Fish that were carried by birds to their offspring were generally small. It was fun for small children to collect and cook them, but they would not be used as a "feast for dinner" for adults.
- The adults, after all, if they had wanted fish, could easily have caught them in the creeks and the main river.
- 11 #32 I don't know what a 'grubworm' is. Can anyone enlighten me ?
- 13 #33 I don't think a five year old would be thinking of marriage and descendants.
- #34 Sending a boy to the well for water. Fetching water was normally a woman's task. A small boy would feel it was demeaning to be sent to do this task - that he was being treated like a small girl.
- However, boys could go to the well to water livestock.
- 14 #35 Kunta is more likely to be taken to his grandmother or an aunt, rather than his father's place.
- #36 I've never heard of powdered neto flour being made into 'bread'. I usually ate it mixed with milk, producing a custard-like dish.
- #37 'wild cashew nuts'. One can eat the fruits which have a pleasant sweet taste, but the nuts need processing before they can be eaten, as the pericarp contains a caustic substance. The cashew would have been a rare (maybe introduced) tree.
- 15 #38 Burial. The body would not be placed outside until the time for burial. It would be washed in the back yard, and then brought back into the house.
- "Women beating dust from the ground with wide fans of plaited grass..."
- "Cattle horns filled with ashes placed round the body..."
- [I have so far been unable to find any source from which Haley might have drawn this information. He uses the old spelling ciboa (for sibi, the rhun palm leaf) which was used in the 18th century. ]
- Taking Kunta and Lamin to the burial place. I have never known children being taken to the burial ground.
- 16 #39 mangkano should be manankaso, or mankanaso.
- I think Haley has confused the gathering of manankaso with the collection of tomborongo as described by Mungo Park ( see DPG p. 97 )
- Manankaso was ripe early on in the year (end of May/early June) before the main rains, and not after the rains had stopped as Haley indicates.

- 19 #40 Mentions a 'traveller's tree' outside each village.  
[I have never heard of this. Travellers now go to the main bantabaa (meeting place) in the center of a village.]
- 20 #41 Concept of a 'hospitality hut' with different families being chosen each day to offer food and shelter to visitors.  
[Again something I have never heard of. Normally the village head had the responsibility for looking after strangers, unless they already had kinsfolk in the village with whom they wanted to stay.]
- 21 #42 Time of harvesting indicated by the sound of the tabulo (Haley tobalo)  
[My experience is that there is no one time when the 'harvest' is ready. The ripeness of the crop, depending on its variety and the time when it was planted, determines the time. Findo comes first, then maize, then early millet (sunoo), then early rice, late millet, late rice, etc.  
  
The first rice is cause for a mild celebration. Women often parched and pounded this to make a tasty treat known as dempetengo. Sometimes they made this out in the rice area. ]  
  
In the case of fruit trees or wild products the village authority may impose a ban on gathering the produce until an approved time, the signal being given by the tabulo drum.
- #43 'souraba drums' - 'Souraba' was the name for a dance and a special rhythm, not the type of the drum.
- #44 'groundnut bushes'. Usually the spreading variety was planted. 'Plants' rather than bushes is a more appropriate term.
- #45 Men throwing hoes into the air [in celebration]. I have not seen this.  
  
[Women when using the long handled hoe, when changing from a right hand lead to a left hand lead, loosen their grip as they raise the hoe into the air, and catch it again on its downward movement.]
- #46 Women would hardly carry cooking pots (which are heavy) out to the farms. The food would surely have been transferred to the lighter calabashes.
- #47 Woman sewing son's garment. Weavers were men, and often sewed the strips together for garments. Mungo Park writes that 'any boy could sew'. The embroidery on Islamic robes was always sewn by men.  
  
Is Haley just transferring an American custom to the Mandinka ?
- 23 #48 The concept that 'the second kafo' is marked by being given clothing, a slingshot, beginning Koranic school, and herding goats - comes from Haley's imagination. There might be many months between the time when a child starts herding, and the time when Koranic school starts - often in the January/February period.
- 24 #49 Slatee. Term misunderstood. See DPG p. 61-62.
- #50 toubob money. No 'money' was in use at this time.

