FRENCH PERSPECTIVES IN AFRICAN STUDIES

A Collection of Translated Essays

Edited by
Pierre Alexandre

AFRICAN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

ROUTLEDGE

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OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Volume 1

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French Perspectives in African Studies

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EDITED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
PIERRE ALEXANDRE

Foreword by Daryll Forde

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Foreword

The preparation of this English version of a collection of studies by French Africanists arose from discussions at a special meeting on Francophone-Anglophone collaboration in African Studies which was convened by the Institute in April 1969. These included consideration of the need to make significant work published by scholars in either language more widely accessible.

While it might appear paradoxical that a need for much more extensive translation should be urged with reference to African studies, especially in the West African area, when the achievement of bilingual competence on the part of all serious scholars and research students was generally regarded as essential, it was also recognized that this was largely a question of timing and the range of dissemination of information. In Africa itself, even under favourable conditions it was thought that it would take a number of years before there was a considerable body of bilingual African students working in the African studies field, and that the same probably applied elsewhere. Meanwhile, a large amount of basic work and important lines of thought remained virtually excluded from undergraduate and even postgraduate training programmes owing to the lack of linguistic competence on the part of students and the difficulties of effective procurement of foreign books.

It was also thought that the anglophone academic world was less familiar with and made less use of francophone material than vice versa, and that this could be held a reason for concentrating in the first place on securing translations into English of French studies relating to the West African region. It was urged that the Institute itself should contribute to this effort by undertaking the publication in English of a collection of studies which would present in brief compass some of the main approaches and methods that had been developed by French Africanists since the forties.

This proposal was accepted by the Council of the Institute, and Professor Pierre Alexandre kindly consented to undertake the editorship of the volume. This, as he makes clear in his Introduction, has been no easy task. Limitations of space and the very wide range of publications to be considered raised difficult problems of selection, which called for many consultations with colleagues and subsequent

discussions with those who consented to contribute studies. Professor Alexandre has also given careful consideration, in consultation wherever possible with the authors, to the translations, in order to ensure faithful and clear rendering of the original texts.

While he stresses that a small collection of studies of this kind can make no claim to be comprehensive or systematic, it will, we hope, be recognized as providing a fair conspectus of the scope and trends of African studies in France. The salient features of these are outlined and vividly commented on by Professor Alexandre in his own Introduction. The Institute is greatly indebted to him for the care and pertinacity that he has devoted to the editing of this volume. Its thanks are also due to the co-operation of the authors whose work is included in this volume and to Dr. Robert Brain for the translations, in which he has endeavoured to present as effectively as possible versions of concepts and modes of expression in the original French texts which might otherwise have been obscure to English readers.

We are also indebted to the editors and publishers of the journals in which the original French texts appeared for permission to publish these translations.

The International African Institute gratefully acknowledges the assistance provided for the translations presented in this volume by a grant from the Secrétariat d'Etat aux Affaires Etrangères, Paris, accorded with the support of the International Social Science Council. The Secrétariat d'Etat has, however, had no part in the selection of the French texts for which the International African Institute is solely responsible.

DARYLL FORDE
Director

Introduction

PIERRE ALEXANDRE

'*Africanisme*' is generally translated as 'African studies', yet I could not swear that the semantic fields of both terms are exactly co-terminal. '*Africanisme*' was coined some sixty years ago after '*Orientalisme*' which had been in use since the beginning of the nineteenth century with the meaning '*science ou étude des choses de l'Orient*'. In fact, owing to the peculiar logic of the French diplomatic service, '*Africanisme*'—probably as the 'science or study of things African'—was (still is even now) a part of '*Orientalisme*'. The most recent of French dictionaries (*Petit Robert*, Paris, 1967) ignores '*Africanisme*' but presents the '*Africaniste*' as 'a specialist in African languages and civilizations'. The latter term, even before the creation of Congrès International des Africanistes (1964) had gained official recognition in France, so to speak, with the foundation of the Société des Africanistes, whose *Journal*, now in its fortieth volume, was for long the only, and is still the main, French learned periodical exclusively devoted to African topics. In spite of this it is only since the late fifties that African studies have been officially introduced in some French universities.

