
(Post)Colonialism and Ideological Configurations: An Analysis of the Power Structures in Cheikh Hamidou Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*

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In 2007, the signatories of the *littérature-monde* manifesto declared an end to *Francophonie* and the demise of the “Franco-French” literary center. Thus, the study of Francophone literatures, as separate from French literature, has extensively benefitted from new approaches.¹ The vast and protean cultural theories of postcolonial studies, as well as gender and queer studies, first emerged in Anglo-American universities. In “Littérature française et littératures francophones: une union inconvenante?,” Nadège Veldwachter suggests that these studies have enabled researchers to apply an interdisciplinary, eclectic approach to Francophone literatures while attracting the best Francophone thinkers and writers to their institutions. In spite of their imperfections, postcolonial studies advance the interdisciplinary collaboration that tries to provide answers to such questions as: “Quelle histoire la littérature considère et configure-t-elle? Et quelle littérature l’histoire fait-elle advenir ou apparaître?” ‘What history does literature consider and configure? And what literature does history produce or render visible?’ (Emmanuel Bouju, *Littérature et histoire*, qtd. in Veldwachter 30). For the purpose of this essay, I would suggest adding the question: “To what extent does literature ‘consider and configure’ history accurately?” More specifically, I will examine the power structures in Cheikh Hamidou Kane’s *L’Aventure ambiguë* (1961), translated as *Ambiguous Adventure* by Katherine Woods in 1963, by rereading this classic Francophone African novel through the lens of Mahmood Mamdani’s cultural study *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (1996).

Critics of Kane’s novel have studied this philosophical text as a Bildungsroman or inverted tale of initiation, as well as a young man’s search for cultural identity; others have focused on the antagonism between tradition and modernity, including the contrast between Islamic mysticism and Western materialist individualism; few have analyzed its ideological configurations. After a brief introduction of both texts (Mamdani’s and Kane’s), I will examine to what extent some aspects of the analysis of power structures in colonial Africa and its legacy as described

by Mamdani may be identified in *Ambiguous Adventure*. Does the fictional, partly autobiographical world created by Kane reflect the sociopolitical reality and its implications as described in *Citizen and Subject*? I will also explore the relevance of Mamdani's theory with respect to the immediate post-independence situation in the Futa Toro, the northern region of Senegal where the novel takes place.²

Mamdani provides a thorough and provocative analysis of the obstacles to the democratization of post-independent African nations whose roots are found, to a large measure, in the historical and institutional context of colonialism. Power structures in contemporary Africa were mainly forged during colonialism, including its despotic forms of direct and indirect rule. A bifurcated colonial regime was the solution provided by the foreign minority to effectively control the indigenous majority. Initially, the occupying powers of most African colonies opted for a direct form of rule, for an unmediated centralized despotism that Mamdani refers to as a "form of urban civil power" that excludes "natives from civil freedoms guaranteed to citizens in a civil society" (Mamdani 18). However, during the late-nineteenth-century scramble for Equatorial Africa possessions, the British began to comprehend that indirect rule proved to be the most effective mode of domination. In most French colonies this realization evolved several decades later.

A Mamdani objective is to link decentralized despotism to apartheid, a term that does not qualify a uniquely South African experience: "As a form of rule, apartheid is what Smuts calls institutional segregation, the British termed it, indirect rule, and the French association" (Mamdani 8). Indirect rule was administered through Native Authorities by customary laws, the laws of the local tribes. Since there were a number of customary laws, colonial powers favored those that best accommodated their colonial practices, their "monarchical, authoritarian, and patriarchal notion of the customary" (Mamdani 22). This theory concurs with Frantz Fanon's, because the term "petrification" denotes the *modus operandi* of colonial power: the reinforcement of existing feudal systems, particularly in rural areas, to create a rift between country dwellers and the urban population (Fanon 109). Mamdani stresses the diversity and the contradictions that have historically shaped the "unfreedom" of many Africans—some pre-colonial chieftainships were based on kinship; others were administratively appointed. "Yet the point about colonialism was that it generalized both the conquest state and the administrative chiefship (sic), and in doing so it wrenched both free of traditional restraint" (Mamdani 40). Unfortunately, because customary authorities were often designated by the colonial state, village chiefs easily evolved into despots. Well aware that in pre-colonial times elders were also guilty of exploiting their