- 26      #51      Haley has the passing of examinations in the Koranic school as the criterion for advancement into the next kafo.  
[This is a Haley invention.]
- #52      Rice left on walkway. Maybe the photograph in Huxley (see p. 86 ) was what gave Haley this idea.
- #53      A "seven-day annual harvest festival".  
[This does not happen in The Gambia. Purely from Haley's imagination.]
- #54      Haley makes the weaver a woman. But in the Senegambian region the weavers were always men. Women spun the cotton thread, and dyed the manufactured cloths.
- 27      #55      Fish kept in well to eat insects [DPG has never seen this.]
- #56      Description of hair. Echoes Huxley (p 15 ). (DPG p.85)  
Sisal is a Mexican plant, does not occur in The Gambia.  
A variety of hemp was what was grown there.
- 28      #57      '...younger men..would go ambling about the village with their small fingers linked loosely in the age-old yayo manner of African men.'  
[I can't find yayo explained anywhere. It is not in English dictionaries, nor in dictionaries of Afro-American slang. Was it meant to be a Gambian word ? If so, what did it mean ?]
- #58      Masks made to be worn by festival dancers. Again something from Haley's imagination.
- 29      #59      Slaughter of goats. A man's task, not a woman's.
- #60      fudano = henna.
- #61      Dancing until one falls into a trance, or complete exhaustion.  
[This was not characteristic of the Mandinka.]
- 30      #62      Haley has the alimamo (Imam) dancing and wearing a mask.  
[This could never happen. Haley's statement is just ridiculous],
- #63      A parade of elders and people of importance. [Again something out of Haley's imagination.]
- 31      #64      Baskets of fruit of different kinds.  
[Never seen in Mandinka villages. Occurs only in modern hotels for tourists.]
- #65      Kola from Nigeria. Kola comes from Sierra Leone and Guinea to the Gambia. Would not have come from Nigeria.
- #66      'Traders came with salt bars' In the lower Gambia salt from the coastal region was brought in small baskets of rhun palm leaf. It did not take the form of cones or bars, which were characteristic of salt conveyed by camels to the Niger region.
- #67      Haley is mistaken in stating that Moslem Mandinka never smoked.



- #68 Musicians expert on the Koran. A misprint for kora ?
- 32 #69 Wrestling followed by dancing. Derived from Mungo Park, though Haley had undoubtedly been taken to see wrestling.
- 33 #70 Boys taken out for 'manhood training' by masked figures.  
[From Haley's imagination. Normally accompanied by family members and friends.]
- #71 Hood over boy's head. I have not heard of this.  
[A 'shawl' is put over the boy's head as he leaves the house, as is the case with brides...to protect him from the 'evil eye', evil spirits, 'a bad breeze' etc. but he can peep out.]
- 35 #72 "Handful of grass as a sign of peace." [I haven't heard of this.]
- 36 #73 Dream of killing buffalo and obtaining the title of simbon.  
[Based on Niane's narrative. See DPG p. 87 ]
- 43 #74 Owls. See notes on Niane, DPG p. 89 ]
- 44 #75 No one would cut a bearing oil palm for building purposes.
- #76 Distinction between thatching grass used for houses of freeborn and those of slaves [Nyantang foro and nyantang jongo]. A piece of Haley nonsense.
- 44-45 #77 Material on slaves derived from Mungo Park (See DPG p. 105 ),
- 45 #78 Material on Sogolon etc. from Niane (See DPG p. 88 ),
- 46 #79 Nyo Boto tells of attack on her village. But whites normally remained on their ships in the river; raids on villages were carried out by warriors from neighboring areas, and the slaves then taken to the river to be sold to whites.
- 51 #80 Haley has Kunta's uncles travel to (from his descriptions) the Sahara desert, the Congo rain forest (where they encountered the Pygmies) the Sudan (where they found the Nilotic peoples), and finally Zimbabwe in South Africa.  
[This is simply unbelievable.]
- 52 #81 The new village (founded by Janneh & Saloum). From the names I thought it might be near Kau-ur in Lower Saalum, where there was a village called Janekunda, but elsewhere Haley states that the village was that of Kintekunda Jaane-yaa, which is beside Saba in Lower Badibu.
- 56 #82 Travellers scraping dust from their first footprints and putting it in their bags so that they will return safely.  
[I've never come across the custom in this form. Usually a mother picks up 'a handful of sand on which her son had trodden' so that he would come back to her. In an instance given by Ebou Dibba Chaff on the Wind, p.15, the mother was seen and criticised "Put it back, faithless woman! Don't you believe in God ?" ]

