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YouTube in Academic Teaching – A Multimedia Documentation of Siramori Diabaté’s Song “Nanyuman”

Brahima Camara, Graeme Counsel and Jan Jansen

Introduction

This paper expands the documentation of a video recording of the song “Nanyuman” by Mali’s legendary female bard Siramori [Sira Mory] Diabaté (ca. 1925-1989). This unique recording was recently collected in the archives of Radio Télévision Guinéenne (RTG), and was then made available on YouTube. This paper adds a transcription and translation to Siramori’s version of “Nanyuman”, and this enhancing of the YouTube video is an attempt to produce a teaching tool.

This paper firstly describes an archival quest in the Guinean sound archives, and the unexpected find of a Siramori recording. It then presents a methodological and ethical reflection on the process of archiving and making the recording accessible on YouTube, with further considerations given to academic publications of the recording, thus creating a multimedia supported documentation. Central to this paper is the song text of Nanyuman, with the text from the example found in the RTG archives presented alongside another interpretation of the same song by Siramori. Thus, the textual dynamics of Siramori’s performance are displayed and a clear impression of her artistry is presented.

Some Unexpected Finds at a Guinean Archive

From 2008-2013, Graeme Counsel undertook an audio project at the Radio Télévision Guinée (RTG) for which he archived, digitized, and preserved audio

materials from Guinea's Syliphone recording label in addition to audio materials recorded on reel-to-reel magnetic tape.⁵² With the death of Guinea's first president Sékou Touré in 1984, Guinea entered a long period of military rule under President Lansané Conté (1984-2008). The revolutionary arts policies of the Touré era (1958-1984), which led to state sponsorship of musicians and orchestras, were abandoned, and the archives, which contained over 10,000 songs, were left in neglect (Counsel 2015). The Conté regime gave scant attention to culture, and less so to reviving memories of Sékou Touré. For several decades, most of the music in the archives was never broadcast on radio or television, and thus the cultural memory of the Touré years was all but erased.

During the project of archiving the thousands of songs on magnetic tape, Counsel commenced researching RTG's video archive, which, although outside the parameters of his project, sat adjacent to the audio archive and contained hundreds of hours of recordings of music. A first find Counsel made was a recording of Kouyaté Sory Kandia (1933-1977), one of Guinea's most acclaimed artists. Dr. Iffono, a former Guinean *Ministère de la Culture, des Arts et Loisirs*, had told him that, when he was minister, he had been searching for the only video recording of Kouyaté Sory Kandia that was believed to exist. The minister informed him that he had in fact traveled overseas to Ghana looking for it, and had considered travelling to Algeria.⁵³ When Counsel was searching in the RTG's Conakry archives, he discovered a video cassette of Kouyaté Sory Kandia amongst a pile of other videos. The RTG's U-matic video machine was barely working but he asked, unofficially, for a copy of the recording, which he gave to the former minister. One of the reasons for the minister's

⁵² Graeme Counsel received major research project funding from the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme in 2008, 2009, and 2012-2013. See Counsel (2009, 2012, 2015).

⁵³ For material recorded during the *Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain*.

long and fruitless search is that the Ministry of Communication has jurisdiction over the RTG archive, and in Guinea, collaboration and communication between ministries is generally weak.

After finding the Kouyaté Sory Kandia recording, Counsel searched for more videos. His endeavors, however, were brought to a close when the U-matic video machine ceased to function. Nevertheless, through unofficial channels, he had secured several examples of rare and previously unknown videos of Guinean musicians and groups.

The RTG archive appeared to also hold some videos by Malian artists recorded by the Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Mali (ORTM). On one of these video cassettes, Counsel noticed Ali Farka Touré's name, and the Siramori track presented in this article is the first track on that video cassette. Since Siramori Diabaté is a Maninka (Malinké) from the town of Kangaba, close to the Guinean frontier, she was popular in both Mali and Guinea, which explains the presence of an ORTM video in the RTG archives.⁵⁴

From Archive to YouTube-Supported Teaching Tool

⁵⁴ To the present day, the practicing musicians in Siramori's family often tour in Guinea. In the 1960s and 1970s, the political elites in both countries highly valued Maninka culture and traditions. See Counsel 2013, 2010; M. Camara 2005; Charry 2000; Skinner 2012. Siramori's call for a better understanding of a woman's position in society, which is one of the main themes of her work (cf. Jansen 1996; Camara 2002; Counsel, Jansen and Camara [under review]), was of major appeal to both the political regimes of Sékou Touré in Guinea and Modibo Keita in Mali (1960-1968).

After archiving and digitizing the video material from the RTG archives, Counsel made it available on YouTube on his Radio Africa channel.⁵⁵ Though not part of his archiving project, he deemed the material too important to not share with the wider community. When Counsel completed the archiving project the Guinean government celebrated it through a *soirée* held at La Paillote, a music venue which dates to the early days of Guinean independence. The event was broadcasted live on radio, attended by the minister for Culture, civil servants, and musicians, while the prime minister sent his congratulations. The legendary Les Amazones de Guinée gave a powerful performance,⁵⁶ and Radio Africa and its YouTube videos were welcomed as additions to the body of research on Guinean music and culture.