people, Mamdani acknowledges that decentralized power went unrestrained under colonialism. Consequently, European powers “crystallized a range of usually district-level Native Authorities, each armed with a whip and protected by the halo of custom” (Mamdani 49). Customary power sanctioned the cultural traditions that the tribe pledged to enforce. It allowed the colonizing forces to settle the “native question” by maintaining law and order among natives and “to create a dependent but autonomous system of rule, one that combined accountability to superiors with a flexible response to the subject population, a capacity to implement central directives with one to absorb local shocks” (Mamdani 60). In French-controlled West Africa, colonial administrators reverted to indirect rule (referred to as “association”) in the 1920s after experience in the Four Communes evidenced that cultural assimilation, a policy of direct administration practiced between 1890 and 1914, led to native revolt; the opposition resulted from the policy itself rather than from its compliance. (The Four Communes, the oldest towns in colonial Senegal, technically enjoyed the rights of French citizenship.) The French eventually understood the essential mediating role of the native tribal chief. He was generally supervised by a *chef de terre*, a “regional chief” in charge of several villages who, in turn, was overseen by a French *commandant de cercle* or “district commander.” The “district” was the smallest unit of French colonial administration in Africa administered by a *commandant*. Mamdani specifically mentions French relations with respect to Sufi Islam³ whose *marabouts* (Muslim clerics)⁴ led an effective resistance in the early period of colonialism; eventually, they formed a productive alliance with the French authorities. Foucault has explained aptly why this “delegated” colonial power functioned so effectively: “power is tolerable on condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (86).

To what extent are indirect rule by the French colonial regime, “masked power,” and its pitfalls, as described by Mamdani in *Citizen and Subject*, revealed in Kane’s *Ambiguous Adventure*? Does Kane’s fictional representation of societal forces in the Futa Toro mirror Mamdani’s representation of the power structures during Africa’s European colonization? The novel is set in the Diallobé, which corresponds with the Futa Toro region in Northern Senegal, home to the Toucouleur, the tribe of Kane’s family.⁵ The strong Islamic influence in this region, a main theme in the novel, created social conditions and subsequent relations with French colonizers that were unique. Since 1776, the zealous Muslim *parti maraboutique* (Marabout party) has ruled the Toucouleur. Janet P. Little comments that their society is organized along a caste system, while their religious aristocracy ascribes itself to an evangelistic mission (76). The influence of a few noble families in the Futa

Toro region increased so much that they eventually developed into a social and political aristocracy “exercising great power in the area which lasted throughout the colonial era, when the French, realizing that they could not subdue this proud and independent-minded people, used them in their attempts at control of the region” (Little 76). Undeniably, therefore, the French who annexed the Futa Toro in 1881 (Wane 13) governed on a day-to-day basis, “in name” more than by deed, a fact that corroborates Mamdani’s theory of indirect rule or “association” as the effective mode of colonial domination in Africa.