At this point the non-Gallic reader must probably be reminded of an idiosyncrasy of the French higher-education system, i.e. the division between *Grandes Ecoles*,[1] which are mainly vocational, with admission by competitive examination, and universities, which are open to all and only slightly concerned with vocational training. Things African were, at first, a monopoly of the Ecole Coloniale, the Colonial service training college, and the Ecole des Langues Orientales, which coaches people for the Diplomatic Service examinations. The infiltration of African studies into academic university curricula did not begin in earnest before French colonialism was decidedly on the wane.

This does not mean that the prehistory—so to speak—of African studies, the period where those concerned were mostly colonial administrators and Christian missionaries, must be underrated. There

[1] Now called 'Grands établissements'; in literal translation: 'Grand establishment', a not insignificant pun . . .

were sound workers among them, as typified by the dominant figure of Governor Maurice Delafosse (1870–1927), anthropologist, linguist, and historian, a scholar of international repute, often prophetic in both his methods and his views. Nevertheless those pioneer Africanists were, on the whole, a closed group (with frequently ferocious strife between laymen and clergy), whose work had little direct impact outside their own ranks. They were still the 'explorers' or 'travellers' whose reports were theorized upon by stay-at-home professors. It must be confessed that most of them were, for evident reasons, more concerned with immediate application of their observations than with general theories. This is evidenced by the fact that most scholarly administrators put the stress of their researches on law and political institutions, while the missionaries preferred to look into religion and systems of values and beliefs. Such theoretical background as existed came mainly from P. Schmidt's *Anthropos* school with the clerics, from Comte through Durkheim and Levi-Bruhl with the laymen. The main fields of studies were anthropology (only sociology was then officially taught in France), linguistics (French universities preferred philology), and history (it was the academic historians' dogma that Africa *could not* have a history). There was no question of an African equivalent of the Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient: the mere idea of it would have been considered a joke before 1914.

The change started between the two World Wars; there was increased interest in the social sciences in French universities, and especially in that rather queer, marginal institution, the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes à la Sorbonne.[2]

Then, in the early thirties, the Ministry of Colonies endowed a chair of anthropology (French: *ethnologie*) in the Sorbonne, while the Governor General of French West Africa created the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) with headquarters in Dakar and local branches in the several territories.

The first holder of the chair of anthropology was Marcel Mauss. He was not an Africanist, nor even a 'real' anthropologist, in so far as he had no experience of field-work. Nevertheless he was the father of professional anthropology in France: by 1935 his first students were engaged in their initiatory field-work in various parts of the world,

[2] Founded in 1862, reputedly on an Oxbridge model, it associates research and teaching; with no regular curriculum, teaching chiefly in seminars and tutorials, it does not grant degrees, but offers subjects ignored by Universities, often on an experimental basis; sections IV, V, and VI are concerned with the social sciences and the humanities.

including Africa, starting a new trend which had taken firm roots by 1939.

In 1940 Professor Mauss was deprived of his chair by the Nazis and Vichyites. He was eventually replaced by Professor Marcel Griaule (1898–1956), the first Africanist to hold a chair in a French university: this was the end of our prehistory, and marked the start of the anthropology of today.

IFAN was probably the first all-embracing institute of African studies, dealing with both social and natural sciences as applying to the African milieu. It employed both professionals and amateurs (some of whom eventually turned professional), African as well as European, obtaining results out of proportion with its shoestring budget. One of its main functions was to ensure coordination of research and mutual information for research workers, both residents and visitors. It was to become, after 1945, the nucleus of the University of Dakar which eventually took over a large part of its former functions.