At that time, Counsel informed Jansen about the Siramori Diabaté recording available on YouTube, since it is the only known video of one of West Africa's most important artists.⁵⁷ Counsel knew about Jansen's ethnographic work on Siramori and her family, the renowned bards ("griots") of Kela (cf. Charry 2000; Simonis 2015), and his efforts to publish text editions of their narratives and songs (Jansen 1996, 2012; *Siramori Diabaté*). Jansen then proposed – not surprisingly, considering his previous work – to publish the text of the Siramori song in order to broaden its

⁵⁵ <http://www.youtube.com/user/RadioAfrica1>

⁵⁶ A highlight of this concert can be seen at <https://youtu.be/NHIDKJqS57c>.

⁵⁷ There also is a recording from 1985 in which Siramori performs with her cousin Kelabala Diabaté. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pwxvt8qAbj0>. This is a recording from the Malian national television. In Kita in 1985, the regional rival griot families were publicly reconciled, with Kela's griots performing the role of externally appointed negotiators. The event attracted significant media attention in Mali and is a focus of a monograph by Barbara Hoffman 2001. The rivalries among the Kita griots were longstanding, and have served, for instance, as the background for several novels by one of Mali's most acclaimed authors, Massa Makan Diabaté, who is himself a griot of Kita origin.

audience and contribute to a better appreciation and understanding of the Maninka griots' artistry. The desired result would be a multimedia teaching tool that enhanced the YouTube video with a text edition of the performance. Jansen also proposed that Counsel invite the linguist Brahim Camara, with whom he had previously published song texts by Siramori Diabaté (Camara and Jansen 2013). Counsel accepted. Thus, three authors have contributed to this article.

For Counsel, this paper has eventuated as a result of the impact of his Radio Africa project. Informing Jansen about the recording was a collegial act, rather than a strategic move to commercialize the recording of "Nanyuman". This paper, though, seeks to make a strategic statement about the resulting product: a YouTube-supported teaching tool that integrates an artist's lyrics and which is published as a scholarly article.

During the writing process for this teaching tool, it became increasingly apparent that digital archives, and YouTube in particular, pose a great challenge to academics of many disciplinary backgrounds as they seek to have their documents enhanced by transcription and translation, or by other forms of analysis. A YouTube recording, whether it is part of a collection, a (professional) video-clip, or an individual recording, can be a fruitful source for both research and teaching in academic courses on African literature, gender studies, comparative literature, popular culture, oral tradition, history, material culture, etc. In particular, when enhanced by a transcription and a translation, we see many opportunities for YouTube recordings in the classroom. We hope that the present text inspires scholars to integrate video recordings from archives and new/social media into their teachings.

At the same time, however, we feel our enthusiasm tempered by concerns of authorship and acknowledgment. We are cognizant of deliberations regarding "standard" situations of collecting oral material and returning it later (digitally) to the

creators (see Merolla, this volume; see Shetler, this volume). The situation of the Siramori song, however, is complex. None of the authors may derive claims or rights from having been involved in the original recordings as the song resides within an oral tradition shared by many Mandé performers. Future researchers of African heritage may find themselves in similar positions as we find ourselves *vis-à-vis* Siramori's "Nanyuman". Therefore we amply discuss our deliberations during the preparation of the teaching tool.

Some Methodological and Ethical Reflections

We are indebted to Siramori Diabaté in particular and to the Kela griots in general. We acknowledge their art and profession, while also acknowledging ethical and legal issues at stake. Ethically speaking, issues of transparency and accountancy need clear elaboration. While writing this article, Counsel deliberated whether he should reveal to the RTG staff the source of the video, since the RTG staff were oblivious to its existence – it being but one video from Mali amongst thousands of others from Guinea. Doing so would reveal how Counsel acquired copies of the videos: not through formal channels, but through informal processes. Many senior Guinean government representatives and artists were cognizant of how Counsel obtained the video, and considered the methods a better option than the former practice of neglecting the nation's unique cultural materials by keeping them hidden from public view for decades, where they slowly disintegrated through a lack of preservation.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ The audio-visual archives at the RTG have not been well maintained. In addition to over 10,000 audio recordings on 1/4" magnetic tape, there are thousands of hours of video recordings covering news items, documentaries, sports, interviews, and music, and several hundred reels of the committee meetings and speeches of Sékou Touré and the Parti Démocratique de Guinée. The

These government representatives and prominent musicians in Guinea were his moral community and he made the recording freely available for scholarly and research purposes via YouTube, recognizing its value as the only known video of Siramori.

In documenting intangible heritage, such as through this discussion of the video of “Nanyuman”, the authors’ motivations are borne from the “Nanyuman” video’s unique qualities and a desire to share these with the wider community. In pursuance of this, however, there are further ethical issues to consider which are complicated by the process of documenting intangible heritage through digital media. Principal among these are legalities concerning copyright. In the case of Siramori’s “Nanyuman” it is impossible to determine whether the composition is traditional⁵⁹ or the artist’s personal composition/interpretation. In a shared oral tradition such as that of the Maninka griots to which Siramori belongs, where songs are passed from one generation to another with and without the performer’s own embellishments, ownership of songs is far from clearly established. Thus, questions such as who holds the copyrights (the performer, her inheritors, the griots from the village of Kela [where Siramori grew up and received her artistic training], the ORTM, YouTube, or a combination of these stakeholders) is a near impossible matter to resolve. The matter is further complicated as to whether the copyrighted material pertains to the lyrics, the video recording, the performance, or combinations of all three. In this regard, YouTube suggests consulting the advice of an attorney, and while such a process

archive constitutes a major repository of materials from the Sékou Touré era, though much was destroyed in the months following Touré’s death (for example, the collections of Syli Film and Syli Photo). The RTG has digitized some of the material but it is kept locked in a cupboard and is never broadcast.