The protagonist in *Ambiguous Adventure*, Samba Diallo, is portrayed as a member of a noble native family who ruled in the Futa Toro region during French colonial domination. First sent to the Koranic school, following in the footsteps of his ancestors, he is soon transferred to a foreign school where he embarks on a Western-style education that he later pursues in Paris. Samba Diallo, like the rulers of his native country, is torn between two cultures. The question then arises: should children be sent to the Koranic or to the French school? This dilemma epitomizes the indigenous rulers’ choice (if one can speak of choice in a colonized country) between the Islamic, spiritual, traditional realm and the Western, materialistic, modern world. Harrow illustrates the power tension in the novel by means of a geometrically precise triangle: a corner representing the French colonizer and its Western materialism, another corner the Most Royal Lady (*la Grande Royale*) “embodying traditional power and authority” (Harrow 286), and a third the Koranic Teacher, Maître Thierno, the spiritual leader. Harrow places Samba Diallo and his father in the “ambiguous” center of the triangle, as part of the ruling caste, one of devout Muslims, yet one apparently reconciled to a changing world. Harrow claims that, from the outset, a direct conflict exists between the Islamic Teacher Thierno and the Most Royal Lady, between the religious and the secular authorities, on the issue of the foreign school. It must be emphasized, however, that there is no doubt in the novel in regard to which authority has more influence on the Diallobé: Teacher Thierno refuses to give his opinion on the controversy regarding the foreign school and leaves the decision to worldly authorities. The Most Royal Lady is fully aware that the foreign school serves as a weapon used by the colonizers to subdue the natives: “L’école étrangère est la forme nouvelle de la guerre que nous font ceux qui sont venus”⁶ ‘The foreign school is the new form of war that those who have come here are waging’ (Kane 47).⁷ The issue of the foreign school preoccupied several generations of natives, as attested by the author himself. Although the novel is contemporaneous to Kane’s childhood and adolescence—between 1938 and 1960 (Mercier 7)—the author concedes that the story presents a “kind of ‘telescoping of time’” (Little 86), declaring that even his

(great)grand-father had had substantial contact with the French school system.⁸

The Islamic Teacher Thierno is the respected spiritual leader of the community, “thierno” meaning *marabout* (see note 4) in the local Fula (French *peul*) language (Little 88). The religious education at the Koranic School aims at the metaphysical realm (preparation for death), whereas the foreign school prepares students for life on earth. In the former, material matters are irrelevant; their “weight” impedes spiritual goals. Jean Getry explains: “Le Foyer Ardent est une institution en dehors de l’Histoire puisque son unique objet d’étude est Dieu” ‘The Glowing Hearth [name of Koranic School] is an institution placed outside History since its sole subject of study is God’ (81). The issue of the foreign school, an integral part of the material, secular world that disinterests the Teacher, creates a predicament for him. He acknowledges: “Il est certain que leur école apprend mieux à lier le bois au bois et que les hommes doivent apprendre à se construire des demeures qui résistent au temps” ‘It is certain that their school is the better teacher of how to join wood to wood, and that men should learn how to construct dwellings houses that resist the weather’ (Kane 21). Like the Most Royal Lady, Teacher Thierno understands the people’s desire for material wellbeing, yet he fears their subsequent straying from the spiritual path. He suggests that the victory of the white people might be a sign from God, who has been offended by the Diallobé. When a delegation of the Diallobé asks the Teacher for advice on the question of the foreign school, he replies: “Je ne dirai rien . . . car je ne sais rien. Je suis seulement l’humble guide de vos enfants, et non point de vous, mes frères” ‘I will say nothing . . . because I know nothing. I am only the humble guide for your children, and not at all for you, my brothers’ (Kane 95). Despite the humility of his response, the fact that people approach him with this problem shows that the congregation, incapable of making a decision, places their confidence in Teacher Thierno. Throughout the novel, people are affectionately, yet condescendingly, referred to as “children” by their leaders: “Ils sont, sous nos yeux, comme des enfants” (“In our eyes they are like children”; Kane 137) remarks the Chief of the Diallobé, brother of the Most Royal Lady, to Thierno. In this traditional hierarchical society, with its patriarchal traits (matriarchal as well in *Ambiguous Adventure*), subjects “naturally” come to their spiritual leader for advice, as described by Kimoni:

La culture africaine en tant que résultat d’une longue série d’expériences et de connaissances, qui s’est perpétuée au sein de sociétés africaines, véhiculée par cette force interne appelée la tradition, fut un facteur de stabilité. L’univers qu’elle régissait se caractérisait pour ceux qui en vivaient, par l’unité du savoir et du vivre qui en faisait un monde indifférencié, hiérarchisé et équitable. . . . Les traditions soutenaient le peuple; le Chef était le pays (Kimoni 176).⁹

