

In June 1992, upon learning that I was interested in studying how rural Bamana-speaking people<sup>1</sup> organize their farming activities, Aminata Koné, a resident of one of the suburbs of Mali's capital city of Bamako, encouraged me to consider conducting my studies in her natal village, Kuluduguni,<sup>2</sup> on the Mande Plateau. She stressed that settlements in this rugged, hilly region of south-central Mali were "true farming villages."<sup>3</sup>

Aminata referred to the Bamana farmers of the Mande hills as "*ciwarawo*" ("farming animals," or champion farmers; the ending *w* denotes the plural), explaining that they farm like wild animals: they work very hard and never seem to tire. I was well aware of the *ciwara* cultural complex,<sup>4</sup> including the famous antelope headdress sculptures prized by collectors throughout the world (Figs. 1, 8, 14–16). Ironically, however, while this form has grown steadily in popularity outside the region, scholars have documented its decline on the west African savanna (Imperato 1970; Zahan 1980).<sup>5</sup>

Aminata, however, claimed that from time to time in some villages on the Plateau, performers did, in fact, dance with *ciwarakunw* ("farming animal heads," or antelope headdresses) to celebrate and encourage the success of their agricultural endeavors. She told me that unlike similar headdresses in other areas, some of those in the hills were associated with special ritual objects (*boliw* or *basiw*)—things that I knew she and other practicing Muslims in Mali generally frown upon. Aminata noted that the people of the hills also participated in other "old" things such as *jow* (initiation societies or associations; see descriptions in Zahan 1974; McNaughton 1979). I believe that it was in this sense that she referred to the Bamana of the Mande Plateau as "*Bamana yèrè yèrè*"—true Bamana—people who continue to work the land as many previous generations have before them and who engage in some of the traditional religious and cultural practices.

Ultimately I decided to conduct research for my doctoral study in Kuluduguni and several nearby communities.<sup>6</sup> As it turned out, I observed three separate performances involving antelope headdresses on the Plateau. The presence of the *ciwara* complex in this region at this time

# Antelope Headdresses and Champion Farmers

## Negotiating Meaning and Identity

## Through the Bamana

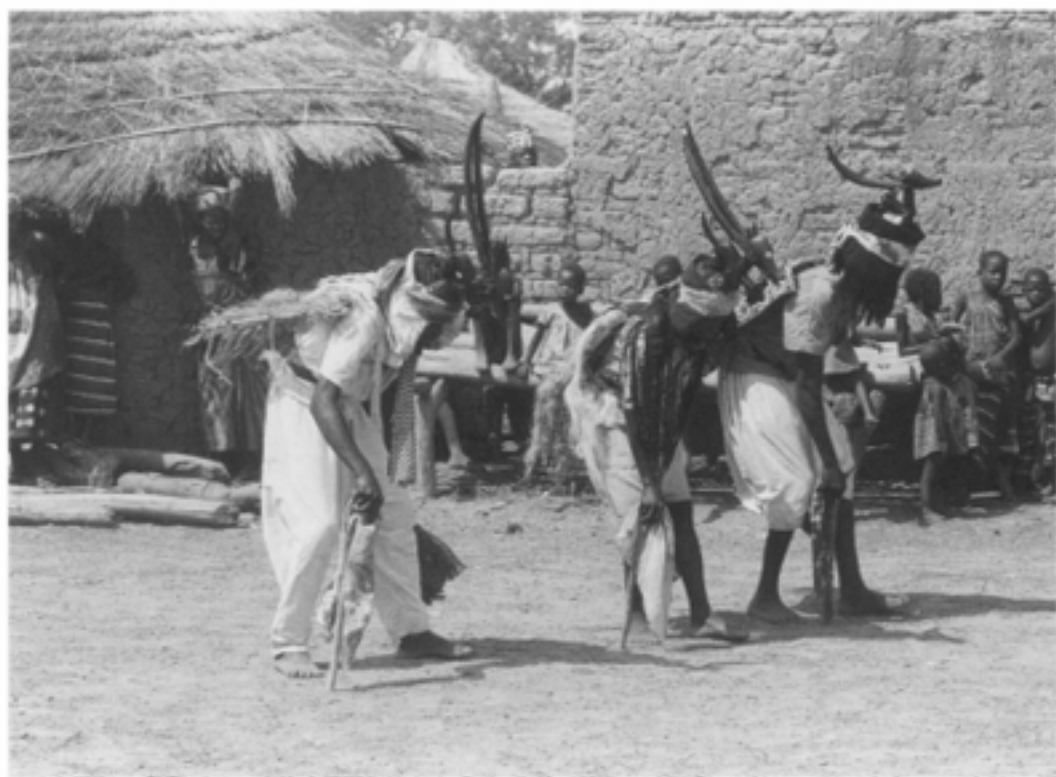
# *Ciwara* Complex

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1. Sogoni koun/ciwara headdress. Bamana, Buguni(?), Mali. Wood, height 51cm (20"). From Völkerkundemuseum Berlin (Leo Frobenius Collection), 1914. Staatliches Museum für Völkerkunde, Munich, inv. nr. 14-7-6, published in Kecskési 1999, cat. 168.

*Ciwara* (*chiwara*, *tyi wara*) headdresses are among the most recognizable and popular genres of African art, appearing in museum and private collections throughout the world.





Clockwise from top left:

2. *Ciwara* dancers. Djitoumou region (Cercle of Bamako), Mali, 1969. Photo: Pascal James Imperato.

Once prevalent among the Bamana, performances of antelope headdresses (*ciwarakunw*, sing. *ciwarakun*) in rituals and festivities related to farming have been thought to be in decline. This photograph documents an interesting departure from the usual performance by a male-female pair. After one of their *ciwarakunw* was stolen in the late 1950s, the village's youth association commissioned a replacement from a sculptor in another area; rather than attempting to match the other headdress, he made the pair seen at left. Despite the stylistic differences, the association's members decided to use all three together. This willingness to adapt is exhibited in *ciwara* performances seen recently on the Mande Plateau.

3. Bamana farmers. Mande Plateau, June 1992. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

The farmers of this rugged, hilly area of the Mande Plateau still use the traditional short-handled hoe.

4. Drummers at a *ciwara* performance. Village of Falayorola, Mali, October 1993. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

The drummers are accompanied by women singers. The performance was part of festivities at the end of a day of communal labor in the fields.



stands in marked contrast to the general trend of decline documented by Pascal James Imperato and Dominique Zahan.

In this essay I provide detailed descriptions and a close analysis of the three events and the ethnohistorical contexts in which they occurred, heeding recent calls (e.g., Hardin & Arnoldi 1996) for more sustained analysis of local dynamics, analysis that prioritizes culturally specific scenes over removed theoretical frameworks. Through this approach I seek to document the changing contours of the *ciwara* cultural com-

plex in the late twentieth century and to explore how Bamana in this region use it to negotiate meaning and identity.

### Village Life on the Mande Plateau

Kuluduguni is a small settlement of mud-and-thatch structures (pop. 184 in 1993-94) on the rugged Mande Plateau. Although the community lies within bicycle range (30-40 km) of Bamako, there are important differences in the character of life in these two areas of the contemporary Malian state. Socially, eco-

nomically, and culturally, the Plateau seems to reflect a traditional orientation.

Like most people in the villages to their immediate north and northwest, residents of Kuluduguni say that they consider themselves Bamana people. As in most Bamana communities, age and gender are important in the social and political realms of this patrilineal and patrilocal society; elders dominate juniors, and men typically hold more public power than women. Agriculture is the villagers' livelihood. Each rainy season they work diligently to produce



5. Male *ciwara* dancer, followed by a young girl attendant. Village of Falayorola, October 1993. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

The dancer, holding short sticks that touch the ground, adopts the characteristic "four-legged" posture as he hop-skips around the performance space.

enough sorghum, millet, corn, and various sauce crops for domestic consumption throughout the year. They use a fallow system, and all farming is done manually with short-handled iron and wood hoes (Fig. 3).

Although a few young men in the area gathered to pray on key Islamic holy days, for the most part the religious and ritual activity I observed in 1993–94 focused around traditional beliefs and practices.<sup>7</sup> During *suw sòn waati* (ancestor offering time) and *Bamana seli tuma* (Bamana prayer time),

men and women made ritual offerings and communicated with their ancestors. Members of the local branch of the Kòmò society undertook their seasonal activities. Several times during the year, I was cautioned against making trips to certain villages that were in the midst of a period of similar *cèkòròbaw baara* (old men's work).

However, as my research on agrarian change in the community suggests, villages such as Kuluduguni are not isolated from the modern world. For example, the people I lived with were actively engaged in commercial activities that linked them with urban markets and life in the capital (Wooten 1997). The negotiated character of their encounters in the economic realm bears on the way I understand and represent their performances involving *ciwarakunwu*. These and other cultural activities are in constant dia-

logue with present-day concerns as well as past experiences.

### Anecdotal Antecedents

During the rainy season in June 1993, I was with a group of women who were weeding a peanut field. As they gathered for their midday meal, two older women approached in an odd manner: bent over at the waist, each leaned on a pair of short sticks and uttered cries which provoked laughter from the group. One of the women explained, "They're *nalonmaw* (fools)." Later, my designated host in the village, a young man named Jatigi Jara, told me, "They were imitating the *ciwara*."

Jatigi went on to say that Kuluduguni shared a pair of *ciwarakunwu* with its nearby sister village, Jiribugu. He suggested that I might see them during the dry season. Other communities in the area apparently had the headdresses as well. These were sometimes danced in the villages or in the fields, for example during a men's work event at the opening of a new farming area. In fact, a few weeks later Jatigi told me about a work event that had taken place in a nearby village while I was away. *Ciwaraw* had danced in the field, and young women had clapped and sung *ciwara ònkiliw* (*ciwara* songs). According to Jatigi, the men enjoyed the performance and worked harder than usual throughout the day. I realized that Aminata's comments about *ciwaraw* on the Plateau were well founded: antelope headdresses and champion farmers were both present.