⁵⁹ “Nanyuman” has been recorded by other artists, including l’Orchestre Régional de Kayes – <https://nextpreview.soundcloud.com/sterns-music/orchestre-regional-de-kayes>.

would provide a legal framework that assures the right of the individual,⁶⁰ it circumvents the politicized reality of a heritage's multi-layered and often situational ownership, as well as issues of temporality. On the other hand, we foresee the impossibility of casting a representative community as the copyrights' stakeholder.⁶¹

We are therefore caught between our ideals to preserve and document oral tradition and the temptation to focus on the end product, thus performing an “idealization” of our research and concealing what Goffman refers to as “the dirty work” (Goffman 1990 [1959]: 89). Given that there are no strong local and national organizations or legislatures to claim and protect intangible heritage in Mali and in Guinea, we can present our work as meeting the ideal of documentation through our efforts at saving, translating, and teaching “Nanyuman”. We acknowledge that our ideals to preserve cultural documents by transferring them through new, access-free media to a wide variety of audiences are inspired by an ideology of “web democracy”, which is an ideology of an *alleged* open society that is, in practice, accessible only to an

⁶⁰ The legal framework may emanate from either the country in which the attorney works or the country of the performers. We note that institutions that are supposed to represent local artists barely function and are criticized by indigenous artists as corrupt. See Counsel's reference to “Eating the Money” on his Radio Africa website – http://www.radioafrica.com.au/EAP_2008.html. We doubt, for instance, if the publication of the lyrics of “Nanyuman” is of any concern to the BUMDA, the Bureau Malien du Droit d'Auteur, or to their Guinean counterpart, the Bureau Guinéen des Droits d'Auteur (BGDA) – both do not have a functioning website. The reason for the existence of the BUMDA and the BGDA is, principally, to prevent piracy, which is a significant problem in both Mali and Guinea.

⁶¹ As an illustration of the local tensions regarding intangible heritage in the area where Siramori lived, see the ownership discussion related to the Sunjata epic in Kela (Jansen 2012) and the process through which local stakeholders acquired UNESCO recognition of Mande oral traditions as a Monument of Intangible Heritage (cf. Smith 2010; Simonis 2015).

elite. We apologize for this and, at the same time, we hope that Siramori's artfulness in the format of an academic text will enrich scholarship and research. Further, had Siramori been alive today, we feel that she would either consider this paper as being a respectful account of (her) intangible heritage or would treat us with the same understanding given to her heroine, the runaway Nanyuman, by her first husband.

Siramori Diabaté and “Nanyuman”

Siramori's career is firmly based within the heritage of the famous griots of Kela (Jansen 1996). Born in ca. 1925, she was among the first wave of female artists who conquered Mali and Guinea's male dominated music scene in the 1970s, a process described in detail by Lucy Durán (2007). As Durán explains, the introduction of the microphone to a large extent led to the emancipation of the female voice. This new technology neutralized the decibel advantage that male voices traditionally had over female voices – a situation that for centuries often limited women to background chorus singers.

Siramori declared that “Nanyuman” is her favorite song (Hale and Sidikou 2012: 147; *Sòròfè* (n.d.), end of Side A). Her interpretations indeed show that she was able to produce entertaining variations, undoubtedly adapted to the audiences she had in mind or was performing for. The interpretation available on Youtube via Radio Africa is a live recording, in which the audience is highly amused by the dialogues between Nanyuman and the traveling kola nut merchant who seduces her.⁶²

⁶² Siramori's interpretation of “Nanyuman” on *Sòròfè* (n.d.) is performed for a live audience and elaborates on the dialogues between Nanyuman and the traveling merchant – the audience is highly

For comparison, a second interpretation is included here which augments the lyrics in the video recording. This version was performed by Siramori for Mali's national radio, probably in the 1960s or 1970s. In this alternate version she evokes a sorority with the adult women of Mali by emphasizing marital values and elaborating less on the domestic scenes and conversations. Originally, Brahima Camara knew this song as a recording by Radio Mali. He purchased a copy in the 1990s at the central market in Bamako from, what he calls, "un revendeur". As in the YouTube case, it is unclear who has rights over Siramori's performance/artistic production.

In Conclusion

Siramori Diabaté has become one of the best documented female voices of West Africa. The discussion of Siramori's interpretations in *Women's Voices from West Africa* volumes 1 and 2, published by Sidikou and Hale (2012) and Hale and Sidikou (2013), very much illustrates her presence and influence in West Africa.⁶³ This current text underscores these earlier publications by providing further examples of her artfulness.

Issues also raised in this paper concern the author's position as scholars when using Siramori's song book. We have noted ethical and legal issues, and we contend that the use of Siramori's songbook is inevitable and necessary to explain her artfulness to fellow scholars and students. We signaled a form of appropriation by us,

amused by it. For a literary and social analysis of the song "Nanyuman", see Counsel, Jansen and Camara (under review).