- 56 #83 Ignoring people in village as they passed. It would have been very impolite to do this.
- 57, 59 #84 "Bread". Not baked in this era. Unless he had special little cakes of millet flour etc. made.
- 58 #85 Cactus. I've certainly never seen any cactus in The Gambia either in the Kau-ur or Lower Badibu area.  
[In fact the only cactus which I've come across, I know was imported from California in 1978 in a small pot. It was then planted out in a garden, and after a few years had grown enormously and become a sight to behold.]
- 60 #86 The 'strange toubob' was clearly an explorer, and it seems as though Haley had Mungo Park in mind, even though Park did not come until 1793. In any case he did not trek along the Gambia, having sailed up river, and completed the last section on horseback to reach Pisania. From Pisania he went inland along the Sandugu bolong valley. He was not interested in the course of the river Gambia, but aiming to reach the Niger.
- 61-2 #87 Mumbo Jumbo. From Park's Travels [See DPG p. 93]
- 63 #88 Place names. Ex Park.
- 64 #89 Kankurangs welcoming visitors. This was not a traditional activity, but arose in recent years in the western area for the benefit of tourists.
- 65 #90 Food set out on 'tables'. Haley is thinking of gatherings in the Southern States. No such tables were in use in The Gambia in this era.
- 67 #91 Map of Africa shown. I can't imagine one being made and shown in this era !
- #92 Olives are not usually regarded as a typical 'African crop'.
- 69 #93 The new village is said to have been composed of people of different tribes and languages. But Kintekunda is in the middle of a Mandinka zone, with at most some Fula herdsmen nearby.
- 71 #94 I don't see why the father would throw away a goat hide which could still be used for many purposes.
- 72 #95 The Arafang would not ask questions irrelevant to Koranic education, such as those related to a student's ancestry. The puzzles asked are of a type which children ask each other.
- #96 Haley has the ancestors as Moro, religious scholars, who came from Mali, where the ancestor had been blacksmiths. Kante, and not Kinte was the clan of many blacksmiths in Mali. Present day Kinte in The Gambia still talk of their origin in Tumbu-kutu i.e. Timbuktu, a place of learning in the middle ages, but the clan was one of scholars.

- 72 #97 Haley also makes the Kinte women weavers, but in Senegambia weavers were always men.
- 73 #98 Gifts to the teacher when one's education has been completed are mandatory [Presented by the parents of the pupil.] Graduating presents to students are an American trait, not Gambian.
- 74 #99 The old jujuo (shed) is always completely destroyed when the boys leave. Nothing would be left to "repair."
- #100 Kintango - term not understood . See DPG p. 61.
- 76 #101 Kankurangs do not usually dance when the boys are going to the jujuo. They have certain protective functions later.
- 78 #102 A jujuo does not consist of huts within an enclosure, but of a large enclosure, partially roofed, open in the center, and with sleeping places round the walls. The boys lie with their feet toward the center. An enclosure may have about 80 boys.
- #103 The account of training for manhood comes from Haley's imagination. See DPG pp. 121 for an outline of present day training.
- Haley's version is
- 78-79 long night marches + use of stars to guide them.
- 80-81 skills of hunting, stalking, making animal noises, bird calls, prayers and rituals; honey collecting.
- 83 boys taught secret signs, secret language.
- 84-85 battle training as warriors
- 86 training in wrestling
- 87 visits from experts-  
griots who relate history  
a moro (holy man) who reads from religious books.
- All of this before the boys had been circumcised (89-91) !
- 93 #104 Initiates would not be released to go home at the jujuo. They would be taken back in a formal procession, and were still under discipline until they were returned to their families.
- #106 Initiates would certainly not grab and hug the old man in charge.
- 94 #107 After coming back from the jujuo Kunta would no longer be sleeping in his mother's house, but he would not be given a house on the other side of the village. He would still live in the family compound and be expected to work on the family grain farms, and carry out duties as directed by his father. He would not be an independent farmer at aged 16/17. He would be eating with his father, and the idea of Binta carrying food for him across the village to his new house is unrealistic.