Shortly after my encounter with the women's "imitation" of the *ciwaraw*, the leader of a domestic group in a nearby village requested that the Kuluduguni-Jiribugu headdresses appear at a major labor event on his main field in order to encourage a large turnout and improve the quality of the work. However, Dugukolo Jara, a respected elder, explained that their *ciwaraw* did not typically perform in such settings. He used the words *cèkòròbawfèn* (old men's thing) and *tulonkèfèn* (plaything) to distinguish between types of *ciwara*. The former had force, while the latter represented something that was broken or ruined. Playthings were used by children and young people for amusement and as incentives to labor. The elders declined their neighbor's request.

I was told that some *ciwaraw* were old men's things associated with *boliw*. Such powerful *ciwaraw* were able to undertake amazing feats. Apparently, certain of them had done such things as bathing in boiling water or having women pound grain on their chest. Some men in the village claimed that *ciwaraw* could even dodge bullets. Dugukolo and the others stressed that this kind of *ciwara* was the real thing—"ciwara yèrè yèrè," echoing the phrase Aminata had used in reference to the "true Bamana" of the Plateau.

Over the next few months, I observed and sometimes participated in many work events. On one occasion, approximately ninety men from Kuluduguni and its environs assembled to expand the boundaries of a distant field into the uncultivated bush. During the midday meal several men began to joke with me. "Do you see that man over there?" they asked. "He can change into a *wara* (a wild animal)." The man rose and approached me, putting his hands up in a feline-like scratching position and making some growling and screeching sounds. I joked back, "That's great—when will I see you do it?" He and the others laughed and replied, "Later, during the dry season." As I will discuss below, this man did indeed become a *wara*—a *ciwara* in fact.

Although no *ciwaraw* came out at any of the work events I attended, I gained insight into one aspect of the *ciwara* performance. During one event, numerous pairs of laborers set a wicked pace through heavy vegetation, wildly pulling weeds from the earth and crying "woo, woo, woo" with each lunge forward. After progressing through a 15–20-meter swath, pairs would call out and raise their hoes. I realized that they were competing with each other. When a team finished a section, an older man would respond, using the word "*ciwara*!" The vocalizations of these hard-working men were almost identical to the greetings used by performers I would see in *ciwara* performances.

As these observations indicate, discourses on and manifestations of the *ciwara* complex are certainly part of contemporary life in the area of the Plateau where I lived and worked. Moreover, they suggest that people draw important distinctions within the overall *ciwara* domain. Local commentary indicates a complex situation in which elements of ritual power, playful entertainment, and the promotion of productive labor are all at hand. The significance of these elements becomes clearer when we compare the details of the three performances I observed.<sup>6</sup>

### Falayerola: Celebrating a Day of Field Labor

One afternoon in late October 1993, Jatigi Jara and I traveled to the nearby community of Falayerola to attend the public celebration of a day of heavy labor in a resident's bush field. The host had provided the workers with a midday meal in the field, followed with kola nuts and tobacco powder. Moreover, at the end of the day the workers were to receive

another meal and be entertained by the community's *ciwaraw*.

Once all the laborers had returned from the fields, subdued and, in many cases, exhausted, the women of the household appeared with numerous bowls of sorghum porridge with green leaf sauce. Afterward they served the liquid refreshments: beer for a small group of older men and, for a larger group of mostly younger men, hot water to be mixed with instant coffee, sugar, and sweetened condensed milk. While they drank, an elder rose and began to speak about the day's events. He singled out one youth who had arrived at the field very early and had excelled in his labor throughout the day. The elder pronounced him the *ciwara* (champion farmer) of the day. Another older man then presented the worker with a chicken and a small can of instant Nescafe—luxury items for most rural Malians. The young man seemed honored and a bit embarrassed: he smiled broadly and sat down quickly. About thirty minutes later, as the drinks began to run dry, four drummers began to play (Fig. 4), joined by about five women who accompanied them with singing and clapping.

Then, from between two mud houses, two costumed figures emerged, each wearing a horizontal-style antelope head-dress attached to a wicker cap. They backed into the public space, then turned and crouched at the side of the performance circle. The headdresses were dark, almost black. The antelopes, one male and the other female, had the tail of a chameleon and the bill of a hornbill. The male headdress incorporated an anthropomorphic male figurine with a gun slung over its back, while the female incorporated a female figurine. A veil of fiber braids covered the faces of the performers, who wore long overshirts made of red-brown

strip cloth decorated with long feathers of various birds of prey. They held a stick approximately 38 centimeters (15") long in each hand at the forked end, the other end on the ground (Fig. 5). The dancers made four-point (feet and sticks) contact with the ground throughout the performance. These sticks, called *wara biriw*, showed signs of a recent sacrifice: fresh chicken feathers were stuck to what appeared to be fresh blood. Each performer was accompanied by a young girl approximately 10–12 years old (*ciwara musoni*). The girls wore matching green two-piece outfits and held fiber plates with which they would fan the dancers.

A middle-aged man dressed in everyday clothes led the crouching performers into the circle (Fig. 6): first the female *ciwara* dancer, then the male, each followed by its young attendant. The small procession made its way to the other side of the performance circle, where the older men were seated on cow hides. The two *ciwara* dancers began to swing their heads gently from side to side, uttering the same vocalizations I had heard in that bush field some weeks before: "woo, woo, woo." Jatigi told me they were "greeting" the old men. The pair proceeded completely around the perimeter and then made two more rapid passes around the circle, during which time the original leader was replaced by an older man. The performers moved in a sort of hop-skip walk, which has been described in the literature as mimicking the movements of an antelope. Returning to the entry point, they assumed crouched positions, remaining motionless while the drummers continued to play a rhythm and the women clapped and sang *ciwara* songs.<sup>9</sup>

After a brief conference between the host and the performers and drummers, the drumming, clapping, and singing



6. *Ciwara* performers with their leader and young girl attendants. Village of Falayerola, October 1993. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

The dancers are identified as male and female *ciwaraw* by the imagery of their headcrests.

began again—this time at a quicker pace. The female headdress entered the circle, completed a rapid circuit, made a 360-degree turn, and exited the arena. The male followed and made two similar passes before departing in much the same fashion. The audience responded with clapping

7. The male and female *ciwarakunw* on view after the performance. Village of Falayorola, October 1993. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

The sculptures, freshly oiled or blackened, are composed of three parts: the body, the head, and the surmounting figurine—a female image on the female *ciwarakun*, a male figure carrying a gun on the male headdress.

and shouting. The whole *ciwara* performance, including the pause for discussion, had lasted approximately fifteen minutes.

The drummers continued to keep up a rhythm. Various members of the audience entered the circle and danced freely, to the amusement of those on the sidelines. The mood had shifted from fairly quiet observation to more upbeat interaction. Soon, another pair of masked performers entered the circle, the *namanikun* dancers. They wore hyena-style masks and ankle rattles made from twine and bottle caps. One performer held a small gourd, the other an ear of corn. The audience was animated; their laughter increased steadily. Jatigi told me

that these dancers were “thieves” and that they tried to make people laugh.<sup>10</sup>

The *namanikun* dancers were joined by an older woman wearing a cloth cap decorated with bits of fur, white feathers, what looked like nuts or seeds, and perhaps some amulets as well. She appeared dazed. She wandered about with a fixed gaze for a few moments and then began shuffling after the *namanikun* performers as they made their way around the circle. Eventually the masked performers stopped, apparently yielding the floor to the woman. The spectators were clearly amused. From the sidelines another older woman appeared carrying a cape or gown





similarly adorned with fur, feathers, and nuts or seeds. The female dancer seemed dull to this woman's approach, as well as to her efforts to put the cape on her. The woman did succeed, however, and the dancer, now bedecked, once again resumed her shuffling. She was joined for a brief period by another older woman, and both proceeded around the circle and exited to a burst of laughter and clapping. Jatigi told me these were "*nalonmamusow*" (foolish women). I remembered my encounter with the *nalonmaw* in Kuluduguni who were imitating the *ciwara*. The *namanikon* dancers then reappeared and made a series of passes around the arena before exiting. It seemed to me that their performance had been upstaged.

The drumming continued. Various audience members took the floor: a pair of young men performed hand-stand dances, several older men danced in the *namanikon* style, and other individuals simply ran about in the limelight. After the tempo wound down, a middle-aged man rose to make a few announcements, thank the workers and performers, and acknowledge my donation to the cost of the *wara sòn* (*wara* offering).<sup>11</sup>

Afterward several men invited me to a nearby hangar where the headdresses and costumes were laid out on the ground

(Fig. 7). The men who had danced the *ciwarakuntw* were present, as were the two young attendants. The sculptures appeared freshly oiled or blackened. Each stood about 25–30 centimeters (10"–11") tall and was composed of three basic pieces: the antelope head (approx. 50 cm/20" long, including the horns), the body (approx. 38 cm/15" long, including the tail), and the human figurine. The head and horns were attached to the body at the neck with metal staples.<sup>12</sup> Each headdress was a flowing and curvaceous rendition of an antelope, though with a backward-curling tail reminiscent of a chameleon's. The bodies were marked by several etched lines. The bent legs made the animal appear to be crouching. Both heads had relatively large lips and a visible tongue, as well as large ears which blended into the head and the long, horizontal horns. Each horn, the tip upturned, was carved to give a spiral effect. The male antelope had a visible penis.