⁶³ Another illustration of Siramori's present-day status in Mali: two collections of her best songs, collected by Mali's Ministry of Culture, were published as "Musique du Mali I: Banzoumana" (Syllart/Mélodie 38901-2) and "Musique du Mali II: Sira Mory" (Syllart/Mélodie 38902-2).

the authors, from which the local artists do not and cannot profit. This painful observation is, it appears, an inevitable fact for researchers who document, preserve and use recordings of oral performances.

“Nanyuman” by Siramori Diabaté

...⁶⁴ *kiri ni nɔɔɔ*.

... confusion and discord.

Fufunintiki di n nɛnɛ, Kanja Burema.

Kanja Burema, it's the carrier of the little basket who deceived me.

Aaa, n ko wadi le nɔɔ, Kanja Burema.

Oh Kanja Burema! It is the fault of money.

Aaa! Fufunintiki di n nɛnɛ Kanja Burema.

Kanja Burema, it's the carrier of the little basket who deceived me.

Ayiwa n badennu!

Yes, dear audience!

Ne Siramari Jabate kan ye nin di.

⁶⁴ The first few seconds of the recording are missing.

It's me, Siramori Diabaté, speaking.

N ye min fɔla nin, n yɛdɛ sɔn lee.

The story I tell here is of my own failings.

N t'a fɔla aw kelen ma dɛ mosolu,

Women! My story is not directed at you alone,

N yɛdɛ sɔn lee.

because it's also of my own failings.

Fɔlb ngaralu

The famous griots of the past

Oyi ye nin fɔ fɔlb mosoyi ye,

have told this story to the women of their time,

Oyi da fudu bato.

and they remained faithful to their marriages.

Ne fɛnɛ y'a yida.

It's my turn to tell.

Mali mosolu, n y'a yida ayi la dɛ,g

Women of Mali, it's my turn to tell,

Ayi fɛnɛ ka fudu bato.

so that you remain faithful to your marriage.

Nanyuman, fin t'a n'a kɛ tɛ.

Nanyuman had no problem with her husband.

Fɔlɔmɔkɔlu le tun b'a kɛ -

In the past people did as follows -

Nɛkɛsoko tele tɛ, motoko tele tɛ,

when there was no bicycle or moped,

Ka worofufunin ta.

people wore small baskets of kola nuts.

N'ayi da woropanyɛ ta, ayi bɛ dɔ bɔ o dala

When buying a big basket of kola nuts, they put some of them

K'o kɛ fufunin dɔ, k'o l'i kun, ka wa duku ni duku.

in a smaller basket which they carried on their head from village to village.

Fufunintiki nada jiki Kanja Bureme kan.

A carrier of a little basket came to Kanja Burema's home.

A ko Kanja Burema, i tɛ hina n na,

“Kanja Burema!” he said, “have pity on me,

N kɛ tele fila nin kɛ i fɛ yan.

so I can stay few days here at your home.

N bɛ n yaara bukudabolo ninnu na,

I'm going to walk to the neighbouring villages,

Ka n ya woro yaara.

to sell my kola nuts.”

Kanja Burema ko, o tɛ baasi di.

Kanja Burema replied, “That's no problem.”

Nanyuman! Deben ta i k'a la bolon kɔnɔ.

”Nanyuman!,” [he called], “go and put the sleeping mat on the floor of the entrance hut.”⁶⁵

Jula le bɛnni bolon kɔnɔ.

Because a traveling merchant likes an entrance hut.”

Nanyuman da bolon fida,

Nanyuman swept inside the entrance hut,

Ka deben ta, k'a la fufunintiki nya.

then took a mat and spread it out for the carrier of the little basket.

A tanbeda sakuma, ka wa a ya fɛnnu feere

In the morning, he went to sell his produce

A nada wura la.

and he returned in the evening.

A talada i kɔ, o dukusagne, ka wa a ya fɛnnu feere

The next day he went again to sell his produce

A nada wura la.

and returned in the evening.

Kanja Burema wad'a ya daba l'i kanna

At the same time, Kanja Burema put his hoe on his shoulder

Ka tanbe ka wa fodo dɔ.

⁶⁵ *Bolon* = hut with two doors that functions as the entrance of a traditional Maninka compound – in French often translated as *vestibule*. In the region south of Bamako, some prestigious families own a *bolon* as a sanctuary, the most well-known being the Kamabolon in Kangaba.

and went to the field.

Nanyuman wilida telekunna dɔ

Nanyuman rose in the early afternoon

Ka wa don fufunintiki kan.

and joined the carrier of a little basket.

Fufunintiki ko, eh Nanyuman!

The carrier of the little basket exclaimed “Eh Nanyuman!

I nalen n badola wa?

Did you come to talk to me?”

Ɔɔhɔ, n nalen i bado la bi sa n fa.

“Yes, sir, finally, I came today to talk with you.”

A ko Nanyuman!

“Nanyuman!,” he continued,

I tɛ woro dɔ ta!

“Have a kola nut!”

Nanyuman ye woro ta.

Nanyuman took the kola nut.

Ee, mosolu! Labawutani, walakunwata! An ka siran!

Hey, women! How can this be possible! We should be in fear [of punishment]!

Nanyuman ye woro wo ta, a y’o nyimi.

Nanyuman took the kola nut and chewed it.

A ko: Nanyuman!

He said to her: “Nanyuman!

A ko: e moso nyumanba nin!

You are a very beautiful⁶⁶ woman!

