

## THE YOUNGER BROTHER AND THE STRANGER IN MANDE STATUS DISCOURSE

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### *Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

In pre-colonial times the town of Kangaba - located on the left bank of the Niger river, 95 kilometres south of Bamako - was an important place in the Sudan: Mungo Park mentions the town as a big slave market,<sup>2</sup> and the ruler of Kangaba, who collaborated with the armies of Samori Toure, was one of the main opponents of the French, in the period they occupied the Mande area<sup>3</sup> in the 1880s. He lived in a two storey palace that is described as an architectural masterpiece (Peroz 1889, p. 252). Kangaba was said to be the last capital of the famous Mali empire.

The French knew that Mande once was the core of a great empire (see, for instance, Anonymous 1884, p. 49), but to them the Mande region seemed in chaos at the moment of their first contact. They considered the ruler of Kangaba to be an usurper who dominated other legitimate rulers and they sent him and his family into exile.

In this article I will elaborate the idea that these French measures had been based on a set of misunderstandings with respect to principles of status and social organization in Mande. Contrary to many others, I think the ruler of Kangaba had been the legitimate leader of a relatively stable society for a long time. My argument is based on a re-analysis of well-known genealogies, namely the genealogies that are recited in text editions of the Sunjata epic. I reject the analysis of these genealogies as it has been put forward by Niane (1975), Person (1981), and Camara (1990) in their reconstruction of the position of Kangaba in pre-colonial times.<sup>4</sup> I will argue that their point of view - produced in order to reject Delafosse's never proven remark that Kangaba may have been the capital of the medieval Mali empire - has been based on a methodological mistake in the analysis of the genealogies of royal dynasties. I think there is no evidence for the belief that Kangaba is the most recent in a long list of capitals of the former Mali empire; the idea that the Keita dynasty in Kangaba settled and took power there in the seventeenth or eighteenth century is unacceptable. As an alternative I link the structure of genealogies to patterns of task differentiation in Mande society and Mande oral traditions. On the basis of those

patterns I will argue that Kangaba had a prominent position in cooperation during warfare for a long time, and that this position is reflected precisely by the 'younger brother' position in ideology. However, although I think that Kangaba's position had been accepted for a long time in pre-colonial times, I do not want to try to prove that the town was the capital of the medieval Mali empire.

I do not divide Mande into territorial segments, since in Mande rule was over people and not over land, and therefore status claims were in terms of social relations. I mainly want to explain why it is logical for a powerful group to express its status by claiming the position of the youngest brother and why it is meaningful to incorporate the ancestors of the dynasties in adjoining regions as the older brother, even though the older brother has the right of succession.

In order to explain the preference for the younger brother, I am first going to analyze his position in genealogies, and later on his position in tales and 'real life'. Mande genealogies have been used as either 'true' products of the excellent memories of Mande bards, or as rather meaningless 'praise lines'. In this article I will elaborate a third option by stating that Mande genealogies do not reproduce a factual reconstruction of the past, but nevertheless contain a historical dimension due to their relation to genealogies from other regions. This approach would mean at least a more economic use of the sources, since it turns many sources hitherto considered as unreliable or uninteresting into meaningful accounts of the principles that reproduce Mande society. Thus, this article is not only meant as an attempt to reconsider Kangaba's history, but it also gives an alternative method for those who work on Mande history.

This last point is worked out in the idea that Mande tales, genealogies, travel accounts and the Sunjata epic are all part of the same status discourse. This discourse is used in any context and this explains the variety in the examples I give. Thus, I do not agree with Person who writes that the Sunjata epic is 'une section isolée, fossilisée' (1981, p. 613) in Mande oral traditions, and that 'sa fonction est culturelle et symbolique, elle (the epic - JJ) n'a pas d'utilité pratique immédiate' (ib., p. 629).

In the Mande status discourse status is expressed in terms of a hierarchical relationship. This is typical for any group in the Western Sudan, since all groups/families in Mande society derive their identity from stories about legendary ancestors (the first one with the patronymic [*jamu*] of the family) who 'worked' [*ka baara kè*] together with the ancestor of another group, although this never leads to a fused identity of the two groups).

*Patterns of settlement in Mande society*

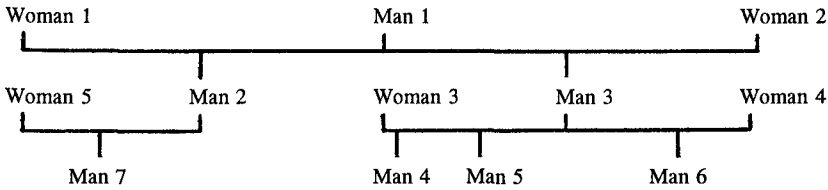
Male inhabitants of Mande society settle patrilocally, marriage in Mande is virilocal, and descentance is patrilineal. This means that - in an ideal situation - the sons remain living on the paternal compound, and they marry women from elsewhere. In the long run, this results in huge compounds populated with a group of classificatory brothers (often three generations: fathers, sons and grandchildren) and their wives and children. These compounds can still be found everywhere in Mande. As families reproduce themselves on the same spot, and because kinship terms are classificatory, any (!) man in Mande is surrounded by dozens of 'grandfathers', 'fathers', 'children', 'older brothers', and 'younger brothers'. This means that a man's position is always dynamic: he is expected to be able to act constantly and interchangeably as a grandchild, a son, a father, a younger brother and an older brother.

Compounds cannot extend indefinitely, and therefore segmentation is necessary. In Mande compounds are said to split up due to conflicts between brothers. Segmentation of compounds thus becomes equal to segmentation of the patrilineage (*bonda*). The tension in a brother-brother relationship is clearly visible in the Bamana/Maninka terms for 'harmony' and 'conflict'. *Badenya* is both 'harmony' and 'siblinghood' (children of one mother);<sup>5</sup> the mother represents peace and harmony in Mande. *Fadenya* stands for both 'conflict' and 'half-siblinghood' (children of one father and different mothers). Bird and Kendall (1987) convincingly show that these two terms - *badenya* and *fadenya* - represent centripetal and centrifugal forces in Mande society, as *badenya* is used to describe peaceful cohabitation and *fadenya* is often said to be at the origin of a segmentation of compounds.

Another cause of compound segmentation is genealogical distance. Although not necessarily accompanied by quarrels or tensions, segmentation between *fadenw* is the most probable fault line in the case of segmentation by genealogical distance. However, after the establishment of two separate compounds, tensions will arise on another level: besides brother-brother relations within the two separate compounds / patrilineages, the brother-brother relation between the recently segmented compounds / patrilineages can become a source of conflict or harmony. Thus, in Mande society, *fadenya* and genealogical distance are mixed in processes of settlement and segmentation.

This brings me to an aspect of the related terms *badenya-fadenya* which has not been mentioned by Bird and Kendall, namely the fact that *fadenya* can be overruled by *fadenya* on a higher level, transforming the lower level *fadenya* into *badenya*. Let me explain this with a figure (see figure next page):

Figure 1: 'Badenya' and 'fadenya'.



In the genealogy the men represent in first instance human beings, but they can also represent patrilinear descent groups (*bondaw* or *siw*) in stories on status claims. Man 4 and Man 5 have both the same mother and father; their relation is characterized by *badenya*. *Badenya* is only partially present between Man 4+5 and Man 6; on a micro level tension is possible, because 4+5 and 6 have different mothers. However, in their relation towards Man 7, a classificatory brother, Man 4+5+6 are joined in harmony.