During the French colonial regime, these hierarchical authoritarian relationships, embedded in century-long traditions, remained unaltered, thus confirming Mamdani's theory on indirect rule by customary laws. However, Teacher Thierno, representing the traditional Islamic viewpoint, fails to exercise any worldly power. It is the Most Royal Lady who embodies, more so than her brother, the Chief of the Diallobé, worldly authority: "On racontait que, plus que son frère, c'est elle que le pays craignait" 'It was said that it was she, more than her brother, whom the countryside feared' (Kane 31). In his portrayal of the Most Royal Lady, Kane emphasizes her supremacy: "Elle avait pacifié le Nord par sa fermeté. Son prestige avait maintenu dans l'obéissance les tribus subjuguées par sa personnalité extraordinaire" 'She had pacified the North with her firmness. The tribes subjugated through *her extraordinary personality* had been kept in obedience by her prestige' [emphasis added] (Kane 31).¹⁰ The term "subjugated" may be interpreted literally in this context since her authoritative rule cannot be characterized other than despotic: she is resolute and tolerates no opposition. What is apparent in this quotation, and in other descriptions of the Most Royal Lady, is the author's admiration and sympathy for this imperious woman ("extraordinary personality") who represents his own class. Moreover, her exercise of power seems to go unchecked by colonial authority, a fact that confirms Mamdani's theory of independent local rule. Britwum vilifies Kane's partiality towards the feudal aristocracy in *Ambiguous Adventure*, and his representation of this privileged caste as shrouded in Islamic mysticism (53). Unquestionably, the author's intention is not to provide a critique on internal class struggle; the system of despotic decentralized power is not condemned in the text.¹¹ Simultaneously, among her clan's conservatives, Most Royal Lady has the most "progressive" opinion on the question of the foreign school, but one that serves her. Tidjani-Serpos emphasizes the ruling aristocracy's motives, through the Most Royal Lady, for consenting that their children attend the French school: they, the elite, must rise above the masses. The princess takes this stance because not only does she understand the Diallobé's desire for better living conditions, but she also acts out of self-preservation. In other words, her caste will maintain privilege because its children are taught by the colonizers "l'art de vaincre sans avoir raison" 'the art of conquering without being in the right' (Kane 47). Like the colonizers' children, Diallobé's youngsters will, by attending the foreign school, acquire a practical knowledge that will teach them how to build houses and improve their lives, as opposed to acquiring the metaphysical knowledge imparted by the Koranic school, an education that is geared toward God worship and the acceptance of death:

N'envoyer les gens du peuple à l'école qu'après avoir évalué l'apport positif ou négatif du nouveau système scolaire équivaut objectivement à former une ou deux générations de nobles qui se prévaudraient de leur naissance noble et de leurs connaissances scolaires pour maintenir leur emprise sur les Diallobé. (Tidjani-Serpos 199)¹²

Tidjani-Serpos argues that sending the elite's children to the foreign school will exacerbate social inequalities. Yet, in the novel, neither the ruling families nor Samba Diallo are waging an anti-imperialist struggle; on the contrary: "Ce sont des collaborateurs qui veulent améliorer le système en y infusant plus de spiritualisme" "They are collaborators who want to improve the system by making it more spiritual" (Tidjani-Serpos 202). Ultimately, ultra-conservatives, such as Teacher Thierno, the Chief and Samba Diallo's father, condemn the West more for its profound materialism than for its exploitative and oppressive colonial system.

Although in practice the Most Royal Lady is undoubtedly the most powerful and effective member of the native authorities, she consults with other members of the ruling caste: her brother, the Chief of the Diallobé, and Teacher Thierno. With apparent respect for each other, they discuss the matter of the foreign school, each acknowledging the importance and influence of each other's opinion (Kane 32). "[L]a solidité de l'admiration réciproque" ("[T]he solid ground of mutual admiration"; Kane 42) between the spiritual and worldly rulers allows us to speak of a power consolidation within a ruling oligarchy or aristocracy. The Teacher turns to the Chief of the Diallobé: "Tant que mon corps obéira, toujours je répondrai au chef" 'So long as my body obeys me, I shall always respond to the chief;' the Chief as a Muslim obeys the laws of the Koran: "Je témoigne qu'il n'y a de divinité que Dieu, et je témoigne que Mohammed est son envoyé" 'I bear witness that there is no god but God, and I bear witness that Mohammed is His prophet' (Kane 41); and the Most Royal Lady avows the spiritual leadership of Teacher Thierno: "vous en [de ce pays] êtes la conscience" 'you are its [this country's] conscience' (Kane 45).