A ko: i dɔnɔkɔnya dɔgwe kɛ!

But it looks like you are deprived!

Ne natuma ni kelen ni sisan tɛ, jurukenin kelen nin le y'i kanna.

Since I've been here, you've worn only one blouse.

Ne ma juruke gwɛdɛ y'i kanna.

I've not seen you wear another.”

A ko: Aaa nfa! Nayi ye an ta lanɔkɔ nin le dɔ yan.

She replied: “Oh, sir! We live in misery here.”

A ko: Nanyuman!

“Nanyuman!,” he replied.

N'i kɛda ne fɛ,

“If you love me,

Ni sanu don, n b'o d'i ma.

if it is gold, I'll give it to you.

Ni wadi don, n b'o d'i ma,

If it is money, I'll give it to you.

Ni fani n[y]uman don, n b'o d'i ma.

If it is beautiful clothes, I'll give it you.”

A ko: Aaa n fa!

⁶⁶ *Nyuman* means morally good, a concept which should not be mixed with *di*, which means good for taste, smell, touch, weather, etc. (but is never used to describe human beings); a beautiful woman is always *nyuman*. Note that *nyuman* is part of Nanyuman's name (cf. Derive 2008).

“Ah, sir!”, replied Nanyuman,

N’i kɛda kɛ n fɛ, n fana y’i fɛ wala.

“If you love me, I love you too.”

A ko: Ayiwa Nanyuman!

“Okay!”, he continued.

N’i kɛ nada bi, n bɛ n sara ko n bɛ wa so sa.

“When your husband returns from the field, I will say my farewells to him.

Sini sakuma, n bɛ n bolofinnu ta, n bɛ wa.

And I will pick up my things to leave tomorrow morning.

Ayiwa Nanyuman!

So, Nanyuman!

Ayi ya kuruninkun min ye yen,

At the little plateaux, yonder,

N bɛ wa n siki yen, k’i makɔnɔ.

I’ll sit and wait for you.

I ka wa n sɔdɔ yen.

You and I will meet there.”

A ko: Wa! N y’i kɔ.

“Okay, I will join you,” said Nanyuman.

Kɛ wo d’i siki kuruninkun dɔ.

The man went and sat down at the plateaux.

Ee Mosolu!

Oh women!

Nanyuman nada, k'a bolofennu fara nyɔkɔn ma,

Nanyuman picked up her belongings,

K'a ya sokɔnɔla fida, k'a bɛɛn.

swept her room, and took off.

*Kɔsɔkɔsɔ kɔsɔkɔsɔ!*⁶⁷

Zjouf zjouf!

Nanyuman wada o kɛ kɔ.

Nanyuman had run off with the man.

(... [after some time] ...)

Ka kɛ wo ya sanu ban,

The man's gold was exhausted,

K'a ya wadi ban.

his money was gone.

A ko: Nanyuman! Kabini n d'i fudu, fɛn wo fɛn tɛɛ n bolo, a bɛɛ banni.

He said: "Nanyuman since I married you, all my wealth has vanished.

N t'i fɛ bi, n t'i fɛ sini, n t'i fɛ sinikɛnde.

I don't love you anymore. Not today, tomorrow, or the day after."

Nanyuman! Nanyuman ye duku min dɔ

Nanyuman! He left the village where he lived with Nanyuman

Kɛ d'o duku bila, ka wa duku gwede dɔ.

to settle in another village.

⁶⁷ An idiophone expressing speed.

O tuma Kanja Burema ko.

Kanja Burema received word.

Ko ne ni n moso ma kɛkɛ,

“I did not quarrel with my wife,

Fin tɛ an ni nyɔkɔn tɛ, gwɛ tɛ an tɛ.

so there is no problem between us.

Ne moso wo ka tunun, ne t’o nyini abada.

If my wife vanished under those conditions, I’ll never find her.

Ala bɛ wa nyini k’o di ne ma.

But God will go searching for me and bring her back.”

[after some time]

Nanyuman wada ole dɔ

Nanyuman went

K’i sɛnsɛn wuruu, ka na se so.

slowly to the village, to reach home.

A nad’a fa sɔdɔ

She went to her father

A ko: Aaa n buwa! I d’a fɔ n yé dɛ!

and said: “Oh daddy! You had warned me well!

O kɛ n’i ban ne dɔ.

The man has left me.

Hali ne ye duku min dɔ, k’o bɛɛ bila ka wa duku gwɛdɛ dɔ.

He even left the village where we lived to go to another village.”

A ko: Aaa n den! N y'a fɔ i ye di?

The father replied: “Ah, my daughter! What did I say?”

A ko Nanyuman! I kelanka kɔdɔyi ya sanba nalen

“Nanyuman,” he continued, “the family of your former husband has sent a message

K'i denkenin kelen najikito. O ko ye di?

that your only son will soon be circumcised. What is your situation?”

A ko: Aaa n bum! O ko tɛ nya gwɛɛ ma.

“Oh father! It must go ahead.

Ayi bɛ jenbefɔlayi nyini,

Search for the jembe players,

Ka balafɔlayi nyini,

search for the balafon players,

Ka jalimosongarayi nyini.

search for the best female griots.