The figurines on the headdresses, mounted on the horns right behind the head with heavy black rubber bands, were particularly intriguing. Each measured approximately 10–12 centimeters (4"–5") in height. They were rendered with arms at their sides and hands slightly upturned. The female had firm breasts, a crested hairstyle, and bracelets. The male figurine

8. *Ciwara* headdress. Bamana, Mali, early 20th century. Wood, metal, thread; length 61cm (24"). The Baltimore Museum of Art: Gift of Alan Wurtzburger. BMA 1954.145.1.

had a bald head, a visible penis, and a gun slung over his back. The armband on his left arm is, in my experience, characteristic of hunters in the region. Each figurine also displayed scarification: on the female, sets of short parallel lines located just below the eyes and underarms, as well as a series of dots on her stomach; on the male, short parallel lines at the underarms and on the chest. In each instance there were four sets of paired lines.<sup>13</sup>

When I began to ask detailed questions about the sculptures and the performance itself, those who had gathered nearby became quiet. I switched to what I thought was a less charged question: Where had they obtained the sculptures? Their replies were rather imprecise: "From a blacksmith in the big city." In response to my query about ownership, I was told only: "They are ours." I gathered that my lines of inquiry were unwelcome—at that point, in that context, or perhaps they always would be. Respectfully, I moved away from this line of questioning, conveying instead my appreciation of the beautiful sculptures.

On the bicycle ride home, I felt fortunate to have observed the performance, and when I arrived back in Kuluduguni I wrote in my field notes: "The dance of the *ciwara* is alive and well on the Mande Plateau."

### Jiribugu: A "Powerful" Performance

On a hot and dusty morning in early April 1994, Jatigi suggested that I prepare early for our trip to the neighboring village of Jiribugu. For months, people in the community had been telling me that every year, just before the rains returned, villages in the area would observe what was usually referred to as *saw sòn waati* (ancestor offering time) or *Bamana seli tuma* (Bamana prayer time). During these several days, village leaders asked important forces associated with the community for assistance in the upcoming farming cycle. According to a sequence predetermined by village elders, each village offered sacrifices to the ancestors and to twin shrines or altars (*sinsin sòn*). The women indicated that they would undertake special women's work, which they contrasted with old men's work, and noted that offerings would be made to specific spirits or forces associated with women (*musokajiri sòn* or *marabiyasa sòn*). Residents also told me that masked performances occurred in some communities, sometimes including appearances of *ciwarakunw* and *cèbilèkèw*.<sup>14</sup> According to the old men, these events were always accompanied with much beer and laughter. *Saw sòn waati* activities would not begin in Kuluduguni for another two weeks, but everyone was excited that this period had already begun in the neighboring village. "Today," Jatigi told me, "we will help them celebrate and we will watch their performances," what he referred to as *nyènjè* activities (entertainment).

People across the region had often remarked that the Kuluduguni-Jiribugu *ciwarakunw* were among the best in the area. Echoing Aminata's early comments and Dugukolo's characterizations, they sometimes said these *ciwarakunw* were *kòkòròfènw* or *cèkòròbafènw* (old things or old men's things) and definitely not *tulomkèfènw* (playthings). Nevertheless, I was unprepared for what I encountered that afternoon.

When Jatigi and I arrived at Jiribugu, the male elders had already made sacrifices to help insure a successful year for the village: good harvests and health, and many new babies.<sup>15</sup> Jatigi later explained that they had made offerings to their ancestors and had done some other "old men's work," which included sacrifices involving various *boliv*. Now they were ready to celebrate and watch their *ciwaraw* perform.

At around 4:00 P.M., as the sun was descending, people began to assemble in the community's central open area, the old men taking a prime location under a large

shade tree. The old women stood next to them. A small group of young women moved in behind the drummers and began singing and clapping. At about this time a man dressed in a mudcloth (*bògòlanfiri*) suit approached the dance circle. Called the *ciwara tigi* (*ciwara* leader), he was leading a pair of performers, each wearing a horizontal-style *ciwarakun*. The dancers, in resplendent costumes decorated with many bird feathers and flowing fiber strands, twirled 360 degrees as they entered the arena.

As in the Falayorola performance, one headdress was male and one was female (Figs. 9, 10). The male sported a large gun atop the antelope, and the female bore a small antelope on her horns. Throughout this performance, too, the dancers walked bent over so that the sticks they held touched the ground. As at Falayorola, each dancer was accompanied by a girl who waved a fan at her *ciwara* and generally shadowed its movements.

After pausing briefly at the entrance, the man in the mudcloth suit led the *ciwaraw* (the female first) and the girls into the circle. He carried a leather sack over one shoulder and had an iron bell in his hand, which he rang throughout the performance. The *ciwaraw* moved toward the musicians and then toward the male elders, all of whom they acknowledged with loud shrieks. The pair repeated the greeting to the old women before making a pass around the circle and then crouching together on the sidelines.

Eventually the pace of the drumming picked up and the female *ciwara* entered the circle alone. She moved quickly around it three times in a hop-skip fashion, ending up in front of the drummers; then she stopped dancing and returned to the opposite side. The male *ciwara* entered the space and danced much as the female had. Their performances were energetic, and the crowd registered their approval with shouts and clapping. After a brief pause, the music picked up again and the female *ciwara* took another set of turns around the circle. The pace of the music was a bit faster this time, and I noticed that interesting things were occurring.

An older man was wandering about the performance area with a needle and thread, which an attendant on the sidelines had just been using to attach loose feathers to the *ciwara* costumes. The man placed the point of the needle against his face, seemingly in an attempt to pass it through his cheek. He also had a knife, and a few minutes later he began to cut at his tongue. As this was going on the female *ciwara* finished her performance and the male entered the scene. Things became even more intense.

The male *ciwara* moved to the center of the area and motioned for something. An attendant then walked briskly around the circle showing everyone what looked like a small ticket. He delivered the item to the male *ciwara*, now joined by the female. The leader had taken off his leather sack

and removed several items from it, placing them on the ground in the plain view: I realized that I was in the presence of three power objects. Two of the *boliv* looked like sections of hollow wood, each about 30 centimeters (12") long and 4 centimeters (1.5") in diameter. The other item looked like a animal horn, perhaps that of a bull. All three objects were a dark reddish color and were encrusted with what appeared to be sacrificial material. For the next several minutes the *boliv* remained on the ground.<sup>16</sup>

The male *ciwara* then unwrapped the mysterious item, revealing a double-edged razor blade. He held it up and moved around the circle so that everyone could see it (Fig. 11). The *ciwara* then placed the blade into his mouth and chewed it. He requested another blade. After consuming it he became very animated and began an energized version of his previous dance. The *ciwara* made his way first to the drummers and then to the male elders, and spat what appeared to be blood on them. Returning to the center of the arena, he went into a very low form of his dance, cradling the sticks, his body so close to the ground that it caused dust to rise. His performance came to an end in front of the drummers, and the female *ciwara* prepared to take the stage.

An attendant presented the female *ciwara*, who was crouching on the perimeter, with a piece of burning wood from a cooking fire. She examined it and returned it to the attendant. The *ciwara* then entered the circle and made a spirited pass around it before coming to a halt near the center. During her circuit, several men, including the *ciwara tigi*, carefully put the power objects back into the leather sack, which the leader slung onto his shoulder. The female *ciwara* assumed a crouched position in the center of the circle, joined by the male. She was given the burning ember; she chewed it up. Her subsequent turn around the arena was, like the male's last performance, quite energetic, and culminated in front of the drummers in a low, cradled dance. The *ciwaraw* reunited on the sidelines.

An older man who had been assisting with the performance took up the male *ciwara*'s sticks and proceeded to dance in the style of the *ciwaraw*, ending with the low dance in front of the drummers. One of the young girls accompanied him, waving her fan energetically. The man returned the sticks to the costumed performer, and the *ciwara* pair rose to depart the performance sphere, twirling around upon their exit as they had upon their entry.

Like the headdresses at Falayorola, the antelope sculptures were of the horizontal type. Rather than the flowing lines of the first pair, these *ciwarakunw* were rendered in a block-like style. The body (from chest to tail) measured approximately 25 centimeters (10"), considerably smaller than in the Falayorola pair, especially in rela-



tion to the tail. The tails were more reminiscent of an antelope's: short and pointing up rather than long and circular like a chameleon's. The female's head (only about 5 cm/2" long, but approx. 50 cm/20" long with the horns) was particularly intriguing. It was human-like, with clearly identifiable facial features. It wore earrings and a nose ring, and its mouth was decorated with nail polish. Metal tacks represented the eyes. The horns had a spiral pattern and curved upward and back. The female carried a smaller antelope on her back. The smaller figure was very similar to the male sculpture, displaying an antelope-style head. Several colorful plastic bead necklaces were entwined on both pieces.<sup>17</sup>

The body of the male headdress was similar to the female's, except that the tail

was slightly longer and it was rendered with a clearly visible penis, which itself was approximately an inch long. The head proper measured approximately 30 centimeters (12") and the horns were approximately 50 centimeters long. More typical of the horizontal-style *ciwarakun*, the head of the male headdress had long, narrow ears, and a mouth with defined lips and tongue. Its mouth area, too, was decorated with nail polish, and its eyes represented by metal tacks. Mounted atop the head of the *ciwarakun* was a large gun, which paralleled the lines of the horns.

As with the Falayorola pair, both sculptures were attached to a wicker basket draped with a fiber veil that covered the wearer's head and neck; a cloth tie fastened the basket to the head. The cloth

costume was similar as well: a long reddish gown ornamented with numerous bird feathers. The sticks were a bit longer (approximately 16"-17") than the ones used in Falayorola. They forked on the hand end, but did not show evidence of sacrifice.

Jiribugu's *ciwara* dance was also followed by a performance of *namanikumw*. The two tricksters danced well and met with resounding audience approval. Next came the *cèbilenkèw*: three performers decked out in mudcloth jumpsuits and with quills protruding from the top of their hooded heads (Fig. 12). The *cèbilenkèw* danced to the balaphone, while the *namanikumw* danced to the drums.

