

TRANSLATION AND ORTHOGRAPHY

The Mandinka language in this book is written with Roman letters and follows often used conventions in transcribing Mande languages. The material for all seven chapters was transcribed and then simultaneously translated line by line into French by a botanist from Dakar University (IFAN) named Kaoussou Sambou, an experienced transcriber and translator who is a Mandinka-speaking Jola from the Ziguinchor area. Line by line, Kaoussou painstakingly wrote out the French word beneath every word of Mandinka before rendering his translation on a third line. I translated this into English with the assistance of Scott Cooper, formerly a French professor at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. Using my own reasonable fluency in Mandinka, I edited out any of Kaoussou's extraneous comments, and corrected his translation. Plurals of family names and ethnonyms have been written in the singular form, following present-day conventions in West Africa.

The reader needs to bear in mind a number of factors that produce some inconsistencies in the text to an experienced Mandinka reader. First, one of my informants, Kaidri Drame, was a teenager and thus quite a lot younger than many of the other informants, who tended to be elders and whose speech patterns might be just as different from teenagers as they are today in Europe and America. Even among elders, the age variation was considerable, possibly enhancing slight differences in accent and pronunciation. For example, Tumani Jeta Kamara of Sumbundu may have been in his early to mid-seventies. But Fode Ibrahima Drame of Dar Silame was quite old, perhaps in his late eighties or nineties, and might not have travelled out of Dar Silame during at least the previous ten years. He also spoke somewhat softly, slightly slurring a few words.

In the sedentary Pakao village system, it is possible that very slightly different accents arose in villages only a few miles apart. People travelled somewhat sparingly, usually by dugout canoe, walking or bicycle, until they could reach a bush-taxi often a few miles away, plying a road often in bad repair during the rainy season. Slight accent variations might have been more pronounced between villages north of the Casamance River (including Dar Silame, Mankono Ba and Sumbundu.) and villages south of the river (including Sunakarantaba). In pre-Islamic times, when the village of Manduari ruled the area, Pakao was comprised of villages running about 20 miles north of the upper Casamance River. Two different kingdoms, Balmadou and Suna, lay on the south bank of the river. Another kingdom, Buje, lay around Sediou, west of the original Pakao villages. After the jihad of 1843, these kingdoms, including villages in Jasine, all became 'Pakao' in the minds of local inhabitants.

Finally, even caste differences might have slightly influenced speech

patterns, causing a village like Sumbundu, entirely composed of lower caste artisans and praise-singers, to speak very slightly differently from a noble village such as Mankonoba. In Gambian Mandinka and Pakao Mandinka, for example, where differences are even more pronounced, the former say *itondi* and the latter say *itodu*, to ask 'What is your name?'

Faced with such slight variations, Mr. Sambou and I deliberately chose to follow the spoken words of our informants closely in our transcription of the Mandinka. This results in a text which, in the eyes of the experienced Mandinka reader, sometimes might be uneven and inconsistent and look 'old-fashioned'. However, to convert the spoken words into to a standardized Mandinka would have resulted in a rather artificial text, in which the flavour of the original spoken version may have been lost. In order to make the Mandinka readable, names of persons and places are standardised, independent of the manner in which our informants pronounced them.

Regarding the pronunciation of Mandinka, the following rules are to be obeyed:

- 'e' is pronounced as 'ay' in 'say'
- 'y' is pronounced as 'y' in 'yard'
- 'i' is pronounced as 'ee' in 'see'
- 'u' is pronounced as 'ou' in 'you'
- 'j' is pronounced as 'j' in 'jazz'
- 'c' is pronounced as 'ch' in 'chop'

Vowels should be pronounced more or less separately, for instance 'kaidri' is pronounced as 'ka-ee-dree'

Single vowels are pronounced 'short'; double vowels are pronounced 'long'.

When a name has been spelled with two capitals, such as 'NDaye', the emphasis is on the second consonant.