N ka la ayi kan

I will join them to

Ka wa n den soli si n kɛ kɔdɔ bada,

go and celebrate with my ex-husband the circumcision ceremonies of my son,

N kɛ ka samada kɔdɔ ta, ka n jufidi mabenben.

and to allow my husband to spank my bottom with an old shoe.”

Ayiwa, n badennu! Nanyuman dontɔ,

So, dear audience! Nanyuman,

Kɛ kɔda biɖ'i b'an dɔ,

after her new husband had abandoned her,

A kɛ kɔdɔ, a dontɔ o bada, a ye dɔnkili min la.

returned home to her former husband and sang a song.

N k'o la wa?

Shall I sing it for you?

[the rest of the song is in song mode]

A ko Nanyuman d'i ban a kɛ fɔl le dɔ

Nanyuman abandoned her first husband

A d'i bari kɛkudalu fɛ, kɛkudalu d'i ban ne dɔ.

to escape with a new one that left her in turn.

Aaa kɛkɔdɔlu kɔnɔnyafɔlɔ lajikitɔ, dimi ma to baasi dɔ.

Ah, the first born of the former husband will be circumcised,

patience can meet any challenge.

Tan-tɛ-n-kɔnɔ, n'a bɛ kɛla tan

I did not expect this, but if everyone was treated that way

Dinya d'i fɛrɛ dɔɔnin.

life would be more peaceful.

Ayiwa n'a bɛ kɛla jonjonjonyi na tan wo, an di fɛrɛ dɔɔnin.

If everyone who ran away was treated that way, life would be more peaceful.

Aaa n'a bɛ kɛla tan

Ah, if everyone was treated that way

Dinya ye suma dɔɔnin.

life would be more peaceful.

N'a be kɛla kɛdabanmosoyi la tan wo, ɔdi fɛrɛ dɔɔnin.

If all women who leave their husbands were treated that way, life would be more peaceful.

Kanja Burema lee, n'a be kɛla tan

Kanja Burema, if everyone was treated that way

Dinya di fɛrɛ dɔɔnin.

life would be more peaceful.

Ayima n'a be kɛla minantalayi la tan wo, an di fɛrɛ dɔɔnin.

If all those who are packing their bags were treated that way, we would be more peaceful.

Aaa, n'a be kɛla tan

Ah, if everyone was treated that way

Dinya ye suma dɔɔnin.

life would be more peaceful.

N'a be kɛla kɛdabanmosoyi la tan wo,

If all women who leave their husbands were treated that way,

Dinya di fɛrɛ dɔɔnin.

life would be more peaceful.

“Nanyuman” by Siramori Diabaté⁶⁸

Iyo, Kanja Burema le!

Yes, Kanja Burema!

Ko wadi le nɔɔ.

It is the fault of money.

Ah! N ko wadi ni wɔyɔ!

Oh! Money sows discord!

I m'a ye faransewadi di n nɛnɛ.

You see, French money deceived me.

A ko Nanyumanin le Nanyumanin le!

Little Nanyuman! Little Nanyuman!

Se bɛ moso min ye bɛɛ ye fudu mara.

A woman who can should take care⁶⁹ of her marriage.

Hali se tɛ moso min ye bɛɛ fudu, i kana niminsa.

⁶⁸ This transcription and translation has been based on a commercial cassette that was available to Brahim Camara in 2000, when Jan Jansen stayed with his family. At this very moment we don't know of any available copy of this recording.

⁶⁹ *Mara* = to guard.

Even a woman who can't, should take care of her marriage, or she will later regret it.

Mosoninmɛsɛnnu le, bɛɛ ye fudu mara, i kana niminsa.

Young women! You should take care of your marriage, or you will later regret it.

Moso karankɛlalu le, bɛɛ ka fudu mara, i kana niminsa.

Educated women! You should take care of your marriage, or you will later regret it.

Ah! Ah! Mosofudukɛlalu le, bɛɛ ye fudu mara, i kana niminsa.

Ah! Ah! Married women! You should take care of your marriage, or you will later regret it.

Mosotɔkɔmalalu le, bɛɛ ye fudu mara, i kana niminsa.

Pregnant women! You should take care of your marriage, or you will later regret it.

Dɔnkililajelu le n'ayi ma fudu mara, ayi bɛ niminsa.

Female singers, if you don't take care of your marriage, you will later regret it.

Eh! Eh! Bɛɛ ka fudu mara, i kana niminsa.

Eh! Eh! Everyone should take care of their marriage, or they will later regret it.

Malimosoninmɛsɛnnu le bɛɛ ka fudu mara, i kana niminsa.

All young women of Mali should take care of their marriage, or they will later regret it.

Soloyo, n bɛ sinbon mawelega, Madujinba ni Farajinba.

Soloyo! I call to commemorate the braves Madu Jinba and Faran Jinba.

Aa, aa, Ala tɛ ɓn.

Ah! Ah! No one knows God [well enough].

Jɔn kana baka jɔnmɔkɔɔn na.

No slave⁷⁰ should insult another slave.

Ayi m'a ye jɔn bæ n'i lakunu kan.

See that every slave has his destiny.

A ko Nanyumanin le, Nanyuman le!

Little Nanyuman, little Nanyuman!

Ah Ne baden silamalu ayi ni ke!

Ah! Dear audience,⁷¹ I greet you!

Ne Siramori Jabate nato jɔrɔnin min fɔla nin di.

I, Siramori Diabaté, I have come to tell you something.