In their study *Autonomie locale et Intégration nationale au Sénégal*,² Balans, Coulon, and Gastellu detail the "tooroodo" aristocracy, as the oligarchy has been historically called in the Futa Toro region: "Dans cette société Toucouleur la plupart des fonctions d'autorité, que ce soit sur le plan politique, économique ou religieux, se répartissent entre les mains de l'aristocratie 'tooroodo'" 'In this Toucouleur society most of the functions of authority, be it on a political, economic or religious level, are shared among the "tooroodo" aristocracy' (30).¹³ This implies that Islamic authorities generally belonged to the same ruling class as the worldly authorities, as the novel confirms: in *Ambiguous Adventure*, they do not operate

as separate powers (as suggested by Harrow's triangle), but rather as a two-tiered system of an autocratic decentralized power. It consists of the "tooroodo" oligarchy that is subjugated, albeit from afar, to a despotic centralized power, the colonial regime. Internal power struggles in the pre-colonial and colonial Futa Toro region occurred mainly between clans that were Muslim to various degrees, according to Balans, et al.¹⁴ Within the novel, the more fundamentalist Islamic current is somewhat represented by Teacher Thierno, but more so by the fool who is said to be constantly in his company. It is he who finally resorts to violence, killing Samba Diallo at novel's end (not if his death is deemed a suicide). However, that Demba, of peasant origin, replaces the Teacher is significant. His appointment is approved by the Most Royal Lady because he has rejected the doomed, traditional values of the deceased Teacher: "Mieux que tout autre il saura accueillir le nouveau monde" 'He will know better than anyone else how to welcome the new world' (Kane 133). Demba changes the class schedule of the Koranic school, thus enabling parents of all social classes to send their children to the foreign school; he realizes that a modern, pragmatic education should not remain the exclusive privilege of the ruling class. As Tidjani-Serpos observes: "Demba, fils de paysan, sait que les siens n'ont rien à gagner à se confiner uniquement dans la quête du spirituel au moment même où les nobles ont commencé à envoyer massivement leurs enfants à l'école étrangère" 'Demba, a peasant's son, knows that his people will gain nothing by limiting themselves to spiritual quest at the very moment that the nobility has started sending their children en masse to the foreign school' (200). Demba typifies the moderate spiritual leader who is seeking a compromise between tradition and modernity, between spiritual and material values, and who wishes to collaborate with the ruling caste to improve all children's lives. Whereas the Teacher sought only spirituality, Demba encourages the pursuit of worldly knowledge: "le Prophète . . . a dit: Vous irez chercher la Science, s'il le faut, jusqu'en Chine" 'The Prophet . . . has said: "You are to go in search of Knowledge, even if you have to go as far as China"' (Kane 134). It is emblematic that this new spiritual leader, the only character of peasant origin within the traditional society of the novel, is also who ultimately succeeds in obtaining a position of power, thus enabling him to take measures that might lead to more democracy. To this end, "modern" education for all social classes is made accessible. Balans et al. point out that the local nobility was opposed to making this education compulsory for all children in the Futa Toro. (This contradicts the situation depicted in *Ambiguous Adventure*.) The "tooroodo" aristocracy remained, at least for some time, the prime beneficiary of the new schools, hence adapting to modernity the elitist character of knowledge.

