In the Footsteps of Djiguiba Camara: An Introduction to the Typescript of “Essai d’histoire locale”

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Both of us as authors are immensely indebted to the Camara family without whose active support this edited publication would simply not have been possible. We wish therefore to express at the outset our gratitude for the faith they have placed in us and in our sincere belief that the life and work of Djiguiba Camara – colonial interpreter, canton chief, man of letters and historian – is worthy of publication and wider recognition.¹

In this introduction we shall follow in the footsteps of the colonial interpreter Djiguiba Camara, first of all by describing what we have been able to piece together of his eventful life. We shall go on to analyse the particular status of his literary construction, characterised as it is by its fundamentally hybrid nature, a cross between oral tradition and written material. Then will follow a detailed study of Djiguiba Camara’s position as an intermediary, and notably the role he himself credited to writing and to his position as a man of letters. Finally, to show how the figure of Samori Touré is constructed in literature and the arts, we shall place “Essai d’histoire locale” within the context of a wider body of historical accounts.

Djiguiba Camara: The Adventures of a Colonial Interpreter and the Career of a Canton Chief

Djiguiba Camara enjoyed an extremely long and eventful career, with strong parallels between the career and the fate of the famous Wangrin, which Ahma-

¹ This introduction is a greatly extended version of a preliminary reflection published as Bertho and Rodet 2019 (see also the interview published online, Bertho and Rodet 2018). We wish to thank Tim Geysbeek for his assistance, and for the interest he expressed in this research project. This project received the BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant SG161843 “Local Historical Writing in Late Colonial Guinea” led by Marie Rodet in collaboration with Elara Bertho and was financed by the ESRC “Resilience in West African Frontier Communities” (ES/R002800/1) led by Marie Rodet in collaboration with Friederike Lüpke, Bakary Camara and Elara Bertho and the Malian NGO Donkosira.

dou Hampaté Bâ has described with such humour.² Djiguiba Camara was the fourth son of Fata Kéoulé Camara, the man who signed an armistice with the French in 1893.³ As surety for the peace treaty, young Djiguiba was sent to the school for chiefs' sons in Kayes from where he graduated as an assistant interpreter in 1900.⁴ On 28 February 1900 he was appointed to his first post in Kérouané, where he was soon accused of hindering colonial policies by preventing contact between the local population and the colonial administrator. Djiguiba was then transferred to Beyla where he would stay until 1903 when he was transferred – again for “political reasons” – to Faranah where he stayed until 1907. In 1906 the examining magistrate at the tribunal with jurisdiction over Upper Guinée discovered that Djiguiba Camara had links to a “political conspiracy.” On 15 October 1907 he was subsequently suspended for a month for “gross negligence.”

By 1908 Djiguiba was part of the French commission for Franco-Liberian delimitation, although he was dismissed two months later as he was considered “unusable.” He returned to Faranah in the same year, but there he was described as “insufferable” because he discredited European civil servants in the eyes of the village populations. Unknown to the administrator, Djiguiba read the archives and daily correspondence very closely and used his illicitly acquired knowledge of the documents to circumvent colonial political actions. Following an administrative enquiry, it was proved that he had abused his position as an interpreter to demand gifts from plaintiffs, whereupon he was dismissed – still in 1908. He contested his dismissal tirelessly, in particular by appealing for support to the *Ligue des droits de l'Homme*⁵ and by claiming compensation for damages. However, in the end his case was dismissed by the Council of State in 1924.⁶ The mention within his file of unauthorised consultation of the archives is extremely important, because it might amount to an early trace of the his-

2 Brunschwig 1983: 119–120 describes him as the archetypal interpreter.

3 According to Djiguiba Camara's typescript, p. 94, Kéoulé Camara handed himself over to Captain Loyer between April and June 1893. For corroboration, see Person 1975 III: 1471–1472: the surrender of “Kyèulé” is dated June 1893, and in the description “partisan” must be understood as the term used by the colonial administration to refer to any chiefs making pacts with the French army.

4 Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer, Fonds ministériel, Série géographique, Afrique occidentale française, X1/4: Acting Lieutenant Governor of French Guinée to the Governor General in Dakar. Complaint addressed to the Governor of French West Africa, from the Ligue des droits de l'Homme on behalf of Mr. Djiguiba Kamara, 24 October 1910.

5 Ibid.

6 *Recueil des arrêts du Conseil d'état*, 1924 (SER2, T94), p. 718.

torical research Djiguiba was conducting at the time, for he was examining his father's role in the transitional period at the end of Samori Touré's empire.

By punishing Djiguiba Camara, it is possible that the French administration was already pursuing a politically-motivated tactic to fetter the production of an indigenous African history. The very fact of studying archives could, for Djiguiba Camara – the son of one of Samori Touré's former ministers – have been reason enough for the French to suspect him of espionage. In any case, in the circumstances, studying African history was clearly a political act.

From 1914 Djiguiba was employed by the *Banque de l'Afrique Occidentale* at its Conakry branch,⁷ until 1928 when he replaced his deceased brother as canton chief, based in the village of Damaro, his birthplace.⁸ Djiguiba received the praises of his chiefs for his "perfect knowledge of the administrative machinery," his subscription to Guinée's Official Journal, and his "modern" management of the canton.⁹ He introduced the plough to the canton and developed a plantation, which most notably included coffee bushes which were not indigenous to the region.¹⁰ Using forced labour, Djiguiba also oversaw the construction of a proper road through the Simandougou pass, making Damaro's neighbouring villages accessible.

In 1946 Djiguiba stood for the first time for election to the *Conseil Général*,¹¹ but received very few votes in his canton. He was described as "authoritarian and proud" and many former *tirailleurs* rather disliked his authoritarianism. Reforms of the repressive colonial system were gradually introduced, notably with the abolition of forced labour in French West Africa the same year. In 1952, however, Djiguiba was elected to the Territorial Assembly as Paul Tétéau's deputy on the list for the "Defence of Rural Interests."¹² Following Tétéau's death

7 Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer, Fonds ministériel, Série géographique, Afrique occidentale française X1/4: Letter from Djiguiba Camara to the Colonial Minister in Paris, 6 May 1914.

8 Following colonial conquest, the old political structures did not disappear, because the colonial administration lacked the means to implement direct administration. Instead, it created a hierarchical chieftaincy system of villages and cantons, who might come from old ruling families or might be new recruits from among the colonial intermediaries. In this case, Djiguiba Camara combined both sources of legitimacy: the colonial and the local. See Goerg 1992: 337–370, esp. 346.

9 Archives Nationales de Guinée, Conakry, 2D279: Cercle de Beyla, no. 33, extract from a tour report, Mr Augé, May 1931.

10 Interview with Mawa Koné, the last wife married by Djiguiba Camara, Damaro, 17 December 2016. Interview with the Honourable Ahmadou Damaro Camara, Conakry, 20 December 2016.

11 Archives Nationales de Guinée, Conakry, 2D280: Cercle de Beyla, political report, 1946.

12 Pauthier 2014: 213. Archives Nationales de Guinée, Conakry, 7D13: General report on the elections of 30 March 1952, document dated 4 April 1952. See also McGovern 2013.

in 1952 Djiguiba Camara replaced him¹³ until further elections were organised. Those elections were held on 2 August 1953 and were won by Sékou Touré who became the Territorial Councillor for Beyla (Guinée Forestière). Touré's opponent was Dougouti Camara, a trypanosomiasis nurse who was supported by Djiguiba Camara. In a way therefore, Djiguiba launched his political career in Beyla as one of Sékou Touré's leading opponents.¹⁴ Indeed, initially Touré came to ask Djiguiba Camara for public support, but Djiguiba refused because Sékou Touré was already advocating the abolition of canton chiefs.¹⁵

Djiguiba had begun writing "Essai d'histoire locale" in 1928 when he was appointed canton chief, and he continued writing it until his death in 1963.¹⁶ He gave a typed copy of his work to the historian Yves Person in the ultimately frustrated hope of gaining help with its publication.¹⁷ That text has therefore remained unseen.

The importance of the 1955 text of "Essai d'histoire locale" does not lie in its form. Indeed, in West Africa there are many examples of notebooks written by local figures recounting the arrival of the French in their areas, and many texts about the history of colonisation were collected after the Second World War, although not all of them have been published.¹⁸ At first sight then, there is nothing extraordinary about Djiguiba's text apart from its 110-page length and its status as one of historian Yves Person's major sources.

The importance of "Essai d'histoire locale" is however its major historiographic value. While Yves Person very frequently quoted his sources in notes at the end of chapters, he nevertheless allowed very little access to the body of those texts, the raw material of his accounts, nor to the records he used.¹⁹

13 Pauthier 2014.

14 Archives Nationales de Guinée, Conakry, 7D422: Legislative by-elections. 27 June 1954.

15 Interviews with his son El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara, Conakry and Damaro, 15–23 December 2016. On the abolition of canton chieftaincies in Guinée, see Suret-Canale 1966. See also Archives Nationales de Guinée, Conakry, 2E2: Chefferie nominations. 1911–1931; 2E14: Chefferie Beyla. 1896–1954; 2E17: Chefferie Beyla. 1901–1953.

16 Interviews with Djiguiba Camara's son El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara, Conakry and Damaro, 15–23 December 2016.

17 Interviews with Djiguiba Camara's son El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara, Conakry and Damaro, 15–23 December 2016.

18 The *Bulletins de l'Enseignement de l'AOF* [French West African teaching bulletins] identified in particular a historiography produced by "auxiliaries," mostly former students of William Ponty. See Smith and Labrune-Badiane 2018.

19 On the absence of the "voices" of Yves Person's informers in his thesis, see Peterson 2008: 261–279: "However, despite the remarkable extent of his fieldwork – including interviews across five West African countries – rarely did Person 'give voice' to the vanquished peoples." See also Soumaoro Kaba, quoted in Geysbeek 2002: 95: "Kaba accused Person of

He never published the vast collection of texts on the history of the region that he had gradually accumulated for his own research work, so that here we are presenting for the first time one of the major sources from Person's personal archives.

A Hybrid Document

"*Essai d'histoire locale*" is part of a corpus of unpublished texts drawn from the personal archives of historian Yves Person.²⁰ Person was among the first historians to compare colonial sources with African oral traditions, thereby allowing Samori's empire to be viewed in its African context. Yves Person not only demonstrated the Samori empire's internal coherence but refuted the previously widely accepted belief that it had been established only through its opposition to the French. Person showed that Samori shaped profound social shifts, including changes in the roles played by Dyula merchants in local power relations, and took advantage of divisions in the Camara descent groups in order to impose centralised rule. It was only after his empire was well established that Samori encountered colonial intrusion – first French, then British.