- 97 #108 The inspection of cooking pots by newly released initiates is new to me.
- 98 #109 "A fine bed of woven reeds over a springy bamboo mattress that his mother had spent half a moon making for him."  
[At present, mattress making (stuffed sacks) is a man's task, as is also the making of matting.]
- 103 #110 The account of his mother providing materials for his house and being jealous if anyone else is suspected of giving him anything strikes me as absurd.  
He has her 'weaving a prayer rug', but the prayer mats were normally made from sheepskin, preferably from an animal sacrificed at one of the Islamic festivals. It would therefore have been prepared by a leatherworker.
- 104 #111 Mention of a 'cured hyena skin'. I can't imagine anyone curing such a skin, or anyone wanting it.
- 105 #112 Feloop. This was the old name for the Jola, not a branch of the Mandinka as Haley seems to think. Maybe he picked up the term from Mungo Park's account.
- 112 #113 Burial of griot in hollow baobab trees. This was a Wolof/Serer custom.
- 112 #114 The search for gold is based on Mungo Park.
- 113 #115 The search for ivory is based on Mungo Park (459)
- 114-119 #116 The Council of Elders. The description of a Council which met once a month, people being called by drumtalk, is largely a product of Haley's imagination.  
For full comments see DPG p. 124.
- 115 #117 'bourein shrub' - clearly taken from Niane's book.
- 122 #118 Blood taken from cows' necks and mixed with milk.  
This was characteristic of East African peoples such as the Masai.  
I have not seen it among the Fulbe of Senegambia.
- 122 #119 "Crossing the eastern border of the Gambia and entering the kingdom of Fulladu." It is difficult to figure out when the term Gambia began to be used for a region rather than a river, as in River Gambia. but the area later known as Fulladu would still have been part of it. 'Fuladu' as a designated area only came into use at the end of the 19th century or early 20th century, the country now called by that term being known earlier as Eropina, Jimara, and Tumaní - three distinct states.

CONCLUSIONS

Why did the book die ? Judging from the Gambian section only, it was simply poorly written, and contained too many errors. Perhaps Haley was trying to do too much.

In the first place he ignored history and tried to create "an Africa that never was". The slave trade was supported largely by internal wars, most of those sold to Europeans from the Gambia were prisoners of war from the interior, but often warriors would turn to slave raiding when they were not at war. A favorite theme of glass painters in Dakar is of a warrior on horseback lassoing fleeing victims. In addition to slaves being taken to the Americas, further inland there were overland routes by which slaves were taken to North Africa. Nothing of this is shown in Roots.

In his effort to counteract the effect of Tarzan novels, where a 'noble white' survives, while Africans are depicted as superstitious and savage, in Roots we have the opposite, a noble black who survives, while the whites are heathen savages.

Haley wants to present a picture of family life centering around his ancestor Kunta, but he has little understanding of daily life in a Mandinka village, and many of his descriptions are erroneous.

Seemingly many drafts and re-writings, perhaps with the help of others, did not improve matters. Inconsistencies were not detected, and there seems to have been no effort to check the accuracy of the material and eliminate errors. The result is a hodgepodge which leaves neither Americans nor Gambians satisfied.

What do I believe ? With the name Kinte and the words Kambi Bolongo, I have no difficulty in believing that Alex Haley's ancestor came from The Gambia. The Jufure area is the most likely place, though a case might also be made for Kintekunda Jane-ya.

