

Ordinary Violence and Social Change in Africa

Afrika-Studiecentrum Series

Editorial Board

Dr Piet Konings (*African Studies Centre, Leiden*)

Dr Paul Mathieu (*FAO-SDAA, Rome*)

Prof. Deborah Posel (*University of Cape Town*)

Prof. Nicolas van de Walle (*Cornell University, USA*)

Dr Ruth Watson (*Clare College, Cambridge*)

VOLUME 31

The titles published in this series are listed at brill.com/asc

Ordinary Violence and Social Change in Africa

Edited by

Jacky Bouju
Mirjam de Bruijn



BRILL

LEIDEN | BOSTON

Cover illustration: Photo-montage of Jacky Bouju's photographs: girl in a courtyard (Ségou 2009) enshrouded by a mask of witchcraft (Bouar 2011) suggesting ordinary violence.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Ordinary violence and social change in Africa / [edited] by Jacky Bouju, Mirjam de Bruijn.

pages cm. -- (Afrika-Studiecentrum series ; v. 31)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-27155-5 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Violence--Africa. 2. Women--Abuse of--Africa.

3. Child abuse--Africa. 4. Family violence--Africa. 5. Marginality, Social--Africa. 6. Social change--Africa.

7. Africa--Social conditions--21st century. I. Bouju, Jacky, editor of compilation, author. II. Bruijn,

Mirjam de, 1962- editor of compilation, author. III. Series: Afrika-Studiecentrum series ; v. 31.

HN780.Z9.V6O73 2014

303.60967--dc23

2014009252

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual "Brill" typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities.

For more information, please see www.brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 1570-9310

ISBN 978-90-04-27155-5 (paperback)

ISBN 978-90-04-27256-9 (e-book)

Copyright 2014 by Koninklijke Brill nv, Leiden, The Netherlands.

Koninklijke Brill nv incorporates the imprints Brill, Brill Nijhoff, Global Oriental and Hotei Publishing.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Koninklijke Brill nv provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910, Danvers, MA 01923, USA.

Fees are subject to change.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Contents

Acknowledgments VII

List of Contributors VIII

Introduction: Ordinary Violence in Africa 1

Jacky Bouju and Mirjam de Bruijn

Changing Life Worlds and Contested Space

Seclusion Practices among the Iraqw of Northern Tanzania 12

Jonathan Baker and Hege Wallevik

A Chain of Family and Domestic Violence

Extramarital Pregnancy and Social Rupture in Burkina Faso 27

Fatoumata Ouattara and Katerini Storeng

Social Violence and Gender Inequality

Mali's Young Bambara Domestic Workers 42

Jacky Bouju

The Itinerant Koranic School

Contested Practice in the History of Religion and Society in Central Chad 63

Mirjam de Bruijn

Surviving Structural Violence in Zimbabwe

The Case Study of a Family Coping with Violence 84

Otrude N. Moyo

The Cyclical Exchange of Violence in Congolese Kinship Relations 101

Sylvie Ayimpam

Kill the Witch!

Anti-witchcraft Violence in the Central African Republic 117

Aleksandra Cimpric

Ordinary Violence towards Street Children (*Shegue*)

in Lubumbashi (D.R.C.) 130

Olivier Kahola Tabu

The Literary Threads of Domestic Violence in Mali	143
<i>Sébastien Le Potvin</i>	
Bibliography	165
Index	175

Acknowledgments

We wish to express our thanks to the authors who entrusted their work to this volume. The book had its origin in a research program with CEMAF UMR 8171 CNRS-AMU in Aix-en-Provence “Conflits & violences structurelles ordinaires, Approche comparative et interdisciplinaire dans huit villes africaines”. The book was certainly inspired by research done in the CDP (Consortium for Development Partnership) coordinated by CODESRIA and the African Studies Center (ASC) of Leiden, in the sub project: ‘Local contexts of conflicts and peace building’ that run from 2007–2010. This collaboration was an opportunity for some scholars to present initial drafts of their paper in the French *Bulletin de l'APAD* (n°27–28, 2007) entitled “Violences sociales & exclusions. Le développement de l'Afrique en question” and to engage in intensive discussion, the substance of which found its way into this book after being translated.

The French Agency for National Research (ANR-06-CONF-004-VIOLAFRIQUE), the African Studies Centre, Leiden and the CEMAF in Aix-en-Provence provided financial and personnel support for the final preparation of the manuscript.

Jacky Bouju
Mirjam de Bruijn

List of Contributors

Sylvie Ayimpam

is Postdoctoral Researcher at the Institute of African Studies (IMAF) in Aix-Marseille University (France). She works on two main topics in African urban settings: first on social violence and uncertainty and second on informality and social regulation.

Jonathan Baker

is Professor of Development Studies at the University of Agder in Norway. His major research interests concern the role of small towns in rural development and the importance of rural–urban linkages in socioeconomic transformation.

Jacky Bouju

is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Aix-Marseille University (France), and senior researcher at the Institute of African Studies (IMAF). His present research in Central African Republic is twofold, the first one concentrates on the relation between violence, uncertainty and witchcraft and the second one concentrates on social regulation and practical norms of action.

Aleksandra Cimprič

is a free-lance Anthropologist engaged in humanitarian and aid programs in Central Africa. She has been working for years in Central African Republic and she is now working in the Kivu region of Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mirjam de Bruijn

is Professor of Contemporary History and Anthropology of Africa at the Faculty of Arts, Leiden University and senior researcher at the African Studies Center, Leiden, The Netherlands. Her current research programme: *Connecting in Times of Duress, Understanding Communication and Conflict in Middle Africa's Mobile Margins*, seeks to understand the dynamics in the relationship between social media, mobile telephony and the social fabric under duress in Africa's mobile margins and combines studies on mobility/migration, conflict and communication.

Olivier Kahola Tabu

is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Lubumbashi University and Research Fellow at the Observatoire du Changement Urbain. His actual field of research

is centered on family and solidarity practices in a precarious economic context.

Sébastien Le Potvin

After conducting historical researches on the issues concerning Malian writers and Malian written literature, Sébastien Le Potvin is today a writer. His last publication is *Lettres Maliennes. Figures et configuration de l'activité littéraire au Mali*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

Otrude N. Moyo

is Associate Professor at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire at the Department of Social Work. She has published several articles addressing social development issues in southern Africa. Her *present* research interest is in social welfare and multiculturalism, understanding quality of life and inequality issues. She particularly focuses on the experience of African immigrants in the United States and United Kingdom.

Fatoumata Ouattara-Traoré

is Research Fellow Anthropologist at the Research Institute for Development (IRD) in Marseille. Since the past ten years, her research has been focused on issues concerning reproductive health and social experiences of women infected with HIV in Burkina Faso.

Katerini Storeng

is a Medical Anthropologist and Researcher at the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Oslo. Her current research focuses on global civil society organizations' role within global health governance. The focus is on their strategies for generating political commitment to equity and the social determinants of health. She also remains involved with a number of international research projects on maternal health in Low-income countries, including Burkina Faso.

Hege Wallevik

successfully defended her PhD dissertation in 2013 entitled *The Complexity of Generalisation: a Phenomenological Approach to Economic Affairs among Women in Zanzibar Town*. Earlier she worked as a consultant and published various articles and reports on gender, poverty and development in Zanzibar and on civil society in Tanzania. She is now a lecturer at the University of Agder in Norway.

Introduction

Ordinary Violence in Africa

Jacky Bouju and Mirjam de Bruijn

Introduction

Violence in Africa has been the focus of many books in recent years but few have specifically addressed the issue of ordinary social violence. Interest in the study of ordinary violence only began in the 1990s, mainly at the instigation of NGOs and militant writers as prior to this the social sciences had hardly shown any interest in the phenomenon. Consequently, little is known today about ordinary social violence that structures social relationships.¹ The reasons for this past neglect of the subject appear to be twofold. Firstly, aggression between people who are closely related is never easy to document and analyse, and this may have led social scientists to focus on less controversial and sometimes more exotic or striking forms of African violence. Secondly, discussions on this topic were mostly held in NGO circles and among activists' groups, which contributed to the conceptualization of Africans as victims. This tendency was strengthened by reports more interested in picturing either the extraordinary savage violence of ethnic wars or the daily harassment of citizens by men in uniform and, only to a lesser extent, by the 'ordinary violence of ordinary people in ordinary situations' (Janin & Marie 2003). It should be clear that ordinary violence – i.e. recurrent mental or physical aggression occurring between closely related people – occurs everywhere in the world and is by no means specific to Africa. Nevertheless, ordinary violence in Africa, as any other social phenomenon, has its distinctive forms and these are embedded in specific histories and cultures. An anthropological approach is especially relevant when studying differences that are loaded with social and cultural meaning. The authors of the contributions in this volume are all social anthropologists

1 French anthropology's interest in ordinary violence in Africa is quite recent. A special issue of *Cahiers de l'UCAC* (No. 3) was dedicated to it in 1998 and a special issue of *Politique Africaine* was devoted to the 'ordinary violence of ordinary people in ordinary situations' in 2003 (Janin & Marie 2003, No. 91). And there were also two issues of *Bulletin de l'APAD*: no. 25 'La violence endémique en Afrique' (Abéga [ed.] 2003) and no. 27–28 'Violence sociale et exclusion. Le développement social de l'Afrique en questions' (Bouju & de Bruijn [eds] 2007) on the topic. Some of these studies provided the first descriptions of situations of ordinary violence that are now being analysed in more detail in this volume.

who have a great deal of fieldwork experience in Africa and have witnessed and studied situations of ordinary violence.

A Specific Global Context: Anomie and Normative Pluralism

A quick look at the historical context of the study of violence will corroborate the fact that qualifying violence is also a political issue. To begin with, it is important to remember that all the countries concerned here have suffered long histories of political oppression that have been characterized by violent changes caused first by colonialism and later by the instability of post-colonial regimes, economic poverty and political uncertainty. The current process of globalization is resulting in serious levels of unemployment and a widening gap between the (exorbitantly) rich and the poor, and this is disrupting processes of social redistribution. It is leading to a gradual disintegration of the socio-cultural institutions that once structured individual behaviour and gave meaning to collective action. This international economic crisis has severely affected kinship solidarity and permanently weakened family ties. The increased social exclusion of the poorest ceaselessly feeds the fires of social tension and conflict. Today the structural violence thus created has become pivotal. The case studies presented in this volume describe ordinary violence related to the eroding of basic social relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, kin and in-laws, and neighbours. Daily insults, recurrent acts of defiance and offence, brutal coercion, insidious threats and the repeated overstepping of socially acceptable boundaries are the most common expressions of this violence. Some of these are no doubt a result of eroding social norms, while others are a result of the lack of functioning of socio-economic institutions due to long-term underinvestment and a lack of development. Another main source of violence relates to spiritual insecurity, which is being expressed in showy funeral rituals, conspicuous displays of religious faith and/or the public lynching of suspected sorcerers (Bruno & Bouju 2012).

Yet, what would appear to be specific to the post-colonial African context is a situation of normative pluralism where reinvented traditional customs are competing on equal terms with modern legal principles. A kind of anomie² characterizes the social order: there is a general ineffectiveness of (official) law that does not protect people simply because they do not know of

2 Anomie characterises a situation in which the Law has lost all or most of its legitimacy, its eminence and its ability to regulate violence.

its existence. People generally pay little attention to state laws and legal principles of action, and social interaction is mainly regulated by neo-customary norms where social hierarchies based on wealth, seniority or gender define inequalities. As a result, local rule tends to be the unpredictable fallout of patronage domination and the poorest people often only survive as subjects bound to powerful protectors.³ In most cases, the competition is between judicial, traditional and religious authorities' rules, and in each of these 'systems' there is a claim to the signification of violence and 'normality'. This results in a situation of legal uncertainty for ordinary people who are no longer sure of the legitimacy of their rights and do not know who to turn to if they have been violated. They cannot even begin to predict what will happen if they do not meet their social obligations. Ordinary violence also has its roots in the plurality of the prevailing moral standards and is continuously fed by the failure of the authorities to regulate violence. Such a pervasive situation of normative pluralism generates uncertainty about legitimacy and the efficiency of coercion recourse.

This volume offers our interpretation of the situation in various social environments in Africa. The individual chapters present the multifaceted expressions of ordinary violence and their connections with on-going processes of social change in eight African countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.⁴ We realize that we have deviated here from mainstream opinion regarding progress and optimism about Africa, but the other side of the global downturn and the economic repercussions should, we feel, also be reported as they are part of the same discourse. This volume aims to fill a lacuna in current discussions about Africa's future.

Categorization and Ethics

Ordinary violence is violence experienced by ordinary people in their ordinary everyday lives. One sees violence, one is violent or lives with violence, one is subjected to it and suffers from it, one qualifies it or judges it. Indeed,

3 Power rests with patronage, local arrangements and corruption. And the law of the wealthiest usually prevails.

4 Several of the authors (Ayimpam, Bouju, Cimpric, Ouattara) were involved in a field research programme between 2006 and 2010 entitled 'Conflits et violences structurelles ordinaires. Approche comparative et interdisciplinaire dans huit villes africaines. "violafrique" ANR-06-CONF-004' that was funded by the French National Agency for Research.

everybody has direct or indirect experience of it and is able to recognize it through the diversity of its expressions. We had assumed that everybody knew what ordinary violence entailed even if they had not necessarily experienced it themselves but this appeared not to be the case in our discussions with people we thought might have been subjected to such violence. Interpretations of what ordinary violence is vary widely and are a matter of heated discussion. How ordinary violence is perceived depends on a person's beliefs and ideology and on the mainstream ideology of the local culture. Acknowledging a social situation as being one of ordinary violence from another cultural point of view thus raises thorny ethical questions. For example, besides the researcher, an external observer, who sees this as violence? In what ways is it ordinary? This undoubtedly prompts another question: is it possible to have an objective transcultural point of view that allows a comparative approach to ordinary violence? Ordinary violence initially appears to be less a social fact than a personal experience of a polysemous and polymorphous reality. And, as the case studies show, people use diverse heterogeneous notions to distinguish between what they consider to be specific fields of personal experience. Ordinary violence is thus less a descriptive concept than a notion reporting to a range of experiences that one may have as victim, perpetrator, witness or judge. Ordinary violence was not a topic therefore that easily offers itself to fieldwork investigation: it raised problems regarding categorization as well as ethical issues. We, the editors of this volume, had to confront two important epistemological issues. The first concerned the categorization of someone's personal subjective and intimate experience about what constitutes violence (Claverie, Jamin & Lenclud 1984; Naepels 2006), while the second point involved the ethical issues raised by fieldwork investigations on this topic.

Saying that behaviour is 'violent' or that a person is a 'victim' is naturally a categorization made by the observer, but it can sometimes also be a local categorization.⁵ Quite often though, our categorization of violence (with its heavily loaded ethical dimension) did not match the local customary classification. For example, several contributions in this volume report the collective accusations of individuals who were held responsible for the failure and misfortunes of their whole community. This was the case among young single mothers in Mali (Bouju), in Burkina Faso (Ouattara & Storeng) and in Tanzania (Baker & Wallevik), of street children in Congo (Kahola Tabu), of poor, older people in Congo (Ayimpam), of unemployed sons in Zimbabwe (Moyo) and of despised orphans in Central African Republic (Cimpric). On the other hand, there were

5 This kind of social qualification of violence could possibly lead to a legal classification of facts.

the Koranic students in Chad who have to carry the burden of society by acting as though they are 'divine' for their community (de Bruijn) and, because of local beliefs concerning their status, individuals belonging to these social categories were more vulnerable to ordinary violence than others, especially if they lacked the resources necessary to defend themselves and cope with the situation.⁶ Theirs was the role of scapegoat and led to situations of social coercion. Of course, they suffered violence in our opinion but, in categorizing their situation as one of violence, we had to be conscious of being subjective and ethnocentric. However human suffering is not a narrative. Beyond our subjectivity and our ethnocentrism were the very real beatings, cries, pain and suffering that hit our conscience, generating mixed feelings of horror, anger and pity that could sometimes be shared with other witnesses to the valence. This was the reality that the observer perceived and explicitly categorized as violence according to his/her ethical judgement and the assessment that could be made about the moral legitimacy of the actions. More often than not, our interpretation of violence did not match with local mainstream interpretation and this led to strong denials locally that there was any violence at all. But on other occasions, the meaning of violence, its intensity and its recurrence were a matter of debate among people. Eventually, it was only this social process of debating and commenting that would allow a (precarious) categorization of violence.

Finding a solution to the ethical problems in our ethnographic practice related to violence and suffering and how we behaved in the face of victims' unbearable pain were issues that had to be dealt with. How could we offer compassion to people who were suffering and at the same time observe and describe violence and its consequences? It was not easy. The fact that ordinary violence generally takes place in interpersonal conflicts that occur in private or in intimate settings was another challenge as such violence is difficult, if not impossible, to investigate. Indeed, the foreign anthropologist might hear about violence through neighbourhood gossip or in conversations that only long-term familiarity with the local milieu can provide access to. Finally, these conversations gave way to the narratives of violence by victims and witnesses that are reported here. Perpetrators were also interviewed but their narratives were usually short, evasive and filled with good intentions while the victims' words explicitly expressed, and at greater length, that they had been affected, touched and harmed by a series of intentional actions that were meant to subdue them

6 It is not primarily one's social status that matters here but one's capacity for resilience. If a person has no resilience, they face a greater risk than others of being exposed to ordinary violence.

against their will. They said (and sometimes it could also be seen) that they had suffered physical injuries or were experiencing psychological distress, showing signs of fear, anxiety, anguish or despair.⁷ Most of the narratives revealed repeated victimization, continued mental harassment and recurring verbal or physical aggression. Sometimes it emerged that these situations of moral or mental violence were known in the neighbourhood but nobody considered them seriously until they became visible following physical injury. Sometimes, the perpetrator explained his/her own use of physical violence as a desperate way of putting an end to a long-lasting period of mental violence. Most of the time, we arrived long after the violence had taken place and we then tried to reconstruct the sequence of events. However a few times, some of us met the victims shortly after the event 'when the blood was not dry yet'. In these cases, all of us chose to empathize with the victims and witnesses. It is impossible to maintain the ethnographical distance that cultural relativism requires. And if, for ethical reasons, a rigorous observation was sometimes impossible to establish in the course of one meeting, we were able to do so in subsequent interviews. Indeed it is only anthropologists' familiarity with their fields of research that allowed them to meet the ethical conditions of access to the testimonies and narratives on ordinary violence that are reported here.⁸ We always did our best to follow the ethical guidelines of decency that allow a description and analysis of violent individual experiences without showing obscenity (Fassin 2004; Gialleri 2004; Naepels 2006).

African Expressions of Ordinary Violence

Although ordinary violence expresses itself in an undefined number of social situations, most can be placed in two broad categories. The first is associated with 'structural violence', i.e. the social and political process of maintaining social order, of containing the violence of others and sanctioning the transgression of rules. This 'violence of rule', that we will henceforth call coercion, is the privilege of people in dominant positions of status or authority (the

7 Such feelings are feared because they can destroy personal judgment, autonomy and the individual's capacity for decision-making.

8 Sébastien Le Potvin's contribution is the only one not to be grounded on fieldwork ethnography. But his review of the ways in which ordinary violence was depicted in some classic books in Malian literature is an indicator that the literature offered one of the few possibilities for breaking the silence that the rule of honour imposed on the public divulging of violence perpetrated against women.

wealthy, elders, men in uniform, etc.). The second category concerns the 'violence of rules' transgression' (Lenclud 1994: 12), which is locally classified as violence that disrespects accepted authority and threatens the social order. Ordinary violence often takes the form of an interpersonal confrontation between the violence of an authority adhering to the respect of norms (in this case one considers the rules of the social game as violent) and the violence of a subordinate transgressing social norms (in this case, the transgression of rules is considered violent). Ordinary violence has also something to do with status and the inequality of human rights. This is why ordinary violence can be characterized as 'silent violence'. In Africa, ordinary violence is silent because it is not 'loud' (i.e. not 'public'). It is private and takes place in intimate settings between individuals in face-to-face social interactions that are often undermined by poverty, jealousy, exploitation or injustice. Vulnerable persons (such as widows, unmarried mothers, childless women, unemployed young men/husbands, dishonoured family heads) may be subordinated and even subjugated by powerful persons of authority. However several contributions in this volume (Ayimpam, de Bruijn, Ouattara & Storeng) clearly show that it is individual resilience that matters. Actually, vulnerability to ordinary violence would seem to depend on the unpredictable combination of a structurally weak social and economic status together with certain external circumstances (Cimpric). To change something in what they consider to be an alienating relationship, they try to distance themselves from the conventional values and conservative meanings of norms. But as they lack the appropriate resources to cope with their situation, they often engage in a transgression of the norms.

Ordinary violence is frequently silent because it hinges on jealousy, envy, lies, cheating and fraud. Attempts to emancipate and achieve individual autonomy are usually understood by the dominant status of authority, as an offense that challenges one's privileges. Indeed, systematic failure to meet one's partner's legitimate expectations is a form of violence. But such transgressions are felt as injurious crimes of *lèse-majesté* offending their honour, and their violence will take the form of contempt, scorn, disrespect, suspicion, curses and insults. Frequently it will adopt a covert threat and use open coercion or retaliation. Traditionally, physical brutality was considered a legitimate attribute of any status of authority. Brutality generates fear and the threat of a beating may well be sufficient to obtain the subordinate's subjection. In these conditions, nobody argues against the legitimacy of resorting to coercion to call a subordinate back to the norms. But, when disagreement, failure and misunderstanding are felt so deeply and overwhelmingly that even the minimum of peaceful social exchange cannot be maintained, then the limits of unacceptable moral or mental violence have been reached. In this case, threats

alone do not suffice and protagonists adopt a 'loud' form of violence comprising of beatings, repudiation and banishment. As the street children in Kahola Tabu's contribution show, this moment in the process of ordinary violence aims to make a person suffer until suffering annihilates their will and capacity to resist.⁹ Such situations of ordinary violence are widespread and are also often socially accepted. They are part of the daily lives of ordinary people who are not appalled, shocked or scandalized when it breaks out, although heated debate may be sparked regarding its more controversial aspects.

These debates arise because the transgressions of norms do not automatically lead to social conflict, coercion or violence. We observed everywhere that local rules usually accepted some regulated deviation from the norm. This point is well illustrated by what appears as a paradoxical aspect of modernity, namely that social change allows the empowerment of a person whatever their initial social status or gender is. Some of the most striking evidence of this is the possibility of social independence for wives, women, girls or even children provided by (il)legal economic activities (Ayimpam, Ouattara & Storeng). This change has had an overwhelming impact on gender relations and is at the heart of conflicts encountered in the course of anyone's identity-building process. Indeed, everyone in Africa today is engaged in negotiating reciprocal expectations and social obligations. For instance, the (frequent) cases of successful businesswomen whose husbands are unemployed have led to implicit new arrangements regarding couples' mutual expectations. In the meanwhile, men's status discrepancies arising from their lasting inability to meet their family obligations undermine their long-term authority (Moyo). This means that ordinary violence and its acceptability depend on local consent concerning accepted norms and that it does not occur as a simple accident in the social game. Violence appears when 'it is too much', when accepted practical norms have been drastically trespassed or when limits of acceptance of the intolerable have been infringed. Categorizing a commonplace action as violence is thus an assessment that one has gone beyond what everyone considers 'normal', 'moral', 'just' or 'legitimate'. Important moral issues are thus at stake: what sort of violence will be socially condemned? Is traditional violence that banishes single mothers always a legitimate means of retaliation? Can the infanticide that is performed by young women after being raped by their employers be seen as legitimate? Can the violence of street children against city dwellers be understood as a kind of retaliation against citizens turning a blind eye to their daily suffering? In most of the case studies, the social classification

9 Physical violence is made possible by a process common to any kind of violence: the setting up of symbolic violence to deny the person's integrity, and therefore their humanity.

of violence appears to be the result of a disputed debate about what is to be considered as intolerable and therefore subject, or not, to law or customary enforcement. However, the plurality of competing norms hampers public recognition everywhere. Indeed, most of the violent situations depicted in this volume show interpersonal relations that are undermined by conflicts of legitimacy. A major issue in ordinary violence lies in the possibility of maintaining or changing the content of role obligations and expectations that characterizes close relationships. These possibilities are related to changes in the norms and values that organize unequal relationships in societies that are undergoing accelerated mutations.

Revenge and Retaliation: A Typical Feature of Ordinary Violence

As we have already seen, it is the inequality of power that is deeply rooted in social relationships that allows ordinary violence to occur. The long history of any kinship relationship generates opportunities for violence. Indeed, the collection of life history narratives revealed meaningful past events that shed light on the reasons for outbreaks of violence. But, more significantly, it showed that the 'triangle of violence', the pioneering viewpoint of violence developed by Riches (1986), was only an isolated stage, or a static moment, in a series of reciprocal blows in the long course of an enduring social relationship. In a conflict narrative, each party presents itself as a victim of the other's jealousy, envy, disrespect, grievance and contempt. Several cases presented here show violent exchanges lasting years with the switching of positions and places between aggressors, victims and witnesses in the triangle of violence. Indeed, witnesses may have been directly or indirectly involved in a past sequence of conflict and, according to their involvement, they could have been themselves aggressors or victims, or both in turn. When it is rooted in social relationships assigned by birth, kinship, neighbourhood or monetary or customary land access to resources, ordinary violence follows the life-long reciprocal exchange of revenge and retaliation between people. Revenge has been revealed as an important feature of ordinary social violence. In these kinds of alienating relationships that one cannot escape, time offers opportunities for retaliation that may stop misdeeds and wrongs that are felt as painful violations of one's personal rights, honour or property. Sometimes, the reciprocity of violence is so old that nobody knows anymore who the original aggressor or victim was. A series of physical, verbal or mystical aggressive acts (as in sorcery indictment) create a historical chain of gain and loss that protagonists try to keep alive. Then, in the course of this cyclical negative reciprocity, the permutations of

the position of aggressor/victim ensure a replication of fears (Strathern & Stewart 2002). In spite of this, revenge is always an opportunity as it remains the only recourse for defending one's interests or seizing lost power in an inescapable relationship. When fed by a long-lasting negative reciprocity resting on retaliation, violence is ordinary because it is expected.

Revenge thus appears as a powerful motive for ordinary violence. As Verdier (1980) observed, the threat of revenge or retaliation seems to work as a principle of regulation that structures most of the local vindictive system. But the legitimacy that people confer on revenge questions the issue of coercion (as an anti-violence violence) and the legitimacy of the legal authorities that consider it illegal. Actually, anomie and the plurality of moral standards seriously complicate the social process of the legal qualification of violence. This is particularly clear in the semantic explanations, confrontations and problems of vindication that are present in the situations described in this book. Indeed, protagonists may agree on what violence (physical, moral or mental damage caused by human or inhuman aggression) is in the situation and, at the same time, disagree on its vindication or its appropriateness. Indeed, the reasons given for having recourse to violence are usually used for its vindication, hence for its legitimization. So whatever the local disagreements are on the meaning of violence, its expressiveness (shouting, cries, visible wounds, blood, smells, etc.) strikes everybody and violence has an unavoidably emotional impact. But, beyond emotion, violence affects witnesses because it expresses behaviour that is out of control, and these may directly threaten the physical integrity of the witnesses and the shared social *status quo*. The fact that revenge or retaliation may be thought of as an ordinary solution against violence, i.e. coercion, raises another issue and implies that revenge could be seen as a rational means, as an artefact able to bring an end to the violence exerted against the social order or authority. For instance, using violence in a contentious relationship may be a strategy aimed at securing an advantage over one's opponent by preventing the other person's next move. Ordinary violence then appears to many as a social resource with a significant potential for action and representation, and as an efficient means of intervention, seemingly appropriate to achieving practical or symbolic aims. Indeed, people appear to use it as an efficient medium of action in their relationships, especially in the dramatization of the cultural values and conceptions on which a relationship is supposed to be established. Nevertheless, what looks like a rationality of violence is, for several reasons, a short-term strategy: firstly, because resorting to violence minimizes the opponent's capacity for revenge for a short time only and secondly, because the unexpected consequences and outcomes of violent deeds usually exceed the perpetrator's initial intentions. Over the course of

time, the initial conflict expands socially, involving unexpected new actors, witnesses or institutions, thus creating other sources of conflict and violence. People's life histories show that recourse to violence may have serious consequences and result in losses for the initial aggressor. Although ordinary violence can be used to some extent as an artefact to somebody's own advantage, it cannot be liable to analysis in terms of rational action.

The aim in this chapter has been to understand the sociological meanings of multifaceted African ordinary violence. It takes place in everyday social interaction and is undermined by poverty, exploitation and injustice, often taking the form of multiple victimization, continued mental harassment and repeated verbal and physical aggression. It occurs in contexts of general insecurity that create specific local conditions of vulnerability that transcend social class or category and escape selective analysis. One of its most typical features, revenge and/or retaliation, is a product of the global anomie characterized by normative proliferation and general insecurity, where the law has not succeeded in guiding social change. Ordinary violence thus expresses conflicting changes that concern paramount cultural values. This usually happens in the course of long-lasting social relationships where personal legitimacy is contested in terms of norms or special privileges. It is, at the same time, subversive of existing social hierarchies and constituent of new ones. In fact, ordinary violence is doing the spadework for social change in African societies. We hope that this book offers some insights into this on-going social process.

Changing Lifeworlds and Contested Space

Seclusion Practices among the Iraqw of Northern Tanzania

Jonathan Baker and Hege Wallevik

Introduction

This paper focuses on the seclusion practices (*meeta*) of the Cushitic-speaking Iraqw people of northern Tanzania who are mainly concentrated in Mbulu District. The headquarters of Mbulu District is the town of Mbulu. Despite its size, Mbulu town can be considered as a 'node of economic and social opportunity' and is an important place providing a wide range of goods and services for its own population, as well as a large hinterland (Baker 2001: 122). At present, Mbulu town is undergoing what might be termed as a process of modernization. The town has a diversified population representing a mixture of lifestyles that influence the traditional Iraqw life world. Mbulu also has a large, mainly Catholic, Christian population. In spite of the apparent acceptance of modern urban life and Christianity on the part of many rural and urban Iraqw, below this veneer of imported dogma traditional beliefs are strongly adhered to and influence Iraqw social and economic behaviour. Among many Iraqw there is a strong belief in the seclusion practices known as *meeta*. People who enter a state of *meeta* are considered dangerous and they are avoided by exclusion from their communities. The *meeta* sanction is particularly strong in rural communities and mainly affects women. The most common and most stringent forms of *meeta* involve cases where a girl becomes pregnant outside marriage, or where a woman suffers a miscarriage, stillbirth or the death of a child before it is weaned.

The argument presented here is that whether these seclusion practices of *meeta* are interpreted as social violence depends on the perspective. Consequently, if a Western perspective is applied, *meeta* practices can be interpreted as a system of social violence and the town of Mbulu can be seen as a liberating place for these women. On the other hand, *meeta* can be understood in terms of protection rather than punishment and the town then represents a dangerous space, which the traditional Iraqw people have to negotiate. This paper reveals how the Iraqw live with these contested meanings of a cultural practice. According to Rekdal (1996: 382), there are about 150 Iraqw clans so generalizations about Iraqw culture are very often not valid at the local clan level. This was clearly found to be the case during periods of fieldwork.

This paper is based on data collected in 2000–2005 in Mbulu town and the three surrounding villages of Gunyoda, Moringa and Murray.¹

The Setting and Context²

Mbulu District

The town of Mbulu is the district headquarters for Mbulu District, (Map 1) which is one of the five districts of the newly created Manyara Region. Mbulu District has a total area of 4350 km² and a population of 237,882 (URT 2003: 171). The district population is overwhelmingly rural and is distributed over a total of 71 villages. Apart from Mbulu, the only other population centres of significance in the district are Haydom and Dongobesh, which also perform a number of important functions for rural populations. The major ethnic group in the district is the Iraqw. While the Tanzanian census does not collect data on ethnic affiliation, the Iraqw can be considered one of the larger groups in the country. According to Mous (1992: 1), the Iraqw number around 500,000. In addition to the Iraqw, the district also has Nilotic Datooga pastoralists, who are estimated to number between 15,000 and 20,000 (Meindertsma & Kessler 1997: 28). Most Iraqw village households are involved in crop production and some livestock keeping, but the number and type of the latter depends upon the household's wealth. Population growth in the whole district is approximately 3.8% per annum, which is above the national average of 2.9% (URT 2003: 2). This has led to land scarcity and, invariably, to a good deal of commercialization of rural land transactions. The problem of land scarcity appears to be intractable. The tradition among the Iraqw whereby the youngest son inherits the family land means that many other males are obliged to permanently migrate to urban centres in the district and elsewhere, or to migrate much further afield to acquire agricultural land. The irregularity of rainfall is also a problem and in some areas of the district there is rainfall and crop failure every two or three years out of ten.

The Town of Mbulu

The population of Mbulu town is growing rapidly and, according to the population census of 2002 had a population of 12,171 people in 2,514 households, which

1 The authors would like to acknowledge the financial support provided for this study by the Research Council of Norway.

2 Much of the detail referring to the socio-economic structure of Mbulu and the three surrounding villages is taken from Baker and Wallevik (2003).

gives an average household size of 4.8 persons (URT 2003:175). Within the urban boundary is a fairly compact core, which represents the commercial centre. As might be expected, the urban population is characterized by greater ethnic and religious heterogeneity than the rural population as a result of in-migration. This population mobility is driven mainly by two factors: the transference of local and central government employees from other regions of the country as part of job relocation (a common policy in Tanzania), and the attraction of Mbulu for non-Iraqw outsiders because of the perceived business opportunities in the town. Given this mobility, it is not surprising that the town's non-Iraqw population is as high as 22% of the total population. Concomitantly, the number of Iraqw traditional believers is only 12%, while Christians comprise 82% and Muslims 6%. Despite its relatively small size, the town of Mbulu performs a range of important functions. It is:

- an administrative and control centre: with the district council administration, district police headquarters and district prison.
- an educational centre: with four primary schools and three nationally recognized secondary schools, which partly cater for the needs of the large village population which only has access to primary schools.
- a health centre: the Mbulu District Hospital is the medical centre for the district and is run by the Ministry of Health.
- a communication centre: the post office provides postal services for the district, and also post bank and telephone services.
- the district's most important economic centre: the economic and employment structure of Mbulu has been influenced, to a large extent, by the fact that it is a central location catering to the needs of its own population, as well as the needs of a much larger rural population. The town is overwhelmingly a service centre and provides retailing, accommodation and bar and food services, in addition to small-scale repair facilities. Mbulu town's connection to the national electricity grid in 1999 resulted in the electrification of grain mills, the introduction of welding activities and the installation of domestic and street lighting.

There are a number of very wealthy local businessmen who own capital-intensive enterprises such as petrol stations, grain mills, large lodging houses and much of the wholesale trade. However, the urban economic structure is dominated by numerous small-scale enterprises often of an informal nature. These include small general stores (sometimes referred to as kiosks if they are very small), itinerant traders and a range of individuals engaged in repairs. Mbulu has a daily and weekly market where rural produce can be purchased.

A large periodic market is held monthly on the outskirts of the town and attracts traders from as far away as Arusha. At the height of market day there are often more than 6,000 people at the market. It provides rural people with the chance to buy and sell large and small livestock. A whole range of manufactured goods are on sale and there are many stalls and tents selling cooked meat and local brews.

Three Surveyed Villages around Mbulu

Three villages were surveyed in an attempt to understand the socio-economic nature of rural life and to investigate the degree of village interaction with the town. These are dispersed village settlements extending over a large area: Murray (28.4 km²), Gunyoda (60.8 km²) and Moringa (16.25 km²). They ranged in population from 3,600 to 5,400. Each village has its own health clinic and at least one primary school. Gunyoda is located 12 km from Mbulu (3 km on the main road and 9 km along a narrow track). Moringa is 16 km from Mbulu, while Murray is the most isolated of the three villages. Although it is only 22 km from Mbulu it could take several hours to reach the town on foot because of the very hilly terrain. The ethnic composition of these villages is overwhelmingly Iraqw and in each village the proportion of Iraqw households was identical: 28 out of 30 households, or 93% of all the households in each village. Non-Iraqw villagers are invariably incomers and usually represented transferred government workers such as teachers, community development officials, foresters, health workers and others. By religious adherence, the villages demonstrated a sharp division between Christians (invariably Catholics) and believers in local Iraqw divinities.

Despite the difficulties of accessibility to Mbulu (particularly for the residents of Murray village), rural people nevertheless made heavy use of the goods, services and other benefits to be found there, including a range of income-generating possibilities from selling labour to agricultural produce (grain, vegetables, livestock and timber) at the daily and weekly markets, as well as the very large monthly market. Rural people clearly perceive the town of Mbulu as a place of social and economic opportunity. However, as is demonstrated below, the town is also considered a dangerous space, especially by rural women who still adhere to the rules and regulations of the traditional Iraqw way of life.

Central Aspects of the Iraqw Life World

The Supreme Powers of Looaa and Neetlangw

As a backdrop to the discussion of *meeta*, it is essential to have an understanding of the supreme powers worshipped by the traditional Iraqw. Among these

Iraqw, there are two different sets of divinities. *Looaa* is a female divinity associated with the sun and represents immense goodness and the fertile powers of rain and birth. She is venerated and thanked for providing protection against evil spirits and the avoidance of conflict, and people seek the blessing of *Looaa* to maintain the fertility of people, animals and the land. By contrast, *Neetlangw* is a powerful male divinity that can cause misfortune such as disease and drought. Appeasement of *Neetlangw* takes the form of animal sacrifice, often a sheep. *Neetlangw* is closely associated with water and inhabits water groves. Women who are in a state of *meeta* (seclusion) are considered by the traditional Iraqw to be possessed by *Neetlangw* and, as such, are extremely dangerous. Consequently, a woman in *meeta* can never collect water since she has the power to inflict great suffering or even destroy her own community, as well as the livestock. It is little wonder then that women possessed of such powers are not readily accepted back into their home communities after a period of *meeta* unless they undergo a process to rid themselves of spirit possession. The cleansing ritual involves a process whereby the spirit-possessed woman is subjected to physical and verbal vilification in order for the spirit to leave the body of the possessed person. Becoming ritually clean also includes having body hair removed. During this cleansing process, family and same-clan members are not involved but a medicine man from another clan takes responsibility (see Snyder 2005, Selvik 1998).

The Seclusion Practices of Meeta

Meeta practices are frequently mentioned in ethnographic accounts of the Iraqw people (Winter 1968, Thornton 1980, Rekdal 1991, Snyder 1993, 2005 and Rekdal & Blystad 1999). The term *meeta* is not easily translated and consequently is open to different interpretations. Thornton (1980) understands *meeta* as a form of ritual impurity, while Snyder (1993: 17) argues that *meeta* should be translated as 'a quarantine created to contain pollution'. According to Selvik (1998: 3), *meeta* refers to 'a complex of rules and practices which Iraqw people observe in everyday life, but which become most intensive after particular incidents'. At the outset, it must be stressed that broad generalizations concerning *meeta* can often be misleading. For example, the practice of *meeta* is particularly strong among certain Iraqw clans. The clans of Gunyoda, Mama Isale, Yaeda Chini and Maretadu Juu are considered by those we encountered as strong proponents of *meeta* proscriptions. The main explanation given by informants for this is that these locations are characterized by remoteness, including a lack of interaction with other clans and ethnic groups. Moreover, these four clans are considered to have a tradition of producing powerful medicine men who reinforce the potency of *meeta*. At present, the most

common forms of *meeta* apply when a girl becomes pregnant outside marriage, or a child dies as a result of a miscarriage, a stillbirth or while still being breastfed.³

The two forms of *meeta* which this paper is concerned with are considered as 'shameful', 'breaking traditional codes of conduct', 'unnatural', 'suspicious' or even 'supernatural' and consequently afflicted individuals have to be excluded from their local communities to protect the community from possible harm. Further, afflicted individuals are only allowed to return to their communities of origin after a period of quarantine that also involves a process of ritual cleansing. This ritual is considered by some women as such a traumatic experience that they are unwilling to undergo this cleansing process and never return to their home communities, but prefer to remain in a space which is beyond traditional control.

If a young woman becomes pregnant outside of wedlock, shame is brought on her family and especially the parents as they are considered as having been negligent in their daughter's upbringing. However, most of the blame is directed at the young woman. Usually, birth takes place outside her father's house, to avoid suspicions of the girl's father being the father of the child. At this point, she enters a state of *meeta* and is physically excluded from her local community. However, her father has the responsibility of finding a family which is willing to accept the girl for the three-year period of *meeta*. Invariably this will be a non-traditional Iraqw, Christian or Muslim household. Excluding the girl from her own community incurs significant costs for her father, who is obliged to pay the host household with a bull. Of course, the girl's household also loses her labour. If a woman suffers a miscarriage, a stillbirth or the death of a child before it is weaned, this is considered unnatural and the woman is obliged to enter a state of *meeta* and will be excluded by her family from her village of origin. However, as soon as the woman becomes pregnant again, the seclusion process is revoked since it is proven that the girl is healthy and ritually clean. Until the woman becomes pregnant again, she is obliged to remain

3 We were told by informants that *meeta* also refers to the death of a husband or wife at a young age. Indeed, we did encounter an informant who stated that he had been subjected to *meeta* sanctions as a result of the death of his wife during her most fertile years. This case is not discussed here due to insufficient data. This form of *meeta* also produced the greatest uncertainty and lack of unanimity among informants regarding its relevance, strength and geographical distribution. According to one of our main informants, the head of the Mama Isale clan (Amna Yingi) had proclaimed as long ago as 1974 that widowhood would no longer be considered a reason to exclude either a widow or widower from local community life. Other informants made the point that this form of seclusion had declined, or was no longer practised. For this reason, we do not discuss this form of *meeta* here.

in *meeta* for up to three years. If after this she has still not had any children and wants to return to her clan village, she has to undergo the cleansing ritual as described above.

More generally, the emphasis given to protecting the local community cannot be overstated. As well as the fact that individuals in a state of *meeta* are obliged to undergo a cleansing process before they are permitted to return to village life, measures to protect the whole village are regularly undertaken. To protect the village from the intrusion of evil spirits, a sheep is sacrificed once a year to placate such evil forces and the intestines are spread around the edge of the village. It is stated that this ritual cleansing also prevents the outbreak of disease. Of course, people and domesticated animals do become ill or suffer disease. In cases which are considered of a more serious nature such as dysentery, leprosy, anthrax or injury as a result of an attack by a leopard, short-term *meeta* (meaning exclusion from the community for a period of between seven and ten days) is prescribed by traditional medicine men. Again, the sacrificial slaughter of sheep, goats and chickens to appease disgruntled spirits is undertaken. A range of medicinal herbs are used as treatment. For example, leprosy is considered as a punishment by *Looaa* for what is considered the extremely serious act of incest, i.e. where a mother has sexual relations with her son or a father with his daughter. Another example concerns the leopard, an animal which is found in Mbulu District but apparently is not commonly encountered, that is often perceived as a danger for the rural population. However, this animal has become the focus of much folklore. Some people are considered to have substantial powers of witchcraft and have the ability to control leopards and use them as a weapon against people. The Manda Do'Bayo clan is a particularly large and powerful group, and certain clan members are said to be able to control the behaviour of leopards. The informant who discussed the idea of the 'controlled leopard' did however add the caveat that 'leopards cannot harm people who are strong Christians!' What is significant about the discussion of leprosy and leopards is that they should best be interpreted as metaphors that reflect a range of powerful proscriptions to protect the traditional Iraqw. As can be seen, much of the discussion surrounding *meeta* has its own internal cohesion and logic.

There are many women living in exile in Mbulu town as a result of *meeta*. Some of them have been excluded and exiled from their village due to their state of *meeta* while others are the children of these excluded women who have not returned to their villages. Below are examples of three women and their experiences with *meeta* seclusion. While their experiences and strategies adopted vary, they all try to adapt or, at least, cope in a context of urban change.

Cases of Urban-based Women in Meeta

A Woman called Maria: Refusal of Ritual Cleansing

When Maria was 22 and unmarried, she became pregnant in her home village. She had to leave the village because of her state of *meeta* and moved to Mbulu where she rented a room. She was assisted in settling into town by other women who had experienced *meeta*. The baby was delivered at the District Hospital in Mbulu. Today, Maria is 38 years of age, still unmarried and lives permanently in Mbulu. She has 8 children ranging in age from 2 to 16 who are either at primary school or in kindergarten. Maria survives as an independent woman in an urban setting by doing agricultural labouring for other households, weeding with a hoe, collecting manure for fuel, and gathering firewood. She also brews and sells local alcohol (*pombe*) and engages in prostitution. Finally, she receives financial assistance from a sister-in-law who lives in the large town of Arusha. Maria could have returned to her parents' home village after a period of eighteen months if she had been willing to undergo a ritual cleansing. She refused as this was against her Catholic beliefs. She is permitted to visit her parents' home but is not allowed to enter the house or sit on a chair, let alone sleep or eat food there. She can talk to her parents but no physical contact is allowed, even shaking hands, for fear of pollution.

The Case of Leonia: Survival through the Informal Economy

Leonia is an unmarried Iraqw mother who is 25 years of age and has been in Mbulu for five years. She runs her own small restaurant (*mama nitilie*) selling chicken and chips. She got pregnant when she was 20 and was forced to leave the village because of her state of *meeta*. Like Maria in the previous example, she was also supported by a network of women who were also in *meeta*. She gave birth to her son who is now five and goes to kindergarten. The father of her son is a Muslim but whether they have contact was not disclosed. She is a Catholic and would like to get married at some stage. She established her chicken and chips restaurant after having worked in a shop where she was able to save sufficient capital to invest in a stove and other essential accessories. She considers her business to be successful. There are six other women in Mbulu operating similar restaurants and she is not concerned about competition from them, although she would not like to see more restaurants open up. Leonia has exploited a rewarding employment niche in an urban setting, which is very advantageous for her. She does not face competition from the many bars and tea rooms which sell traditional food such as bananas, rice, and maize with sauce. Unless Leonia, like Maria, undergoes a ritual cleansing, her chances of returning to the village are negligible. As an Iraqw woman she is

also denied access to agricultural land as this is inherited through males. It would appear that Leonia is best placed facing a future in town with all the opportunities that may arise there.

Mama Fatuma: Transgressing Traditional Norms of Behaviour

Mama Fatuma was born in Mbulu to a Muslim Sambiaa father from Tanga and an Iraqw mother. She resides and earns a living in Mbulu town. From the way that she behaves, in sharp contrast to traditional Iraqw values, it is most likely that her mother was a woman in *meeta* who refused to undergo the cleansing ritual that would have facilitated her return to the 'protection' of the village. Fatuma is probably a woman in her mid-forties. She has never been married and has four children, the youngest is 13 years of age. All her children attend primary and secondary school. Fatuma's main source of income is a bar, located in the internal courtyard of her house, which produces local brew (*pombe*) using maize as the principle ingredient. She started her *pombe* business in 1991.

Pombe production using maize is a legal activity as long as there are plentiful supplies to meet local food requirements. However, during periods of drought when maize is scarce, the production of *pombe* from maize is unlawful. Since this is Fatuma's only source of income, she is obliged to produce *pombe* even when it is not allowed. In an attempt to circumvent the attention of the police during periods of drought, *pombe* production and sales take place in the *porini* (the woods). Fatuma employs five women to help her prepare *pombe*, in addition to three who act as lookouts in case of overzealous police. Occasionally, the police do manage to locate Fatuma's 'bar in the woods'. The punishment for such an offence is a fine of Tsh 20,000 or six months in prison. Invariably, Fatuma pays a bribe to the police and continues with her business. Fatuma's *pombe* business is highly lucrative and on a good day can earn up to TSh 30,000. To put this in context, at the time when this study was conducted, the minimum wage for a government worker in Tanzania is between TSh 40,000 and TSh 50,000 *per month*.

It is generally acknowledged in Mbulu that Fatuma produces an excellent *pombe*, partly because of additives which, it is stated, improve the taste. While she has a good business, the majority of her customers are rural people who spend most during the harvest and post-harvest months from July to October. Otherwise, the busiest days are during the large monthly markets, which are held in Mbulu throughout the year. Many urban people and especially those with the economic wherewithal to visit 'modern' bars (civil servants being a case in point) drink more expensive bottled beer and do not frequent more traditional *pombe* bars. Despite the fact that Fatuma was born and brought up in Mbulu, she is very much an outsider. Her lifestyle stands in sharp contrast to

that of traditional Iraqw women. She owns a large house which has electricity, is nicely furnished and has a TV. As a Muslim woman she is not supposed to be involved in the alcohol business in any way. She argues however that her business permits her to care of her children in the best manner possible and that crossing the strict boundaries that should guide her behaviour as a Muslim woman is not a major concern for her. Fatuma has never been married and has no contact with the fathers of her children.

Towards an Interpretation of Meeta

A central issue which this paper attempts to address is how *meeta* should be interpreted and understood during processes of social change. A fruitful point of departure is to dichotomize the analysis. One interpretation views *meeta* as a major form of physical and social control through the use of severe punishment (social violence) by elders, invariably elderly men, to demonstrate their power over the community, and particularly over women who are seen as having transgressed the rules and interests of the community. Within such an interpretation, the rituals that women have to go through to be allowed back into the community are considered to be so severe that the majority of women do not return to their home communities but make a new life further afield, for example in the town of Mbulu. The alternative (and opposing) view sees *meeta* as a cultural practice where it should not be understood as a punishment but rather as a collection of powerful sanctions to protect the community against what are considered dangerous events or circumstances. If we adopt this view, the seclusion practices of *meeta* are employed to ensure that the processes of growth, and thus the fertility of humans, animals and the land, are secured.

Exile from the Village: The Town as a Refuge for Rural Women

It is estimated that 30% of all households in Mbulu town are headed by women. This is similar to the situation elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa where many rural women – who are divorced, widowed or single – migrate to towns to find work or to escape the drudgery and confines of rural life (see, for example, Gugler & Ludwar-Ene 1995: 258–268). While it is true that many of the independent women householders in Mbulu town have left their villages, the reasons behind this migration are often due to the sanctions of *meeta*.