Soon after the *cèbilenkèw* exited, a group of women entered the circle, two of them taking center stage; Jatigi said they were the women's *ciwaraw*. On their heads each sported a metal clothes hanger, mounted the long way from front to back and secured with cloth ties (Fig. 13). Holding sticks approximately twice as long as the men's, the women danced around in a small circle, using much the same choreography as their male counterparts'. Each dancer was followed by a fan-waver, though these were adult women. In their midst was a woman wearing a *namanikum*-type mask. Like the *namanikum* performers I had seen, this character seemed to be a thief of sorts—she was grabbing at things in onlookers' hands and held a package of cigarettes. The drummers kept up a beat and the women made several passes before dispersing into a knot of audience members who—young and old, male and female—laughed heartily at this spectacle.

### Kuluduguni: *Ciwarakunw* across the Generations

Ten days after the Jiribugu performance, the villagers of Kuluduguni began their own *saw sòn' waati* activities. On the evening of April 22, 1994, all the members of the three main Jara domestic groups ate a rather festive meal together. Dugukolo Jara made offerings of a goat and a chicken to their ancestors. With members of all the community's domestic groups watching, he cut each animal's throat and placed the open wound against either side of the doorway of his meeting hut. He uttered phrases, sometimes laughing to himself between them,<sup>18</sup> and offered porridge and sorghum beer libations and threw kola nuts at the base of the doorway. Dugukolo



9. Female *ciwara* dancer. Village of Kuluduguni, Mali, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

The neighboring villages of Jiribugu and Kuluduguni share *ciwara* headdresses. The face of this female headdress is notable for its human-like features.

10. Male *ciwara* dancer. Village of Jiribugu, Mali, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten (from videotape).

With its female counterpart (Fig. 9), this male *ciwara* dancer performed during the annual ritual period called "ancestor offering time," when the villagers of Jiribugu offered sacrifices to ancestors and other spirits. The antelope carved on the female *ciwaraku* supports a smaller antelope figure. The carved gun atop this crest reflects the dynamism of the *ciwara* tradition. It might have been intended to signify male power and to underscore gender roles.

told me later that this process was undertaken to honor Doseke, the village founder, and other deceased relatives and to see how they responded to his request for aid in the coming year. I heard him mention rainfall and grain harvests, asking for plentiful amounts of both. The next morning Bafin Jara, head of another Jara domestic group, sacrificed a chicken at the doorway of the community's eldest woman, Dusu Kulibali, the widow of one of the Jara elders. The formula was the same. Dugukolo told me that this sacrifice was for the group's mothers.

On the second day, similar sacrifices of chickens were made, first by the other Jara domestic groups, then by a Kulibali group. Around 4:00 P.M., as at Falayorola and Jiribugu, Jatigi arrived at my house to tell me that it was "*nyènajè waati*" (entertainment time). This time four drummers led a procession of performers and their attendants into the public space. The drummers were followed by a man ringing a bell and carrying the same leather sack I had observed in Jiribugu (Fig. 17). The leader (*ciwara tigi*) was none other than Cefolo, the man who had performed the male headdress at the Jiribugu event; he was a full-time resident of Kuluduguni, however. The male *ciwara* entered first, the female second, each followed by its attendant (Figs. 18, 19). A group of women came next, singing and clapping. The leader monitored and even directed the performers' movements very closely, as if they were novices.

After the drummers and women took up positions across the circle, the *ciwara tigi* guided the dancers on their first pass, making sure that they made a 360-degree twirl upon their formal entry into the circle. They greeted the drummers with the characteristic "woo, woo, woo" vocalization and then were shepherded further around to greet the community's oldest woman and, next, the elder men.

The drumbeat picked up, and the female *ciwara* completed two spirited turns

11. Male *ciwara* preparing to eat a razor blade. Village of Jiribugu, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten (from videotape).

The activities at Jiribugu were marked by several dramatic exhibitions of power, including this *ciwara*'s consumption of the razor blade held in his hand. Part of the female *ciwara*'s crest appears at right.

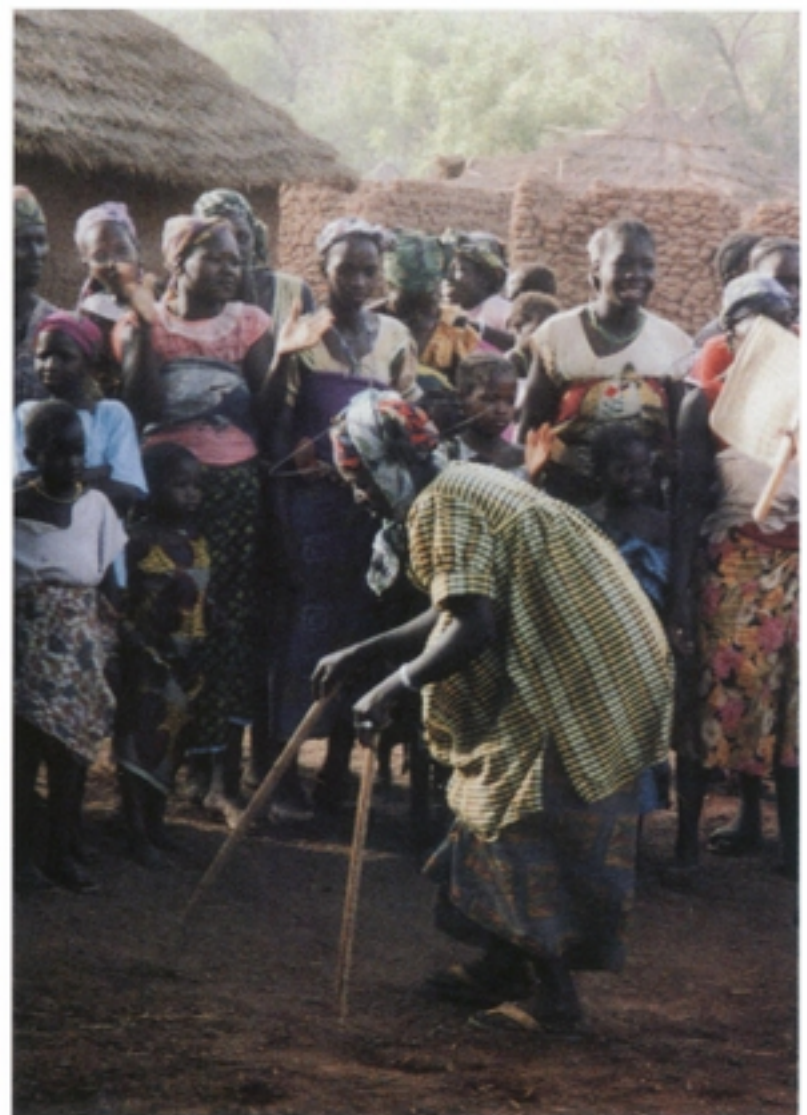


around the circle as the audience shouted, "*Wara run, wara run.*" The choreography was identical to that of the other performances: a hop-skip dance. Her dance ended, as in the other cases, with a fast-paced segment in front of the drummers. The two-pass dance was then repeated by the male *ciwara*.

The older men who had assisted with the performance in Jiribugu were involved in this event as well. In fact, the man who had danced the female headdress in Jiribugu entered the circle, though dressed in everyday clothes. At that point, one of the guides from

Jiribugu relieved Cefolo of the sack and bell. Cefolo took a pair of *ciwara* sticks and performed the dance—without a headdress or any of the other accouterments: he seemed to be instructing the day's performers. The older man now guiding Cefolo was the one who had danced after the *ciwarawo* in Jiribugu. I realized that this cross-generational pattern had occurred on all three occasions. As he danced around the arena, Cefolo greeted the appropriate people in the process: the drummers, the old women, and the men—some of whom he seemed to single out for special attention. Perhaps





these were distinguished past performers. After two circuits around the arena, which met with much applause, Cefolo retrieved the bell and sack from the older man, who now took control of the sticks himself and made several turns around the circle to an approving audience. I had just witnessed a sequence involving three generations of *ciwara* dancers.

As this performance was taking place, the dancer of the female *ciwarakun* from the Jiribugu event, Zan Jara, began to walk around in the center of the circle, muttering and pounding his chest with his fist. Eventually he motioned for Jatigi to join him and handed him a block of wood and an awl. The next thing I knew, Jatigi was using the block to hammer the awl into Zan's upper chest. Zan then removed another leather sack from a cloth bag. As Cefolo danced, Zan wandered about the circle with the leather sack hanging by a strap from the awl.

After a few moments, Jatigi revealed a 1,000 FCFA note (about \$3). He gave it to Zan, who held it up for all to see and then crouched in the center of the circle and began to chop the bill and a few tree leaves into bits. Meanwhile, several other older men took over the *ciwara* sticks and made passes through the arena. Zan began to mutter while folding the bill and

leaf fragments into a piece of paper, seeming to speak to the package, but sometimes looking up to the sky while uttering phrases. He slapped the packet between his hands and waved it over his right shoulder several times. The costumed *ciwara* performers joined him, crouching by his side. Zan handed the packet to Jatigi, who opened it to reveal about five or six bills! Jatigi moved around the circle to show the audience, who responded with laughter, cheers, and clapping. Zan then placed the bills back into the sheet of paper and commenced the same procedure: slapping, speaking, and waving the packet about. When Jatigi opened it, he revealed the leaves and the single bill. The audience erupted again.

With that feat of transformation accomplished, the *ciwaraw* took center stage and made separate energetic passes, each ending with a low, cradling-style sequence in front of the drummers. They were coached throughout by Cefolo, who seemed determined to make them dance to their fullest potential. The *ciwara* performance ended when the male and female danced together in the low posture. After they exited, an older man rose to make a speech.<sup>19</sup>

The dance floor was then opened to the audience: men, women, and even

Left: 12. *Cèbilenkè* masquerade. Village of Jiribugu, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten. Jiribugu's *ciwara* dance was followed by several others, including that of the *cèbilenkè*.