Hadama, n'i ka donkili wo donkili la, ni kɔdo t'a la,

If someone sings a song that doesn't make sense,

A bæ mɔkɔyi kɔnɔɔfili.

it will confuse the people.

⁷⁰ We read “slave” here as a “servant of God”.

⁷¹ *baden* = kinship term that expresses harmony, literally “children of the same father and the same mother; *silimalu* (pl.) = (lit.) “Muslim”, but usually used to address a group of people in a respectful way.

A kekun le fεε ne fε nin di, k'a kɔɔ l'a kan ayo k'a mɛn – Nanyuman.

For this reason I will sing you a song, and clarify its meaning – Nanyuman.

Hali ne yεdε min kan y'a lala nin di, ne Siramori Jabate, n ye moso di.

I myself, Siramori Diabaté, whose voice sings this, I am a woman, too.

Mosolu, ayi ye hakeɛto dε,

Women, I apologize,

Ne yεdε kan y'a lala; n yεdε sɔn y'a di.

[because] what my own voice sings is about my own failings.

Nk'a fɔlen mosolu ye, oyi y'i miiri a kuma ma, fɔɔ ngaralu fε, ka furu bato.

But it was told by the famous griots of the past, for the women who contemplated about these words, in order to remain faithful to their marriages.

N kekun ye k'a fɔ alu ye ole di.

For this reason I sing you this song.

Malimosolu, ayi wo ne wo, an bεε k'an miiri kuma nin ma, an ka fudu bato.

Women of Mali! You and I should contemplate about these words, in order to remain faithful to our marriages.

Nanyuman y'a kε kan, kεε t'a n'a kε tε.

Nanyuman lived in harmony with her husband.

Fufunintiki dɔ nalen.

There (once) came a carrier of a small basket.

I komi n y'a fɔ alu ye nya min ma, fɔbmɔkɔlu tun bɛ woro kɛ worosakinin dɔ, k'a lasidi,

As I have told you, in the past people packed kola nuts in little hives,

K'a l'i kun, k'i tɔkɔma duku nin duku tɛ k'a yaara.

And carried these on their heads from village to village [to sell them].

Worofufunintiki, a nada se Nanyuman kɛ ma.

A carrier of a little basket of kola nuts came to Nanyuman's husband.

Ko Kanja Burema, I tɛ bakɛto n ka bi ni sini f'I fɛ, ka n ya woro mayida dɔɔni.

He said: “Kanja Burema, please allow me to stay at your place today and tomorrow, to sell my kola nuts in the area.

N bɛdɛ n tɔkɔma yɔrɔlu fɛ, n bɛ se ka na si fɛ yan.

When I go from place to place during daytime, I can pass the night here at your place.”

O ko o moso ma ko Nanyuman,

He [Kanja Burema] called his wife: “Nanyuman,

K'i bɛ bolonkɔnɔla fida, i ka wa debɛn dɔlu bila yen.

Sweep the interior of the entrance hut, and put there some sleeping mats.

Ko bawo k'olu ye julalu di, k'ayi bennin bolon ne kɔnɔ.

Because this man is a traveling merchant, and these [merchants] feel better in an entrance hut.”

O ye bolon fida,

She swept the entrance hut,

Ka lolankε ɾbɛn, a n'a bolofɛnnu, ka w'a bila yen.

and prepared it for the guest – his belongings were deposited there.

Aa, aa, Nanyuman!

Ah! Ah! Nanyuman!

A ye su fula kε, a b'i miiri.

For two nights he [the guest] contemplated.

N'a ye fɛn o fɛn fɔ, Nanyuman b'o bεε d'a ma.

Nanyuman gave him everything that he asked for.

A su filanan dukuseɣwɛlen,

After the second night, a new day started,

Telekunna dɔ, kε bada wa konko dɔ.

In the early afternoon, the husband went to his field.

A walen konko dɔ, Nanyuman ye kodo ta,

After he had gone to his field, Nanyuman took a stool,

A nada don kε fε bolon na, k'i sik'a fε.

And seated herself next to him [the guest] in the entrance hut.

Lolankε ko Nanyuman, k'e tε woro fε wa?

“Do you like kola nuts?” the guest asked to Nanyuman.

Ko n ye woro fε ke.

“I really like kola nuts.”

K'i tε dɔ ta!

“Then take some.”

Nanyuman ye woro dɔ ta.

Nanyuman took a kola nut.

Lolanke ko ee, Nanyuman, ko kelen yεdε nɔ ye ne bali:

The guest said: “Nanyuman, I am surprised about one thing:

Ne tele fila ye yan ayi bada ni.

I have lived here at your place for two days.

Ne nya y'i la, i mafani nɔkɔlen, i nyama nɔkɔlen.

I see you look poor and wear only this dirty cloth.

Nin moso nyumanba nin!

A very beautiful woman like you!

E k'i kenya dɔgnε sa ke!

Look how you look like!

N'i di ne sɔn ne dɔ, walahi Nanyuman, n b'i fudu.

I swear [by God], Nanyuman, when you love me, I will marry you.

N b'i fudu, n bε fani d'i ma, n bε wadi d'i ma, n bε sani d'i ma.

I will marry you, give you clothes, give you money, give you gold.”

Nanyuman ko: Aa, nfa, nayi ye an ta nyadɔban nin le dɔ yan.