*

This collection is a partial one, in every sense of the term. Unwillingly partial, but partial just the same. There is no room here to explain in detail the methods and constraints which played a part in the final selection of texts and authors. Those authors who are represented here chose their own texts—subject to the limitations of conditions of reprinting and the space available—so that their contributions can be considered as fairly typical of their own work. But they are not representative of the whole panorama of contemporary trends among French Africanists. To begin with, all of them are, now, working in Paris: the provincial and African universities and research centres have to some extent been left out from lack of space. Even then the sample is not representative of all the trends in the Paris schools. The youngest generation, which tends to be much more radical in outlook, methods, and aims is hardly represented at all. For the more senior practitioners, the sample is fair enough as regards disciplines, but not too well balanced with respect to trends and methods. To take but one example, such a respected scholar as Professor Bastide (Afro-American ethno-psychology) very kindly agreed to step aside to make room for a younger person. Of course, Professor Bastide does not need to be introduced to specialists; yet his absence, even if it has allowed us to correct to some extent the effects of the generation gap, still results in some imbalance of the general picture. And we could quote about a dozen other obvious omissions,

such as R. Mauny, E. de Dampierre, C. Tardits, P. F. Lacroix, R. Pélissier, M. Houis, H. Deschamps, to mention only a few well-known names. Exhaustiveness was, however, impossible within the assigned limits, while it is doubtful whether a purely random choice of authors and subjects would have provided a better overall view. It may well be that a purely personal and subjective choice of writers and topics would have offered a better solution than the present compromise. On the other hand it is perhaps more significant to have let the authors make their own choice, the editor being responsible only for apportioning space between the various disciplines.

As the reader will come to realize, anthropology is central in the field of Francophone African studies. Yet the table of contents shows only three pieces of straight anthropology (the French word *ethnologie* would perhaps be more apt). For, in fact, most, if not all articles are basically anthropology in combination with some other discipline. Another indication of this is the proliferation in French of compound phrases such as *ethnosociologie*, *ethnohistoire*, *ethnolinguistique*, etc. *Ethnogéographie* is hardly, if ever, used today, yet this does not prevent the geographers from having anthropological (they tend to say 'sociological') preoccupations and from working in teams with anthropologists.

As mentioned before, Marcel Griaule was the real pioneer in African anthropology and many of his students and disciples are still active in the discipline. Griaule's anthropology is not too easy to define in Anglo-Saxon terms. His approach, influenced as it was by the Durkheimian tradition, was nevertheless probably closer to American cultural anthropology than to British social anthropology (the latter found a parallel more in applied sociology as expounded by Robert Montagne and his school in North Africa and the Near East). The main concern of Griaule and his students was directed towards systems of values, beliefs, and Weltanschauung, rather than towards kinship systems and political structures. It led to meticulous, painstaking, almost exhaustive ethnography, with an attempt to interpret the resultant data in the Africans' own terms or views. *Dieu d'eau* (*Conversations with Ogotemmêli*, London, 1965) or *Le Renard pâle* are thus Dogon ethnography rather than an ethnography of the Dogon. Or, to put it another way, it is second level ethnography—the ethnography of Dogon ethnography. Griaule's classic article on the mother's brother in the Western Sudan is quite typical in this respect, especially when compared with, for instance, that of Radcliffe-Brown. Similarly Germaine Dieterlen's description of the blacksmith caste in

the same region is primarily cultural rather than structural or functional as would probably have been the case with a student of Malinowski or Radcliffe-Brown, and this is true to an only slightly lesser extent of Denise Paulme's work on age-sets and blood-pacts as compared, for instance, with Evans-Pritchard on those of the Nuer or Azande.

It is rather difficult to describe the philosophy underlying the works of this school and period. The *ethnologues*, at least in Africa, kept aloof from the sociologists, striving more or less explicitly to keep the two disciplines apart. In so far as French sociological work on Africa had been influenced—quite strongly in some cases (cf. Maunier's *Sociologie coloniale*, 1932)—by Comte's and Spencer's evolutionism, the African anthropologists reacted against this tendency which had all too often led to rather unpleasant racial stereotypes of 'primitive' or 'backward' peoples. Griaule himself fought, fiercely at times, to have African cultures recognized as real and valid ones, on a level both with Western and with 'classical' and exotic civilizations.