Thus, one sees that an opponent becomes the partner in an other context, namely when Man 7 is involved. However, it is also possible that Man 4+5+6+7 will support each other, for instance when they are in conflict with an 'outsider'. Then *fadenya* turns into *badenya*. This relative character has completely been overlooked by Leynaud and Cisse in their ethnography on the Maninka of the Haut Niger. They write (1978, p. 254):

"Si les relations sociales s'appuyaient uniquement sur les structures généalogiques, la cohésion de la communauté villageoise aurait bien du mal à se maintenir, car on sait que chez les Malinke, *fadenya* (descendance patrilinéaire) est synonyme de rivalité pour le pouvoir."

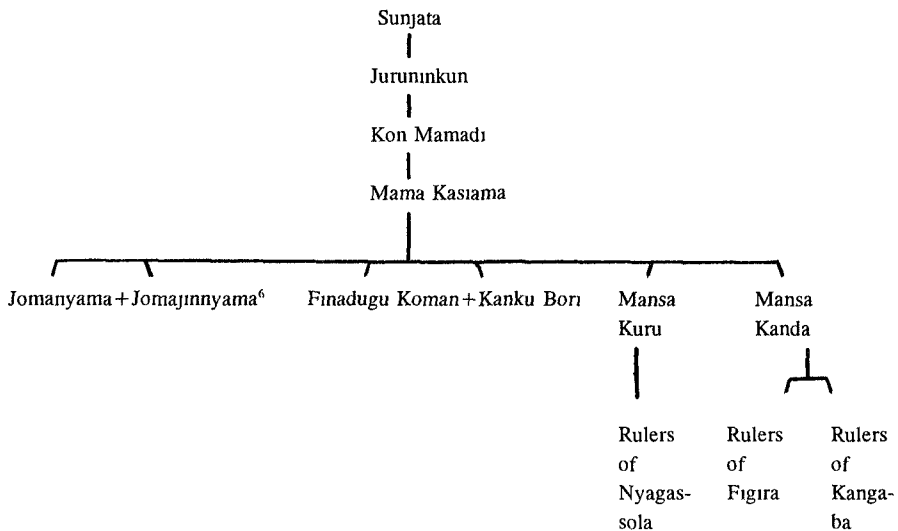
Of course, patterns comparable to the here proposed mutual exchangeability between *fadenya* and *badenya* are well-known for many African societies which have been classified as 'segmentary societies'. However, for Mande it has not been proposed by authors who describe Mande as segmentary, and therefore they often stress mainly the scattered character of society. Amselle is, as far as I know, one of the few who tried to analyse the interchange between unifying and destabilizing tendencies in Mande society (Amselle 1990 and 1993), but he uses arguments others than kinship structure.

*The royal genealogy according to the rulers of Kangaba*

The brother-brother relation described above can also be found in the genealogies of the hereditary rulers (*mansaw*) along the river Niger. These genealogies are still acknowledged by the descendants of these rulers and recited in public by their *jeliw*, their client-bards (bard is '*jeli*', 'griot'). In this article I deal with the first five generations of these genealogies only, because they contain names which are known in many parts of the Mande world.

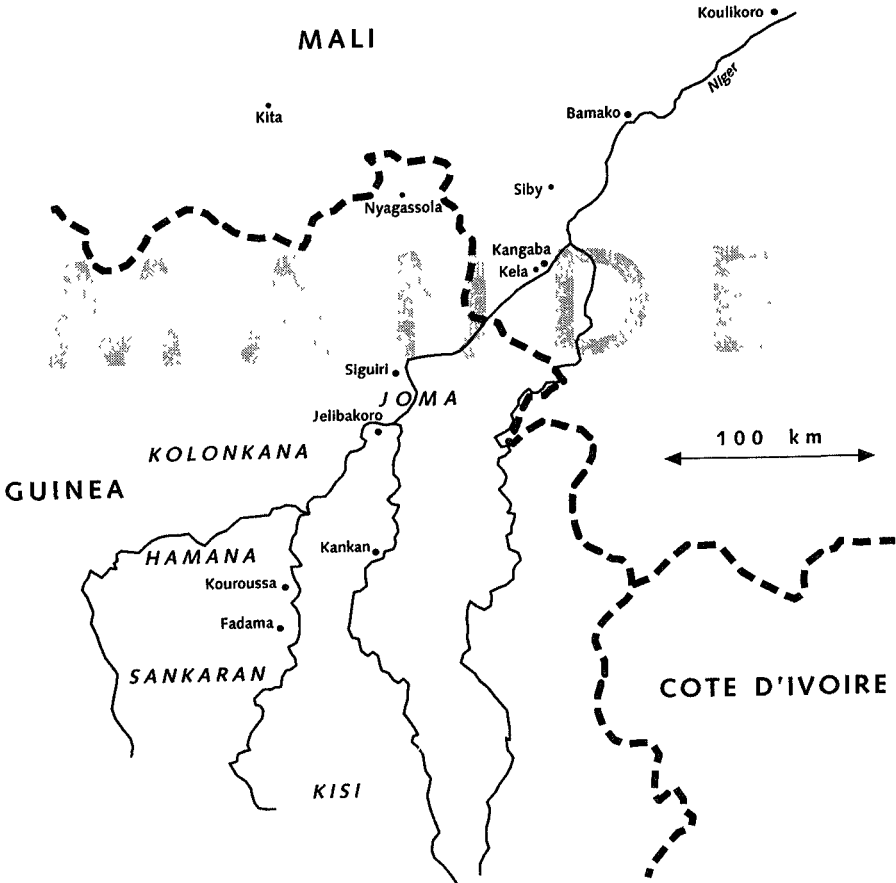
The most powerful dynasties in Mande bear the patronymic (*jamu*) Keita. They represent themselves as descendants of Sunjata, the legendary founder of Mande society. These dynasties are related to each other as classificatory brothers. This principle can be illustrated by the genealogy put forward by the population in and around Kangaba:

Figure 2: *The genealogy of the rulers of Kangaba.*



This genealogy ends with six kings, each of them the founder of a dynasty.<sup>7</sup> The descendants of Mansa Kanda are known as the Keita Kandasi. The descendants of the oldest son of Mansa Kanda rule Figira, a town on the right bank of the river Niger. The descendants of the youngest son are the rulers of Kangaba, on the left bank of the river Niger. Although the distance between Kangaba and Figira is not great - about ten miles - the towns are separated by a major geographical barrier: the river Niger.

The older brothers of Mansa Kuru and Mansa Kanda clearly refer to regions. Finadugu is a region just north of Kangaba, and the descendants of the two middle brothers rule in the town of Narena and villages adjoining to Narena (Leynaud and Cisse 1978, p. 145 and p. 448-451). Joma (Juma) consists of two regions, separated by the river Niger (see map).<sup>8</sup>



The division into spheres of influence is said to be the result of the disintegration of the Mali empire. Person writes in an article that has been considered as the standard for the history of the aftermath of the Mali empire (1981, p. 625):

"Dans le triangle malinké, on ne trouvera plus au XIXe siècle que des *kafu*, ces petites unités étatiques qui forment les cellules politiques fondamentales du monde mandingue. Certains d'entre eux savaient faire reconnaître leur hégémonie à leurs voisins, mais aucune structure politique permanente n'existait à niveau supérieur. Beaucoup d'entre eux, dont les plus puissants et les plus

peuplés, seront alors commandés par des lignées Kééta qui se réclament avec quelque vraisemblance des empereurs du Mali médiéval."

Although there is no centralized administration, the region has a remarkable stability as far as its borders are concerned.<sup>9</sup> When Mungo Park left Bamako for Siby, he noted that he entered the Mande kingdom and from that moment on the rulers were called *mansaw*. One century later Vallière mentioned almost the same spot as the limits of Mande, on his way from Siby to Bamako. He also noted a lack of organization and writes (Vallière 1885, p. 338):

"La nation manding manque absolument d'unité, et il faudrait, sans doute, remonter bien loin dans son histoire pour la trouver consituée avec un gouvernement reconnu par tout le pays. Chaque village vit séparément avec son chef particulier et, bien que ces chefs appartiennent tous aux deux ou trois familles les plus illustres, ils n'ont, malgré ces liens de parenté, aucune solidarité d'intérêts."