As mentioned, Mamdani underscores that colonizers, the centralized despotic force, stabilized and reinforced the authority of those noble families most in favor of their cause, those destined to guarantee a social equilibrium, thus maintaining solidly the customary laws. This situation is readily recognizable in *Ambiguous Adventure*. Some tribes fiercely resisted the colonial power's conquest, described as "une grande clameur" ("a great clamor"; Kane 59) that awoke the Diallobés; others negotiated. The outcome, according to the text, was the same for all: "Ceux qui avaient combattu et ceux qui s'étaient rendus, ceux qui avaient composé et ceux qui s'étaient obstinés se retrouvèrent le jour venu, recensés, répartis, classés, étiquetés, conscrits, administrés" "Those who fought and those who surrendered, those who conceded and those who refused, all found themselves, when the day came, categorized, separated, classified, labeled, conscripted, supervised" (Kane 60). The French colonial authorities, represented in the novel by the district commander Paul Lacroix, dominated as a centralized power. To the natives, observes the narrator, those who had come to kill also knew how to rebuild and to heal. Despite mention of previous native resistance to the colonizers, opposition in the novel remains mostly passive; nowhere can we discern a direct power conflict between the colonizing force and the ruling aristocracy. For instance, it is the native authority's most powerful member, the Most Royal Lady, who decides to send her cousin Samba Diallo to the foreign school. Informed about the decision by Samba Diallo's father, Lacroix expresses his satisfaction, but plays no active role in the arrangement. Nowhere in the novel does he become involved in the native authorities' controversy over the issue of the foreign school. Its mentioned attraction, especially for the ruling class, was evident. The point of indirect rule was, as Mamdani puts it, "to create a dependent but autonomous system of rule" (60). Native chiefs and administrators educated in the new school were recruited from the ruling class, and were often appointed to a region different than their own. Samba Diallo's father is such an example: an administrator who finds himself between two cultures.

The "tooroodo" aristocracy, in power since pre-colonial times, adapted to colonialism and, not averse to change, succeeded in "traditionalizing modernity" ("traditionaliser la modernité") and "modernizing tradition" ("moderniser la tradition") even after independence, according to Balans et al. (78). In 1961, the Futa Toro aristocracy was treated tactfully by the new Senegalese government in spite of certain noble families' defiance to the African Socialism of the Union Progressiste Sénégalaise. Balans et al. assert: "Force nous est . . . de constater qu'après près d'un siècle de colonisation française et une dizaine d'années d'indépendance l'hégémonie de l'aristocratie toucouleur ne s'est pas fondamentalement dégradée"

'We can only state that, after almost a century of French colonization and some ten years of independence, the hegemony of the Toucouleur aristocracy has not fundamentally eroded' (43). Léopold Sédar Senghor, Senegal's first president, accepted the region's political status quo, including its hierarchical class structure. Mamdani generally acknowledges this situation in post-independence African societies: "Whereas the shift to a centralized despotism appeared as a naked military regime in the conservative states, it was much more the effect of a failed effort to uproot and transform indirect rule in the radical states" (107). The alliance of modern with traditional elites was a characteristic of post-independence power structures, both in the Futa Toro region and in other parts of Senegal. These districts witnessed the interaction of a decentralized as well as a centralized political system that, Mamdani argues, has been deracialized after independence, but not democratized. Regrettably, in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon accurately predicts the political fate of most African post-independence states in the early 1960s: "it is a commonplace to observe and to say that in the majority of cases, for 95 % of the population of underdeveloped countries, independence brings no immediate change" (75).

In light of Mamdani's analysis, we can conclude that Kane's depiction of the power structures in the Futa Toro region during French colonial rule is largely accurate; here his fictitious, partly autobiographical novel reflects historical reality. We can clearly observe in the novel the existence of despotic independent rule by a powerful oligarchy, including The Most Royal Lady, the Chief of the Diallobé, and Teacher Thierno/Demba. Despotism was not a new unique phenomenon of colonialism; it existed since pre-colonial times, at least in the Futa Toro region. However, French imperialism introduced a period of double oppression—Mamdani refers to it as "the bifurcated power forged under colonialism" (280)—that has greatly influenced post-independence political configurations in the Futa Toro region and in other parts of Senegal. The colonists imposed centralized despotism on an imperial level, whose influence is apparent in the novel through the controversy regarding the foreign school—after independence, central rule on a national level continued it. The question after independence was how to integrate and democratize two ideological systems. According to Mamdani, the key to democratization is detribalization: "Without a reform of the local state, the peasantry locked up under a multiplicity of ethnically defined Native Authorities could not be brought into the mainstream of the historical process" (288).¹⁵ One can imagine that this is not an easy task given the hierarchical class structure described in Kane's *Ambiguous Adventure*. The text corroborates the solidity of ingrained traditional power structures in the face of political reforms, whether

imposed by a national or by an imperial administration.