Right: 13. Woman wearing a coat-hanger *ciwarakun*. Village of Jiribugu, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

Two women wearing this version of a *ciwara* crest performed to the amusement of the crowd. Their postures and movements were very similar to those of the male performers.

some children. Some men danced a version of the *namanikun* choreography, and others executed dance steps from the *kòtèba* (see Brink 1980). Shortly thereafter, the *namanikun* performers danced, much as they had at Jiribugu and Falayorola. Next came Kuluduguni's own *ntomonikun* dancers, their headdresses typically associated with the Ntomo society (see Zahan 1960; Imperato 1980). The *ntomonikun* dancers made a very good showing, performing with energy and determination. Afterward people entered and exited at will, and a mood of festive confusion set in.

The *ciwarakun* and *namanikun* were the same as those used in Jiribugu. As Jatigi and Dugukolo had suggested, the two villages apparently share these re-



14. *Ciwara* headdress (side and front views). Bamana, Mali, 20th century. Wood, beads, string, metal; length 60.1cm (23.7"), depth 8.3cm (3.3"). North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, GL 72.19.37. Gift of the Hanes Corporation.



sources. Although different individuals danced the forms, residents in both locations were able to use them to help celebrate their *sutu sòn waati*.

### Negotiating Meaning

While previous studies have described the steady decline of the *ciwara* complex in many areas of Mali (Imperato 1970; Zahan 1980), my experience indicates that this process is not uniform or entirely complete. My observations reveal a situation in which contemporary Bamana people mobilize *ciwarakumto* to create meaning in their world and to forge various aspects of their identity.

All the *ciwara* performances I observed occurred in association with a sacrificial offering, a key aspect of Bamana religious dynamics (Dieterlen 1951; Henry 1910; McNaughton 1988; Zahan 1960). The performances in Jiribugu and Kuluduguni were clearly linked with *nyama*, or power,<sup>20</sup> occurring within the context of a highly

charged set of sacrifices to the ancestors and other forces in the community during *sutu sòn waati* or *Bamana seli tuma*. Even in a context of post-labor entertainment, the leaders of the Falayorola event insured that an appropriate sacrifice was offered via the *ciwara* sticks.

Furthermore, on two of the occasions, powerful acts occurred. In Jiribugu, the public consumption of razor blades and hot coals heightened the performance, and the startling use of a needle and a knife underscored the "special" nature of the event. In Kuluduguni, one of the performers from Jiribugu transformed leaves into money and then back again. In the 1960s, Imperato's informants attributed such feats to the ritual power of *ciwara jow*, or associations (1970). They can be likened to the snake-handling exhibitions described by Zahan (1980), said to reflect the tremendous efficacy of *ciwara* power. In our discussions about glorious *ciwarawo* of the past, Dugukolo Jara referred to amazing feats. Those undertaken by the *ciwarawo* I saw point to the manipulation or harnessing of *nyama*. They demonstrate the power of the individuals who undertook these acts and perhaps, by extension, the power of their community as a whole. Indeed, comments of this nature circulated widely in the Plateau communities.



PALL MACAPA



Moreover, the association with *bolivo* at the performances in Jiribugu and Kuluduguni signal a link to traditional power dynamics. In Jiribugu, the leader of the masquerade carried powerful objects in a bag during most of the performance and removed them for public display at a particularly dramatic point. They were apparently also present at Kuluduguni,

although they were not revealed. These *bolivo* are physical evidence of the religious orientation of the individuals and communities in question. Indeed, Zahan (1980) provides a detailed description of similar objects in his discussion of the altars of the *ciwara jo*. I suggest that the association of the *bolivo* with these *ciwara*, explicit at Jiribugu and implicit

at Kuluduguni, points to the strength of at least some aspects of what Imperato and Zahan have described for the *ciwara jo*.<sup>21</sup>

Even if the performances I have described are not connected to specific *ciwara jo*, elements of ritual power were clearly at hand. However, it is impossible to categorize them as either sacred or secular, powerful or playful. The perfor-

Top: 15. *Ciwara* headdress. Bamana, Mali. Wood, metal, fiber; length 82.3cm (32.4"). Seattle Art Museum, 81.17.22. Gift of Katherine White and the Boeing Company.

Bottom: 16. *Ciwara* headdress. Bamana, Mali. Wood, length 56.5cm (22.3"). The African Collection, Illinois State University, Normal.

mances included elements of play, entertainment, and reward. The identification of the "*ciwara* of the day" at Falayorola most clearly demonstrates the reward aspect. People often referred to the events as *nyènajà*—entertainment or amusement. Indeed, all the dances took place in public village settings during daylight hours, with men, women, and children in attendance. At times people joked and laughed. Afterward they frequently commented that the events made them happy.

The mixed character of these performances might be viewed as evidence of secularization—a process explored in detail by Imperato and alluded to in conversation by various community members. However, this complexity probably has a significantly long heritage. The earliest descriptions, written at the beginning of the twentieth century, indicate that the *ciwara* complex, in contrast to societies like the Kòmò and the Nama, for example, simultaneously involved sacred and secular, private and public aspects (e.g., Henry 1910; Delafosse 1912). I suggest, then, that the dichotomies may have been overstated: by outsiders seeing the collapse of indigenous systems, by insiders seeking to highlight intervillage power differentials. Commentators of either type may have accented one dimension or another according to the case or context at hand.

I would like to propose an alternative term for understanding the *ciwara* complex: powerful play.<sup>22</sup> This mixed character could be unique to *ciwara*, but it may lead to insights into other aspects of Bamana life. We would do well to pay less attention to rigid analytical categories and more to multidimensional domains of practice.

## Negotiating Identity

*"Cultivateurs, le travail des champs est une chose divine."*

(from a *ciwara* song, quoted in Zahan 1980:42)

It is abundantly clear that all three performances of the *ciwarakunwu* played an important role in building and maintaining an agrarian identity. For generations, scholars have described the Bamana as a farming people par excellence. The Bamana themselves project this image. Recall Aminata's reference to her hard-working relatives on the Plateau as *Bamana yèrè yèrè*; according to her, these farmers are true Bamana people.

A common Bamana proverb declares, "The world began and so it will end with farming." Indeed, oral tradition (presented first in de Ganay 1949) suggests that the original *ciwarakunwu* were constructed and performed many generations ago to honor the mythic being, Chi Wara, who taught the people how to cultivate. Imperato's informants portrayed the development of a *jo* from this origin myth (1970), and he discussed the idea that a strong *ciwara* tradition and successful farming tended to overlap. Zahan noted that the *ciwara* society was not open to those whose main occupation lies outside the realm of agriculture (e.g., smiths).

Elsewhere I have shown that agriculture is the mainstay of life in Kuluduguni and nearby hill communities: people depend on it for both food and income (Wooten 1997). These villages have strong reputations for excellence and diligence in farming. Their identity is apparently linked to their successful way of life, which in turn may very well be linked to their adherence to a powerful agrarian rite and its connection to Bamana domains of power.

The people of the Plateau continue to farm using traditional implements, hand-held hoes (*dabaw*). This is an important point. In his account of the deterioration of the *ciwara jo*, Zahan identifies the shift from the hoe to the plow as a determining factor (1980:20), suggesting that in moving away from traditional agricultural methods, people move away from traditional religious and ritual worlds as well. The landscape in my study area, however, is not well suited to this mechanized activity. The slopes are typically too steep and the soil too rocky. In this sense, the devotion to farming and the *ciwara* complex is practical as well as religious or ideological.

In Falayorola, the practice of naming a "*ciwara* of the day" encourages hard work and salutes the community's agricultural heritage. The appearance of the *ciwara* during seasonal rites of affirmation aimed at insuring the livelihood and well-being of people in Jiribugu and Kuluduguni supports the notion that the *ciwara* complex contributes to the ongoing construction of an agrarian identity.

Whether or not the actors or observers involved in the cases I have presented know the agricultural origin myth, make explicit connections to the mythic inventor of this way of life when they perform, or participate in a *ciwara jo*, their links to an agricultural way of life are affirmed and strengthened in the activities involving *ciwarakunwu*. Farming is at the core of their identity.

Zahan (1980:144) discusses the role that annual *ciwara* sacrifices and performances play in celebrating the emergence of group life, which is said to have arisen with the invention of ironworking and the cultivation of grain. In his narrative, rites performed in the village setting com-

memorate the transition from the more solitary life of food collection to the social life of food production. The performances I observed were unifying community events, bringing the men, women, and children of the villages together.

There was an element of rivalry that promoted intravillage cohesion as well. When people from one village heard about a performance in another, they always asked how theirs compared. They were interested in "their" *ciwara*'s image and reputation. My observations echo information presented by Imperato on intervillage rivalry involved in past *ciwara* performances (1970). This community pride is probably linked to farming identity and prowess. Villages want to be known for their dances, but perhaps even more for the success of their farming activities. Today, when people on the Mande Plateau gather to watch their *ciwaraw* perform, they are celebrating and affirming their collective village identity and the social nature of their mode of subsistence.

Thus, for people in the communities described here, it seems that occupational and village identities are most important. How far does the *ciwara* complex go toward the construction of group identities? Do the performances represent an attempt to solidify an explicitly Bamana identity? I think not. Rather, I suggest that the performers and observers at the *ciwara* events I described have a decidedly local orientation; identity politics seem to unfold at the village rather than the ethnic level. In their festivities, the villagers were not necessarily communicating their ethnicity to members of other ethnic groups; rather, they were communicating with each other, with their ancestors, and with powerful forces in their community.

However, as Mary Jo Arnoldi has shown (1995, 1996), elements of the *ciwara* complex can play important roles in the articulation of Bamana ethnic identity in contemporary multiethnic contexts. She describes how Bamana residents of Segou use the *ciwara* form to assert their "Bamanaya," or Bamana-ness, in a complex urban arena where other ethnic identities and symbols are in circulation. For these urban Bamana the *ciwara* complex provides a rallying point, an expression of their cultural heritage. For the performers and audience members on the Plateau, however, the *ciwara* complex is not simply a symbol of the past—a "spirit" of occupational heritage—but rather a reflection of their contemporary reality.