Remarkably, the present-day genealogy of the descendants of Sunjata in figure 2 still mentions the same border line, since the two middle brothers - Kanku Bori and Finadugu Koman - rule the region that was considered as the northern part of Mande. Thus, there is also a parallel between 'ideology' and 'area of influence'.

The relation between the two classificatory brothers/dynasties may have been tense as well as intense. The descendants of Mansa Kuru,<sup>10</sup> the older brother of Mansa Kanda, are the rulers of Niagassola. The two regions are marked by a geographical barrier. Niagassola is situated in the Mande hills. When the French 'explorer' lieutenant Vallière arrived in Niagassola as the first white man, Niagassola's ruler - an old man named Mambi Keita - told him that his younger brother, another Mambi Keita, was the ruler of Kangaba. Mambi of Niagassola stated that his namesake in Kangaba was a very brutal man and that Niagassola and Kangaba had been in war with each other for generations. However, when Vallière left Niagassola, the same Mambi of Niagassola advised him to go to Kangaba, because he would be received there with the same hospitality as he had enjoyed in Niagassola (Vallière 1885, p. 314). Since he wanted to visit his commander, captain Gallieni, and as the rains slowed the progress of his exploration, Vallière decided to take a different direction, and went straight to Bamako.

This event indicates two sides of the relationship between the rulers of Niagassola and Kangaba. Mambi of Niagassola disliked his 'younger brother' in Kangaba, but also admitted his importance. This recognition is also visible in the fact that Mambi of Kangaba married two princely women from Niagassola (information in Camara 1990, p. 133). This shows the existence of a diplomatic relationship between the two towns, although the French noted that the rivalry between Kangaba

and Niagassola was so vehement that they always chose opposite positions (Anonymous 1884, p. 75, 175).

Of course, this is a most peculiar situation. Historians and explorers claim that the unifying factor among these petty rulers is the memory of the famous Mali empire, which had fallen a long time ago. On the one hand they note a certain sense of unity and, actually, there really is a stability in the territory which is called 'Mande'. On the other hand, they record tensions between many towns and dynasties, and they find usurpers in Kangaba, the acknowledged centre of the Mande region. How can this be explained?

*The position of 'younger brother' in royal genealogies*

The fact that several dynasties of rulers consider themselves as 'brothers' is not sufficient to explain the feelings of unity, just as the relation between brothers is no guarantee for peaceful cohabitation. On the contrary, it is at the same time the cause of tensions, as explained above.

Moreover, the position of Kangaba's powerful rulers seems like a source of conflict, as they are in the position of the youngest brother. In Mande succession is collateral: when a man dies, he is succeeded by his oldest brother. This person can be a descendant of a different father, or an oldest son of a deceased brother of the deceased, since many classificatory brothers live as neighbours in one village. The death of the chief of the patrilineage is often the moment that conflict arises.<sup>11</sup> The cases are numerous in which several persons claim the right to succession after the death of a chief of the patrilineage. A conflict like this may lead to segmentation into several patrilinear descent groups.

Since the rulers of Kangaba are the classificatory younger brother of all the other rulers, the French colonial administration considered the prominent position of the rulers of Kangaba as illegitimate. During their conquest of the Mande region, the French collaborated with Niagassola and Figira in order to beat the very resistant ruler of Kangaba. Kangaba, in its turn, was supported by the famous resistance leader Samori Toure. After the fall of Kangaba, its ruling dynasty was sent into exile and the French endowed the rulers of Figira - the older brothers - with the function of *jamanatigi* (*chef de canton*), thus governing the area of both Kangaba and Figira. Niagassola was also liberated from the authority of Kangaba. The French built a fortress in Niagassola and reorganized its *maara* ('area of influence') into a separate district. Nowadays, Niagassola is part of Guinée; the separation from Kangaba is complete.

These measures by the French were not only a reward for the support they had received from Figira and Niagassola; they thought them to be justified by the rules



of collateral succession which determine that older brothers come first. From the authors cited, I get the impression that the French administrators were serious ethnographers, who certainly made great efforts to understand Mande, since they were fascinated by the region which they considered to be a main source of the gold they saw in the Sudan. Moreover, they knew that this region had been at the core of a former empire. The French had a fascination for the Mali empire which may have been similar to their fascination for Timbuctu.

Despite their position in the royal genealogy, the rulers from Figira were never accepted by the population of Kangaba, but the French arrangement lasted until 1951 when the former rulers from Kangaba were restored to the position of *jamanatigi* (Leynaud and Cisse 1978, p. 271). Thus, although the genealogy (figure 2) was accepted by both Kangaba and Figira, at the same time the population of Kangaba did not accept the 'legitimate' older brother from Figira.

The logic of this situation becomes clear by analyzing genealogies from centres of power adjacent to Kangaba and Niagassola. First, let us look at Kita, west of Niagassola (information from Cissé and Diabété 1970, p. 91f.)

In the Kita tradition Sunjata is said to have had eight sons. The oldest, Nyamagan, settled in Kita, followed by his younger brother (from the same mother) Jinè Magan. The names of the other six sons are not mentioned. After an unknown time span Nyamagan went to Siguiri, leaving Jinè Magan behind in Kita. The praise song for the town of Kita contains the names of the two brothers (ib. p. 92):

"Je vous parle de Kita...  
De Kita Kuru<sup>12</sup> et de Mansa Ganda  
De Nyamagan et de Jinè Magan."

These Kita praises contain some names similar to those in the genealogy of the kings of Kangaba. Again the duo Nyamagan/Jomamagan and Jinè Magan/Jinnyama are said to be the oldest. However, when recited as a praise-song Kita Kuru/Mansa Kuru and Mansa Ganda/Mansa Kanda come first, thus suggesting that they are the oldest.<sup>13</sup>

The departure of the elder brother is remarkable, since this means that the Keita of Kita themselves claim to descend from a younger brother. Here is a similarity with the other centre of power, Kangaba, whose rulers also claim to descend from a younger brother.

The logic of the situation appears, when data from Siguiri, the main town of Joma, are taken into account. Niane writes that a 'branche cadette' moved from Kita to Joma (Niane 1975, p. 96). Thus, the Joma perspective is the reverse of the Kita perspective, and both claim descent from a younger brother.

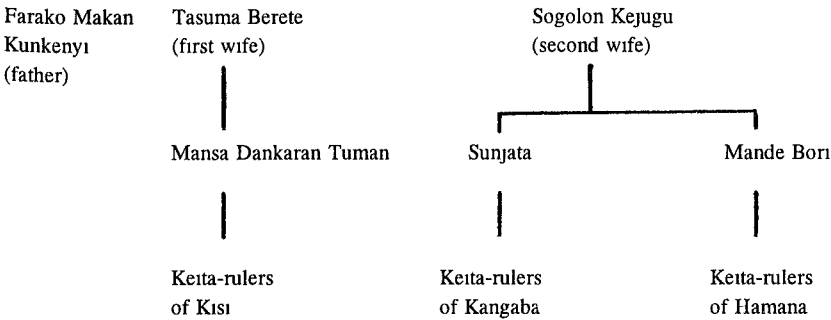
The genealogies of the descendants of Sunjata are similar to the principles of settlement; both are in terms of brother-brother relations and this means they represent tension and mutual acknowledgement. The genealogies are transformations of the same set of names; one presents oneself as the youngest and the neighbour - that is the rival - as the older brother.<sup>14</sup> Centres of power (Kita, Kangaba, Siguiiri) represent themselves in the position of the younger brother, and - at the same time - place their neighbours in the position of the older brother.