Notes

¹ The manifesto for world literature in French, “Pour une ‘littérature-monde’ en français,” was published in *Le Monde* on 16 April 2007. The manifesto, qualified as a Copernican revolution, favors a French language that is “libérée de son pacte exclusif avec la nation” (“freed from its exclusive pact with the [French] nation”). France is no longer the literary center, but one from among many. See also *Pour une Littérature-monde*, edited by Michel Le Bris and Jean Rouaud (Paris: Gallimard, 2007).

² This region’s name has various spellings. “Futa Toro” is the preferred English spelling, while the French use mostly “Fouta Toro” or “Fouta Tooro.”

³ Webster’s dictionary defines “Sufi” as “a Muslim following the teachings and traditions of an ancient form of Islamic mysticism.”

⁴ Cruise O’Brien points out that the term “marabout” was used by the French and the Senegalese for those Muslim clerics who had “advanced instruction in faith” and whose functions “ranged very widely” (23).

⁵ According to Little, Toucouleur is a French corruption of “Tekrur” or “Tékreur” (Wane v) “the old Arabic term dating back from the tenth century for the area, corresponding to the modern Fouta-Toro (sic), which extends over the Senegalese and Mauritanian banks of the Senegal River” (Little 4).

⁶ In *Decolonizing the Mind*, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o formulates the change in “warfare tactics” as follows: “Berlin of 1884 was effected through the sword and the bullet. But the night of the sword and the bullet was followed by the morning of the chalk and the blackboard. The physical violence of the battlefield was followed by the psychological violence of the classroom” (9).

⁷ Translations of *L’Aventure ambiguë* are from Katherine Woods’s *Ambiguous Adventure*. All other translations are mine.

⁸ Abiola Irele notes that Kane saw *L’Aventure ambiguë* as “a *récit* (not a *roman*), thereby calling attention to the objective significance of this drama for the men of his generation” (7).

⁹ African culture, which evolved out of a multiplicity of experiences and shared knowledge, and which maintained itself within African societies through the inner force called tradition, was a stabilizing factor. Those who inhabited this universe understood it as a synthesis of knowledge and a way of life that resulted in an undifferentiated, hierarchical, and *just* world. . . . Traditions supported the people; the Chief embodied the country.

¹⁰ Kane repeats the word “obeissance,” “obedience,” from the previous page: “le souvenir de sa grande silhouette n’en continuait pas moins de maintenir dans l’obéissance des tribus du Nord” ‘Memory of her tall figure continued nonetheless to hold northern tribes in obedience’ (30).

¹¹ With respect to the Most Royal Lady, the author revealed in an interview: “Elle est un peu un précurseur de ce que nous devrions faire, c’est-à-dire sauvegarder l’essentiel de nos valeurs sans nous fermer à la nécessité de nous initier aux connaissances scientifiques et techniques” ‘She acts to some extent as an example of what we should do, what safeguards the essence of our values without excluding the need to take in scientific and technical knowledge’ (Getry 56).

¹² Sending the common people to the school only after having evaluated the positive or negative contribution of the new school system amounts objectively to educating one or two generations of the nobility who would then pride themselves on their noble birth and the knowledge acquired in the school to hold their sway over the Diallobé.

¹³ This quotation formally describes the situation in Futa Toro just after Senegal's independence, but it applies equally to the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

¹⁴ Balans, Coulon and Gastellu corroborate this statement: "il faut souligner que les luttes de clans . . . ont toujours été un des traits caractéristiques de la vie politique au Fouta" 'It has to be emphasized that tribal strife has always been part of politics in the Futa' (46). They determine the spread of Islam in the region during the 11th century, two centuries before Wane. 90 % of the region's population was Muslim in the early 1970s (Balans, Coulon, and Gastellu 27).

¹⁵ It would be a truism to state that, in general, tribalism is still a main cause of war, unrest, and corruption on the African continent. Within the restricted parameters of this essay, it is unfortunately not possible to examine the current political situation in the Futa Toro region in detail.

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