Yves Person makes very few theoretical comments about either his historiographical approach or his methods. Moreover, his work of collection, which was the most original feature of his approach, is hardly elucidated anywhere. The introduction to his thesis provides a literary review of the sources available and highlights their insufficiency,²¹ while pleading for oral African traditions and even individual testimonies to be taken into account.²² Still there is no mention of how the sources were collected. However, further information is revealed in Person's bibliography, presented in volume 3 and listing fourteen main informers, whom Yves Person calls his "privileged sources" ("*informateurs privilégiés*").²³ Those fourteen were among the 861 people he questioned in almost 43 cercles. Djiguiba Camara was one of the fourteen informants.

basing most of his work about Samori Ture on Dyigiba Kamara's history without giving him enough credit."

20 For studies on the work of Yves Person, see Becker, Colin and Daronian 2015; Sekou Bamba 2016; Fauvelle-Aymar and Perrot 2018.

21 Person 1968 I: 7.

22 This was putting into practise in the field what has been theorised by Vansina 1961. On the relationships between Yves Person and Djiguiba Camara, see also Bertho and Rodet 2018.

23 Person 1975 III: 2194.

Uncovering "Oral" Sources in the Archives

Our initial objective was to find those fourteen privileged sources in Yves Person's personal archives, which Person's family had deposited at the Bibliothèque des Recherches Africaines by his death in 1982. The collection consists of over forty boxes and at the time of our visit had been only partially catalogued in an incomplete inventory conducted on 31 July 1997 by Liliane Daronian. The classification system used seems to have been Yves Person's own, since it follows the colonial administrative organisation of "cercles," as found in his bibliography.²⁴ Odienné, Beyla, Kissidougou, Sikasso, Siguiri (boxes 4b, 4c1 and 4c2, 4d, 4i) are the major areas where oral histories about Samori have been preserved and in the files we found Yves Person's notes from extensive interviews he conducted in several cercles. During his seven years as a colonial official (1955-1962) Person's status enabled him to travel throughout the territory, completing reports and speaking to representatives of the colonial authorities. Such activity was referred to as the "tournée"²⁵ both by those who followed its course and by historians. Yves Person was therefore able to collect and document numerous accounts recorded from crowds or communities, but in his bibliography he wrote down the names only of the main speakers in the conversations he preserved.

Person took notes on the spot, and they consist mostly of names, toponyms, ethnonyms, simplified narratives, arrows, abbreviations, or drawings. Among them feature notes on the interviews he conducted with his "privileged sources." We were able to find notes of nine out of the fourteen men presented in the bibliography, and were surprised to discover that among the notes were a few signed typescripts. Djiguiba Camara's text is the longest. We found it in box 4c2, which in the inventory was labelled "Guinée, works and documents related to the thesis on Samori. Cercle of Kissidougou, Guinée." The little available information about the author was provided in Person's bibliography, where he appeared as the fifth on the list of informers. The description given by Person reads as follows:

From Damaro (Simāndugu, cercle of Beyla), died 1967. Former Great advisor, born around 1885. Son of famous chief Kyéulé,²⁶ he demonstrates the

24 Since then a new inventory has been carried out, which does not follow this classification. Fabrice Melka worked on this collection, its partial transcription, and its referencing on the website Calames.

25 On the practice of the "tournée," see the anthology of Simonis 2005. For a detailed account of the practice of the tour by one of Yves Person's classmates and friends, see Colin 2004.

26 Yves Person spells the name of Djiguiba Kamara's father as *Kyéulé*. In Djiguiba Kamara's

same tendencies as (4),²⁷ with greater marked hostility towards Samori. This extremely well-informed man did not, incidentally, hide his convictions. He wrote a somewhat confused yet well-detailed “Essai d’histoire locale” (110 pages), which he refused to publish and gave to me only reluctantly. This document, which cross-checking proved reliable, has been completed and verified during a series of interviews. The heirs, in Côte d’Ivoire, are considering publishing it.²⁸

Tim Geysbeek in his enumeration of his sources at the opening of his thesis underlined the text’s extraordinary character resulting from its handling by Yves Person.²⁹ With that recognition and institutionalisation from a prominent historian, Djiguiba Kamara’s text could have become a major source for the historiography of Guinée, but at that exact moment it vanished completely.³⁰

Dyigiba (Jiba) Kamara wrote a manuscript titled “Essai d’histoire locale” that is an enigma in the historiography of Guinea; few scholars and students in Guinea appear to have seen the document, but many have cited it. The work’s existence seems to be widely known. One informer in Musadu, for instance, lamented the fact that no one had written a history about Musadu, although “Va Dyigiba” wrote a book about Sumandu. [...] The other important source of information about Dyigiba Kamara comes from Soumaoro Kaba who completed his thesis, about Samori Ture’s influence in Beyla and Kerouane, in 1971. Kaba wrote that Dyigiba Kamara collected most of his traditions in Sumandu between 1927 and 1957, and that the “document is of inestimable value and constitutes a mine of information that traces the great odyssey of the Dyomande and Samori.” He

text however, the spelling is not fixed: most often we find *Kéoulin*, but also *Kéoulé* and *Kéoulén*. In the Dyula language the phrase *cè wùlen* means literally “red man” which may refer either to a man whose complexion is copper-coloured or, most plausibly, to a “brave” man – the colour red connoting anger and violence in battle. We wish to thank Jean Derive for this information.

27 We were unable to find informer n°4, Bängali Kamara. For the reader’s information, the description provided reads as follows: “from Lénko (Bâmbadugu, cercle of Beyla), family of Samori’s first father-in-law. The tendencies to which he belongs are those of the Kamara ‘uncles’ who provided the conqueror with the means necessary for his first victories, but who, for some of them, repented later on.” It is a euphemism: this “tendency” established by Person is clearly hostile to Samori.

28 Person 1975 III: 2194.

29 Geysbeek 2002: 93-97.

30 Geysbeek 2002: 94.

noted that Kamara's manuscript contains "a great genealogical tree of all the Dyomande clans since their patriarch Fonikaman Dyomande up to the lesser Dyomande chiefs."

Djiguiba Camara seems to have used the genealogies passed down orally by his father, but he gave no further details on the sources he used to create his text. The text is quoted by many students in their work but in fact such references are merely repetitions of what Yves Person said.³¹ It therefore appears that, after Yves Person had analysed it, the text vanished for decades to resurface only when Person's deposited personal archives were catalogued at the Bibliothèque de Recherches Africaines and made publicly available. What became of the copy in Guinée in all those years? It is said to have been lodged with the University of Kankan and then stolen from the collection there, but nothing more is known about it.³² So it might well be that Yves Person's own copy – which we present here – is the only one remaining. Djiguiba Camara's son, El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara, kept a copy of the text, which he undertook to spend his life completing and rewriting, but that text had never been made public until we went to Damaro in December 2016; which explains why Tim Geysbeek was unaware of it.

There is a sense that the notion of "oral tradition" becomes problematic when applied to a typewritten text such as the one introduced here, for in truth it remains "oral" only in its recording of the source it records.³³ In our case here, there is an evident desire to structure the text, to accord it the status of a finished work of literature. The text therefore no longer falls into the category of truly oral tradition but rather forms part of a category of *unpublished* documents, which demand the same level of precise understanding of the context of their production.³⁴

In his short explanatory note Yves Person implied that he knew Djiguiba Camara well enough to be aware that he was reluctant to pass on his typescript. Person later interviewed Djiguiba Camara a number of times, probably to clarify certain specific points. Some of those points were given as examples in footnotes to discussions with Djiguiba Camara that we managed to find in Person's field notes.

31 Sidibé 1989: 8–12; Millimono 1989: 12–13 (both quoted by Geysbeek 2002; Sidibé is partly translated into English in the appendices: 4.10).

32 Geysbeek 2002: 95–97.

33 Here, it is the memory of the words of the father-witness, Kyéulè, who was a member of Samori's restricted council.

34 Newbury 2007.

Attempting to Reconstruct Yves Person's Methodology

Thanks to its presence in the archives of Yves Person, its role as a major source for his work on Samori Touré, and Person's own numerous annotations on the text, the version of "Essai d'histoire locale" published here serves not only as an endogenous source on African history but also on Yves Person's methods and the production of European historiography on Africa.

Beginning with the fragmented information Yves Person gave in his introduction and his bibliography we may hypothesize about his methods of collecting sources. Of course, Person's silence on African sources must be understood in the context of the French university of the day, where as a general rule the "oral tradition" and African sources were given short shrift. In that sense Yves Person was a true pioneer in his constant efforts to reproduce African accounts and place them alongside colonial sources. He was in fact somewhat ahead of his time in producing a "history of equal parts," to borrow the expression from Romain Bertrand.³⁵ Nevertheless, in his published thesis Yves Person did not accord anything like the same status to his African sources as he did to European ones, and there is minimal information on who produced the African sources and how they were collected. The African manuscripts are in fact lost within a list of over 861 oral interviews.

Because Yves Person was first and foremost a historian he was interested in oral traditions for their evidentiary value and so sought to confirm the veracity of written sources by comparing them to oral heritage. Djiguiba Camara's text was not regarded as a literary interpretation of a single event, but as testimony to and illustration of how that event was perceived. Person's aim was to confront sources in an attempt to gain access to previously unknown facts, or to the sort of facts which were beyond the scope of European archives. The ideological basis of his work therefore greatly influenced the nature of the facts he collected, because witnesses were interviewed with the purpose of confirming pre-existing information. Moreover, those witnesses often had important social roles so that what they were doing was relaying an official and collective memory. Those two aspects go hand in hand, as the community exercised implicit control over what was said in the interviews. For his part, Yves Person was more interested in historical facts than in story-telling, so he gave precedence to people with moral and political authority such as chiefs, dignitaries, and important traders.

Yves Person's function as a colonial official effectively was what allowed him to carry out his work as a historian. His training at the ENFOM (*École Nationale*

35 Bertrand 2014.

de la France d'Outre-Mer) as a colonial civil servant meant he had some knowledge of the Bambara, Maninka, Dyula and Fula languages.³⁶ That naturally greatly facilitated contact with his informers. Although he wrote his notes in French it is likely that most of his interviews were conducted in local languages. He worked with interpreters but he could exchange greetings and probably knew enough of the local languages to verify some of the interpreter's translations.³⁷ However, Yves Person was not concerned with trying to safeguard linguistic heritage and none of the documents from his own archives – whether handwritten or typed – is in an African language. The texts that were sent to him were written in French, and that has had repercussions for the status of the language as well as what is being said. The spontaneous use of French by African speakers writing about colonisation is no accident: the self has to be narrated in the victor's language and to adopt the language of colonisation is to adopt a code of writing.

Yves Person's collected his sources as part of his administrative work – through the colonial "tourne" – and that framework had an effect on the type of information given, as well as how it reconstructed past histories. Yves Person's status as an official might have impressed the people he spoke to, so that a power relationship might have been established in the transfer of knowledge.³⁸ In the same way, Djiguiba Camara's decision to give Person his text was influenced by the fact that Person was an official, a representative of the French government, which had an important impact on the axiology of the narrative.