*Sunjata and his younger brother Mande Bori*

I have presented the descendants of Sunjata, but I will now turn to the dynasties that relate to him through his parents. Not all the princely Keita are descendants of Sunjata. South of Joma, in Hamana and Kolinkana (in presentday Guinée), live princely Keita who claim descent from Sunjata’s younger brother, Mande Bori. Even further south, in the forests of Kisi, live princely Keita who trace their descent to Sunjata’s older brother, Mansa Dankaran Tuman.

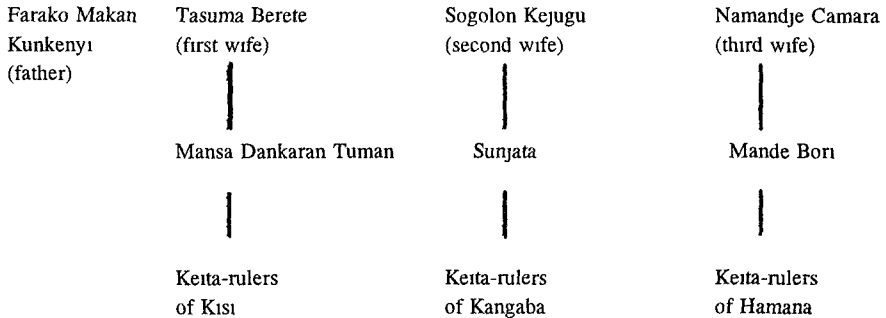
The following genealogy has been often recorded in the region of Kangaba.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 3 - The royal family, the Kangaba perspective



In Hamana and Kolonkana the same order is accepted, although with a seemingly minor difference: this genealogy contains one more *fadenya* construction (see figure next page).

Figure 4: The genealogy of the Keita in Hamana (source: Niane 1975).

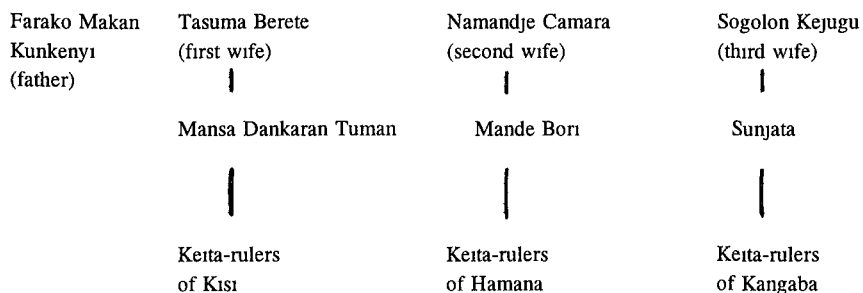


The introduction of a third wife takes away the *badenya* which existed between Sunjata and Mande Bori in the Kangaba perspective. Thus, the descendants of Mande Bori themselves see a kind of rivalry with the descendants of Sunjata, but the descendants of Sunjata are convinced of the harmony between the two brothers/regions.

It is interesting to have a look at the story that tells about the relation between the two brothers. Both the descendants of Sunjata as well as the descendants of Mande Bori agree<sup>16</sup> upon the events of this narrative (for a full account, see Ly-Tall et al. 1987, p. 53; Jansen et al. 1995, p. 140). It is said that Mande Bori insulted his sister and for that reason he will never be 'war leader' (*keletigi*). In Kangaba this event is taken as an explanation for superiority over Hamana, but in Hamana the story is used to explain the alleged organizational chaos along the river Niger. Thus, although the story is mutually accepted, its message is a point of dispute between adjoining regions (cf. Zobel, *infra*).

The other dimension of the way status can be expressed in Mande is seen in the case where the Hamana perspective is accepted and incorporated into a Kangaba narrative. Leynaud and Cisse give the following genealogy, which they claim to have recorded from the famous bards of Kela, who are attached to the Kangaba rulers (see figure next page).<sup>17</sup>

Figure 5: The genealogy of the Keita as presented in the ethnography by Leynaud and Cisse 1978 (condensed version).



This genealogy contains the same transformation as seen with the descendants of Sunjata: the descendants of Sunjata place themselves in the position of the youngest brother in relation to the descendants of Mande Bori. The position of the younger brother is always worked out; no attention is paid to the descendants of the older brother.

Thus, the position of the oldest brother is not favored: the Keita in the Kisi region are a powerless branch among the Keita dynasties and this may explain why they were linked to Mansa Dankaran Tuman, a coward who fled from Sumanguru Kante and settled in the forests of Kisi.<sup>18</sup>

#### *The younger brother in oral traditions*

In Mande many stories are told about the origin of different social categories and the relation towards each other. These stories often have a brother-brother relation at their core. Undoubtedly the most famous is the story about the origin of the Diabate bards (taken from Niane 1960, p. 25):

"Les deux frères Oulani et Oulamba étaient tous les deux Traoré; quand le cadet eut tué le buffle, Oulamba le frère aîné composa sur-le-champ une chanson au vainqueur qui s'écria: <Frère, si tu étais griot, personne te résisterait> ce qui se dit en malinké <Koro toun Baké Djéli à Dian bagaté> et l'expression Dian-Baga-té est devenu <Diabaté> et par déformation Dioubaté. Ainsi les Dioubaté griots sont frères avec les Traoré."

In this tale, accepted by both Diabate and Traore, the oldest brother stands aside and the youngest kills the dangerous buffalo of Do. Thus, the bard - who receives gifts and is not supposed to fight in a war - is represented as an older brother, while the

younger brother is at the origin of the Traore, a *jamu* which represents noble warriors.

A less known story gives an other example of a difference in status categories. This time, the members of the two status categories have the same *jamu*. The story explains why certain Conde are noble in the Sankaran region in Guinée, while other Conde are bards (taken from Niane 1974, p. 65):

"Les Condé de Fadama représentent la branche aînée du clan. Voici dans quelle circonstance celle-ci a été déclassée: les frères cadets partirent un jour en guerre et ramenèrent à Fadama un grand butin. Parmi les prisonniers se trouvait une belle femme que les vainqueurs avaient destinée au frère aîné. Celui-ci en fut ravi et épousa la prisonnière, elle lui fit un enfant, mais le jour du baptême de l'enfant, la femme révéla qu'elle était d'origine griote,<sup>19</sup> du clan Kouyate. Ainsi donc, les héritiers du frère ne pouvaient plus prétendre au pouvoir. L'aîné accepta le fait accompli et Fadama, son village, devint le centre historique pour les pays du Haut-Niger."

Again the younger brother(s) accomplish(es) a deed, while the other brother is respected, but stays aside.

A 'fraternal' story which has received much attention from bards themselves in the last decade tells of the three sons of Mamadi Kanu. The youngest of them takes the throne of Mande and from his offspring Sunjata will be born much later; all the Keita thus descend from this youngest brother. Both in Kela as well as in Bamako the oldest brother is considered to be the ancestor of the Sumano-bards. When told by Bakari Sidiki Sumano, chief of the *Union Nationale des Griots du Mali*, certain characteristics of the older brother - younger brother relation become visible (taken from an interview, December 19, 1992):

"Mais puisque tous les trois frères, ils n'étaient pas dans la coup, le jeune, très emu, est venu devant son grand-frère pour lui dire: '(Voilà,) grand-frère, ça c'est la choix de Dieu et des ancêtres. Sinon, je n'aurais jamais accepté de gouverner là où toi tu ... (not audible) Mais c'est la choix de Dieu, c'est la choix de nos ancêtres. Nous ne pouvons que l'... (not audible). Voilà, pourquoi j'ai accepté la mission. Mais, c'est toi qui commanderas. Et moi, j'exécuterai. Si je prends un jour de ... (not audible) pour aller combattre des gens, sans aucune autorisation, je prie Dieu pour que je n'arrive pas.