For an apparently modernizing society, the tradition of *meeta* is still very strong. Women who have been in a state of *meeta* and who get married usually marry non-Iraqw men. However, there are examples also of Iraqw men marrying women in seclusion (Snyder 1993, Selvik 1998). These women can, if they go through the cleansing ritual, return to the confines of the village but the experience of *meeta* is said to be so traumatic that Iraqw women who have been

exposed to the sanction often avoid further contact with traditional Iraqw culture. Very few women return to their villages of origin to live but remain outside *meeta* space in places like Mbulu and find work as bar girls, run small restaurants, engage in petty trade, or work as prostitutes, just like Maria and Leonia. It is not difficult to produce arguments to support the view that *meeta* is a form of social violence which can be understood as 'any intentional act that is carried out against another person against their will and that causes psychological suffering or physical bodily harm in the course of normal social relations'. This form of exclusion results in a disrupted, even shattered, relationship with the community they once belonged to and a lack of identity and feeling of belonging to the village of origin. Their identity and feeling of belonging are instead grounded in the networks they engage with in town. What the three cases above and many others like them demonstrate is the importance of the urban secular space of Mbulu – a space which provides opportunities for independent women to survive and, in some cases, to accumulate capital. And it is also a space largely devoid of tradition and confinement, which allows for alternative lifestyles and choices. While this can be regarded as a liberating experience by the many women who are forced to leave their villages, the very same urban context can be viewed as a place to be avoided due to the possibility of escape from Iraqw rules and norms of behaviour.

The Town as a Dangerous Space: A New Type of 'Outside' to the Iraqw 'Inside'

Iraqw people conceptualize their world and surroundings according to 'insides' and 'outsides'. Thornton (1980: 83) argues that Mbulu town is 'a sort of a hole in this Iraqw conceptualisation of their land and surroundings'. Selvik (1998: 66) argues that Mbulu and other surrounding towns constitute instead a new type of 'outside' to the Iraqw conceptualization of space. This means that Mbulu town is not regulated by the seclusion practices of *meeta*, and many girls in the state of *meeta*, especially if pregnant outside of wedlock, are sent to town where they give birth to and raise their children. If the town is seen as a new 'outside' to the Iraqw conceptualization of space, young women in particular have to be careful about moving into this non-*meeta* space (which corresponds to what we can term 'secular space') because this 'outside' may also imply a way of behaving: being free and beyond the boundaries imposed by traditional *meeta* space (non-secular space) and clan authority. From the viewpoint of the present discussion, space must be viewed as a relative concept. For example, for many non-Iraqw women as well as women in a state of *meeta*, the urban space of Mbulu can be seen as a liberating experience but for traditional Iraqw women this urban space should be approached with caution or best

be avoided since it can also be a threatening and dangerous space. Entering certain kinds of space may put individuals and communities in danger. Young women have to be careful not to stray into non-traditional Iraqw space for fear of being afflicted by other young Iraqw women who are in a state of *meeta*. This should be seen in the light of the central position ascribed to women and their life-giving flows (see Rekdal 1996, Selvik 1998 and Snyder, 2005 for further details).

With this interpretation in mind, it would be more difficult to argue that the practices of *meeta* are to be understood as a form of social violence which should be acted upon or at best eradicated as a tradition that does not belong in a modernized society. On the contrary, *meeta* should be viewed as a way of protection. Within such an interpretive framework, Maria and Leonia are both women who should have gone through a cleansing ritual to be included into the communities they belong to. As long as they choose not to, they will be avoided by women in a state of procreation for fear of a loss of fertility. Mama Fatuma on the other hand represents, within this perspective, the dangerous space of Mbulu town, understood as the Iraqw 'outside'. It is not an exaggeration to say that traditional Iraqw people do not care much for women like Fatuma. Clearly Mama Fatuma challenges the rules which condition the Iraqw perception of ideal behaviour. She drinks a good deal in the evenings after her bar is closed and is often intoxicated. Fatuma is considered as an uncontrollable individual and, as such, is considered a dangerous woman inhabiting dangerous space. This is the kind of space that young Iraqw women must avoid and be protected from.

Maria, Leonia and Fatuma can be interpreted as belonging to an Iraqw 'outside' without any relationship with the communities they used to belong to. Consequently, they are regarded as being excluded for life unless they willingly return to their communities after going through the required rituals. Many women like these choose not to, and prefer to find an identity and feeling of belonging in the networks of women in town.

The Iraqw Life World Contested: Maintaining Values Through Syncretism

On the face of it, Iraqw culture appears to represent a culture being successfully modernized (viz. globalized by the nation state of Tanzania through the widespread use of the Swahili language and other instruments of state power). A good illustration of this is the number of respondents who claim membership of the Catholic Church. Conversion to Catholicism has been an ongoing process for more than a century and represents the success of the Western missionary project.

However having said this, many Catholics simultaneously adhere to the local traditional belief systems. Among many Iraqw, this tendency towards parallel beliefs or syncretism is very strong and effects everyday life in a number of ways. The fact that *Looaa* is female is related to the strong belief among the Iraqw of the central importance of fertility. It is highly likely that this syncretic model is articulated most strongly through *Looaa* because she can be compared to the importance of the Virgin Mary and all the Catholic associations surrounding fertility. Many Iraqw maintain traditional Iraqw values through syncretism. According to one central informant named Stephen who is a practising Catholic, there is no conflict inherent in this syncretic approach. For example, if Stephen or a family member became ill and could not find a cure in modern medicine, a traditional Iraqw healer would be consulted. By casting stones and interpreting the way in which they were scattered, a diagnosis would be made and a treatment prescribed. Following this, Stephen would go to confession and ask for forgiveness for believing in a spiritual power other than that of the Church. The simultaneous belief in both Catholicism and local deities is more a matter of a blending or a mix of faiths rather than an issue of either-or. Many Iraqw do live lives which represent both continuity and change within the Iraqw life world. The following example clearly exemplifies this point.

The Case of Joseph: One Foot in Each World

Joseph is 47 years of age and is an Iraqw who claims to be a practising Catholic. He was born in the countryside 25 km from Mbulu and came to town ‘to make money’. He did not reveal how long he has been in town. He owns a small lodging house in the centre of town, and also runs a fairly large one-room tailor’s workshop. He employs two young male employees. During periods of fieldwork, we observed that his business appeared to be thriving, although Joseph did express a concern about ‘some degree of competition from second-hand clothes traders’. All tailors in Mbulu make school uniforms and cater for both urban and rural demand, an important and lucrative business since all school children have to wear uniform. Apart from this, most customers are from town and include wealthier customers with sufficient money to be able to purchase made-to-measure suits. However, there is significant rural demand for wedding dresses. Joseph travels to Arusha once or twice a month by bus to purchase cloth. A follow-up interview was arranged at Joseph’s house on the outskirts of the centre of town. The house is built to a very high standard with modern bricks and ceramic roof tiles. It is also connected to the national electricity grid which reached Mbulu in 1999. In the backyard a shed houses a modern hybrid dairy cow – one tangible result of the development activities of a

European bilateral donor. Joseph is married to an Iraqw-Indian woman who is in her early thirties, and they have five children ranging in age from two to eight years of age. Joseph's mother-in-law is probably an Iraqw woman who was in *meeta* as a result of being unmarried and having a child by an Indian. This is supported by the fact that intermarriage between Africans and Asians is extremely rare in Tanzania. During the course of discussions, Joseph disclosed that he also had another, older wife and family in the countryside. Here he has a 1.5 acre *shamba* (farm) of which one acre is devoted to the growing of coffee. According to Joseph, his country wife has 'mental problems' and is assisted by two grown-up sons aged 21 and 19. The eldest son is married to an Iraqw woman who had had a miscarriage and was subsequently in a state of *meeta* at the time of the interview.

In this changing world of the Iraqw, Joseph can be viewed as a successful Iraqw man utilizing the opportunities offered by Mbulu town. With his business and his house and assets, Joseph can be seen as a modern urban practising Catholic. Joseph is able to live a married life in town with a woman born out of wedlock without any difficulties. At the same time, he is able to maintain his marriage in his home village. Here he adheres to the belief in the *meeta* practice of secluding his daughter-in-law due to her miscarriage. It could be argued that Joseph has successfully established a life with one foot in each world, adapting to the changing realities of where he lives.

Concluding Remarks

A number of key informants in Mbulu, as well as in the literature on the Iraqw, have pointed to the possibility that *meeta* sanctions are showing signs of relaxing as a result of a number of factors. Some of the more important include increasing school attendance and the spread of Catholicism, including rapidly growing indigenous Christian movements. Mbulu town is also populated by a large number of outsiders from other parts of Tanzania, which is influencing the Iraqw life world. In addition, the diffusion into Mbulu District of other modernization impulses, such as television, provides the local Iraqw population with alternative world views. Road improvements have also reduced the friction of distance and have helped reduce the former isolation of much of the district. Finally, as access to rural farmland is becoming scarcer (both in terms of the amount and quality), earning a living from the land will become more difficult and precarious. This strongly suggests that some of the rural population (young men without agricultural land and young unmarried women without customary rights to land) will be obliged to permanently leave

the land and search for employment opportunities elsewhere. All these changes might lead to a weakening or the eventual dissolution of the strength of clan solidarity and control, thus weakening *meeta* practices.

However, it can also be argued that an understanding of changes taking place in different African communities demands a deconstruction of the modern-traditional dichotomy (Rekdal 1996, Selvik 1998). Consequently, it is necessary to go beyond the assumption that there is a linear, one-way process from traditional to modern life or as Comaroff and Comaroff (1993: xii) say 'the terminus towards which non-western peoples constantly edge'. Rekdal (1996: 382) argues that 'so-called traditional societies "are not passive victims of external modern forces having an impact" on them in more or less predictable ways "like all societies Iraqw culture have mechanisms and procedures for coping" with change in a manner which ensures cultural continuity'.

In her book *The Iraqw of Tanzania: Negotiating Rural Development* Snyder demonstrates how the Iraqw find new ways of combining traditions with development and modern ways of living (Snyder, 2005). Iraqw ensure that aspects of their lifeworlds are reproduced while at the same time they are part of producing new ways of living their lives (see Wallevik, 2012 for a discussion of this phenomenon in Zanzibar). Selvik (1998) argues likewise that we cannot assume that *meeta* is simply a remainder of a former tradition, but we should see it as a cultural practice taking on new forms. This is in line with our argument of viewing *meeta* from different perspectives. The rapid processes of change that have characterized Mbulu town and its surroundings have not eliminated *meeta* practices, but new meanings of *meeta* are instead in the process of being created.

It could perfectly well be argued that the seclusion practices of *meeta* are a form of social violence where the victims of the practice are secluded and where the relationship with the community is cut off and the women are left in a state of limbo or of not belonging. However, doing this we have to bear in mind that what we do is to apply a western perspective and thus turn a cultural practice into a phenomenon of social violence where the term social violence actually has a meaning. If we, on the other hand, in our interpretation also include the rich context of the Iraqw life world, it is possible to argue the opposite and that the seclusion practices of *meeta* should be understood as a form of protection rather than punishment. Such an understanding will acknowledge the cultural practice of exclusion from within the Iraqw lifeworld. Even though we see the practice as a protection of a collective whole, for the individual girls who are in the state of *meeta* we have to acknowledge that exclusion from the village and their families is a devastating experience which results in many of them never returning.

A Chain of Family and Domestic Violence

Extramarital Pregnancy and Social Rupture in Burkina Faso

Fatoumata Ouattara and Katerini T. Storeng

In defining individuals' adaptation to various risks and their social enrolment, one can deduce that situations of vulnerability are circumstances – in the sense of specific moments and given areas – during which this vital exercise is especially painful, difficult or dangerous.

DELOR & HUBERT, 2003, p. 9; our translation

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to analyse instances of ordinary or everyday violence – whether social, structural or physical – that affects social bonds both within the family or kin group and within couples, and that thereby impact on the process of gendered identity formation. Numerous ethnographic studies of women's status demonstrate that marriage and fertility determine a woman's social legitimacy in African societies. By contrast, the data presented here highlight situations in which violence appears in response to social contestations of pregnancy and/or couple relationships.

The argument that we aim to develop here is that an individual's process of identity construction through the mobilisation of social ties to one social network (that surrounds the couple), involves a risk of 'disaffiliation' or social exclusion from another network (the kin group). Meanwhile, social tension within the kin group tends to render a woman's relationship with her male partner fragile and, in turn, creates social tension. It is within this dynamic that violence can occur.

Within social science discourse, any violent act is presented simultaneously as the consequence of and the cause of other violent acts. How should we best understand these links between violent acts? What justifications are given to account for the interpersonal difficulties that occur within, say, a familial context, or those that occur within a polygamous couple? Which normative repertoires of action are mobilized to legitimize acts of violence? And how should such modes of interaction be interpreted sociologically? How do they produce a process of individualization that challenges societies in crisis? And how do social relationships play out within an environment rendered particularly violent as a result of economic insecurity?

These forms of violence can be thought of in terms of sanctions applied following the transgression of social norms. They express contestation of social behaviour relating to a particular status put at stake in daily relations (Demeulenaere 2003). The reproduction of violence results from the fact that a woman's different social roles (wife, partner, daughter, sister) are intertwined or linked with each other. The process of consolidating a woman's social position within a kin group is indicative also of the process of her insertion within a couple and the process of achieving legitimacy within this relationship. Violent relationships (whether explicit or implicit) thus become a part of the process of legitimating marital relations within a couple, and also of the unequal relationships within the kin group (e.g., first born children versus younger siblings) and more generally gender relationships, and particularly of the power relationships and social integration between those with material resources and those without. Moreover, the emergence of violence appears to be shaped by various forms of dependency, particularly material dependency.

One woman's trajectory through pregnancy and childbirth provides the frame for our analysis.¹ We acknowledge that the use of biographical material risks diluting theoretical discussion in favour of description of a distinct or 'particular experience' (Passeron 2006: 2). Our use of biographical material is therefore accompanied by an interpretation of the 'social flux' that contributes to the creation and legitimation of violence. We examine how one social actors' trajectory inscribes itself in the 'topography and institutional schedules?' 'The social destiny of individuals and groups is, before any possibility of tactical

1 The obstetrical path described in this article has been reconstructed as part of a study on the social consequences of obstetrical complications (pregnancy, miscarriages, abortion and delivery) undertaken in the Initiative for Maternal Mortality Programme Assessment (IMMPACT). In Burkina Faso, the study combined an epidemiological and an anthropological component in which we participated. For the purpose of the anthropological investigation, extensive interviews were conducted with women selected purposively from within the epidemiological cohort. This sub-sample included women in the category 'near miss', women who had nearly died in the course of pregnancy and childbirth (Mantel, Buchmann, Rees & Pattinson 1998). Compared to maternal deaths, cases of near miss are more common in African hospitals. For example, in Benin, a study has shown that the occurrence of obstetrical complications was 15 times higher than that of maternal deaths (Filippi et al. 2005). Our sub-sample included women who had narrowly escaped death during pregnancy, childbirth or the postpartum period with a living or stillborn child, women who had narrowly escaped death after an abortion and women who had had a normal delivery. At least two in-depth interviews were conducted with the women over the course of the year after they were released from hospital, and discussions were held with members of their families (spouses or relatives) (see Storeng et al. 2008 for more details).

or strategic choices, structured by norms, social definitions, representations, or simply by objective chances, socially conditioned, biographical developments or orientations, probabilities, already calculable for any individual based on its group belonging...' (Ibid.: 10, our translation). How do social norms develop in the course of a life? In order to answer these questions, a Durkheimian approach will be used to elaborate the 'topographic' inscription of norms. Individual life paths can illustrate 'the succession of actions, reactive, defensive, tactical, anticipated' chosen by a social agent to meet constraining social norms. In short it corresponds to the meeting between the 'singularity of an individual's destiny' and 'the structure of social time' (Ibid.: 12, our translation).

Symbolic Violence Resulting from the Anticipation of Fertility in Marriage

The 'woman, marriage and motherhood' trinity is often presented as the ideal course for the social success of women. Within this perspective, women's value is determined through marriage and motherhood, as anthropologists have written about African women's social promotion through childbearing:

In traditional societies the woman's fertility determines her status. (...) Her social status evolves in accordance with the different stages of her reproductive life. An infertile woman is in this system treated with dramatic indifference or, in certain cases, accused of witchcraft. It is sometimes said that she 'eats' the vital force of other women's children. The Mossi consider a woman without children an 'empty woman'. The representation of a woman is thus the good mother who does not disturb the reproductive cycle. She is made pregnant, she gives birth, she nurses etc. Often one hears talk of a woman 'either carrying a baby on her back, or one in her belly'.

DESJEUX ET AL., 1983, page number not indicated

During our fieldwork, the women interviewed in both urban and rural areas reproduced these idealised images of motherhood, regardless of their ethnicity, age, marital status and personal reproductive history. Pregnancy and childbirth were predominantly defined as fundamental and necessary steps in the life span of a woman: 'every woman should experience the pain of childbirth' as it was often expressed. The value placed on fertility is what is emphasised here. It is defined as necessary for a woman's completeness. In addition, giving

birth to a child allows a woman to gain recognition, consideration and respect within her family circle. This respect is often emphasised by the fact that women are designated by the names of their children: 'mother of X'. Conversely, infertility is seen as a misfortune, a source of concern, sadness and breakdown in a woman's life. A woman may face mockery and ridicule from those around the couple because of her infertility. Several women, for instance, gave examples of the insults that a childless woman may have to endure from her co-wife. Their discourse emphasises the continuous confrontation and 'viciousness' the childless woman must endure from other women. A threat of violence takes the form of verbal harassment against married women whose fertility has not been proven. Relationships between co-wives within polygamous marriages are punctuated with signs of stigmatisation towards those who have no children. Rumours and insults about their infertility reinforce the sense of guilt these women feel. In contrast to the typical and idealised representations of femininity, narratives of pregnancy and childbirth experiences are not immune to vulnerability. Social violence here manifests itself in the anticipated statuses of the woman. Among them, the status of pregnant woman is a privileged one. The simultaneous diversity and plurality of statuses (sister, married woman, mother) puts women in a position of relational vulnerability, understood here as the product of breaking off social ties, generating disaffiliation. As such, this vulnerability exists only in the context of social relations where the woman develops personal strategies to distance herself from the expectations of others, expectations that she may have internalized as a duty of her female role. Alternatively, she may try to reduce the distance – built by the expectations of others – that keeps her from the attributes of roles that are highly valued locally.²

The anticipation of fertility once married is an expectation that makes the woman vulnerable, and thus exposes her to the risk of violence.³ But for an

2 If her strategy, whatever it is, is opposed to the mutual expectations of others, then interaction will lead to tension, then a succession of strained interactions will generate conflict, which can lead to violence. Nevertheless, conflict and violence do not necessarily lead to the failure of relations. For this to happen, it is necessary that one of the participants in the conflict no longer believe in the possibility of improving his/her position, status or role in the social interaction with the other, even if that interaction is conflicting. The breaking off of relations and the social interaction that goes with it occurs when it becomes more interesting for one of the participants to be out of the relationship than in it.

3 Admittedly, all the women want to marry. But once married, anticipation of pregnancy (involving self-imposed pressure as well as strong pressure from the spouse, in-laws and the wider social environment) makes the women necessarily vulnerable. This vulnerability is expressed through the permanent exposure of women to verbal or behavioural violence, such as psychological harassment, contempt, denigration and stigmatization.

unmarried woman, a pregnancy will without doubt expose her to difficult relationships with her family members. A young woman who begins her reproductive life by reversing the normative order of things makes herself vulnerable. In Burkina Faso (as in many other African countries), an extramarital pregnancy is a problem for her whole family.

Marie's story illustrates this problem. Before coming to Ouagadougou, Marie lived with her parents in Gaoua where she had a boyfriend she cared for. Her parents, however, did not approve of their relationship. They justified their disapproval by claiming that Marie was too young to be married. Despite her parents' disapproval (the first form of violence), the young woman was in a romantic relationship with her boyfriend for two years. Her first pregnancy happened during this period of cohabitation and she broke up with her boyfriend shortly after becoming pregnant. She describes this first pregnancy as an accident, as she did not want it. At 20, she gave birth to her daughter (who at the time of the study was 6 years' old and lives in Gaoua with her maternal grandparents).

In this case, the vulnerability of a young woman is characterised by the fact that, contrary to the hopes of her parents, she becomes an unmarried mother. As in other Sub-Saharan African societies, the marriage of a girl is a form of honour for her family. Conversely, it can be shameful when a girl who is old enough for marriage, is not married. The situation is worsened if this girl gets pregnant before her wedding. Paradoxically, while fertility is valued locally, the occurrence of a premarital pregnancy is disapproved: 'The priority of a social arrangement to another can only exist if people internalise the importance of the existing social order and its compliance...' (Boute 1998: 47). Two years after the relationship ended, when her child was two years old, Marie met a man who was temporarily staying in Gaoua. (It was in his house in Ouagadougou that we met Marie.) Shortly after meeting him, she decided to join her new partner in Ouagadougou, but without asking for her parents' consent. She even took advantage of her mother's trip to Bobo-Dioulasso to steal some of her clothes and cooking utensils before moving to her new 'home' (the second form of violence). This is precisely the form of free relationship that is disapproved of by her parents. Given the dominant local values, if there is no marriage ceremony, families cannot join together to celebrate their association through the union of two members.

Without marriage and the alliance and honour associated with it, who is going to force the couple to stick to the norms? It is not Family Law (which is ignored by all) but the heads of both families who can compel spouses to respect local conventions and fulfil their duties. Outside this normative framework, his/her group does not protect the individual: s/he is subject to all kinds of pressures and has no defence against possible abuse. The fact that Marie

distanced herself from her family and, without negotiation, imposed her choice on them triggered a process of mutual disengagement among the members of the family who, in turn, felt no solidarity for the young woman. When she arrived in Ouagadougou, Marie discovered that, contrary to what he had made her believe, her new partner (who she referred to as her husband although they were not formally married) already had two wives (the third form of violence). The co-wives were also surprised as they had not been informed about the arrival of a third wife (the fourth form of violence). Contrary to local norms regarding the regulation of relations between co-wives, Marie's arrival was not announced to her co-wives. It is therefore not surprising that the new co-wife, who should have been perceived as a 'little sister', quickly became a rival, excluded at all costs, and if possible, kicked out of the house. Very quickly, aggression and conflict became part of the daily relations between the newcomer and her co-wives. The husband, who had deceived them all, protected her against the other women, as is standard procedure. The way the new woman was introduced into the family here 'justifies' the extent of the violent reactions of her co-wives and puts her in a vulnerable position. Of the two co-wives, the second was the most hostile to Marie's arrival. Indeed, within Burkinabe polygamous marriages, the second wife is considered to be the favourite and the arrival of a third wife can only give rise to strategies to preserve privileges that are established or are considered as such. The many conflicts that the second wife had with her husband and with the third wife led to the end of her marriage (the fifth form of violence). She lost the battle. In spite of the departure of one of the first co-wives, the relationship between Marie and the first wife never improved; her co-wife threatened to attack her with witchcraft (the sixth form of violence).

After these (explicit or implicit) threats of witchcraft, Marie suffered physiological disorders in 2003. A neighbouring woman of Marie's ethnic group who described herself as Marie's 'relative' and referred to Marie as her 'little sister' remembered it in the following terms:

She fell seriously ill. When she was out of the courtyard, she is OK. But when she came back and went into the house, she couldn't sleep, stayed awake the whole night and screamed until the morning. ...She felt pain in all of her body. When she went into the house, it felt like she was going to die. Very often she would go out in the street to get some sleep. Upon returning to the courtyard of the house, things always got worse.

The husband also believed in the threats of witchcraft from the first wife, and encouraged Marie to spend most of the day outside the house. Marie

accompanied him to his workplace. His work consisted of offering his services as an intermediary between vehicle owners and employees of a transport service specialised in formalising purchase documents for vehicles. The neighbour or 'relative' criticised Marie for the fact that she always followed her husband to his workplace (in an appeal to respect the established order). The presence of women on male territory is criticised by women but not, as might be expected, by men. The legitimisation of gender relations is thus internalised by women. Subordinated as they are, it is ironically they who put themselves in a position to ensure the reproduction of the conditions of their subordination.

The threat and fear of witchcraft and the permanent suspicion it creates, poisons the daily experiences of women in polygamous couples (Fainzang & Journet 1988: 116–120). Friends and family share these views. Marie's relative, fearing that she would die or become insane, suggested that she return to her village. She refused, even though things were getting worse in her household. According to the same relative, 'she did not get along with anyone in her family, nobody loved her...nobody supported her'. During our first meeting, we asked Marie if everything was going well in the courtyard with the people who lived there. Her answer was clear: 'No'. She believed that her in-laws did not like her because she was not from the same ethnic group (she is Dagara while they are Mossi), and they had even told her to return to her village. Tensions with her in-laws had always existed but they became worse after the death of her mother-in-law. In addition, a recently divorced sister of her husband's had come to live with the family and did not hide her dislike of Marie (the seventh form of violence). In fact, on our first visit to the house, the bad relationship between Marie and both her co-wife and her sister-in-law was tangible. The atmosphere of suspicion was such that the young woman decided that the interview be conducted in French, a language that neither the co-wife nor the sister-in-law could understand. Linguistic exclusion only added to the tension and conflict between the members of the household. Marie did not hesitate to show how proud she was of the fact that we visited 'her' home and how superior she was thanks to her ability to speak a 'foreign' language that is locally valued. Tensions between wives and their sisters-in-law are just as common as those between co-wives, not helped by the lack of privacy in the household: co-wives, children, husbands, sisters-in-law and cousins daily share the same domestic space.

Disagreement between co-wives is a classical relational structure.⁴ However, the violent nature of the relationship between co-wives is due to the

4 Modelled on the scenes of daily life, rivalries and malice between co-wives feed African fiction (Le Potvin 2005).

unique history of each polygamous family. The other co-wives were quick to understand the vulnerability of Marie's position, and her arrival had not been legitimised by any rite of marriage. Such rites are supposed to mobilise families, clans and generations, and thereby seal an alliance that plays the role of a collective guarantee that protects the women. Marriage is what maintains a woman's membership within a kinship group while ensuring her integration within the group of her family-in-law. But Marie was not interested in marriage: she went against all conventions and, in so doing, provoked, from her initial series of violent actions, other forms of violence in return. In sum, no member of the young woman's family is known to the family-in-law. She abandoned her family without the consent and support of her parents and her arrival provoked the repudiation of one of the co-wives.

A Common Violence: Disaffiliation from the Kin Group

Structural domestic violence focuses on actors whose position is the most vulnerable. The unequal relationship between elders and juniors that characterises the dynamics of kinship networks is maintained by the norms of social constraints and obligations. If these relations are not respected, there is a backlash from the kinship network. The statutory inferiority, weakness and poverty usually provoke violence from superiors, the powerful and the rich (Janin 2003). Marie has three sisters and a brother. The latter is a civil servant and lives in Ouagadougou. But when Marie arrived there, contrary to the rules of etiquette, she did not visit her relatives. She did not behave as a 'good little sister' and her relatives criticized her for choosing a selfish life. Her 'relative' in the neighbourhood explained: 'She did not even come to see us; she did not even want anyone to know that she was in Ouagadougou. She was in hiding'. Although they lived in the same neighbourhood, it was only after several visits from Marie that her 'sister' finally decided to return the visits. But she soon put an end to the visits because of the conflicts she had witnessed between Marie and her husband. Marie spent three years in Ouagadougou without paying her brother a visit. When she finally went to see him her 'sister' took her along. She paid him a second visit while her mother was staying with her brother for medical treatment, but on this occasion her brother criticised Marie for her bad life choices. He told her that her child's father exploited her. Annoyed, Marie spoke her mind to her brother, who then vowed to no longer consider himself her brother.

Within the Dagara ethic community, uttering such words towards a sibling or other direct descendant is a serious act that requires mending in due form

according to village ritual. According to ritual, the brother could no longer help his sister in anything. Contrary to what her relatives said, Marie confided to us that she often visited her relatives in Ouagadougou but that they never came to see her in return. She thought that the main reason was 'because my husband never came to ask my hand. I joined my husband without their consent'. But by not approaching her relatives in town, Marie violated a basic rule of etiquette in the social bond of the community. An individual's guilt is based on individualistic behaviour. This is the logic of community life as put forward by Alain Marie (2003: 14), who defined the individual as 'perpetually in debt vis-à-vis the group, with reciprocal obligation to be socially altruistic, and, complementarily, he is subjected to repression of his individualism, which exposes him to repressive violence'.

However, in the reality of everyday life, these two trends are not clearly distinct. The very social actors who claim the 'value of African traditions' are often those who mobilise change and modernity to legitimise a lifestyle, and vice versa. From a normative point of view, the victim of social violence is also an aggressor. The words the brother uttered reminds us insidiously that the community puts precedence on individual freedom. Marie's life path is at the heart of the antagonism between social norms of conduct or behaviour defined as unchanging – 'it was like that when we were born' – and strategies of individual autonomy enshrined in one's personal life cycle. Here it is less a matter of objective truth than of required truth (Janin 2003: 50). As discussed below, even the extreme economic vulnerability of the young woman during a health emergency will not allow her brother to commit 'perjury' by helping her. One could conclude that even though a network of kinship is available it cannot always be mobilised (Cohen 1997). The ability to mobilise the help of relatives depends on the quality of the relationship with its members and on the evaluation made by the network of the way one fulfils one's obligations in the community. The 'welfare system' of family solidarity is not taken for granted. The social logic involved in the statutory recognition in family relationships is based on a situation of reciprocity where 'calculated solidarity and recurrent debts' prevail (Vuarin 2000). Thus, for the principle of solidarity to work, the process has to be activated. The rights acquired by family membership do not automatically trigger aid or support, but need to be earned by considerable efforts of sociability.

Solidarity is gained by conforming to society's norms. The person appealing for solidarity must make a strategic choice and follow the rules of precedence. If s/he does not, as in the case of Marie (according to her relatives), then solidarity will not play a role and the applicant will be in a situation of vulnerability and unable to mobilise adequate (social, relational, financial) resources to

cope when exposed to suffering and violence. If guilt and vulnerability were intrinsically linked in the practice of violence, the framework of family relations would seem to make people who are weak feel guilty. We agree with Janin (2003: 34–35) that the individual has very little capacity to transform his or her family ties by distancing himself/herself in a process of individualisation. In this respect, the relational vulnerability of spouses who live together without marrying is a direct consequence of the lack of consent and involvement by their respective families, their choices and decisions. And concomitantly, vulnerability as a result of disaffiliation from the kinship group is followed by the weakening or non-recognition of the marriage bond by the family in-law: without marriage, the man's partner remains an intruder who does not exist socially in the eyes of his in-laws. The vulnerability of women living in a situation of cohabitation outside of marriage results in constant fear of being alone and abandoned. The precariousness of such lives results in exposure to three kinds of risk: domestic violence, not having sufficient financial resources and/or being unable to mobilise them (e.g., through claims on family solidarity), and the risk of suffering serious consequences. This is what happened to Marie.

A Structural Violence Associated with Pregnancy

Situations of pregnancy are often combined with situations of violence. Although the failure of a pregnancy is first and foremost painful for the woman, it may also raise suspicions among her in-laws and the wrath of her husband. Marie had a son by her husband who was three years old at the time of the interview. We met Marie four months after a miscarriage. She had complained of physical pain despite the drugs she had been prescribed at the hospital. She said that she had felt pain after carrying water from the public well while pregnant. She then started to bleed. She first went to the neighbouring health centre before being sent to the maternity hospital for emergency care. The young woman narrowly escaped death, but signs of exclusion marked her stay in the hospital. For example, it was her neighbours who paid for her medicine, and her 'sister' in the neighbourhood paid the hospital bill and for the taxi that drove her to the main hospital. Marie's co-wife did not give her any moral or material support, nor did she bother to inquire about her health or send her food. During the pregnancy, Marie's relationship with her husband was characterised by psychological and physical violence. She remembers that her pregnancy was marked both by a lack of sufficient food and conflict with her husband, who denied responsibility for the pregnancy. She was repeatedly beaten and also verbally abused. The acts of violence did not diminish with the

termination of the pregnancy; only the pretext of the accusations changed. Marie's husband accused her of voluntarily terminating her pregnancy and of witchcraft, claiming that she was guilty of causing the miscarriage by taking drugs. After this painful episode, the young woman claimed she had no wish to have another child. However, during the interview Marie showed signs of pregnancy, and our suspicions proved to be right a few months later.

As with HIV/AIDS (Castro & Farmer 2002), the women who are most socially and economically vulnerable are those who are the most exposed to unwanted pregnancy and obstetrical complications. Although they are aware of the risks of complications, they have limited financial capacity to access good quality care. As always, poverty is characterised by uncertainty of employment, a lack of resources, unequal access to material resources and a lack of power in decision-making: all these are inherent in women's life situations (Kinda 2000). Only in urgent situations can one mobilise financial resources: 'when the situation is burning, one can always find...'. In general, inequality generates violence whatever its forms and the relationships in which it exists⁵ (Héritier 1996: 31). However, it should be noted that in the field of healthcare, analyses have rarely taken into account simultaneous individual integration in the cycle of access to material resources and the reproductive cycle (Devreux 2001). Yet, physical fragility is coupled with a situation of guilt that compromises marital solidarity. We observed that the precariousness of the social relationship (the lack of marriage) exacerbated the fragility of women in situations of obstetric complications. Being an unmarried woman living with a man is in itself a vulnerability that crystallises with pregnancy and/or obstetrical complication (e.g., miscarriage, stillbirth, ectopic pregnancy).

After the miscarriage, the relationship between Marie and her husband did not improve. In fact, it got worse and was exacerbated by accusations of adultery. Marie's relative reported that Marie's 'husband' had caught her with a lover and had beaten her up. 'She was so sick that the next day she could not even stand up. She had pain all over her body. It was only on the second day that she could walk'. The husband then took the lover to the police, but they would not consider the complaint because the charge of adultery could not be justified given that there was no formal marriage between Marie and her husband. The case was therefore closed. The lover in question was a marabout and Marie justified her many visits to him by the fact that he was a regular customer at the cola stand and he wanted to help her find a job. It should be noted that Marie's relative disapproved of her conduct and accused her of 'being an easy lay'; someone who could not control her sexual desires. 'I told her I would

5 See also Coomasraswany (1995).

blame her husband if he had beaten her up just like that in the street, but since he had caught her in the house of another man, then I could not agree with the behaviour of Marie...Honestly, what she has done was bad, really bad'. She even described Marie's sexual conduct as 'pathological'. She told us that Marie had 'moved into the house of a traditional healer' in Gaoua with whom she had had a child that died shortly after birth. Then she moved in with another traditional healer with whom she had another child (her first daughter, aged about 6 and living in Gaoua).

As everywhere, adultery is common but is condemned by all social norms. The social norm in this case is therefore to be discreet and not to be seen in public, to preserve one's honour and that of others. Marie's indiscreet adulterous relationships were thus intolerable for society. Having to suffer physical and verbal abuse is the social response given not to the transgression of the prohibition of adultery, but rather to the transgression of the norm of discretion (Ouattara 1999; Kintz 1987). When Marie gave birth to her last child, her husband was in jail on a charge of embezzlement. When he returned home after ten days in prison, he denied being the father of the newborn and, to prove his position, refused to baptise the baby. Therefore two months after being born, the child still did not have a name. Marie's co-wife had, in her own way, also condemned the act of adultery: she refused to deal with the placenta that was brought home, arguing that she would not care for a child who was not her husband's. 'When they brought the placenta home...the co-wife said it was none of her business. ...The placenta stayed there until the night...they had to call other women from the neighbourhood over to bury it. The co-wife vowed not to touch the placenta because it was not the child of her husband'. Having a child without an identity is in itself a serious social sanction. Refusing to give an identity to a human being that one is responsible for is a major form of social and symbolic violence. This singular decision runs against the normative logic. The process of recognition of the filial bond that at the same time legitimises the marriage bond is then broken. In this regard, the action of Marie's partner can be interpreted as an act of symbolic violence towards social norms.

The Interstice between Ordinary Violence and Economic Vulnerability

The daily events in Marie's marital life are full of violence.⁶ She was regularly beaten for various reasons and the few savings she had, which she used to hide

⁶ For details about strained and violent relationships among couples, see Traoré (2005).

in her room, tended to disappear. When she talked to her husband about the matter, he beat her, not to deny his guilt but to show her that a woman should not accuse her husband of theft. Openly accusing the head of the family, despite his guilt, undermines his honour (Le Potvin 2005). In yet another situation, he tore off the door to her room in an attempt to make her leave the house. Marie then went to spend two days with a cousin who serves in the military, who helped Marie's husband to re-hang the door.

As if to show his power as a man and husband, he decided to confiscate Marie's identity card to prevent her from travelling. Marie knew that without a proper identity card, it would be difficult for her to undertake any travel, as she would be constantly exposed to police controls and identity checks. Acquiring another ID card would require money that she did not have. She even had problems feeding herself. During our interview, she was so hungry that she asked for some money so that she could get some food. Marie seemed doomed to be alienated. The sufferings and violence she endured were not reported.

Domestic violence is expressed in other contexts too. Marie had a degree from a training centre in Gaoua where she had studied dressmaking, embroidery, weaving and dyeing. Her brother had planned to start a small call centre that Marie would manage in Gaoua, but the project was compromised by Marie's lifestyle. 'He wanted to open a call centre for her in Dano. Having finished primary school, she could read and write. But all that initiative was useless', her relative explained. The failure of this project was probably at the root of the strained relationship between Marie and her only brother.

Marie managed to survive in Ouagadougou by doing small jobs, and for several months went from door to door in the neighbourhood to collect people's clothes to wash. This work proved physically exhausting, and she went on to do hairdressing. However this came to a quick end because during a fight with her husband, her finger was injured. She then asked her 'sister' to lend her some money to start a business in cola nuts. This 'sister', who worked as a teacher, was the only person who helped her financially. 'Even when she had to go to the hospital, her brother would not help her. Because of what happened between her and her brother he would not spend even a dime on her before they went to the village to settle their dispute. He believed that if he helped her, he might die. So he has no other choice than to leave the situation like that. I am the only one who can help her'. The intervention of the ancestors as custodians of family relations is claimed here to justify the decision not to help a 'relative'. Knowledge of an emergency situation does not necessarily lead to the mobilisation of family solidarity and declared solidarity is not automatically granted. If there is solidarity, it is 'calculated' and social norms put the individual in a 'reciprocal obligation of being socially altruistic' (Marie 2003: 14).

He who does not bother with generosity runs the risk of not receiving any support in situations of vulnerability. Ultimately, Robert Vuarin's (2000) observation from Bamako applies here as well: contrary to what everyone says, social support is not directed at those most in need socially and financially. Even situations of serious illness or deteriorating health due to pregnancy do not necessarily lead to a decision to facilitate access to healthcare. A unmarried woman is not automatically 'worth' this in the kinship network or in a polygamous couple.

To pay for medical treatment after the loss of her baby, Marie had to spend all her savings (FCFA 8000). In addition, medical advice recommending rest after leaving the hospital was ignored. Two weeks after leaving the hospital, Marie resumed her household activities, the most difficult of which was carrying water from the public well located several hundred metres from her home. She could count neither on financial assistance to buy water nor on help from her co-wife with such an exhausting physical activity. Her husband's financial situation was also precarious. When they first met, he was working for a construction company and then in Ouagadougou for a transport company. But his business was not doing well and shortly after Marie's arrival, he had to sell one of the family homesteads to cover his debts.

Despite her daily difficulties and loneliness, returning to her village did not appear to be a viable alternative for Marie. Fear of her parents' reaction undoubtedly discouraged her from returning, as she had left Gaoua without their consent. How could she return home having openly defied her whole family? On top of it all, Marie could not bring home anything but her experiences of life in the city, marked by acts of violence, loneliness, economic hardship and a 'child who did not even have a name'. To remedy this lack of identity once in the village, the child would be assigned the name of one of Marie's youngest brothers to ensure a birth certificate. Feared and dreaded, the village became a last resort when there was no further possibility of integration into an urban universe that had become perilous and left little room for individual integration into networks of mutual support. Paradoxically, at the same time as enabling individualism by making it possible to take some distance from social norms, the city also creates situation of social solitude, at least for the most vulnerable. The internalisation of norms and the consubstantial justification of lapses in behaviour justify the maintenance of family ties and possible return to one's village even in a situation of social failure. 'Really her living conditions were very bad, it was nothing but suffering', declared Marie's only relative in the city, stressing the specificity of the adversity that the young woman had to face. Such a confession attests to the ordinary of everyday character of this violence. The vulnerability brought about by her relationship with

her relatives and her difficult marital relationships thus fed each other in a circular manner.

Besides its social dimensions, it is important to stress here the justifying dimension of violence. Socially accepted violent behaviours require some legitimacy from the persons who engage in them. However, in order for them to be legitimised, the social logic underlying them should be governed by incorporated social norms or a desire to distance oneself from these norms: 'The unconscious brings an original solution to the arrangement because it allows for constraint in the form of a power inextricably external and internal to the person, like an internalised exteriority: a force that, externally would manifest itself as violence, possess people, constrain their inside, determine their behaviour by taking the shape of their will. It tends to blur the difference between physical violence and other forms of constraints, and ultimately, may end up treating all determinations equally, whether justifiable or not' (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991: 419, our translation). In practice, then, several forms of ordinary violence implicating unmarried pregnant woman are channelled through kin relationships involving alternately family and marital ties.

Social Violence and Gender Inequality

Mali's Young Bambara Domestic Workers

Jacky Bouju

Introduction

Urban migration in Mali is an ancient development that was started by young men in the colonial period.¹ However a few decades ago, the urban migration of young girls from all over the country started to become a major phenomenon. This female emigration was initially socially regulated and peasant girls from the same age group (15–17 year olds) used to leave their village to seek temporary employment in nearby urban areas where they were colloquially referred to as the '52'. This is a pun on the homophony between number cinquante-deux (fifty two) and the expression San-kaw-den ('children of the City of San' in the Bamanan language). These young peasant girls of San, a city to the east of Segou, were the first to migrate to urban areas to find domestic work in Malian cities. Today, migration is organized with the help of networks of earlier migrants who have settled in town. The urban host (*diatigi*)² helps the young migrant girl to find a family that will employ her as a housekeeper, maid or nanny. In the past, migrants rarely stayed in the city for longer than six months and they would usually return to work in the fields, like everyone else in their village, at the end of the dry season. After harvesting, they would then go to their future husband's village to get married. Once married, the young women would rarely leave the village again. Nowadays migration of the '52' has proliferated.³ In all regions in Mali, very young girls are now leaving their

-
- 1 After the First World War, young boys, Dogon and Bambara, left their villages in great numbers for the Gold Coast (today's Ghana) where they worked on cocoa and coffee plantations. Expelled from Ghana like all other foreigners in the 1970s, they then turned to Ivory Coast and the capital cities in the region, namely Bamako, Niamey and Ouagadougou. This is why even today young men are called 'Accra Boy', i.e. a young man from Accra (Ghana's capital city). Today, young men go to cities or to neighbouring countries in search of remunerative work between the two rainy seasons to find work to pay their taxes and meet the expense of marriage and other family needs.
 - 2 The *diatigi* is a trustworthy person who hosts a migrant, sometimes for a long time. It is usually someone who originates from the same village and the same ethnic group as the migrant.
 - 3 For example, two thirds of today's emigrants in Bambara villages in the Djenne region are very young girls.

villages to go to distant regional cities like Bamako, Segou, Djenne or Sikasso and to cities like Ouagadougou, Conakry, Dakar and Abidjan. Migration on such a massive scale by young peasant girls is being undertaken for cultural reasons linked to strong economic incentives. One of the main reasons is the paramount importance of the family's honour in village affairs. Honour is a strong incentive and motivates countrymen to accumulate savings in order to complete the purchase of costly 'modern' wedding trousseaus. This conspicuous rural competition for an expensive trousseau has had such an inflationary effect on the cost of the wedding itself that the girls' parents are no longer willing or able to afford to pay for everything by themselves. Today the wedding trousseau can be acquired only through money accumulated by the young migrant girls after several years of wage labour in harsh surroundings in cities. Although peasant girls always gave the need for bride wealth as a primary reason for migrating, my research shows that their migration was inspired by a complex set of different motives. Indeed, collecting bride-wealth items was the more legitimate reason while others were more hidden. Most were associated with feelings of deteriorating social links and living conditions in the villages. More specific reasons, like the obligation to care for a divorced mother, a widowed grandmother or an isolated aunt, appeared to be important extra incentives to undertake urban migration. And some expressed the wish to experience city life or escape forced marriage. Admittedly, these reasons were of a different nature but they were not necessarily at odds with others previously mentioned. The current situation is that numerous young peasant girls are leaving their villages for periods of five to six years to help their family and provide for their bride wealth. While in the urban areas, these young girls are quickly exposed to situations in which they may be sexually exploited⁴ and face the violence associated with these situations.

This chapter aims to show the social process that exposes young migrant peasant girls to ordinary violence. From an analysis of the situations of the '52' in the region of Djenne,⁵ the nature of their vulnerability to violence is

4 A UNICEF survey undertaken in Mopti by Brigitte Delay in 1999 established that 80% of young home helps (n: 769) had sexual intercourse in exchange for gifts or money. 15% became pregnant and, of these, 90% had a dangerous abortion to terminate their pregnancy. The remaining 10% were unmarried girls who were at risk of being banished from their village.

5 I coordinated field research on this topic in Mali for two years. The village data for the region of Jenne was collected by one of my students, Youssouf Maiga. The interviews involved different categories of people: unmarried migrant mothers, the migrants' parents, fiancés or lovers, village leaders, social workers, etc. A total of 85 interviews were conducted in 17 villages (Soala, Djenné-ville, Sirabougou bambara, Bougoula, Kouin, Gagna, Diongué bambara, Dorobougou, N'Dobougou, Yébé, Siratinti, Bankassi, N'Djibougou, Flaco, N'Gola, Kéké,

discussed according to the different circumstances that affect migrants' personal trajectories. Our starting hypothesis was that there was a link between their vulnerability to danger, their (total) submissiveness to their father's will and their ignorance of the outside (urban) world. Indeed, the survey showed that young migrant girls suffer a continuous process of victimization that sometimes endangers their lives. The first part of this chapter analyses elements of the social context and specific circumstances that have a decisive influence on the girls' situation. The focus is particularly on the violence inherent to the organization of the forced arranged marriage and early engagements⁶ in Bambara communities in the Djenne region. The second part considers the different forms of social violence faced by young girls due to their personal circumstances. It is discussed how moving from the village community context of structural violence to the urban context of hazards and risks drastically reduces their ability to cope successfully with harmful consequences.

The Local Context: Arranged Marriages, Forced Marriages

In Bambara villages in Mali's Djenne region, local, traditional customs are not perceived as oppressive. However, as evidenced by the life paths followed by young peasant girls, the marital family may become a closed and alienating world where the tyrannies of intimacy can be perpetrated with impunity. For most villagers, the internalization of the norms established by their ancestors leads to an acceptance of this kind of ordinary violence that is seen as a form of coercion. The young girl's destiny begins with an engagement that is arranged by her parents in early childhood and takes into account the past covenants between village families. Marriage is not only an opportunity to

M'Biabougou). The choice of village was motivated by the importance of female emigration from these places and the number of cases of banished unmarried mothers that had been registered in recent years. The data showed that there had been an average of 227 migrants per year in the 17 villages surveyed between 1996 and 2000. This survey resulted in a dissertation written by Youssouf Maïga, 2002, *Exclusion des filles-mères Bambara du cercle de Djénné*, Dissertation for the DSTSI, Collège Coopératif PAM, Aix-en-Provence.

6 Section 4 of Mali's *Code de mariage et de la tutelle* states in Paragraph 2 that no woman may enter into marriage before the age of fifteen. However, such a marriage could be authorized by a decision by the Minister of Justice, who is the only authority who can grant exemptions not subject to appeal. The Malian government has also established a legal framework to protect children against sexual exploitation. According to Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is 'every human being below 18 years old, unless majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to him'. In Mali, different age limits exist to define majority depending on the local context.

strengthen ties between two families of the same clan (*faden*),⁷ it is also a chance to increase the honour⁸ of the families concerned. The issues of honour and shame are ruled by the traditional 'ostentatious rivalry of the faden' called *fadenya*. *Fadenya* is a rule of individual pride that forces people to behave according to the most conformist interpretations of customary norms. This logic creates a situation of constant competition between brothers of the same clan, parents of large families or residents in a common neighbourhood. The rivalry is legitimate and is expressed publicly in family celebrations through ostentatious practices designed to expose signs of integrity and worthiness that one is supposed to possess and by dazzling people with the virtue of one's own family. The building of a virtuous reputation is directly linked to the accumulation of valued symbols designed to attract the esteem of others (Bourdieu 1966; Bouju et al. 2004: 30–33).

The Bambara of Djenne place the virginity of girls when they marry among the most valued family virtues. As a consequence, the loss of a girl's virginity before marriage brings shame and disgrace to her family and to herself. In these Bambara villages, a girl's social value depends exclusively on her reputation. The *fadenya* rivalry thus plays with public rumours about the virtuous behaviour of the fiancée. For the girl's parents, the social game consists of protecting themselves against any breach of the girl's good reputation. The challenge is such that it creates a situation of permanent suspicion in the girl's family. Everyone is watching everyone in order to catch somebody from the other family behaving badly, a situation that might seriously damage their honour. In this rivalry between opposing village patrilineal family heads, young girls are the weak link because they are what is at stake. Thus, any dishonourable behaviour by the young girl provides her fiancé's family with the opportunity to 'spoil'⁹ her own family's reputation. For villagers today, a girl's virginity at marriage is the main sign of respectability that allows a family to stand as a model of morality in the eyes of others. Virginity is seen to vouch for the submission and loyalty of the future bride. Nowadays, a girl who manages to offer this symbolic capital to her family is indeed offering her family a big present. The reputation of her family concerning the good education they have provided will be publicized in other villages and her sisters will be coveted as possible brides. This honourable reputation is also a promise of

7 *Faden* means father's children. *Faden* are the descendants of a common ancestor.

8 Bouju (2002: 100–102).

9 This question of honour is so important that in the past a Bambara head who was disgraced in front of others preferred to flee his village rather than endure sarcastic remarks on a daily basis. It was not uncommon that some committed suicide to escape disgrace.

gains¹⁰ for the father because suitors' families will be ready to spend a lot of money to ensure such an honourable marriage. Indeed, in order to marry a girl that embodies this ideal of female virginity, submission and fertility, Bambara villagers are willing to pay dearly. In addition to expenditures related to the engagement and the wedding itself, a husband can spend up to FCFA 700,000 a year¹¹ on his wife after the promise of marriage. To this amount must be added the grain and money that are given as presents before she joins her husband. It is thus easy to imagine the shame that will be caused if, on the day of the wedding, it is made public that the girl is not a virgin. During the interviews, many family heads mentioned the severity of traditional rule: 'Previously, the day after the wedding night, the girl who was not a virgin at wedding night was flogged in public by her husband until her blood ran'. This penalty was clearly intended to scare the other village girls. As for her mother, the people would point their finger at her. On the other hand, if the girl was a virgin, there were celebrations and she and her mother would receive presents. While we, anthropologists, consider such whipping as violence, the Bambara villagers see it as normal coercion imposed for a serious transgression of customary rules.