This kind of anti-evolutionist, possibly anti-sociological bias, resulted in a somewhat static approach, producing splendidly detailed descriptive work as far as traditional customs and modes of behaviour were concerned, but often failing to take into account phenomena of social change with the ensuing modifications or re-interpretations of customary values. The implicit ideology of the Griaulean school has been a generous universalist humanism which sought, so to speak, for proofs of the essential humanity—and hence equality—of Africans, through and beyond the originality of their cultures. Save ye first the kingdom of culture and politics and economy will be added unto you . . . Griaule himself, as a politician (he was active in the demo-christian Mouvement Republicain Populaire and a member of the Assemblée de l'Union Française), was strongly critical of the assimilationist aims and methods of the French colonial administration, yet he never confronted the existence of the colonial relationship as such. In fact he tended to ignore all manifestations of the colonial presence among his beloved Dogon, to leave it out of the otherwise meticulous picture he gave of their society.

The colonial facts of life were to be discovered only by the post-war generation with the initiative of Georges Balandier, who introduced the notion of the 'colonial situation' in 1955, a bare five years before the official demise of colonialism. This generation saw the end of the divorce between anthropology and sociology, a rapprochement which

soon extended to other disciplines as well. The initiative cannot be laid exclusively at Balandier's feet. It was a result, in part, of the growth in numbers of younger French Africanist research workers, in part of a better knowledge of British and later American studies, both in anthropological theory and in African field-research. Some of Griaule's followers actively joined in this widening of aims, approaches, and methods. Yet differences are evident from a comparison, for instance, of Calame's and Alexandre's work in linguistics, the former being rather ethnological, the latter rather sociological in their contexts.

Balandier's *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique noire* (1955) offered a dynamic, future-oriented approach, which not only did not try to sift out the 'impure' non-ethnological modern traits but in fact consciously sought to integrate them into the description of contemporary African societies as total systems. It was an anthropology of function, much influenced by the British functional–structural school, and making no really clear-cut distinction between anthropology and sciology. Its practitioners would probably prefer to be called *ethnosociologues* rather than plain *ethnologues*, and rightly so. Culture is not, however, neglected in this approach (as it tended to be in some British works of the forties), but it is no longer analysed as an isolated or isolable phenomenon. Rather it is viewed in a dynamic, dialectic relationship with the other aspects of the total field, including politics and the economy. Scholars of this persuasion are certainly not orthodox marxists but they have read Marx whose influence, if not determinant, still remains quite perceptible in their writings. Multi-disciplinary studies become a necessity with this group, be they conducted by teams (e.g. Sautter's and Balandier–Mercier's *Atlas des terroirs africains*, associating geographers and ethno-sociologists) or by general practitioners (Alexandre on language problems and nation-building). Lifelong, intensive studies of one group *à la* Griaule tend to be replaced by a shorter term of concentrated field-work followed by still shorter trips to other regions and other tribes, offering a wider basis for theorizing. The scholars' personal involvement with one particular people is probably less deep than in the Griaulian approach, the overall concern with Africa has taken on a different orientation. It is also significant that the growth and academic installation of this school—if it can be called a school—was contemporary with the decolonization of Africa.

The most recent generation working in independent Africa, then, would be represented in this volume by Claude Meillassoux and

J. Zempleni-Rabain. The latter, as a psychologist with good anthropological training, is probably less typical of the new trend than Meillassoux, who is often categorized as an economic anthropologist. It would be more to the point to characterize him as a neo-marxian general anthropologist, since his preoccupation with economic structures derives from a rigorous application of some of Marx's social concepts, that is, to simplify somewhat unduly, on occasion, an explanation of the total structure of any society based on the study of the modes and relationships of production. As such he is typical of a new radical trend—whose exponents do not belong to the French Communist Party—including such people as E. Terray or P. P. Rey, whose views also derive from Lévi-Straussian structuralism as well as from the works of neo-marxian philosophers such as G. Althusser.