In his bibliography, Yves Person makes a very clear distinction between intensive and extensive practices of enquiry:

The first fourteen informers, regardless of their geographical origins, have provided material mostly on Samori and his empire. I worked with each of them for several weeks, except for Dyiguiba Kamara whose interviews only allowed me to verify a handwritten document. As there are significant variations in the points of view, these indications enabled me to build the history of Samori as seen from the conqueror's Court, or at least from those closest to him.

36 Interview with Roland Colin at his home, Paris, 10 February 2015. See also Person 1981: 628n27.

37 On the role of interpreters in the collection of colonial knowledge, see Van den Avenne 2012 and Van den Avenne 2017.

38 There is a long tradition of administrator-ethnographers marked – in France at least – by the figure of Maurice Delafosse. On this subject, see Amselle and Sibeud 1998. See also Sibeud 2003; Grosz-Ngat 1988; Van Hoven 1990; Van den Avenne 2017.

All informers were questioned on Samori only within the framework of a broader historical investigation, and the data they provided only applied to a village, or to a kafu at most. A small number of them led to some intensive work, and an extensive investigation was carried out on the basis of the elements combined, which covered four-fifths of the interrogations.

In most cases, the sources consist of brief interviews following a pre-established pattern and aiming to verify the data obtained for the whole territory.³⁹

Yves Person also paid tribute in his introduction to his small group of “privileged sources:”

The most abundant data were collected from about fifteen people, almost all of whom were descended from dignitaries or from the Almami's intimates or allies. (...) Some of these witnesses have been extremely valuable, like Ladyi Mamadu Sulèmani Dèm, who then lived in Korhogo, and who is now dead like most of his companions.⁴⁰

Yves Person's investigation was extensive, carried out over seven years, across many cercles and with over 850 groups of interviewees. In fact, only the main interviewee from each group is identified in the bibliography, either because the others were of lower social status or because they played less active roles in the interviews. However, that extensiveness enables memories to confront each other; and the perspectives of dignitaries from Samori's Court and those of former vanquished peoples are analysed on an equal footing.

Our investigation has been carried out intensively in a few privileged centres, but we strove to extend it to the widest possible area, using inevitably extensive methods. This enabled us to confront multiple points of view and to do numerous cross-checks. Samori's opponents and neighbours were consulted as often as possible.⁴¹

The comparative approach therefore operates on all levels: between European written archives and African oral memory; between various regional oral memories; and between the memories of former political opponents.

39 Person 1975 III: 2193.

40 Person 1968 I: 8.

41 Person 1968 I: 8.

Writing Local History: Conquering Legitimacy as a “Man of Letters”

The Position of the Intermediary-Historian

At this point it will be useful to recall Djiguiba Camara's specific status. He was certainly not an insignificant author, as Yves Person's brief references might lead the uninformed reader to believe, for as mentioned above, Djiguiba Camara had a long career as a colonial intermediary. The position of intermediaries has often been studied through the dichotomous analytical framework of resistance/collaboration.⁴² This text, just like Djiguiba Camara's career, reveals the simplistic nature of such a diametric opposition, and so allows us to analyse the ambiguous area occupied by intermediaries, in which they might be profiteers and masters of manipulation as well as proud representatives of a system which offered them unique careers. Rather than seeking to destroy the colonial edifice from within, the auxiliaries of colonisation tried to adapt to it as much to their own advantage as they could. They did that most particularly by trying to achieve a certain degree of respectability through strategies of *notabilisation*.⁴³ It is therefore essential to resituate Djiguiba Camara and his manuscript within the social, economic and political circumstances of the time. To do so will reveal the plurality and diversity of his experience as an intermediary-historian.⁴⁴

First of all, the very existence of this text shows the diversity of roles filled by colonial auxiliaries or “intermediaries” and their colonial practices. By intermediaries we mean colonised people, most of them men, who occupied lower posts in the colonial administration or at least whose tasks consisted of making links between colonisers and colonised. That is a broad definition which includes African interpreters, office workers, secretaries, public scribes, teachers, medical staff and canton chiefs. It is that last category which interests us here, because Djiguiba Camara began writing “*Essai d'histoire locale*” and collecting information for that purpose – with the encouragement of the colonial administrator at the time – as soon as he was nominated as Simandougou's canton chief in 1928.⁴⁵ Intermediaries were often used by the colonial administration as sources for the production of monographs on the cercles and their “cus-

42 Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2006; Tilley and Gordon 2007; Gary-Touunkara and Nativel 2012; Smith and Labrune-Badiane 2018; Beucher 2017; Mark-Thiesen 2012.

43 Osborn 2006: 56-76; Jézéquel 2006.

44 On practising the profession of historian in Guinea, with specific reference to Djibril Tam-sir Niane, see also Conrad 2010. See also on the status of historian in Africa, Peterson and Macola 2009.

45 Interviews with Djiguiba Camara's son El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara, Conakry and Damaro, 15-23 December 2016.

toms," although such contributions often remained unofficial. In such cases too, intermediaries were only rarely officially recognised by the Western explorers, soldiers, missionaries and ethnographer-administrators as full co-producers of their knowledge.⁴⁶

Djiguiba Camara's role as an interpreter during the early part of his career as an intermediary clearly demonstrates the central role played by interpreters in regions newly colonised in the period 1870-1918. Their position allowed them to develop a great deal of autonomy and to undertake varied work. Djiguiba Camara for example was an interpreter not only for various colonial administrators but in 1909 for the Justice of the Peace too, who had wide competence. Colonial budget restrictions and the difficulty of recruiting European staff made the recruitment of African auxiliaries essential for maintaining a colonial structure at less cost.⁴⁷ The administration was forced to train African colonial employees and depend on them to fulfil daily administrative tasks, a fact which would have greatly complicated the project of colonial domination. The auxiliaries saw opportunities to acquire skills and knowledge, power and authority. That led them in turn to develop their own strategies of accumulation. Djiguiba Camara's file gives glimpses of such strategies on all those levels. But the typescript also demonstrates that material accumulation was not necessarily the principal aim of those concerned. It helps rather to resituate the careers of intermediaries by focusing less on their relationships with the administration than on their role within processes of heritagisation and "notabilisation" which were, first and foremost, local.

In a way, Djiguiba's career mirrors the evolution of the role and position of intermediaries in the colonial structure under the influence of colonial bureaucratisation, the implementation of supervision measures, and the spread of literacy. The new situation limited intermediaries' scope for such activities, particularly between 1921 and 1952.⁴⁸ The changes forced them in the end to adapt to a more formally codified administrative environment in which their success depended increasingly on their capacity to understand and manipulate the colonial administrative machine to advance their careers.

But this typescript also shows that although the position of intermediaries evolved over the twentieth century, they nevertheless continued to be "cultural mediators" or "cross-cultural brokers"⁴⁹ acting as permanent go-betweens

46 Sibeud 2003; Coret 2017; Lefebvre and Surun 2008; Jézéquel 2011; Smith and Labrune-Badiane 2018; Tilley and Gordon 2007.

47 Eckert 2006; Klein 2006.

48 Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2006: 29.

49 Lawrance, Osborn and Roberts 2006: 21.

between colonists and colonised. The intermediaries performed their role while simultaneously creating their own world, often developing trilateral strategies to adapt,⁵⁰ particularly by recourse to “the bargain of collaboration.”⁵¹ They developed a hybrid world made up of *bricolages*, adaptation and rejection of what was on offer both in their own culture and in the new colonial environment.⁵² The development of the new space amounted to a sort of synthesis between precolonial, colonial and European practices. Sometimes a middle class emerged who at independence would be the ones to take over the reins of power. Although the abolition of the *canton chiefs* by Sékou Touré cut short the Camara family’s aspirations to perpetuate their position as “notables,” they nevertheless remained very heavily involved in politics in Guinée, as they are to this day.

Intermediaries were at the heart of the production of local and colonial knowledge. They had to grasp European concepts and learn very quickly how to adapt them to their own culture, in order to codify African customs intelligibly for the colonial administration. The description of customs in the type-script can be seen in the tradition of the establishment of *grands coutumiers* in African colonies in the 1930s. From the beginnings of colonisation various administrators began to compile what would be an exhaustive inventory of legal customs in their *cercles*. They used the information to write descriptions of customs to help them manage the *cercles* and to administer the legal system.⁵³ Because the administrators knew very little of local legal custom, the assessors exercised a great deal of power over the establishment of specific legal precedents, which in many cases required invention of traditions. Such interventions were made all the easier by the fact that administrators were rarely inclined to revisit a verdict.⁵⁴

Intermediaries’ knowledge of European culture and its sociocultural categories allowed them to control, create and transform information as necessary. The effective management of information flows required them to take coherent actions which were constantly open to accusations from competing interests. They also had to be highly adaptable, paying constant attention to colonial and African environments. Their circumstances obliged them to shift their allegiances from one day to the next, with the constant risk of losing their status,

50 Levine 2006.

51 Robinson 1972.

52 Eckert 2006: 248-269.

53 Rodet 2007: 187-188.

54 Ginio 2006.

which was why it was so important to some of them to leave a written trace as a source of legitimisation for future generations.

At the same time, lack of human and financial resources obliged the administration to rely systematically on “traditional” chiefdoms to run large territories which otherwise would have been difficult to control. The colonial administration’s great dependency on interpreters and chiefs necessarily encouraged the formation of a “circle of iron,” preventing any direct transmission of information to the colonial administrator. The auxiliaries therefore soon proved to be the essential actors in maintaining the apparatus of the colonial state, and they showed themselves capable of influencing it from the inside and re-appropriating colonial violence to use it for their own ends.⁵⁵ Starting from his first post in Kérouané in 1900, Djiguiba Camara was accused of standing between local populations and the colonial administrator. Later, as a canton chief he systematically used colonial forced labour to develop “his” canton. The growing power of the intermediaries did attract the concern of the colonial administrators, but they only rarely succeeded in controlling them. As a canton chief, Djiguiba Camara was frequently criticised by the colonial administration, although he was never removed from office. Indeed, he remained in post until the canton chieftaincies were abolished by Sékou Touré in 1957.

Although this typescript is the product of various interactions between two arenas, it is still true that its author’s social origin, cultural belonging and unique personality make it a unique and original document which is in many ways very far removed from colonial monographs. Even if Djiguiba Camara was initially prompted to write the document by a colonial administrator,⁵⁶ the document’s fate shows that its life has extended well beyond the colonial setting. Djiguiba Camara continued to work on it for more than thirty years until his death in 1963, so that it seems he wrote it first and foremost for his community of origin. It is conceivable that he wished to record an ideological system the gradual disappearance of which he, as a colonial intermediary, was best placed to evaluate.