The Social Process of Arranged Marriages

By engaging in a matrimonial alliance, families also begin a cycle of reciprocity. A family that gives a daughter in marriage to another family will also later request a daughter in marriage from this family in return. A 65-year-old man from the village of Sirabougou summed up the matrimonial norms as follows: 'For us, Bambara, marriage must be at an early age so that girls and boys can have children quickly'.¹² When a young girl is identified as a bride-to-be, a boy's family head goes to a marabout or a soothsayer to find out whether he is doing well by asking for this girl in marriage for his son. If the answer is negative, he gives up and looks for another girl. Marriages are arranged by village families and the girl has no right to choose her own husband. She can only accept what her parents have decided for her. The same goes for the boy: he cannot refuse the girl that has been chosen for him.¹³ If he does, his parents will not help him

10 It is also a guarantee of not having to run up debts in order to pay the dowry to the bridegroom.

11 About €1067. Despite the high costs of marriage, almost all the men that we met had at least two wives.

12 A boy can be engaged after circumcision (at around the of age 10), while a girl is engaged between the ages of 3 and 7.

13 During fieldwork, no refusals were recorded. It should be noted that Malian law no longer allows early marriage and prohibits forced marriage.

pay for the wedding. When a family head starts looking for a wife for his son or for a young man that he is responsible for, he will inform all his relatives and friends in other villages and they will start looking for a (morally) suitable family with a marriageable daughter.

At this point, it is worth considering the values¹⁴ that characterize the ideal partner according to the villagers. Women's normal destiny is entirely in marriage: *muso dambé dé yé fourou yé*, 'the value of a woman lies only in marriage'. People in villages give no consideration to an unmarried adult woman.¹⁵ Still, marriage and childbearing are still not sufficient reason to treat a woman with respect. Respect must be earned by ostensible submission to her husband. This is why older village women consider the suffering endured by a married woman from her husband and his family as the only means of obtaining God's grace.¹⁶ Conversely, a man's reputation depends on the number of women he marries. It is only when a man has several wives that he can be considered as 'capable'.¹⁷ Generally, the more wives there are in a family, the more rivalry there is between them. According to the standards of *fadenya*, this is an issue of male honour: the more rivalry there is between his wives, the greater the man will be admired by other men. Therefore, it is a matter of pride for him to stir up competition among his wives, a practise sustained by the institution of the 'preferred wife', a *bara-muso* (the beloved one)¹⁸ among the wives. A man is at the same time envied and admired by other men if he can show publicly that he dominates his wives and that they are submissive.

When the choice of bride is settled, the head of the family sends the *fouroboloma Tigu*¹⁹ with ten cola nuts and FCFA 100 to the girl's father to inform him of his intention to seek the hand of the girl for a son in his family. These gifts are considered as a 'gateway', they are not refundable regardless of the answer. The girl's father asks for a few days of reflection and will in turn

14 A value is a persistent belief that a specific mode of conductor of existence is socially preferable to another (Milton Rokeach 1973, *The Nature of Human Values*, The Free Press).

15 An old woman in the village of N'gola, supported by a dozen other people, said: 'in our villages, an unmarried woman is considered as a malicious person, as someone who behaves badly'.

16 Several of them said that, to be answered, the prayers of a woman should be made on behalf of her husband. Among true believers, most think that only a woman who is submissive to her husband and receives his blessings will go to paradise.

17 Powerful.

18 Which is usually the youngest because she has more time to devote to her husband than the older ones who have to care for their children.

19 The person who is responsible for the marriage negotiations between the two families, it is usually the family griot.

consult soothsayers and marabouts. If everyone agrees to certify that the suitor is of good character, that divorce is not to be feared and that the girl will be the mother of many healthy, strong and vigorous children who will perpetuate his lineage and his blood, then the bride's father is happy. He subsequently announces his decision to his wife and daughter, his parents, the village chief and the council of elders. Finally, he informs the father of the suitor that the doors of his house are open to him. The engagement cycle continues by sending twenty cola nuts and FCFA 200. The girl's parents formally accept them and the girl is officially betrothed to the boy.²⁰ This reciprocal engagement makes the two families closer. It is in the period between the engagement and the wedding that the boy and his parents will spend a lot on gifts for the family-in-law. From then on, each year after the harvest and at religious festivals, the groom will perform his duties by sending cereals²¹ (millet, rice, etc.), cola nuts, clothing and shoes²² but also by helping his future in-laws with their work.²³ These services will be provided annually until the wedding (when the girl is between 16 and 19) and there will not be a wedding if there is any debt between the two families. An engagement is of paramount importance for the Bambara villages of Djenne as it is seen to be the beginning of a lasting alliance between two families. The wedding period is fixed by the boy's family although it is sometimes requested by the bride's family. If one of the families is not ready because it lacks the means to meet the expenses or one of the couple is away, then a request for postponement can be sent to the other family through a mediator (*fourouboloma tiguï*). At a time agreed by both families, the groom's family sends his mediator with cola nuts and the bride wealth (FCFA 1000). This amount, which belongs to the woman, will be needed to pay for the wedding that will take place in the village of the bride-to-be. The wedding ceremony (*konyo*) lasts for a whole week. On the wedding day itself, an old caste woman (*Kogno woulouni*) will check the girl's virginity and declare the results publicly to the parents and the village council. It is at this crucial moment of collective village assessment that the honour of the girl and her family is at stake and

20 During the public announcement of the engagement by the girl's mother, the boy's parents send her another 10 cola nuts and FCFA 500 or FCFA 1000. Marriage is a significant economic expense for the boy's family.

21 About 450 kg of grain is given to the bride's family annually by the bridegroom's father as soon as the boy reaches the age of 7 and this continues until the wedding.

22 At Tabaski, Ramadan and Sanyèlèma (new year) celebrations, 10 cola nuts are offered to the father-in-law, and clothes, shoes, pomade, perfumes etc. are presented to the bride.

23 Twice a year during the rainy season, the groom asks his age-group friends to help him sow and harvest his bride's father's field.

everyone can understand what public humiliation would mean. Then the young woman will return to her parents for two weeks. After that, she will join her husband for two weeks. In that time, she will learn her role as a wife and will be informed of her in-laws' requirements in terms of domestic chores. She will thus be tested by her parents-in-law as a future mother and cook. After this, she will again return to her parents with gifts from her husband and her parents-in-law and she will spend the whole dry season with them working the cotton with her mother to make clothes for her husband. During the rainy season and harvest, she will again return to her in-laws to help them work their land. This is a good moment for the parents-in-law to test the courage of their daughter-in-law. After the harvest, she will return to her parents with about 1000 kg of cereals. This constant moving between families will continue for two or three years before her husband asks her to move for good, with or without her wedding trousseau, depending on whether her mother is ready. If the mother is not ready, she will move to join her husband with just her kitchen utensils. It is only when the wedding trousseau is completed that it will be publicly exhibited in the village. After definitely moving to her husband's compound, the woman will start her normal married life. In the months and years that follow, she must demonstrate her fertility or she will be suspected of all kinds of evils.

A man marries primarily to have a large family.²⁴ This means that it is not enough for a woman to honour her family-in-law by preserving her virginity or by her submissive behaviour. She must also bear a lot of children who will help her aging family-in-law to work their fields. It is clear that the spread of urban female migration deeply disturbs the ideal model of the Bambara wife as it is presented here. And men are well aware of this. They consider urban migration to be the main reason why young girls refuse the bridegroom proposed to them. The worst thing, they say, is that some girls return home with babies whose father is totally unknown to them.

Preparing the Wedding Trousseau

People say that mothers used to be responsible for preparing the wedding trousseau for their daughters. The mother earned the necessary money to buy the items for the trousseau by selling the cereal surplus that they received from their daughter's fiancé. They also sold their own harvest of groundnuts and millet. At that time, the traditional trousseau was composed of jars, calabashes, mats, a mortar and pestle, and bridal finery (Diarra & Kone 1991). Mothers also

24 A child born outside marriage has neither status or family. According to Bambara custom, such a child simply does not exist.

used to spin cotton and weaved it to make clothes for the bridegroom. This was enough to pay for the wedding trousseau and mothers did not need to have their daughters work in the city to earn money for their wedding. But today, it is unthinkable that a girl marries with only a traditional wedding trousseau. The economic inequalities among village families and the inflationary pressure of *fadenya* have inexorably imposed new standards. The monetary resources of the mother and the gifts of the groom are no longer sufficient to pay for the trousseau, which has grown in both size and content. The modern trousseau has quickly become a symbol of social status that confers prestige on the girl who prepared it and on her family. But it is also considered as a major contribution by the family-in-law. Returning to her village after migration, a girl will be judged on the basis of the 'treasures' that she has brought from the city and that invariably include dishes, pots, lamps, clothes, mirrors, shoes, carpets, a wardrobe, a bed and a table. All in all, the average trousseau amounts to FCFA 200,000.²⁵ The trousseau that the family will proudly display is today impossible to gather having seen the parents' monetary resources. The poor girls who cannot collect the whole trousseau before their wedding must swallow their pride and borrow the elements they lack from other girls. On the wedding day, this will not prevent the mockery and ridicules of other women when the content of the trousseau is publicly displayed. Humiliation will be unavoidable.

To protect their families against *fadenya* humiliation and to honour themselves, the young girls have no choice but to migrate to cities to work as domestic servants or street vendors.²⁶ But because they are very poorly paid, they have to stay away for a long time (three to four years) to earn enough money to pay for the trousseau items they require. Sometimes, they return to their village just in time to get married.

25 About €305.

26 All regions in Mali are concerned with young girls' urban migration to collect their wedding trousseau. In the region of Kayes, 'young teenage girls (...) very often take the road of major cities in the desperate search of a wedding trousseau for a marriage which in most cases is imposed on them, making them once again victims of forced and/or early marriages, common in this part of the country more than anywhere else' (van der Veld & Sogoba 2005: 35). Girls who went to Sikasso to work as domestic workers and earn money for their trousseau are exploited by their bosses who ask them to bring home an extra amount of money (around FCFA 500–750 per day). Thus, after completing their domestic chores, the girls are often forced to sell bananas, oranges, water, etc., for the rest of the day to earn additional money. They may be punished or insulted if they fail to give this money to their employers. During their activities as vendors, these girls are often offered money for sex (van der Veld & Sogoba 2005: 46–47).

In most cases, the girls do not require the consent of their parents to migrate to the city. The young domestic servants that were interviewed in Sévaré and Mopti said that most of them had secretly saved up money to pay for the journey. Sometimes they had even stolen money from their mother to finance their trip to the city. Interviews indicated that fathers are against their daughters' migration because of possible unwanted pregnancies and also due to the problems they face with reintegrating into village life. However, despite their official disapproval, fathers (who believe that completing the wedding trousseau is not their responsibility) make little effort to prevent their daughters' migration. At the same time, mothers said that they were against their daughters' migration too but the majority of the men and women interviewed in the villages indicated that most mothers were in fact informed of their daughters' intentions to migrate. As they are unable to provide the financial means to buy a modern trousseau, parents adopt a *laissez-faire* attitude and let their daughters migrate to the nearby cities of Djenne and Mopti. If she settles in the town of Mopti, the girl is usually housed by a family relative, and if she is in the nearby town of Djenne, she can see her mother on market days. As for her father, he usually keeps away and will only learn about his daughter from his wife whenever she brings good news. Bad news is usually resolved without the father's intervention because, according to women, his involvement would complicate the situation. In general, girls who migrate to Djenne and Mopti return for a visit to their village every year. With the opportunities and freedom it offers, the city does not lack attractions for young peasant girls.

Migrant girls who become street vendors or domestic servants in the city are quickly faced with hazards that include exploitation, ill treatment, daily humiliation and/or sexual abuse. Most are unable to cope with these situations because they lack the economic, social, cultural or cognitive skills needed to do so. Furthermore, in the Malian context, the girls have very low resilience. When they arrive in town, young migrant girls engage in a process of identity maintenance (Delor & Hubert 2003) that consists of maintaining close social ties with village relatives. Consequently, they choose to be housed by a relative or a classificatory aunt. The host usually employs the girl as a street peddler or s/he places her as a domestic servant. In the first phase of their migration 'career', girls may be exposed to their employers' attempts to sexually abuse them. These young girls, who are often under 15, work all day seven days a week, with little rest and for low wages (FCFA 3000 to FCFA 5000 a month depending on the city and the employer). On a working day, they may be responsible for a dozen different tasks and often do not get enough to eat,

having to make do with leftovers after everyone else has finished eating.²⁷ They are also frequently victims of humiliation and are beaten by their employers and relatives to whom the employer has complained about the girl's pseudo rebellious behaviour. Finally, these young girls are subjected to daily sexual harassment²⁸ to the point that many of them confide that they were forced or coerced to have sexual relations with the husband or son of their female boss, or even with another servant in the house. In addition, many employers do not pay salaries regularly, so that after several months of work when the girl wants to return to her village, the employer is sometimes unable to pay them their full wages.

Many girls are then forced to extend their stay in town and wait for their full salary, which can sometimes take months unless a third person intervenes on their behalf. Sometimes, the girl asks her employer to keep her savings but she may use the money and later is not able to pay back the money left with her for safekeeping. The humiliation the girls suffer in their subjugated situation often deprives them of all autonomy and personal responsibility, i.e. of their right to see themselves as a person 'like others'. In such a situation of psychic and physical abuse, they feel a loss of self-esteem and self-respect that can affect their feelings of their own social value. This is a main source of psychological trauma for these girls and it often deprives them of any possibility of seeing positive value in their own abilities and encourages the kind of 'dumb' expression that they often show in the presence of their boss. Besides any sexual abuse they suffer in the house of their employer, the girls admit having sexual partners that they themselves choose, such as a boyfriend who also works in town and is usually from the same village or region as they are. This way they try to maintain and positively construct their identity. Sometimes they have other lovers who may be family members who come to town. Most of them will offer some money or a gift in exchange for sex. Indeed, as they are very poorly paid, the

27 Not only do they face new eating habits, but also the amount of food they are given is insufficient for the physical effort they have to extend.

28 And yet, they have never received any sexual education because in rural families, the sense of decency forbids any mention of sex between parents and children. To protect her daughter against unwanted pregnancies and prevent the disgrace of an unwanted pregnancy, a mother usually consults a marabout or a soothsayer who, after making some sacrifices, gives amulets or 'holy water' to the mother who gives them to her daughter, but again without explanation because of decency. All the girls who have been interviewed confirmed that they had received a magic protection from their mother. Some girls believe so deeply in the efficiency of their charms that they think they are immune to the threat of pregnancy and indulge in reckless sexual behaviour.

majority of them have sexual relations²⁹ for money. They also visit bars and/or meet 'clients' in the street at night when their housework is finished. Those who sleep in the home of a female host are more at risk of this form of prostitution than girls who sleep in their employer's house. Many young girls³⁰ come to gradually combine domestic work with that of (occasional) prostitution in order to generate enough savings and gifts to satisfy their parents.

Second Risk: Banishment for the 'Crime' of Pregnancy Outside of Marriage

The first risk from having voluntarily or coerced sexual relations is that the girls may become pregnant by someone other than their promised groom, and many of these sexual adventures do end in pregnancy. If the pregnancy is not terminated, it will in turn lead to a series of serious social risks for the girl, since the birth of a child outside marriage is never desired. However, in some places, although this is a family humiliation, the child is forgiven because s/he is innocent and should not suffer from the sins committed by his/her parents. The child is thus accepted with his/her mother who is tolerated even though relations with her parents will have seriously deteriorated. But among the Bambara of Djenne, the pregnancy of a girl outside of wedlock is a very serious matter, sometimes even considered tantamount to a crime that will expose all the participants to shame and dishonour, humiliation for the girl, lasting disgrace for her parents and insult to the family of the bridegroom. Such a crime is punished by banishing the culprit and her offspring. This way of thinking was similar in all the villages involved in the survey. However, fieldwork showed that the level of punishment was not the same everywhere and that there was a difference in behaviour between the larger villages like Keke, Won, N'Gola and Sirabougou and the smaller villages in the region. In larger villages, there was a higher percentage of unwanted pregnancies (between 10% and 15% of

29 Like migrant boys, they have become a vehicle for the transmission of AIDS and other STDs in the villages.

30 Sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes is a fundamental violation of their rights. It comprises sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or in kind paid to the child or a third person. The child is treated as a sexual and a commercial object. Sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes is a form of coercion and violence against children and amounts to forced labour and a contemporary form of slavery. Declaration and Program of Action, First Congress against sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes, Stockholm, Sweden, 27–31 August 1996. Document: A/51/385, Paragraph 5.

migrant girls), which can be explained by the fact that contact with the city is more intense and changes of behaviour more rapidly adopted than in the smaller villages like Kouin, M'Biabougou, Yebe and Dorobougou where there were few cases of unwanted pregnancy among migrant girls (2% to 0% of migrants girls) (Maïga 2002: 81). A tradition that justifies the rejection of the new-born claims that the ancestors have laid a curse on any family that hosts a girl and her illegitimate child. In villages like Siratini, M'Biabougou, Bankassi and N'Gola, people have asserted that any family that violated this established rule would be marginalized.

More surprisingly, another belief is that a child born from an act of true love between his/her parents³¹ will be a future social leader and thus dominate the other children in the family, and even the village. The extended family would finally depend on him so such a fate is perceived as a curse for the chiefs. Village mothers require their migrant daughters never to come back to the village with a child and in the case of pregnancy to do everything to get rid of the child. In this case, it is less the 'mistake' committed by the young girl than the physical existence of the child born out of marriage that is severely punished.³² The baby must be abandoned and if the young mother does not resolve to do so, she will be banished from the village with her child.³³ As for the parents of the bridegroom who are the main actors in the marital arrangement, their choice is considerate and hopeful. Thus, the illegitimate pregnancy of the bride-to-be is seen as a betrayal of the trust placed in the girl. Her misconduct deeply affects the honour of her fiancé who feels unable to accept the child. This is not only because of the threat it would cast on his legitimate offspring but also because the mere presence of the child would always remind him of his bride's insubordination and of his own shame for having once been challenged and shamed by an unknown rival. In such a situation, the groom and his family initially adopt a position of silence to show that they feel insulted. Then they ask the girl's family to find a solution to this humiliating situation. But at this point they can hardly do more to show their discontent. The simplest solution for the groom's family is certainly to break off the engagement. But they would not go that far because by doing so, they would lose the right to

31 It is believed that a child born outside marriage usually has parents who were very much in love at the time of conception.

32 Four unmarried mothers stated that they had illegal abortions to escape the unbearable social pressure placed on them by daily sarcasm that would remind them of their actions.

33 According to the survey, only 9% of unmarried mothers were accepted (with their child) by their families, the rest, i.e. 91% of mothers, were banished with their babies (Maïga 2002: 22).

claim the entire amount of the dowry already paid. The groom's family therefore does everything it can to force the girl's parents to break off the marriage and pay back the dowry. The idea of recovering the entire amount paid is to facilitate the search for a new bride. From its side, the bride's family must find a solution either by ensuring that the groom's family breaks off the marriage (thus avoiding having to pay the dowry) or by letting the wedding go ahead while accepting the new-born.³⁴

Most of the time, the bride's family head cannot, or does not want to, pay back what he has already received during the engagement and he will do everything he can to avoid the marriage from breaking down. The groom himself cannot refuse because his family would not accept losing the economic investment made over the years. Then the young man is compelled to accept his bride 'as she is' and he will marry her despite his dented honour. But, from now on, he and his family will make the bride pay dearly for her disgraceful behaviour. In her conjugal family, which is her family of residence in the village, the young woman will be abused not only by her husband but also by her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law who will make her a domestic slave. For his part and to erase the painful memory of this disgrace, the young husband will quickly take a second wife, with the marriage taking place according to the prevailing norms. In this case, the dishonoured first wife will be reduced to the role of a submissive servant to the second wife for the rest of her life. To escape this fate, the pregnant girl will mobilize the scarce resources she has. Her lover is the first person she will turn to in the case of family banishment. But if the lover does not recognize the child, she will have to face the problem alone. If her lover accepts the child, he will let the girl solve her problems with her parents or ask to marry her. In this case, he will give the girl's father the refund of the dowry and, if the girl had been excluded from her family, he will seek a go-between who can help him arrange the marriage. If the girl's family refuses, the couple could decide to run away and start a new life far away from the village. But, if the lover does not accept responsibility for the child, or if the pregnancy is the result of sexual abuse or a rape, then the girl will try to do anything to escape the threat of banishment, even at the cost of her own life. She will consider extreme solutions such as an illegal abortion,³⁵ child abandonment or even infanticide. Any of these violent solutions may be undertaken with the complicity of her mother to erase the physical evidence of her disgrace and that of her family.

34 In poor families, the girl is increasingly banished from the family home and told to find a means to pay back the dowry of her ex-fiancé.

35 In the villages surveyed, 70% of migrant domestic workers had had an abortion.

Third Risk: Abortion, Infanticide, Physical and Psychological Suffering

The first problem that pregnant domestic workers face is keeping their job. An employer will not hire a pregnant girl or a young mother who cannot be put to work like a beast of burden. A first escape is offered through abortion. The survey showed that the abortion rate was higher in smaller villages (M'Biabougou: 100%) than in larger villages (60% to 80%). This can probably be explained by the fact that people in smaller villages live in a society where enduring the daily humiliation of contemptuous words and scornful looks is unbearable. Nevertheless, some girls who had hoped to influence their fathers positively had chosen to give birth.³⁶ For others, recourse to illegal abortion can be dangerous, especially when it is executed by unskilled persons using unhygienic methods.³⁷ As a consequence, the young girl may face serious physical damage and gynaecological complications. Her life is often put in danger by the risk of infection and bleeding. If the girl does not die, her uterus may be so injured that she will have recurrent miscarriages and painful subsequent deliveries or even become infertile. But if an abortion is successful, no one is aware of it and the daughter and her family have a chance of escaping disgrace. When the idea of an abortion is abandoned, a decision needs to be taken about the delivery. Various solutions can be considered by the young mother to escape disgrace and banishment: infanticide or abandoning the child by giving it to a third person (27% of cases). Most often, the new-born is abandoned at the door of a family. Sometimes the young mother pretends to leave her child in the care of an elderly woman for a few minutes and then disappears forever. When faced with such a 'gift' some families take the baby to the police or to the office of the administrative *Service de Développement Social et de l'Economie Solidaire*, while others will adopt the child without notifying anyone of its existence. And, last but not least, infanticide is sometimes carried out³⁸ by young mothers. Infanticide and the abandoning of babies³⁹ tend to occur in the town of Djenne between the months of April and July when the village mothers ask their daughters who have migrated to return home to help with cultivation work.

36 30% of the domestic workers surveyed.

37 To carry out an abortion, most girls use chloroquine, potassium permanganate or other chemical powders or detergents.

38 In 9% of the cases of domestic workers surveyed.

39 The survey showed that out of 22 successful deliveries, 9 young mothers kept their children while 13 others got rid of them in one way or another.

Fourth Risk: Family Banishment, Prostitution and Stigmatization

By this point in their migration, the young peasant girls who came to the city to earn money for their wedding trousseau have been exposed to many forms of ordinary violence. Many will have been sexually abused or raped several times. Physical abuse is arguably one of the deepest humiliations that a human being can undergo. The humiliation they suffer from the contemptuous looks that people give them because they do not have a husband and the continuous attempts by men to take possession of their bodies against their will create a level of humiliation that gradually destroys their self-esteem. And beyond the physical suffering caused by the denigration or the sexual abuse, there is the psychological and moral suffering from having been ceaselessly exposed as being defenceless to the will of others (Delor & Hubert 2003: 8, footnote 4). The migrant girls are exhausted from suffering alone and often end up experiencing emotional difficulties and feelings of guilt mixed with resentment that then generate frustration. Yet, in spite of the problems that they may face later as a consequence of their decisions, some girls decide not to abandon their babies and choose to become unmarried mothers.⁴⁰ They remain in contact with their mothers in an attempt to resolve the problem discreetly but if they fail to find an acceptable solution, the mother, in turn, is likely to abandon her daughter for fear of being repudiated. At this point, when they can no longer rely on any family help, peasant girls are banished.⁴¹ Of the 22 unmarried mothers surveyed in the region of Djenne, 12 were able to return to their families after long negotiations but ten of them had to get rid of their children in one of the ways mentioned above. Only two had been able to return to the village with their children but they had been excluded from their age-group association, which meant that they could no longer participate in any village festivities. The other ten girls (45%) had been banned from contact with their families. Among these girls, four got married in town either to the child's father or to someone else. Finally, six remained alone with their children in the city, hoping to find a husband. But to survive and take care of themselves and their offspring, they were left with little alternative but to become involved in prostitution. These banished girls will often try their luck by migrating to the major cities of Segou, Bamako, Sikasso, Abidjan, Conakry or Dakar. Their mothers,

40 In 41% of the cases of domestic workers surveyed. Cases of delivery are higher in villages with large populations, like Keke (36%) and Gagna (33%). In small villages, on the other hand, there are far fewer deliveries.

41 Banishment implies being deprived of one's rights and excluded from the social milieu to which one belonged. In a society ruled by kinship, banishment is a very severe form of punishment.

whose consent is not required, are usually informed of their daughters' decisions but, from now on, the girls will be beyond the control and influence of their family and will be exposed to new risks that they will have to face alone. Nevertheless, through the social network of classificatory kin, girls often find an 'aunt' who lives alone in town and agrees to offer her accommodation. The aunt will take the opportunity to exploit the girl, either by placing her in a family as a domestic worker or by getting her to be a street peddler. But she will also advise the girl to find a boyfriend 'just like all the girls of her age'. However, working as a street vendor, housekeeper or laundry worker does not pay much and the aunt will begin to complain, pointing to her 'niece' who she adopted and saved from the street but claiming that she is a burden and must work harder to pay for her board. If the girl does not bring in enough money, she will be insulted and her salary cut. So to make more money, the girl will gradually turn to prostitution like other young girls in a similar situation.⁴²

In all Malian cities, one can see young girls aged 15 to 18 soliciting for clients in bars, restaurants, hotels, markets, bus and railway stations and other public places like streets, sidewalks and crossroads, construction sites, schools, residential neighbourhoods in major cities and other places less visited by the public at certain hours (unfinished buildings, markets, piece of waste land). Most girls think that this is the only way possible to living independently and they point out that the practice of prostitution is widespread in urban society. They know about negative social attitudes to the practice of prostitution but they do not want to give up its benefits. For a girl, it is indeed the easiest way to earn money in a short time. In Bamako, a girl can earn between FCFA 1500 and FCFA 4000⁴³ per trick when she meets her client in a bar. But if the client takes her elsewhere, he pays a higher price (between FCFA 10,000 and FCFA 15,000). One girl confided that she could earn between FCFA 10,000 and FCFA 30,000 in a weekend. Attracted by the lure of easy money, some take additional risks by agreeing to sex without a condom. The price is higher, and some men are ready to pay from FCFA 15,000 to FCFA 50,000 for unprotected sex.⁴⁴ Based on an average income of FCFA 20,000 per weekend, it would seem that girls can earn a monthly income of about FCFA 80,000, while the monthly salary of a domestic worker ranges from FCFA 3000 and FCFA 5000. Prostitution therefore appears as

42 See van der Velde & Sogoba (2005) on the sexual exploitation of children in Bamako, Kayes and Sikasso.

43 But in smaller urban centres, earnings are lower than in Bamako, between FCFA 750 and FCFA 1500 per client and between FCFA 2500 and FCFA 5000 for sex without a condom. These girls earn about FCFA 1500 to FCFA 8000 a night (FCFA 2000 = €3).

44 Van der Velde & Sogoba (2005).

a very attractive alternative for migrant girls who can earn large sums of money compared to the pittance given by their employer or host who also puts additional pressure on them to bring in extra money. However, prostitution is a risky way to earn one's independence and autonomy. The risks are associated with the negative consequences of prostitution and sexual exploitation. As part of their business, they sometimes encounter violent clients who are drunk, do not want to pay or want to have sex without a condom, which exposes them to the additional risks of HIV/AIDS. They may be abused, fooled, beaten, threatened, robbed or raped by their clients, by street boys or by policemen but the main risks they face are illegal abortions, infanticide and child abandonment that can have serious consequences on the physical and mental development of the girls. In their neighbourhood, they are insulted by other girls who are jealous of their earnings and also by ordinary women who are jealous of their beauty and freedom or by the men that they have rejected. All these people engage in a collective stigmatization of the girls by denigrating them publicly. Daily experiences of contempt and denigration prevent them from any possibility of valuing their own abilities and from having any kind of self-esteem and self-respect. Many of them hide when they meet someone who knows their family but some, on the contrary, display their new identity as a prostitute with arrogance or indifference. Not only does the girl behave in accordance with what is expected but she will even 'exaggerate' this behaviour, exacerbating it and turning it against those who do the stigmatizing as a way of escape. Stigmatization creates a reactive violence and the result is the establishment of a vicious cycle of violence that is constantly reinforced by provocations confirming the stereotypes. The experience of all this suffering profoundly affects the girls' sense of otherness and the legitimacy of the institutions that they no longer consider able to ensure their social integration. They detach themselves easily from their peasant culture,⁴⁵ but are not able to internalize all the norms and values of the urban culture that fascinates them so much.

Conclusion

Caught between two cultures, the young migrant girls do not feel at home anywhere. They settle in a marginal state of 'double non-belonging' reinforced by their membership of urban places of tolerated deviance. The identity reconstruction of the 52s has to be seen as a simultaneous process of differentiation

45 Some girls clearly consider prostitution as a form of rebellion against violence by their family or the village order.

(that expresses their need for autonomy and emancipation and thus creating distance from the village norms) and of affiliation (that expresses their need for social links thus reducing the gap that separates them from the practical rules of marginal urban groups). By belonging to a versatile micro society of 'nightclub girls', they try to build up a transitional identity in a violent social environment that nevertheless offers them a solidarity that the 'good' society is not able to offer them in any way. In the particular context of tolerated areas of deviance in which they operate, they continually reconstruct the dynamic system of increasing social distances and reducing differences that connect them to the significant others in their social categories of reference (Bouju 2004). Most girls said that they hoped to abandon prostitution one day and that their goal was to earn enough money to start a small business that would make them independent financially until someone marries them. This aspiration to a very conformist model of female success demonstrates their capacity for resilience.

I have tried to describe here the precise social and cultural circumstances that determine the life course of young migrant peasant girls in the Djenne region in Mali. The recurrent situations of ordinary violence that they experience refer to a context of global anomie characterized by normative⁴⁶ conflicts resulting from the instable plurality of legal norms and legitimate traditional rules. Relatively autonomous urban and rural social orders generate heterogeneous norms of behaviour. They also shelter places of deviance and tolerated violence that common sense discourse on violence tends to hide. We have seen how the trajectories of the '52' are marked by repeated violent events. The situation of violence that they experience lies in the unequal gender relationships (legal, social and economic) on which marriage is based in peasant Bambara society. The girls' inequality of access to human rights increases their vulnerability to hazards and risks of violence. Given the fact that the law that should protect them from forced marriage is neither respected or enforced, marriage is contracted through local Bambara village customs and marital exchanges and alliances are ruled by rivalries of honour that put the girls' virginity as the major stake in the matrimonial game. This situation is so 'normal' that, as a Malian judicial authority noted, women victims of early marriage never complain. The victims, witnesses or neighbours do not resort to law enforcement. Similarly, cases of sexual harassment, sexual abuse or rape are never reported to the authorities. This lack of judicial action and complaint is mainly due to the fear of dishonour. But there is more. Few people know the law, few are

46 Delor & Hubert (2003: 18) have rightly underlined how normative discrepancies appear to be crucial factors in tension and social disruption.

aware of their rights and are able to claim them. The shame and disgrace attached to the stigma of losing one's virginity drive people to remain silent and cover up violence. They do so by using religious and local leaders who will find an arrangement between families rather than pursuing the perpetrator in court. Indeed, young urban domestic workers are not socially recognized as persons with full rights as citizens. It follows that the punishment they endure of being banished from the family and the village has the inevitable consequence of exposing these young migrant girls to the risks of various forms of ordinary violence. Those who benefit from the dependent situation of the girls, like the bar owner that exploits them at night or the men who abuse them, claim that the girls have deliberately chosen prostitution and that they have decided voluntarily to make a living this way. It is common to hear that the sexual exploitation of young girls is a consequence of declining moral values and the fact that parents no longer have any authority over their children. 'Before, there was forced marriage and it prevented the children to adopt certain behaviour. Today parents can no longer force their children to marry. Customs are violated; children marry the man or woman of their choice, regardless of ethnicity or social status' (van der Veld & Sogoba 2005: 28).

This chapter has shown that this is not the case. The current economic conditions of early marriages in rural areas are a major obstacle to the protection of young girls' rights. The emphasis on virginity, the failure of the head of the family to face his responsibilities in organizing the wedding trousseau, the lack of tolerance and pity for the poor condition of the young girl, the silence surrounding the sexual abuses she suffers and finally her banishment or being assigned as a domestic worker for the rest of her life are village practices motivated by the traditional 'sense of honour' (*fadenya*). It is the prevailing values of *fadenya* that expose young peasant girls to all sorts of risks without any consideration for their human rights. Ordinary violence, like that experienced by young domestic workers, is obviously due to the inability of the village community to tolerate deviance. On the contrary, the city is characterized by a proliferation of tolerated areas of social deviance and a proliferation of ordinary violence. The prevailing normative pluralism leaves everybody helpless: village rules demand early arranged marriages (considered legitimate from the community's perspective, but illegal from a state's perspective) and banish young girls who fall pregnant outside marriage. And while the law condemns forced marriage and the sexual exploitation of underage girls, at the same time the urban social order is responsible for organising and tolerating prostitution. The adaptation of individual behaviour to this normative cacophony is certainly not easy. Indeed, by becoming pregnant while living in town, the young girls violate the standards of village tradition, by abandoning their child or

carrying out infanticide, they break the law, and by engaging in systematic prostitution, they openly violate cardinal values of the shared moral standards of the global society. But, as we have shown, they are overwhelmed by successive situations of ordinary violence in which they are the victims before they become perpetrators. By way of conclusion, it can be said that ordinary violence is such because, despite its many illegal characteristics, it is widely accepted and therefore legitimated in the daily lives of ordinary people. This case study has shown that in Malian society there are social categories that are much more in danger of suffering ordinary violence than others. And, among these, young female domestic workers are especially vulnerable and become victimized. Another conclusion that can be drawn is that ordinary social violence takes place in the process of uneven social exchanges and, like gifts, violence appears to be given, received and given back in an indefinite cycle of exchange. But for the weakest, social risks lead to inescapable and sequential experiences of ordinary violence: sexual harassment, rape, illegitimate pregnancies, abortion, physical and psychological suffering, family banishment, prostitution and stigmatization.

The Itinerant Koranic School

Contested Practice in the History of Religion and Society in Central Chad

Mirjam de Bruijn

The daily market in the small town of Mongo in Guera Province in Central Chad is crowded with malnourished and badly dressed children between the ages of 6 and 16. They gather around any newcomer who may need someone to carry their luggage or who might hopefully give them a small gift out of pity or just because it is normal to do so. The majority are Koranic students who come to the market or wander the streets to find their daily meal by begging or doing small jobs. In the early morning, afternoon and evening they study the Koran, supervised by older students and their teacher, the *fâkih*. Many of these 'schools' come from regions other than the Mongo area, in most cases from the northeast. Although travelling schools are an accepted reality in the Chadian social landscape, their numbers are outgrowing the capacity of the population of this small town. People in Mongo are complaining that they cannot supply all these children with food every day. Indeed, it is clear from the children's appearance that they are not getting a balanced diet. There is no organised social care for these children nor do they find any structural support from NGOs or the local community.

observations summarized by Mirjam during fieldwork in 2003

Introduction

I made these observations during my stay in Mongo in Central Chad in 2002 and 2003. It was shocking to see such children and so I tried to find out more about these schools and understand why the children were in Mongo and not at home with their families. The main explanation for the situation could be Chad's recent history and the current levels of poverty in a country that recently experienced 30 years of civil war and where development has been virtually impossible because of a lack of political will. In these terms the rights of the children are violated and the schools could be interpreted as a form of (structural) violence, like forms of poverty can be. However such a perspective would set the schools and the teachers in the position of perpetrators and the children in the position of victims. I will not

deny that what I saw in the schools and the condition of the pupils can indeed easily fit an explanation of structural violence. However such explanation did not fit the way the pupils, their parents and the teachers see it themselves. Why do children join these schools voluntarily? They gave themselves as answer to such questioning that they joined out of religious piety and for the career perspectives the schools offer. From the people who were, like me, observing the schools, the inhabitants of Mongo, nobody outwardly condemned the practice. Instead, I met many people who contributed to the system by inviting the Muslim teachers and their pupils to stay in their houses. Today, however, the practices of these schools are becoming increasingly contested under the influence of NGO activities, who have embraced the structural violence thesis and defend the rights of the children, and the introduction of modern Islamic schools that are considered a good alternative for these itinerant schools.

In this chapter I pursue the discussion about these schools between them being structural violence, violating children's rights or systems of cultural and social practice. To understand the situation of the schools today it is important to situate them in the historical, religious and socio-economic context of Central Chad. Policy practice, the reactions of civil society and recent contestation of the schools will be discussed to help explain the phenomenon. Each of these players in the theatre of the Koranic school has its own subjective interpretation of the situation. Central question in this article is how these various subjectivities varying from cultural and social practices to structural violence come together in the practice of the Koranic schools in Central Chad. On an empirical level I am also questioning why these itinerant Koranic schools that do have a cultural and social history, have developed into a phenomenon that we can indeed interpret as an act of structural violence against children.

The data presented were collected when I was living in Chad in 2002 and 2003 and during later visits in 2004 and 2005. After making some general observations and interviewing both teachers and pupils, I decided to carry out a more systematic study of the practice. A team of health workers in Mongo did surveys and short interviews and a nutritionist undertook a health survey among the children. Discussions and interviews with the Imam, social workers and ordinary citizens completed the picture. The anthropological approach I used while being in Mongo, i.e. observing and living in town, revealed probably the essential elements to understanding this practice.

Koranic Schools and Society

Teaching the Koran is an important element of Islamic education and almost all Muslim children study the Koran for a few years. This teaching is closely

linked to pathways of studying that involve travel from place to place. The teachers at these itinerant schools have histories of travel, having travelled from village to village or town to gain knowledge. When they have reached a certain level in their studies, they can take children with them who they teach while they are travelling. The sedentary schools also embody mobility and often house children who come from far and wide and their teachers may also have a history of travel. As Fortier (2003: 235–236) explained, the label ‘school’ may not give the right image of what the Koranic school – sedentary as well as itinerant – is like. The constant element is the wooden tablet on which the students write their phrases and verses from the Koran. It is carried everywhere and the student can thus study anywhere. The itinerant school represents this model in an extreme form, with the teacher and his pupils travelling around the countryside and finding a place to stay for a few months or just a few weeks, living off gifts from the community in which they settle. The itinerant and sedentary schools should be seen as a continuum of the same mobile institution. This aspect of mobility in the schools and the children is explained in relation to verses in the Koran that describe the *mahadjar*, or the travels of the Prophet Mohamed when he went to Mecca. The name for the pupils that we hear in Tchad *Mahadjirin* is derived from the word *mahadjar*.

The itinerant school is a common phenomenon across the Sahel from Senegal to Chad (cf. Troch 2006, Keja 2006). These itinerant schools have no prescribed size and the children vary in age from 6 and 20. For most *fâkihe* it is a temporary way of life that they will follow for five to ten years. The element of begging, suffering and living on the margins of society is an explicit part of the children’s education and the children have no material possessions other than those needed for their studies. In addition to the wooden slate, they have an inkpot and millet stalks carved into pens and, of course, a metal or wooden bowl for food. Their teacher’s equipment is usually more extensive and he will have several slates and at least one carpet for his prayers and a blanket. The teaching at these itinerant schools follows the same curriculum as that found in sedentary schools elsewhere (cf. Mommersteeg 1996 Brenner 2001, Fortier 2003). However the curriculum and the pedagogy of the schools were not specifically investigated in this study. Itinerant Koranic schools are not a recent phenomenon. The historian Iliffe (1987: 32) mentions these begging youngsters in his review of poverty in Sahelian history in the 19th century and shows how this historical phenomenon can be explained in the context of the Sahelian economy, i.e. the poverty in the area and related issues of insecurity and uncertainty in daily life. These schools were then too also a fall-back option for families who could not take care of their children. This element of care or social security was picked up by researchers whose studies reflect the

present-day situation. Loimeier (2002) relates the existence of the Koranic schools in Senegal to the poverty which the families of the pupils at these schools experience. Seesemann (2002) considers the schools as a kind of social security institution as they assume the care of children who would otherwise probably face difficulties at home. Last (2000) discussed Koranic schools in Northern Nigeria in similar terms.

One of the manifestations of Islam in the Sahel is the economy of begging. As Gilliard (2005) has shown for Niger, begging is an integral element of the economy of the poor but also of the rich. Alms-giving is not only a religious duty but also an economic opportunity. Giving alms to those in need is part of the Islamic ways like the institution of *zakat* and *sadaqa*, and will bring those who give *baraka*, i.e. divine force. Such giving can be seen not only as an act of help but probably even more as part of the search for the path to Allah. On this path, giving as well as receiving are acts for *baraka*. Begging and related social hierarchies have become an institutionalised practice in the Sahelian Islamic cultures, and the differences between people seem to be an accepted part of life (cf. de Bruijn & van Dijk 2007). The religious explanation for the itinerant school and the practice of begging is another strong explanation put forward by the same authors. Children should go to school and they need to learn Koranic verses not only to become a good Muslim but also to be able to play a true part in the culture into which they were born. Although we may understand the phenomenon in its cultural, social and economic logic, this does not mean that the practice is always acceptable. The case of Mongo will show that the itinerant school in the political and social context of present-day Chad has become a burden on the community specifically because of the country's economic and political history. For several years the practice of the begging *taalibe*, as it is called in West Africa or *mahadjir* as it is known in Central Africa, has been the subject of much discussion. The practice is defined as non-acceptable in the discourse of NGOs whose ideas are part of the global discussion on children's rights (Perry 2004). In Chad, and more specifically in Mongo, this discussion was new in 2005. Nevertheless even within the community of Mongo the practice had come under fire from people with a more modern outlook, like the Imam of the central mosque and NGO personnel. They are, however, torn between the cultural values and history of their community and the practice of the itinerant schools where the children often live in unacceptable conditions.

To understand the phenomenon of the itinerant Koranic school in Chad, and more specifically in Mongo, I will unravel the different elements of the explanation explored above, the subjectivities and realities of the phenomenon of the itinerant Koranic school. But before I can do so I need to introduce

the region and its religious and economic history to reveal the role of Islam and poverty in the area.

Islam in Mongo and the Surrounding Area

Mongo is Chad's fifth largest city. The majority of the inhabitants of the Guera are now Muslim although the islamisation of the area has been a slow process and massive conversions have taken place only recently. Islam has long been the religion of the elite. The people who inhabit this area are known as the Hadjerai, from the Arab word *Hadjar* (meaning mountain), an umbrella term for many different ethnic groups such as the Dangaleat, Kenga, Daadjo, Migaami, Bidiyo and Moubi. Other people living in this area and its surroundings are Arab, Kouka or Baguirmiens. In the 19th century the Guera was surrounded by the Ouaddai Empire to the east, the Kanem Empire in the northwest and the Baguirmi Empire to the west. These Islamic empires with an economy based on the trade in slaves profoundly affected the peripheral zones (cf. Magnant 1992). The Guera was a zone for slave raiding and at the same time a refuge area from which opposition to the surrounding empires was organised, although often in vain. Contact with these empires introduced Islam into the region, but apparently only nominally as the Margay (mountain spirits) belief has long been the dominant religion for most Hadjerai. The adjacent regions however were much more deeply Islamised, simply because they were incorporated into these Islamic empires. (cf. Vincent 1975, Fuchs 1970). Some islands of Islam existed in this time in the Guera and Fuchs (1970: 287) reported on the village of Korlongo to the east of Mongo that was a vestige of the Ouaddai Empire from where other villages were attacked.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Daadjo migrated to the area from Sudan and became the dominant group in the area around present-day Mongo, with their chiefly village just three kilometres away. Islam had already gained a foothold in the area and they were active in its spread (cf. Magnant 1992). The Imam of the main mosque in Mongo recounted how five Daadjo *fâkihe* (*marabouts*) settled in villages around the city to preach Islam. When they arrived, people were still living in the mountains and honouring their mountain spirits (Margay). Some of them gradually converted to Islam but the Margay cult did not totally disappear.

When the French colonised Chad, the big empires lost their power and slave-raiding gradually ended. This pacification opened up the plains and people came down from the mountains. In some cases they were forced to do so by the French so that they would be more accessible for administrative purposes. The area's pacification also opened the way for travelling *fâkihe* from the east (Ouaddai), who were mainly from Tijjaniyya and Kadiriyya Sufi brotherhoods

and could now travel more easily around the country. Alongside these agents of Islam, traders also brought Islam to the region. They were mainly Nubians, Hausa, Fezzan and Kanuri, and were all Muslims (see Fuchs 1970). In Mongo the Hausa have their own quarter (*secteur* 8), which was established during this period. In 1911 the French set up their administrative headquarters near Mongo Mountain and created the centre of this town. The French did not restrict the spread of Islam but it remained the religion of the aristocratic groups, like the Daadjo and Arabs in Mongo. Islamic scholars were judges and advisors of the chiefs, *chefs de canton* and in some cases also of the *chefs de village*. However, the Margay cult and religion did not disappear but remained the religion of the common people. In a town like Mongo the division between the common people and the aristocrats may well have been reinforced by this difference in religion (Fuchs 1970: 287–289).

In the early colonial period, travelling *fâkihe* with their pupils were already to be found in the Mongo area. However Fuchs observed that the inhabitants of the Guera did not like them and never allowed them to stay longer than two or three weeks. The *fâkih*, mostly children from Islamic families, had usually studied abroad for a while and came back as Islamic scholars. Other young men went on labour migration, often to Sudan, before returning as learned Islamic scholars. These were the men who were accepted in the Guera as teachers of the new religion. The Islam they preached, of the Sufi order, was one in which the Margay universe could easily be integrated and in many families Islam and Margay existed alongside each other (Fuchs 1970). After World War II, the politics of the French towards the *fâkihe* changed. The *fâkihe* were seen as agents of a movement of Arab nationalism, and thus as being against the French who restricted their freedom of movement. The *chefs de canton* who were surrounded by these *fâkihe* as advisors were requested, in no uncertain terms, to limit their numbers. French politics changed from being pro-Islam to wanting to stop the further spread of Islam (Fuchs 1970: 301).

However the spread of Islam continued regardless. A comparison between the observations of Fuchs in the 1960s and my own observations in 2002/2003 suggests that Islam among the Guera population has increased considerably. At the beginning of the 1960s Fuchs observed that there were two *fâkihe*, with 25 pupils in Korlongo, a village near Mongo, but these *fâkihe* were sedentary. Of the 473 men in Korlongo, 80 were Muslim. He saw a clear co-existence of Margay and Islam and in some cases the two beliefs were united in one person, who carried out his Margay obligations but was, at the same time, a Muslim scholar (Fuchs 1970: 290). Our observations established that today Korlongo is totally islamised; everybody is Muslim and no one is allowed to

worship altars in the mountains. The inhabitants of the village have all left their mountain homes, live in the village and go to the mosque, which is centrally located next to the market place every Friday. Koranic schools are common in the village and travelling *fâkihe* are well received. Many men and women migrated to N'djamena from this village during droughts and periods of war but some migrants ended up in Mongo where they settled in the 4th quarter, one of the poorest in town. There, some older women still adhere to the Margay cult, but they are not allowed, often by their own children, to hold their rituals. They are afraid of upsetting their children because they might refuse to take care of them if they found out that they still adhered to Margay traditions.

Observations in other villages showed that the majority of the population are Muslim, which was not the case in 1960 at the start of the period of independence. How can this change in religious orientation be explained? Above it was explained how it was a gradual change for Mongo with the arrival of the Daadjo and the influence of the surrounding empires. But apparently for this area the picture today of a semi-total islamisation is also a relatively recent development. The explanation for this change in religious orientation is partly related to changes that took place during the civil war that had the Guera in its hold for thirty years. During the chaos of the civil war in the Guera from 1965 to 1990, authority was not well defined between rebel forces and the government. In most parts of the Guera the rebel forces were the dominant political power during the 1970s and 1980s. Although the main opposition group that gained a stronghold in the Guera was not a religious movement, they did not hamper the spread of Islam and were, in fact, in favour of this religion. As Buijtenhuijs (1992) concluded, their positive attitude to Islam may also have stimulated conversions because being Muslim opened up new career opportunities for the area's inhabitants. Some of my informants suggested that the rebels used violence to urge people to convert. The sparse information I gathered from interviews sketches a picture of a social and political climate during the rebellion in which Islam imposed a strong hold on the area and where being Muslim could help one to be accepted and make social progress. Islam finally engrained itself in the area in social, political and economic spheres and although Islam, Christianity and the Margay cult could exist alongside each other they offered different economic and political advantages (cf. Alio 2009, de Bruijn & van Dijk 2007). In 1975, only 10% of the people in Mongo were Muslim, while the Imam today thinks that figure would be at least 90%. The majority of the Muslim believers here adhere to the Sufi tradition, as inspired by the first waves of islamisation that came from Arab and Daadjo Muslim scholars.

Economic Situation

Chad's history is marked by the thirty years of civil war it endured and by various periods of extreme drought that profoundly affected local economies. The Guera was one of the central areas in the military strategies of the opposition and of the government and the civil war ruined its economy. The whole period of the war meant a situation of occupation for the Hadjerai and the surrounding zones: people were not free to move about, they were regularly attacked and many of them joined the rebels. I will not go into the details here of the civil war and the way it became grounded in the Guera. It suffices here to understand that the Guera was torn between the rebels and government forces, which resulted in a situation of economic deprivation for many of its inhabitants. This was made worse by the recurring droughts of the 1970s and 1980s (de Bruijn & van Dijk 2007). From observations made in 2002–2004, it was clear that this situation of deprivation had not ended. Life expectancy at birth for the Salamat for example is 40 years. The Human Poverty Index for Chad is 57%, which means that six out of ten Chadians suffer deprivation. Chad's Human Development Index is 0.403 but there is a big differentiation between zones. In 2000 the Human Development Index of the Guera was 0.350 and in the adjacent zone of Salamat it was 0.259, and 0.395 in Ouaddai. The Guera and the adjacent area have become zones of chronic poverty (cf. PRSP 2003: 32). Figures as such do not say much about the people concerned. They live in poverty, and live with it. In the villages where I worked there were big differences between some of the people but, in general, surveys showed that cultivation and husbandry did not provide the villagers with a sufficient subsistence base. The children I met in the Koranic schools which are described below all came either from the surrounding villages in the Guera or from the east, and many of their families barely managed to get by or live in conditions below subsistence level.