## Generation and Gender: Realms of Continuity and Contestation

The performances I have documented offer important insights into issues of meaning and negotiation in the realms of generation and gender. In all three instances, members of at least two genera-

17. *Ciwara* leader (*ciwara tigi*). Village of Kuluduguni, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten.

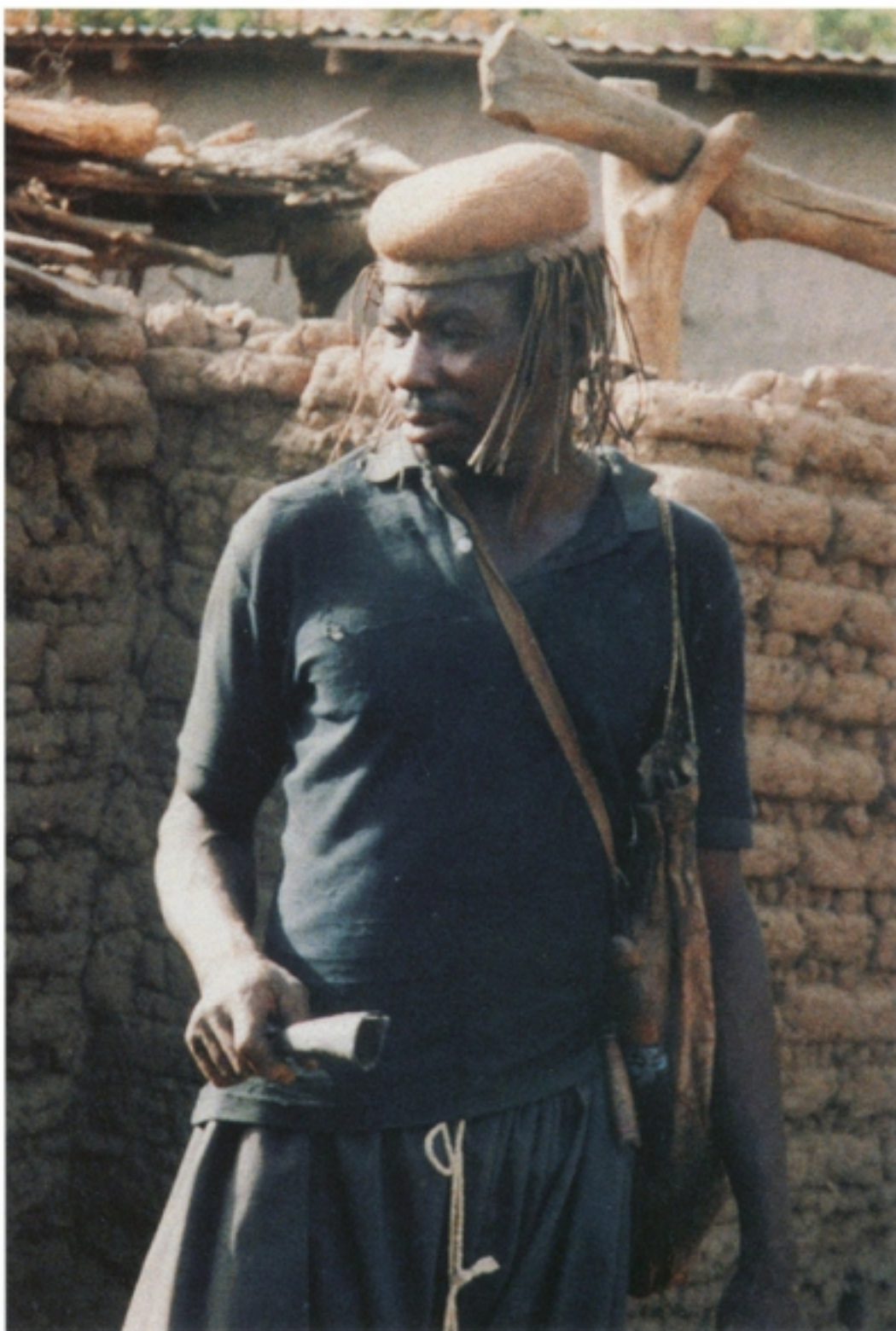
In the performance at Jiribugu several days earlier, this man danced the male *ciwara* headdress. Here he seemed to treat the *ciwara* pair as novices, closely monitoring and directing their movements. Later he would perform the dance himself, with the *ciwara* sticks but without the headdress.

tions played important roles. In Falayorola, the leader of the masquerade was an older married man. After guiding the performers through their sequences, he performed himself. Likewise, male elders in Jiribugu assisted the performers with their costumes and with the preparation and display of the power objects. Several took turns dancing, and at least one elder executed acts of power. The fact that novices danced the headdresses in Kuluduguni shows an interest in passing on this tradition. Former *ciwara* dancers seemed to serve as guides, their performances a reminder of their prowess in the past. The deliberate and public actions of different generations insure temporal and cross-generational continuity.

I also observed potential lines of change and conflict within the *ciwara* complex, especially with regard to gender constructs. According to received wisdom, the male-female pairing of the headdresses suggests the theme of sexual interdependence and complementarity (Brink 1981; Zahan 1980). Human and agricultural reproduction depends on active participation from men and women. The sculptures described here support this interpretation. Each was a male-female pair, and the theme of successful reproduction was supported by the small figures incorporated into the female headdresses. In this way, the sculptures carry forward key aspects of Bamana gender ideology.

However, there is also an interesting sculptural twist: in these cases the quintessential farming icon incorporated images of hunting. The male figure on the Falayorola headdress appeared to be a hunter. He carried a gun and wore a hunter's magical armband. Where was his hoe? In Jiribugu and Kuluduguni, the male headdress was topped with a large gun. These elaborations on the basic symbolic structure reveal the dynamism of this complex.

Evidence of change and the active negotiation of gender identity go beyond sculptural symbolism. While the *ciwara* complex has typically been identified as male dominated, my observations reveal that women are active in its maintenance and ongoing reconfiguration. Recall that two girls always followed the *ciwaraw*. Moreover, women and girls were always present at the performances, as members of the audience and as singers of songs that encouraged the performers and glo-



riated the hard work of farming.<sup>23</sup> Yet, though women were definitely invested in the performance complex, they also seemed to contest it.

During the women's field labor event, "foolish" old women "imitated" the *ciwara* dance. More significantly, in the Jiribugu case, women danced their own version of *ciwarakuntw!* Such scenes have never been reported in the literature on the *ciwara* complex. Are they signs of women's long-standing but largely invisible role in the tradition, or do they indicate a more contemporary negotiation of power between the sexes? Are they meant to signify women's own heritage as "champion farmers"? After all, agricultural labor has never been strictly a male activity among

the Bamana. Or do they reflect women's desire to gain a foothold in important new farming activities such as market gardening, a realm largely limited to men, but which women actively contest (see Wooten 1997)? One also wonders if male performers and sculptors are using the tradition to underscore what they see as more appropriate gender roles. Does the addition of the gun and the hunting imagery reinforce male power?

Rather than providing enlightening answers to such questions, my observations of women's roles in these settings compel us to pay closer attention to gender dynamics in this and other performance arenas. If we explore women's agency in such contexts more closely, we stand to



Left: 18. Male *ciwara* dancer. Village of Kuluduguni, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten. Now performed by a different dancer, this *ciwarakun* is the same as that performed at Jiribugu (see Figs. 10, 11).

Right: 19. *Ciwara* pair in performance. Village of Kuluduguni, April 1994. Photo: Stephen Wooten. The dancers' costumes are decorated with long bird feathers. At the upper left one sees the hand of the attendant, who is fanning the *ciwara* with a fiber plate.



learn a great deal—about their role in the *ciwara* complex and about the wider field of Bamana gender relations. At this stage it seems that there is at least an element of gender contestation in this largely male-centered, intergenerational tradition.

By focusing on the ways in which people located in a particular social, cultural, and historical setting make use of one of Africa's most widely recognized forms of material culture, I have tried to shed light on the complex relationships between objects and spheres of meaning and identity—specifically, to gain a sense of how people on the Mande Plateau shape the meaning of *ciwara* headdresses and how *ciwara* headdresses shape the identities of

the region's residents. More in-depth study can add much to this preliminary analysis of a contemporary manifestation of the *ciwara* complex, and I intend to expand my studies of antelope headdresses and champion farmers in the days ahead. However, important insights have been gained thus far.

Are the people of Falayorola, Jiribugu, Kuluduguni, and neighboring villages of the Plateau *Bamana yèrè yèrè*—farming champions with a strong orientation to traditional Bamana ways—as Aminata and her urban neighbors assert? By some criteria, the answer is yes. Residents of these areas do farm as if their lives depended on it (as they do), and some do indeed celebrate their agrarian heritage with performances involving *ciwarakunw*. Many residents engage in traditional power-oriented activities which bring meaning to their worlds. However, the farming people of the Plateau are by no means conservative traditionalists. The champion farmers of the Mande Plateau live very much in the present. Their present certainly includes elements which some urban dwellers in contemporary Mali (and some people living outside the region) view as aspects of the past. However, the cultivation of the

soil, the negotiation of cycles of abundance and scarcity, and the maintenance of healthy relations with traditional sources of power are still processes of immediate concern to the people whose worlds I have come to know.

The Bamana farmers whose actions I have described here use *ciwarakunw* to bring meaning to their lives and to forge identities in a rapidly changing world. In this sense the *ciwara* complex is alive and well in at least one area of contemporary rural Mali. This is good news for distant aficionados of African art—and, more important, for the hard-working people of the Mande Plateau. Additional ethnographic research in the region and perhaps even further afield will go a long way toward clarifying other configurations of content, context, and creativity in this exceptional expression of Mande culture. Like the present work, such studies will contribute to the development of a more Africa-centered approach to the continent's material culture, as well as to the advancement of a theoretical framework in which human agency and dynamic change receive the attention they so clearly deserve. □

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ca; and the trade in African raw materials. In the next, he discusses the discovery of Kerma and the history of its study, including the excavations and other fieldwork; theories and interpretations of Kerma; and its identification as the capital of the empire of Kush. Chapter 3 concerns the development of Kerma civilization from its late prehistoric origins to its collapse owing to military raids and occupation by Egypt. It also examines the contacts with Egypt through time.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, Kendall looks at the urban environment and organization of Kerma, as revealed by social and historical information derived from excavations of the settlement area; the houses, palaces, and temples discovered in the excavations; and burial customs, the development of the cemetery, and funerary temples.