Nanyuman said: “Ah, sir! We live here in misery.

N’i kɛdɛkɛ n fɛ, n fɛnɛ y’i fɛ wala.

If you love me, I will love you the same.

Tɔ tɛ n na.

I can’t stand it anymore.”

Lolankɛ ko: Nanyuman, sini n bɛ n sara i kɛ la ko n wato.

The guest said: “Tomorrow I will say goodbye to your husband.

N bada wa, n bɛ wa i makɔnɔn dukusokɔfɛ, fukaninkun na.

But I will wait for you behind the village, in the open space in the bush.”

O dukusagwɛlen, lolankɛ d’i sara Nanyuman kɛ la; a wada.

On that day the guest said goodbye to Nanyuman’s husband; and he departed.

Nanyuman y’i lɔ a kɛ ka wa fodo dɔ.

Nanyuman waited until her husband went to his field.

O walen, a d’a ya minannu daladɛ; a d’a kɛ hɛɛn.

After he had left for his field, she took her belongings, and fled.

Kanja Burema nada ka bɔ konko dɔ.

Kanja Burema returned from his field.

A ko Nanyuman be min? Ee, n moso ka tunun kun t'i la.

“Where is Nanyuman?,” he asked, “has my wife disappeared without a reason?”

N t'o nyini, Alla b'o nyini!

I won't track her down, but God will!”

A wada ke wo fe.

She departed with this man.

Wadi banda, sani banda.

(...[after some time]...)

His money finished, his gold finished.

Ko Nanyuman ma n t'i fe bi n t'i fe sini.

He said to Nanyuman: “I don't love you anymore.

Kabini n d'i fudu, n na wadi bannin n na sani bannin.

Since I married you my money is finished, my gold is finished.”

Ayi ye duku min do, a y'o bila Nanyuman koso, ka wa duku gwede do.

Because of Nanyuman he left his village and he settled in another village.

Nanyuman sakeda ka n'a fa la lu ma.

Nanyuman returned to her father's compound.

A ko aa, aa, n fa, i no ye a fo n ye, ko n kana wa ke nin fe.

“Aa., aa, daddy,” she said, “you advised me not to accompany this man.

I nɔ ye a ɔ min ma a kɛlen tan.

Things have happened as you said.

A fɛɛ nin di a nɔ ye i ban n dɔ.

Now he has abandoned me.”

A fa ko, ko sanba nalen ka bɔ i kɛlakɔrɔ dɔ, k'i denkɛninɔlɔ lajikito sini.

Her father said: “The old husband has informed us that your first son will be circumcised tomorrow.”

Nanyuman ko, ɔ ni n sakeda n kɔ ka na n den soli si,

Nanyuman said: “I have to return to my husband in order to celebrate the circumcision,

N kɛ ka samadakɔdɔ ta ka n jufidi mabenben.

And to let my husband spank my bottom with an old shoe.”

O kɛlen o dɔ: o da jenbetikilu nyini, ka jalimosongaralu nyini, k'olu bil'a kɔ ka taka.

And so it happened: she assembled djembe players and griottes, to accompany her.

Ee, ee, mosolu, Nanyuman ye dɔkili min la a kɛlasokɔfɛ a n'a ya ɔlilayi dontɔ a kɛkɔdɔ bɛdɛ, n b'o ɔrɔ ɔ ayi ye. A ko:

Women! I will sing for you the song by Nanyuman and the musicians at the entrance of the compound of her old husband. It says:

[the following is in song mode]

Nanyuman d'i ban a kɛɔlɔ le dɔ, a d'i bari kɛkudalu fɛ.

Nanyuman abandoned her first husband and settled with a new one.

Aa, kekedalu d'i ban ale do.

But the new one abandoned her.

Aa, kekodolu kononyafob lajikit.

Aa! The first child from the first marriage was about to be circumcised.

Dimi ma to basi do.

Patience will relieve every barrier.

Tan-te-n kon n'a be kela tan wo, dinya di fere dooni.

If everybody was treated like me, life would be more peaceful.

A ko n'a be kela jonjonjonyi la tan wo, dinya di fere dooni.

If a runaway was treated that way, life would be more peaceful.

N'a be kela kedobanmosoyi la tan wo, dinya di fere dooni.

If a woman who abandons her husband was treated that way, life would be more peaceful.

Kanja Burema le n'a be kela tan, dinya di fere dooni.

Kanja Burema, if it always would end like this, life would be more peaceful.

A ko n'a be kela kedobanmosoyi la tan wo, dinya di fere dooni.

If a woman who abandons her husband was treated this way, life would be more peaceful.

Aa, n'a be kela tan, dinya di fere dooni.

If it would always end like this, life would be more peaceful.

N'a be kɛla kɛɗbanmosoyi la tan wo, dinya di fɛɛ ɗɔɔni.

If a woman who abandons her husband was treated this way, life would be more peaceful.

[the following is in speech mode]

Mali kɛlasikimosolu le bɛɛ ka fudu mara wo, i kana niminsa.

Married women of Mali, you all should take care of your marriage, or you will later regret it.

Aa, bɛɛ ka fudu mara, i kana niminsa.

Everybody should take care of their marriage, or they will later regret it.

Mosoninmɛsennu le bɛɛ ka fudu mara wo, i kana niminsa.

Young women, you all should take care of your marriage, or you will later regret it.

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