These economic conditions have led people to look for alternative income-generating sources and labour migration has become an essential part of their economies. The outflow of people from the area is significant, which was confirmed by my research in N'djamena where there are quarters with a long history of large numbers of Hadjerai residents. Nevertheless people do manage to make a living in Mongo and the surrounding villages. During the civil war, migration was directed towards N'djamena, Nigeria and Cameroon when the eastern route was blocked because of the fighting. In addition to long-distance migrants, I also met many people who had migrated within the region, in many cases women with their children left their villages to settle in a small town like Mongo in search of income (see de Bruijn 2006). Mobility is also seen in the

area's agricultural practices of slash and burn. The Arabs in the area are nomads and most of the families are transhumant with their cattle, staying in their semi-sedentary settlements in the Guera for a few months a year. Children are part of these practices and travel with or without their parents. The Guera is characterised by 'cultures of migration' (Hahn & Klute 2007).

Itinerant Koranic Schools in Mongo

History and Geography

Today Mongo officially has an estimated 20,000 inhabitants and is the capital of the northern Guera in Central Chad where the offices of the prefecture, the military and the *gendarmerie* are vested in old buildings that remind the town of its colonial past. As the area's administrative headquarters, the town has an important regional market on Wednesdays, some shops, a cattle market, a Catholic mission, a Protestant mission, two big mosques and a few smaller ones. Most of the inhabitants of Mongo today are Muslim. The old colonial buildings in the centre are dilapidated and in a state of disrepair. Being rich in Mongo is the privilege of only a few since most people just have enough money to get by and feed their families. Mongo is – in appearance and in reality – a poor town. However a differentiation in poverty between the quarters (the different residential areas of town) is related to their various histories, which in turn affects the reception given to the itinerant Koranic schools.

In Mongo there were quite a number of itinerant schools; with numbers increasing during the dry season. The schools find corners in which to settle in dilapidated houses without roofs, doors or windows, and some of the teachers and their pupils even sleep under trees. It depends on the teacher's contacts as to what the state of the 'accommodation' is. For instance, some teachers have family in Mongo and are offered part of their homes. Or the *fâki* will build a hut for his pupils and a separate one for himself on the terrain of a large concession where the owner has given him permission to do so. Housing conditions can be quite varied. Mongo, anno 2005, had nine different quarters, with quarters 4, 8 and 9 being the most hospitable to Koranic schools. The spread of itinerant Koranic schools is related to the availability of space but apparently also to the communities living in these quarters. The 9th quarter is the most recent and is where military and administrative personnel are building big houses. The owners of these plots and houses are mainly government employees who are Muslims themselves and they frequently lend out their still-uninhabited houses to itinerant Koranic teachers and their pupils. The 4th quarter is an area full of recent immigrants and people who cannot afford to live in the

centre of town where houses have become too expensive. Their strategy has been to sell their compound in the centre and to save money by buying a piece of land on the edge of town where they could build a mud house. The periphery was also attractive to people who found village life too difficult and tried their luck in town where resources are more varied. The 4th quarter, which has the feeling of a chaotic village, is home to many families and individuals, among them a large number of female-headed households who originate from villages in the Guera. It is mainly through these migrant relatives that Koranic teachers find a place to stay. Furthermore in this village-like quarter it is not difficult to find a place to camp in a field that will only be cultivated during the rainy season (see de Bruijn 2006). Mongo's 8th quarter is one of the chic quarters. Relative strangers from Bornou, Niger and Nigeria live here. They are Hausa or Fulbe, and are people who were originally involved in trade. They were among the families who brought Islam to the area and have a long history of receiving Muslim scholars in their midst. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd quarters are the oldest in town, with the houses of the families who lived here in colonial times. These quarters are densely populated and there is no room for itinerant schools. The 5th, 6th and 7th quarters are difficult to classify – they were peripheral but have recently become more integrated in town. The number of itinerant schools is considerable in these quarters.

In my research I tried to cover all the quarters of Mongo, and with the help of community health workers we were able to visit the different schools across town. However it was not easy to carry out a survey among the itinerant Koranic schools in Mongo because the Muslim teachers were all very reluctant to disclose information. What would we use it for? The *fâkihe* in quarter 9 in particular expressed mistrust regarding our efforts. Finally only the schools whose teachers wanted to collaborate were registered, which means that there is a serious underreporting of the number of schools. Each of the health workers registered the itinerant schools in a quarter and tried to find a few teachers willing to speak to them. They were able to interview five children from these schools briefly to gain a quick appreciation of their lives. The total number of registered itinerant schools in eight of the nine quarters was 88, with 870 Koran students. When one realises that there are at least twice as many sedentary schools in Mongo, with 20 to 35 pupils per school, some of whose pupils also live on the street, then one can imagine the number of children roaming the streets looking for food. These children and their teachers do not come from far away: from Ati, Eref, Oum Hadjer or Mangalmé, 150–200 km north or east of Mongo, or places in the Guera itself. They are mainly Boulala, Kouka, Arab or Moubi and most of them arrived in the dry season in December 2002, although some had come earlier. Most of the teachers knew Mongo and came because

they had a network there or because they expected to find a good living in this town with a relatively large market. Among them were *fâkihe* who already knew they would come back next year, but for some it was their first time in Mongo. A description follows of one of my first confrontations with these schools:

Ahmat is a teacher from a village near Oum Hadjer. He came to Mongo this dry season (2002/2003) after he had put his meagre harvest in granaries where it would stay until the next rainy season when Ahmat wants to go back to his village to cultivate. He travelled to Mongo with 18 pupils who are all related to him; some are neighbours but most of them he labels as cousins or nephews. They age from 6 to 16 years old. When we first met them they were living in quarter 8, and we found them in a difficult situation. Ahmat told us they were very ill and six had to go to hospital. One of them had died a few days before. After they buried him they did not feel at ease in this house. Ahmat therefore decided to leave the house and they moved to the third quarter. That was where we met them for the second time, when we decided to measure their nutritional status. This is how we confirmed our impression that the health and nutritional status of these children was very bad.

In the third quarter they lived in a half-built house that belonged to the family of the previous *chef de canton*. His daughter, who works in the social affairs department of Mongo community council, was living in the completed part of the house and it was she who had taken in the school (and later two others). It was her duty as a Muslim she said, and it would do her and her family good as pious Muslims. She did not like our intervention in this situation but it was impossible for us to know about these children and their poor health and not take them to hospital. We finally set up a small nutrition programme for them, and by doing so we in effect accused her of not caring for the children adequately.

One of the health workers did some short interviews with Ahmat and with Ahmat's pupils, which have been translated by the interviewer from Arabic to French and by me from French to English, (below) to show what kind of information they provided.

Name: Ahmat Youssouf Issa

Age: 25 years

I come from Assountaye Wadi Rima, near Ati. This concession (secteur 3) is owned by Ahmat Idoumou, the former *chef de canton*. I have 17 pupils with me. I have learned the Koran by heart. I am the only teacher and have no assistant. I teach for free. I wait for what people/the parents will give me for teaching but I ask for nothing.

Hours of teaching: 3.00–5.00, 13.00–15.00 and 18.00–20.00.

I studied the Koran in Mongo for 12 years. I teach children because it is important that they are well instructed.

The health worker observed the teacher one day and concluded that he taught his pupils well and was a pious Muslim.

Name: Saddaddine Abdoul-Aziz

Age: 10 years

The boy was badly dressed and his clothes were dirty.

I have been at Fâkih Ahmat Goussou Issa's Koranic school for three years. We live in this house in *secteur* 8 owned by Ahmat Ibedou. I am from the same family and same village as my fâkih, that is Oum Hadjr. He is my parent.

My family are all in the village of Oum Hadjar. My father is in Oum Hadjar. He is a herdsman. My mother is also in Oum Hadjar; she has a small business. They are married and not divorced. My sister and brothers are all in Oum Hadjar. I am at school so that I will have a better future. My level of study is *hisib* 10.

During the day I go into the quarters to search for *la boule morte*.¹ The hours of study are from 13.00 to 15.00, and then from 18.00 to 20.00 and from 3.00 to 5.00 in the morning and from 7.30 to 10.00. I also go to the market to visit and help the traders from 11.00 to 12.30 and then I may earn FCFA 25 or FCFA 50. I divide my earnings with the fâkih, I give him 50 and I keep 25. I travel to Oum Hadjar. I have not studied elsewhere. I have always been with this *fâkih*. I think about my future.

Name: Charfaddine Youssouf

Age: 8 years

He was badly dressed and his clothes were dirty.

For three years I have been at Fâkih Ahmat Youssouf Issa's school. I first lived in *secteur* 8 with him and now in *secteur* 3. The owner of this house is Ahmat Ibedou. I am related to the *fâkih*. He is my big brother, we have the same father. My family is in the village of Kabiro Aradip. My father is in Kabiro Aradip and he is a cultivator. My mother is also in the village. She is a small trader. They are married. My sisters and brothers are all in the village. I am in the Koranic school to help me prepare for my future. I am at the level of *hisib* 30. During the day I search for

¹ Referring to leftovers of the local dish made out of millet: *la boule*.

firewood in the neighbourhood. The study hours are from 13.00 to 15.00, from 18.00 to 20.00 and from 3.00 to 5.00 and from 7.30 to 10.00. I go to the market to see if the traders have work for me, to help them set up their stalls for instance, that is from 11.00 to 12.00. I earn FCFA 100 a day. Then I divide my earnings with my *fâkih* who will take FCFA 75 and I will keep 25. When the rains come I will travel, but since I have been with the *fâkih* I have not been to my village. I think about my future and what I will become later.

Another child of 9 is reported to be ill and therefore his only work is begging at houses for the *boule morte*; another child of 10 explains that he is orphan, his father died. Every child has his own story. These children all come from small villages near Oum Hadjar and they say they have a parental relationship with their *fâkih*.

Malnourishment

The case of Ahmat was exceptional because of the high rate of illness in his school, but this was a telling situation. Triggered by this case we decided to do a health survey in addition to the interviews. The survey showed that almost 90% of the pupils were malnourished and it was clear that the conditions under which the children had to live were not favourable. All the interviews with *fâkiche* revealed that they struggled with illness amongst their pupils. They all complained that they had no money to take the children to the hospital. Malnourishment was not only the consequence of deficiencies in their diet (wasting) but also of a lack of food over a longer period (stunting), which may be explained by the long period of time children spent at the schools but also by the conditions of life at home. This alarming situation is clearly linked to the daily practices of these schools but in the interviews neither the teachers nor the pupils commented on the system itself. They were all convinced that studying the Koran was a good way to follow the path of Allah. These itinerant schools are one way of reaching this goal.

Daily Life in the Schools

Most itinerant schools are made up of a teacher and pupils who come from the same village or villages close to each other. Often they are related, the teacher being the uncle (in the widest sense of the word). The number of pupils varied from three to twenty-five, but never more. This could be due to the fact that it is impossible to travel with more children. In some cases the teachers had a donkey or two that would carry the (teacher's) luggage, but in most cases everyone walked.

What is life like for the children and their teachers? The children study a few hours a day, early in the morning, in the afternoon and late at night and they have to look for their own food, which occupies most of the rest of their day. After their early-morning studies, they leave their 'home' to beg for food. The children go from house to house asking for gifts, and are often given the leftovers from the previous day (*la boule morte*). The children have their own routes and some find families who want to help them. Other children do not make such acquaintances and try their luck around the market place and at restaurants. As well as begging, the children also look for other work: on market days they earn most of their income by carrying women's shopping but they also receive small gifts from the market people. Theft is also part of their repertoire. On ordinary days they do similar activities but revenues are very low. If the teacher has a donkey, the older children will go to fetch water from the wells on the outskirts of Mongo and take it from door to door. A trip to fetch water, which involves at least two boys, will take a few hours, and will earn them FCFA 250 if they are lucky. The money the children earn is divided between them and their teacher. According to the children, the teacher receives at least two-thirds. From the food the children gather, the largest portion is reserved for the teacher. This is how the teachers are able to eat well and buy soap to wash their clothes. All the pupils agreed that there was not enough food in town to feed the ever-growing number of children and they often went to sleep on an empty stomach. This also affected the food provisions of their teachers, and ultimately the health of them all.

Family Background

In the interviews we asked the children what their parents' occupation was. Some of the children were orphans or used to live in their home village in single-parent families or with an uncle or grandmother. Most of the children's parents or the people responsible for them were cultivators and the mothers were frequently engaged in petty trade. The small sketches of family life these children provided showed that the families they come from are poor (which may be 'normal' in Chad). The mothers' engagement in petty trade implied that they were reselling tea, sugar, millet or charcoal, with very little financial gain. Most of the fathers were reported to be *élèveur* or *cultivateur*. One child openly admitted that his parents told him to leave home because they simply had no means of feeding him. From interviews in quarter 4 it was clear that the parents living there also sent their children to a Koranic school so as to have one mouth fewer to feed. About 20% of the children interviewed had lost one or both of their parents. The parents of others had migrated to N'djamena. These data confirm the idea that for some poor families itinerant Koranic

schools are a fallback option for their children. Saving and economising is equally a reason for the *fâkihe* to leave his home village. Some gave as their reason for travelling the fact that they did not want to touch this year's harvest and this was a way of postponing consuming it. The regions the children come from do indeed have structural shortages in food production. The year of our survey was a deficit year and it was clear that many families could not feed their dependants properly, but 2002/2003 was not exceptional. The zone's climate is characterised by insecurity and variation in rainfall and a bad harvest can be expected every few years. Households in this zone therefore have tremendous difficulty in keeping their economies turning over.

Why do parents send their children to these schools? And are they so unaware of the conditions in which their children will be living? The parents figured in the interviews when the teachers mentioned that parents would sometimes bring him millet, or pay some money for their children's studies. But such parents were apparently not in the majority. However, the parents send their children to these schools as they consider it part of their education but it is not easy for any of them. In May 2004 I visited a friend in a small village. She was not as cheerful as she had been the previous year. While we sat eating nuts and drinking tea, she told me about her illness and about her children – two boys – who had left home to join a *fâkih* from a nearby village. The teacher had gone with them and 48 other pupils to N'djamena. Her husband, the village Imam, had insisted that their sons go to this 'school' and she had agreed with the decision but was very worried as travellers from N'djamena had told her that her sons were now suffering. So she had sent mosquito nets and money to the *fâkih* in the hope that her sons would receive treatment if they fell ill. She doubted however if the money would be used for this purpose. I heard similar doubts from other women in quarter 4 who had sent their children to these schools, but they subscribed to the idea that it was good for their sons to endure this sort of situation and they hoped for a better future.

The Future

The children argued that studying the Koran was the most important reason to follow their teacher. Many foresaw a future as a Koranic teacher, which would certainly be an option for them and socially a highly respected job. As these children travel for years with their *fâkih*, they distance themselves from agricultural work and do not acquire the knowledge necessary to become good farmers or herders. Their future is in religion. Young men are attracted to this career as was obvious from the ages of the *fâkihe* we met, many of them were under 25. This may well be a career that has more prestige and be economically more lucrative than being a farmer or herder. In a society where the options

outside agriculture are as limited as they are in and around the Guera, this would seem reasonable. For the teachers and pupils, the main reason for the existence of these schools is simply to follow God and study the Holy Koran. The suffering they endure in Mongo is part of their study, although some admitted that this year it was extremely hard. The teachers added that studying in a place far from home is also important because it will make the pupil more devoted to his studies.

However not all the children are happy with being members of these schools. Although we did not ask whether the children stayed at school of their own free choice, we were told that many of them may leave and try their luck elsewhere. Among the street children in N'djamena where we did an extensive survey, a few told us they had left their Koranic school because they could not endure the life any longer (cf. de Bruijn & Djindil 2006). One of our interviewers came across a teacher who told him that three of his six pupils had left because they were disobedient. Two went back to their parents (boys aged 7 and 9) another boy of 14 left to join his uncle in Biltine, who was also a *fâkih*. The children have a tough life: they do not get enough food, they try to hide their income from their teacher, violence is used against them, and they endure hardships and harsh conditions in general.

Reception of the Itinerant Koranic Schools in Mongo

Mongo is an Islamic town. The Catholic and Protestant churches each have around 300 members but thousands of people visit the two big mosques in town for Friday prayers. The streets are full of veiled women and men wearing typical Islamic dress. There are Koranic schools every few houses, recognisable by the fires the children study around when evening sets in. The town's politics are characterised by a broad tolerance of Islamic customs and expressions. The begging children are part of this picture. Mongo has known malnourished Koranic students/children for a few decades now, as is evidenced by reports from the hospital's nutrition centre. Children used to be brought in and looked after there but a few years ago, as a result of corruption and mismanagement in the hospital, the feeding centre had to shut its doors. The nurse who talked to us was upset about the way these children have to survive today without any care or support from the local council. Another nurse, who is the head of the maternity department, shared similar concerns. According to him the health situation of these children was a danger for the town's health situation. They spread diseases such as measles and they set a bad example for the children of Mongo.

The daughter of the *chef de canton* who had the Koranic school (of Ahmad who was presented above) in her own compound offered them shelter as a

private citizen. At work she was also involved with Mongo's street children, who appear to be a new target for social policy and Mongo had in 2003, 11 of these specially targeted youth. When I asked her at a meeting in her office about the situation of the children in the Koranic schools, she said she would never be able to reach them, as in her opinion Koranic teachers are averse to interventions. Furthermore, she considered this a religious affair for the religious community (in which she participates). From her reactions, it was easy to see the duality in attitudes of the people in Mongo towards Islam. Islam is relatively new but at the same time has been internalised by society. Official policies are secular and therefore the Koranic children are not included in social policy. The Islamic community has its own ways of dealing with (or not dealing with but at least explaining) the pitiful situation of these Koranic children/students. The Mongo community also benefits from these children's presence, for instance through their contribution to the provision of water in town. Mongo was presented with a water tower when the present president, Idriss Déby, came to power in 1990. However, some of the money for this project disappeared and the tower could not be finished, resulting in it being 'left' on the ground, which made providing water to the higher parts of town difficult, especially during the dry season. Furthermore, water bills are rarely paid by the big users who have links to the community council, and there is thus no money to pay for fuel for the pumps. The result is a malfunctioning water system. The Koranic students who have access to a donkey (their master's) have jumped into this market by fetching water with the donkeys from the wells outside town, and have become indispensable to Mongo's water supply and everybody knows this. Then the town council introduced a new tax: a tax on transportation by donkeys. To get permission to make trips to the well, water carriers had to pay FCFA 3000 a year per donkey. The children and their teachers were not able to pay this money and the transportation of water by Koranic students came to an end. The council's action reveals the double standards of its members and of city policy. The council members are, of course, Muslims and know that these children, for whom they should feel responsible, earn money from transporting water, but at the same time they are exploiting them.

A Contested Practice?

In the course of this research on Koranic schools I became deeply engaged in these children's problems. The short interviews, the observations and later the nutritional survey made me so aware of the problems that I decided that I could not just leave the children in such circumstances. Furthermore, being confronted with the policy of the *commune* and the attitude of the educated Muslim elite made me more aware than ever of the lack of attention to the

welfare of these children. I realised that by organising food aid or developing a project I would become part of the global discussion on children's rights and inevitably had to take a position on it. Was there a contradiction between these possible actions and the aim of the research that was to try to understand the practice of the itinerant school in its own cultural and social logic, and in the historical and economic context of Chad? Nevertheless, these actions opened another discovery in this research. It led us into discussions with the different actors in the field which revealed new stories. It emerged in this new phase of the exercise that the practice of the itinerant Koranic school is also contested among Mongo elites, Muslim leaders and the *fâkihe*.

My actions started with a small food aid programme for the children of Ahmat's school. We prepared special porridge for them which they had for a period of 40 days to help them get over their extreme weakness. We also became involved in the hospitalisation of the children and took care of the follow-up treatment. The role of two health workers and a research assistant were indispensable and they themselves became so involved that they proposed starting a small *centre d'accueil* for the children. A Dutch foundation helped to start the NGO that would carry out this programme. As part of this initiative, they proposed organising a workshop in Mongo to discuss the phenomenon of the itinerant school in its various aspects. Finally the NGO was able to start in January 2004 and, with a grant from the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) in N'djamena, the workshop was held in May 2004.

The NGO of our research assistants was established in January 2004 but it was only during the workshop in May that its existence became truly visible. Their main activity was the distribution of medicine and care for the children of the itinerant Koranic schools and those in a poor sector of town (*secteur 4*). When they started, the people running it were not well informed about the town's policy and they made the mistake of not informing everyone of their existence, which led to confusion about the organisation of the seminar. Both the *préfet* and the *délégué* of social affairs reacted in a way that shocked me but that is understandable in town politics. Our action made even more visible that the children had become a resource, attracting the attention of large NGOs, Dutch foundations and the UNDP. This time it was not the children's practice that was contested but the possible funding for aid to these children. Only the fact that the UNDP delegation had international and national importance prevented the conflict from escalating. This delegation – including the Secretary General of the CNDH (*Comité National de Droit de l'Homme*), a representative of the civil-society organisations, a judge and a UNDP employee from N'djamena with direct link to the ministries – would be well received and not become part of local politics. So the seminar took place. It was the first of its kind in Mongo

and the first time the *fâkihe* could speak for themselves. After the seminar, the NGO leader was summoned by the *préfet* to a meeting with the social affairs representative. He was told that his actions were a mistake: he had broken all the rules of power concerning the division of resources and responsibilities. The next time, as he was told, he should inform them and make them part of the organisation of the event. Who would benefit? The children as 'victims' of the 'malpractice' the itinerant Koranic schools had apparently become a resource. The global discourse of the rights of the child gave these organisations a new wave for their subsistence.

The discussions and speeches during the seminar revealed the itinerant Koranic schools also as a contested practice for other reasons, namely the controversy of how to teach the Koran to these youngsters. Participants at the workshop were the itinerant and sedentary *fâkihe* from Mongo or those who were in Mongo at the time, their pupils, Muslim leaders, representatives of various NGOs in Mongo, a delegation from N'djamena and the NGO leaders themselves. The nutritionist researcher and I were also present. Lectures were given by the Imam of the central mosque in Mongo and by a leader of a human rights organisation in Mongo. The two speeches were impressive in the way they discussed the issues at stake. The human rights representative explained about children's rights and made it very clear that these itinerant schools do not adhere to these rights. Instead of condemning the teachers, he related the practice to the economic situation in which Chadian people have to make a living.

In his speech the Imam stated that the practice of travelling Koranic schools had nothing to do with anything described in the Koran and that the way these children lived was in fact against all Muslim practice. Children's rights are also defended in the Koran. Afterwards he patiently answered all questions from the *fâkihe* about how they should look after their pupils and what is written in the Koran and what not. His attitude during the seminar confirmed an interview I had with him in 2003 in which he did not hide his objections to the practice. He was genuinely concerned about children who are malnourished and for whom the Islamic community is responsible. He admitted that today's itinerant Koranic schools are no longer acceptable as a religious institution. The initiative to set up a feeding centre for the Koranic students with the traders in town and some other 'rich' people would not succeed, he said, because these people were simply not wealthy enough to finance such an undertaking.

Discussions in small groups revealed the difficulty the school teachers have in balancing the welfare of the children and the practices they consider as holy and necessary for the children's future. They could not, of course, condemn this practice but they did condemn the conditions of life in the villages they come from, and in Mongo.

Conclusion: Daily Practice in Context

As Scheper-Hughes & Sargent (1998: 2) stated: 'Children are part of the "cultural politics" of every day life. ...The treatment and place of children (...) are affected by global political-economic structures and by everyday practices embedded in the micro-level interactions of local cultures'. Seesemann (1999: 41), who studied Islam in Darfur, suggested that 'A closer look at Qur'anic schools can thus offer an insight into the functioning of the social fabric in Muslim societies'. In this paper I have situated the practice of itinerant Koranic schools in the cultural politics of everyday life and in the politics of the town where they live, and have shown how these affect the form of the practice at the micro level, i.e. the treatment of the children, and their situation in society. Discussions on social welfare and human rights have reached Mongo and will certainly influence the micro-politics and policy regarding children but certainly also the practice of these schools. How and whether the interaction between the practice of the schools, these debates and this policy will eventually lead to social change still remains to be seen. I have also demonstrated that the 'cultural politics of everyday life' are situated and formed in the cultural and socio-economic context of the region, i.e. in relation to the history of religion in the area but certainly also in the economic conditions in which people have to make a living and which have become structurally worse in Chad's (post) war economy.

The growing number of itinerant Koranic schools in Mongo reflects socio-political and religious tendencies in Chadian society. Profound changes in the socio-religious landscape may have been underway under the French but they have continued since independence. Islam has become the dominant religion. Animists and Christians today have no say in politics and they are largely underrepresented in the police, the *gendarmerie* and the army. In such a situation, itinerant Koranic schools are an accepted phenomenon: they are part of the region's political and religious dynamics. Mohamed Abdi (2003: 366) argued, when discussing the increasing influence of Koranic schools in Somaliland after the war there, that '*l'école coranique est socialisante; elle fait partie du paysage culturel*'. The itinerant Koranic schools in Chad should also be considered as part of the education of children; an education that to Muslims is seen as indispensable. School is certainly part of socialisation into the specific culture of the Guera where social life is dominated by mobility and continuous confrontations with social and economic uncertainties.

The presence of these children and their teachers, their state of health and their physical appearance show another reality of Chad that continues to the present. The war and droughts have exhausted society and, as a result, poverty

is profound and unavoidable. In addition to the wishes of parents that their children study and become closer to God, more material and urgent needs force them to send their children away with Koranic teachers. Their children are also travelling to escape a poverty that is deeply engrained in Chadian society. After the wars and droughts, children in Chad have become vulnerable. The expansion of nomadic Koranic schools and the number of children living on the streets (many of whom have run away from these Koranic schools) are an indication of this. They are an integral part of the political economy of Chad but how this situation of poverty affects these children and their beliefs is not clear from this research. It should be further investigated if we are to understand the dynamics of the interaction between Islam, religious change and poverty. The empirical reality of the children we were confronted with was one of misery, poverty and indeed one could say exploitation. Once these were part of a system that might have worked, but today the number of children are too large and their teachers are too poor, as are the people who are supposed to provide these begging schools with enough means to survive. The rights of the Koranic school children are violated. One can defend this with the argument that they are dying for *baraka*, but in the end they die too young, out of poverty and of the hard life they live in the itinerant schools. However it is questionable if the school as an institution and the teachers as individuals can be held responsible for this. The major 'crime' in this sense is the state that refuses to take care of its people. Poverty is the violation of human rights, institutionalised by the Chadian state. The developments after 2005 do not encourage the idea that the situation will improve now Chad has become an oil producing country. Despite the fact that the Chadian economy showed some growth for a few years (that is no longer the case anno 2011) the situation of these children did not change as the researchers would report to us. The situation we encountered in December 2009 in Central Chad, where then a huge famine struck the town, the villages and its people, showed clearly that the children in the Koranic schools will be part of history for the coming decades. The schools, the townspeople, and local government are all caught in the trap of structural violence that is poverty and an uninterested State.

Surviving Structural Violence in Zimbabwe

The Case Study of a Family Coping with Violence

Otrude N. Moyo

Introduction

What is violence? This chapter addresses this question by providing a situated answer. In an edited discussion of international perspectives on family violence, Malley-Morrison (2004) suggests that we all have implicit theories about the meanings of social phenomenon, like violence. By implicit theory, Malley-Morrison refers to the notion of personal constructs of meaning about a phenomenon. According to this social constructivist view, people actively construct understandings about themselves, others and relationships. We are not just passive learners of facts about the social world (Malley-Morrison 2004: 5). As such, implicit theories about violence develop through one's experience of their social environment and the stories unfolding there.

In this chapter, I argue that family violence is a manifestation of structural violence, associated with a political economy that has sacrificed many of its citizen's livelihoods. Life in Zimbabwe has historically been lived through structural violence and the nature and consequences of this violence are visible in all aspects of the social life of Zimbabweans. Using the social constructivist perspective where implicit theory informs what I view as violence, I argue that Zimbabwe's heritage of violence in the political economy creates a breeding ground for family violence. Within the private sphere of home, role, expectation, status incongruity and competition between family members for limited resources all put pressure on family life (Goode 1971, Campbell 1992) and this creates an environment in which family violence is likely to erupt. Given the socio-historical context of the political economy in Zimbabwe, I argue that the family is a power system of unequal members like any other but, in an environment of inherited violence and when an individual within that system does not have resources, he or she is more likely to use violence to get what they want. The connection of the socio-historical context of structural violence helps to explain the correlation between material deprivation and family violence in the case presented in this discussion. After the European invasion and occupation of Zimbabwe, violence became an active instrument to entrench coercive settler power and rule. But violence also became the instrument for dislodging settler power and rule and achieving Zimbabwe's

political liberation (Sokwanele, 2006). The tentacles of violence reach far and wide. Financial hardship and poverty have historically been the most interfering and destabilizing factors for the vast majority of the population in Zimbabwe and have contributed to an elevation of violence on and within the family and at a macro level, which I call 'structural violence'.

I begin the chapter with the socio-historical context of the political economy of Zimbabwe, which provides a summary of major issues related to the country's structural violence. This is followed by a family vignette in which experience and voice reveal conceptions of family violence as embedded in a structurally violent environment. The family whose experience is shared here was encountered in my earlier work relating to an understanding of families, their work and livelihoods in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe (Moyo 2001). However, this work did not directly research violence per se but family well-being. The entrenchment of violence in Zimbabwean society and an encounter with a family of older adults living with an adult son who was 'troubled and troubling' led me to consider sharing their experiences to show the nature of structural violence as it is experienced in family interactions. What forms does structural violence take within the family? What do elders who are experiencing violence say about it? What does the child who is perpetuating the violence feel?

Using a case example, I recount a historicized story of the experiences of structural violence in one family. The narrative is mainly told from the vantage point of three family members, the fifty-six-year-old mother, the father who is in his late sixties and their twenty-six-year-old son. The issues that are perceived to have precipitated the violence and the different forms of violence provide texture to the complexity of violence as a social phenomenon. The experience of this family is situated in the socio-historical context of Zimbabwe to connect interpersonal violence to structural violence. The intention is not to generalize the experience of a single family but to highlight the particular experience of one family in understanding violence, a visible but hidden social problem in Zimbabwe. I have used a broad definition of structural violence to avoid *a priori* normed naming of family violence but through the vignette we glean a complex understanding of what is considered family violence, in this context. Violence is inherited when the perpetrators are excused and the victims are blamed for not avoiding violence (Sokwanele, 2006). Violence can also be silent and loud; silent violence refers to the threats, the coercion, the insults and the deep scaring that has no physical marks, and the loud violence refers to the physical harm to people, to their property (Chitiyo 2000) and their environment including the social environment of the community.

Defining Structural Violence and the Embeddedness of Family Violence

Like any social phenomena, family violence must be understood within the socio-cultural context in which it occurs. Interpersonal and intrapersonal violence in Zimbabwe takes place within a context of structural violence. Structural violence refers to a mode of human relations involving the domination and exploitation in economic, social, political and psychological terms between individuals, between social groups and classes within and beyond societies, and globally, between entire societies (Gil 1998). Examples of structural violence experienced as personal violations and interpersonal violence are numerous in Zimbabwe. Consider the visibly segregated residential spaces that once entrenched the divide between the Africans and the whites. Now, the divide marks the material-rich from the poor. The organization of living space in Zimbabwe speaks to the profound consequences of the racialization of the political economy, meaning the use of race as a means to foster unequal development at all levels of society (Moyo 2001). The history of the racialization of Zimbabwe's political economy gave 'whites' privileges of power in controlling the economy and polity from colonial occupation in the 1890s until Zimbabwe's independence in 1980. The consequences of this control led to devastating socio-economic conditions for the African population that suffered massive poverty, high unemployment, poor housing and a lack of access to health care (Mandaza 1986, Moyo 2001). Unfavourable socio-economic conditions have a tendency to put pressure on personal and intrapersonal relations leading to tensions and high crime rates involving forms of physical, psychological, social, environmental, political and economic violence.

In a country marred by poverty, it is not uncommon for a person to be attacked by another on the streets. People endure insults of all sorts and pick-pocketing occurs during the constant body searches that people are forced to go through by state functionaries i.e. the police and the army and by private security guards supposedly protecting individuals. Imagine a knife being held to your throat as you are ordered by assailants to hand over your purse and even the clothes you are wearing. In the privacy of one's home, thieves working in gangs and those who make a living by hassling (*otsotsi*) threaten families by breaking and entering the sanctuary of their homes. Burglaries are the order of the day. When using public transportation a person's dignity is threatened as people are packed into vehicles like sardines. Family members, neighbours and friends accuse each other of witchcraft, and public brawls are not a rarity. In social care and public life shaming is used as a way of care. At home and at school children are beaten into submission. Children learn young 'that it is

acceptable; it is the privilege of the perpetrator and must be suffered and tolerated by victims. Not because the perpetrator is right, but because they have power...children learn to become victims of superior force backed by the authority of a revered institution' (Sokwanele, 2006).

In schools, a few selected children learn how to be in charge of and discipline other children through the prefect system, which has been passed down from the English public school system and was the moulder of colonial officials (Ibid.). These children are permitted to exert considerable brutality through physical punishment, exertion and psychological punishment that often entails shaming and humiliation. If you are the victim, you are supposed to endure such treatment as perhaps one day you will be able to get back at those who tortured you by torturing others. This is the inherited violence that is structurally entrenched and carried over to the public and private spheres so that everyday lives are characterized by structural violence and a mode of human relations involving domination and exploitation in economic, social, political and psychological terms in everyday situations. This is not to say that this is the norm but people have become accustomed to violence. Outbursts of violence from the state, fellow citizens and institutions of public life have become part of everyday life. However, no social violence is as humiliating as that perpetuated by family members, particularly one's own children and grandchildren. In the privacy of family life, scars of structural violence are more visible in interpersonal and intrapersonal familial relations. Concha-Eastman (2001) and Okulate (2005) point out that the intentional use of force against another person in close relationships or otherwise is now acknowledged as a universal public-health problem. The connectivity of structural violence and personal violence often gets missed.

Socio-Historical Context of the Political Economy of Zimbabwe

Family violence in Zimbabwe must be located and analysed within the wider context of the political economy of Zimbabwean society to understand the structural and personal expressions of violence. The Republic of Zimbabwe came into existence in 1980 out of the struggle for African rule that spanned over a century against white settler governments whose roots were entwined in European imperialism and British colonialism. In this case, the use of physical violence was historic. The scramble for Africa by Europeans, the use of force, the expropriation of African lands and the massive relocations of African peoples to create 'white territory' illustrate the horrific physical violence of occupation.

The psychological, social, political, environmental and economic nature of structural violence is exemplified by the racialization of the political economy of Zimbabwe. For the most part African families and their livelihoods occurred within the context of a racialized society, with racialization defining the emergence of racism as a tool to exclude (Moyo 2001). This became embedded in social practices and institutions throughout Zimbabwean society for at least a hundred years of colonial rule until independence in 1980. Racialization was a state-sponsored strategy of exclusion in which the overarching ideology was racial supremacy, where what was white, urban, educated and modern was supported while that which was African, rural and illiterate was underdeveloped. Through this ideology, most Africans were considered backward, ignorant and passive and were often treated in a condescending, paternalistic manner and were marginalized in all spheres of social life. The lifestyles of Africans and their (distorted) culture were considered inferior and given no recognition or space. A lopsided political economy resulted and with it came massive resource inequality, the cultural denigration of African ways of life, and ideas about femininity and masculinity that would also change to accommodate the changes in social structure.

This racialization has not been a constant; it adapted to the changing environments to safeguard the interests of the dominant group (Moyo & Kawewe 2002) and intersects with other categorizations of people, i.e. gender, ethnicity, class, region, marital status and age. It is important to note that, through oppressive relations with people of European descent in Zimbabwe, African ethnic groups generally lost authority to explicitly define their values, their traditions and customs and therefore to maintain societal sanctions against inter and intrapersonal violence. Historically, since the national policing system in Zimbabwe was developed in a racialized environment to control and police Africans, there is a general lack of trust in these systems when it comes to curbing violence, and often Africans as individuals confronting interpersonal and intrapersonal violence have to take individual and/or group actions to protect themselves.

African ethnic groups in Zimbabwe are largely seen in the social sciences literature as patrilineal and collectivist in their family ideological outlook (Parpart 1995, Riphenburg 1997). Gendered role expectation is part of the expressions of family ideology, for males the breadwinner role is emphasized and for females the responsibilities are related to care even though women are expected to be economic providers too, and gender dynamics have evolved with the institutionalization of westernity. Elders in families are supposed to receive acts of deference. Prior to colonization, gender roles had been fluid but the collision of African collectivist arrangements and the ideology of

domesticity created different experiences (Gaidzanwa 1996). For example, during colonial governments, African men were forced to work for wages in the white cities, while their wives, daughters and sisters were required to stay home, illustrating the domestication of African women (Moyo & Kawewe 2002). The settler economy catered mostly to the minority white population in Zimbabwe and the majority of the population, which is African, experienced dispossession. Because of the racialization of the economy, social care at state level was preserved for the few, African families have thus evolved as the social security for their members, providing the indirect sanctions and support of members but also providing a variety of necessities, for example, jobs, credit, capital, care for the sick and the elderly, emotional support, and companionship. Ideally, the interdependence of family members is emphasized and family members are expected to take care of each other. Remnants of reciprocal obligations of family members remain visible in the pooling of resources, with adults supporting the young in the expectation that the young will take care of the old (Moyo 2001). However, these relations are also marred in disagreement and conflict. Obligations are not only confined to parents but to siblings and extended family members and if one is perceived as successful, children may be fostered with relatives to allow opportunities for education and work. Family members working far away from home are expected to send remittances (Moyo 2001), but financial dependency in a collapsed economy traps some family members in violence.

Societal changes resulting from colonialism, urbanization, wage employment, migration, wars and political destabilization, economic restructuring, and the speed of globalization have created different environments according to people's expectations of one another. Many families with few economic and social resources reproduce their livelihoods in extreme indigence resulting in a strain in familial relations, particularly if members are not able to positively adapt to the normed cultural and gender role expectations. Instead of banding together, conflict in families may cause the separation and isolation of its members. For example, where the male's role was to protect family members, if this role is undermined men respond by using violence against family members to get whatever they want as is the case at micro level with the vignette shared here. Similar threads are observable at macro level with the current administration at state level.

The changes that occurred post independence were particularly related to policies of economic restructuring and present different sets of dynamics for families. At independence in 1980, radical policies were made by the new African government to counter the effects of colonialism in most areas of social life and blatant racism became unacceptable (Bond 1999). It was clear

that colonial capitalism had not served the majority of the people well, considering all the socio-economic imbalances during the colonial period. Expansion of governmental support in basic necessities including education, housing, health care, sanitation and water became increasingly noticeable in post-independent Zimbabwe. Direct investments in people were seen to be essential for the social development of the economy. Generally, there was improvement in the quality of life for many after independence, a situation that would be reversed in the 1990s with the institutionalization of structural adjustment programmes that pushed for privatization and market-based solutions in all areas that were subsidized by government. The decommodification of some basic necessities had ensured improvement in the quality of life, for example, in education, health care, housing and prospects for social mobility by removing subsidies, but poverty escalated (Bond 1999). While concerns were about growth, equity issues and nation building, the ZANU-PF led government sponsored atrocities along ethnic lines, attacking the Ndebele as a minority ethnic group in Zimbabwe. In the international arena, problems of state violence, like the Gukurahundi atrocities, were not a topic of public discussion as the international community busied itself with shaping Zimbabwe as a model of smooth transitioning from white settler rule to independence. The extent and consequences of this violence remain a major public health issue.

Political economic changes in the 1990s, particularly the restructuring of the economy in an attempt to align the Zimbabwean political economy to westernity, also brought concerns that impact all levels of Zimbabwean society economically, politically and socially. The push for privatization saw the dismantling of many state-owned businesses. The process of privatization occurred within a stagnating economic environment that resulted in a dramatic reduction in the quality of life for many. In the process of restructuring, public companies were privately transferred to individuals as private properties and the capital was siphoned off. Bankruptcies followed and many people lost their jobs and subsequently their personal dignity as employment disappeared and incomes fell dramatically (Bond 1999). The resulting massive unemployment and increases in the prices of basic commodities led to protests and sometimes violent confrontations between the state, workers and students. The unemployment situation has been depressing for youths who have just completed high school and college through expanded education opportunities: this population, although educated, still cannot find employment. Shattered expectations are a form of violence as they undermine a person's physical, psychological and social health.

Increasingly, Zimbabwean youth were entering a job market that only offered positions as informal workers, if they could get the capital to start even

that kind of work. Many migrated to countries where capital was seen to be concentrated. But even there jobs available to non-citizens are often at the bottom end of the service sector, and as such the generation that came to adulthood in post-independent Zimbabwe has not been able to realize the value of its education and has experienced an assault on their human dignity. Men and women sought jobs outside Zimbabwe but the service economy in areas where capital is concentrated usually prefers women migrants. Men's insecurities have mounted as they were expecting to find employment. In the lopsided economy, gender discrimination favoured males while women had cultivated self-employment, and with the contracting economy were able to provide their own work (Moyo 2001). Even though such work is confined to the lower rungs of the economy, it has provided a means of survival. Male workers suffered most in the economic restructuring because of their reliance on paid work (Moyo 2001). Massive unemployment and shattered expectations have resulted in frustrations and powerlessness which have been translated into emasculation (Fourie 2004), and led to a rise in self-destructive behaviour (such as alcoholism) and violence against elders to prove their masculinity where they have failed to meet familial expectations. With the breakdown of the economy, older adults are the ones with some assets and resources, and have at least had jobs and managed to accrue resources that can be translated into money. However, younger adults are the ones who are being heavily victimized by the collapse of the economy. They have no jobs and few sources of income and have to rely on older adults in the community. This has created massive familial tensions and interpersonal violence, where culturally, care was expected by older adults from the younger generation. The burden of care today is falling heavily on aging parents. Added to this is the AIDS/HIV pandemic that is killing the younger adults, and care for them is also increasingly falling on the older adults. When they die, orphaned children often remain in the care of older adults who will probably not have anticipated outliving their own children let alone grandchildren. Because of the absence of any public support, older adults are the only safety net for their families. People's scarce financial resources are being used up to cover basic necessities and this means that money tensions have also mounted as family members compete for scarce resources.

These problems have largely been played out as individual private problems because community protest has been met with an unsympathetic response from government officials who have used coercive strategies to redistribute land, as is seen in the government-sponsored commercial farm invasions (Chitiyo 2000). The current dynamics of the Zimbabwean political economy reflect and entrench structural violence, which is expressed in some situations

as family violence, taking the form of violence against the elderly and family members. Sometimes the violence is 'silent', at other times it is 'loud' (Ibid.). Violence against elders as part of family violence is a subject that is rarely talked about in public. There has been considerable discussion and efforts to stop domestic violence, particularly violence by domestic partners be they married or in live-in partnerships. Extensive efforts have been mounted to stop violence against children but violence against elders remains a silent subject. Hidden from the public is the violence against men, particularly in terms of material deprivation within a patriarchal-dominated society.

Surviving Structural Violence: A Case Study of a Family Coping with Family Violence by a Young Male Adult

The Historicized Experience of Structural Violence

MaMlilo had been married to Moyo for forty-five years. At the time of the interviews Moyo was in his mid-sixties and was retired from the Zimbabwe national army and owned a small construction business. Like many of his generation, he had been forced to take up arms in the liberation war in an attempt to dismantle the racialized political economy. Moyo talks about a political economy that greatly disadvantaged Africans. In his younger adult life he had been a labour organizer and attempted to politically engage the settler governments into realizing the sculpturing of inequality but since the inherited Zimbabwean solution has never been to seek justice, to instil respect for dignity and protect those who were vulnerable, he had been tortured and imprisoned for organizing for change. Moyo and his family had survived the structural violence in silence but the forcible removal of their lands to make way for white farms left his family with limited means to earn a living and was done with such brutal force that the violence had moved him to join the struggle for independence. It is under these conditions that Moyo joined the liberation struggle to dislodge coercive settler rule.

Talking about the effect of this violence, Moyo describes the separation from his family as a bad time in his life because he was not part of his children's lives as they were growing up, an issue now being raised by his son. A difficulty for Moyo was going against what he perceived as the norm, 'a man takes care of his family and "trains" the sons to take care of themselves'. Instead of engaging in the personal development of his family he had to make sacrifices (of which he is proud) to become a freedom fighter. Being in the army Moyo learnt that power is gained and retained by the use of brute force. After independence, he stayed in the army as he had no other means of earning a living, but

being stationed in another part of the country was devastating for him. In his words: 'I had to leave the army as soon as I could get a reasonable pension and I wanted to become a family again'. This conversation highlights that the expectation was that both parents would help with parenting but because of employment opportunities families ended up divided, with husbands rarely sharing in the raising of their children. Apparently, families experience silent violence when spouses are not able to share parenting. This would be a point of contention in Moyo's family as husband and wife MaMlilo perceived the difficulties with their son Dingi as emanating from the absence of male authority in the home.

MaMlilo, a feisty 56-year-old woman, raised her five adult children: three girls are living and working in South Africa, one older boy who still lives at home, as does a younger boy of ten and several grandchildren. We started the conversation about the well-being of children. Moyo's family was raising four grandchildren and a 'troubled and troubling adult son' was living with them. 'Troubled and troubling' were Moyo's words to describe their son, Dingi, who was 26 at the time of the interviews and living with his parents, and had a girlfriend and a two-month-old baby. Three of the grandchildren belonged to the daughters who were working in Johannesburg and providing well for their children and Moyo and his wife. In MaMlilo's words: 'my girl children were born with free spirits and it helped that they matured at a time that the government was promoting women's liberation...I rely on those girls as if they were men. That is what I keep telling Moyo that today it is not the male children who make homes it is women. It is better to have daughters: they work for their children and support them. I can never go hungry as I eat with the grandchildren. But with the boys it is different they never go away instead they bring trouble to us'. The trouble referred to here is the silent family violence because the son is unable to meet family expectations. The point that is raised here is that male children have been unable to figure out ways of engaging in government-sponsored women's liberation. As the vignette unfolds we learn that MaMlilo's definition of family violence largely hinges on the son not following expected family roles. In this case, unlike the daughters who have managed to take care of their parents, the son was shaming the family by not adopting the role of 'helpful' son. We see violence as expressed in the inability of the son to follow family roles, a definition of violence that is often hidden when the focus is only on physical and visible violence.

MaMlilo extended the definition of violence to include physical and psychological abuse they as adults had endured. MaMlilo in her spirited manner began to tell her story of coping with abuse from their son. Evidently, Dingi is the older boy in the family and as such had been the favoured child, a son who

would carry the family name. MaMlilo explained: 'Perhaps I treated him differently because I was proud to have a boy. It used to be that boys were the ones who would take care of us older parents. It used to be boys marry and their wives take care of us because girl children join other families. The saying was that boys build a home. This is how I treated my boy Dingi. I had expected him to be that home builder. I protected Dingi even in school when he got into trouble and was beaten, I would argue for him'. Clearly, the expectation in this family was that male children were supposed to care for the family and aging parents, but this expectation is undermined in MaMlilo's family, as their older son Dingi is seen as irresponsible. However, the blatant preference for female children as models of success and responsibility means a revision in family ideology. But this revision does not appear to be going smoothly as it presents familial problems that intensify the silent violence. In MaMlilo's family the male child is no longer seen as an asset because he is unable to secure economic advantages and become a future provider. This gender role incongruence acts as an underlying factor in the violence between an adult male son who perceives emasculation and is unable to fulfil the expectation of the continuity of patrilineity. Instead, female children have become a family asset, and bearing children out of wedlock is no longer a shame but offers continuity of families by providing grandparents with grandchildren who can look after them in their old age. In the case of MaMlilo, her daughters' marriage and/or attachment to a male without secure economic standing was seen as a liability. The unkind treatment of Dingi's girlfriend by MaMlilo, as an elder, may exemplify the revisions in gender expectations.

Troubling Moments Raising Boys

Apparently both Moyo and MaMlilo had come to the conclusion that raising boys was a challenge after the frustrations they felt with Dingi. He had completed his high-school education and passed only a single subject although five passes are usually required for any further training. He had repeated his O level exams twice and had done poorly each time. In school he had been a boy who was often humiliated and in his younger years his mother had been his protector. Seeing that he was not gifted academically, his parents tried to push him towards being a mechanic's apprentice. Evidently, Dingi had the support of his parents who tried to help him become a successful child by supporting his education. Besides his personal difficulties in school Dingi is among the many graduates who perceive themselves as the 'sacrificed generation' who lost out on employment opportunities and whose education could not be translated into jobs and earnings because of the collapse of the economy. The only jobs available to Dingi and many youths were in the informal sector and were

unappealing because of the precarious nature of the work and the low wages they offered. Shattered job expectations have left Dingi confused about his purpose in life.

However, Moyo, as part of the cohort of older adults who had secured resources before the collapse of the economy, managed to run his one-man construction company and had even tried to entice Dingi into becoming part of the company. To this, Dingi was reported to have explained to his parents that he was not interested in becoming a *dagga boy* meaning the one who lifts the brick-layering mortar. Evidently, Dingi had anticipated an office job and not manual labour. His parents were troubled by his lack of job and income so they tried to find him work. His mother had provided money for him to try his luck in South Africa as his three sisters had found employment there and were able to send remittances. Job prospects were perceived as better but Dingi was unlucky as he got deported several times. He suffered the humiliation of being rounded up, beaten and tortured by the authorities, so that he would never think of returning.