Finally, if the typescript is part of a more generalised strategy of *notabilisation*, it reveals only one part of that process for, notably, it does not really allow us to examine the role of women. Moreover, although Djiguiba Camara had sixteen wives, the typescript barely mentions any personal information about him other than his genealogy. Such a high number of wives not only illustrates his

55 Osborn 2006: 56–76.

56 In 1928, Djiguiba Camara began his literary endeavour at the express encouragement of a colonial administrator, but unfortunately his name has been lost to the memory of the Camara family.

social and political status, but equally hints at the importance that marriage might assume in intermediaries' strategies of respectability. The importance of family within the social networks implemented by intermediaries is often discussed, but we sometimes forget that the word "family" includes women. Did not women too play mediating roles, benefiting like their husbands from their contact with the administration? Perhaps they too could implement similar strategies of accumulation? Unfortunately, the typescript does not furnish material for us to answer such questions. However, the interviews conducted in Guinée in December 2016 with Djiguiba Camara's surviving wives and some of his children demonstrated that, although in many ways the women did not necessarily feel involved in their husband's work, some of the unions were nevertheless "political." A good example of that is the marriage of Djiguiba Camara to a native of Côte d'Ivoire, after her French soldier "husband" left following the conquest of Guinée.⁵⁷

Why and for Whom Did Djiguiba Camara Write His Text?

Djiguiba Camara's prefatory "Note to my friend" suggests an official addressee who although unnamed was described in enough detail for him to be identified as Kefin Donzé.⁵⁸ Djiguiba Camara lists many characteristics matching Donzé's, describing the "friend" as a childhood intimate educated at the French school ("Ensemble nous avons fréquenté les écoles" ... "tous deux nourris à l'École Française"). We are told the addressee had made the pilgrimage to Mecca ("Moi Chef, vous ayant fait le pèlerinage sacré") and that he belonged to the social élite ("Vous fils de notable ...") although it appears the "friend" had died by the time the text was written in 1955. ("Ce que vous auriez pu lire ici, si vous viviez" and later "Je vous dédie ce livre en témoignage de notre amitié que la mort n'a pas pu détruire.")

Kefin Donzé (aka Fodé Dountzou) was an interpreter whom the colonial archives list as Djiguiba Camara's rival in a legal matter dating from 1910.⁵⁹ Suspected of corruption, the two colonial interpreters made accusations against one another, and the administrator at the time requested Djiguiba Camara be posted to Kouroussa. Djiguiba refused, leading to his dismissal in 1910; in the

57 Interviews with Mawa Kone and Samafin Keita, widows of Djiguiba Camara, Damaro, 17 December 2016.

58 Or "Fodé Dountzou" in the colonial archives. Confirmed by Djiguiba Camara's son, El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara, during interview in Conakry, 22 December 2016.

59 Archives Nationales d'Outre-mer, Fonds ministériel, Série géographique, Afrique occidentale française x1/4: Acting Lieutenant Governor of French Guinée to the Governor General in Dakar. Complaint addressed to the Governor of French West Africa, from the *Ligue des droits de l'Homme* on behalf of Mr. Djiguiba Kamara, 24 October 1910.

same year he complained to the *Ligue des droits de l'Homme*, only for his complaint to be dismissed in 1924, as we know. The case caused animosity between the two childhood friends, which would not be resolved for thirty years and then only after the intervention of an imam.⁶⁰ Djiguiba Camara's choice to address the typescript to his old friend indeed seems to confirm that the two men were reconciled.

However, it seems there was a second addressee implied in the preface, that being the French colonial administrator who had first suggested Djiguiba Camara's literary endeavour.

First of all, the Note offers a pact with the reader based on two different sources of authentication. Those sources are related to two discursive traditions which are commonly placed in opposition and they cut across the text's double destination which we have just mentioned.⁶¹ On the one hand the text aims to provide a history of the country able to compete with Western historiography. Even in the first paragraphs, the author writes: "I have written about the past of our fathers in this corner of Africa." However, he highlights that those ancestors have been accorded little importance, misrepresented as they have been in the colonial discourse: "They are not well-known, these ancestors. [...] civilisation, with its relentless optimism, is introducing new mores which tend to veil and deform everything, even men." Clearly the author felt the need to give new legitimacy to his ancestors by providing new sources: "My aim was to expose certain errors, to indicate certain imperfections which are due to a lack of untainted documentation." Those sources made it possible to counter the European historical discourse, which tends to devalue African heroes like Soundiata, Samori and El Hadj Oumar. The point is made in the first few lines of the text ("In the face of the rise of European ideas, our duty is not to mount a resistance [whether passive or active], but to understand ourselves in order to love ourselves."). On the other hand, the author simultaneously legitimises his endeavour by aligning it with authentic local tradition. His words "draw [their] source and ... power from the ancestral will." That double legitimisation affected how the history was written, as a history of the region intended to meet the standards of Western historiography while drawing on African oral traditions and memory.

60 Interview with El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara, Conakry, 23 December 2016.

61 It should be noted that this "note to my friend" also seems to echo typical school exercises in the format of a "letter to my friend," which Djiguiba Camara might have exercised as a pupil at the school for chiefs' sons in Kayes, or equally which he might have encountered for the first time when he opened the school in Damaro in the 1940s.

Writing as a Historian

The most prominent feature of the text is its accordance to the Western academic tradition of history writing from which Djiguiba Camara's style is conspicuously derived. Djiguiba Camara portrays himself as a precise, erudite and meticulous historian and deploys discursive devices to signify his academic nature.

Djiguiba Camara constructed his ethos primarily with a strongly didactic aim. His purpose was both to transfer technical knowledge and provide explanations of it. For example, he included a table summarizing ranks and how they might be translated among the armies of Samori, the Camara and the French.⁶² Djiguiba Camara's focus on the translation of concepts, of translating Malinké culture in accordance with French models, is of crucial importance to understanding to whom the text was addressed. If the addressee really was the mysterious "friend" referred to in the introductory Note, what would be the point of such translation, as a didactic device? If Djiguiba Camara was really and solely addressing his friend, he would surely have felt no need to explain his own culture. Consciously or unconsciously then, the text, written as it was by a canton chief educated at a colonial school was, at least implicitly, addressed to European readers. It was constructed entirely using vocabulary that any French reader would be able to understand and therefore process as *translated* information. We do not claim that the author was necessarily writing with Yves Person in mind, simply that there is clear evidence that a typical French reader was envisaged as the text was being written. Certainly, Djiguiba Camara was reluctant to give his text to Yves Person, but that does not invalidate our hypothesis here. We believe that this information should be read as suggested the preface, as being a counter to French historiography and therefore addressing and even competing with it in some ways. The putative reader too might have been essentially a concept, or a set of discourses and practitioners.

The same device may be found throughout the text, in clauses interpolated to draw parallels with the French presence in Africa. Even though such clauses when taken separately might seem to have little significance, viewed together they offer undeniable proof that there was an indirect addressee. For example, linguistic correspondences are systematically given in French,⁶³ the term "indigenous" is used repeatedly in expressions such as "Toutes les sanctions dans la vie indigène, même de nos jours quand elles n'ont pas été à

62 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 64.

63 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 3: "Kibakan" bears the word "Translation" on the facing page – which means French, by default.

l'encontre des lois humanitaires et de la justice française, ont pour origine Moussadougou"⁶⁴ (the vocabulary itself bears some traces of the process, as Djiguiba Camara refers on multiple occasions to "indigenous life," "indigenous society," etc.), and there are didactic explanatory notes.⁶⁵

Djiguiba Camara made great play too of exhibiting the academic nature of his text. His aim was to rewrite colonial history and to reclaim from the history of the "victors" the names of "the Soundiatas, the Samories, the El Hadj Oumars."^{66, 67} In that sense Djiguiba Camara's endeavour was assuredly "post-colonial" *avant la lettre*, since it used writing to induce a "response" from the empire.⁶⁸

To that end the text is made up of short units or paragraphs, almost all of which have titles. Readers may then more easily find what they wish to refer to, indicating a wish to break from fictional historical narratives. The form and structure immediately place the text in the realm of factual study. The titles often signal a search for causality, using an inductive approach to trace events to their primary or original cause. Examples of them include, "Causes de la guerre de Sikasso," "Le pays avant l'arrivée des Camara," "Origine des mille sacrifices," "Révoltes – et ses causes," "Causes et suites de la mésalliance Samory-Kolo." A fact is first presented, then explained, which is why the text contains frequent analepses, or flashbacks. The flashbacks convey a sense of chaotic chronology, but only as a result of excessive precision in explaining the motives of historical figures, or accounting for power relations in the region's geopolitics. The search for proof also involves distinguishing between rumour and fact, which is why binary oppositions are frequent, using expressions such as "it is said," or "it is countered." For instance, Djiguiba Camara tells the reader that "It is claimed that he [Nalé Morou Keïta] died by his own hand during a hunting party," but then contradicts that statement with his next comment, "Samory sent Dion Konaté Olén and his sword Dioufa to assassinate him after an agree-

64 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 14.

65 The most indicative example is probably on page 69, where the two explanatory notes are clearly addressed to a French reader, as the translation process is elucidated: "Réglez cela après moi," "Cela voulait dire, tuez-les en vous vengeant de toutes les souffrances qu'il a faites aux autres. Séry Missa décapita Sadjj" and further on, "Dans les mœurs indigènes on ne pouvait décapiter sans circonscrire [circoncire]. Kagbè Féré fut d'abord circoncis, puis décapité en premier lieu: il ne voulait pas voir couler le sang de son père qui le suivit, puis ensuite Sa Oussou."

66 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 1.

67 De Certeau 1975; Goody 2010.

68 Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2012.

ment with the sofa chiefs. The hunting theory came later to fill in the details.”⁶⁹ The proof is all the more legitimate since evidence of it is in the French colonial archives – even though the archives have been criticised earlier with the words, “the post of Kérouané, created in 1892, remained the furthest point to which French troops had advanced until the end of 1893, as the military documents say.”⁷⁰ The comparative approach offers a voice of authority – the European archive – which settles the question.

Finally, Djiguiba Camara defined his ethos using erudition and comprehensiveness. At work throughout is concern to tell all, to fix the limits of liveable reality by naming it, to create a community by invoking shared descent from Farin Kaman. To name someone is to give that individual a place within the group.⁷¹ Consequently, any failure to be exhaustive would mean excluding legitimate descendants from the community. Lists therefore have real performative value.⁷² The ethical need to give the names of all the sons in the first part of the text is mirrored in the second part by another ethical imperative not only to list all of Samori's descendants, but also all the battles he waged, every one of his war chiefs, all the treaties he signed, and so on. The historian's method is thus combined with that of the genealogist and the precolonial historian's methods are blended with those inherited from the colonial context.⁷³ That is why the text contains not only many genealogical tables, but also a large number of lists. There are lists of “superstitions,” which fill numerous pages;⁷⁴ there is a list of people who attended oath-taking ceremonies,⁷⁵ a list of goods gained during the war,⁷⁶ a list of the war chiefs and armies; and more. The lists may be seen both as pieces of evidence and invocations of the responsibility of the individuals mentioned. In the passage on the “Braulot case (1897)” it was crucial to determine the identity of the members of the council who decided to condemn the French officer to death during the Bouna massacre, because the trial conducted a year after it by the French army passed a sentence based on the

69 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d'histoire locale,” typescript p. 76.