The last chapter concerns the collapse of the Kerma-Kush polity and the renaissance of the Nubian state after the end of the Egyptian empire. Here Kendall looks at the organization of the Egyptian province, Egyptian-Nubian cultural fusion, possible similarities between the Kerma and Napatan religions, and the rise of the Napatan kingdom and its presence at the site of Kerma. A catalogue of the exhibited materials, with short introductions to each class of object, and a bibliography complete the book.

The author's approach—to start with the relationship between Kerma and Egypt—is effective: it links the discussion of the Kerma site and culture to a culture more familiar to nonspecialists. Nevertheless, considering the intention stressed in the foreword and in the introduction, to use Kerma to deepen our historical understanding of the African continent, it is strange that any reference to other African cultures contemporary with and linked to Kerma is almost completely absent. Only a few words are dedicated to Lower Nubian cultures (pp. 11–15), and the Sudanese Eastern Desert and the Butana and the Kassala area are for the most part ignored. The general public might erroneously conclude that the region south of Kerma, from which many raw materials were exported via Kerma to Egypt (see pp. 7–8, 10, 12), was a cultural void.

The omission is evident in the map of the Nile Valley “illustrating the expansion of the Kerma culture and the early Kingdom of Kush” (p. xvi): the Kassala region and most of the Eastern Desert, the Butana, and the Atbara area are cut off. In addition, the “historical timeline showing the mercantile, political, and military interaction between Egypt and Nubia” (p. xv) omits any reference to these regions.

Yet Egyptian texts and archaeological evidence suggest not only that the regions south and southeast of the Kingdom of Kush-Kerma were densely populated in the third through second millennia B.C., but also that complex societies arose there (e.g., see O'Connor 1987, 1991; Fattovich 1990) and intensively interacted with Kerma and Egypt in a trade network extending from the Ethiopian plateau to Arabia and, via the Red Sea and the Nile, to Egypt and the Mediterranean (e.g., Fattovich

1996a). In those regions one can confidently locate other place names mentioned in Egyptian texts, such as the widely known Punt (see Kitchen 1982, 1993; Fattovich 1996b) and Irem (e.g., see O'Connor 1987).

Of course, this omission may be attributed to the stated popularizing purpose of the book and to the still partial archaeological exploration of the regions south and southeast of Kerma. Nevertheless, it should be noted that most of these areas are outside the Nile Valley and therefore traditionally considered marginal to Nubiology, despite the important implications of the archaeological activities conducted there over the past twenty years. A book that aims to introduce the general public to the earliest phases of African civilization would do well to discuss not only Kerma's contacts with Egypt but also those with its southern partners.

Although the book is aimed at nonspecialist readers, it contains many noteworthy observations. Kendall argues that the two buildings at Kerma named Deffufa could have been a kind of flat-topped artificial mountain similar to the Jebel Barkal hill, where the Egyptians built an Amun temple. It may have taken over an earlier cult site, where the main ceremonial and religious center of the Napatan state arose in the eighth century B.C. (pp. 46–48, 78–79). Although it is difficult to prove any kind of ideological and religious continuity between Kerma-Kush and Napatan, the possibility should be noted. In any case, despite what is suggested by the “historical timeline,” which lists Kerma and Napatan rulers in the same column under the general label of “Kings of Kush,” any kind of direct relationship between the states and dynasties of Kerma and Napatan is very unlikely and in any case still unproved, as the author states in the text (p. 81).

Kendall is to be credited for attempting to provide a systematic outline of aspects of the religion of Kerma-Kush that we can infer from architectural monuments and other manufactures. Though he cautiously stresses that “the outlined concepts are only speculations” (p. 78), he argues convincingly that the religion may have had cosmic, most likely solar, aspects: rituals took place on the terraces of the temples (where at least in one case, a kind of obelisk—a typical solar symbol—was erected), the dead were always placed in their tombs with heads oriented toward the east, or the dawn, and the winged sun-disk appears on royal tombs and temples as architectural decoration (pp. 46–48, 65, 77–78). The solar deity may have been represented as a ram crowned with a spherical object (p. 76–78). This deity was identified with Amun by the Egyptians, and it was clearly connected with royal power, perhaps the legitimation of Kerma kings (pp. 77–78).

The possible Nubian origins of several aspects of the Egyptian Amun cult have already been stressed (e.g., Bonnet 1990:77), as has the basis of references in Egyptian texts (e.g., see Koenig 1987), but Kendall rightly places everything in a complex system in which technologies, ideologies, and ways of life were exchanged between the Nubian and the Egyptian Bronze Age elites (pp. 41–42, 63–65).

Kendall mentions another noteworthy point about the control of trade in ancient Kerma-Kush. Basing his argument on the position of the royal residence and the presence of storerooms near it, Kendall believes that all important trade was a royal monopoly (pp. 48–49). This hypothesis is probably accurate, but more data need to be collected to prove it and to allow us to learn more about the organization of trade in Kerma-Kush society.

The catalogue of the exhibited materials gives an effective overview of some Kerma crafts, like ceramics, carpentry, jewelry, and metalwork. Kendall offers interesting remarks on the technologies and on the sources of craftsmen's raw materials.

In *Kerma and the Kingdom of Kush*, Timothy Kendall summarizes in a very effective way, and for the first time in English, our present knowledge of Kerma culture for a nonspecialist readership. Despite some omissions, his original observations and fresh perspective lead me to recommend this book as well to readers more directly concerned with Nubian and Egyptian history and archaeology. □

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## notes

WOOTEN: Notes, from page 33

[This article was accepted for publication in February 2000.]

Many individuals and institutions have supported my research in Mali: I am tremendously grateful to all of them. The Department of Anthropology and the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, provided grants for fieldwork during 1992. The Foreign Language and Area Studies Program of US/ED supported my training in Mande studies and the Bamana language. A Fulbright-III Dissertation Grant and a National Science Foundation Ethnographic Training Grant funded my fieldwork during 1993–1994. In 1995, Steve Meckstroth and Linda Giles's invitation to examine Bamana sculptures in Illinois State University's African Art Collection stimulated me to develop my analysis of the *ciwa* complex.

I presented versions of this essay at Illinois State University, Knox College, the University of Florida, the 1995 African Studies Association meeting, the 1996 Banjul Conference of the Mande Studies Association, and the Oregon Humanities Center, and received valuable input in those forums. Alma Gottlieb, Richard Warns, Julianne Freeman, and P. J. Imperato provided helpful comments on earlier drafts. The comments of *African Art's* reviewers also helped improve this essay. Joanna Lambert has offered support and feedback all along the way—from the Mande Plateau to Eugene. I am eternally grateful to her. Finally, I offer my deepest thanks to the people of Mali, particularly the farmers of the Mande Plateau, for welcoming me into their world and for teaching me about their culture and my own. *I ni ce. I ni ba.*

1. I am following local usage patterns in referring to this diverse sociolinguistic group as Bamana. In much of the earlier literature the people are called Bambara. The spelling *ciwa* (frequently spelled *ciwa*, *ciwa*, *ciwa*) follows the most recent Mande orthographic trends.

2. Out of respect and consideration for those whose worlds and activities I describe in this article, I have chosen to use pseudonyms for place and personal names.

3. I first met Aminata in 1987 when I was a trainee with the U.S. Peace Corps. I lived in her husband Mou's compound for five months and was fortunate to get to know her as well as the other members of the Kone extended family. When I returned to Mali in 1992 to begin my doctoral research, I sought her guidance. Her son, Seydou Kone, has been a constant source of support throughout my work in Mali.

4. James Brink uses this phrase in what I consider to be one of the best encapsulations of the *ciwa* phenomenon. His entry on the antelope headdress in *For Spirits and Kings* (1981:24–25) is worth quoting at length here: “For the Bamana of Mali, *ciwa* refers to a constellation of meaning and value. On the one hand, it summarizes the immense importance of agriculture in the society and, on the other, focuses human and spiritual energy on the realization of agricultural work. Numerous forms and personages, each described as *ciwa*,”

function as vehicles for this cultural substance and energy: the mythic "farming beast" who epitomizes the qualities of the ideal farmer and who gave agriculture to the Bamana; the cult group that preserves the knowledge of agricultural fecundity and the power of the cult's sacred objects (*totem*): the rhythms, songs, dances, costumes, and headdresses used to motivate the young men's communal hoeing, planting, and cultivating; the young champion farmers whose physical strength, suppleness, and farming virtues imitate the example of the mythic farming beast and qualify them to wear costumes and headdresses in dance performances known as *chi wara*.

5. Thirty years ago, in the pages of *African Arts*, Dr. P. J. Imperato provided what I consider the first socially, culturally, and historically informed description of the performance context of the *ciaras* complex. A decade later, Dominique Zahan contributed to our appreciation of this magnificent tradition with an impressive volume in which he explored its symbolism and documented an impressive range of stylistic variation in the form. I dedicate this essay to these pioneers and hope that it accents their work in some small way.

6. Between 1992 and 1994 I documented the development of market gardening in the area and examined the influence of this process on domestic organization and production patterns (Wooten 1997). Aminata's comments compelled me to watch closely for evidence of the *ciaras* performance tradition during my fieldwork, though the *ciaras* phenomenon was not the focus of my field studies at the time; my exposure to these performances was fortuitous. While I focused my research energies on Kuludugani, I traveled regularly to neighboring villages, attending labor events, marriage celebrations, hunters' celebrations, as well as various performance events involving masks and masquerades. Overall, I am comfortable stating that there was a considerable degree of overlap within the region with regard to basic social, economic, and religious/ritual patterns.