Mais, toi, tu restes. Toi, tu t'occuperas de la maison-même, tu t'occuperas de la famille. '*I na so mano*'.

'*I na so mano*', en Malinke: tu tiendras la famille. Toi, tu t'occuperas de la famille. '*I na so mano*'. Alors, notre nom vient de là: Sumano."

This is the perspective of the older brother! He allows the younger to accomplish deeds, to make war. The older brother stays at home; he is immobile, and he is still in command over his younger brother. This story is not widely known, as 'Sumano' is not a very reputed *jamu*, but it gives an indication of the relation between an older brother and a younger brother. Moreover, it shows that some *jamuw* (often bards')<sup>20</sup> are proud of the position of the oldest brother in relation to other *jamuw*.<sup>21</sup>

Not only noble *jamuw* as Keita and Traore prefer to be represented in the position of the youngest brother within the genealogies. For instance, the Diabate bards do the same. Besides the story of the two brothers who kill the buffalo of Do, the Diabate tell of another ancestor. They claim - in many versions of the Sunjata epic - to descend from Kala Jula Sangoy, a warrior who liberated Sunjata's sister Tasma Gwandilafe from the hands of Sumanguru Kante. This Kala Jula Sangoy had three sons: Tuba Kate, Monso Kate and Fatiya Kate. Fatiya Kate had two sons: Donfènogo and Gwèdè. The bards from Kela claim to descend from Fatiya Kate and Gwèdè. On October 17, 1992, Lansine Diabate from Kela explained to me that the descendants of Tuba Kate live in Figira and the descendants of Monso Kate in Kita.

Descent from Gwèdè is preferred by any Diabate: Clemens Zobel's host Sidiki Diabate (from Gambia and linked with the Diabate from Kita) also claimed descent from Gwèdè (Zobel 1994, p. 57). When Zobel, known in Mande as 'Brehman Diabate', queried Lansine again on the subject of the Diabate genealogy (Bamako, October 17, 1994), this time Lansine - who knows Zobel and his host well - placed the bards from Kita among the descendants of Gwèdè. Apparently, being a descendant of the youngest brother is the most prestigious position.

### *The position of the younger brother in daily life*

Before I attempt to explain this preference for the position of younger brother by the Keita royal dynasties, I will discuss some fieldwork data.

My host in Kela, Lansine Diabate has two adult sons: Brehman (born 1969) and Damori (born 1972). One day, I entered Lansine's compound, because I was looking for Damori. I found only Brehman who was twining a rope in front of his hut. I asked him where Damori was. Brehman replied that Damori was in the fields. He added that there was some work to do at home, and some work out in the fields. Since he was the older brother, he had to do the work at home, and Damori, the younger brother, had to go to the fields. Brehman gave me this information with an expression of pride on his face.

Following this short dialogue - in December 1992 - I started to think about the allocation of roles between brothers. Later I realized that the division of labour between Brehman and Damori represents the drama of the Mande male population

in a nutshell. Since Brehman is the oldest, he will succeed his father and thus stay on the paternal compound. In case of shortage of economic means, Damori, Brehman's younger brother, has to leave in order to accomplish something elsewhere.

Brehman's right to succession makes him responsible for the reproduction of the paternal compound. He stays at home, just like the Sumano ancestor and the oldest Conde brother. The younger brother is active outside the compound, but is accountable to his older brother, who is the one in command of his younger brother.

The 'immobile' position of the older brother is also visible in Mande views of the famous resistance leader Samori Toure, who was the main regional opponent of the French at the end of the nineteenth century. I already noted that the Keita of Kangaba were allies of Samori. Stories about Samori are abundant in southwestern Mali.

From written sources we know that one of Samori's war leaders was his 'younger brother' Keme Brehman. This Keme Brehman is remembered in the title of the praise song (*fasa*) for both Samori and Keme Brehman. At first sight, it may sound strange that the praise song about the famous Samori has the title 'Keme Brehman's praise song'.

When I recorded this song in March 1993, I did not recognize it, and asked Madu Diabate - the only French speaking person around - for an explanation of the song. He told me that it was 'the praise song for Keme Brehman', and added that 'les blancs' only talked about Samori. Madu said that he had himself also learned about Samori at school. However, he added, in reality, 'Samori, il était toujours assis'. According to Madu, Samori's younger brother Keme Brehman was the active warrior and for that reason he is praised.

Actually, Madu Diabate pointed out only one aspect of Samori. In the 1880s the French captain Peroz writes about Samori (1889, p. 398-399):

"Depuis (1874 - JJ), il se mit rarement à la tête de ses armées, n'ayant plus occasion de les réunir pour combattre un adversaire digne de lui. Il les divisa en sept corps, puis en dix, à la tête desquels il plaça ses frères et ses guerriers les plus dévoués et les plus habiles. (...) Les frontières furent en même temps divisées en huit secteurs: à chacun d'eux un corps d'armée était attaché, avec mission d'opérer toujours en avant."

Samori's career can be divided into three steps.<sup>22</sup> First he was successful as a war leader (*keletigi*), then he became *faama* ('settled ruler' without hereditary rights) and finally *almami* (spiritual leader). Samori was already *almami* at the time he became opponent of the French. As an *almami* Samori was 'assis'. He had to be 'seated',

because he was commanding others - 'younger brothers' in the French accounts - in his status as an *almami*. This explains why the French colonial reports often mention diplomatic meetings between French officers and Samori's 'younger brothers' and generals.<sup>23</sup> Samori never presented himself; *il était toujours assis*.

Apparently, the principles shaping Mande oral tradition do not provide a model for Samori's three step career. It seems the people of Mande have two models for the incorporation of Samori and Keme Brehman in their oral traditions, because historical reality fits only partially to their cultural models. First, they have the possibility of keeping Keme Brehman the youngest and then they are able to ascribe activity to him at the cost of Samori. Secondly, they could have represented Samori as the younger brother in order to make him as important as he is in written histories. As I showed, they 'chose' the first option, making Samori 'assis'. This shows that a historical event can only be kept in mind if it is developed as a tradition along well-known lines about task differentiation, or if the event confirms this task differentiation.

#### *The younger brother, the war leader*

The younger brother represents activity and warfare, but the older brother has the right to succession and commands the younger brother. Both statuses are highly esteemed and prestigious to acquire. Before I explain why the descendants of Sunjata prefer the position of the younger brother in the genealogies, I will draw the reader's attention to a long narrative, which is told in Kangaba in order to explain the prominent position of Kangaba in relation to its adjoining villages. The story deals with the descendants of Mansa Kanda, the rulers of Kangaba and Figira. I consider it to be the most revealing account I found during my research (partially summarized from Ly-Tall et al., 1987, p. 73-74):<sup>24</sup>

"When Benba Kanda was dying he called his children in order to give them blessings. He called Nan Tanwulen whose descendants live in Figira and said: 'Find a place to settle and bring me a present, so I can give you blessings, and I will tell you your profession.' Nan Tanwulen chose Nyaninba and donated a basket filled with white sorghum. Benba Kanda gave him blessings and said that his descendants will cultivate white sorghum. That is the reason why the population of Figira cultivates white sorghum and always has a good harvest.

Then the ancestor of the people of Degela had to present himself. He donated a meal of fonio and said: 'I do not move too much and want to settle near my maternal uncles.' His father gave him blessings and said that his descendants will cultivate fonio. That is why the people of Degela always have a good harvest of fonio.