When I see photographs of Binta Kinte and Alex Haley side by side, as in the magazine GEO article, or of Binta Kinte and his brother George, I have no difficulty in accepting them as remote cousins. [The relationship might easily be settled if the Kinte Foundation were to sponsor a DNA comparison of the Kintes and the Haleys.]

I find it difficult to believe, however, that people actually remembered the name of an 18th century sixteen year old who disappeared, and think that this name was concocted to link Haley to his kin. But Kunta has now become part of local lore, and so is widely accepted.

The people of Jufure were eager to accept a long-lost 'relative'. It was Alex Haley himself who seemed to remain remote from the villagers. We never hear of him learning Mandinka, so as to be able to communicate directly with his kin. He did not build himself a little house where he could stay when he came on visits. As many of his promises failed to materialise - what happened to the mosque that was supposed to be built, for example,<sup>1</sup> so disillusion grew in the minds of the villagers.

Jufure was declared a "national monument", and things began to be organized by the Department of Tourism. A box was arranged into which visitors could put contributions to be used for the benefit of the village. But how was the money accounted for ? who had the keys to the box ? A rift occurred between the leading males of the village who had "the box", and Binta Kinte, who complained that after all people came to Jufure to see and talk to her, as Alex Haley's nearest African relative, and no one provided her with a "box". She always made it clear that she would accept gifts from visitors, if they wanted to talk to her, or take photographs of her, etc.

1 A Mosque was eventually paid for by the Nation of Islam, and dedicated at the Fourth Annual Roots Festival in June 1999.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Judging from Nobile's article, members of the Manga family were reluctant to talk freely about Alex Haley's activities, and the roles played by various members of the family, feeling that as he was dead, one should simply let bygones be bygones. What he did was his affair, and he can no longer speak for himself.

On the other hand I feel that as he is no longer with us, I am doing him no personal harm by criticising his work. Should we, however, continue to let people believe that what he said was "the truth", when the source of much of his writing was his imagination. ~~Something~~ something which had some sort of a factual basis ended up by being turned into a 'good tale' by being altered or twisted around, so that one ended up with, at best, "fiction", at worst "deliberate deception." The creation of the idea of "symbolic truth" to cover inaccuracy tosses in another factor.

So, maybe in the next world, we have two delightful old rascals, Keba Fofana and Alex Haley, regaling each other with tall tales. But Would Mungo Park turn up with his lawyer - asking for a share of the royalties ?

At any rate many Ph.D. dissertations can clearly be written from a study of the Haley archives, shedding light on some of the questions I have raised.

And, I suppose, one should ask "What has been the effect of all this on the people of Jufure themselves ? What has been the relationship between the Department of Tourism and the villagers ? Two more Ph.D. dissertations ?

## EPILOGUE

In Banning Eyre's book In Griot Time: An American Guitarist in Mali, Temple University Press, 2000, p. 62, he relates :

"Djelimady also told Dirck and me a poignant story about meeting Louis Armstrong in Bamako during his last African tour, shortly before his death in 1971. "He had a name," said Djelimady, "a name passed down through his family. And we walked through Bamako neighborhoods until we found the family with that name. Oh, my God, Louis Armstrong ! He cried when he met this family. It was unbelievable."

Literally so. To begin with, the name Djelimady recalled was Kunta Kinte, the slave name from Alex Haley's novel, Roots . In addition, Armstrong's last African tour took place in the early 1960s, and its itinerary did not include Bamako. Griot history.

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One of the disquieting features is that people who ought to know better accept Haley's descriptions of Mandinka life as true and accurate. C.O. Nwanubobi, a Nigerian teaching in Toronto, in his recent book on the Malinke (1966) has a section (p.45) on The Kaliyoo Child-Naming Ceremony. The normal word in Gambian Mandinka is kulliyoo (from kung- head and li- to shave). But the text has clearly been derived from Alex Haley's Roots (pp. 2-3). In 20 lines of text 17 significant words and phrases are identical. Yet Nwanubobi does not give any source for his material, nor even mention Roots in his bibliography.

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