Apparently, the violence and humiliation had not been a deterrent as Dingi tried to re-enter South Africa several times before he gave up and came back home. On his return his father managed to find him a job through his contacts as a general hand in a small company making plastic products. At the time of the interviews (1999–2000), both his parents were afraid that Dingi would not keep his job because he had problems interacting with people and was drinking and gambling a lot. On one of my visits to Moyo's house I experienced first-hand the contempt Dingi had for people around him. He had airs of self-importance, and one Saturday morning that I visited his family he was still asleep around 11:00 a.m. His ten-year-old brother explained that he had come home drunk at 3:00 a.m., not caring that he had a small child. When he got home he had started fighting with his girlfriend. It had been quite difficult to quieten Dingi down. MaMlilo complained 'you have seen with your own eyes this is what he does, wakes up late and eats, gets cleaned up and is out again until midnight or the early hours of the morning. He comes home when we are all asleep and expects us – his old parents – to get out of bed, unlock the doors for him and serve him hot food. If we don't, he starts his routine of insults and threatens to beat us' This is the silent violence that the family has endured. Dingi seemed grouchy and never seemed to have any sustained interaction with his family. The son's behaviour troubled the father who blames the inherited violence that forced him to leave his family. Moyo shared that at some point Dingi had begun to harass his mother for money, this was called 'loud violence'. When this happened Moyo had confronted Dingi who began to threaten his father with gangs. The father would not be a physical match for his

younger son so they conceded and gave him the money he needed to avoid insults and threats, the 'silent violence'. At the time of the interviews Moyo was anxious and afraid that somebody was going to get hurt one of these days because Dingi was out of control. In Moyo's words, 'it has been troubling and troubled moments raising boys'.

Dingi's younger brother related another incident. MaMlilo had been born into a large family and her extended family supports each other. One of her sisters had an adult child who has been in and out of the hospital because of AIDS. In the ten-year-old's words: 'Our mother had not been to the hospital to visit our cousin because she was not feeling well herself...every adult has to visit those who are ill'. Dingi's younger brother explained that one day he was in the city centre with his mother and they met the relative who had been hospitalized. 'It was the three of us, our mother, Dingi and me. I remember now he had to help with carrying groceries that is why Dingi was with us. On that trip we met our sick cousin and our mother gave him some money excusing herself that she was not able to visit him in hospital. After leaving the sick cousin, Dingi jumped on our mother with words demanding why she had given money to the sick cousin yet she had never given him anything. That afternoon mother avoided what would have been a potential confrontation in public with Dingi by just brushing his complaints off'. In the younger brother's words: 'I was afraid that if she tried to reason with him he would start beating our mother right there on the street. Although we are born and raised by the same mother and father and we have been taught the same lesson to respect our elders, Dingi is different. He is my older brother but I am afraid of him now. He was not always like this'. The silent violence is mainly psychological abuse and the fear that familial role incongruence would be replaced by loud violence, the actual physical beating of the elderly mother. Seeing the boy's distress, Moyo injected, 'you see even his young brother is now afraid of him. He used to be an aloof child growing up. Always punished in school, humiliated by other children but we never thought it would come to this. His girlfriend has been hit several times. I am sure that child is asking herself many times why she attached herself to him. As we said, he works but we have never seen a cent from him. After he gets paid he goes out drinking in pubs and clubs. We don't know what is going on with him because now even the cries of his baby make him angry. Can you imagine even the cries of his own child make him all mean?' Moyo continued to describe the efforts they had made to help their son 'MaMlilo and I have tried to take him to traditional healers (*kubosiyazi*) to understand what is going on with him. When we give him the medicines to cleanse him, he has attacked us for bewitching him. However, we know that the bewitching thing here is alcohol and it is shattered dreams that are destroying our son'.

Clearly these parents were distressed by the actions of their adult son. MaMlilo and Moyo in their narrative gave an impression that they were interested in protecting their children. They had wanted the best for their children and were now frustrated about a son who had not embraced their efforts. Because he was no longer a child the parents had indicated that they had reported him to the police on several times when he had physically assaulted them. MaMlilo's words, 'we report him to the police so that they could help us by talking sense to him because he does not listen to us anymore but we are afraid to let him go to prison. So, we are forced to find the police when things get out of hand, then he promises to listen and not repeat his deeds. We accept his apologies and then he goes drinking and it starts all over again'. The police are used to finding ways to punish people but in prison there is no way of undoing the embedded structural violence. At the time of the interviews Dingi's parents were hoping that he would move out of their house and the situation with his girlfriend having a baby seemed to suggest that perhaps he would move on. At the same time, his drinking and reliance on his parents suggested that he was home to stay. In his parents' home Dingi was demanding money not only for his upkeep but often for his drinking. Abuse of one's elders in the form of financial abuse is apparent in MaMlilo's words: 'he comes at one o'clock in the morning and he will knock and demand that we get up and open the door. He knows that it is not safe around here and we are elderly and afraid of *tsotsi* (gangs of thieves) but still he does not take this into account. When he comes in the middle of the night he demands food. And when there is no food for him he becomes very aggressive. First it was banging of doors, then throwing things around, then it came to be targeted at me as the person who keeps the house. He does not wake up until noon. And when he is up, all of us and the younger children have to be walking on egg shells fearing that our moves will anger him'.

Apparently, Dingi had physically pushed his father and threatened the younger children as well. MaMlilo explained that to try to keep the peace in their house they had tried giving him what he wanted – usually money. But whenever they were unable to, he would become verbally abusive particularly towards his mother who after trying to cleanse his spirit was accused of bewitching him, and this was why he was experiencing problems. The mother, in addition to keeping house and providing food, is also expected to have positive aura to enable children to become successful. Yet when she tries to rely on traditional healing, these activities are perceived as bewitching and the violence escalates. MaMlilo explained that relations with her son became tense after his girlfriend got pregnant and moved into MaMlilo's home. In MaMlilo's version of things, the son and his girlfriend were not helping with

the household chores or with the care of the grandchildren but expected her to work for them. MaMlilo felt that this was offensive because younger adult children were supposed to revere older people. MaMlilo explained that whenever she demanded her daughter-in-law's help, Dingi would be offended and to show his disapproval of his mother would shove her and shower her with insults. Sometimes the tensions escalated into violence, with the son using physical force against his mother and she, in turn, using objects to fight back. Again, MaMlilo explained that it was on these occasions that they reported him to the police but for fear of him ending up into prison, she had often dropped the charges. She explained that her son had pushed her too far and after the next incident she would be likely to have him arrested. It turned out that MaMlilo feared her daughters' disapproval if her own son were sent to prison as a result of her actions. In her words: 'I am afraid of sending him to prison, I am afraid that the other children would not understand why his mother sent their brother to jail'.

*Voice of the Presumed Perpetrator of Violence against the Elderly,
the Son*

Dingi complained that he did not have a secure job and this was frustrating. Casual employment meant that he was not able to meet his financial needs and those of his new family. In his words, 'one feels hopeless, you work but the pay is little, things are expensive, prices of things go up everyday and then you come home and parents are at you for being a failure it gets difficult to handle. I know I have done wrong with the loud violence, fights and insults'. While the precipitating factors for violence against his parents related to money matters, Dingi apparently felt that parental stress about being a failure resulted in arguments that escalated into violence. He recognized that his response was wrong but his alcohol consumption, which he did not see as a problem, usually led to the verbal and physical violence.

Because of his lack of resources and his continued reliance on his parents, Dingi felt that his mother was discriminatory against his girlfriend and that she had favourites among her daughters. He said, 'the care is with those who bring in hard currencies at the end of the month. Those of us without rands become nothing in this home'. The tensions of resources and status inconsistencies are poignantly highlighted in MaMlilo's son. When Dingi does not have rands (foreign currency) to contribute to his parent's house, he uses violence to assert the resource power that he does not have. Dingi justified his 'temper' as he described his behaviour towards his mother and related an incident that touches on status inconsistency and silent violence. 'One day I was coming from town and I met mother with a neighbour and they were clearly talking

about us children and mother boosting how her girls had been successful and when I approached them, mother did not even introduce me as her son, which shows that she does not like me but likes her girls. To be unacknowledged by your own parent as part of her family is humiliating’.

To complicate the situation, I later learnt that Dingi had been coping with the realization that he was HIV positive. The unsettling issue was that his private troubles created havoc in the family and family members were only addressing the presenting violence. Dingi survived by acting tough and drowning his sorrows in alcohol but in the process has become a menace to everyone in his family.

Summary and Conclusion

Violence has to be understood within the context in which it unfolds. In this case, the family is a power system embedded in the constellation of an inherited history of violence – the context of the political economy of Zimbabwe – and structural violence becomes entwined in familial relations. When a family member does not have resources, or their status is undermined, they will use violence to assert power. The absence of resource ownership among young adults, as illustrated in the example, means that young adults like Dingi turn to their parents for support while the expectation is that older adults would turn to younger adults for support and protection. If Dingi’s drinking and gambling habits are not satisfied, violence and threats are used to exhort money from those who are perceived as having it. Family violence is expressed in silent violence in the form of threats, shaming and humiliation but this can escalate into loud physical violence.

The case here not only explains conflict in family ideology where a son – because of the privilege of being male in a gendered society – is supposed to provide honour to the family by showing responsibility and protection for parents and females but also the fact that Zimbabwean society is plagued by violence. At both the micro familial level and governmental level, the use of violence is apparent. The son suffers status inconsistency as a result of widespread unemployment and low wages and this leads to the use of violence to assert the authority of maleness in the family. Yet because of societal changes, the son finds that the family ideology is revised and he has difficulties coping with the new expectations. His mother – as the family protector – does not make it easy, and so the violence escalates.

The revision of family ideology within a social environment marred by violence and poverty is felt negatively by the son, who sees himself as losing

ground as a result of the changes: a young adult male is no longer sure what his role is since male authority is challenged by female resource ownership. MaMlilo, the older woman, does not hide the failings of her son and even discusses the situation with neighbours. The silent violence goes both ways. The older parent preferred her daughters to her male child who was seen as 'being a trouble and creating troubles' instead of contributing to family well-being. Failure to fulfil his manly role is not only a family issue but is shared in the community, leading to the son's loss of standing in his immediate family but also in the extended family and among neighbours. The loss of this power is compensated for by the use of violence to assert power and get the resources he needs.

The decrease in opportunity and resource availability in the Zimbabwean political economy has resulted in rampant social violence as people try to survive the brute of indigence. The link between familial violence and poverty is shown in this case. While poverty is extreme, societal change has meant that traditional gendered mores are also being challenged. Although the situation of the daughters in the family narrative presented here is not elaborated on, the mother's fear of sending her son to prison speaks to further psychological abuse of elderly parents who fear a loss of familyhood if the son is incarcerated. The threat of losing that family – particularly her daughters' material support in an environment where there is hardly any social care system for the elderly – leads elderly parents to suffer abuse in silence. Both parents were resourceful in trying to find ways to support their son and to understand his problems but given the social environment that has a history of violence and no visible means of containing the violence, it is difficult to extricate oneself from self-destructive habits. We conclude that the lack of sanctions against structural violence in Zimbabwe's political economy highlights a defect in society's mechanisms to address social justice.

The Cyclical Exchange of Violence in Congolese Kinship Relations

Sylvie Ayimpam

Introduction

This chapter will not follow the dominant view on violence exclusively centred on the dichotomy victim/aggressor; more accurately it will highlight the *reciprocal* and *cyclical* nature of family ordinary violence that prevails in the urban milieu of Kinshasa (D.R.C.). Grounded in two life histories collected through several periods of fieldwork, I have chosen to investigate the violence a specific kin relationship, namely the wife/family-in-law relationship. In Central Africa, a married woman has, most of the time, an equivocal relation with her in-laws. First of all because she is considered as a 'foreigner' having been 'purchased' through the payment of a dowry and therefore subjected to her husbands and his kin. Such a situation of ordinary 'violence against women'¹ could easily make wives appear as the dedicated victims of the structural violence associated with their marital status. But, although this is undoubtedly true, in the long run of kinship relations the wives unequal social status may become at odds with their economic status. And, as I shall show here, when a wife happens to be empowered by wealth superiority, she may become the aggressor and violence will be on her side. In the long run of wife/family-in-law ties the interactions follow a diachronic cycle of revenge and retaliations where each side may be in turn victim and aggressor. As already shown by Pierre Janin and Alain Marie (2003) the urban African family milieu can be a microcosm of reciprocal violence. However, I try here to dig in deeper into the process of reciprocal violence in family relationships. This was possible because the daily interactions in the family circle offer to the anthropologist a good point of view to observe ordinary violence. Nevertheless, the African family continues to think of itself as an extended kin community built upon family members' solidarity, made of unequal relationships between consanguinity and affinity ties

1 Regarding violence against women a number of important studies have been conducted recently in European countries. Among them a recent book by Maryse Jaspard (2005) gives a synthesis of works about violence against women in general and against women in a subordinate position vis-à-vis their husband's family in particular.

and where authority lies in the patriarch's hierarchical rank of seniority. Of course, such a conception of hierarchy and authority generates tensions and conflicts that may lead to violence.

However, my aim is to show that despite this strong hierarchical structure of authority and the ideology of kinship solidarity, violence in the family rises because of strong discrepancies between kinship status and economic positions. Indeed, whatever a family members initial status, one's dominant position will be related to one's economic situation. Therefore dominating situations are reversible allowing for revenge and retaliation leading to a kind of violence typically reciprocal and cyclical. A violent act is a visible event that anyone may comment, but the anthropologist knows that it is only a particular stage in a complex cycle² of violent exchange. The description of the most important stages of a family violence cycle requires a diachronic approach, for which a long period of fieldwork is required.³ Proximity and trust have been slowly woven through recurring visits that were necessary to gather the personal testimonies of individuals. With time, these persons have agreed to share with me their personal experience, their perceptions and even to reveal some family secrets that constitute the data of these life histories. Therefore, I present here two life histories that I have selected because they gather enough information to reveal the sequence of a cycle of family violence.

Revenge and Retaliations between a Widow and Her Family In-Law

Mama Mapasa's Case

In March 2001,⁴ the funerals of Papa Mapasa an old retired civil servant, took place in Kinshasa. The wake was held in the family courtyard located in a popular neighbourhood East of Kinshasa town. The wake had lasted nearly sixteen

2 By cycle, I mean the 'fluctuations of a phenomenon that consists of expansion phases followed by recession phases, of contraction and recovery, generated by a negative retrospective effect' (Boudon et al. 1993: 54).

3 The life histories presented here were first collected in Kinshasa in 2000 and 2001, during a field research study on 'neo-Pentecostal churches and the issue of family solidarity'. They have been completed during further field researches (from 2003 to 2006) supported by the French Ministry of research (Action Concertée Incitative, the French Center for National Research (CNRS) and the Institut d'Etudes Africaines (now CEMAF) in Aix-en-Provence.

4 In Kinshasa, it is common that parents of twins are called respectively, Papa (or Tata) and Mama Mapasa. The word Mapasa (Lipasa in singular) means twin in Lingala language. I have chosen this pseudonym in order to maintain the confidentiality of the informants. The same applies to all other names of persons in this paper.

hours and was coming to a close since it was almost time for the burial. Mama Mapasa, the widow, sat on a mat placed near the coffin, her head was covered with a scarf of white cloth. She had not been eating for twenty-four hours and she seemed very weak and tired. Indeed, in Central Africa the funeral customs are traditionally violent for widows. Therefore, in spite of a pressing need to go to toilet Mama Mapasa's family in law prohibited her to get up and go. The sisters-in-law of Mama Mapasa who were sitting in front of her shouted at her: 'Cry, keep on crying! Weren't you the one who spent his money! Are you tired of crying? You will not get up before filling this bucket with your tears!' She had to cry for a while before her husband's family finally gave her permission to go to the toilet and then drink and eat. All night long, whenever she fell asleep, she was shaken awake and told to cry her husband before sleeping. Faced with murmurs of protest coming from the assembly, one of her sisters-in-law, also a widow, justified this attitude with the following words: 'This is tradition. That is the way it is. There is nothing we can do about it. She is neither the first nor the last to do this. Me too, when I have lost my husband, I did the same thing. But, I was not treated so bad because I had been kind and generous to my family-in-law when my husband was alive. Then, they have not been too harsh with me. But, your daughter has always been arrogant and stingy! So, she won't get up before filling this bucket (with her tears)!' After that, people of Mama Mapasa's family became angry, stating loud and clear that the sisters-in-law had exceeded bounds. Nevertheless, the family-in-law remained intransigent.

Mama Mapasa was also member of a church whose pastor and followers had come to the funerals to bring comfort and support to her. After a moment, a woman from the church's group of Mama Mapasa stood up and said to the family-in-law: 'Tradition! Tradition! What is this tradition? Today, here we are all Christians. Today, our tradition is Christianity. You should be ashamed to practice traditions which are not in confirmation with human dignity!'

One of the sisters-in-law of Mama Mapasa who apparently had the same age as the woman replied: 'Well! If you think that tradition has no authority any more why don't you bring her to the toilet? Then, we shall see if you are also going to "wash" her after the funeral!' These threatening words referred to the body purification ritual that should be done by the deceased husband's family. The custom of 'purification baths' and other funeral ceremonies aiming at liberating the widow from her ties with the deceased in order to facilitate her reintegration in society after the mourning period is widespread among Congo's ethnic groups. In order to help the reader to have an idea on how mourning was traditionally accomplished and to understand also the extension of these practices in urban areas, I shall refer to Alphonse Ngindu's

detailed report on this ritual among the Baluba of Kasai which is the ethnic group of Papa Mapasa's family:

The relatives of the deceased shave completely their head in sign of sorrow. Throughout the mourning period, brothers of the deceased and their sympathizers sleep under the stars. As for the women, they sleep inside the house of the diseased, on the floor or on mats. However, only the widow has the duty to wear mourning for the diseased. This is the last opportunity for her to show her love and affection for her husband. She must mourn her husband, as the saying goes, with shaved head, the body almost completely naked and covered in ash. She cries day and night, talks very little, if any, refuses all kinds of body care: hygiene, eating, drinking. Everything is reduced to the minimum necessary (...) on the anniversary day of death, a week or several months depending on the situation, the end of the mourning takes place (...) the lifting of mourning is always a great event in the village. It is the resumption of life. Guns are shot, there is singing and dancing all night. (...) The funeral ritual of the Baluba (...) seems to have for them a dual nature. First, close relatives are aware of being contaminated, deeply affected by the death of a loved one. They need to be purified (...) On the other hand, the dead person continues to cling to the living. He/she (...) continues to be around the village. He/she tries to find his/her house and his/her bed. He/she appears in dreams. He/she startles passers-by on the paths (...) The rituals of purification we talked about target specifically the separation of the living and the dead person, especially the widow with her husband.⁵

1969: 90–91, 93

5 'Les proches parents du défunt se rasent complètement la tête en signe de tristesse. Durant tout le deuil, les frères du défunt et leurs sympathisants couchent à la belle étoile. Les femmes quant à elles couchent à l'intérieur de la maison mortuaire à même le sol ou sur des nattes. Toutefois, c'est la veuve qui porte vraiment le deuil. C'est l'occasion pour elle ou jamais de montrer l'amour et l'attachement qu'elle portait à son mari disparu. Elle doit pleurer son mari selon l'expression consacrée: tête rasée, corps presque entièrement nu et couvert de cendres. Elle pleure jour et nuit, parle peu ou point, refuse les soins corporels: toilette, manger, boire, tout cela est réduit au strict nécessaire (...) le jour anniversaire, une semaine, ou plusieurs mois après, suivant les situations, on procède à la levée du deuil (...) La levée du deuil est toujours un grand événement dans un village. C'est la reprise de la vie. On tire des coups de fusils, on chante et on danse toute la nuit. (...) Le rituel funéraire des Baluba (...) semble avoir à leurs yeux un double caractère. D'une part, les proches parents ont conscience d'être contaminés, profondément affectés dans leur existence par la mort d'un des leurs. Ils doivent

According to these beliefs, only the purifying bath has the power to separate forever the two spouses. With this, the in-laws held a powerful argument against the widow's side. Thus, faced with the violence of this unexpected threat the woman backed down to the church's group. Then, choosing a negotiation approach, the pastor and elders of Mama Mapasa's family started a long discussion with the in-laws. Finally, Mama Mapasa's sisters-in-law accepted some money in exchange for their permission granted to the widow to go to toilet, eat and drink.⁶ Such a ritual violence against widows is quite common in Congolese big cities. Therefore, the husband's funeral is feared by any widow because she knows that the funeral ritual, especially the funeral wake, is a good opportunity for her in-laws to ill-treat her. This violence is considered by the sisters in-law as a revenge or a retaliation to a wife who was not submissive enough when their brother, her husband, was alive. On her side, the widow fears that her in-laws could refuse to accomplish the purification rite that would free her from her deceased husband and this fear makes her submissive and completely subjected to her family in-law's abuses during the funeral rite. A custom based on revenge, inflicting fear and threat, humiliating and degrading treatment, is undoubtedly violent, but it is widely accepted or tolerated as it is justified by tradition. Therefore such violence is considered 'normal'. Moreover, in many cases, these treatments have nothing to do with the tradition they claim to originate from.⁷ Very few people actually think about such

être purifiés (...) D'autre part, le mort s'accroche aux vivants. L'homme décédé (...) continue à roder autour du village. Il tente de retrouver sa maison et sa couche. Il apparaît en rêve. Il effraie les passants sur les sentiers (...) Les rites de purification dont nous avons parlé visent précisément une séparation des vivants avec le mort, en particulier de la veuve avec son époux'.

- 6 During colonization, the ethnic intermingling that resulted from the creation of cities has led to a mixing of funeral rituals that had been maintained in the urban contexts. But, in recent years, due to the kind of religiosity that actually prevails in Kinshasa and the general poverty of citizen funerals tend to be simplified and reduced to a ritual minimum.
- 7 Considering the perpetuation of traditional rituals, Gerard Lenclud indicates that ritual is a repetition, even though its fulfilment takes some liberty with tradition. Consequently, it is not an exact repetition. 'Les historiens des sociétés rurales ont établi que les coutumes n'ont pas fixé d'anciennes traditions, mais mis en forme des institutions d'apparition tardive, parées par la grâce (tradionnante) de l'écrit d'un vêtement archaïque. Bref, les traditions, autant que les traductions, sont des belles infidèles' (1994: 30). A tradition is invented or recreated, and thus it is an answer, formulated in the past to a question in the present, and it shows a piece of the past, tailor-made for the present in a contemporary workshop (1994:33–34).

practices and question them, except when it goes 'too far'. But where are the limits? What to do when the suffering endured is beyond human tolerable limits? In the case of Mama Mapasa there was neither opposition nor rebellion, but rather a long negotiation ending in a coarse money bargaining. A proper amount of good money settled the limits of the tolerable violence.

What I have just described is nothing but a moment in the cycle of violent relationships, an act of revenge that can only be understood when put in connection with the previous events that taken altogether weave the diachronic exchanges between Mama Mapasa and her family-in-law. When one comes to hear the full story, then the reciprocity of violence appears clearly. It compels the anthropologist to go beyond the isolated points of view that depict a situation where there is clearly an aggressor and a victim. A cycle of violent exchange had begun long ago and will go on long after the funerals. In our case, the main source of disagreements between Mama Mapasa and her in-laws was first and foremost about the choice of Mama Mapasa as the wife for their 'brother' and 'son'. Indeed, Papa Mapasa's mother had secretly hoped that her son would marry her best friend's daughter. But, Papa Mapasa's father had given his agreement against his wife's will. Then, the wedding took place and it was the beginning of a long ambiguous story. At the time of their marriage in 1960, Papa Mapasa was still a university student. Lacking money, the couple had to accept to live in a two-roomed flat that Papa Mapasa's family had allocated to him in the extended family courtyard.⁸ At this time, Mama Mapasa worked as a nurse at the Kinshasa General Hospital. She tried in vain to persuade her husband to leave the family compound where 'things' were very difficult for her. Indeed, the relationships between Mama Mapasa and her mother-in-law remained very tight throughout the seven years that they spent in the family compound. Her mother-in-law used all opportunities to show her hostility, treating her with contempt and superiority. Any occasion was good to make fun of Mama Mapasa or to make her look ridiculous.⁹ One day, tired of being treated in this way, she 'dared' tell her mother-in-law that her behaviour was unfair and discriminatory. Her mother-in-law took the criticism as an insult. She retorted

8 This family compound was crowded. Papa Mapasa originated from a large family of twelve children of which he was the eighth child. His older brothers and sisters lived there with their spouses and children too, not to mention cousins, uncles, aunts and other relatives.

9 For example, when Mama Mapasa brought meal to her mother-in-law, the latter either said that her daughter-in-law did not know how to cook, or she would refuse disdainfully saying that the portion was insufficient. When Mama Mapasa did not bring her any meal, she told everyone that her son had married 'a snake that left her mother-in-law starve to death'. Nevertheless her mother-in-law was more conciliatory with other daughters-in-law whom she had approved the choice, or that she had herself chosen.

that Mama Mapasa had no right to talk to her that way, that as a daughter-in-law she owed her unconditional submission and respect: 'consider yourself fortunate that I am not as harsh and nasty with you as my mother-in-law has been with me!' she said. Then, she told her children that Mama Mapasa had 'insulted' her. Afterwards, one after another, her children stood against Mama Mapasa. The daily relationships became very tense and filled with threats, fights, insults, conflicts, etc. The behaviours of the mother and the daughters-in-law in this life sequence are particularly illuminating. They illustrate the hierarchical imperatives that sustain the community governance.

This daily violence in family interactions is often an expression of relations based on domination. Then, they are not specific to the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. Indeed, in strongly hierarchical families, they also rule other relationships such as those between elders and juniors. The dominating social norms governing interactions between family members legitimate the use of coercion by those in positions of authority in order to impose their will. Moreover, the most powerful among them are supposed to have an almost exclusive access to occult powers (Janin & Marie 2003). This permanent but somehow hidden coercion, exercised with the threat of resorting to occult violence, is a way to maintain domination in family relationships. But it is primarily socialization to which women are actively working which determines the family members to undergo this type of interaction.¹⁰ It allows the family members to internalize cultural values that legitimize relations of domination. Those at the bottom of the hierarchy are expected to have a blind obedience to those at the top of the hierarchy, elders and seniors. Those who are in a position of authority try, of course, to justify and legitimize their authority by resorting to tradition. Therefore, the violence that characterizes daily family interactions can be defined as 'toute action verbale, physique ou psychologique, imparfaitement régulée, qui dégrade un rapport hiérarchique ou une relation plus égalitaire vers une plus grande domination et soumission'¹¹ (Janin 2003: 33). Any action which in daily social interactions aims at imposing on others a psychological distress (fear, threat, humiliation, anxiety, hopelessness) or physical suffering (beating, abuse or injury) will be considered as an act of violence.

10 As indicated by Dauphin & Farge (1997), due to their educational role within the family, women instil, maintain and reproduce the social power relations between older and younger generations, the dominant and the weak, as they themselves have assimilated for example the constraints related to their unequal status.

11 'Any act of verbal, physical or psychological nature, imperfectly regulated, that degrades a hierarchical or a more equal relationship towards further domination and submission'.

In 1968, as soon as her husband received his academic degree and found a good job, Mama Mapasa urged him to leave the family compound. So, the couple settled in a home that became their private property fifteen years later. Mama Mapasa who had already six children when they moved into this house refused to host children from her husband's family as tradition usually requires: 'They made me feel so uncomfortable when we were in their house. Then, I was not going to let them make me feel uncomfortable in my own house! They wanted me to be kind and generous with them when they came to our house, forgetting everything they made me endure before! They wanted me to give them food, drinks...They wanted me to smile at them...But, when I was staying in my husband's family compound, they bullied me'. However, one day, without seeking their advice, her mother-in-law brought in two nieces aged ten and twelve years old. They were the daughters of one of the elder sisters of Papa Mapasa. Mama Mapasa understood this as an attempt from her husband's family to get control on her and her house. The only way she found to take revenge was to be harsh and nasty with the two children. The girls' mother told me: 'My daughters were like slaves, they were used as maids in their uncle's house'. She added that her children lived in terror because Mama Mapasa tortured them physically and morally; they had to do all kinds of domestic tasks and other household chores and Mama Mapasa used any pretext to beat them, insult them or threaten them. They were poorly clothed and poorly fed. They did not have any time to do their school homework or revise their lessons and this spoiled their academic performance. Also, Mama Mapasa never missed an opportunity to laugh at them and treat them as silly. On their side, the two girls were careful not to reveal much about what they were enduring to their family for fear of Mama Mapasa's reprisal. Indeed, they confessed later that Mama Mapasa threatened to kill them if they dared to speak. Concerning the silence and indifference of Papa Mapasa in front of his wife's attitude towards his nieces, his sisters try to understand it as a result of his wife's domination obtained through the use of fetishes that had subjected her husband to her will. This sister thinks that Mama Mapasa's suffering during her husband's funeral was only due justice and a just reprisal for all the pain she had inflicted to her in-laws while she was in a powerful position. 'This woman no longer respected us and when we went to her place she did not treat us with the respect due to in-laws. She was arrogant, rebellious and looked down on us. She seemed to forget that one day our revenge would come'. This is how the in-laws justified and legitimized Mama Mapasa's ill treatment during her husband's funeral. Mama Mapasa said that her hostile attitude towards the two girls and her in-laws was just a strategy of resistance to the oppression that she had previously endured and that she did no want to be repeated anymore.

But the revenge of the in-laws was not quenched with the end of the funeral ritual. After the mourning period, Mama Mapasa and her children have been stripped of from all their commodities and goods: the house, the cars, the household appliances, even personal gifts such as jewellery, clothing or dishes, etc. Papa Mapasa's family did not show any compassion for the orphans, their own brother's children, their own 'blood'. In spite of the intervention of some public figures and pastors from the neighbourhood, the children were thrown out in the street along with their mother. Mama Mapasa had no other option than seeking refuge with her parents until she could find a small house to rent. However, the Congolese family code settles quite clearly the issue of succession. The orphans are the first entitled to three quarters of the inheritance; the widow and other family members of the deceased are second class heirs who can only share the remaining quarter of the inheritance. Then, the dispossession of the widow and her children from inheritance is illegal, but, interesting enough Mama Mapasa did not claim her inheritance rights and she did not undertake any legal action. This urban custom of dispossessing heirs finds its roots far back in traditional ethnic traditions, but the deepening poverty of citizens has rejuvenated it to the point that it has become quite common in Kinshasa to see widows and orphans completely stripped of their inheritance and thrown out of their homes. But fear prevails, and only a few try to claim their due or stand up against the diseased father's or mother's family. One rather observes an attitude of resignation, apathy, as if such a fate was inevitable. When questioned about this Mama Mapasa said: 'These possessions are just earthly things, and I do not want to fight for it. My husband who had acquired them has died and he could not take them with him. Those who have confiscated them will also die and leave them behind. I have taught my children not to fight for commodities. I do not know what my late husband's family has in the belly. But, I do not want me or my children lose our soul because of this. The lives of my children have much more value than all the goods that they took from us'. It appears clearly from her speech that Mama Mapasa was afraid that her children could be bewitched. Indeed, the sentence 'I do not know what my late husband's family has in the belly' means 'I do not know if they are witches'.¹² What may be mistaken for cowardice and resignation in

12 In the collective imaginary of people in Kinshasa witchcraft is often referred to as something that resides in the belly. In everyday jargon, it is said that someone has 'something in the belly', meaning that this person is a potential sorcerer. This way of referring to witchcraft seems fairly common in Central Africa. In his work on witchcraft among the Maka people of Cameroon (1995) Peter Geschiere reports similar expressions; see also Martinelli & Bouju (2012).

front of real injustice is often nothing else than the true fear of witchcraft retaliation. One wonders why people who have at their disposal legal texts favouring their human rights (like the Family Code), who may have recourse to judicial court if needed, accept without discussion such unfair decisions and tolerate to be illegally robbed without starting a lawsuit to claim their right. The rationale for this lies in the fear of being bewitched. This fear is a real violence. It is the only reason why for generations one can see people being completely ripped off their rights to inheritance.¹³ Passivity is justified by the fate of misfortune that occur in case of dispute with in-laws. The list of misfortune events is dreadful: children dying one after another, incurable diseases or the inability of girls to find husbands or to have children, the inability of boys to finish school, etc. The power relations on which family relationships are based are enforced through violence, understood as ‘toute coercion physique ou morale “légitimée” par le droit du plus fort’¹⁴ (Janin & Marie 2003: 5). Here, those in positions of power are supposed to hold occult powers (i.e. witchcraft) through which they can obtain the submission of the weakest to accept unjust decisions. Of course, it is nothing less than an abuse of power.

In July 2001, four months after the death of Papa Mapasa, his eldest daughter, Chantal, who had been engaged to a wealthy Malian merchant one year earlier, was preparing to celebrate her marriage. Contrary to what is usual in such occasion, Chantal, her mother and the latter’s family, decided through mutual agreement to exclude Papa Mapasa’s family from the dowry price negotiation and the wedding ceremony (customary, civil and religious) organization. Mama Mapasa’s resentment against her in-laws was so deep that she flatly refused to associate them to her daughter’s wedding. The customary marriage ceremony took place in August 2001. Without having been invited, her family in law showed up anyway at the ceremony, but they were driven out without mercy. She told them plainly that they would not ‘eat’ her daughter’s dowry as she had been stripped off her inheritance. Booed by the guests and the neighbours invited, the in-laws were compelled to leave. But, as they left,

13 It should be mentioned here that in some families, widows and orphans are not robbed of the inheritance. It should also be indicated that there are indeed widows and orphans who do not tolerate to be pushed out, especially when the orphans are already responsible adults. Sometimes, cases are even brought before the courts. However, it is difficult at this stage to generalize the phenomenon of robbing the inheritance in a city like Kinshasa. Yet, it is quite common to see widows and orphans have disputes with the deceased’s family about the inheritance or being completely robbed of it. According to some of my informants, the phenomenon has appeared in the last thirty or forty years, first in the families belonging to ethnic groups with a matrilineal system.

14 ‘Any physical or moral coercion legitimized by the law of the strongest’.

they uttered a threat against Mama Mapasa: 'if this is the dowry of our niece that you are refusing to share with us, we shall see!' After three years of marriage, Chantal and her husband could not conceive. She began to suspect that this could be due to her father's family dissatisfaction for having been deprived of its due part of the dowry. In November 2004, Chantal decided to apologize to her paternal uncles and aunts; they accepted but her husband had to pay them a new dowry. However, two months later, Chantal became pregnant. Mama Mapasa told me: 'Didn't I tell you that these people were witches? This is how they harm other people without any remorse, and they harvest without sowing anything. But just wait and see! One day they will end up paying for all that they have done to others.' Threats and menaces again. It is clear that the violence of revenge and retaliations between the widow's family and her in-laws will go on.

How Yesterday's Victim Becomes an Aggressor Today

Kato and Tabou's Case

Unlike Mama Mapasa, Tabou had kept more or less peaceful relations with her in-laws, but also with her husband Kola especially in the early years of her marriage. Things began to get worse in the couple when she found a job with a salary higher than her husband's. Tensions had been exacerbated when Kola's elder sister, Kato, driven out by her husband's family, took refuge in their house. Kato's husband was a civil engineer who had completed his studies, but who could never manage to find a job. In such a situation, Kato's in-laws who entertained endless expectations in their eldest son's success found themselves helpless. This misfortune had certainly a cause, so they began to investigate what had 'prevented their son to find a job'.¹⁵ One of his sisters who was involved in church matters eventually 'discovered' with her pastor's assistance that her brother's eldest son, an unhealthy child, was a sorcerer and that he was 'blocking his father'. The child was supposed to have received witchcraft from his mother, Kato, who was accused of being an 'unconscious' witch. Kato's husband had been informed about the situation and he was advised to drive his wife out of his home in order to be 'delivered' from this blocking bewitchment. Unable to tell what happened to his wife, Kato's husband expressed his

15 The French word 'blocage' is a term generally used by the independent churches in Kinshasa to designate the 'mystical' obstacles preventing a person to be successful in life. These barriers are allegedly due to the action of evil or jealous persons, like witches, who try to prevent other persons to be successful in life.

resentment against her by becoming very violent. He began to beat her regularly hoping that despair would make her flee the marital home. But, because she was still in love with her husband, Kato did not flee. Her daily life became terrible. She suffered sprains, burns, open wounds, swollen eyes, broken bones, and so on but she could not understand her husband's sudden burst out of violence.¹⁶ She thought that it was perhaps due to his professional setbacks.

While having turned violent, her husband was at the same time hesitant to repudiate her. On one side, he was torn between resentment and doubt about his wife's alleged witchcraft. On the other side, Kato had supported him financially during these six years of unemployment. Being penniless, his family had offered him to return home once his wife would be gone. However, when Kato was beaten she used to take revenge on her husband by depriving him of food and pocket money. According to her, it was the only effective means of pressure to stop his violence, but it was also a form of coercion to oppose to her husband's violence.¹⁷ This strategy worked for a while. Confronted with hunger and need of money the husband calmed down for a few weeks, but he started to beat her again. This situation of ordinary violence lasted two years. During this period, in depriving her husband of food and pocket money she opposed a silent retaliation to his physical violence. This specific sequence of ordinary violence raises an interesting issue: can a force that opposes an intentional act inflicting physical and mental suffering on a person be described as violence? The legitimacy of the violence needed to stop violence is an old philosophical issue. The only way to introduce an acceptable discrimination between these sorts of violence is to call 'coercion' what seems to be the legitimate one (Kato's action) and 'violence' the illegitimate force used by her husband to inflict

16 The results of major surveys on domestic violence in Europe show that domestic violence is not negligible in Western societies (Jaspard 2005). In a social and cultural context that prohibits physical violence, domestic violence is not confined only to women. Mental violence, work or sexual harassment, are predominant forms of ordinary violence. In another study devoted to the specific case of Switzerland (Gillioz, De Puy & Ducret 1997), the authors give an account of domestic violence against women highlighting its social and family factors.

17 Regarding for example domestic violence and their 'acceptable' limits, a woman told me in an interview in May 2004 that it was normal and even good for a woman to be beaten from time to time by her man, provided that he does not go 'beyond certain limits' or 'does not hurt her too much', because it is a way to prove that he loves her and that he cares about her. She argued that when a man does not beat his wife, it probably means that he is no longer interested in her or that he no longer loves her. To support her point, she hummed the lyrics of a popular song that says: 'the blows in a marriage are proofs of love'.

severe physical and mental pain to his wife. Kato's retaliation is the opposite of her husband's violence.

Noticing that their son did not resolve to drive his wife away, the husband's family held a family council in 1992 where it was decided to do something. The in-laws proclaimed publicly that Kato was a witch and that she had transmitted witchcraft to her eldest son. Therefore, both mother and son were acting to prevent the success of Kato's husband. Driven out from her husband's home Kato and her children took refuge in her brother Kola's house. Full of resentment and bitterness, Kato found in Tabou (her brother's wife) the appropriate 'victim' who could pay for the humiliation and injustice that she had herself recently suffered. On her side, the situation of Tabou was tensed because she knew of course about the witchcraft accusation that was loaded on her sister-in-law and her children and she was frightened at the idea that they could bewitch her children or even 'contaminate'¹⁸ them. The fright of Tabou generated by the suspicion of witchcraft weighing upon her sister in-law shows the extension of the public damage created by Kato's husband's family. Tabou was really frightened and fear is the researched effect of an effective violence.

Actually, both women had an exclusive and inalienable kinship tie with the same man. Therefore, both had developed reciprocal and symmetrical strategies of violence and mutual exclusion that transformed daily life in a domestic inferno. Fear being the worst advisor, Tabou developed various forms of mental violence against Kato. Regularly she offended her sister-in-law with humiliating words, indirect verbal threats or evocation of her witchcraft. Among other insults, she would treat Kato's son as a mangy. Kato in turn, indicated by a haughty attitude and ostentatious contempt that she was in the house of her brother and that nobody could throw her out. She constantly interfered in the couple's conflicts, systematically siding with her brother and insulting Tabou during these altercations. Worst of all, Kato allied openly and publicly with her brother's lover, making Tabou suffer a real mental torture. The story does not finish here. A decade later, the situations and places of both women had been reversed. Tabou could not avoid becoming Kato's host! In the meantime, the child (accused to be a witch) had died in 1994 and Kato had remarried in 1996.

18 It is commonly believed in Kinshasa, that witchcraft is transmissible, in a 'contagious' way, especially among young children. It is often described as a 'disease' (implying a disease of the soul) that can be contracted either by hereditary means or by contagion, which one can in turn transmit. It can allegedly be cured if one is willing to get rid of it and accepts to receive an appropriate treatment. Hence the 'theory' of unconscious witchcraft mentioned above according to which a person could contract witchcraft without knowing it and therefore be a witch without realizing it.

Kola had lost his job in 1997 and so did Tabou in 1998. Without any income, unable to pay their rent, in 1998 they had to take refuge in Kato's house. In 1999, Kola went 'hunting' for diamonds in Angola and when I did my investigations in this family in June 2001 Tabou was still awaiting an unlikely return of her husband. Kato, her sister-in-law could on her turn take revenge on Tabou who did not have a reliable income and had therefore no place to go. This sequence shows clearly how ordinary violence is built upon a generalized and diachronic exchange of violence.

Between close people, due to interact for a long while, the places occupied in conflicts and violence may shift with reversal of fortune. The one who is today suffering violence from another may, tomorrow, be the one inflicting violence to the other. With time, and reversal of fortune, the youngest and the weakest of yesterday may be the eldest and strongest of tomorrow. This shift in dominating position favours the perpetuation of the violent relationships¹⁹ and contributes directly to the diachronic reproduction of ordinary violence. Since all structurally dominant positions in a family are relative and reversible, domestic violence can only be mutual (Janin & Marie 2003). It is not just the mimetic reproduction of violence acts that one would have suffered or would have witnessed during childhood, but the reproduction and perpetuation of family domination relationships that are strictly hierarchical and through which ordinary violence can be expressed and perpetuated.

Conclusion: An Ordinary Violence among Others

Urban violence that one can observe in Kinshasa is multifaceted. Indeed, after a long period of dictatorship in the country, the early 90s and the beginning of the transitional period to democracy were characterized by manifestations of disorders and public violence: looting, uprisings, riots, student violence, etc. (Devisch 1998, Ndaywel 1998, De Villers & Omasombo 2004, Tsamby 2004). As a megalopolis, Kinshasa has also been experiencing urban forms of violence such as crime, juvenile delinquency, armed banditry, etc. According to Pérouse de Monclot (2002) these forms of violence always go with urban growth and are a basic part of it and we agree with Omasombo and de Villers that in Kinshasa a 'naked violence (hateful, cruel, destructive, hedonistic) is growing: (...) violence against property, against symbols, against people, violence against the living and the dead'. (2004: 226). Indeed, some years ago, funeral rituals

19 Investigating about the endemic nature of violence and its perpetuation Severin Abéga (2003) also wonders rightly how it is maintained, how it repeats itself and how it is spread.

became an opportunity to burst out in social violence. Violence took the shape of verbal or physical assault against funeral participants suspected of witchcraft or designated as having ‘eaten’ the deceased. In Kinshasa, a specific form of youth violence, ‘la violence yankiste’, is disturbing funerals. The expression is derived from ‘yanké’, a local slang meaning young delinquents, crooks, brigands or bandits. During funerals, these ‘yankés’ try to overturn the funerals, transgressing taboos such as smoking cannabis in front of mourners, making crude comments on the deceased, singing very vulgar songs mentioning human genitals, insulting and threatening adults, especially the elders, and brutally diverting the funeral procession’s route, robbing passers-by, etc. This phenomenon has been observed in Brazzaville (Vincent Dissisa, 2003) and recently filmed in the Kinshasa cemetery of Kintambo by Filip de Boeck (2010).²⁰

The ordinary forms of violence among closely related people that I have described here are not isolated and, indeed, they are linked with this encompassing violence. For instance, the current rise of armed banditry and juvenile crime in Kinshasa can be related to the extraordinary increase of the number of street children. These are wandering around the streets mainly because their families have accused them of witchcraft (de Boeck 2000). Accused, abused, driven away by their families, they find themselves in the street and they grow the ranks of juvenile delinquents. Soon, they are ‘introduced’ to street violence and become real players in ordinary urban violence.²¹ It is first and foremost the kind of domestic violence that I have described here that produces street children. Ordinary violence is also an expression of cultural representations in a society where misfortune, illness or death are attributed to sorcerers. According to Alain Marie ‘le sort et l’identité de chacun sont rivos pour le meilleur et pour le pire, aux bons ou mauvais vovloirs, aux dispositions fluctuantes de son entourage social et surréal’²² (1997b: 323). In cities today, this violence triggers more and more a ‘witch-hunt’ in a climate of generalized paranoia. In such a context of economic crisis where everyone is trying to ‘save

20 This film ‘Cemetery State’ directed by Filip De Boeck shows the burial violence in the cemetery of Kintambo in Kinshasa. Although this cemetery had been officially closed many years ago, the people from the nearby slum area of Camp Luka continue to bury their dead there. In recent years, funerals and mourning rituals have become opportunities of upheaval and contestation of officials and authorities for the youth of Camp Luka: ‘For this urban youth, burials have become occasions to criticise elders, politicians and preachers who are blamed for the pitiful state of affairs in the city and the country’ (<http://www.filmnatie.eu/CemeteryState.php>).

21 See Oliver Kahola Tabu, this volume.

22 ‘The fate and identity of each one are tied, for better or for worse, for good or ill-will, to the changing moods of its social and surreal environment’.

one's skin' at the expense of the other, the harshness in daily social relationships tend to escalate and lead increasingly to the questioning of the social link and the family solidarity. Despite the appearance of friendliness which can be observed in family relationships, they are at the same time more and more ambivalent, that is to say, based both on an emotional feeling, a consciousness for the need of solidarity and of mutual distrust and suspicion. Therefore, they cannot avoid being heavily loaded with potentials of silent or explicit violence, where jealousy, competition, revenge and exclusions are entangled. Then ordinary violence appears as a sign and a symptom of a society in deep cultural and economic crisis where violence was historically an attribute and a privilege of authority status. Until now, the legitimate regulatory institutions (law, custom, judiciary and police administrations) are unable to control social violence especially those forms associated with the belief in witchcraft that prevents any recourse of citizens to legal jurisdiction and coercion.

Ordinary violence between closely related people, be they kin, neighbours, colleagues or friends, is so deeply rooted in everyday life that it tends to be trivialized and played down. It finds its rooting in the lasting history of social relations and is easily deployed thanks to the authoritarianism of the community elders that rely on 'traditions' to justify their violence. Nevertheless, the two domestic cases that I have analysed here show that a dominated position alone does not explain the status of victim. The economic uncertainty appeared to be a crucial and decisive factor of vulnerability or domination of one's position. The reversal of fortune affecting one of the protagonists may reverse the flow of violence and the victim may become the next aggressor and the aggressor the next victim as was illustrated in the story of Kato and Tabou. Increasingly today, the dominant is dominant because of his relative economic security. That is how a statutory underdog can oppose the violence of a statutory dominant but economically weakened person. The actual status inconsistency of family heads, elders or other traditional position of authority is one of the most common social drama today in Kinshasa. A frustrated ex-dominant but economically weak status has nothing else than violence to uphold one's authority. To dispose of economic means is a protection from ordinary family violence as it allows for example to move away from the in-laws compound, to free oneself from the 'traditional' torture exerted by sisters-in-law during funerals, or to free oneself from a curse (as Chantal's husband who paid a new dowry).

Thus, in the two cases of ordinary violence that I have discussed, we see two factors interacting closely: the social status (any 'traditional' hierarchical position in the order of seniority or gender) and the economic status (the fact of having a good regular job). And I have shown that it is the situation of economic dependency that exposes to the risk of statutory violence. Therefore, in the actual social game, economic uncertainty seems to play a decisive regulatory role.

Kill the Witch!

Anti-witchcraft Violence in the Central African Republic

Aleksandra Cimprič

Une petite fille accusée de sorcellerie est morte après avoir été brûlée vive. Elle est admise à l'hôpital lundi dernier, orpheline de père, la petite âgée de 9 ans est accusée de sorcellerie par sa tutrice, cadette à sa maman. Aspergée de carburant, elle est enflammée par on ne sait qui exactement car, quand les agents des forces de l'ordre ont fait le déplacement de SICA II tout le monde avait déjà disparu.¹

Introduction

This is just one story among others, the kind of stories that disrupt the daily lives of the people of the Central African Republic (CAR) and that show the persistence of beliefs in witchcraft and the extreme violence that goes on with such accusations. These stories no longer refer only to oral history, they are now written and appear in the media and they are becoming urban myths that people do not hesitate to spread. Being in both the private and public spheres, witchcraft has become part of daily life in the CAR and provides a framework for interpreting failure, misfortune, sickness, poverty and, correspondingly, success, wealth and fortune.

The collective imagination² of Central Africans about witchcraft consists of multiple entities: the witches (*zo ti likundu*); people who metamorphose themselves (*zo ti urukuzu*); people who throw lightning (*ongo-Brotto*); sirens

1 *Le Citoyen*, N°2532, 26 October 2006. 'A girl accused of witchcraft has died after being burned alive. She was admitted to hospital last Monday. Fatherless, the little 9 years old girl is accused of witchcraft by her guardian, her mother's younger sister. Sprayed with fuel, she has been set to fire by unknown people: when the police came to the scene in SICA II, all the perpetrators had vanished.'

2 The word 'imaginary' is used in this text to refer to the invisible that is represented by imaginary social meanings. Even if they are relatively inarticulate and unconscious, they are as real and powerful as the social dynamics that have contributed to their creation and their shaping. See *Institution imaginaire de la société* by Castoriadis (1975). When the term 'witchcraft imagination' is used, it therefore refers to the social construction of the phenomenon and to its representation in the common social imagination.

(*Mami-Wata*) and crocodile-men (*talimbi*). These 'figures of the imaginary or invisible' (Tonda 2005) work on the visible and the real by haunting the lives of local people and represent for them an ever-present danger, keeping them in what Ashforth (2005) calls 'spiritual insecurity'. In a country like the CAR that is living in chronic social, political and economic crisis, the feeling of insecurity appears in fear but also in mistrust, resentment and suspicion. Insecurity is not limited to traditional witchcraft. As Fancello (2008: 161–162) rightly points out, it also encompasses a variety of entities from 'fetishes', spirits and demons, to AIDS. In a world 'full of witches', social, interpersonal, family and neighbourhood relationships are woven around this imaginary. Protecting oneself and fighting these attacks by witches of the invisible world fuel a vast market that is benefitting the independent, prophetic and Pentecostal churches in particular. This divine healing, which consists of a special treatment of release and exorcism, induces the reproduction of beliefs in witchcraft, especially through accusations of witchcraft manipulated in the dreams and visions of pastor prophets (Tonda 2002: 97). 'Plus les travailleurs de Dieu luttent contre la sorcellerie, plus ils s'investissent dans l'activité thérapeutique et plus, en définitive, ils élargissent le capital sorcier'³ (Ibid.: 60). Although they are not necessarily the source of the witchcraft accusations, they nevertheless confirm and legitimize them. It is in the name of God that they are struggling against witchcraft. The persecution of demonized witches in these churches justifies the violent actions in the fight against witchcraft. When a disaster occurs, it affects first one person and then his/her entire family. People will seek, through socially well-codified means (in consultation with a *Nganga*⁴ or the visions of a pastor), the instigator of this calamity in order to punish him/her. There are two kinds of punishments in the CAR: the first is legal and appeals to the judicial system that, thanks to the legal provisions in the CAR's Penal Code,⁵ punishes and condemns the alleged witches. The second is illegal but socially legitimized and involves the use of so-called mob justice, which often results in extreme violence or even the death of the accused. It is important to note that the one does not exclude the other and generally in cases of witchcraft, people combine both.