With this group the fusion of anthropology and sociology is complete. What they advocate is, in fact, a unified field theory of all the social sciences, a single, all-embracing, total Sociology. *Africanisme* then would no longer have its own theoretical *raison d'être*. It would become a local application of the general Science of Society—which would at the same time be the Science of Man. Thus would the circle be closed: we should be back at the situation which obtained at the end of the nineteenth century, only at a higher level of abstraction, with a higher power of explanation. One does not want to sound too pessimistic or old-fashioned, yet it is difficult to escape a feeling that this is still a little premature.

While there is certainly a very definite need for synthetic and comprehensive studies of Africa and Africans much—if not most—of the data are still to be collected. It is an interesting fact that many African students are going back to ethnography, a field which has been somewhat neglected since the late fifties. And a similar tendency can be observed among young African linguists, geographers, and historians: they engage in monographic studies, not because it is an easier apprenticeship (it is not) but because they are probably more aware than their European colleagues of the actual scarcity of reliable data and of the difficulty and urgency of their collection. This does not mean either that they wish to renounce communication outside the bounds of their own methodology or that they make no attempt at theoretical analyses or generalization. But they approach Africa as insiders, even while using outsiders' methods and instruments. This is likely to lead to a new type of relationship between foreign Africanists and African social scientists—an issue which is of world-wide, not just French or European, dimensions.

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II

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The Mother's Brother in the Western Sudan

MARCEL GRIAULE[1]

The problem of the relationship between the maternal uncle and his sister's son has long been under discussion by sociologists and anthropologists. A considerable amount of documentation has been collected on the rites, practices, and representations which characterize this relationship, and attempts to explain and to become more deeply aware of the subject-matter are many in the literature. It would therefore seem to be of some interest to contribute to this debate, which is far from closed, some explanations provided by the people themselves on situations originating from this type of kinship.

The Sudan provides an excellent field of study, offering at first sight clear-cut examples of this institution, which among the Bambara and the Fulani, for example, manifests itself both during periods of tension on the occasion of funerals, weddings, and births, and also in the most current events of everyday life. Among the Fulani, where children live in close contact with both the father and the mother's brother, they will certainly expect a degree of attachment from the former, but it is the latter who shows tender affection on all occasions. If today a boy goes to school, his father gives him advice but will restrict his compliments and will be harsh in his criticism. The mother's brother, on the other hand, will always show great indulgence. A father, when scolding his son for unsatisfactory school results will often conclude: '. . . and now go and be comforted by your uncle.'

[1] *Marcel Griaule* (1898–1956), Dr. es L. The first field anthropologist appointed to a Chair of Ethnology at the Sorbonne (1942). Initially trained in Semitic languages, he worked first (1928) in Ethiopia and then, from 1931, in West Africa, specializing on the Dogon of Mali. Developed a method of exhaustive ethnography, working with a team of students year after year on a limited area. After the Second World War he also entered politics, being elected a Councillor of the French Union, in which capacity he played an important part in the drafting of constitutional and legal reforms in West Africa. Until his death he was the dominant figure in French African studies. The original French text of this paper was published as 'Remarques sur l'oncle utérin au Soudan', *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, xvi (1954), 35–49.

Later on the relationship undergoes a change: in spite of the uncle's continuing indulgence, the nephew will start criticizing him and making demands, most of which will be met, the most important being, among the Bambara for example, the provision of a wife. In many cases, moreover, the kind of obligation which the uncle seems to have assumed towards his nephew will be extinguished as soon as marriage takes place. Somehow compensatory to this attitude we can observe, among the same people, a classic rivalry between the father and the son, a so-called *fadena* in which substantive expression the terms *fa* 'father' and *de* 'son' could mean 'father–son rapport', 'father–son way of relating'. This term is applied to practically all kinds of rivalry, that between father and son being the prototype. Among some peoples these attitudes are even more pronounced; among the Dogon, when the death of the mother's brother is announced, his sister's sons are told by the elders on the paternal side that 'their millet is ripe!': *yu bemme illawa*. By this they mean that it is the time for them to go and 'harvest' the crops, that is the wealth of their uterine kin, wealth which has become available on the death of their uncle and which, mythically, should belong to them.