Then Nyakalen Mori and Nyakalen chose a hill as their place to stay and came back with game. Their father said: 'Well, you did not investigate other possibilities, but you wanted to have meat. Your descendants will be hunters.'

Après quoi, Tènènba Koman, à son tour, alla se promener. Il revint avec un fer à esclaves. Il prit le fer à esclaves et alla le poser aux pieds de Benba Kanda. < Mon père, dit-il, je me suis promené, mais je voudrais m'installer ici auprès de ma mère. Je vais m'installer ici. Voilà un fer à esclaves que je t'apporte pour que tu me fasses des bénédictions (en échange). > - < Gloire à Dieu! répondit Benba Kanda, cela me convient et me fait plaisir. Ah! Koman mon fils, tu ne m'apportes qu'un fer à esclaves pour qu'en échange je te benisse. Que Dieu fasse que ce fer-là ne soit jamais vide (d'esclaves). Si ce n'est de nos jours, il y avait toujours des gens au fer à Kaaba (=Kangaba - JJ). > "

Again we see that real prestige is given to the youngest brother, the one who is active in war and who makes captives. However, this time the youngest settles at home, thus reproducing the paternal compound. The claim for reproduction of the paternal compound has been put in terms of harmony, since the younger brother settles besides his mother. This choice is a message for the other villages, saying that their mother is in Kangaba. The story is a brilliant construction: Kangaba claims both leadership in 'external' affairs (the acquisition of slaves versus agriculture), and the central position in 'internal' affairs (living next to the mother, while her other sons settle in neighbouring villages).

I use the dichotomy 'external' - 'internal', because I wish to explain the position of the younger brother in Mande genealogies along these lines. The position of Mansa Kanda as the youngest brother (see figure 2) was accepted in a region that surpassed by far the actual area of influence (*maara*) of the *mansa* of Kangaba. As the younger brother is always active outside - as a warrior - the position of younger brother is equal to the claim of being war leader (*keletigi*) when the entire region is attacked from outside, and when temporary cooperation was necessary.

In 'real life' politics the rulers seemed to have acted along the lines of the genealogy of figure 2. For instance, Niagassola and Joma claimed to be in conflict with Kangaba, unless the entire region was attacked from outside. Although the status of Kangaba as the youngest had been acknowledged for a long time, the town had to reconfirm it again and again, since all the older brothers (Figira or Niagassola) try to tackle the youngest. Peace is always 'relative' and relational!

The fact that the Kangaba traditions represent the Keita of Joma (who claim a relation with Kita) as the oldest brother of all shows the relative dynamics of society: for the people in Kangaba, Joma was expected to be 'less obedient' than Niagassola. Joma thus had more freedom of action than Niagassola. This may explain, for instance, why the ruler of Niagassola promised the Toucouleur to help them to

destroy Kangaba, but in the end guided the armies to another village which was burned down (Peroz 1889, p. 239), and also why he wanted Vallière to visit Kangaba.

The relation between the descendants of Sunjata and Mande Bori - the princely Keita in Hamana and Kolonkana - is marked by the same mechanism. Although Mande Bori is presented as younger, in the story it is stated very explicitly that his descendants will never be the *keletigi*. Thus, ideally, when attacked from outside, when collaboration in defense is necessary, Kangaba was most probably to function as *keletigi*, being a descendant of Sunjata, and being recognized as the youngest brother among the dynasties which claim descent from him. However, the Kita perspective represents a counterclaim, because Mansa Kanda is mentioned before Nyamagan.

Written sources confirm my analysis of the genealogies: powerful families worked together only in case of an external threat. The French captain Peroz complains (for instance, 1889, p. 386f.) that regions only join each other when attacked from outside; when the external threat disappears, the mutual hostility returns.

The return of the old feelings of hostility is not surprising, considering the power of the *keletigi*: he constitutes a potential threat to his companions, his 'older brothers'. Look what happened to the chief of Kankan who gave the function of 'generalissime' to his younger brother Moriba (ib., p. 385-386). This Moriba suffered some defeats in the early 1860s and therefore decided to ask Niagassola for military support. This temporary alliance led to a great deal of plundering, weakening the position of Kankan in the end, and bringing much booty to Niagassola. This story shows the enormous power of the *keletigi*. It would therefore be dangerous to continue collaboration between 'brothers' too long, that is to accept one person as a *keletigi* for a long period, or to intensify collaboration. In the long run this would undermine the position of the 'older brothers'.

*Mande - where the action is: in search of a status discourse for Mande*

The parallel between younger brother and the task of war leader in case of an external threat, may also be corroborated by drawing a parallel between the younger brother, the stranger, the hunter and the sister. I will start with the stranger.

Many villages in Mande tell foundation stories which explain a certain division of authority. The people that descend from the founder are called the *dugurenw*, the original inhabitants (*autochtones* in French). The function of *chef de terre* (*dugukolotigi*) is attributed to one of these *dugurenw*. The *dugukolotigi* is responsible for the division of the village ground and in former times he used to guard the

*tyiwara* masks which danced in the fields at harvest time, and used to make sacrifices which guaranteed a good harvest.

The function of *chef de village* (*dugutigi*) is in the hands of a group of so-called strangers (*lolanw*) (*allochtones* in French). In the foundation stories these *lolanw* are said to have arrived last as conquerors.<sup>25</sup> Traditionally, the village chief had to welcome guests and to preside over the meetings of the old inhabitants of the village. Nowadays, he is also responsible for the collection of taxes.

Similar to the brothers, the one that arrived first, the founder, is responsible for reproduction. The stranger, the one who arrived last, is associated with violent activity and takes care of external affairs. Parallels with other tales about dichotomies are common. For instance, in the above mentioned village of Fadama, the Conde bards, descendants of the older brother, are considered to be the founders of the village (Conde 1989, p. 14).

A stranger in Mande is, in fact, not 'strange' at all; the term 'stranger' is as neutral as, for instance, the term 'hunter' or 'brother'. The stranger is welcomed according to the strict rules of hospitality. René Caillié experienced in Kankan how great this hospitality can be in the Sudan (1989, p. 321):

"J'allai donc à l'humble cabane de mon nouvel hôte, qui était très pauvre, mais il me reçut du mieux qu'il put: il me donna même la natte sur laquelle il avait l'habitude de coucher. Je fis difficulté de l'accepter, car il m'était pénible de déplacer ce bon veillard, mais il insista en me disant que, comme étranger, je devais lui céder, qu'il était naturel qu'il me fit les honneurs de chez lui."

Caillié experienced how a stranger is treated with high esteem, just as the position of the youngest brother can be: the stranger's wishes come first.

The younger brother and the stranger are related on a logical level, too. A younger brother has no right to succession and will therefore leave the paternal compound in case of conflict. Having left the compound, he will be the stranger upon arrival in another village. Moreover, the youngest brother 'arrived' last in the family, just as the *lolanw* arrived last in Mande foundation stories. The parallel between order of arrival and task differentiation is striking.

There is also a parallel between a younger brother and a hunter, since both are active in a violent fashion outside the village. In stories younger brothers hunt and so do Sunjata and Mande Bori. However, after Sunjata became *mansa* (ruler) of Mande, he was no longer allowed to get involved in external affairs. The Sunjata epic gives numerous examples of heroes (Tiramagan, Fakoli) who compel Sunjata to stay home or are sent by Sunjata, but only after Sunjata became *mansa*. Sunjata's

younger brother Mande Bori, however, remains a hunter and in presentday Northern Guinée he is considered to be the ancestor of the hunters.