3 'The more workers of God fight against witchcraft, the more they are involved in therapeutic activity and, ultimately, they expand the belief in witchcraft'.

4 Nowadays *Nganga* refers both to the traditional practitioner and the clairvoyant – the soothsayer who is involved in anti-witchcraft hunting and who is also a medicine man. The word exists in many Bantu societies and, according to Retel-Laurentin, was introduced in the Oubangui during the Bandia conquest (1969).

5 Law Articles 162 and 162 bis.

This article draws on a series of fieldwork investigations carried out in the CAR, particularly in Bangui and in the southwest region of Lobaye where violence against those accused of witchcraft is recurrent and seems to be at the heart of social relations. In fact, violent action is a basic element of social reality and instead of trying to eradicate it, society is seeking instead to channel or control it (Aijmer 2000).

We shall show here that, as indicated by Abéga & Abe (2006), social conflicts between rich and poor, the dominant and the dominated, young and old, and urban and rural, but also between men and women appear to be emerging behind representations of witchcraft. This witchcraft that articulates or verbalizes conflicts and constraints is nowadays expressing itself with violence; Witchcraft is violence. Accusations of witchcraft are increasingly open and brutal and seem to be accompanying the deterioration in living conditions that is closely related to the social and economic crisis and political instability. Therefore, it is essential to start with a brief recent history of CAR and to consider the political and social changes the country has experienced since the 1990s. This context will be the cognitive framework in which is deployed, on the one hand, the excitement of the imagination about witchcraft that is visible in all areas of life including the most 'modern' (Geschiere 1995), and on the other hand, ordinary anti-witchcraft violence.⁶ We shall demonstrate that the latter, which is culturally constructed, domesticated and subject to manipulation, legitimized and rarely punished, is a recurrent way of action in the public space. Finally, a specific case study will demonstrate not only the social issues related to witchcraft but also that the process of victimization, which determines the perception of the victim and the violent act, varies considerably depending on whether the person one is talking to is a victim, a witness or an executioner. It can similarly be of a cyclical nature, which is why anti-witchcraft violence must be understood, like any other social phenomenon, in its own cultural context.

The Social, Political and Economic Crisis in the Central African Republic

Landlocked in the heart of Africa, CAR has been the last remaining uncharted spot on the map of Africa that was drawn up around 1885 (Kalck 1992). This vast (622,984 km²) and sparsely populated (4.5 million inhabitants) territory

⁶ Anti-witchcraft violence should be seen in the light of a social context anti-witchcraft fight operated by the state administrations as well as by religious institutions.

became the Central African Republic on 1 December 1958 and proclaimed independence on 13 August 1960. One cannot grasp the uniqueness of anti-witchcraft violence in the CAR without recalling the country's recent history. Since 1996, insurrections, mutinies and coups have followed one another and indicate claims for social, economic, legal and political change. They have caused major loss of life but also huge losses in social and economic development. They have called into question a difficult process of democracy, which was restored in 1993 and has resulted in political instability that has induced successive changes of government and plunged the country into deep crisis. These events have negatively affected the population. Since the riots and coups, an atmosphere of general mistrust and fear has settled permanently in the capital and across the whole country. In addition, civil war has led to an inability to resolve interpersonal conflicts and has maintained or exacerbated conflicts between ethnic groups.

Since 2003 and despite the return of some kind of political stability to the country,⁷ the effects of the persisting economic and social crisis can be seen, as well as a sharp upsurge in urban violence. Violence has also been intensified by an institutional crisis, a family crisis and an identity crisis due to the social changes experienced across Sub-Saharan Africa. Changes related to development (education, urbanization and wages) need to be tackled individually but face social systems that are tightly community based and characterized by what Marie (1997a) called the 'community debt'.⁸ Obviously, the youngest in society are suffering the worst consequences of this changing Africa and new city dwellers are subject to instabilities such as casual jobs or the 'economy of getting by' that is linked to illegal work and delinquency. If social inequalities were traditionally based on criteria such as age or gender, they would refer nowadays mainly to access to material wealth. This statutory gap leads to the violation of traditional rules resulting in conflicts regarding expectations and obligations, and challenges the relationship between

7 That was ruptured again in December 2012, when the President Bozize was sent away by a new Rebellion, coup d'Etat. This new development happened after the fieldwork period on which this article is based, but it does confirm the actuality of the analysis made in this article.

8 The 'community debt' is the structuring logic that maintains, through the principle of exchange of gifts, the relationship between kin (donor) that occupy the position of the creditor, and the young (receiver) who are inferior to the donor and must, therefore, respect and honor the debt. This logic presupposes hierarchical relationships that are commonly accepted and everyone finds his own place in it. They need to be maintained for the 'good of the community', but also for the social protection arising from this debt (Marie 1997a).

generations and genders. In addition, social changes should have offered new horizons to the desires supposedly accessible to all but, in reality, few people have had access to these new opportunities (Geschiere 2000). Exclusion from the new-rich community or deprivation of material wealth are experienced as social failures by those who are either excluded (Geschiere 1995) or left behind (Ashforth 2005).

The frustrations affecting city dwellers are reflected in the prevalence of negative feelings in their social interactions. Among the negative feelings jealousy can become deadly. Adam Ashforth (2005: 91) considers that jealousy is a way of pointing at someone responsible for one's personal failure, a kind of fantasized enemy, a 'scapegoat' on whom one must take revenge. Revenge here plays the role of an outlet for tensions and frustrations. Moreover, the crises have seriously weakened the CAR's administrative institutions and the state can no longer fulfil its obligations and is not meeting the expectations of its people. The difficulties that it encounters in maintaining social order are gradually resulting in loss of legitimacy. This situation of normative uncertainty reinforces the 'spiritual insecurity' mentioned above. The rights and obligations are no longer regulated or punished, people do not know who to turn to or what their obligations are (Bouju & de Bruijn 2007: 3). This context has led not only to the persistence of representations and collective imaginary about witchcraft, it has also encouraged their proliferation and the intensification of repressive attitudes expressed in social violence.

Witchcraft is Violence

In the actual context witchcraft refers only partially to the memory of an ancient African tradition. Instead, it appears as a reconstruction or an appropriation of beliefs and speeches about witchcraft that have been transformed to meet current needs. One can speak of 'invented tradition' as defined by Eric Hobsbawm (2007) because all the practices and beliefs surrounding witchcraft seem to establish continuity with a shared historical past. Until recently people did not dare to talk loudly about witchcraft for fear of being overheard by witches, but this has now become common practice. CAR writer Pierre Sammy Mackfoy evokes this change as follows: 'Before, witchcraft was considered as a taboo. People did not even want to hear about it. And there were also those who had already suffered from witchcraft. So, when one started talking about it, there was immediately a reaction. But now it has become almost commonplace. People talk about it all the time' (Bangui, 7 February 2007).

When Central Africans refer to ‘witchcraft’,⁹ *likundu*, it is seen as the ability to use a kind of power or ‘mystical’ force able to harm someone through disease, personal setback or even death. Thus, operating at night, the witch is supposed to get rid of one’s human body and ‘fly’ on one’s magic broom or in an invisible¹⁰ plane to attack (devour)¹¹ a person’s heart. However, witchcraft is not only a structured set of shared beliefs. It is also, according to Marc Augé (1974: 53), all the practices of detection, treatment and sanctions in relation with these beliefs. The accusations and possible solutions for fighting or protecting oneself against witchcraft remain, functionally, its most visible manifestations. They have been analyzed as an idiom in which a painful process of fission is in place (Douglas 1970: xviii), but also as a ‘social strain-gauge’ (Marwick 1964) representing both a form of interpersonal, family or social conflict and a regulator of order, and, by extension, a way of restoring social cohesion and order (Gluckman 1955). Today, however, if witchcraft accusations still denote deep conflicts, they are proving unsuccessful in effectively restoring social order. This social disorder is characterized by a general dysfunction of family solidarity as well as legal authorities, particularly the judiciary one. For, even if witchcraft is defined as an offense or a crime in the Central African penal code, the use of mob justice remains widespread not only in the rural areas (where the geographical distance can sometimes explain the lack of legal justice) but also in the urban areas. Indeed, resorting to mob justice reflects the general mistrust in a judicial system considered to be of foreign origin. But, the Central African legal system reveals major difficulties in dealing with cases of witchcraft. Even though it often condemns alleged witches to long prison terms, people do not trust the prison system and therefore prefer to solve witchcraft cases themselves. Stories daily broadcasted on the radio and the rumours of *radio-trottoir* constantly remind people of the presence of this invisible world. The potential danger of being the victim of a witch is so

9 It is necessary to say here that the concepts of ‘witchcraft’ and ‘witches’ are very imprecise translations that were introduced during the colonial period. Encompassing a multiplicity of varied local practices, they do not always correspond with local realities. However, due to the lack of a better term and because African populations have integrated them into their vernacular languages, the anthropologist cannot avoid to use them even though every usage needs to be contextualized.

10 The current representations regarding the magic broom or even the invisible plane are the European representations of the witch on a broomstick and the contribution of ‘modernity’ to the witchcraft discourse.

11 An act of witchcraft is generally described as an act of devouring or eating in the invisible, which causes illness or misfortune in the visible world. See Marc Augé (1974a) and Joseph Tonda (2005).

widespread that there is a permanent climate of spiritual insecurity. As we shall see now, this ‘violence of the imaginary’ (Tonda 2005) justifies the popular expressions of anti-witchcraft violence. Françoise Héritier (1996: 17) has proposed a broad definition of violence, stating that it concerns ‘toute contrainte de nature physique ou psychique susceptible d’entraîner la terreur, le déplacement, le malheur, la souffrance ou la mort d’un être animé.’¹² Violence, as it is analyzed in this paper, is social and has an ordinary and commonplace character. ‘Elle prend place dans le quotidien des relations sociales ou d’interactions menacées par l’exploitation, l’injustice ou l’anomie de la société globale; sa compréhension confère donc un rôle important au contexte local dans lequel se déploient les rapports sociaux’¹³ (Bouju & de Bruijn 2007: 3). Anti-witchcraft violence in particular distinguishes itself by an alarming frequency that makes its presence felt in ordinary and normal daily life. In addition, the current non-intervention of the police in cases of mob justice and the lack of legal action against executioners have led the observer to think that the legal authorities, even though they do not necessarily approve, do nothing to stop this violence. Ordinary people in the CAR do not consider sorcerers as victims, let alone the victims of a violent act. Who is therefore the ‘victim’ in a case of witchcraft and in such a case what definition is to be given to a ‘violent action’?

The Story of Agathe

According to Séverin Cécile Abéga and Claude Abé witchcraft is a tool and an art for staging social relations. It works in a symbolic space by dramatizing conflicts that characterize everyday life (2006: 40). The story of Agathe has been chosen to illustrate a ‘drama’ that is not exceptional in the daily lives of the Mbaïki people.¹⁴ Agathe was born around 1945 and she had been married for over 40 years to Jean a 72 years old retired teacher. They had 11 children together. Following successive illnesses, six of the children died. In summer

12 ‘Any kind of compulsion, either physical or mental, that is likely to cause terror, displacement, misery, suffering or death of a living being’.

13 ‘It takes place in everyday social relations or interactions threatened by exploitation, injustice and anomy of the whole society; therefore the local contexts in which social relations unfold are very important in order to understand it’.

14 Mbaïki is the administrative centre of the Lobaye region, 100 km from the capital. Its geographical proximity to Bangui and its distance in economic terms are reasons why the region’s inhabitants, especially the youth, feel isolated and left behind.

2008, one of Agathe's sons, Jerome (aged 36) went to Bangui to visit his younger brother who is a pastor in an evangelical church. During a ceremony one of the pastors indicated that Jerome was seriously ill because of a witchcraft spell. He had to go back to Mbaïki but he was advised after that to come back to Bangui where he would find divine healing in this evangelical church. Thus, Jerome returned to Mbaïki, but his illness had worsened and he could not come back to Bangui. His stomach was so swollen that his family and neighbours were very concerned. Initially, the family consulted an *nganga* who confirmed what the pastor had already said, namely that the 'disease was due to witchcraft' (*kobela ti likundu*)¹⁵ and that someone 'had thrown a toad in his belly'.¹⁶ As his stomach pains were intensifying, his family decided to take Jerome to the *nganga* who tried to cure him, but without success. Jerome was then taken for the first time to the Mbaïki hospital where the doctor prescribed him a treatment against parasites. Jerome's stomach continued to swell and, for people, this proved the ineffectiveness of 'modern' medicine. Jerome was then taken to another *nganga*. It is important to point out that in case of disease 'caused by witchcraft', the victim cannot recover if the witch has not been identified. His family and the youth in the neighbourhood¹⁷ thus decided to consult the *Mbengue*. The *Mbengue*,¹⁸ 'the test of poison', is a practice well known in Central Africa (Curet 1929, Evans-Pritchard 1932/1976, Retel-Laurentin 1969).

-
- 15 The first stage of the work of an *nganga* is to find out whether a disease is due to witchcraft (*kobela ti likundu*) or has natural causes, perhaps from the forest (*kobel ti Ngonda*). This diagnosis defines the type of treatment the patient will be given.
- 16 The image of the 'toad in the belly' is highly symbolic. Witchcraft is viewed as a substance in the stomach of the witch and, as a concept, is not unique to the Central African context and is widely accepted. The name of the substance (*likundu, dikundu*) refers in proto-Bantu languages to the 'belly' (*Kundu*) (Bernault 2006: 213). This substance is sometimes believed to be an animal, particularly the toad.
- 17 This is an association that brings together young people in the neighborhood and is supposed to participate in the development of the neighborhood by helping the elderly and cleaning roads.
- 18 The *Mbengue* (*benge*) is the bark of a tree (*Erythrophlaëum guineense*), the toxic product and the instrument of the ordeal. This practice involves the absorption of a toxic powder that is supposed to reveal the truth. In the Lobaye region, the *mbengue* remains the instrument most commonly used to identify witches. Contrary to its use in the past (Retel-Laurentin 1969), the *mbengue* is rarely administered to witches who are supposed to know its 'antidote'. Nowadays, the toxic brew is consumed by people who are not necessarily *ngangas*. These people (of whom there are always at least three) are then either possessed (*mbengue a gbu ala*) or not by the *mbengue* who gives the answers to the questions put to him by the *nganga*.

Nowadays, the *Mbenque* oracle is used as an ordeal for the designation of witches. It is highly 'institutionalized' although it is illegal.¹⁹

The youth in Jerome's neighbourhood collected money to consult the *Mbenque* and twice the *Mbenque* designated Agathe, Jerome's mother, as the culprit. In addition to this 'expertise', Agathe's guilt was reinforced by the fact that three of her children had died of the same disease and there had been a complaint against her a few years earlier. Agathe was then publicly accused by the youth and the neighbourhood chief: 'We will kill you. You're a witch, we'll kill you'. They ordered Agathe to save her son and threatened her. Finally, in November, the neighbourhood chief decided to take Jerome to the hospital, but it was too late and the young man died in his mother's arms. When she left the hospital in tears to inform her family she was stopped on the street by young people who began to beat her up. The policemen, whose office was not far from the place where the attack took place, did nothing to intervene. Agathe was saved thanks to the intervention of the subprefect who himself suffered blows and insults from the crowd. For her own protection Agathe was held before her trial in the Mbaïki prison.

The process of victimization is not limited to violent action. Though it is often marked by an extreme physical violence, this act is only a moment in a process that is more dynamic and complex. Most often, it is made of multiple assaults and continued psychological harassment. The interest of such an approach in witchcraft violence does not rest only upon the dynamic restitution of the exchange cycle of violence between the aggressor and the victim (Bouju & de Bruijn 2007: 9) because, as far as we know, it is not common that a person who has been accused of witchcraft can also play one day the role of accuser. The exchange takes place at the level of the reversible perception about the victim. In the example presented here, Jerome represents the legitimate victim in the eyes of the population, but Agathe, who is accused and presumed guilty is, in the eyes of the observer, the victim of socially tolerated violence. In the prevalent context of general fight against witchcraft, social violence has become structural and is implicitly accepted by the state authorities because it is explained in terms of regulation and control that guarantee the maintenance of social order.

Jerome, Victim of the Invisible World

For the people in this neighbourhood, in this case of witchcraft the victim is undoubtedly Jerome. This invisible action of witchcraft is always defined as

19 Police Order No. 001/PL/SG 2001 which prohibits the *Mbenque* practice in the Lobaye district.

violent because the victim suffers from an incurable disease or a particular misfortune sent by a witch. The reasons usually mentioned to justify witchcraft are different and are generally fit to a social event need of meaning. They are mostly associated with jealousy, adultery, unpaid debts, non-compliance with social norms and, more generally, non-compliance with the expectations and obligations that govern solidarity between community members.

In addition, the reasons of witchcraft are in tune – as in the case of Agathe – with a common imaginary of witchcraft that defines witches as persons indebted to a community of witches to which they belong. According to Agathe's neighbours, she is a well-known witch who is accused for the third time, and who is paying her contribution to the witches's association with the sacrifice of her own children. This year, it was Jerome's turn to be sacrificed. In the same vein, any young neighbour may feel under potential threat and consider himself as a possible 'victim'. This way of thinking is mainly that of poorly educated young community members who are caught between traditional values and more actual ones, and who show particularly vulnerable to rapid changes. Moreover, they are generally perceived of and they consider themselves as being on the margins of social, economic and political processes. Their inability to participate actively in the world in which they live is perceived as a failure or a disaster, almost a curse.

Even if Jerome's illness had been real,²⁰ its causes remained mystical, i.e. linked to witchcraft. In January 2009, Pascal, a young neighbour, explained the situation as follows: 'Witches commit their actions in various ways. In order to kill someone for instance, they can use AIDS. They send AIDS to kill somebody but in reality it's not real AIDS'. The natural explanation did not exclude the explanation by witchcraft. The disease is very real, yet it had reached a particular individual at a particular time because witchcraft was involved.²¹

The witch representation incidentally personified by Agathe exerts a 'violence of the imaginary' based on 'le principe que les mots et les idées sont des puissances, des êtres dont l'action sur les corps est tangible'²² (Tonda 2005: 39). It operates continuously on social actors in a context of rapid socio-economic deregulation and '*déparentalisation*', i.e. in a context marked by the breakdown of family ties and patriarchal authority. Thus, this violence is the result of a

20 The medical certificate that was issued after his death stated that Jerome died from cirrhosis of the liver and intestinal parasites.

21 This concerns the theory of double causality proposed by Evans-Pritchard ([1932]/1976).

22 'the principle that words and ideas are powers, beings whose action on bodies is visible'.

deep individual and societal crisis that finds in the scapegoat strategy an outlet to misfortune.

Agathe as Victim of the Witchcraft Imaginary

After being once accused of having bewitched a girl from the neighbourhood, Agathe had been stigmatized and subjected to suspicion and frequent psychological abuse from her neighbours. As nobody had any doubt about her sulphurous reputation, she suffered threats and insults: 'If she comes back in our neighbourhood, we are going to torture her, kill her and get rid of her. Here, we'll bury her alive, we'll dig a hole and put her quietly inside, just like that' (recorded in 2008). These words implied her repudiation and her banishment from the neighbourhood: it was a process of stigmatization that inevitably led to repeated violence. When her son had become ill, she had done her best to treat him but because of the pastor's 'expertise' and her own belief that her son's illness had been caused by a witch, Agathe made a choice for a traditional medicine cure. Then, Jerome spent months in the hands of *ngangas* who were indeed only seeking for a culprit and not really for a cure. As soon as Agathe had been designated as the cause of the disease, the threats against her became more and more frequent and she had to flee to the house of a family member where she stayed until her son had been brought to the hospital. Tensions were starting to run high in the neighbourhood and on the day of her son's death, young district people were awaiting her with sticks and machetes to kill her. However, Agathe never had time to reach her neighbourhood for on her way home she was intercepted by the crowd. She explained: 'I cried, I screamed with pain when they caught me around the station. They started to yell: "Witch, witch you have killed your son"...They were beating me with hands, sticks or stones...while they were yelling "Witch, you have killed your son"'. (recorded December 2008). The local youth regretted that Agathe did not reach their town-district because she could have been beaten to death, and no one would have intervened. The youth's president explained it in these terms: 'The *nganga* demonstrated the facts that she kept denying all the time. Our intention was to exert real violence, to commit a real massacre in order to show how angry we were. She had to be beaten properly'. (Recorded January 2009). Meanwhile, another young man added: 'In our thinking, we wanted to kill her, this is why we the youngster had stored up stones'. Even though Agathe was never convicted of guilt by the Mbaïki court,²³ her life and those of her family will be permanently stained by this event. We think here of the psychological consequences of this extreme violence that will make Agathe's future life

23 Public Hearing of 23 December 2008.

unbearable. She had to leave her old neighbourhood but, for her community people, here or elsewhere, she will always bear the burden of accusation: she will remain a witch.

‘A female witch who wants the death of a person has to be killed, we cannot let her walk around freely’, explained a young female Central African student in April 2006. Revenge for the death of a brother and the existence of potential danger are sufficient for people to rise up, to take it out on one person, to destroy one’s property and house, and to torture, if not bury or burn one alive. We have defined such violence as a structural violence. According to Joseph Boute (1998: 47), this sort of violence concerns all forms of exploitation and injustice perpetrated for the maintenance of political, social, family and gender domination. Moreover, it is strongly related to legal or legitimate normative coercion (Bouju & de Bruijn 2007: 6). Anti-witchcraft violence is therefore social (and gender) domination as well as social coercion. Indeed, some social groups seem to be more vulnerable to violence than others. Marc Augé (1976) had already pointed out that, although anyone can be suspected of witchcraft, the accusation usually focuses on the poorest people, especially women. It is as if some social actors – old widows without families, disabled people and, increasingly, abandoned children – embody the failures of their community. As they are very vulnerable they do not have the helpful resources necessary to defend themselves. Women with little or no schooling are a particularly sensitive category in witchcraft accusations. An objective marker of this problem is the fact that 70% of the female detainees in the main prison of Bangui have been jailed on charges of witchcraft.²⁴ The socially recognized domination of senior people allows them to influence any preventive or punitive action towards children, including those accused of witchcraft.

Conclusion: Anti-witchcraft Violence as a Response to the Crisis in the CAR

The fight against witchcraft is being increasingly exploited not only within the churches (Fancellò 2008) but also in the CAR’s judicial system where it has been legally formalized. The extreme violence associated with this struggle to maintain social order is the culmination of a slow historical process, the result

²⁴ See Dankwa E.V.O. (2000) *Les prisons en République Centrafricaine*, Rapport de la Commission Africaine des Droits de l’Homme et des Peuples. Séries IV, 7. The data presented here also come from several surveys conducted in the CAR prisons between 2005 and 2009.

of a violent past and a current situation marked by social relationships deregulations, dysfunctional state administrations and the omnipresence of God's work and witchcraft capital (Tonda 2000). Above all, this violence reveals a deep crisis in the postcolonial society. In contemporary Africa, anti-witchcraft violence is meeting challenges concerning big changes affecting the conception of the self in relation to others in the individual person. This is especially true of young people. But, it is also a way of expressing a general feeling of disappointment *vis-à-vis* the false promises of a protecting and emancipating millenarian capitalism.

It seems that the ways in which the independent, Pentecostal and prophetic churches, as well as the CAR judicial system express their position on the violence of witchcraft imaginary are involved in the reproduction and the spread of beliefs and practices related to witchcraft. Endemic anti-witchcraft violence is therefore not only legitimate in the eyes of the population but it is also at the level of the state, which rarely intervenes in a popular violent action and seldom applies legal sanctions against the executioners. Almost legitimized in a society marked by anomie and spiritual insecurity, a situation perfectly explained by Bouju & de Bruijn (2007: 2), anti-witchcraft violence in its broadest sense thus appears to be characteristic of a situation where social order and judicial institutions have lost most of their legitimacy and effectiveness.

Ordinary Violence towards Street Children (*Shegue*) in Lubumbashi (D.R.C.)

Olivier Kahola-Tabu

Introduction

Street children (*shegue*) and the violence they suffer in the town of Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) are the focus of this chapter. How can one understand why there are street children in a society where life is not considered to have been fulfilling if one does not have children? What could be so unbearable at home with their family that a child would prefer to live a precarious and dangerous life on the streets of a big city? The widespread social phenomenon of street children in Congo indicates that there are serious shortcomings in urban domestic group relationships. Indeed, most of the fieldwork cases that I have been investigating show that street children flee from their family compounds as a result of broken relationships. This is particularly well exemplified by the case of 13-year-old Jeannette:

I had a good life at home with my parents but after the death of my father, life changed dramatically at home and even getting food to eat became a problem. Eventually, my mother remarried but my stepfather unfortunately did not want me in the house. To save her new marriage, my mother decided to send me to stay with my grandmother but a few months later my grandmother died of cholera. Then I had to return to my mother's home despite my stepfather's strong antipathy towards me. I do not know the reasons why my stepfather disliked me so much but I know that he disliked the mere fact that I was living at home. One day while I was washing the dishes, I inadvertently broke a china plate and my stepfather became very upset and pounced on me and hit me. I banged my head against the wall and my nose started to bleed. He was so angry that he did not even notice that I was bleeding and he kept beating me until I ran out of the house. When my mother returned home, she saw my swollen face and I told her what had happened. But I was very surprised when my mother took it out on me. She insulted me for not doing anything to please her husband. With time, daily life became unbearable for me at home. Every day I was sure that my stepfather would find a reason to hit me or insult me. I complained to my mother but she did not

support me. The climax of the conflict was when my stepfather lost a sum of 5000 Congolese Francs that were in the house and he accused me of stealing his money. Before I could utter a single word, he had his hands round my neck to the point that I could not scream or move. Luckily Papa Gilbert intervened on my behalf but my stepfather was furious and said: 'I do not want to see a child born of adultery in my house'. Helpless about what was happening, my mother rallied behind her husband's cause and promised to burn my hands. Confronted by such violence, I suddenly realized that my place was no longer in this house and that I would have to live on the streets. Such was my fate!

The case of Jeannette gives an idea of the living conditions endured by some children in their family homes. Jeannette had become a victim of her stepfather's violence. Of course, one should be cautious about reading too much into children testimonies: *'Mille et une raisons peuvent être évoquées par les enfants pour expliquer ou justifier leur fugue. Entre raisons objectives et celles subjectives, il existe une plage pouvant donner libre cours de toutes formes d'affabulations. Il arrive même que l'enfant trompe ou qu'il se trompe lui-même sur ce qu'il croit être le vrai motif de sa fugue'*¹ (Mutambwa 2005: 38). But, Jeannette's case is not so extraordinary that her testimony should be questioned. She obviously lived in a state of emotional and psychological insecurity resulting from a situation of personal and traumatic abuse that she could no longer bear. Unable to continue living in a hostile family environment, she looked for a way out and ended up on the street.

In Lubumbashi, families are not limited to small nuclear families comprising a father, mother and children. An important question is thus why abused children cannot enjoy the solidarity of their kin. Quite often, when victimized children report the maltreatment inflicted upon them, their close relatives accuse them of being a liar or they simply ask them to be patient and endure their suffering. According to Ordonez, a street kid

...est un enfant qui a fuit sa maison en réaction à un contexte familial violent ou sans capacité de contenance. L'enfant cumule des sentiments d'hostilité durant des années, il ne se sent plus relié à personne. Dans ce

1 'Thousands of reasons can be given by children to explain or justify running away from home. For objective and subjective reasons, all kinds of confabulations can be found. It can even be that the child is mistaken or has misled others about what he believes the true reason is for running away'.

climat d'hostilité, ces enfants se résolvent à partir dans la rue, car ils se considèrent comme étant des éléments gênants. Si dès leur départ, les parents ou les membres apparentés ne viennent pas les rechercher, ils consolident leurs liens avec la rue.²

Ordonez cited by AGUILAR 1997: 140

The conditions of subjection that some parents in Lubumbashi impose on their children are appalling. Nowadays, child abuse is very often justified by accusations of witchcraft that make them the targeted victim of family coercion. Misfortune made Jeannette flee to the streets. Why the street? Why not elsewhere? The child felt rejected by her close relatives and knew that her presence was unwanted. Neighbours who witnessed this violence turned their backs saying that it was not their business to interfere in another family's affairs. Among all the members of this extended family, there was no one who could give Jeannette shelter. Faced with the absolute indifference of family and neighbours, the child found herself alone with a crucial choice to make: she had to either stay at home and endure serious abuse or could flee her persecutors but risked facing further violence elsewhere. The decision to leave prevailed which meant that her daily life at home had to have been truly unbearable.

Contrary to what most runaway children think, the street is not a space where it is easy to make a living and survive. As soon as they arrive, they have to demonstrate physical and moral endurance in the face of all kinds of abuse and maltreatment that the street dwellers who are already there inflict on them. It is a kind of rite of passage. Those who are accustomed to life on the street describe the conditions there as *pima uyambe* 'dare and shit', meaning that there is a potential on the street for repeated victimization that takes neither age nor gender into account. In this context, it is not morality that governs one's actions but the need to protect oneself and strengthen one's street identity.

The Novice's Rite of Initiation

Viewed from the outside, the street seems to be open to all children but this is far from the case. Any child who decides to live on the street must

2 '...is a kid who has run away from his/her family home in order to escape from a violent family circle or without the capacity for containment. For years, the child builds up feelings of hostility and s/he does not feel connected to anybody. In such a hostile climate, children feel they are troublesome elements and decide to run off and live on the street. If, from the very beginning, their parents or other kin do not try to take them back home, then they settle on the street.'

accept and endure the violence that comes with his/her integration. This violent initiation ritual has a twofold objective, namely to assess the newcomer's physical endurance and to test his/her ability to adapt to the harsh conditions s/he will face there. Thus, a runaway child who stays on the street in spite of the various forms of abuse there is allowed to stay only if accepted by the street 'elders'. At this point, the attitude of the runaway child is ambiguous. Having fled his/her home after having been ill-treated, they find themselves on the street where they are welcomed by the violence of the street children. What can they do? Return home again after running away? The child will always be embarrassed to do this and so, for reasons that may be unclear, s/he will usually prefer to stay on the street while harbouring the secret hope that a family member will come to take him/her back. The following testimonies by Xavier and Giselle illustrate such violent initiations.

Xavier's Ritual Initiation

One night, I fled the house because my stepmother was regularly persecuting me. I was fed up and decided to take refuge on the street. That day I did not know where to go but going back home was out of the question. I was thinking that maybe my father would come to get me. But my expectations were in vain. So I went to the Mzee Kabila market to spend the night there. I was asleep when, about 20:00, a group of kids woke me up. Without asking me any questions, one of them hit me hard and I fell down. With the help of the others, he put me in a bag and they started kicking me as if they were playing football. I cried out but nobody came to my rescue. Then I pretended I was dead and they stopped beating me and went away for a while. After a bit, one of them came to get me out of the bag. My nose was bleeding but I got up and ran away. When I saw a police patrol, I ran to them for protection but my aggressors had been following me and demanded that the policemen release me. The police asked me where I came from and when I told them that I had left home because of my stepmother's abuse, they kicked me out telling my tormentors: 'take him, he is your mate'. I was lost. My aggressors burned my body with liquid plastic and when they released me, I could not walk. My whole body was aching. What could I do? Go home? I would have to face my stepmother again and she would continue to torture me. I then resigned myself to dying on the street. The next day, when my aggressors saw me, they were surprised that I had not gone home after all that I had endured the night before. The leader of the gang then gave me his hand

and told me that I could live on the street because I was brave. He accepted me into his group and since then I have been living on the street.

Gisèle's Testimony

You need to be very brave if you want to survive on the street. When I think of what I suffered before being initiated, I can never forgive my stepmother. It was Sunday when I resolved to leave my father's house after my stepmother burned my hands with boiling water. So I found myself around 21:00 in the Mimbulu market, writhing in pain because of the burns. I did not know where to go when a group of street girls asked me: 'Are you coming to compete with us? You think that it is easy to live on the street? You would have done better to stay home in spite of being persecuted. Here, you'll experience things worse than what you have already experienced at home.' They then jumped on me and undressed me. I was naked. They laughed at me when they saw me in this state. The leader of the band ordered me to keep quiet, threatening that if I screamed, she would insert a stick in my vagina. I was shaking and crying. They started molesting me. Then she asked Veronique to call two street boys. A few minutes later, Veronique came back with two boys. The girls immobilized my arms and legs. The gang leader asked the boys to rape me in turn. It was my first sexual experience. While the first boy took my virginity, the second added to the pain. When I screamed, the leader of the gang started to strangle me and slapped me with all her might. Subsequently, she told me that I had become a big girl and I would not be afraid of boys anymore. Before releasing me, she forced me to smoke cannabis and I complied quickly, fearing further sexual abuse if I did not.

These testimonies show the violence that newcomers can suffer at the hands of other street children. This kind of violence takes on the form of an urban rite of initiation that occurs at night, when street children notice the arrival of newcomers. Once identified, they are subjected to unimaginable torture and complete indifference. The boys are routinely lynched, stoned, slashed with razors, burned with molten plastic, tied up and thrown into ditches. Sometimes their bodies are coated with salt or pepper after being slashed with razor blades. The lucky ones are simply whipped or punched. The sight of an initiation rite is pitiful, with the older street children, often under the influence of drugs, showing the newcomers no mercy whatsoever. The newcomers scream

as loudly as they can, calling for help but nobody will dare to rescue them. Not even the police intervene. In this ritual process of violent initiation, the situation appears normal to the initiators and they impassively cheer each other on and tell the newcomers that this is the street, that they will be beaten up and that it takes a lot of stamina to survive in this world. Nobody will defend them, so they need to know how to take the blows and fight back if they have the opportunity. If they steal, they will be beaten up. Therefore they need to be immune to pain.

For the girls, most of the physical abuse inflicted on them is sexual: being stripped, humiliated and raped is their fate. But they are also tortured. Sometimes the lips of their vagina are burned with a cigarette or they may be subjected to violent sexual molestation. These practices do not take into account the age of the newcomer. Generally, they think that this is the best way to teach the newcomer, whatever her age, not to be afraid of men: a girl who has been raped will never be afraid of men. By doing so, they hope to prepare the newcomer for life on the street because girls cannot perform the same activities as boys there. Girls should be prepared for prostitution by destroying any sacred aura around man and sex. However, it is important to note that the new street girls are often taken in by street boys who gang rape them. This sexual and physical abuse takes place at night with the total indifference of a society confined behind the walls of private homes. During the day, passers-by simply note that the street children have scars and wounds but do not realize that the marks were the result of abuse suffered in the anonymity of the previous nights.

Violence between Passers-by and Street Children

When one observes the behaviour of passers-by, there is obvious suspicion and even an *a priori* hostility towards street children. This attitude is naturally the result of the stereotypical image of aggressiveness and brutality that they have of street children. In fact, it is in a situation where survival is their only goal that street children develop violent feelings. They do not hesitate to throw stones at people who would prevent them from stealing from a passer-by. And when fighting each other, they often use knives. These attitudes generate fear and hostility among passers-by. In an urban situation of ordinary violence, the interactions between street children and passers-by are ambivalent. Street children believe that the street is their own domain and anyone who is there has to submit to their rules that consist of a violent balance of power based on theft and intimidation. When street children follow a passer-by to steal their purse, it is better for witnesses not to intervene. Those who do so may be

chased by other children and run the risk of being stoned or slashed with razor blades. Passers-by who know the aggressiveness of these children do not want them to approach their field of activity. To avoid any problems, passers-by have developed a reaction of hostility towards street children so that when a street child is begging, the passer-by does not respond to his/her request or even look at them. If the street child continues to harass them, s/he is either insulted or rebuked with the back of the hand. In turn, some children react with insults even when the passer-by's action is non-threatening.

The interaction between street children and bystanders is thus uncertain, with both parties feeling vulnerable and insecure. The child is prone to being hit as a way of survival, while the passer-by must stay focused to avoid being robbed or insulted. In this urban world of aggressive distrust, if a passer-by who has been victim of a street child catches the culprit, then s/he will attempt to take the law into his/her own hands and nobody will be able to stop him/her. Conversely, when a street child assaults someone on the street, most passers-by remain indifferent, according to the popular attitude of *mubaache baishane* or 'let him get it over and done with'. Violence is routine in daily interactions between passers-by and street children. The following incident took place outside a downtown hotel:

Mr W. parked his car in which there was a box of money. While he went to his room, a street kid unlocked the door and got in to steal a few Congolese Francs. But he got caught by the owner who came back sooner than expected. The man grabbed the child, opened the trunk of the car, took out a screwdriver and poked it in the child's eye. The child screamed but the man just got into his car and drove away.

Such an act of violence is beyond understanding and challenges us all. The deed committed by the child had been severely punished by Mr W. whose violent reaction to the child's violence cannot be condoned in any way. However, the bystanders who witnessed the scene did not dare to react despite their obvious amazement at what had happened to the child and they let the man get into his car and drive away. The collusion of the bystanders is a dimension of street violence that is becoming commonplace in society. Before the car owner gouged the eye of the street kid, some passers-by had witnessed the attempted robbery but nobody had tried to stop the child. And yet, if the child had succeeded, Mr W. would have complained about his lot. Faced with such complicity between the passers-by (urban society) and the street children (drop-outs and delinquents), Mr W. took the law into his own hands. The ill-treatment inflicted by street children on passers-by is barely noticeable. The

main victims are women and girls. On Djamena and Tabora Avenues, street children force girls to give them money and if they do not have any, they are threatened with stoning. Sometimes they are robbed of their headgear. These frequent and brutal acts punctuate everyday life. By their lack of reaction, the people who witness such scenes of ordinary violence directed at girls appear to condone the street children's violent practices.

These cases suggest that street children and passers-by, who are both victims and aggressors, share the same contempt for citizenship. Street children are insensitive to the pain felt by passers-by (who are considered as their victims), while the latter are insensitive to the suffering of the street children (who are considered as their aggressors). D'Haeyer (2004: 11) evokes this contempt as follows: '*Un étudiant belge travaillant avec les enfants des rues s'est hasardé à leur offrir de partager son repas. La tenancière du restaurant a jeté la nourriture sur le sol et refusé catégoriquement que les enfants mangent assis sur une chaise. Pour la tenancière, on n'invite pas les déchets à s'attabler*'.³

Exclusion and Social Violence Directed towards Street Children

The presence of children on the street depicts a society that does not care about its youth's future but, above all, a society that passively condones the victimization of abandoned children. *Shegue* are clearly excluded from society. Most of them share the same position: they are abandoned by their families, a phenomenon reinforced by a collective social resignation. Rea (1999: 35) explains the relationship between exclusion and violence, affirming that in situations in which social, community and family solidarity are no longer able to take over the protecting role of a failing state, youth violence appears to be a response to the brutal social exclusion youths face. Under such conditions violence becomes a response to the lived experience of exclusion and becomes part and parcel of a social structure. Exclusion, according to Rea, is not only an experience related to the absence of work or income, but more generally a social and political relegation of youths in such situations (Ibid.) This perspective allows for an understanding of violence that children inflict on society. For example, one day the *shegue* in Lubumbashi had decided that girls should no longer wear trousers and those girls who ventured to do so were stripped of

3 'A Belgian student working with street children ventured to share his meal with them. The manager of the restaurant flung the food on the floor and refused categorically to let the children eat at the table. She thinks that one should not invite the dregs of society to sit down at table.'

their clothes in public, provoking applause from passers-by. This situation spread to such an extent that no woman dared to wear trousers publicly. Girls in trousers were hunted down and those who fell into their hands were stripped after being publicly beaten. The kind of violence exerted by the street children on the persecuted girls was remarkable. This particularly violent action enjoyed social support. The police, who should have protected the girls, tacitly encouraged the *shegue* to abuse them and while the girls were being abused, the police moved on to other places. The *shegue*'s violence was a kind of revenge against the violence of indifference to their daily suffering.

An Exclusive Victimization

It is clear that street children are the victims of social exclusion. As Luccini (1996: 358) put it, they are the victims of an exclusively violent environment. However, fieldwork has revealed that citizens were violent towards the street children because they were afraid of them. After being banished by their families, the *shegue* face a different type of social exclusion that can be explained by their antisocial and deviating violent behaviour. Admittedly, the socio-economic dislocation of families has seriously altered kin solidarity, but one wonders if the subsequent violence of runaway children is not the real reason for the severity with which they are treated by society. The question remains open. Nevertheless, the fact remains that children living on the street are excluded, marginalized and victimized. For instance, instead of taking care of abandoned children, the churches participate in the process of exclusion under the pretext that they are 'witches' who are responsible for all the misfortune that befalls their families. After long prayers, usually accompanied by trances, pastors prophesize the sorcery of these children. As a result, the frightened parents oppress the children who, from now on, will be unfairly blamed for crimes they did not commit and of which they are clearly innocent. They are punished and deprived of food and a 'dry' fasting period of three days (without food or drink) is usually imposed on them. Moreover, to break the spell, they are submitted to prophets who, with the support of relatives, impose punishments on the children to exorcize them: they are whipped or beaten on the pretext that sorcerers are stubborn and confess only after being mistreated. D'Haeyer (2004: 40) confirms that: '*pour exorciser ces gamins, certains pasteurs utilisent la manière forte. Ils font ingérer de puissants vomitifs et laxatifs aux petits afin de les vider des restes de chairs humaines qu'ils disent avoir consommés la nuit.*'⁴ In such a context, the children end up claiming to be sorcerers

4 'In order to exorcise these kids, some pastors use the hard way. They force the children to swallow powerful emetics and laxatives so that they will be able to vomit the remnants of human flesh that they are supposed to have consumed during the night.'

and reporting hallucinations. This phenomenon has become so widespread that every child on the street is now believed to be a sorcerer. However the dyadic relationship of exclusion of children involving family and the church is alarming. In this climate of accusation, children feel guilty and are traumatized because every time there is a case of sickness in the family, they are threatened with death if the patient does not recover. And sometimes they find themselves thrown onto the street where other forms of ill-treatment await them.

The Case of 12-Year-Old Plamedi

We were seven girls in our Karema. Plamedi was the youngest of us all. One day, a car parked in front of us. The window went down and a daddy called me over. I went to him and he pointed to Plamedi. I called Plamedi. In my presence, the daddy asked if Plamedi could go with him because he wanted to adopt her. I asked Plamedi to accept the proposal. She did and the daddy let her climb into the car. It was at that point that I realized that the 'daddy' was actually looking for a virgin to make his magic charms. He took Plamedi to a hotel at La Ruashi where he raped her. Plamedi could not stand it and cried. Two policemen came along and forced the daddy to open the door. The hotel manager, seeing the police, fled. When the policemen broke into the room, Plamedi was almost dead. To save himself, the daddy offered the policemen a large sum of money. They took it and, using his car, they took Plamedi to a health centre in La Ruashi claiming she had been raped by a man who had fled when they intervened.

The street girls suffer rape in absolute social silence but this has a significant impact on the lives of these children. Gauthier (1994) emphasizes that sexual abuse is at the centre of the very broad field of child abuse. The sexual violence that this man (described above) inflicted on that pubescent girl challenges the socio-cultural values of society. The case illustrates well what usually happens: the police catch a man in the act of committing rape but, in exchange for a handful of bank notes, they agree to cover up his guilt. Then the child '*se sent trahi dans la confiance aveugle qu'il portait aux adultes, l'abuseur lui renvoyant, par lui-même ou par ses actes, des sentiments de souillure, de honte et d'anormalité. Certains signes peuvent en témoigner: Méfiance vis-à-vis des adultes, irritabilité, agressivité, etc*' (Ibid.).⁵ What is serious about this form of violence is that most

5 Then the child 'feels betrayed in the blind trust s/he felt toward adults, the culprit provokes in the child feelings of filthiness, shame and abnormality. Some signs can attest of such experience: mistrust *vis-à-vis* adults, irritability, aggressiveness, etc'.

of the time someone simply takes the victim to hospital for primary treatment. But psychologically, the victims are abandoned to their fate and they do not benefit from any psychotherapeutic support to assist their rehabilitation. And yet, the real challenge would be to follow this humiliated child who is likely to develop a bad image of adulthood and sexuality. Such is the case of Annie.

The Case of Annie

Around midnight, while I was going to join my friends in the Tunnel market, I was stopped by three policemen on patrol. One of them asked me where I was coming from and where I was going. Before I could answer, another ordered me to follow them. Because I was dragging my feet, he hit me and told me that a normal child should be in bed at home at this hour. He pushed me in front of them and indicated that I should follow. Along the way, I realized they were leading me into the compound of the Athénée Kiwele. It was extremely dark down there. A policeman pushed me into a classroom and ordered me to undress. Under threat, I complied and he raped me. After this, he motioned to another policeman to enter the classroom and he raped me too. When the last one came in, I cried and begged him not to rape me because I did not have any strength anymore and my vagina was hurting. He took pity on me and left me to my fate in the classroom.

Considering such cases of gang rape, Mutambwa (2005:26) notes that

Le viol collectif est particulièrement dangereux tant pour la victime que les auteurs. Les violeurs n'ont pas le temps de chercher à porter le condom. La victime risque fort d'être contaminée des IST et VIH/SIDA, de la part de ses bourreaux, qui en retour peuvent également être infectés par le biais de la victime devenue le vecteur commun. Cet acte, du fait d'avoir été commis en groupe semble diluer la responsabilité des auteurs qui peuvent ne pas se sentir totalement responsables du crime.⁶

6 'Gang rape is particularly dangerous for the victim and the perpetrators. The rapists do not have time to wear a condom. The victim is likely to become infected with an STD and HIV/AIDS from the attackers who, in turn, can also be infected by the victim who becomes the common vector. Such an act, because it is committed by a group, seems to dilute the responsibility of the attackers who may not feel responsible for the crime'.

Further investigation showed that these girls also complain of assault and beatings. In addition to rape, which exposes them to serious dangers, street girls are beaten as soon as they resist their attackers. Faced with such sexual and physical abuse, street children perceive society as a world of terror that threatens their existence. On the streets, there is more humiliation than protection in their daily lives. Even those who are supposed to protect them, i.e. their parents or law enforcement officers, are becoming what Seck (2000: 117) called 'deaf and dumb' in 'a virtual complicity to violence against children'. Why do the children's close relatives not come to their assistance? Why does society ignore the atrocities that are being perpetrated against its own children? These are the questions that need answers.

Conclusion

When a street child commits a crime in Lubumbashi, society considers it acceptable for the victim to take justice into his/her own hands. I personally witnessed a scene where a street child was having his fingers slowly crushed by a shopkeeper who claimed that the child had stolen 500 Francs from him. Nobody expects anyone to denounce the abuse inflicted on the child. This is evident in the fact that in many cases the relatives of the child are likely to help or support the 'administrator of justice' in his action. So, when a street child is beaten, passers-by giggle with indifference and even cheer on the persecutors in terms such as: *Pika nyoka* 'hit the snake'. For instance, a group of street children accused of stealing diamonds in Mbuji Mayi were burned alive by diamond hunters. Such treatment shows that the social norm of coercion is extremely violent. One wonders if these children are considered as full human beings. Perceived as 'witches', society would appear to consider that they deserve abuse and violence. They do not deserve protection because no institution tries to stop them from using psychotropic drugs⁷ that they purchase at pharmaceutical kiosks all over the city, with some street children consuming more than 20 tablets at a time in order to influence the functioning of their brain.

How do the *shegue* interpret the ordinary violence inflicted on them? Rea (1999: 28) noted that: 'l'interprétation que les victimes donnent de leur vécu n'est donc pas uniforme et comme pour d'autres formes de présentation de soi, le récit de victimisation est l'occasion d'une mise en scène globale du social

⁷ A survey has even shown that street children get cannabis from police and military officers.

dont l'interprétation nécessite de tenir compte de la structure des transformations de la morphologie sociale'.⁸ For her part, Angelino (2004: 155) says that: *'L'enfant a besoin de posséder un espace protégé au sein duquel il se sent à l'abri du regard ou du jugement d'autrui. L'absence d'un tel lieu est significative des difficultés à attribuer à l'enfant un espace psychique sans lequel il ne peut se reconnaître et s'autonomiser progressivement.'*⁹ The so-called street children are the sad result of the social structure's disorganization. Many of these children come from families that did not protect them and all too often abused them and most of them were regularly subjected to physical or psychological violence from close relatives. In these circumstances, the children end up on the street hoping to find a better life. This is quite cynical when one considers that the psychological and physical abuse they endure on the streets is hidden by the 'good' society. Indeed, integrating into the street forces them to face another sort of violence and they learn to become immune to pain caused by violence but also learn how to be violent themselves. All this violence can occur with the total indifference of the authorities and other citizens. *Shegue* are both the victims and the actors of torture and rape. Such is the fate of street children. The relationship between street children and their society seems to have become one of reciprocal violence and it is clear that the suffering of street children neither interests nor concerns the 'good' citizens who are quick to stigmatize them as witches, demons, the possessed, thieves and so on. The *shegue* respond to this stigmatization by exerting continuous violence and aggression against these citizens who have abandoned them to their fate. Street children have become one of the main expressions of ordinary urban violence in Lubumbashi today.

8 'The interpretation that the victims give of their personal experience is not uniform, and as with other forms of self-introduction, the stories of victimization are an opportunity to make a staging of the social scene whose interpretation requires to consider the transformation of the social morphology structure'.

9 'The child needs to have a protected space within which s/he feels protected from other people's judgments. The absence of such a place shows the difficulty in giving the child a psychic space without which s/he cannot recognize him/herself and become gradually autonomous'.