70 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d'histoire locale,” typescript p. 93.

71 On the status of proper names, see Kleiber 2004; Wee 2006; Sophia, Marmaridou 1989; see also Bean 1980.

72 See Eco 2009.

73 On the role of genealogies in the Sahel, see Bornand 2005, especially the section entitled “La force de la nomination:” 229–370.

74 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d'histoire locale,” typescript p. 17–18.

75 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d'histoire locale,” typescript p. 52 (“Oath between Gnaman and Kolo”).

76 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d'histoire locale,” typescript p. 57 (“Sharing the booty of Nanténin Famourou”).

composition of that same council. There is therefore a second sentence, which Djiguiba Camara delivered by means of the list more than fifty years after the trial. The consequence of such classifications is that the text is littered with names, of people and places. The names lend an encyclopaedic dimension to the text, which lists the members of the community.

Legitimising Oral Tradition

Even though Djiguiba Camara aspired to be a historian “in French” – his choice of language implicitly shaped the narrative – and although he scattered his text with markers of its academic nature, he nevertheless drew legitimacy for his information and theories from oral tradition and from his position as a witness. That is, he made use of *another* way of writing history. Djiguiba Camara’s distinctive feature is that he combined both, thereby adopting an approach as a historian similar to that of Yves Person who wished to set European archives and written sources against African narratives from oral tradition.

Djiguiba Camara was first and foremost a witness to the facts. In 1955, the memory of colonial penetration was still alive. As he recalled in the note: “As youths, we watched our parents serve an ideal, with a pride drawn from a certain social position. We witnessed as they effectively assisted with French penetration.”⁷⁷ Moreover, Djiguiba Camara was the son of Kyéulé, a member of Samori’s council, so his information was first-hand.

In spite of his declared misgivings Djiguiba Camara gave the greatest prominence to oral sources, as the only genuinely “authorised” sources. As he said: “The version which we have taken from some sources, however authoritative they may be, have some imperfections, since the tradition is only oral. But we are certain that this is the version which comes closest to the truth.”⁷⁸ The closest thing to “reality,” to the facts, was the “pure documentation” he alluded to in his introductory remarks – a form of documentation to be found in speech and memory but which European historians lack.

That said, we should not be misled by the author’s discourse on his own text. Djiguiba Camara uncontestedly drew on his father’s testimony, but that does not mean that his text belongs to an “oral tradition.” Rather, the author’s discursive devices must be distinguished from what he actually created, for Djiguiba Camara wished to give theoretical dignity to oral testimonies and living memories as documents fit to be analysed in the historiography. Based on the establishment of those materials as primary sources, he advocated the de-

77 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d’histoire locale,” typescript p. 2.

78 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d’histoire locale,” typescript p. 27.

centring of the writing of history, which he correctly regarded as Euro-centric.⁷⁹ All the same, Djiguiba Camara's plea does not require a redefinition of his own text, which cannot be placed in the "oral" category, nor for that matter in any other pure tradition. As Gérard Lenclud recalls, the very process of changing media, of putting words into writing, transforms the status of the source, which becomes a *written* representation of formerly *oral* knowledge.⁸⁰ There is little "orality" at play.⁸¹ As for the "tradition" itself, it consists only of what the dominant class at the time of writing wants it to be – that is, a legitimisation of its own power. In 1955, Djiguiba Camara rooted his status in the Camara's long tradition as land owners. The family were temporarily allies of Samori Touré, but the legitimacy of their power greatly exceeded and surpassed his. That shows that a tradition can only be "invented" and "constructed."⁸²

Implicitly Inheriting Literary Forms

Beginning with his Note therefore, Djiguiba Camara seems to have assumed two traditions, the oral tradition of the historical narrative and the demand for proof, which holds sway over the European academic discourse.⁸³ Nevertheless, under that intentional discourse, other literary influences implicitly question in which genre category to place the text. Indeed, less visibly than the discursive markers described above, literary echoes gradually emerge and partly challenge the text's academic presentation.

For example, the description of Samori Touré's childhood draws significantly on the model of the clever child who is precociously more capable than adults. It may be found in certain stories:

Samory spent his childhood in Mignanbaladou. By turns he was a goat-herd, a cowherd, a shepherd. He would organise games for the children of his age, including wars between different teams. He already showed great skill in throwing, climbing and running.⁸⁴ Growing up in Mignanbaladou,

79 In the Note, see "They are not well-known, these ancestors ...," Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 1-2. See also Kouamé, Coquery-Vidrovitch and Meyer 2014. See also: Gary-Toukara and Nativel 2012.

80 Lenclud 1994.

81 See similar examples of things passing from the oral to the written in Baumgardt and Derive 2013; Ciarcia and Jolly 2015.

82 On the notion of tradition, the conclusion of Gérard Lenclud's article reads as follows: "Even before being written down, a tradition is not the tradition." More generally, see also Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983.

83 This hybridity is also found in the Swahili texts analysed by Carré 2014.

84 Djiguiba Camara employs the typical character, recurrent in folktales, of the precocious child, often more skilful than adults.

he remained a model son, going to gather dead wood and fetching shopping. He never remained idle, and he was followed everywhere by an army of children⁸⁵

Here, the characteristics and defining features of an adult hero are applied to a child. The text therefor posits an essential heroism, a necessary destiny which owes nothing to chance. Because of his dexterity, his bravery, his understanding of situations and his skills as a leader, Samori Touré could not but become the "Almamy." The "children's army" foreshadows his future armies. The model is of foresight, as the prophecy of heroism is there to be read from the child's actions.

By the same token, Samori's characteristics as an adult were sometimes related in cruel tales, or as the type of hero who is simultaneously bloodthirsty and fascinating.⁸⁶ The episode of his two daughters' deaths – the double infanticide – appears frequently in accounts of Samori Touré:

They dictated to him the sentence of stoning. The Almamy did not have an in-depth knowledge of the Quran's texts, but he wished to give the first example of the vigour of the Quranic law which he had just introduced in his States without any preliminary instruction. So the two lovers were put to death and the two daughters stoned. This barbaric act is still remembered and Mognouma Gbati held responsible. [...] Later, the Almamy received further information. The act of accusation was due to the menstrual blood staining their loincloths, which had been so obviously unclean that it was impossible to remove.⁸⁷

The passage is interesting because its axiology does not seem to be fixed; its point of view is unstable. The anecdote refers to the literary tradition of tyrann

85 Djiuguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 47.

86 On the role of violence in the text, it must be noted that it is not linked only to Samori. The French are also characterised by the use of awful punishments. See p. 89 of the typescript, which recounts that the severed head of Sanan Oulén, one of Samori's agents, was displayed at the entrance of Kérouané's post from 1892 to 1903. See p. 108 about the intra-African wars, where Gbondo is beheaded, his head boiled and his jaw sent as a trophy to Massé Bigné, who turned it into a ceremonial jewel. See also, still on p. 108, the mention of the "atrocities" committed against the prisoners during the wars led by Kaman Kekoua in 1896. On the role of trophies, of the exhibition of an enemy's corpse, and more generally on the status of violence in warfare, we refer to Viti 2012 who advocates going beyond the paralysing category of "barbarism" to analyse cruelty.

87 Djiuguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 77-78.

nical heroes in tales, and thereby relegates the hero to the status of monster, past humanity and beyond morality. Yet Djiguiba Camara feels obliged to place the moral blame on the marabouts who advised the Almamy, who was simply the plaything of both sages and women, his stepmother having allegedly passed off menstrual blood as evidence of a double rape. The Almamy was therefore guilty in all innocence – which is of course the peculiar feature of any tragic hero. However, the deeply ambivalent characterisation developed in the anecdote is very far removed from the academic discourse displayed in the introductory Note.

Djiguiba Camara's text is therefore truly hybrid, since it is – or claims to be – rooted in two different historiographic traditions and is also steeped in deep literary references. More importantly, it invites readers to analyse the academic status expected from sources, and to re-historicise the concept of history writing.

A New Source for Research on Africa

Yves Person was the first historian to add this work to the canon, which he did by using it as one of his privileged African sources. Along with Babou Condé who later became Camara Laye's source for the history of Soundiata,⁸⁸ and Tidiane Dem, Djiguiba Camara is one of the informers to whom Yves Person most frequently referred throughout his thesis. In that respect, Djiguiba Camara's text has become part of contemporary historiography, and therefore deserves to be made public. Yves Person was the first historian who read and studied it and he was also the first to comment on it. Occasionally in the body of the text, and very often in the notes at the ends of the chapters, Person quoted Djiguiba Camara, holding him up against other African informers and comparing him to French and British sources. Person assessed Djiguiba Camara's originality, the precision of his comments, and possible mistakes or exaggerations he made. We have collected those quotations, those *marginalia*, which make up the first critical commentary on the document. It appears that Djiguiba Camara was one of the few authors to be quoted regularly in all three volumes. Yves Person himself seems to have hesitated over how to characterise Djiguiba Camara's writing. Initially, he appears hostile to Samori, thereby representing the camp of the Camara, who formerly supported the conqueror and realised too late that they were losing their dominance over the region. In that regard the Note provided in the bibliography section titled "Traditions and testimonies on Samori and his empire" is unequivocal. Indeed, Djiguiba Camara

88 Camara 1978.

drew numerous unflattering parallels between the legal code in force under the Camara and the arbitrariness that prevailed under Samori's reign. Hence the pithy statement: "Samory's main innovation was the absence of fairness," later commented upon:

Gifts from the plaintiffs and the good will of the Judges were the motives for all decisions. The Judges always proved strict and were not placated or persuaded by anyone but their entourage, made up of griots and major notables. Some examples: Theft of agricultural produce was punished by amputation of a limb.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, in the body of the thesis, Yves Person presented Djiguiba Camara as an archetype of "tradition" and especially of the "pro-Samori tradition." Person wrote, in apparent contradiction to his own bibliography, "according to a pro-Samori informer [5], the Almami entered Odienné at the head of his guard,"⁹⁰ where [5] refers to Djiguiba Camara. In any case, Djiguiba Camara was always presented as a first-hand informer:

Regarding the fall of Gbānkundo and the death of Saghadyigi, I follow the version of [5]. This informer, a former head of the Simāndugu canton and distant relative of Momo, is particularly reliable, and a variety of information often incompatible with the tradition collected by Kalil Fofana, corroborates his own.⁹¹

Djiguiba Camara also had the advantage that he had witnessed the events, since his own father had been part of Samori's council. Yves Person recalled the fact when writing about the death of Gnanenco during the "Selinca ambush:"

This famous betrayal has caused continuing controversy between the Tomas and the Maninkés. It is reported that the idea was submitted to the attackers' council, who decided in favour of it, with Kyéulè being the only exception. He is said to have maintained that Samori's good reputation should not be damaged in the eyes of outsiders such as the Tomas. The fact is quite possible; but the trouble is that it was reported by Djiguiba Kamara, Kyéulè's own son. The event, moreover, was brought

89 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 101.