The parallel with the hunter shows another characteristic of the 'younger brother complex': the lack of reproduction. Austen (1986, p. 388) notes that Sunjata never acquires food by production, only by 'violence'. Sunjata hunts, uproots a baobab in order to give its leaves (food) to his mother, and he cuts a piece out of his leg in order to give meat to his bards. As a *mansa* Sunjata - lured from Nema with agricultural products - no longer engages in such activities: he has become immobile and is responsible for reproduction.

Mande hunters are considered to be great sorcerers and the '*brousse*' is the domain of sorcery, contrary to the village in which social order - the paternal compound - is reproduced. These facts give insight in the identity of women in Mande oral tradition, because in the context of the story the identity of a Mande woman is dependent on her 'mobility'. I already mentioned the harmony and stability which are represented by the mother (*ba*) and the concept of *badenya*. This does not seem to fit with an other characteristic attributed to women, namely their power as sorcerers, because sorcery is linked to the *brousse*. However, this can be explained through an analysis of women's mobility. As a man's mother a woman is supposed to stay in the paternal compound; after the death of his father, the son will take care of her. However, as a sister she is supposed to move: being married out, she transgresses the '*brousse*' and becomes a stranger in the village of her husband. This explains how in Mande traditions a sister/wife is given entirely different characteristics than a mother. Therefore, one cannot write about 'women in Mande', but must analyse them in relation to others (see also Van Hoven and Oosten 1994).

*A discourse is more than a list of parallels*

Summarizing the dichotomies and the parallels mentioned in this article, the following list of oppositions, that is opposite organizing principles, can be given (see table next page). I consider these oppositions as a list of not necessarily related parallels. Moreover, I do not want to suggest a hierarchical order in the dichotomies: Mande culture does not 'start' with either one basic parallel, nor one aspect (the Sunjata epic, patterns of compound structure, kinship, labour differentiation, or state formation processes).

immobility	mobility
internal	external
sitting	on the road
reproduction	expansion/violence
older	younger
village	'brousse'
<i>duguren</i>	<i>lolan</i>
<i>dugukolotigi</i>	<i>dugutgi</i>
<i>badenya</i>	<i>fadenya</i>
agriculture	hunting
<i>mansa</i>	<i>keletigi</i>
mother	sister/wife
order	dynamics/sorcery
receive	give
continuous status	temporary status
command	execution

The oppositions in the list represent organizing principles which are articulated in a certain context according the same lines of logic: the older is immobile and is responsible for reproduction and the younger is active externally and, thus, can achieve status in war, or in other external relations. Or to put it more strongly, if he does not succeed in warfare, he is a worthless younger brother. The discourse on brothers can be used to express change - and therefore 'society-as-it-really-is', because the younger brother is supposed to bring a stimulus, a change, to his paternal compound (Jansen and Zobel, *supra*).

The oldest brother must guarantee its continuity. This explains the Mande proverb (in Johnson 1986) 'The hero is welcome only on troubled days'. The hero is the stranger, the hunter, the violent one, the one who comes from outside, the younger brother who deposes his older brother in order to replace him as the compound chief. Such a person is only welcome when the reproduction of society is in danger.

In this way, it becomes clear how groups attribute a context dependent status to themselves in relation to other groups in given contexts. The relationship with the other is hierarchical, and primarily stresses a difference of social roles. Both these roles are honorable, but in some contexts one can be more 'profitable' than the other. For instance, in case of war, the position of younger brother, was especially valuable, because Mande genealogies show that every royal descent group preferred this position in explaining its heroic origins.

Moreover, I use the term 'discourse' because the use of the oppositions in the list refer to a way of expressing social events: an opposition is not a statement about the essential character of what actually happened. In the discourse oppositions are often

'mixed'. Let me explain this with some examples. Camara (1990, p. 269-270) writes that a newly chosen ruler of Kangaba was called 'the stranger' when he was the first of a new generation. (After the generation of 'fathers' had died, the oldest 'son' had the right to succeed on the throne.) Of course, the son was not a stranger, a man from outside. The label 'stranger' referred to its equivalent 'younger brother' and showed the new ruler's power to act.

The label 'stranger' is applied to Sunjata, too. Bird and Kendall (1987, p. 18) write that Sunjata's mother sang the following words on the day that Sunjata first walked:

"Stranger, stranger, Oh!  
Sunjata became a stranger today"

According to Bird and Kendall Sunjata acquires extraordinary powers of sorcery on the moment he starts to walk. These powers turn him into a dangerous person and that would be the reason why he is called a 'stranger'.

I do not agree with this explanation, since there is no indication whatsoever that strangers are a priori considered to be dangerous in Mande. Caillié mentioned already how welcome a stranger is (*supra*). Rather I propose Sunjata is called a stranger on the day he starts to walk, because a stranger is mobile. Within the Mande status discourse it is 'logical' to draw this parallel. From this follows a predictable step in the narrative: Sunjata starts to hunt as soon as he can walk.

Sometimes an extra dimension is attributed to an older/younger opposition. This mechanism can be seen in the genealogy of the rulers of Cendugu, a region fifty miles west of Kangaba (Samaké, 1988, p. 388). These rulers bear the *jamu* Traore. They claim to consist of four groups, descendants of four brothers. The function of ruler belongs (of course!) to the descendants of the youngest of the four brothers. Moreover, the descendants of this youngest brother are the classificatory children of the descendants of the three older brothers. Here the opposition older - younger has an extra dimension: the descendants of the three brothers are older in age as well as in generation.

Another reason to prefer the term 'status discourse' is that the parallel usages can be combined in a single statement. The day before my departure from Kela, on October 16th, 1994, old Mamadi Diawara greeted me. He knew me by the name of 'Sidiki Kuyate' and therefore used the following words:<sup>26</sup>

"Les Kuyate sont les premiers griots du Mande.  
C'est pourquoi ils sont inférieurs à tous les autres.  
Alors, pour tous les griots du Mande c'est obligatoire à donner aux Kuyate."

Mr Diawara used these words in order to announce the blessings he wanted to give to me. His statement clearly gives an insight into 'Mande-logic'. In this article I presented some narratives about older brothers who became ancestors of bards. Bards receive, as the older brothers, a portion of all goods acquired by the younger brother. Among the bards, the Kuyate receive from other bards, who are considered to have been 'converted' to 'griotism' 'later' (see Zobel, *infra*, Keita, *infra*)

A basic problem of a gift is that it restricts freedom of action, since the receiver has to pay attention to the giver. Therefore, the youngest is the most free of all. He has accomplished real freedom of action. On the other hand, the oldest brother receives the most respect. According to Mr Diawara, this was also a prestigious position, since only respected people receive gifts.

### *Conclusions Mande status discourse and the history of Kangaba*

In Mande groups prefer the status of 'old' in some contexts and that of 'young' in others. Mande society is a whirlpool of status claims, interpretations of status claims, and counter claims.

In this article I use various kinds of data, genealogies, fieldwork data, 'family' histories, travelers' accounts, and the Sunjata epic. I made this choice in order to show that Mande has a discourse which is used at all levels of society in all contexts. This turns an 'isolated' research project - such as a reconstruction of the past on the basis of genealogies or succession lists - into a risky enterprise, as data must always be analyzed within the general background, namely the patterns that shape Mande status discourse. They cannot be studied as isolated facts.

I hope to have shown that many historians who studied Mande and the history of the aftermath of the Mali empire, made a methodological mistake by analyzing Mande genealogies from a perspective of positivist chronology. Most of the time Mande genealogies have less to do with chronology, than with status claims in relation to others, and - as a consequence - claims for a particular task differentiation.