The Literary Threads of Domestic Violence in Mali

Sébastien Le Potvin

Notre société a terrorisé les femmes et les jeunes...Un jour les enfants de la rancœur se mettront ensemble, et ils mettront le feu à la barbe et aux tresses de leurs pères.¹

TRAORÉ 2004

Introduction

Laughing children beat up a naked old woman under the triumphant gaze of other people: the old woman is accused of being a 'soul eater'. Elsewhere, a little girl witnesses the massacre of her family. These scenes that introduce the literary work of Moussa Konaté (1981) and Aïda Mady Diallo (2002a) contrast with the peaceful images that one may have of (Southern) Mali. Going against the fashion of the current official public image, the contemporary works of Malian writers come across as, literally violent, describing a violent society without identified project or reference, therefore groping blindly towards the future and turning a deaf ear to its most critical social issues. What kind of violence, concealed from external look and public concern, is tearing apart private courtyards? Diving into the Malian literature gives us an access into this reality. Commenting on Plato's idea about the perfect city that excluded poets, René Girard (2003) wondered whether, instead, it was not the ability of written texts to reveal 'the lie of sacrifice' that bothered the philosopher.

Therefore, we have decided to question the Malian literary works that address the topic of domestic violence on the basis of their ability to overcome the etiquette of the polite conversation and the compulsory conventions of the '*grand parler*' (Hampâté Ba) through a possibility of '*oser-dire*'² that transgresses the *musalaka*.³ Indeed, uttering a direct criticism in speech is contrary to the manners of the Malian culture. As a variety of decency or manners of

1 'Our society has terrorized women and the youth (...) One day, the children of bitterness will come together and will set fire to the beards and braids of their fathers'.

2 'Dare-say'.

3 A Bambara word meaning 'social convention'.

consensus and conflict avoidance, the *musalaka* is also characterized by the systematic eluding of sensitive topics: '*Tu veux savoir pourquoi je fais ça [la prostitution]? (...) Tu sais, on ne dit pas sa vie à quelqu'un que l'on ne connaît pas/ Bien sûr. Même à ceux que l'on connaît d'ailleurs*'.⁴ (Traorè 1982: 95). The *musalaka* is therefore a kind of social control of public critical speech,⁵ expressing a cultural lack of public debate. Conscious of the fact that '*chacun se sert de tout pour s'encourager dans son sens et précipite tout dans sa preuve*'⁶ (Gide 1927) and that literary works are neither psychosocial studies nor sociological documents, we have to say that we do not deal here with ordinary domestic violence in Mali *per se* but with domestic violence as it appears in Malian literature. But, why should one study literary works that express more the filtered 'radiography' of their authors' feelings than an ethnographical observation? In 2003, Alain Marie (2003: 17) recalled that social violence has long been euphemized, if not forgotten. And yet, for nearly thirty years social violence had spread out in successive waves through the African literature. But who reads it? Moreover, literary works offer inner observations that come from recreations and interpretations that are admittedly subjective but which give the possibility for access to what is currently unthinkable about ordinary domestic violence. Beyond the narrative content and aesthetic effects 'the words weave the reality'. Then, it is necessary to scrutinize the backgrounds, the repetitions of themes and situations or the recurring dialogues as well as the filiations between texts that finally weave common literary representations of the Malian society. The observation of the texts, seen as webs of signs and meanings, makes it possible to pay attention to the 'sewing' – or 'stitching' – in which the artist's fantasy squeezes in, in which the author's subconscious slides in, for whom '*il s'agit moins de penser la violence à l'aide de la littérature que d'écrire une littérature violente qui sorte la pensée de ses ornières, qui nous force à véritablement penser*'⁷ (Garnier 2002: 54). It is therefore the duty of the social sciences, even if they do not escape the constraints of literalism, to take advantage of the insights offered by literary works in order to transform a 'truth of words' into a more factual and objective approach, a kind of social truth, although the full reality of these violence constantly transcends the

4 'You want to know why I do this [prostitution]? (...) You know, it is not common to tell the story of your life to someone that you don't know. Of course, besides, not even to those whom you know'.

5 Or a 'social hypocrisy' according to the former president Alpha Oumar Konare (in *Bouillon de culture*, 'Spécial Mali', France 2, recorded 1 December 1997).

6 'Everyone is doing everything to achieve what one wishes to achieve, and brings about one's evidence'.

7 It is less thinking violence through literature than writing a violent literature that gets the mind out of its lethargy, and forces us to really think.

limits of the scientific discourse. Eventually, listening to the literary discourses is, a minima, listening to the spokesmen of the voiceless and to the spokespersons of the free speech.

What is called 'modern literature' emerged in Mali in the late 1950s with the publications of *La Passion de Djimé* (1955) by Fily Dabo Sissoko and *Sous l'orage* (1957) by Seydou Badian Kouyaté (Le Potvin 2005). The first literary works mostly answered the criteria of educational and ideological literature in the 1950s and 1970s. However, while the Negritude enjoyed huge success in the World Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar in 1966, a young Dogon was preparing a literary coup. The shocked silence with which *Le Devoir de violence* by Yambo Ouologuem was received in Africa in 1968 was equal to the sensation in France that welcomed the first writer from Sub-Saharan Africa to be awarded the Renaudot Prize. In an attempt to undermine the idealization of ancestral Africa and the illusion of decolonization of the new kinglets in suits and ties, the breaking of tabou operated by *Le Devoir de violence* provoked a huge outcry that was fatal to the author. After the political overthrow of Modibo Keita by Moussa Traoré in 1968 and the fall of Ouologuem, all attempts at protest have been contained for a decade before a spate of literary dissent was unleashed: *Les Angoisses d'un monde*, *Le Prix de l'âme*, *Sahel! Sanglante sécheresse*, *Les Ruchers de la capital* and *Le Fils de chaos* are titles that speak for themselves. Palimpsests of real-life sufferings, the Malian literature dared to crack the inner walls of the collective conscience. In 1991, the deposition of President Moussa Traoré and the advent of multiparty democracy have opened up an era full of hope and uncertainty. In the footsteps of their predecessors, a new generation of writers has continued the conquest of the public space for free speech and worked to the textual representation of the self. A corpus of realistic works had emerged that demonstrated a spirit of conciliatory criticism, with the notable exception of *Devoir de violence*. Although the virulence of certain texts is objectively directed against the lure of a traditional gerontocracy that is clinging to its privilege, the use of public questioning without clearly stated answer remains the preferred method: 'Qui est plus détestable? Celui qui vend son enfant ou celui qui achète un être auquel rien ne le lie?'⁸ (Ly 1988: 45). 'Who could ever estimate the trauma suffered by children from polygamous families?' (Konaté 1986a: 105) 'One should find Malians who believe in Mali. The question is: do they exist?' (Diallo 2002a: 78). This straight-talking questioning of violence, although not really subversive, remains disturbing according to usual behaviours.

8 'Who is to be loathed most? He who sells his child or he who buys a human being with whom he has no ties?'

But violence is also disturbing for the scientific discourse. On one side it is uncomfortable for researchers who aspire to the recognition of African cultures, but on the other side it is too easily used to support those who belittle African societies with the yardstick of an apologetic interpretation of liberal democratic regimes, 'forgetting' that the African communities do not have the monopoly of violent behaviour. The July 2002 report by the European Commission for Equal Opportunities established that in Europe domestic violence is the leading cause (before cancer and traffic accidents) of death and disability for women aged between 15 and 44 years. It is therefore important to reject any hasty comparisons, especially when they oppose historical societies to an intention, an ideal, such as the Human Rights Declaration where equality of individuals prevails, while 'individual is nothing in a society of solidarity' (Ly 1988). This reality of the negation of the person as an individual should be integrated as an objective data in order to avoid an *a priori* interpretation of this discrepancy with the standards of the Human Rights Declaration as a mistake or an aberration. This is all the more so as violence is an elusive concept. In its 2002 World Report on Violence, the World Health Organization defines violence as a 'threat or intentional use of physical force or power against oneself, against others or against a group or community that result or may strongly result in trauma, death, psychological harm, ill development or deprivation'. Despite its apparent precision this definition is nevertheless subject to cultural representations. For example, regarding the notion of power or the idea of intent, someone who uses the force of his power does not necessarily have the intention or consciousness to cause harm but rather to redress a wrong or prevent a danger. The perception of violence is therefore subject to the legitimacy that everyone recognizes or not to the coercive power of social control, be it that emanating from the State, a community, a family or a particular individual. Finally, to understand the phenomena of domestic violence, it is not easy to distinguish the triggering agents of violence from its amplifying factors. In a family the interactions between different factors are complex: individual (personality traits), relational (amity or lack of it between members), socio-economic (living conditions, educational level), cultural (degree of religiosity, of attachment to traditions) but also environmental (political tension, economic crisis) and accidental (drunkenness, loss of employment).

Marital Violence

Under Malian customary law, marriage gives the husband higher social status than the wife. Wives talk about their husbands in terms of 'master' and 'owner'.

In addition, the household head has the right to inflict corporal punishment on his wife if the latter, according to him, fails to accomplish her duties, starting with obeying him. When comparing the different scenes of domestic violence in the family life painted by the Malian literature, the issue of authority appears at the heart of family conflicts and it is often confused with strength and the right to use force. *'Mon père, dès qu'il franchissait l'entrée du vestibule [de notre maison], il devenait roi'*⁹ (Konaté 1986a: 15). The abuse of authority that this 'king' exerts on his courtyard people consisted in acts of intimidation, humiliation or physical assault which deteriorate a family situation in a manner described by Mandé-Alpha Diarra as follows: *'la rancœur et la peur rongent l'amour qui unit les miens'*¹⁰ (1994: 13). If it is true that authority is an attribute characteristic of a person who orders and imposes obedience, this dominant feature tends to hide the other side of authority: its moral obligation. The authoritarian authority that does not use the countermeasure of its power (moral authority) will drift towards authoritarianism or tyranny. While the holder of moral authority aspires to wisdom that traditionally guides a community towards what is allowed and good for it, the tyrannical husband is only capable of repressing what is prohibited. The first one enjoys respect without threatening and proposes a way forward to which he is himself subject; the second one has nothing but fear as an argument and the arbitrary as a means. From husband to master, from authority to authoritarianism, the motivations of this shift towards violence are expressed by literary fictional characters in two ways: anger and contempt of women.

What contributes to this omnipresence anger in Malian books? Accidental factors such as drunkenness are not the most frequent. The aggressiveness of the immediate environment (food insecurity, police violence, contempt, professional harassment) carries more weight. *'C'est la misère qui rend les gens méchants'*¹¹ (Diarra 1981, Ly 1988) and this misery shapes the mentality of frustrated poor husbands. Anger reveals the social impotence of the husband who is culturally almighty within his family. But are men's extreme poverty and social deprivation sufficient to explain why? *'dans [cette] société, les faibles ne sont pas protégés mais asservis'*¹² (Ly 1988: 45)? Moreover, this violence does not only affect poor families. Rich and powerful men, respected in their villages, have the same tendency to resort to violence especially when they know that they are feared. Therefore, besides extreme poverty the social and cultural

9 'As soon as he crossed the entrance hall [of our house], my father became a king'.

10 'Resentment and fear burn the love that unites my parents'.

11 'It is poverty that makes people malicious'.

12 'In [this] society, the weak are not protected but enslaved'.

inferiority of women also plays an important role insofar as the dynamics of violence increase or decrease depending on whether the 'dominated' one resists or submits to marital authority. However, reactions are different between spouses and they vary according to the context. According to the narratives, women's positions are ambiguous: the authority that submits them is at the same time admitted (in conformity to cultural norms), reproduced (through educational precepts instilled by mothers to children) and lamented in secret. It is sometimes openly challenged at the risk of persecution. For, facing the household head is perceived as an insult to the honour of the name and blood of the family and has to be punished harshly. Caught in a vise, between the weight of education and cultural norms and the risks of humiliation and punishment, most women prefer to act like Rokia, '*Rokya restait dans les normes de son éducation. Son mari était le maître et elle lui devait le respect, même s'il la battait*'¹³ (Traorè 1982: 43). Is it respect or fear? In all situations where women try to preserve order in their families by opposing their husbands they are hopelessly beaten, insulted and generally repudiated. They become the symbol of dishonour: '*des femelles qui ne semblaient pas savoir qu'elles étaient nées pour procréer et obéir*'¹⁴ (Konaté 1981) who deserved consequently to be humiliated. '*Pauvres femmes que nous sommes (...) traitées comme des esclaves, de vils objets sans âme*'¹⁵ (Tapo 2003: 177). The old village woman who expresses this with resignation does not understand the stubbornness of Bintou, the widow who refuses to marry the brother of her deceased husband according to the village tradition. She believes that the behaviour of Bintou is dishonourable and a curse. Because social submission is often assimilated as a submission to God, those who break social norms will incur God's wrath. This clearly appears in the language used to educate children and to explain accidents. Thus, gnawed by fear and doubt, a lot of women rigidly adhere to what they believe to be the tradition that will ensure they go to heaven after death. This explains the provocative formula used by Moussa Konaté: '*Vaut-il seulement la peine de compatir à sa misère quand [la femme] elle-même, souvent, semble l'assumer?*'¹⁶ (Konaté 1986a: 128). The absence of women writers who could describe the psychological mechanisms and the women's logic in reproducing actively

13 'Rokia remained within the norms of her education. Her husband was the master and she owed him respect, even though he used to beat her regularly'.

14 'Female who did not seem to understand that they were born just to obey and bear children'.

15 'Poor women that we are...treated like slaves, despicable objects without a soul'.

16 'Is it worth the trouble to sympathize with their misery when [women] themselves often seem to assume it?'.

the prevailing social inequality is particularly striking in Malian literature. Are, the shame of economic dependency associated with the fear of being repudiated only amplifying factors? One may regret that Moussa Konaté did not go further in *'Un appel de nuit'* (1986b: 18):

Alima: [Dad] has abused mom so much.

Doulaye: Did you ever wonder why mom did not rebel?

Alima: Because she was poor and illiterate.

Doulaye: You know I also met strong and educated women who never rebelled against their husbands. It's not that simple.

An important aspect of this problem lies in the silence of tradition about the possible sanctions to be taken against a family head who does not properly fulfil his duty, when he puts his family at risk with his angry behaviour and when his wife refuses to accept the consequences. But, none of the novels answer this question. Or more precisely, Malian literature tends to suggest that tradition did not include this possibility. Thus, in *'Fils du chaos'*, Moussa Konaté tells us how his father had repudiated his mother until a mediation of village elders persuaded him to take his wife back: *'Mon père a répondu que son épouse devait se mettre en tête qu'elle n'était rien qu'une femme. Ma mère est tombée à genoux, lui a demandé pardon'* (Ibid.: 84).¹⁷ Later in the story, an imam facing a woman who complained about her husband condemns her with contempt: *'Honte à toi de n'avoir pas su qui tu es'*¹⁸ (Ibid: 140). Yet both cases were about submissive women who accepted the social model and suffered daily abuse by their husbands. Inevitably the day came when, fed up, the two women rebelled. Given the general lack of understanding of their attitude, they feel themselves guilty. *'On peut ressentir de la culpabilité et n'être coupable de rien'*,¹⁹ said the psychiatrist Benslama Fethi (2005: 59).²⁰ Except that these women had exceeded their traditional rights by rebelling against their 'master' would argue the supporters of tradition. Thus, these situations reveal a flaw in the social system, a dead-end of thinking about what is meant by authority and tradition that result in a refusal to open dialogue and debate. This is the kind of situation that irritated Ousmane Diarra (2006): *'nos bonnes vieilles traditions bruyamment revendiquées par ceux-là mêmes qui ne se donnent pas la peine de*

17 'My father replied that his wife had to understand that she was nothing else than a woman. Then, my mother fell on her knees and begged forgiveness'.

18 'Shame on you for having forgotten who you are'.

19 'One can feel guilty while not being guilty of anything at all'.

20 *Jeune Afrique - L'Intelligent*, no. 2327, 14 August 2005: 59.

les comprendre (ils ont d'autres chats à fouetter)...Pourtant, c'est penser qui transforme les grains de mil en bière, ce n'est pas de moi cet adage bien de chez nous'.²¹

Why this attitude of dodging, this constant denying of the issue of reliability, why is tradition being invariably presented as never-failing? What is customary law worth without the respect of duties and moral imperative? A retracted tradition, a social system initially intended to rest on the common effort rule that is drifting towards the jungle of common law? And yet, the family head himself is recognized as being infallible: the woman is always wrong and if a man happens to make a mistake, it is the wicked conduct of the woman that pushed him to make the mistake. Conversely, if a man recognizes his doubts and mistakes in his own courtyard, he is mocked by the women who denounce him as a husband 'unable to wear his trousers' and as a man 'who wears the dress'. Would such scenes happen in novels written by women too or do they reveal the hidden fears of male authors? The power of women over their husbands is a new social order that has emerged in the Malian literature in recent years. This change in power relationships in couples however remains confined to wealthy families in Bamako. Unlike village women, urban women can more easily escape social control and hope to meet new people. They thus have the ability to change their lives by changing their husband. According to Moussa Konaté (1981) the city becomes the place of the '*cocufiés cocufiant*'²² and feminine beauty, a weapon that puts pressure on husbands who neglect their wives financially. Hope for social success and greed have changed the life expectations and behaviour of women who no longer see the dignity of motherhood as their only possible future. More generally, the struggle of women to acquire and preserve an honourable place in society appears to be particularly bitter in literature. Even when they are unhappy with their husband, they continue to fight in order not to be divorced or isolated. With polygamy, the struggle lies at the very heart of the family: rivalries and dirty tricks between co-wives poison everyday life. A mother confides to her son: '*quand ton père t'a battu et chassé, ils ont ri Farima [la coépouse] et ses enfants. Ils n'attendaient que ça. Farima a usé de tous les moyens pour me rendre antipathique à ton père*'²³ (1986a: 62).

21 'Our good old traditions loudly claimed by those people who do not bother to understand them (for they have other fish to fry) (...) However, as a well-known saying from our tradition states: it is by dint of thinking that one can transform grains of millet into beer'.

22 'The unfaithful/victim[s] of unfaithfulness'.

23 'When your father beat you and threw you out of the house, Farima [the co-wife] and her children laughed at us. That was what they were expecting. Farima has used every possible means to make your father dislike me'.

Indeed, the co-wife who is supposed to be the 'little sister' becomes a rival. Both of the wives either suffer the other's privileges or welcome the other's misfortune, *'l'altercation entre Hawa et sa fille s'entendait bien dans la cour. La coépouse Amina était folle de joie: Mariama n'était pas heureuse'*²⁴ (Ly 1997: 56).

In addition, literary representations highlight the importance of the suspicion of ill intentionality: *'je vis déjà avec la hantise de voir mon mari choisir une coépouse, rien que pour m'embêter et me rendre la vie impossible'*²⁵ (Tapo 2003: 16). It is not surprising that a woman does not appreciate her husband marrying another woman. However, to be convinced that he is doing so only to harm her happiness is what is peculiar here. Psychological studies of socio-cognitive processes show that in a situation of aggression or one that is perceived as such, if an individual attributes aggressive behaviour to accidental factors, he will react less aggressively to it than if the same behaviour is attributed to a deliberate action. The suspicion of intentionality favours a hostile, even paranoid interpretation of facts and words, on top of which easily comes superstition (Fisher 2003). Consequently, relations between two rival co-wives often look like a tough competition of spells and antidotes with the intervention of fetishists of all kinds. Therefore, in a family life made of bitterness and jealousy where 'everyone was suspicious of everybody' (Konaté 1986a: 144), an outbreak of violence is just a matter of time. In matters of domestic violence, 'angry husbands' and wives 'in a mad rage' coexist and the latter, unable to turn against their husbands, relieve their aggression on their co-wives, their children and domestic workers.

Through the topic of domestic violence, but in a completely different language, contemporary works take up one of the main motives of oral literatures: in a culture based on social inequality, if authority is not characterized by balance and consultation, then a dangerous substitute for tradition may germinate which will be submitted to the whims and weaknesses of its gatekeepers.

The Evil Woman

*'Au pays des hyènes, on a intérêt à ne pas bêler, même si on est agneau'*²⁶ (Diarra 2006). The fear that brews and controls family relationships generates more

24 'The altercation between Hawa and her daughter was overheard by everyone in the courtyard. This was a reason for the co-wife Amina to be ecstatic: Mariama was not happy'.

25 'I already dread the idea of seeing my husband choose a co-wife, just to annoy me and make my life miserable'.

26 'In the land of hyenas, it is better not bleat, even when you are a lamb'.

frustration than explanations, more suspicion than understanding between individuals. There is thus the need for a scapegoat as an outlet for the collective repressions of individuals. These are not only embodied in the 'deviants' of the system but also through various accidental figures. Women, 'trampled by life' (Ly 1997: 12) are not only the victims of domestic violence but are also the most exposed to exclusion and blame for any misfortune in the family: 'My father always told me: beware of women as it is through them that Satan enters into the family' (Konaté 1086b: 12). Mamadou Bani Diallo argues that if the woman in African literature is 'alternately idealized and celebrated, she is nonetheless also surrounded by prejudice and superstition'.²⁷ 'Women, wonders a security guard: What a mystery!' (Diabate 2002a: 34). Far from being a secondary eccentric phenomenon, the invisible government of supernatural powers does not reign only in a few impressionable minds but concerns a large sector of the population 'who believes that invisible and evil beings populate the universe' (Konaté 1986a: 169) and regulates the misfortunes of life in a peremptory way. In *Les Angoisses d'un monde 'partout où l'activité quotidienne pouvait s'exercer, les gris-gris, amulettes et talismans étaient des alliés sûrs (...)* rien ne permettant de savoir d'où viendrait le danger, l'on passait son temps à surveiller l'attitude de ses voisins et à interpréter leurs paroles'²⁸ (Couloubaly 1998: 10). Instead of looking for factual causes of things, one substitutes an external logic manifesting itself primarily in the curse that is supposed to hit a person affected by an antisocial incident. Thus, all literary dialogues are overwhelmed by words such as 'doomed' and 'curse': the infertility of women is linked with curse! Has a young girl been raped: curse! A young widow: curse!

Curse is about saying evil things, which is seen as 'the worst and most effective way of wishes' (Ibid.: 30). '*Parle jeune homme! S'exclame un grand marabout de la capitale. Ta bouche a tété le sein d'une femme soumise, donc bénie*'²⁹ (Diarra 1994: 85). The woman who rebels will be cursed. In *Un Appel de nuit*, when parents who migrated to France decide to return to Mali, Alima refuses to follow them. When she saw the determination of her daughter, the mother exclaims: 'Cursed, that's what you are'. The curse appears to be a headlong

27 Diallo M.B., 'La femme dans la littérature africaine', *Tapama*, no. 3, December 1998, Bamako, *Donniya*: 42.

28 'Wherever the daily activity could be exercised, gris-gris, amulets and talismans are reliable allies, (...) as you could never know from where the danger could come, people spent their time watching the attitude of their neighbours and interpreting their words'.

29 'Speak, young man! Claimed a great *marabout* from the big city. You are blessed because you were fed at the breast of submissive mother'.

rush to avoid finding the real reasons behind a person's behaviour. Avoiding reappraisals and finding the reasons for phenomena also characterize this episode of *Toiles d'araignées* when the mother after trying to convince Mariama to marry old Diallo, became convinced that her daughter had been bewitched by her co-wife. Therefore, instead of continuing the dialogue, she turned to a 'charlatan' to break the spell put on Mariama. This typical scenario often reappears in novels. Mande-Alpha Diarra mentions the 'divine lottery' as being a national sport while Moussa Konaté quips that '*seuls les sortilèges et les marabouts étaient capables de conjurer le destin, de faire réfléchir Allah qui, souvent, à cause de l'immensité et de la complexité de sa tâche, se trompe*'³⁰ (Konaté 1986a: 86). In addition to the fact that the activities of the marabouts rarely achieve any result, this way of doing presents an impasse for critical reasoning and ruins the harmony of peaceful families. It is no longer about discussing, convincing or even understanding; one must eradicate evil by acting and extracting the danger from the family, i.e. rejecting, excluding or banishing. The spell also appears associated with situations condemned by God. Thus a woman's infertility produces not compassion but slander and rejection. When Founéba, the first wife of the village chief, remained childless, '*tout Willimano chuchotait alors qu'elle portait malheur*'³¹ (Konaté 1981: 19). Discredited by her family and mocked in the village, she felt guilty and punished by divine wrath. This assimilation of motherhood to social respectability is represented in an extreme way in *La Nièce de l'imam*: '*Un midi, [son nouveau mari] la viola. Fatima en fut horriblement malade mais en conçut une grossesse. De joie, elle en oublia l'horreur du viol*'³² (Diarra 1994: 50). Is the author credible? If so, it is a violent demonstration of disrespect of oneself in favour of one's social status and of motherhood as a way to escape from the hell of infertile women.

Indeed, the fear of disgrace appears in all literary works as a dreadful social evil. Not only because it leads to exclusion but also because it gives to rumour an uncontrollable power of social control and to slander a real harmful power. After Bata had resolved to leave his village, a woman told him: '*On est allé dire beaucoup de mal de toi, Bata. Ta mère en est tombée malade. Elle t'a maudit*'³³

30 'Only spells and *marabouts* were able to ward off the fate and make Allah think. He who, because of the vastness and complexity of His task, is often mistaken'.

31 'The whole village of Willimano started to whisper that she was nothing but bad luck'.

32 'One afternoon, [her new husband] raped her. Fatima was terribly sick but got pregnant. She was so happy that she forgot the horror of the rape'.

33 'People have said a lot of bad things about you, Bata. Your mother became sick of it. She cursed you'.

(Konaté 1985: 154). When *radio-trottoir* (Mandé-Alpha Diarra, 1994) or *radio-duruni*³⁴ (Ismaila-Samba Traoré, 1982) points the finger at a family, then the social pressure exerted on the family head forces him to take drastic measures against the family member targeted by the rumour. This situation is particularly compelling in the case of unmarried mothers who had been victims of rape. The young girl is not seen as a victim who needs to be protected but as a 'damned soul', a 'bastard' (another common expression) who distresses, humiliates and disgraces the whole family and its ancestry. The physical and psychological suffering endured by the young girl is nothing compared to the violation of tradition. Less frequently mentioned in literature, this subject has nevertheless been the subject of a film, *Den Muso* (The Girl) by Souleymane Cissé, who said: '*J'ai voulu exposer le cas de nombreuses jeunes filles rejetées de partout. J'ai voulu mon héroïne muette pour symboliser une évidence: chez nous les femmes n'ont pas la parole*'.³⁵ Literature does not mention either, apart from a brief mention in *Le Devoir de violence* of Yambo Ouologuem the special case of girls 'offered' to colonial administrators who toured the villages. Why were they the ones to be sacrificed? What became of them after the 'commandant' had left? Cursed souls?

To understand the superstitions surrounding infertile women or women who have been raped, the notion of accident associated with the divine will to punish sinners is accepted as an explanation within families. Women who lose a young child suffer similar suspicions. The curse is substituted for misfortune and reveals the non-thought of accidental deviations. When a young girl has to marry a bedridden (but rich) man in his seventies, one might assume that it is perfectly natural for the husband to die relatively soon after the wedding. The notion of accident should not exist unless one suspects the young wife of murder. Yet, young widows and particularly those who have not had the 'honour' of pregnancy become, in their turn, cursed, 'buriers' (*L'Héritage empoisonné*). In *La Nièce de l'imam*, Fatima thought at first she would escape the fate of young widows thanks to Bilaÿ's wish to marry her. Despite the astonishment of the villagers, she was given to him in marriage. Unfortunately for the young woman, she suffered an accident while she was pregnant and lost her child. Immediately, the village marabout explained to Bilaÿ that his wife 'bore the fatal seal of the exterminating widows' (Diarra 1994: 51). Fatima was therefore abandoned.

34 *Duruni* are vehicles for public transportation. Old Peugeot 404 s are generally used for this purpose.

35 'I wanted to present the case of many girls who are rejected everywhere. I chose a dumb girl as heroine in order to symbolize an obvious fact: here women have no voice'. Souleymane CISSE, *Den muso*, © Sisé filimu, 1975, 86 min.

The truth is that literary works do not provide strong evidence for understanding these beliefs but do illuminate the disempowerment of communities. The submission of causal relations and historical logic to supernatural mysteries is first of all a sign of giving up responsibility. And the woman who has been raped appears guiltier than the rapist! To be confronted with the obligation to think and plan the integration of human accidents, such as the one of raped women, would require a real Copernican revolution of the local concept of women. For the time being, village women *'restent toujours mineures aux yeux de leur entourage (...) toujours soumise à la volonté de ceux qui les maintiennent dans cette situation d'éternelle enfant'*³⁶ (Tapo 2003: 26). It is not the Imam in *Fils du chaos* who would contradict this, considering the fact that 'a woman is what she is, whatever her age, she will always remain a child' (Konaté 1986a: 138).

The Child at the Centre of Family Battles

The family as the basic unit of socialization is the central place of intimacy and development of the child. When the family suffers the intrusion of violence, the child is the first to feel it: either s/he him/herself suffers physical, verbal or psychological abuse, or s/he witnesses violence committed against his/her mother and/or other women in the family. *'L'amour d'un enfant pour ses parents n'a besoin de nulle manifestation (...). L'obéissance seule est permise, souhaitée, exigée'*³⁷ (Ly 1997: 59). This idea of education is reproduced in dialogues with a terrifying verbal abuse: *'Si tu n'agis pas selon sa volonté, [ton père] te tuera, et moi [ta mère] je n'y pourrais rien. (...) il a droit de vie et de mort sur nous tous'*³⁸ (Konaté 1986a: 61). A father reprimands his daughter: *'Alima prends garde : le nom, l'honneur, le sang de notre famille sont plus précieux que ta vie'*³⁹ (Konaté 1986b: 13). Or let us consider the case of a woman who, being too poor to raise her child, gives her son to a notable with the words: *'Considère-le comme le tien. Bats-le s'il te désobéit, tues-le s'il ne mérite de vivre: je ne t'en demanderai*

36 '(women) are still considered inferior in the eyes of those around them...Always subject to the will of those who keep them in this situation of eternal children.'

37 'The love of a child for his parents does not need any demonstration...Only obedience is permitted, desired, required.'

38 'If you do not act according to his will, [your father] will kill you and I [your mother] could do nothing about it....He has the power of life and death over us all.'

39 'Beware, Alima: the reputation, the honour, the blood of our family are more precious than your life.'

*même pas compte*⁴⁰ (Konaté 1985: 27). In the works of Moussa Konaté, we are far from the happy *Enfant noir* by Camara Laye! ‘[When I was a child], I was in the grip of terror. And nobody was aware of my trouble’ (*Fils du chaos*: 64). Furthermore, the child who tries to disobey hears the same accusations of guilt, in addition to being beaten, cudgelled or becoming the punch-bag of the family, the scapegoat of the angry father or of the mother who puts on him her own abuses. That is how Antoinette who ‘*ne pouvant assouvir sa haine en molestant [les hommes qui l’ont violentée], se rabattit sur son enfant qui, dès lors, ne connut plus un instant de paix*’⁴¹ (Konaté 1985: 88). In addition, Moussa Konaté and Ibrahima Ly show that children experience common violence provoked by rivalries and jealousy between the wives in polygamous households. *Toiles d’araignées* (49–50) describes scenes of joy and tenderness between the little girl Mariama and her father. Then, suddenly, ‘*la vie changea quand une seconde épouse entra dans la maison (...). Mariama subit toutes les avanies de sa marâtre sans que son père osât bouger*’.⁴² Elsewhere, ‘[the] mother and her co-wife insulted each other regularly and even came to blows. Of course, children also joined in’ (Ly 1997: 73). Let us not forget that the childhood of girls is almost absent from books (apart from its abrupt end with early forced marriages). Is this because almost all Malian writers are men? The fact is that neither sexual mutilation (except in *La Nièce de l’imam*) nor incest is mentioned in books. Similarly, leaving children in the care of distant relatives is not mentioned either. Finally, only Ismaïla-Samba Traoré in the introduction to his latest novel *Les Amants de l’Esclaverie* mentions the pawning of children by their parents (*tonomada*) in Mali, which involves sending a child to work in another family with whom the parents have run up a debt.

Childhood traumas appear to be underestimated. However they haunt the works of Moussa Konaté: ‘*Se peut-il que tu n’oublies jamais ton enfance?/ Je ne sais pas. Ça me revient toujours à l’esprit. Je ne sais pas pourquoi*’.⁴³ (1985: 165). In *Le Prix de l’âme* Djigui grows up with ‘the indelible image of the rape of his mother by [his father]’ (Konaté 1981: 24). The main character in *Fils du chaos* keeps asking: ‘who can ever assess the consequences of such trauma on

40 ‘Consider him as yours. Beat him if he disobeys, kill him if he does not deserve to live: I will not even ask you for an explanation’.

41 ‘Could not satisfy her hatred by molesting [men who raped her], fell back on her child, who, since then, did not enjoy any moment of peace’.

42 ‘Life changed when a second wife entered the household...Mariama suffered all the insults of her stepmother without her father daring to move a finger’.

43 ‘Is it possible that one never forgets one’s childhood?/ I do not know. It always comes back to my mind. I do not know why’.

a society of adults?' (Konaté 1986a: 105). Internalization of aggression, inhibited rebellion, violence crouched in the depths of consciousness: '[Our children] are born from women and resentments', says Ismaila-Samba Traoré (2004: 25). The author recalls that the revolt of youth, which used to be blamed on the decline of tradition caused by colonization as it is today blamed on globalization, is a 'constant in the Bambara and Malinke founding narratives' (Ibid.: 9) because it is the only way to lift the weight of the fathers when gerontocracy refuses the transfer of power. '*Qui es-tu ?/ Je suis le fils de mon père/ Mais encore?/ Je l'ignore moi-même, j'attends de le savoir. Mon père occupe beaucoup de place*'⁴⁴ (Ibid.: 18). Also in the works of Massa Makan Diabaté, the question arises about the filial relationship around this saying: 'there are three kinds of boys: the one who does not achieve the fame of his father, the one who is as good as his father and the one who surpasses his father'. But this action of surpassing one's father tends to take on a pathological form in the mind of abused children. 'Sometimes...I thought that I would kill my father' (Konaté 1986b: 10). The murder of the father obsesses the characters of Moussa Konaté but they never dare take action, except in *Les Saisons*. Yet there is no Oedipal complex in this desire to kill: it is not an affirmation of the sexed subject that is expressing itself but a redresser of wrongs, a violence that pushes the victim of an unrecognized injustice to revenge, like Kouty, the murderous teenager in the novel by Aïda Mady Diallo. Less dramatically, childhood traumas related to family violence play an insidious role in the degradation of the social system as children, when becoming adults, tend to repeat the violence they experienced or reproduce logical behaviours of persecution. They partly explain the observed facts about domestic violence in the novels. Talking about his childhood, the narrator of *Fils du chaos* remembers with a sigh: '*Une femme n'est rien qu'une femme, avait affirmé mon père, et ma mère lui avait donné raison. Cette pénible scène, je ne l'ai jamais oubliée. Maintenant encore, chaque fois que je m'efforce de voir en la femme autre chose qu'une femelle, l'image de ma mère à genoux devant son mari me revient en mémoire et m'ôte toute illusion*'⁴⁵ (1986a: 84). '*Je suis entrée dans la cuisine. Ma mère y était: j'ai fait semblant de ne pas la voir (...). Triomphant, je suis sorti sans lui répondre parce que je savais qu'elle n'était qu'une femme, rien qu'une*

44 'Who are you?/ I am the son of my father/ But still?/ I do not know myself; I am waiting to find out. My father takes a lot of space'.

45 'A woman is nothing but a woman, used to say my father and my mother agreed with him. I've never forgotten this painful scene. Even now, whenever I try to see in the woman anything but a female, the image of my mother kneeling before her husband comes to my mind and deprives me of any illusion'.

*femme*⁴⁶ (Ibid.: 28). Finally, from the first Malian novel, *La Passion de Djimé* by Fily Dabo Sissoko (1955) to *Vieux Léopard* by Ousmane Diarra that was published in February 2006, the right to difference is consistently claimed as a preliminary step towards personal freedom. In fact, Malian society presents a paradox: considered to be the Mecca of oral culture, it in fact deprives the majority of its citizens of the right of expression.

The right of expression is restricted to a handful of men and women who speak on behalf of all. This lack of communication provides fertile ground for resentment, suspicion and vindictive thoughts that take away any livelihood from reason and speech. A typical example of the convergence of social and parental violence on a young girl is probably the forced marriage to an old man, a recurring topic in literary works starting with *Sous l'orage* (Badian 1963). But it is only in the novel *Seydou Badian* that the outcome is happy. In all other novels, the girl who refuses is subject to repression as is illustrated by the case of Mariama the unhappy heroine in *Toiles d'araignées* (Ly 1997) which goes beyond comprehension. These reprisals should not overshadow the beginning of the nightmare of Mariama whose refusal to become a seventy years old sick man's wife comes after her father's decision to marry her to this rich merchant so that he himself can afford to marry a young girl. Incidentally, the author does not fail to note the influence of the mother, an unhappy wife, who nonetheless drives her daughter to follow the same path as herself. When Mariama tells her mother her intention to refuse this marriage, the latter, before cursing her, says: 'Did you consider what the consequences of your refusal would be for me?' (Ibid.: 67). Ly moves on to a key element of social pressure that makes those who rebel against the established order feel particularly guilty: by overriding standards, they damage the reputation of their own families. Mothers continue to remind their children that if they do not follow tradition, they will destroy the honour and reputation of their parents. In *Fils du chaos*, a mother implores a son to obey his father: 'If you do not follow the will of your father, he will think that I am the one urging you to disobey him. He will not hesitate to repudiate me' (Konaté 1986a: 61). This is exactly what happens in *Une aube incertaine*. The consequences of refusing one's father's authority are tragic and put the child in an agonizing dilemma. 'A quoi bon? Pourquoi vivre alors qu'il n'est plus possible d'être soi-même?'⁴⁷ (Badian 1963: 59). Kany's question in the

46 'I walked into the kitchen. My mother was there: I pretended not to see her (...). Triumphant, I walked out without answering her because I knew she was nothing but a woman'.

47 'What's the point? Why would one continue to live when it is no longer possible to be oneself?'

turmoil underlines the fact that there is no suicide in literature. Submission and/or escape are the only options. In contrast, forced marriages of teenage girls to old men are used by writers to denounce sexual violence that they did not dare to connect to domestic violence. Indeed, the act of taking the virginity of a girl is often described as a traumatic event. '*A soixante-dix ans, enlever à une pucelle son innocence! Certes, la lame du rasoir pourra toujours aider et l'honneur restera sauf*'⁴⁸ (Ly 1997: 60). When the old Boura tried to consummate his marriage with Fatima, he realized she was not circumcised. On the spot, they resorted to the removal of the clitoris, after which Boura returned to Fatima's room. Following this episode, the young woman '*ne pouvait imaginer un sexe d'homme qu'associé à la lame de l'excision, à l'hernie et aux serres de Boura*'⁴⁹ (*Nièce de l'imam*: 60). As for old Bakary, if he did not resort to the blade to prove his sexual potency and rape Mariama, he nevertheless enjoyed the complicity of the girl's uncle to keep her from struggling and escaping. In the case of a teenage girl marriage with a bedridden man, parental violence is total since the parents condemn their children to the plight of being an 'exterminating widow'. Without falling in ethnocentric moral judgment and condemnation, the attitude of parents nevertheless raise some questions. Do they really succeed in justifying the abandonment of their children in the name of tradition without any qualm? Is faith of parents in traditional authority so powerful that it creates relief only for having accomplished their duties and preserved social honour? Do they accomplish their duty, sometimes even with the murder of their child, with as much certainty as described? What about filial love? Are they not facing self-destructive dilemmas? Is it not with a heavy heart that they 'comply' with these duties? Tumours of family violence are probably as deep as the repression of feelings of love: '*Je ne me suis jamais demandée si j'aimais Bilaï ou non... Il n'est pas question d'amour, mais de cohésion de la communauté... Ces questions d'amour du couple sont pour ta génération*'⁵⁰ (Diarra 1994). 'Is falling in love an invention of our generation?' wonders Moussa Konaté (1986a).

Domestic violence that is witnessed by children or that they endure as direct victims is denounced in the World Report on Violence WHO (2002) as being responsible for the early pathological troubles of a society. Can African

48 'A seventy year old man who takes the virginity of a young girl! Admittedly the razor blade can always be of some help and the honour will remain safe'.

49 'Always associated a man's sex with the blade of excision, the hernia and the claws of Boura'.

50 'I have never asked myself whether I loved Bilaï or not... It is not about love, but about community cohesion... These questions of love of the couple are for your young generation'.

communities do without considering social violence on the pretext that they are motivated by the benefits of tradition? What exactly is a tradition: the historical foundations of an evolving social model or the mindless imitation of a fixed historical pattern? The first assumption is reflected in a cultural continuum, an extended history in contemporary adaptations (more commonly called endogenous development). The latter transforms the notion of social cohesion in totalitarian order, which Montesquieu in *Lettres persanes* summed up as follows: '*la loi faite pour nous rendre plus juste ne sert souvent qu'à nous rendre plus coupables*'.⁵¹ Faced with the insults of domestic violence, the child has no other right than to be silent: s/he is crushed. How can s/he grow up and blossom when reduced to silence?

He Who Sows the Wind

'Bissimilai! Either the world is turned upside down, or I am having a bad dream' (Diabaté 2002c: 69). Literary texts describe a community that suffers from an excessively corrupt socialization, almost a socialization of offense when the loss of positive and objective values is replaced by violence as a mode of social regulation. Even though these situations of violence are not specific to Mali, or even to Africa, they nevertheless give the reader a feeling of a very traumatized Malian society. Let us consider an excerpt from *Une aube incertaine* by Moussa Konaté (1985), which is a summary of the situations described in our study: physical violence, men's contempt for women, rivalries between women, authoritarianism, lack of dialogue, hierarchies considered to be sacred, lack of opposition, fear, incomprehension, defence and reproduction of the social model by victims, curse, vindictive resentment, exclusion and psychological dilemma.

Bata s'était réveillée bien avant l'aube (...) elle travailla tant qu'à midi, elle éprouvait de la peine à se tenir debout (...) Bata dut peiner ainsi jusque tard dans la nuit...puis elle s'endormit aussitôt sur son *tara*. Pour la première fois depuis qu'elle [travaillait] chez Faran, elle se réveilla après le soleil. Les maîtresses de maison ne se gênèrent pas pour lui dire ce qu'elles pensaient. Insultée, moquée, étourdie, Bata oublia son premier devoir quotidien: aller devant la porte de la chambre de Faran et, un genou à terre, dire: Bonjour, mon maître. Faran fit appeler Bata (...) Alors, tu ne me salues plus? (...) Faran lui ordonna de se mettre à genoux: il la

⁵¹ 'The law that intends to bring us to the right path often only serves to make us guiltier.'

battit avec son nerf de bœuf (...) Plus tard, Waly [le mari de Bata] alla trouver son père adoptif dans la hutte où il trônait. Pourquoi as-tu frappé Bata? Faran regardait Waly avec dédain. Pourquoi l'as-tu frappée? Est-ce que tu es son mari? Dans la famille régnait un silence de mort, tant la stupeur était grande : jamais personne n'avait osé s'adresser au chef avec tant d'insolence. Va-t'en d'ici, chien! Vociféra Faran. Je te demande pourquoi tu l'as battue. C'est ma femme! Cria Waly. C'est moi qui te l'ai donnée, maudit! Sans moi, que serais-tu? [Waly gifla le vieillard. Il fut alors ligoté et battu à son tour]. Ecartant la foule, la mère de Waly s'approcha de son enfant couché à terre. Elle le regarda longuement et dit: Ah! Waly, tu m'as tuée! Elle franchit de nouveau la foule, disparut (...) Bata et Waly comprirent, sans se le dire, qu'ils n'étaient que des serfs aux mains de Faran. Je le tuerai, je le tuerai, murmurait Waly entre ses lèvres tuméfiées. A l'aube, les deux jeunes gens prirent le chemin [de l'exil].

KONATÉ 1985: 28–30

[Quelques années plus tard, une femme du village croisa Bata en ville]. C'est toi Bata? Ah! Quel malheur t'es arrivé? Tu es partie comme ça sans le consentement de ta mère (...) Elle a beaucoup souffert ta mère. Pourquoi as-tu suivi cet ingrat de Waly qui a osé gifler Faran son bienfaiteur? (...) Tu sais quand tu es partie ton père a répudié ta mère (...) quand une femme a subi cette épreuve sous le regard de ses coépouses, elle ne peut plus relever la tête. Ton père avait même juré qu'il te tuerait (...) Je me demande chaque fois que je pense à toi: Que lui est-il arrivé? (...) On est allé dire beaucoup de mal de toi, Bata. Ta mère en est tombée malade. Elle t'a maudit, elle qui t'aimait tant, et elle ne veut même plus entendre parler de toi.⁵²

IBID.: 153–154

52 Bata was awake long before dawn (...) she worked so much that at noon she was having trouble to stand up (...) Bata had to toil that way until late in the night (...) and then, she suddenly fell asleep on her *tara*. For the first time since she [worked] at Faran's, she woke up after the sun. The housewives did not hesitate to make fun of her. Insulted, victim of mockery, absent-minded, Bata forgot her first daily duty: going to the door of Faran, and, on one knee, saying: 'good morning, master'. Then, she was summoned by Faran: 'So you do not even bother to greet me anymore?' Faran (...) ordered her to go on her knees and he beat her with his whip (...) Later, Waly [Bata's husband] went to see his adoptive father in his hut: 'Why did you beat Bata?' Faran looked at Waly with disdain. 'Why did you hit her? Are you her husband?' A dead silence prevailed in the family, so big was the surprise: nobody had ever dared speak to the chief with such insolence. 'Get away from here, you dog!' shouted Faran. 'I ask why you did beat her. It's my wife!' shouted Waly. 'I am the one who

He who sows the wind reaps the storm. This could be the moral of this story that says enough about the complexity of the various points of view and misunderstandings that do not assign the same reasons to this dramatic story. Indeed, who is sowing discord here? Any response will betray an ethnocentric or subjective socio-cultural perception. Doulaye Konate, who argues in favour of traditional mechanisms for conflict prevention, noted the importance of the concept of consensus in Malian culture: '*On pourrait objecter, écrit-il, que le consensus n'est pas synonyme de démocratie. Soit, mais faudrait-il pour autant occulter les formes de concertation au profit des «caricatures» de procédures dites démocratiques?*'⁵³ The issue is indeed relevant. But this remark mistakes electoral acts and public space, voting right and individual right of expressions. In addition, consensus is often established at the expense of justice, with group cohesion taking precedence over individual compensations. And yet, literary stories highlight how the family and the community are endangered by the adverse impact of individual feelings of injustice and how the systematic shunning of open conflicting situations spring from violence. How could the dynamics of domestic violence be escaped? By using human rights as a final solution for community cultures? Malian writers, for their part, mention three priorities: rethinking authority, its means and objectives, readjusting the position of the individual person in the community and respecting his physical and moral integrity, defeating the idea of 'cursing' and regaining confidence in oneself. Of course, each writer would have other wishes to add.

gave her to you, you fool! What would you be like without me?'. [Waly slapped the old man. As a consequence, he was tied up and beaten up]. Pushing her way through the crowd, the mother of Waly approached her child lying on the ground. She stared at him and said: 'Ah! Waly, you just killed me!' She then pushed again her way through the crowd and disappeared (...) Bata and Waly understood, without expressing it, that they were just slaves in the hands of Faran. 'I'll kill him, I'll kill him', muttered Waly. At dawn, the two young people went into exile. [Some years later, a woman from the village met Bata in the city.] 'Is that you, Bata? What happened to you? You left just like that without the consent of your mother (...) She has suffered a lot, your mother. Why did you follow this ungrateful Waly who dared slap Faran, his protector? (...) You know, when you left, your father has repudiated your mother (...) when a woman undergoes such an ordeal in front of her other co-wives, she can no longer raise her head. Your father had even vowed to kill you (...) I wonder every time I think of you: what has happened to her? (...) People were telling a lot of bad things about you, Bata. Your mother became ill. She loved you so much, but she has cursed you, and does not even want to hear from you again'.

53 'It could be argued (he writes) that consensus is not synonymous with democracy. Maybe! But should one for all that conceal the form of dialogue for the benefit of 'caricatures' of the so-called democratic procedures?' Konate Doulaye, *Les fondements endogènes d'une culture de paix au Mali*, 1999: www.unesco.org/ccp/publications.

Moussa Konate would probably require the elimination of polygamy, Ibrahima Ly and Ismaïla-Samba Traoré would insist on the need to restore the historical truth of past centuries, Ousmane Diarra and Aïda Mady Diallo would claim the right to individualism. Meanwhile, all would certainly claim the right to freedom of speech and debate in order to reveal the problems that plague the dynamism and confidence of Malians. The lack of responsibility and self-consideration has consequences for individuals and society that have been underestimated. The sometimes excessive importance given to the treasures of the past, to honour and reputation, also reflects the search at all costs for a dignity that needs to be recovered. Otherwise, it is often humour that comes as a crutch: 'it is said that when De Goli (De Gaulle) saw his country invaded by the Germans, he came to see Allah for help (...) Consequently De Goli won the war. When *Khrouchtchev* was in the chaos brought about by Staline, he went to see Allah for inspiration (...) Even Kennedy, Senghor and many others came. Allah told everyone that their countries would become very rich (...) When the Maréchal went just to find out whether the inhabitants of the Old Country [Mali] would one day have enough to eat, even before he could speak out; God shook his head and burst into tears' (Traoré 1982). But, behind the laughter lies fear, even the fear of being abandoned by God. The fear of being a cursed people; the fear of oneself also: '*La grande majorité des Africains n'ont pas de réponses aux questions suivantes: où en sommes-nous? Que nous est-il arrivé? Que se passe-t-il en ce moment précis de l'histoire de notre continent et de l'humanité? Comment nous faut-il envisager l'avenir? Telle une chape de plomb, la langue de bois pèse sur les causes des événements passés et présents*'⁵⁴ (Traoré 2002). With these questions one meets again the lack of public debate in Mali. Because it is not only the literary discourse that contravenes the old custom of veiled speech, of the unspoken, of the *musalaka*, the scientific discourse itself disturbs the established social and intellectual 'clergy'. African writers and researchers who require a reinterpretation of the legacy of the past and an appraisal of the present state of affairs are discredited and denied access to public speech. Drawing up an inventory of the past is seen or allegedly experienced as the desecration of collective memory and customs. Between human traditions and customary taboos, the 'forbidden' fruits of traditional cultures are used as a screen to conceal the temptation of cowardice rather than unravel the threads of history.

54 'The vast majority of Africans do not have answers to the following questions: where are we? What has happened to us? What happens at this particular time in the history of our continent and humanity? How can we view the future? As a concrete screed, political scant is weighing heavily on the causes of past and present events'.