90 Person 1975 III: 1601, note 84.

91 Person 1968 I: 451, note 59.

up fifteen years later by Kyéulè, rallying behind the French against Böngo-Mörigbè, who, in turn, was carrying on the resistance with the support of the Tomas.⁹²

So it is unsurprising that Yves Person quoted Djiguiba Camara extensively, beginning in Volume 1 where his family connection made him a privileged witness to the relationships between Samori's first supporters and the Camara. Djiguiba Camara was also cited in reference to the overall organisation of the empire, and all technical aspects of the administration. He was the only one who provided precise lists of army generals, for example⁹³ and the only one who provided information on the origin of the shotguns which would prove to be one of the Samorian army's major advantages.⁹⁴ Djiguiba Camara knew too of the territorial divisions and organisational pattern of the empire.⁹⁵

The text is also a re-reading of the history of the Camara. The whole of the first part of "Essai d'histoire locale," dedicated to the tutelary character of Farin Kaman and to the foundation of Moussadougou, may usefully be read alongside Vase Camara's text as collected by Tim Geysbeek (transcribed, respectively, as "Foningama" and "Musadu," sections 2 and 3).⁹⁶ The first thirty pages of "Essai d'histoire locale" deal with what Geysbeek called the "Musadu epic" and we have inserted footnotes into Djiguiba Camara's text to refer to the episodes Geysbeek cited. Both texts follow the same chronology, beginning with the presentation of the founder-slave Musa (Moussa for Djiguiba Camara), moving on to the curse placed on the region after his talisman was destroyed and to the foundation of the laws by Farin Kaman and their immediate transgression by his sons. No sooner had the law been enacted than Farin Kaman's sons violated it and the sovereign's first decision was to put them to death, thereby consolidating the effectiveness of his executive power. After he had established a world order, Farin Kaman made sure it was effective and operational for everyone, including his sons, as Vase Camara underlined:

After the law passed, Musadu's market was raided and looted. / Four of Foningama's children were involved. / Afterwards Foningama said, / "I will

92 Person 1968 I: 583, note 45. For the purposes of comparison, see Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 74-75.

93 Yves Person reproduced these lists in full, in notes at the end of chapters (see in particular Person 1970 II: 785, note 21).

94 Person 1970 II: 789, note 37.

95 Person 1970 II: 1049, note 9.

96 Geysbeek 2007. On the foundation of the Kamara, see also Cissé 2007. On Musadu, see the narrative Anderson 1971 [1874]: 88, 104.

respect my word. / It is important to respect one's word. / Take them and execute them" / So they were executed according to the law. / He said: "I love my word more than my children."⁹⁷

The death of the children – as cruel as it might seem – is the paradigm of the universality of the law, which can operate fully only if it is respected by all, even by those closest to the king. Similarly, as Djiguiba Camara wrote:

Of Farin Kaman's 16 sons, 5 of them break a law, together with a griot. Their father is Chief over matters of custom and, as we have said, he knows how to act as Judge. The assembly as well sentenced the 6 culprits to death.⁹⁸

The sovereign established his authority in that original act. The transgression-foundation took place in some mythical time, whereas the decision to apply the death sentence etched the story in an effective time, that of the implementation of the law. That is where Djiguiba Camara's text is interesting as, unlike Vase Camara, Djiguiba Camara stressed the effectiveness of the law enacted within the myth by his citation of genealogical lists and the numbered presentation of what may be called the Camara "civil code."

The originality of Djiguiba Camara's text lies precisely in its heterogeneity. After elucidating the "Origins of the thousand sacrifices,"⁹⁹ the author drew up a table of those of Farin Kaman's sons affected by the legislation and listed the rules of social life implied by the initial rite.¹⁰⁰ The insertion of such legal, codex-like lists can be better understood when the text is re-situated in its broader narrative context, that of the foundation of the city of Moussadougou and the establishment of the rules of life associated with it. Therefore, the pages of lists act as the expansion and development of the end of Vasa Camara's text, the "Musadu epic:"

Foningama said: "We have listened to all the laws. / Anyone found breaking the law against the market will be tied to a tree" [...] From that time to today, all of the Kamara in Manaan-Kòsan, Girila, Sumandu, Gbana, Konokòlò, or Buzye / Any Kamara who violates the law will give a chicken

97 Geysbeek 2007: 74.

98 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 12.

99 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 11-12.

100 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 12 ("The division of Farin Kaman's sons"); p. 14-20 ("Customs and traditions," "Superstitions").

or cow, but will not be killed. / That is why we have a joking relation between the Donzo and the Kamara.¹⁰¹

Vase Camara did not place the emphasis on the same aspects. Although the components and characters are the same, the primary element in Vase Camara's text was the foundation of a world. On the other hand, Djiguiba Camara, while using the same narrative structure, expanded it to present its legal implications, which eventually led him to describe the Camara's whole way of life. He returned to that presentation at the end of his text, drawing comparisons taken from life under the Camara, under Samori, and under French rule. Therefore, after the presentation of legendary times in the early pages, readers are invited to compare three broad pictures of three different social constructs developed in the same region. That corresponds too with the overall structure of the text, which details life with the Camara and the Cissé before Samori, then life under Samori, and then under French rule. Therefore, the heterogeneity of style and genre in Djiguiba Camara's text was ruled by an imperative that was intrinsic to the narrative, which was that it must be a recounting of the emergence of a society regulated by just laws – those of the Camara – the Camara society later being compared with Samori's regime.

Finally, Djiguiba Camara's text provides us with lesser-known or even hitherto unknown episodes from the history of the region. Yves Person could therefore use "Essai d'histoire locale" to counterbalance Péroz's "Grand Guignol" descriptions of the siege of Sikasso and the fall of Samori's brothers.¹⁰²

The circumstances surrounding the death of Samori's brothers are unclear. The only certainty is that they were not killed in an important battle. According to one version, they were caught by surprise as they ventured far from their sanyé while hunting [5] [...] The Grand Guignol scene in which Péroz describes Thyéba having Samori's brothers torn apart for a whole day seems to be nothing more than a literary artifice.¹⁰³

It is extraordinarily striking that an African source questioned the accuracy of the French *doxa*. In fact it is a very good example of the role of this source, which serves to invalidate the accounts of the French as history's "victors." Yves

101 Geysbeek 2007: 74.

102 Péroz 1895: 124.

103 Person 1970 11: 794, note 75.

Person's approach of systematically juxtaposing sources from two continents is here successful thanks to his ability to use the elements provided by Djiguiba Camara, whom, as we know, Yves Person referred to as number 5. Returning to the theme of Sikasso, Djiguiba Camara dedicated a section to "the sorrel harvest," which is mentioned nowhere else. A seemingly comical and even bizarre episode, "the sorrel harvest" tells the story of how Managbè Mamadi Touré, one of Samori's sons, saved his father from a "brain cold" by stealing sorrel from the gardens of the wife of King Tièba, the very enemy whose city they had been besieging for a number of months:

Driven by love for his father, he [Managbè Mamadi Touré] immediately went to organise a sofa attack which he directed himself. The bold man headed for the garden of Sénie (queen of Tiéba) where they were spotted by Tiéba's troop, who covered the place in order to prevent them from picking their mistress's vegetables. The two armies met on open ground, leading to a bloody combat.¹⁰⁴

Sorrel was the ingredient needed to make the medicine which would save Samori's life, and in spite of heavy losses Samori's son's act of bravery earned him a respected position within the council. Yves Person accredited the episode which, at first sight, is doubtful or at least unconventional. He drew a parallel between this text and Festing's mention of the fact that Samori was indeed unwell at that time:

Manigbè-Mamadi was from then on the favourite and inspired oral tradition. According to [5], Samori suffered from a "brain cold" during the siege. (Festing confirms that at the beginning of May he had a fever and felt rather sick). Kariata, his wife, expressed out loud her regret for not being in Bisândugu, where Da (= Hibiscus saboariiffa), an efficient remedy, grew in her garden. Yet, in a garden in Tyèba, at the bottom of the town, South of the Dyöfuru, some da did grow. Manigbè-Mamadi, who had heard Kariata, took the initiative of going there to collect da under the fire of the Sikasso battle. An attack had to be pushed back and the "sorrel" battle (Da-Kèlè) was particularly bloody. Samori is said to have been very sensitive to his son's zeal.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 82.

¹⁰⁵ Person 1970 II: 794, note 82.

Against all odds then, the historian lends some degree of legitimacy to a previously unknown episode which to the best of anyone's knowledge is mentioned in no other literary text. We may note, however, that the motif of the sorrel harvest (by witches in that case) is to be found in certain versions of *Soundiata*, which might be evidence for the passage's legendary character.

It seems that the text is exceptional not only because of its length but also because of the quality of the information it provides on precolonial history, the foundation of Moussadougou, society under the Camara, and Samori's empire. Furthermore, it is an African source which has already been used to counterbalance French archives. Yves Person often quoted it to call into question Péroz's or Ménaud's judgements.¹⁰⁶ As a primary source for African history it had, in some sense, already been canonised before it was published. The text urges us to question the very notion of the "writing of history." In spite of what this source displays in defending African orality, the question about it is surely not whether it belongs to the oral tradition or the written realm, for of course it is now written. Rather, the question is about what sort of history writing it represents.¹⁰⁷ It is in that respect that we find Djiguiba Camara interesting, for he was torn between two heterogeneous forces, the effects of which coexist in his text without being synthesised. On the one hand, the choice to write in French and thereby obliquely to address a European audience, was combined with Djiguiba Camara's concern for evidence and with his rejection of legends in a search for comprehensiveness and what was not known. On the other hand, the legitimisation, through history, of his own position is reinforced through Djiguiba Camara's celebration of the Camara tradition and of inherited oral and literary narrative structures. Both coexist within the work, making completely irrelevant in this case any notions of the purity of "tradition," which Michel Foucault called the "illusion of origins."¹⁰⁸ The text belies too the equally deceptive quest for some objective way of writing. Djiguiba Camara's text is infused with contradictions, which is why it is difficult to comprehend, as it expresses the mutations of its time through a resolutely dialogical writing of history. Within the writing, several systems of historicity coexist, and memory wars are at play.¹⁰⁹ The "great divide" between traditional societies and societies

106 Péroz 1895; Meniaud 1935. Regarding the Colonial Library and the "Samori" imaginary in the first French narratives, notable here is a remarkable text by Albert Nebout (1899), who had the opportunity to witness the shotgun manufacturing process used by Samori's blacksmiths.