7. During my stay, the community had no mosque. In fact, I do not remember seeing mosques in any of the Plateau villages I visited most frequently—they certainly were not highlighted on the village tours I was usually given upon my first arrival.

8. The following accounts derive from my direct observation of the events and from subsequent examination of the videotapes and photographs I made during the performances. Jatigi Jara provided various points of clarification and interpretation, I indicate his input where relevant. For short video sequences from two of these performances, see Wooten 1998.

9. Unfortunately, I was unable to record this or the other *ciaras* songs mentioned here. I intend to retrieve whatever I can from the audio component of the videotapes.

10. This masquerade corresponds to the "Namakoroni" phenomenon Imperato (1970) describes in association with many *ciaras* performances. See his description for more details.

11. Jatigi had mentioned that it would be appropriate for me, as a guest, to offer a small sum (1,000 FCFA, then about \$3 U.S.) as a gift to, as he put it, "help with the *wara sin*." He explained that each time the *ciaras* were danced, a chicken sacrifice was offered (evidence of which I had noted on the *ciaras* sticks).

12. See Zahan's essay in this issue for a structural analysis of this feature.

13. These lines may be linked to those described in de Ganay's account of circatization among the Bamana (1949).

14. For an introduction to this masquerade, see Chéron 1931.

15. Jatigi had mentioned that on such occasions people typically wished each other luck with their upcoming farming activities, so upon hearing the old men discussing plans for the planting I said, "May you harvest many granaries of sorghum" and "May you harvest much corn." The old men loved this! They laughed and joked that I was truly becoming a Bamana man.

16. I had observed various sacrifices, divinatory kola tosses, and protective amulets, but had never seen this type of object. I was very surprised to see such items set out for public view and in conjunction with the headdresses.

17. These necklaces apparently came from the young *ciaras* girls; I observed them wearing the same jewelry before and after the event.

18. Jatigi later told me that Duguko had spoken to the ancestors and that his laughter was associated with hearing their replies.

19. He thanked the dancers, drummers, and singers, and especially me and my visiting fiancée. He noted that the community was glad to have us present for their *gnaña* and extended blessings to us.

20. See McNaughton 1988 (esp. pp. 15–18) for an engaging discussion of this important aspect of the Bamana/Mande religious order.

21. While Imperato was told in the 1960s that such items had been used in association with *ciaras* in the past, he never saw examples of them during his many encounters with the complex (personal communication, 1997).

22. This conceptualization is inspired by Arnold's insightful analysis of puppet masquerades in the Segou region (Arnold 1995, 1996).

23. Indeed, it should be pointed out that the presence of women and children at various stages of *ciaras* performances was noted in several of the earliest discussions of the complex. See Henry 1910 and Delafosse 1912.

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#### ZAHAN: Notes from page 45

[This article was accepted for publication in January 2000. All notes are by Allen F. Roberts as editor and translator.]

1. As co-founder and co-director of PASALA, I asked Professor Zahan to write a paper marking his stay at Iowa. He left "Two Worlds" in rough draft, full of comments to himself (deleted here), written as he learned to use a computer. As a rough draft, we must forgive Zahan if his prose is a bit chatty, some of his ideas remain incomplete, and a few of his assertions are unsubstantiated. In translating his paper for publication, I have elected to delete redundancies and other superfluous, as a copy editor might have requested had Professor Zahan been able to do so himself; it may be worth noting that some years before his death, I translated another of his articles in the same way, and Zahan was pleased with the results. I have preserved the professor's rather idiosyncratic use of quotation marks for the most part. Because of confusion resulting from Zahan's illness and death, the paper was lost for a number of years, but in 1999 I discovered a copy of it on a disk dating from 1991. Readers interested in Zahan's life and work may wish to consult three volumes collected in his memory: Emy 1992; Emy & Witt 1995; and Emy, Stamm & Witt 1996.

2. Although in the present paper the ethnographic grounding of Zahan's assertions is not documented, in *Antélope du soleil* (1980:84) he states that "all our informants are unanimous in saying that the [horizontal *ciaras*] crests from Bédédougou refer to *Voudzira*, the upper level of the object to the above-ground part of the plant, the lower to its buried portion, including the roots." In other words, his argument is based upon the Bamana exegeses he gathered in the 1950s, as he himself asserts in the final paragraph of this paper.

3. A far more detailed discussion of the iconography of *ciaras* crests is presented in Zahan's compendious volume, *Antélope du soleil* (1980). This work contains line drawings of ninety-two horizontal *ciaras* (figs. III-1 through III-92), providing an unparalleled opportunity to see the play of ideas across a genre. His catalogue raisonné also includes more than four hundred other *ciaras* in several "models."

As Stephen Wooten notes in this same issue of *African Arts*, *ciaras* performers are called *ciaras*; "farming animals," in the Bamana language, and the head crests they wear in performance *ciaras*; or "farming animal heads." For brevity, I have chosen to refer to the society, its performers, and their head crests by the same term, "*ciaras*." It may also be

noted that in a substantial literature, authors have discussed whether or not it is logical to call *aardvarks* and pangolins "armadillos," as Zahan does here, for although such preposterous beasts may defy culturally constructed animal categories, they are nonetheless situated in and explained by systematic knowledge; see Roberts 1995:17–22 for a review of such writing.

4. Zahan offered the French name for *Voudzira subterranea* as *pistachies de la terre*, or "ground pistachios." I extend sincere thanks to Raymond Silverman for contacting Professors Richard Bernstein, James Bingen, Christopher Penders, and John Staatz of Michigan State University, who supplied me with information about the plant and its fruit that "look something like kidney beans, called *tiga gawien* by Bamana." The English term for *Voudzira* may be "Bambara ground-nuts," a name that would clearly indicate the plant's local origin and use, but one that appears not to have wide currency among anglophonic Africanist agricultural economists. Given such uncertainties, it seems better to leave the name in Latin, as "*Voudzira*." Zahan discusses botanical literature concerning *Voudzira* in *Antélope du soleil*, which Bambara "consider a hermaphroditic plant" because the "male" peduncle is "attracted to the femininity of the earth by the same impulse characterizing the attraction of the sexes" (1980:55–57).

5. Here Zahan had intended to supply a slide and a caption identifying the tobacco mortar he had in mind. Unfortunately, this information is now lost, but he may have been referring to Lulua mortars from Congo (Kinshasa), which are often figurative. Zahan was interested in African arts associated with tobacco, and we discussed the possibility of working together toward an exhibition of these. Sadly, this initiative was among those lost with the professor's death.

6. Peanut leaves are eaten as a vegetable elsewhere in Africa, such as southeastern Congo (Kinshasa), so it is not that they cannot be eaten, only that they are not by Bamana.

7. It should be noted that in Zahan's catalogue raisonné of ninety-two horizontal *ciaras* (1980: figs. III-1 through III-92), many possess more complex lower registers than those illustrated in this article.

8. Zahan did not identify the particular type of Baga figure in his rough draft. Frederick Lamp suspects that Zahan was referring to *Tahol* (or *doh*) figures that are sometimes danced as crests, sometimes used as shrines; I thank him for this personal communication of January 2000. Lamp (1996:101–2) suggests that the bird-like head of *Tahol* figures may reflect the shape of women's hoes, and that "the figure is an anthropomorphized spiritual cultivator. In this capacity, a *Tahol* [the singular form of the term] bears comparison with the doiled Manding figure known as *Chi Wara*, or 'The Farming Beast', who likewise represents a spiritual being credited with the introduction of agriculture. *Chi Wara*'s formal manifestation is also similar to a *Tahol*'s: a composite of an antelope and an anteater, he has a long snout that is said to represent the hoe."

9. This unexplained analogy is difficult to understand. Zahan's point more generally, as elaborated in *Antélope du soleil* (1980:84, *passim*), is that iconographical details of horizontal *ciaras* such as the reverse spirals of *aardvark* tails are "counter-verities" and an "inversion of nature" meant to reflect an assertion of human agency in a difficult world. He compares such sculptural ploys to the clowning undertaken by members of the Koro society, whose "intentional burlesque" is meant to make reality a more ready subject of reflection by playfully subverting the expectations of life. "Humans ought to mock death in order to better submit to it" (Zahan 1980:84).

10. The word "allusive" in both French and English refers to indirect reference, "without naming names." In a lecture at the University of Iowa, Zahan and I discussed whether the term is appropriate to describing *ciaras*, for it is not so much that the names of animals and other iconographical elements are not named as it is that a small part is chosen to stand for a large whole—horns for antelope, for example. Sculptural synecdoche of this sort is quite common in Africa, as Zahan suggests (see Roberts 1995). What is allusive is the symbolism whereby the roan antelope "is" the sun, as suggested in a zigzag pattern reminiscent of the way the animal takes flight when pursued. A phrase from *Antélope du soleil* (1980:81) captures the brilliantly complex mix of named and unnamed references in Bamana art: he called such works "plastic imbricities," with all the contradictions so implied.

11. The literal translation of *brindilles*, "twig," makes for an awkward phrase in English when coupled with the word "art." Later in his rough draft, Zahan nominates about the phrase in an appended note. He recognizes that *art-brindilles* may be translated literally as "twig art," but adds that "I think that the best expression for this art would be art or *moraxama* ('lamp art' or 'stick art'). Personally, I think that in English it would be better to say 'lamp art' even though the word 'lamp' usually refers to something without form. One can note, for instance, that 'lamp sugar' refers to sugar in pieces given distinct form." In my opinion, "lamp art" does not convey Zahan's sense very well either. Aside from being a rather comical phrase in English, what Zahan means to suggest is that while parts of animals or other referents may be "bumped together," they "twig"—that is, they extend and grow into a complex whole that is more than the sum of its parts. "Burgeoning" seems to capture this sense.

12. The zigzag of the roan antelope's flight may recall the apparent movement of the sun along the ecliptic, as viewed