The same encouragement is given to them at the end of the mourning period, *dama*, which is celebrated several months or even years after the funeral; those who participate take the opportunity to indulge in apparent violence,[2] raiding cattle and foodstuffs which they carry off to the young men's house in their village ward. It is all eaten on the spot and shared with members of their age classes, *tonno*, who receive the plunderers with shouts of *day sõ*, which is normally shouted at hunters in order to bring them luck or to praise them for their spoils. The elders call after the young men *olu po*, 'good bush', when they see them going off to the meal, known as *niñu walu* 'the diminishing of the uncle'.

A 'diminishing of the uncle' also takes place on other occasions. Any visit which the nephew makes to his house is a pretext for levying small amounts of goods, and this is done with a great deal of furore while daring jokes and insults are directed at the uncle's wife.

Along with customs such as these we have, among the same people, rivalry between father and son and between brothers, and a marked reserve between mother and son.

[2] This feigned attitude parallels the actual limitations on the amount of goods taken. In 1946 the young men of a family in Dozyou Oreil (Upper Sanga) pillaged their maternal kin living in Dyamini (Lower Sanga) and their booty, considered a large one, consisted of ten measures of millet, a dozen chickens and a goat.

These classic facts, so well established that we do not need to elaborate on them here, are given an initial explanation:

'All those things, the Dogon say, which the *mangou*[3] nephew (joking relative) steals from his uncle, it is because of (his) mother: it is because of the anger (which he feels at the idea) that there has been no marriage between (his) uterine uncle and (his) mother. If (the nephew) insults his uncle's wife, it is because she has taken his mother's place. The symbolic anger he feels towards his father is because his mother did not stay (marry) with his uncle.'[4]

The focal point of interest, therefore, in these initial statements, is the non-realized union of his mother and his uterine uncle: i.e. between a brother and a sister. In fact, the ideal union, mythically speaking, is between a pair of twins whose prototype came from the egg of the world. They consider any situation in the present to be the direct consequence of the first acts of creation, which must be presented here, as succinctly as possible, if we wish to comprehend the problem.

Creation began with a seed of *Digitaria exilis* which is euphemistically known as *kize uzi*, 'the little thing', that is, in the minds of the people, the smallest of all things.[5] This tiny grain was the prefiguration of a limitless world: it contained, in particular, a central kernel made of a tablet bearing signs which, after being dispersed in outer space, fell on mankind thereby making people conscious of themselves.[6]

The interior of this egg-seed was divided into two placentas which prefigured the worlds of heaven and earth and each contained a pair of twins of both sexes, Nommo, direct emanations of the creator Amma. While Amma is unique, his perfect unity is only realized in the association of two complementary creatures, male and female in

[3] The word *mangou* is used here to explain the nephew's attitude to his uncle and recalls that of his 'joking partner'. This over-simple translation is used here for convenience only. Cf. my article 'Alliance cathartique', *Africa*, xviii, 4 (October 1948).

[4] Ledu woniñi mon mãgugo kede woy guyã. wozogo wona sabde. wogõ woniñugo wo na belle yagi yolugo kine ban dige. wo niñu yana woduyozogo wo na dõy dãga dige. wo de le kine banu le wo aduno sone wona wo niñu mon toyoluga.

[5] This euphemism is used mostly by totemic priests for whom this grain is strictly tabooed.

[6] The metaphysical part of creation will not be treated here. We shall deal only with that mythical part which concerns beings whose situation and sentiments are prototypes for those of mankind today. The Dogon system of astronomy will also be omitted along with a detailed description of twinship which we shall mention only briefly. For signs, cf. M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, *Signes graphiques soudanais* (L'Homme: Cah. Ethnol. Géog. et Ling., no. 3), 1951.

each case. In one of these parts the male did not wait the correct amount of time to be formed but sprang out prematurely, disappearing into space, taking with him some grains of *Digitaria exilis* and a piece of his own placenta.