107 See Lenclud 1994; Certeau 1975.

108 Foucault 1971.

109 Stora 2007.

based on writing needs to be reconsidered here and the historiography would benefit from an exploration of such examples of hybrid coexistence.

The Figure of Samori Touré: An “Epic in the Making?”

Samori Touré, a Literary Character

In less than 100 years Samori became a well-known literary hero and the subject of a variety of narratives and characterisations, from bloody tyrant to a nation's founder. From hagiography to tales of his cruelty, Samori has held a fascination for the imaginary since as early as the nineteenth century, when he was already perceived as both the “Napoleon of the savannah” and a dangerous slave-dealer, an ambivalence that endures to this day. “Essai d’histoire locale” too, while purporting to be a purely academic and historical account, was embedded in the Samorian literary tradition.

Samori is the most important figure in “Essai d’histoire locale,” with the narrative constructed around Samori’s rise to power as the focal point. The origins of the Camara are but a prelude to the emergence of the Almami, as the author himself points out:

We will endeavour to bring out the exploits which characterise the days of the CISSE, BERETE, [and] TOURE. [...] Nevertheless, we give pride of place to the story of Samory. [...] It should also be noted that we insert the history of the Béréte, for it was in this period that Samory was initiated.

We also recorded this among the Cissé: his predispositions and his genius later allowed him to eliminate all other powers from a large part of the “pays noir.”

Before finding yourself in the history of Samory itself, you are no longer ignorant of the existence of these three powers.¹¹⁰

The systematic scrutiny of the country’s “major powers” serves to describe the landscape which Samori would enter. It is a text before the text – a “prolegomenon.” The volume dedicated to Samori seems to confirm that hypothesis, for in fact, “Essai d’histoire locale” is in large part “Samori’s History,” or at least the history of Samori viewed through the prism of the Camara’s local history.¹¹¹

110 Djiguiba Camara, “Essai d’histoire locale,” typescript p. 34.

111 On the ways Samori Touré’s story was used after independence, see Goerg 2011; Pauthier 2012.

We have seen that Djiguiba Camara himself was alternately described by Yves Person as “hostile” to Samori or, conversely, as representing the purest “pro-Samorian tradition” and that his position evolved over the course of the text. So, was Samori a praiseworthy hero who resisted colonial penetration, or a cruel conqueror? The character in Djiguiba Camara’s text is both – and that is what makes it interesting. The unstable axiology of the narrative seems partly to disprove the hypothesis of a fixed Samorian epic.¹¹² Samori is both praised for his bravery and his talent as a strategist, and yet hated for his evil deeds. Most importantly he is a fascinating character, all the more enigmatic for his ambivalence. Indeed, it is precisely his ambiguity that triggers the narrative. Samori seems to be an epic character “in the making,” within a potential developing epic of which the axiology remains unfixed.¹¹³

Black Legends

The text is partly in line with the major narratives hostile to Samori, from the early twentieth century to the present day. Indeed, there are a number of texts, including the oldest literary documents on Samori at our disposal, which promote interpretation of the character as a truly “black legend.” The representation of a bloodthirsty tyrant is an entirely literary motif which, in African literature, is fed by the influence of oral tradition. The cruel figure of incomprehensible motives borrows certain features from characters in folklore such as the widespread Terrible Child,¹¹⁴ whose cruelty is never explained nor even justified by any role as an “opponent” in the actantial model (while it is normal for the “villain” or opponent to behave cruelly in tales, it is seldom that the hero does so too!). Samori could also be compared to major ambivalent epic characters such as Soumaworo Kanté, who is simultaneously terrifying and a

112 This hypothesis is defended by Conrad 2011, in reply to Jansen 2002. It is difficult to settle the debate, all the more as many sources mentioned by Conrad are still unpublished. We diffidently suggest, without any claim to settle the question, that some germinal Samorian epic might have emerged in certain regions of Guinée. However, the extensive published literature which is clearly hostile to Samori, and which we use in our analysis, prevents that interpretation from being easily generalised for the whole of Guinée, let alone Mali or Côte d’Ivoire. Although the narrative’s extreme variability does not call into question the epic hypothesis, the text’s general axiology, on the other hand, seems to disprove it.

113 Bertho 2016.

114 On cruelty in African tales, see for example Calame Griaule 2002. See especially the several paragraphs in the introduction that deal with the question of cruelty. On the Terrible Child and his unexplained cruelty, see, among numerous works: Görög, Platiel, Rey-Hulman and Seydou 1980; Seydou 2005: chapter 48.

founding father. The same motif is similarly present in European literature, and is promoted there too for political and ideological reasons. For example, from the 1870s onwards French governments endeavoured to legitimise the continuation of a deeply unpopular colonial conquest, and so was developed in the late nineteenth century a resolutely orientalisising literature on the savage, the cannibal, and the cruel slave-driving king. Such literature was intended to evoke within public opinion a paternalistic reaction and desire to defend the oppressed – what came to be known as “the white man’s burden.”¹¹⁵ For example, the motif may be found in *Au Soudan* by Étienne Péroz,¹¹⁶ in which the character of the king of Nyagassola conforms to this literary cliché. From then on, French authors adopted the position of defenders of civilisation against barbarism.

As soon as the early twentieth century three African literary texts constructed the image of a terrible, Machiavellian Samori. That was not only because the memory of the war was still recent, and the authors belonged to groups who had suffered from population displacements, slavery and raids.¹¹⁷ We argue that it was also because their traumatic memory finds an embodiment in the literary memory, and because a common literary heritage of the terrible king before whom everybody trembles – man and beast alike – provides material which enables the narrative to be made coherent. Extreme violence and accounts of it are channelled via literary motif, of which Djiguiba Camara is partly the heir.

Amarou Kouroubari was probably the first to write about Samori, in a text in the Bambara language, translated into French in 1959. The text is entitled “The History of Imam Samori”¹¹⁸ and describes Samori as a slave trader and tyrant whose unrelenting wars devastated his country:

I left Dawakala with a desperate soul; the roads were covered with beheaded dead bodies; along the roads, we waded through blood that reddened our feet. Cursed be Samori and his son! They killed my father, my mother, my little brother and my little sister. May God chase them until they die and torture them in Hell!

115 On the construction of this paternalistic attitude on the *topos* of the cruel sovereign, see for English-speaking Africa Brantlinger 1988.

116 Péroz 1891.

117 On those still very vivid, transmitted memories in oral history, see Rodet and Challier 2014.

118 Kouroubari 1959. The first version in Bambara was published fifty years earlier: Delafosse 1901.

The bloody road motif would be used again in other narratives about Samori, now produced by French writers, in officers' accounts of Samori's capture in the heart of the forest, where the roads were littered with rotting corpses.¹¹⁹ A few years later, Abu Mallam wrote a text in *ajami*, dated 1914 and entitled "Histories of Samory and Babattu and Others."¹²⁰ In describing Samori's many campaigns the author placed heavy emphasis on the sacrilegious aspect of the destruction of so many holy Muslim cities. For example, paragraph 93 includes the description: "Samori was a false Muslim. Samori, son of Kufila, who deceives every one." Like Hare and Jackal, two recurring characters famous for their cruel tricks and untrustworthiness in alliances, Samori was often characterised by the French and his enemies alike as a traitor to his word, who constantly deceived his opponents with fallacious promises, whether regarding religion – here, his Muslim faith is contested by Mallam Abu – or the military treaties he signed with the British and the French.

During the same period, in 1915, Omar Berté used a school exercise book to record the memories of his father Kèlètigui Berté, who died that same year, thereby writing the "Mémorial of Kèlètigui Berté."¹²¹ Centred on the defence of Sikasso, first against Samori's armies then against the French, that text too belongs to the network of narratives hostile to Samori produced very soon after the events, from 1901 to 1915. Finally, more contemporary works in the same vein include Bala Kanté's version of defiance of Samori as a war-monger, especially in the short narrative recounting the capture of his voice.¹²²

Djiguiba Camara integrated various features of the cruel character into his own text. He strongly disapproved of the cruelty committed by Samori and his relatives, denouncing, for example, the "Sélinca ambush"¹²³ – although he

119 Similar images of bloody rivers can be found in oral history. See Rodet and Challier 2014.

120 School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) – Archives and Special Collections (London), Migeod section, MS 98013 Abu Mallam, Histories of Babatu and Samori and others, 1914. This document is in the Hausa language and was transcribed using the Arabic alphabet. Excerpts have been translated into English in Pilaszewicz 1991. We are grateful to Stanislaw Pilaszewicz who was kind enough to provide us with the transcription of the Hausa text into the Roman alphabet. A French translation of the 182 folios, led by Souleymane Ali Yero and Elara Bertho, is available as an Appendix to Bertho 2016: 558–607. See also Bertho 2017.

121 This text was given to Roland Colin in 1953 and published fifty years later. It should be noted that Yves Person owned a copy of it, and that he referred to it in his primary sources (Person 1975 111: 2159). Colin 2004, Appendix entitled "Mémorial de Kèlètigui Berté."

122 Jansen and Diarra 2006: 136–139.

123 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 74–75.

took pains to stress that Kyéulé was opposed to that particular decision. The especially lively descriptions of the reprisals against Samori's enemies add a poignant dimension to the account, while reinforcing the portrayal of the Almami's tyrannical character:

All the people taken captive are led to the place of torture. Men and women who had participated in acts of rebellion in response to Samory's public insults were beheaded on a plain of rocky ground. This was the biggest massacre and bloodied the plains for several days.

Sadji Oussou and his son Kanfing Féré were beheaded a bit further away. Sadji's head is removed, and cooked with salt. It was believed that this would root out the seed of chieftaincy for ever in this family.¹²⁴

Similarly, the conquest of Kong and the massacres of Muslims inside mosques are regarded as sacrilegious and a climax to the horror of war (page 97): "In the face of imminent danger, the marabouts took refuge in the mosques. They were not spared. Everywhere, pages of the Koran were strewn across the ground." The scattering of pages torn from the sacred book represents the extent of the sacrilege committed by the Almami. As Abu Mallam recalled on numerous occasions in "Histories of Samory, and Babatu and others,"¹²⁵ no Muslim may wage war against another Muslim; to do so is a grave sin. The section entitled "Depopulation" at the end of Djiguiba Camara's text summarises the consequences of Samori's general policy as Djiguiba Camara perceived them:

Depopulation under Samory had its deepest origins in the trade of captives in exchange for weapons, horses, ammunition. The killing of captives was also among the causes of this depopulation (people of Gouana transferred towards Bouré). To complete this picture we add to this the miseries of war (famine, disease). It is the Foutah which was populated to the profit of Samory's States (through trade and the resettlement of populations).¹²⁶

124 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 69.