This task differentiation varied over time and context, but claims could be more or less acknowledged mutually for a long time. I want to stress the principles according to which stability was sought and acquired, again and again, between a group of petty rulers. It was advantageous to anyone involved to avoid a static, 'closed' view of the mutual status claims, because claims had to be used in different contexts. For instance, the Keita Kandası are *mansaw* in the immediate surroundings of Kangaba but *keletıgiw* in the case of an attack from outside, in relation to other Keita dynasties (in other regions) the most expansive position was taken. This position was represented by the image of the youngest brother.

This explains why the Sunjata epic, the story that legitimizes rule, is relatively stable within such a vast region, anyone wanting to make status claims must know the stories before it is possible to use them. The bards had a lot of work to do in pre-colonial Mande! The Sunjata epic was only the tip of the iceberg, the real struggle was about additions and interpretations. The discussion on the relation between Sunjata and Mande Bori is a clear example of such a struggle for interpretation. The story is told by the descendants of both brothers, but they use it as a means towards different goals. Any interpretation, however, had to fit within the patterns of Mande status discourse. For instance, others had to be acknowledged as 'brothers'. The discourse is very complex, because it is extremely dynamic, because every claim creates a counter claim. The bards of Mande are the masters of this status discourse (and their often praised '*tête historique*' has been molded by this discourse).

An example of the intellectual efforts by bards can be seen in the tale about the sons of Fa Kanda. In this story Kangaba claims to be the war leader (the youngest brother gives slaves, the other give agricultural products) as well as hereditary ruler (the youngest brother settles beside his mother). It covers all possible claims from whatever perspective one takes. That is the reason why it is so brilliant.

Such a story must not be labeled as 'ambiguous', it makes sense within the Mande status discourse. In Mande contradictory roles must be performed in different contexts. This is the routine of daily life, since any person plays a variety of 'contrasting' public roles as an inhabitant of a compound, on which related patrilineal descent groups live.

The status discourse analyzed here can be found at all levels of Mande society. In this article I stressed its use in the determination of leadership in times of war, and therefore I put an accent on the position of the younger brother. I showed that the Sunjata epic has to be analyzed as a vivid story full of leadership claims that are based upon genealogies, the epic is intermingled again and again with contextually relevant information.

The patterns discerned in the Mande status discourse compel me to reconsider the history of Kangaba as it has been described by various historians. The history of Kangaba is not one full of coup d'états and usurping families and it is not probable that Kangaba's star rose only recently in Mande, nor that the *jamu* Keita immigrated into Mande in the seventeenth century. The idea that the Keita of Kangaba took power in the eighteenth century - or even later - is nowadays even used to date non-Mande sources (Green 1991, p. 130f). This is a dangerous development in West African historical research. Lists of the 'capitals' of the Mali empire always mention Kangaba as the newest/last one (discussion in Green 1991), but this does not necessarily refer to a recent foundation.



On the contrary, lists that present Kangaba as the last illustrate that the status of this famous town has been widely recognized for a long time - Kangaba is the ultimate youngest brother, the ultimate invading stranger. The fact that 'Mansa Kanda' is considered to be the youngest brother in a wide region, and the fact that Mansa Kanda is an older brother in Kita, shows that Kangaba's status had already been high for centuries at the moment of the French conquest.

This does not mean that Delafosse was right, when he claimed that Kangaba was the capital of the medieval Mali empire. My analysis rejects only the myth that was created by historians who thought to modify Delafosse's point of view, but it does not prove Delafosse's claim. To summarize, I would say that Delafosse was possibly right, and that his successors certainly made methodological mistakes.

That is the reason why I think the French took precisely the wrong measures when they reorganized Mande. The 'older brother' from Figira had no legitimate 'customary right' to the 'throne of Kangaba'. It was a mistake to send the rulers of Kangaba into exile because of their position as 'usurpers', as younger brothers. Both the Mande population and their colonial rulers suffered from the French failure to understand the manner in which the organizing principles of Mande society are articulated.

## NOTES

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2 Park (1983) writes about Kangaba six times p 147, 181, 197, 233, 243f, and 248 (the index of the book mentions only three times)

3 In this article 'Mande' refers to the so-called Mande heartland, that is the triangle Kankan-Kita-Bamako

4 For a summary of their arguments, see Green 1991

5 My colleague Saskia Brand rightly remarked to me that a *badenya* relationship exists also in the case of a mother who has children by more than one man I do not include this possibility in figure 1 (infra), because this form of *badenya* is not found in the genealogies that I analyze in this article During my fieldwork in Kela *badenya* was translated with 'mème mère, mème père'

6 *Nyama* or *nyamana* is equivalent to *kafu* (Person 1981, note 24)

- 7 The oral traditions speak of 'six sorcerers' (*subaga woro*)
- 8 I am indebted to Karin Vocking for drawing this map
- 9 See also Jansen 1996
- 10 *Kuru* may signify 'rock' The name of 'Mansa Kuru' is not restricted to the Mande region For instance he is also part of the genealogy of the Segu kings (Conrad 1990, p 86-88) Conrad links *kuru* to 'canoe' and suggests a reference to the famous Mansa Musa
- 11 Diabaté's novel *L'Assemblée des Jinns* is a beautiful case study on conflict in Mande, although it is fiction
- 12 This means 'the hill of Kita' Compare with 'Mansa Kuru', 'the ruler of the hill' (supra)
- 13 Although Kita Kuru and Mansa Ganda are not mentioned as human beings (kings or brothers) in the praise lines for Kita
- 14 I made a selection of the available quantity of data However, almost any genealogy that I found fits within the pattern of preference of the younger brother position For instance, see the genealogies in Cisse and Kamissoko (1988, p 386f )
- 15 This story can be found in the three versions of the Sunjata epic told by the griots of Kela, the official 'court historians' of the rulers of Kangaba These versions cover the entire twentieth century Vidal did his research in the 1920s (Vidal 1924), Ly-Tall recorded the Sunjata epic in Kela in 1979 (published as Ly-Tall, Camara and Dioura 1987) and I recorded the epic in 1992 (published as Jansen, Duintjer and Tamboura 1995)
- 16 Information from David Conrad (who did extensive fieldwork in Hamana) - August 1994
- 17 Although I am still surprised that this genealogy is said to have Kela as its origin, I do not consider it as either 'wrong', or 'pure coincidence' When I read through my fieldwork notes I found the following note made the day after my arrival in Mande (Kela, October 25, 1991 - translated from Dutch) "I explained to Damori Diabate (son of Lansine Diabate) that I had come to Kela to hear stories about Sunjata He nodded and said 'Yes, Sunjata and Mande Bori 'Mande Bori, who is that?' I asked Damori was astonished 'Don't you know him? He is the older brother of Sunjata '"
- 18 Actually, nothing is known about royal Keita in the Kisi region (Buhnen 1996), and this shows the artificial character of the kinship construction
- 19 She started to sing when the baby was born (Conde 1989, p 9)
- 20 Nowadays, many Sumano are griot The Sumano claim that they all used to be noble Therefore, the story told by Mr Sumano does not make a difference between status categories
- 21 The model 'younger = warrior, older = bard' is not universal in the Sudan Conrad (1972, p 69-70) gives a tale (from a region West of the Haut-Niger) in which the younger brother becomes the bard
- 22 I thank my colleagues at the Institut des Sciences Humaines in Bamako for discussion and information on this subject, October 6, 1994 See also Person 1968

23 Moreover, my interpretation explains the abundance of younger brothers of Samorɪ in the French reports, these 'younger brothers' were officers or officers-in-training

24 I cannot give the entire text, which is more than one page, because this would cause problems with the authors' copyrights

25 I refer to the 'latest goup' in village foundation stories. Of course, in every Mande village there are families who immigrated recently in the village. Such families, however, are never part of the foundation story. All the families who feature in foundation stories settled a long time ago in the village. I merely note the parallel between order of arrival and task within the community.

26 Translated in French on the spot by Seydou Diabate