He wanted to create his own world, a replica, before its time, of the one which, until then, had only a potential existence and which was to develop normally.[7]

He made a rough shape of the earth with the things he brought with him but since he had been separated from his female twin he climbed back into the egg in order to try and find that part of the placenta where she was. However Amma stepped in then and dispersed the contents of the egg and the creature went back down again, incomplete, to begin his ever fruitless quest for his twin, Yasigi, whom Amma handed to the other pair of Nommo.

However by procreating in his own placenta which had become the earth and was the avatar of his genitrix, he created—into obscurity, dryness, and the absence of time—single creatures who were incomplete like himself. At the same time he himself took the form of an animal called Yurugu (*Vulpes pallida*).

Henceforth everything in the world below became impure, as the result of incest which had been prefigured by Yurugu's fruitless return into the egg from which he had been born.

In order to remedy the drawbacks of this situation, Amma sent the couple of Nommo to earth accompanied by blacksmiths and four couples who were to be the second generation. They occupied a huge ark which bore a whole new world which with light, moisture, and time, took over from the earlier world. Nevertheless, the latter did not disappear; order and disorder coexisted, one being necessary to the other, a situation which revealed itself in the ceaseless struggle between Nommo and Yurugu, in which the latter is for ever vanquished.

This brief outline of the considerable myth developed by the Dogon will suffice to enable us to follow the inquiries into their representations of kinship and their attitudes to these.

The Dogon joint family forms an exogamous group which is patrilocal and patrilineal. As far as marriage is concerned they

[7] Here, as far as the Dogon are concerned, we are presenting a summary and necessarily clumsy picture of these events. This person is the avatar of an internal vibration of the egg, which once it pierced the sheath joined the external world. It was therefore normal for him to come out first, and it was in the creator's plan. What was abnormal was his theft which caused disorder, a feature equally essential to creation.

practise a form of generalized exchange, the preferred spouse being the daughter of the mother's brother.[8]

However, this situation and similar practices are the basic structure supporting complex patterns, varying according to the reciprocal position of the agnatic and uterine kin, or between spouses or again between generations as in the case of uncle and uterine nephew. Thus for each individual the uterine group represents feminity and maternity. Whatever his age he calls all the women of his maternal family 'mother', even small girls. This group's patron is the Nommo pair, first expression of the embryo which was to become a universe based on the principle of twinness.

On the opposite side, the agnatic group represents masculinity and paternity, being the guarantor of Amma the creator. In this case, Amma-creator and the created Nommo-universe are equivalent, the universe being nothing more than a replica of Amma, as are also the two groups which unite in order that life may continue.[9] The non-paired couple Yurugu and Yasigi do not appear.

Seen from another angle, the two lines merge at the level of *ego*'s grandfathers, who are Amma and bifurcate on the level of genitors: the father and his sister are the pair of reorganizing Nommo, and the mother and her brother are the other couple from the egg, Yurugu and Yasigi. In other words, it means that agnatic kin are images of those beings in that part of the egg where all events took place in an orderly fashion, other kinsfolk, on the other hand, correspond to that part where disorder reigned and where the generations became muddled.

Indeed the norms, at the beginning of creation, involved twinship parity on the one hand, and union between a brother and a sister belonging to the same pair of twins on the other. The twins who were born of this union, and who also married, had as their father the twin brother of their mother; later, as a result of the incest prohibition, he became the uterine uncle. Let us provisionally content ourselves with looking at this mythical rule and its projection into the real world

[8] Cf. M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, 'The Dogon' in *African Worlds*, ed. Daryll Forde, London, 1954; also G. Dieterlen, 'Parenté et mariage chez les Dogon', *Africa*, xxvi, 2 (April 1956).

[9] We could almost say that we are dealing with the subordination of the creator to his work. This idea, at all events, is expressed in a phrase, *Amma gunnono* ('captive of God' or 'God captive'). Cf. M. Griaule and G. Dieterlen, 'Signes graphiques soudanais', p. 22, fig. 41. See also fig. 43, ibid. *Amma kobo* ('water-drawer of God' or 'God water-drawer') which shows the creator in his role as a drawer of water, that is, bearer of life to the world or in his role as master of a water-drawer.