125 School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) – Archives and Special Collections (London), Migeod section, MS 98013 Abu Mallam, Histories of Babatu and Samori and others, 1914.

126 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 102.

Slave trading was a major source of income for Samori, who depended on it to purchase rifles and munitions from both the British and the Germans. Furthermore, it is clear that population transfers were a major cause of depopulation during the second part of Samori's reign, as he fled the advancing French colonisation.¹²⁷

Djiguiba Camara inscribed himself in a tradition which rejected the characterisation of Samori as a legendary warrior. Even though he did not spread the rumours about "children crushed in mortars" or pulled out of their mother's wombs, which are commonplace narratives of war cruelty,¹²⁸ Djiguiba Camara nevertheless contributed to building what Yves Person called the "black legend" of Samori,¹²⁹ where neither horror nor cruelty invalidated the extraordinary aspect of the literary hero. On the contrary, they reinforced it: Samori is all the more fascinating due to his ambiguous and mysterious status.

Samori Touré: A Hero with a Fascinating Quality

That, then, is exactly what stands out in "Essai d'histoire locale:" fascination with the extraordinary destiny of a young Dyula who built an empire by himself, and then resisted colonisation. In spite of Samori's misdeeds, Djiguiba Camara could not help but admire his journey, often underlining its extraordinary nature. Indeed, from the account of his adolescence, Samori was immediately regarded as extraordinary and as already bearing the marks of his future glory. He was a leader who won the unanimous support of everyone around him; even his lack of success as a merchant was re-interpreted as a sign of his destiny:

He never backed down from any quarrel or any danger, never complained in any suffering and gladly sided with the dioulas in every argument. He also endeared himself to all those who travelled with him. He did not make a great fortune; the chosen man cannot have good luck in all his undertakings.¹³⁰

Moreover, Djiguiba Camara acknowledged that Samori's reign did have beneficial aspects, for example in religious education:

¹²⁷ Rodet 2015.

¹²⁸ See Rodet and Challier 2014.

¹²⁹ Indeed, the conclusion of his thesis is titled "The meaning of Samori: black legend or golden legend?," Person 1975 III.

¹³⁰ Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 47.

Samory had done the following good: Quranic education was no longer a privilege reserved for a minority. Everywhere, he had established Schools and attendance was compulsory for male children.¹³¹

Furthermore, Djiguiba Camara continually praised Samori's gifts as a strategist,¹³² admiring him for personally leading his men into battle,¹³³ and noting his mastery as a speaker.¹³⁴ Samori is portrayed as the epitome of a leader, the perfect example of a politician, a point illustrated in a scene in the section "His Encounter with the Bonnier Column." In the passage, Samori demonstrates his skill at deception while being pursued by the French. Contrary to what might be expected, Samori's flight is portrayed not as shameful nor as discrediting his courage – the text implies quite the opposite. Indeed, the escape is depicted so as to highlight the martial qualities of the leader: craftiness, *métis*, bravery, speed, and perceptiveness all characterise the Almamy. Like all true heroes he is assisted by an exceptional auxiliary, in this case his horse,¹³⁵ which is rewarded afterwards:

Since the minor operations of the rainy season, Samory had been in Mandou. He retreated further east, towards Djimini. But Samory remained the French armies' main concern. So the Bonnier column attacked him at Tintou. He was driven out and defeated.

"Thanks to God and to the speed of his horse with the white coat" (Gbassili) = which means "he who does not want to be struck" he managed to escape the pursuing spahis.

Descending from his mount, he said to his wives: "My horse deserves every congratulations, otherwise I would have fallen into the hands of the enemy." Immediately the women brought hot water and great quantities of sorghum for the animal in gratitude. His griot Sansona was captured and executed.¹³⁶

131 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 76.

132 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 42 ("Samori the diplomat").

133 One of the most revealing examples is undoubtedly the "War of Sanankoro," Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," p. 50, where Samori is described in action, fighting his enemies while encouraging his men.

134 See the speech he delivers to his "uncles" of the Camara family, in order to escape Saran Souaré Mory. Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 43.

135 In several tales from Western Africa, it is the horse that rescues the hero from the most hopeless situations; he sometimes even talks to and takes his place in ordeals. See "La fille travestie," in Seydou 2005.

136 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 96.

That is a description of a real achievement. Samori's mastery of the art of war allowed him to triumph in any situation. The defence of Diala was his first major feat of arms, and was the occasion when Samori was most heavily outnumbered by opposing forces. Even when describing the wars Samori led against the French, Djiguiba Camara placed less emphasis on the imbalance between the two competing armies:

The attack unfolded in the order planned. But neither Kaïssa Bala and his 600 warriors, nor Kolo with his 1,105 poorly-equipped and badly-trained men, succeeded in beating the 50 warriors reinforced by some warriors of Massaran Séri, the Almamy's father-in-law, who were entrenched in the fortification of Diala. [...] This was Samory's first serious victory.¹³⁷

Whatever Samori does in the text, he is depicted in an extreme manner: his talents, like his vices, can only be hyperbolic. In all cases, what is admired is the exploit, and Samori's extraordinariness.

His admiration is probably what led Djiguiba Camara to excuse Samori for the death of his, Samori's, own two daughters. The scene in which the Almami's daughters are stoned to death, as described by Péroz, is often interpreted in the literary tradition as the culmination of the leader's monstrosity and the most obvious indicator of his insanity. In Djiguiba Camara's text, on the contrary the blame is attributed to Samori's eager-to-please advisers and to his wives.¹³⁸ He is also tricked by the French as they capture him:

The arrest was made without obstruction. [...]

He was led to believe that the Chief of the White Men needed him in Kayes.¹³⁹ Travelling through Kankan, Siguiri, he and his family journeyed to Kayes. He had previously been told that he would have everything he needed to make his journey east. In Kayes, he was presented to the authority decreeing that he shall be sent into exile. Immediately, all his wives abandoned him, even his favourite, Sarankén.

137 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 49.

138 Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 77-78, episode cited above.

139 The motif of the false promise is common in African tales of colonisation. For more on this precise motif at the time of Samori's capture, see the musical version given by the very famous Bembeya Jazz National, *Retour sur le passé*, "Regards sur le passé," 15'01 and 22'41 (1999). In a different manner, the reggae singer Alpha Blondy reprises this argument: Alpha Blondy, *Cocody Rock!!*, "Samori Touré," 4'53 (EMI, 1984).

He was taken to Saint-Louis where he saw the truth of his son Karamoko; he saw the strength of the French. The words of praise from his griot Morifindian make him want to kill himself. Morifindian takes responsibility for killing him.¹⁴⁰

Although the treachery of the French during colonisation is a recurring theme,¹⁴¹ it is seldom referenced by authors hostile to Samori, but the man described here is abandoned by all, is facing dishonest enemies, and is surrounded by wives who are disloyal.

It seems, therefore, that Samori Touré was not entirely an epic hero, lacking the necessary homogeneity. In Yves Person's words, black legends and golden legends are always intertwined. Djiguiba Camara conveys that heterogeneity, which ultimately reflects the position of Djiguiba's own family who, although formerly influential counsellors of Samori Touré, broke away in 1893 in a spectacular volte-face, preferring instead to ally themselves with the French. That ambivalence was carried through into "Essai d'histoire locale."

This document is first and foremost an African source on African history. To borrow a phrase from Mbembe, this written work and this personal trajectory find themselves at the interface of cosmopolitanism and indigeness.¹⁴² The text is indeed of hybrid nature, thanks to its author's personal trajectory it is a successor to colonial monographs, but simultaneously profoundly rooted in local trajectories.

Far from being an anecdotal source or a piece of amateur history, "Essai d'histoire locale" is the work of a proper historian. The text embodies a practice of history which explicitly lays claim to a double belonging, which Djiguiba Camara wished to show as having equal dignity. It is up to us to take the text seriously as a source and especially for what it reveals about endogenous production during the colonial period of African history.

¹⁴⁰ Djiguiba Camara, "Essai d'histoire locale," typescript p. 100.

¹⁴¹ See the very recent novel by Djemaï 2012, the plot of which is entirely based on the treachery of the French during the capture of Abd-el Kader. The trickery of the British is also commonplace: see the accounts of the intentionally faulty translations of treaties, during the colonisation of Rhodesia, in narratives relating to Lobengula or Nehanda, for example, see Bertho 2016.

¹⁴² Mbembe 2000.

Episodes

Djiguiba Camara did not always use linear narration, and his text contains many analepses. Even though the author gave titles to his sections, they are too numerous to offer a clear overview. To allow for easier reading, we present the following outline of the text's contents:

- Note to my friend
- Preface, invasion of the Camara

Part One – The Country before Samori; the Camara, the Cissé, the Béréte

- The Camara: Farin Kaman, assassination attempt and Moussadougou war
- The thousand sacrifices
- Farin Kaman's sons
- Laws: customs, superstitions, society (hunters, lower classes, marriage)
- Genealogical table of Farin Kaman's sons (second list)
- History of Fakassia
- Kéoulén, Fakassia's successor
- Arrival of the Foulah
- Cissé's invasion, with Mori Oulé at their head
- Abdoulaye's rise to power
- Capture of Samori's mother, Samori's first military actions
- Advent of Siré Brahima, wars and revolts
- Expansion of the Béréte
- Samori's increasing power

Part Two – Samori's Empire

- Samori's genealogy and childhood
- First wars
- The taking of Sanankoro
- Various raids by Sadji
- Expansion towards the forest and northwards
- The fall of Nanténin Famourou
- The fall of Siré Brahima
- Organisation of Samori's army
- The fall of Sadji
- Farin Kaman's descendants, table (third list)
- The fall of Gnanenco (Sélinca ambush)
- Attacks against the French, meeting with Péroz (double infanticide and return of Karamoko at the same time)

- The siege of Sikasso
- Revolts by Samori's sons
- Organisation of armament
- The second wave of attacks against the French, migrations eastwards
- The taking of Kong
- The Braulot Affair (Bouna massacre)
- The arrest of Samori

Part Three – After the Fall of Samori

- Organisation under Samori (legal system, trade, agriculture, population, etc) and comparison with the Camara
- Return to the Camara; the history of Kaman Kékoura, under Samori, thereafter under the French
- French colonisation

ILL. 7 Petits et grands consultent les deux volumes d'El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara à Damaro, photographie de 2016 d'Elara Bertho et Marie Rodet / Young and old alike consult El Hadj Daouda Damaro Camara's two volumes in Damaro, photograph by Elara Bertho and Marie Rodet, 2016