Protesting writers are seen as Waly and Bata: they are a disgrace. Between them and the Malian society there is a cracked relationship. However, if writing is a discovery of one's self, or even the birth of the self, literature is also sollicitude. In the absence of an audience, it condemns its creators to a long loneliness. Is (southern) Mali living socially in peace or is it a powder keg awaiting a spark? Is the apparent social peace of the country based on an ordinary violence consisting in the sacrifice of the majority of its population? Will this cultural model continue despite expected economic improvements and progress in national education? Will women continue to accept being inferior? Is the evolution of Malian society an *in vivo* experiment of adaptation to the forced globalization of a community committed to its historic values or is it a corrupting confinement, allegedly traditionalist, in favour of a minority? Will the evolution of this social peace go through a gradual endogenous process by imitating an externally imposed model or with a revolution? To afford the luxury of being able to choose rather than being subjected to something, would it not be better for Malians to discuss matters openly? Unless one fears that this would be the spark that would ignites the powder if the discussions should turn into dissension or into wind of words. He who sows the wind.

Bibliography

- Abbo, N. (1997), *Mangalmé 1965, la révolte des Moubi*. Saint-Maur: Editions Sépia.
- Abéga, S.C., ed. (2003), La violence endémique en Afrique. Editorial. In: Special issue of *Bulletin de l'APAD* 25: 5–7.
- Abéga S.C. & C. Abé (2006), Approches anthropologiques de la sorcellerie. In: E. De Rosny, ed., *Justice et sorcellerie en Afrique*, Paris: Karthala, pp. 33–44.
- Aijmer, G. (2000), Introduction: The idiom of Violence in Imagery and Discourse. In: G. Aijmer & J. Abbink, eds, *Meanings of Violence. A Cross Cultural Perspective*, Oxford & New York: Berg, pp. 1–21.
- Alio, K. (2009), Central Chad. *asc Working Paper*, African Studies Centre, Leiden.
- Angelino, I. (2004), *L'enfant, la famille, la maltraitance*. Paris: Dunod.
- Ashforth, A. (2005), *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Augé, M. (1974a), Les croyances à la sorcellerie. In: M. Augé, ed., *La construction du monde*. Paris: Maspero, pp. 52–73.
- Augé, M. (1974b), Un essai d'analyse « idéo-logique », les métamorphoses du vampire. D'une société de consommation à l'autre. In: M. Augé, ed., *La construction du monde*. Paris: Maspero, pp. 112–134.
- Augé, M. (1976), Savoir voir et savoir vivre: les croyances à la sorcellerie en Côte d'Ivoire. *Africa* 46(2): 128–139.
- Badian, S. (1963[1957]), *Sous l'orage*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- Baker, J. (2001), Migration as a Positive Response to Opportunity and Context: The Case of Welo, Ethiopia. In: M. de Bruijn, R. van Dijk & D. Foeken, eds, *Mobile Africa: Changing Patterns of Movement in Africa and Beyond*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 107–125.
- Baker, J. & H. Wallevik (2003), Poverty and Wealth at the Rural–urban Interface: An Actor-Centred Perspective from Northern Tanzania. *Environment & Urbanization* 15(2): 229–248.
- Benslama, F. (2005), *Jeune Afrique – L'Intelligent*, no. 2327, 14 August 2005: 59.
- Bernault, F. (2006), Body, power and sacrifice in Equatorial Africa. *Journal of African History* 47: 207–39.
- Boltanski, L. & L. Thévenot (1991), *De la justification. Les économies de la grandeur*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Bond, P. (1999), Political reawakening in Zimbabwe. *Monthly Review* 50(11): 1–17.
- Boudon, R. et al. (1993), *Dictionnaire de la sociologie*. Paris: Larousse.
- Bouju, J. (2002), Se dire dogon. Usages et enjeux politiques de l'identité ethnique. In: Special issue of *Ethnologies Comparées* 5 [<http://alor.univ-montp3.fr/cerce/revue.htm>].

- Bouju, J. (2004), L'identité Dogon: conceptions pour soi et représentations pour autrui. In: R. Bedaux & J.D. van der Waals, eds, *Regards sur les dogons du Mali*, Leiden/Gent: Editions Snoeck, pp. 183–188.
- Bouju, J. et al., eds (2004), Les incivilités de la société civile. Espace public urbain, société civile et gouvernance communale à Bobo-Dioulasso et Bamako (communes 1 et 2). Programme de Recherche Urbaine pour le Développement. Paris: GEMDEV-ISTED.
- Bouju, J. & M. de Bruijn (2007), Violences structurelles et violences systémiques. La violence ordinaire des rapports sociaux en Afrique. In: J. Bouju & M. de Bruijn, eds, Special issue of *Le bulletin de l'APAD*, no. 27–28 : 1–12.
- Bourdieu, P. (1966), The sentiment of honour in Kabyl society. In: J.G. Peristiany, ed., *Honour and Shame: the Values of Mediterranean Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 191–241.
- Boute, J. (1998), La violence ordinaire dans les villes subsahariennes. *Cahiers de l'UCACI* 3: 39–60.
- Brenner, L. (2001), *Controlling Knowledge, Religion, Power and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bruno, M. & J. Bouju, eds (2012), *Sorcellerie et violence en Afrique*. Paris: Karthala.
- Buijtenhuijs, R. (1978). *Le Frolinat et les révoltes populaires du Tchad, 1965–1976*. Den Haag, Paris, New York: Mouton Publishers.
- Buijtenhuijs, R. (1992), Le Frolinat: mouvement islamique ou mouvement de musulmans? In: J.-P. Magnant, ed., *L'Islam au Tchad*. Bordeaux: CEAN, pp. 127–139.
- Campbell, J.C. (1992), Wife battering: Cultural contexts versus western social sciences. In: D. Ayers Counts, J.K. Brown & J.C. Campbell, eds, *Sanctions and Sanctuary: Cultural Perspectives on the Beating of Wives*, Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 229–249.
- Castoriadis, C. (1975), *L'institution imaginaire de la société*. Paris: Editions du Seuil.
- Castro, A. & P. Farmer (2002), Anthropologie de la violence: la culpabilisation des victimes. In: Special issue of *Notre Librairie* 148: 102–108.
- Chitiyo, T.K. (2000), Land violence and compensation: Reconceptualising Zimbabwe's land and war veterans. *CCR-Track Two* 9(1): 1–31.
- Claverie, É., J. Jamin & G. Lenclud (1984), Une ethnographie de la violence est-elle possible? *Études rurales* ('Ethnographie de la violence') 95/96: 9–22.
- Cohen, V. (1997), La vulnérabilité relationnelle. Essai de cadrage et de définition. *Socio-anthropologie* 1, mis en ligne le 15 janvier 2003, Consulté le 16 septembre 2013. URL: <http://socio-anthropologie.revues.org/74>.
- Comaroff, J. & J. Comaroff (1993), Introduction. In: J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff, eds, *Modernity and its Malcontents. Ritual and Power in Post-colonial Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Concha-Eastman, A.J. (2001), Violence: A challenge for public health and for all. *Epidemiological and Community Health* 55: 597–599.

- Coomaraswamy, R. (1995), *Les Violences contre les femmes*. Rapport de l'ONU, Genève.
- Couloubaly, P.B. (1998[1980]), *Les Angoisses d'un monde*. Bamako: Jamana.
- Curet, Dr. (1929), Poison d'épreuve, coutume banda au tribunal de Fort-Sibut. *Bulletin de la Société des Recherches Congolaises* 10: 123–128.
- Dankwa, E.V.O. (2000), *Les prisons en République Centrafricaine*, Rapport de la Commission Africaine des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples, Séries IV, 7.
- Dauphin, C. & A. Farge, eds (1997), *De la violence et des femmes*. Paris: Albin Michel.
- de Boeck, F. (2000), Le deuxième monde et les enfants sorciers en RDC. In : Special issue of *Politique Africaine* 80: 32–57.
- de Boeck, Filip, Dir (2010), *Cemetery State*. Screenplay by Filip Boeck, De and Sara Vanagt. FilmNatie. DVD.
- de Bruijn, M. (2006), Neighbours on the fringes of a small city in post-war Chad. In: P. Konings & D. Foeken, eds, *Crisis and Creativity: Exploring the Wealth of the African Neighbourhood*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 211–229.
- de Bruijn, M. & H. van Dijk (2001), Ecology and Power in the Periphery of Maasina: The Case of the Hayre in the Nineteenth Century. *Journal of African History* 42(2): 217–238.
- de Bruijn, M., H. van Dijk & N. Djindil (2003), *Rapport final: Les effets à long-terme de l'insécurité sur la société au Guera, Tchad*.
- de Bruijn, M. & H. van Dijk (2007), The multiple experiences of civil war in the Guéra region of Chad, 1965–1990. *Sociologus* 57(1): 61–98.
- de Bruijn, M. & R. van Dijk (2007), Farewell to Social Security in the Study of Religion in Africa: The Ambiguous Meaning of the Gift in African Pentecostalism and Islam. In: T. Teelen et al., eds, *Social Security and Religion*, Oxford/New York: Berghahn Books.
- de Bruijn, M. & N. Djindil (2006), État nutritionnel et histoire de vie des “enfants de la rue” à N'Djamena (Tchad). *Psychopathologie Africaine* 33(2) : 183–211.
- Delay, B. (1999), *La situation des filles domestiques à Sévaré et à Mopti*. Résultats finaux d'une étude conjointe. Mopti: rapport, DRAS-Mopti – Save The Children UK – UNICEF.
- Delor, F. & M. Hubert (2003), Un réexamen du concept de « vulnérabilité » pour la recherche et la prévention du VIH/SIDA. *Observatoire du sida et des sexualités*: 1–33. (Also published in *Social Science & Medecine* 50 [2000]: 1557–1570).
- Demeulenaere, P. (2003), *Les normes sociales. Entre accords et désaccords*. Paris: PUF.
- Desjeuc, C., B. Bonnet & D. Desjeux (1983) *Africaines*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- de Villers, G. & J. Omasombo (2004), Quand le peuple kinois envahit les rues... In : Special issue of *Cahiers Africains* 61/62: 213–233.
- DevischR. (1998), La violence à Kinshasa ou l'institution en négatif. In : Special issue of *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines* 150/152, XXXVIII (2–4): 475–495.

- Devreux, A.-M. (2001), Les rapports sociaux de sexe: un cadre d'analyse pour des questions de santé? In: P. Aiach, D. Cèbe, G. Cresson & C. Philippe, eds, *Femmes et hommes dans le champ de la santé. Approches sociologiques*, Ouagadougou: Éditions de l'École Nationale de la Santé Publique, pp. 97–116.
- D'Haeyer, A. (2004), *Enfants sorciers, entre magie et misère*. Paris: Labor.
- Diabate, M.M. (2002a[1979]), *Le Lieutenant de Kouta*. Paris: Hatier.
- Diabate, M.M. (2002b[1980]), *Le Coiffeur de Kouta*. Paris: Hatier.
- Diabate, M.M. (2002c[1982]), *Le Boucher de Kouta*. Paris: Hatier.
- Diallo, M.-B. (1998), La femme dans la littérature africaine. *Tapama* 3, déc. 1998. Bamako: Donniya.
- Diallo, A.M. (2000), *La révolte du Kòmò*. Continents- noirs, Paris: Gallimard.
- Diallo, A.M. (2002a), *Kouty, mémoire de sang*. Série-noire, Paris: Gallimard.
- Diallo, A.M. (2002b), *Dandara*. Nouvelles voix d'Afrique, Paris: Hoëbeke.
- Diarra, M.-A. (1981), *Sahel! Sanglante sécheresse*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- Diarra, M.-A. (1994), *La Nièce de l'imam*. Saint-Maur-Bamako: Sépia-Jamana.
- Diarra, O. (2002), La côte d'Adam. *Nouvelles voix d'Afrique*, Paris: Hoëbeke.
- Diarra, O. (2006), *Vieux lézard*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Diarra, T. & Y.F. Koné (1991), *Les migrations féminines au Mali: la main-d'œuvre domestique*. Rapport final, Bamako: Ministère de la Jeunesse.
- Dissisa, V. (2003), Violence et funérailles au Congo-Brazzaville. In: Special issue of *Bulletin de l'APAD* 25: 89–97.
- Douglas, M. (1970), Introduction: Thirty Years after *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic*. In: M. Douglas, ed., *Confessions and Accusations*. London: Tavistock publications, pp. xiii–xxxviii.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.-E. (1976[1932]), *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. London: Clarendon Press.
- Fainzang, S. & O. Journet (1988) *La femme de mon mari. Anthropologie du mariage polygamique en Afrique et en France*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Fancello, S. (2008), Sorcellerie et délivrance dans les pentecôtismes africains. *Cahiers d'Études africaines*, XLVIII(1–2) (189–190): 161–183.
- Fassin, D. (2004), Et la souffrance devient sociale: de l'anthropologie médicale à une anthropologie des afflictions. In: Special issue of *Critique* 680–681: 16–29.
- Filipi, V., C. Ronsmans, S. Goufodji, M. Lardi, A. Sahel, J. Sainzou & V. De Brouwere (2005), Maternal wards or emergency obstetric rooms? Incidence of near-miss events in African hospitals. *Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand* 84(1): 11–16.
- Fisher, G.-N. (2003), *Psychologie des violences sociales*. Paris: Dunod.
- Fortier, C. (2003), 'Une pédagogie coranique'. Modes de transmission des savoirs islamiques (Mauritanie), *Cahiers d'Études africaines* XLII(1–2), (169–170): 235–260.

- Fourie, R. (2004), South Africa. In: K. Malley-Morrison, ed., *International Perspectives: Family Violence and Abuse: A Cognitive Ecological Approach*, London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fuchs, P. (1970), *Kult und Autorität, die Religion der Hadjerai*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag.
- Gaidzanwa, R.B. (1996), The ideology of domesticity and the struggles of women workers in Zimbabwe. In: A. Chhachhi & R. Pittin, eds, *Confronting State, Capital and Patriarch: Women Organizing in the Process of Industrialization*. London: Macmillan, pp. 273–289.
- Garnier, X. (2002), Penser la violence. *Notre Librairie* 148, july-september 2002.
- Gauthier, D. (1994), *L'enfant victime d'abus sexuels*. Paris: PUF.
- Geschier, P. (1995), *Sorcellerie et politique en Afrique. La viande des autres*. Paris: Karthala.
- Geschier, P. (2000), Sorcellerie et modernité: retour sur une étrange complicité. *Politique africaine* 79: 17–32.
- Gide, A. (1927), *Voyage au Congo*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Gil, D.G. (1998), *Confronting Injustice and Oppression: Concepts and Strategies for Social Workers*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Gilliard, P. (2005), *L'extrême pauvreté au Niger, mendier ou mourir?* Paris: Karthala.
- Gillioz L., J. De Puy & V. Ducret (1997), *Domination et violence envers la femme dans le couple*. Lausanne: Payot.
- Girard, R. (1993), *La violence et le sacré*. Paris: Grasset.
- Girard, R. (2003), *Celui par qui le scandale arrive*. Paris: Desclée de Brouwer.
- Gluckman, M. (1955), *Custom and conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Goode, W. (1971), Force and violence in the family. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 33: 624–636.
- Gugler, J. & G. Ludwar-Ene (1995), Gender and Migration in Africa South of the Sahara. In: J. Baker & Tade Akin A., eds, *The Migration Experience in Africa*, Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.
- Hahn, H. & G. Klute, eds (2007), *Cultures of Migration*. Munster: Lit Verlag.
- Héritier, F. (1996), Relations pour nourrir la réflexion. In: F. Héritier, ed., *De la violence I*, Paris: Odile Jacob.
- Hobsbawm, E. (2007), Invention de la tradition. In: E. Hobsbawm & T. Ranger, eds, *Invention de la tradition*. Paris: Editions Amsterdam.
- Iliffe, J. (1987), *The African Poor, a History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Janin, P. (2003), Vivre ensemble ou la douleur d'être en grande famille. In: Special issue of *Politique Africaine* 91: 33–50.

- Janin, P. & A. Marie (2003), Violences ordinaires, violences enracinées, violences matricielles. In: Special issue of *Politique Africaine* 91: 5–12.
- Jaspard, M. (2005), *Les violences contre les femmes*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Kahola-Tabu, O. (2005), Les reflets de la rue. In: L. Kaumba, ed., *Les enfants de la rue au Katanga*. Rapport de recherche, Lubumbashi: Travaux de l'Observatoire.
- Kahola-Tabu, O. et al. (2004), Les enfants des rues. In: L. Kaumba, ed., *Approches de la criminalité dans la ville de Lubumbashi*, Rapport de recherche, Lubumbashi: Travaux de l'Observatoire.
- Kalck, P. (1992), *Histoire centrafricaine des origines à 1966*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Keja, R. (2006), "Ne tourne pas le dos à l'avenir": de confrontatie van het internationale kinderrechtendiscours met het dagelijks leven van bedelende *talibés* in de stad Thiès, Senegal. MA Thesis, Utrecht University.
- Kinda, F. (2000), Informations statistiques sur les femmes: la pauvreté au féminin au Burkina Faso, Colloque Statistique, Développement et Droits de l'Homme, Montreux 4-8/09/2000.
- Kintz, D. (1987), De l'art peul de l'adultère. *Bulletin de l'AEA* 29/30: 119–143.
- Konare, A.O. (1997), « spécial Mali », *Bouillon de culture*, France 2, enregistré en public le 1^{er} décembre 1997.
- Konaté, M. (1981), *Le Prix de l'âme*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- Konaté, M. (1985), *Une Aube incertaine*. Paris: Présence Africaine.
- Konaté, M. (1986a), *Fils du chaos*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Konaté, M. (1986b), *Un Appel de nuit*. Bruxelles: Lansman, Carnières-Morlanwelz.
- Konaté, D. (1999), Les fondements endogènes d'une culture de paix au Mali. www.unesco.org/ccp/publications.
- Last, M. (2000), Children and the Experience of Violence, Contrasting Cultures of Punishment in Northern Nigeria. *Africa* 70(3): 359–393.
- Lenclud, G. (1994), Qu'est-ce que la tradition? In: M. Detienne, ed., *Transcrire les mythologies. Tradition, écriture, historicité*. Paris: Albin Michel, pp. 25–44.
- Le Potvin, S. (2005), *Lettre maliennes*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Loimeier, M. (2002), "Je veux étudier sans mendier": The Campaign against Q'uranic Schools in Senegal. In: H. Weiss, ed., *Social Welfare in Muslim Societies*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrika Institutet, pp. 118–137.
- Luccini, R. (1996), *Sociologie de la survie: L'enfant dans la rue*. Paris: PUF.
- Ly, I. (1988), *Les Noctuelles vivent de larmes*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Ly, I. (1997), *Toiles d'araignées*. Arles: Actes Sud, [L'Harmattan, 1982].
- Magnant, J.-P. (1992), L'islamisation au Tchad: questions et hypothèses. In: J.-P. Magnant, ed., *L'Islam au Tchad*, Bordeaux: CEAN, pp. 7–25.
- Maïga, Y.I. (2002), *Exclusion des filles-mères Bambara du Cercle de Djenné*. (Mémoire pour le Diplôme Supérieur en Travail Social International), Aix-en-Provence: Collège Coopératif P.A.M.

- Malley-Morrison, K. (2004), *International Perspectives: Family Violence and Abuse: A Cognitive Ecological Approach*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mandaza, I. (1986), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy of Transition 1980–1986*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Mantel, G.D., E. Buchman, H. Rees & R.C. Pattinson (1998), Severe acute maternal morbidity: A pilot study of a definition for a near-miss. *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 105(9): 985–990.
- Marie, A. (1997a), Du sujet communautaire au sujet individuel. In: A. Marie, ed., *L'Afrique des individus*, Paris: Karthala, pp. 53–54.
- Marie, A. (1997b), Avatars de la dette communautaire. Crises des solidarités, sorcellerie et procès d'individualisation. In: A. Marie, ed., *L'Afrique des individus*. Paris: Karthala, pp. 249–328.
- Marie, A. (2003), La violence faite à l'individu. In: Special issue of *Politique Africaine* 91: 13–32.
- Martinelli, B. & J. Bouju, eds (2012), *Sorcellerie et Violence en Afrique*. Paris: Karthala.
- Marwick, M.G. (1964), Witchcraft as a social strain gauge. *Africa* xxii(3): 215–233.
- Meindertsma, J.D. & J.J. Kessler (1997), *Towards Better Use of Environmental Resources. A Planning Document of Mbulu and Karatu Districts, Tanzania*. The Hague: Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- Mohamed-Abdi, M. (2003), Retour vers les dugsi, écoles coraniques en Somalie. *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines* XLIII(12) (169–170): 351–396.
- Mommersteeg, G. (1996), *Het domein van de marabout: koranleraren en magisch religius specialisten in Djenne, Mali*. Amsterdam: Thesis Publishers.
- Mous, M. (1992), *A Grammar of Iraqw*. Leiden: Leiden University.
- Moyo, O.N. (2001), *Dealing with work in its context: An analysis of household work and provisioning strategies in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe*. PhD Thesis, Heller Graduate School: Brandeis University.
- Moyo, O.N. & S.M. Kawewe (2002), The dynamics of a racialized, gendered, ethnicized, and economically stratified society: Understanding the socio-economic status of women in Zimbabwe. *Feminist Economics* 8(2): 163–181.
- Mutambwa, M. (2005), Formes des violences sexuelles. In: M. Mulumbwa, ed., *Abus et violences sexuels faits à l'enfant et à la femme au Katanga. Sites de Lubumbashi et du poste frontalier de Kasumbalesa*. Rapport de recherche. Lubumbashi: Travaux de l'Observatoire.
- Naepels, N. (2004), Violence de la relation ethnographique. *Terrain* 43, mis en ligne le 05 septembre 2008. URL: <http://terrain.revues.org/1864>; DOI: 10.4000/terrain.1864.
- Naepels, M. (2006), Quatre questions sur la violence. *L'Homme* 1-2(177–178): 487–495.
- Ndaywel, I., (1998), Du Congo de la rébellion au Zaïre des pillages. In: Special issue of *Cahiers d'études africaines* XXXVIII (2–4) (150–152): 455–474.

- Ngindu, A. (1969), Propos et problèmes concernant le culte des morts chez les Baluba du Kasai. *Cahiers des religions africaines* 3(5): 25–35.
- Okulate, G. (2005), Interpersonal violence cases reported to the police: A Nigerian Study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 20(12): 1598–1610.
- Ouattara, F. (1999), *Savoir-vivre et honte chez les Senufo Nanerger (Burkina Faso)*. Thèse de doctorat (nouveau régime), EHESS-Marseille.
- Ouologuem, Y. (2003), *Le Devoir de violence*. Paris: Le Serpent à plumes [Seuil, 1968].
- Parpart, J.L. (1995), Gender patriarchy and development in Africa: The Zimbabwe Case. *Working Paper*, 254, East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Passeron, J.-C. (2006), *Biographies, flux, trajectoires. Questions the l'extérieur, Avant Propos*. Enquête, No 5, Biographie et cycle de vie. Adresse: <http://enquete.revues.org/document77.html>, date de consultation: 05/10/06.
- Perouse de Monclot, M.-A. (2002), *Villes et violences en Afrique noire*. Paris: IRD/Karthala.
- Perry, D.L. (2004), Muslim Child Disciples, Global Civil Society, and Children's Right in Senegal: The Discourse of Strategic Structuralism. *Anthropological Quarterly* 77(1): 47–86.
- PRSP (2003), National Poverty Reduction Paper, Chad, June 2003.
- Rea, A. (1999), Désintégration sociale et affaiblissement de l'Etat. In: Y. Cartuyves & P. Mary, *L'Etat face à l'insécurité. Dérives politiques des années 90*. Bruxelles: Labor.
- Rekdal, O.B. (1996), Money, Milk and Sorghum Beer: Change and Continuity among the Iraqw of Northern Tanzania. *Africa* 66(3): 367–385.
- Rekdal, O.B. & A. Blysrad (1999), "We are as Sheep and Goats": Iraqw and Datooga Discourses on Fortune, Failure and the Future. In: D.M Anderson & V. Broch-Due, eds, *The Poor are Not Us: Poverty and Pastoralism in Eastern Africa*. Oxford, Nairobi, E.A.E.P, Athens, Ohio University Press: James Currey.
- Retel-Laurentin, A. (1969), *Oracles et ordalies chez les Nzakara*. Paris: Mouton.
- Riches, D., ed. (1986), *The Anthropology of Violence*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Rippenburg, C. (1997), Women's status and cultural expression: Changing gender relations and structural adjustment in Zimbabwe. *Africa Today* 44(1): 33–50.
- Rokeach, M. (1973), *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: Free Press.
- Scheper-Hughes, N. & C. Sargent (1998), Introduction: The Cultural Politics of Childhood. In: N. Scheper-Hughes & C. Sargent, eds, *Small Wars, The Cultural Politics of Childhood*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pp. 1–35.
- Seck, B. (2000), Les mauvais traitements à l'enfant au Sénégal. Etats des lieux, prise de conscience, solutions. In: T. Agossou, ed., *Regards d'Afrique sur la maltraitance*, Paris: Karthala.

- Seesemann, R. (1999), 'Where East meets West': The Development or Qur'anic Education in Darfur. *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 13: 41–61.
- Seesemann, R. (2002), Sufi Leaders and Social Welfare: Two Examples from Contemporary Sudan. In: H. Weiss, ed., *Social Welfare in Muslim Societies in Africa*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrika Institutet, pp. 98–112.
- Selvik, E. (1998), *Channeling Flows of Blood and Water. A Study of Gender, Fertility and Seclusion Practices among Iraqw People in Tanzania*. Cand. Polit. Thesis, Oslo: University of Oslo.
- Sissoko, F.D. (1955), *La Passion de Djimé*. Paris: La Tour du guet.
- Snyder, K. (1993), *Honey and Water: Moral Ideology and the Construction of Community among the Iraqw of Northern Tanzania*. PhD Thesis, Yale University.
- Snyder, K. 2005, *The Iraqw of Tanzania. Negotiating Rural Development*. Westview Case Studies in Anthropology. Westview Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Sokwanele (2006), *Zimbabwe's heritage of violence: Sokwanele comment on the 26th anniversary of independence*. Zimbabwe, Sokwanele Civic Action Support Group. <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/YAOI-6NZ3LX?OpenDocument>. Retrieved 15 June 2006.
- Storeng, K.T. et al. (2008), Paying the orice: the cost and consequences of emergency obstetric care in Burkina Faso. *Social Science & Medicine* 66: 545–557.
- Strathern, A. & P. Stewart (2002), *Violence: theory and ethnography*. London, New York: Continuum.
- Tapo, A.G. (2003), *L'Héritage empoisonné*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Thornton, R.J. (1980), *Space, Time and Culture among the Iraqw of Tanzania*. New York: Academic Press.
- Thornton, R.J. (1982), Modelling of Spatial Relations in a Boundary-marking Ritual of the Iraqw of Tanzania. *Man* 17(3): 528–545.
- Tonda, J. (2000), Capital sorcier et travail de Dieu. *Politique Africaine* 79: 48–65.
- Tonda, J. (2002), *La guérison divine en Afrique centrale (Congo, Gabon)*. Paris: Karthala.
- Tonda, J. (2005), *Le Souverain moderne. Le corps du pouvoir en Afrique Centrale (Congo, Gabon)*. Paris: Karthala.
- Traoré, I.S. (1982), *Les Ruchers de la capitale*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Traoré, A.D. (2002), *Le viol de l'imaginaire*. Paris: Actes Sud-Fayard.
- Traoré, I.S. (2004), *Les Amants de l'Esclaverie*. Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu.
- Traoré, S. (2005), *Mariage et célibat à Ouagadougou*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Troch, H. (2006), *Een zoektocht naar kennis, God en levensonderhoud. Leren en leven in de koranschool in de Haayre*. MA Thesis, Leiden University.
- Tsamby bulu, L. (2004), Musique et violence à Kinshasa. In: Special issue of *Cahiers Africain* 61–62: 194–212.

- United Republic of Tanzania (URT) (2003), *2002 Population and Housing Census, General Report*. Dar es Salaam.
- van der veld, E. & B. Sogoba (2005), Rapport d'évaluation rapide sur l'exploitation sexuelle des enfants à des fins commerciales au mali (Bamako, Kayes, Sikasso). [version provisoire], Bamako.
- Verdier, R. (1980), *La vengeance dans les sociétés extra-occidentales*. Paris: Librairie Cujas.
- Vincent, J.-F. (1975), *Le pouvoir et le sacré chez les Hadjeray du Tchad*. Paris: Edition Anthropos.
- Vuarin, R. (2000), *Un système africain de protection sociale au temps de la mondialisation ou 'venez m'aider à tuer mon lion....'*. Paris: l'Harmattan.
- Wallevik, Hege (2012), 'The complexity of generalisation: A phenomenological approach to economic affairs among women in Zanzibar Town'. PhD Thesis 45:2012, Noragric, University of Life Sciences, Norway.
- Winter, E.H. (1968), Some Aspects of Political Organization and Land Tenure among the Iraqw. *Kyoto University African Studies* 2: 1–29.

Index

- AIDS/HIV 37, 53, 59, 91, 96, 118, 126, 140
anomie 2, 10, 11, 60, 123, 130
authority 6–8, 10, 69, 87, 88, 102, 107,
147, 151
 clan authority 22
 judicial authority 44, 60
 moral authority 147
 patriarchal authority 61, 93, 99, 101,
102, 126, 148, 158
 status authority 7, 116
 traditional authority 103, 107, 149, 159
- blessing 16, 47
Burkina Faso 3, 4, 27, 28, 31, 32
- care
 body care 104
 emergency care 36
 health care 37, 40, 86, 90
 obstetric care 89, 91, 94, 100
 social care 63, 65, 78, 86, 89, 100
- Central Africa 66, 101, 103, 109, 124, 128
Central African Republic 3, 4, 117, 119, 120
 Bangui 119, 121, 123, 124, 128
- Chad 3, 5, 63–67, 70, 71, 76, 80, 81, 83, 84
 fākih 63, 65, 67–69, 70, 72–75, 77, 78,
80, 81
 Guera Province 63, 67–72, 78, 82
 Koranic school 5, 63–66, 69–72, 76,
78–82, 84
 Mongo 64, 66–74, 76, 78–82
- colonial
 colonial period 42, 68, 71, 72, 89, 90
 colonial rule 86, 88
 colonial strategy 87, *see also*
 racialisation, racism
- customs 163
 funeral customs 103, 105
 Islamic customs 78
 local, village customs 4, 60
 traditional customs 4, 44, 49, 61, 88,
163
 urban customs 109
 meeta 21, 23
- death 104, 110, 155
 child death 12, 127
 death and sorcery 115, 118, 122, 123, 126,
128, 138, 148
 death of husband or wife 17
 death of in-laws 33, 106
 death of parents 130
 maternal death 28
- deference 88
Democratic Republic of Congo 3,
101, 130
 Kinshasa 101, 102, 105, 106, 109–111,
113–116
 Baluba 104
 Lubumbashi 130, 131, 132, 137,
141, 142
- dignity 86, 90, 91, 92, 103, 150, 163
discipline 91
- expectations 7–10, 14, 30, 33, 59, 70, 73, 77,
84, 88–91, 93–95, 97–99, 107, 111, 120, 121,
126, 133
- family asset 91, 94
- global(ization) 2, 3, 11, 23, 60, 62, 66,
81–82, 86, 89, 123, 141, 157, 164
- hierarchy 102, 107
- identity 8, 22, 23, 27, 38–40, 51, 52, 59, 60,
115, 120, 132
- ideology 102, 145
 family ideology 88, 94, 99
 mainstream ideology 4
 racial ideology, *see* racialisation,
 racism
- informal sector 14, 19, 90, 94
interests 21, 88, 104
- legitimacy 2, 3, 10, 11
 institutional legitimacy 59, 117, 130
 legitimacy of coercion 10, 33, 107, 110,
112, 128, 146
 legitimacy of violence 7–10, 27, 28, 41,
63, 112, 119, 120

- legitimacy (cont.)
 moral legitimacy 5, 60
 social legitimacy 27, 28, 41, 118, 121, 130
- liability 94
- Mali 3, 4, 42–44, 50, 51, 58, 60, 62, 110, 143, 144, 164
 Bambara 42–46, 48, 49, 53, 60, 143, 157
 Malian literature 6, 143–145, 147, 149–155, 158–160, 162–164
 Malian writers 143, 145, 148, 156, 159, 162–164
- marriage 12, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33, 34, 36–38, 42, 44–49, 53–55, 60, 61, 94, 110–112, 130, 146, 154
 arranged marriage 44, 46, 55, 61
 forced marriage 43, 44, 46, 50, 60, 61, 156, 158, 159
 polygamous marriage, polygamy 27, 30, 32–34, 40, 145, 150, 156, 163
- mercy 110, 134
- mourning 103, 104, 109, 115
- obedience 107, 147, 155
- obligations 89, 120, 121, 126, 155
 family obligations 8, 43, 89
 moral obligations 147
 political obligations 121
 reciprocal obligations 35, 39, 89
 religious obligations 68
 social obligations 3, 8, 34, 35, 126, 155
- political change 90
- political climate 69, 89
- political economy 82–92, 99–101
- political power 69
- pregnancy 27–30, 36, 37, 53, 55, 62, 154
 abortion 28, 37, 43, 54–56, 59, 62
 extramarital pregnancy 17, 22, 27, 31, 53
 infanticide 8, 54–56, 59, 62
 pregnancy complications 12, 17, 28, 37, 40, 56
 premarital pregnancy 30, 31, 54
 unwanted pregnancy 31, 37, 51–54
- property 9, 85, 108, 114, 128
- relationships 7, 9, 10, 22, 23, 26, 30, 35, 107, 118, 120, 130
 close relationships 9, 87
 couple relationships 27, 28, 31, 36, 38
 daily relationships 107
 domination relationships 114, 120
 equal relationships 107
 family relationships 31, 35, 39, 40, 84, 101, 107, 110, 116, 151
 gender relationships 28, 60
 group relationships 130
 kin relationships 9, 41, 101, 120
 marital relationships 30, 32, 36, 41
 parental relationships 75
 power relationships 10, 28, 150
 social relationships 1, 2, 9, 11, 27, 37, 84, 116, 130
 unequal relationships 9, 28, 34, 37, 101
 violent relationships 28, 33, 38, 106, 114, 143
- religion, religious 2, 3, 14, 61, 63, 64, 67, 69, 82, 105, 119
 Christianity, Christian(s) 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25, 69, 82, 103
 Islam, Muslim(s) 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 64, 66–69, 71–74, 77, 79–82, 84
 local religion 15, 48, 67, 68, 82, 110, 146
- respect(ability) 36, 45
 respect for family 30, 34, 47, 60, 96, 107, 108
 respect for social norms 7, 31, 33, 92, 120, 150, 153, 162
- roles 5, 9, 30, 35
 family roles 84, 93, 96, 137, 148, 157
 gendered roles 30, 34, 49, 55, 88, 89, 94, 100, 101
 religious roles 67, 125
 social roles 5, 9, 28, 35, 137
- rule 3, 84, 87, 88
 local rule 3, 8, 22, 23, 34, 35, 61
 rule of honour 6, 60
 traditional rule 15, 16, 45, 46, 54, 60, 120, 145, 150
 transgression of rule 7
 violence of rule, *see* legitimacy
- safety net 91
- seniority 3, 102, 107, 116, 128

- siblings 28, 34, 35, 39, 40, 45, 74, 95, 96, 98, 104–106, 109, 111, 113, 124, 128, 148
 social constructivist perspective 84
 social security, *see* health and social care
 solidarity 101
 clan solidarity 26, 126
 family solidarity 32, 35, 36, 39, 101, 116, 122, 137
 kinship solidarity 2, 37, 101, 102, 131, 138
 social solidarity 37, 60, 131, 146
 status
 authority status 6, 7, 116
 economic status 7, 98, 99, 101, 102, 116
 gendered status 8, 27, 29, 30, 153
 social status 5, 7, 8, 10, 28, 29, 50, 61, 88, 91, 101, 116, 146, 153
 street children 4, 8, 51, 53, 58, 59, 63, 72, 78, 79, 84, 109, 115
 Shegue 130–141, 143
 support 34–36
 emotional support 89, 103
 mutual support 19, 40, 89, 96, 99
 public support 91
 social support 40, 47, 78, 89, 137
 structural support 63, 78, 90

 Tanzania 3, 4, 12–14, 20, 23, 25, 26
 Iraqw 12–26
 Mbulu district 12, 13, 14, 18, 20, 25
 traditions 13
 belief traditions 54, 61, 69, 103, 121, 146, 148, 154
 functional traditions 151, 158–160, 162, 164
 violence traditions 88, 105, 107, 109, 116, 117, 146, 149, 151
 trust 54, 88, 102, 122
 blind trust 139
 distrust 116, 136
 mistrust 72, 118, 120, 122, 139
 suspicion 7, 33, 36, 45, 113, 116, 118, 127, 135, 151, 152, 158

 values 7, 9, 23
 cultural values 10, 11, 31, 47, 59, 66, 107, 139
 moral values 61, 62, 162
 traditional values 20, 24, 88, 126

 Zimbabwe 3, 4, 84–92, 99, 101
 Bulawayo 85

 violence (actors):
 aggressor 9, 11, 35, 101, 106, 111, 116, 125, 133, 136, 137
 children
 Shegue 130–141, 143
 street children 4, 8, 51, 53, 58, 59, 63, 72, 78, 79, 84, 109, 115
 orphans, orphaned children 4, 75, 76, 91, 109, 110
 youngster(s) 65, 81, 127
 youth(s) 79, 90, 94, 115, 123–125, 127, 137, 143, 157
 domestic workers 42, 50, 55, 56, 58, 61, 62
 elite(s) 67, 79, 80
 executioner 119, 123, 129
 fâkih(e) 63, 65, 68, 69, 72–75, 77, 80, 81
 family
 extended family 89, 96, 101, 106, 132
 elders 7, 21, 34, 48, 85, 88, 91, 92, 96, 97, 105, 107, 115, 116, 133, 149
 family members 31, 35, 52, 84–87, 89, 91, 92, 99, 101, 102, 107, 109
 family roles, *see* roles
 family-in-law 19, 25, 33, 34, 48–50, 55, 98, 101, 103, 105–108, 113, 114, 116
 parents 2, 17, 40, 43–46, 48–55, 61, 64, 71, 77, 84, 89, 97, 99, 101, 102, 104, 132, 138, 140, 156, 158, 159
 relatives 32–35, 39, 47, 51, 52, 72, 89, 131, 132, 138, 141, 142, 156
 Koranic students 5, 63, 78, 79, 81
 migrants 42–44, 54, 69–71, 91
 nganga 124, 127
 NGOs 1, 63, 64, 66, 80, 81
 oppressor 102
 perpetrator 4–6, 10, 61–63, 85, 87, 98, 117, 140
 police 20, 37, 39, 56, 86, 97, 123, 133, 135, 138, 147
 private security guards 86
 researcher(s), research assistant(s) 4, 65, 80, 81, 84, 102, 146, 163
 scapegoat 5, 121, 127, 152, 156

- sorcerer 2, 111, 115, 123, 138, 139
 traditional healers 24, 38, 96
 tormentors 133
 victims 4–6, 9, 10, 26, 35, 50, 52, 60, 63, 81,
 85, 87, 101, 106, 111, 113, 116, 119, 122–127, 131,
 132, 136–138, 140–142, 152, 157, 160

 widows 7, 17, 102–105, 109–111, 128, 148,
 154, 159
 witches 111, 118, 121, 122, 124–126, 138, 141, 142

 violence (causes of):
 alcoholism 91, 96, 98, 99
 bearing children out of wedlock 17, 22,
 25, 27, 31, 53, 94
 crisis
 economic crisis 2, 115, 116, 118, 119, 146
 family crisis 120
 identity crisis 120
 institutional crisis 120
 social crisis 27, 120, 121, 127, 144
 dependency 28, 89, 116, 149
 deregulation(s) 126, 129
 discrepancies 8, 60, 102, 146
 domination 3, 86, 87, 107, 108, 114, 116, 128
 dowry 46, 55, 101, 110, 111, 116
 dysfunctional state 129
 economic vulnerability 35, 38
 emancipation 7, 60, 129
 exploitation 7, 11, 44, 51, 53, 58, 59, 84, 86,
 87, 123, 128
 failure 3, 4, 7, 13, 30, 36, 39, 40, 61, 98, 101,
 117, 121, 126, 128
 familial problems 94
 funeral customs, *see* customs
 gender role incongruence 94, 96
 inequality 7, 9, 37, 42, 88, 92, 149, 151
 intransigent 103
 isolation 9, 89, 123, 150
 lifeworld contestation 12, 15, 23–26
 maleness 99
 migration 14, 21, 42, 43, 49, 50, 51, 57, 68,
 70, 71, 89
 misfortune 4, 16, 30, 110, 111, 115, 117, 122,
 126, 127, 132, 138, 151, 152
 mistrust, *see* trust
 norm(s), 2, 3, 7–9, 11, 20, 22, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34,
 35, 38–41, 44–46, 55, 59, 60, 87, 92, 107, 126,
 141, 148
 occult powers 107, 110

 political instability 119, 120
 poverty 2, 7, 11, 34, 37, 63, 65–67, 70, 71,
 82, 84–86, 90, 99, 100, 105, 109, 117, 147
 power 3, 9, 10, 15, 16, 18, 21, 23, 24, 39, 41,
 67, 69, 79, 81, 84, 86, 92, 98, 99, 101, 105, 110,
 122, 126, 135, 146, 150, 152, 153, 157
 powerlessness 37, 67, 91, 101
 precarity 2, 86, 90, 91, 99, 112
 privilege 6, 7, 11, 30, 32, 71, 86, 87, 99, 116,
 145, 151
 racialization 86, 88, 89, 92
 rebellion 59, 69, 106, 120, 157
 reciprocal obligations, *see* obligations
 repudiation 8, 34, 127
 resources 5, 7, 9, 28, 35–37, 50, 55, 72, 81,
 84, 89, 91, 95, 98, 99, 101, 128
 separation 89, 92, 104, 105
 social change 3, 8, 11, 21, 82, 119, 120, 121
 social exclusion 2, 27, 137, 138
 social rupture 27
 socio-economic conditions 86, 90
 spiritual insecurity 2, 118, 121,
 123, 130
 status incongruency 84
 status inconsistency 98, 99, 116
 strategy of exclusion 88
 struggle 87, 92, 128, 150
 superior 33, 34, 87, 101, 106
 supremacy 88
 suspicion, *see* trust
 unemployment 2, 86, 90, 91, 99, 112
 wars 1, 63, 82, 89, 92, 99, 112
 witchcraft 18, 32, 33, 37, 86, 109, 110, 113,
 115–125

 violence (expressions of):
 abortion, *see* pregnancy
 abuse 31, 52, 55, 59, 61, 93, 97, 105, 110, 115,
 131, 132, 133, 138, 141, 147
 verbal abuse 36, 38, 155
 sexual abuse 51–53, 55, 57, 60, 61, 134,
 139, 140
 physical abuse 57, 107, 135, 141, 142
 psychological abuse 96, 100, 127, 155
 afraid 69, 95–98, 109, 134, 135, 138
 aggression 1, 6, 10, 11, 32, 142, 151, 157
 aggressive 9, 97, 135, 136, 139, 151
 altercation(s) 113, 151
 anger, angry 5, 96, 97, 103, 127, 130, 147,
 149, 151, 156

- anxious 96
 armed banditry 114, 115
 assault 91, 97, 115, 125, 136, 141, 147
 attack(s) 32, 67, 70, 86, 96, 118, 122, 125
 banishment 8, 53, 55–57, 61, 63, 127
 beat(en), beating 7, 8, 36–38, 52, 59, 86,
 94–96, 107, 108, 112, 125, 127
 bewitching 96, 97
 bewitchment 111
 blame(s) 17, 38, 85, 95, 138, 152
 blow(s) 9, 112, 125, 135, 156
 brawl(s) 86
 brutality 7, 87, 135
 brute force 92
 coercion 2, 3, 5–8, 10, 44, 46, 53, 85, 107,
 110, 112, 116, 128, 132, 141
 coercive strategies 91
 complaint(s) 37, 60, 96, 125
 conflict 2, 5, 9, 11, 16, 24, 30, 32–34, 36, 60,
 80, 102, 107, 113, 114, 120, 123, 131, 144, 162
 family conflict 89, 99, 122, 147
 social conflict 8, 119, 122
 confrontation 7, 10, 30, 73, 82,
 90, 96
 contempt 7, 9, 30, 59, 95, 106, 113, 137, 147,
 149, 160
 crime 7, 53, 86, 87, 114, 115, 122, 138, 140
 criticism 106, 143, 145
 cry 103
 curse 7, 54, 116, 126, 148, 152, 160
 delinquency 114, 120
 denigration 30, 57, 59, 88
 disagreement 7, 10, 33, 89, 106
 disaster 118, 126
 disgrace 45, 52, 53, 55, 56, 61, 153, 154, 164
 dispossession 89, 109
 dispute 39, 110
 distress 6, 96, 97, 107
 distrust, *see* trust
 emasculation 91, 94
 exclusion(s) 1, 2, 12, 18, 22, 26, 27,
 33, 36, 44, 88, 113, 116, 121, 137–139, 152, 153,
 160
 exploitation 7, 11, 51, 81, 86, 87, 123, 128
 sexual exploitation 44, 53, 58, 59, 61
 expropriation 87
 fear 6, 7, 10, 19, 23, 33, 36, 40, 57, 60,
 96–98, 100, 105, 107–110, 113, 118, 120, 121,
 135, 147–151, 153, 160, 163, 164
 fight 39, 109, 118, 119, 125, 128, 135, 150
 force 26, 29, 31, 41, 66, 69, 70, 87, 92, 98,
 112, 117, 122, 146, 147
 fright 113
 frustration(s) 57, 91, 94, 121, 152
 guilt 30, 35–37, 39, 57, 125, 127, 139, 156
 harass(ment) 1, 6, 11, 30, 52, 60, 62, 95, 112,
 125, 136, 147
 harsh(ness) 43, 78, 103, 107, 108, 116, 133
 hassling 86
 havoc 99
 hopeless(ness) 98, 107, 148
 hostility 106, 132, 135
 humiliation 49–53, 56, 57, 87, 95, 99, 107,
 113, 141, 147, 148
 hurt 96, 112
 ill-treatment 139
 inability 8, 61, 93, 110, 120, 126
 indigence 89, 101
 infanticide, *see* pregnancy
 injury 6, 18, 107
 injustice 7, 11, 110, 113, 123, 128, 157, 162
 insecurity 2, 11, 27, 65, 77, 118, 121, 123, 129,
 131, 147
 jealousy 7, 9, 116, 121, 126, 151, 156
 juvenile crime 115
 kill 108, 117, 125, 126, 127, 155–157, 162
 looting 114
 malnourished 63, 75, 78, 81
 maltreatment 131, 132
 material deprivation 84, 92
meeta, *see* customs
 menace 99, 111, 123
 mob justice 118, 122, 123
 nasty 107, 108
 offensive 98
 opposition 67, 69, 70, 106, 160
 oppression 2, 108
 oppressive relation(s) 88
 out of control 10, 96
 outbursts of violence 87
 paranoia 115, 151
 physical harm 85
 pickpocketing 86
 prostitution 19, 53, 57–62, 135, 144
 protest 90, 91, 103, 145
 psychological distress 6, 107
 punish 50, 53, 54, 96, 97, 118, 119, 121, 136,
 138, 148, 153, 154
 punishment 12, 18, 20, 21, 26, 53, 57, 61, 87,
 118, 138, 147, 148

- racism 88, 89
 rape 55, 60, 62, 134, 135, 139, 140–142, 153, 154, 156
 resignation 109, 137, 148
 retaliation(s) 7–11, 101, 102, 105, 110–113
 revenge 9–11, 101, 102, 105, 106, 108, 109, 111, 112, 114, 116, 121, 128, 138, 157
 sacrifice 52, 92, 126, 143, 164
 sanction(s) 17, 21, 25, 28, 88, 89, 100, 122, 129, 149
 scaring 85
 seclusion 12, 16–18, 21, 22, 26, see also *meta*
 secret(s) 102, 133, 148
 self-destructive behaviour 91
 shame 17, 45, 46, 53, 54, 61, 94, 103, 139, 149
 shaming 86, 87, 93, 99
 social solitude 40
 sorrow 99, 104
 stigmatization 30, 57, 59, 62, 127, 142
 strain 30, 38, 39, 89, 122
 subjected 3, 4, 16, 17, 35, 52, 101, 105, 108, 127, 134, 135, 142, 164
 submission 45–47, 86, 107, 110, 148, 155, 159
 submissive 47, 49, 55, 105, 149, 152
 suffer 8, 18, 38, 44, 52, 53, 57, 70, 100, 113, 130, 134, 139, 151, 154
 tension(s) 2, 27, 30, 33, 60, 86, 91, 98, 102, 111, 121, 127, 146
 terror 108, 123, 140, 156
 threat 7, 10, 30, 33, 52, 54, 55, 100, 105, 107, 111, 126, 140, 146
 torture 113, 116, 127, 128, 133, 134, 142
 tortured 87, 92, 95, 108, 135
 trauma 52, 145, 146, 156
 trouble 93, 94, 100, 148, 156, 161
 victimization 6, 11, 44, 119, 125, 132, 137, 138, 142
 victimized 62, 91, 131, 138
 violation(s) 9, 53, 83, 86, 120, 154
 wrong 98, 146, 150
 violence (types of):
 anti-witchcraft violence 117, 119, 123, 128, 129
 curbing violence 88
 cycle of violence 59, 125
 cyclical dimension of violence 102
 domestic violence 27, 34, 36, 39, 92, 112, 114, 115, 143, 144, 146, 147, 151, 152, 157, 159, 160, 162
 family violence 84–87, 92, 93, 99, 102, 106, 157, 159
 inherited violence 84, 87, 95
 interpersonal violence 85, 86, 91
 mental violence 6, 7, 112, 113
 occult violence 107
 ordinary violence 1–11, 38, 41, 43, 44, 57, 60–62, 101, 112, 114–116, 130, 135, 137, 141, 164
 physical violence 6, 36, 41, 87, 98, 99, 112, 125, 160
 public violence 114
 real violence 110, 127
 reciprocal violence 101, 142
 ritual violence 105
 silent violence 7, 85, 93–96, 98–100
 social violence 1, 9, 12, 21–23, 26, 30, 35, 42, 44, 62, 87, 100, 115, 116, 121, 125, 137, 144
 state violence 90
 structural violence 2, 6, 36, 44, 63, 64, 84–88, 91, 92, 97, 99, 101, 128
 tolerable violence 106
 urban violence 114, 115, 120, 142
 violence cycle 102
 visible violence 93