

Psychotherapies in an African city

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Abstract

The staff of therapists which gathered around Henry Collomb at the Fann hospital of Dakar in the sixties has noticed the particularities of the African psychiatry with a noticeable predominance of delirious puffs on the other pathologies. In the years eighties, Maurice Dorès drew attention in the evolution of this situation marked by a notable diminishing of the delirious puffs in favor of hysterical psychosis and other symptomatology. This text accounts for the psychotherapeutics of patients who come to consult a psychologist in urban area and currently the most frequent motivations of this approach.

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In a book published in 2001 [1], I recalled that the first psychiatrists and psychologists to work in the sixties in Dakar with African populations had immediately been confronted with the need to adapt the proposed consultations to the Senegalese cultural context and to socially rethink their therapeutic framework. Multidisciplinary research had initially allowed them to understand the ways in which the disease was talked about and thought of [2], which was traditionally treated, the importance of statuses related to group of belonging, gender, age, etc. This encounter of cultural difference had led them to question traditional nosographic classifications, the link between “psychiatry and cultures” [3]¹, the relevance of the diagnostic critiques in relation to cultural modes of perception where, for example, persecution is not necessarily part of a delusional process but is part of the traditional² work of setting.

François Laplantine [6] explains that “psychiatrists working in Africa have also been struck by the near absence of self-accusation and neurotic guilt; which means that when sublimative defence mechanisms (including belief in ancestors, geniuses and fetishes) fail, when a given individual can no longer react to a series of traumas, frustrations and failures, he does not do so (for example) according to the model of neurotic internalization, but according to the model of the brutal psychotic externalization that has been taught to him and that is expected of the rest of him. It is for this reason that we find psychological disorders characteristic of Asians, Africans, Europeans... “Therefore, he adds, we must affirm both the identity of the clinical tables in their structure and their economy... and the difference in their frequency and in the events with which they build [...]. Too willing to insist exclusively on permanence, the danger is to fix once and for all a psychiatric nomenclature too rigid. If we want to emphasize diversity too much, we risk drowning in cultural relativism, that is to say, of socializing all psychiatry, and, finally, we can no longer speak at all”.

¹Henry Collomb explained that delusional puffs were characteristic of psychiatry and related to acculturation conditions, and that they were not to be confused with schizophrenia: “The delusional puffs, thetas oniroids have the meaning of a character crisis. They concern the superficial layer of personality, the façade for others; they do not shake the deep layer, the person’s” [4].

²See, for example, Jacqueline’s comments Rabain about the child *nit ku* Good [5].

Maurice Dorès [7] explains that new psychiatric pathologies are being observed in urban Africa: "Is there an African psychiatry? This question will be answered positively if we only consider the expression of mental illness as a cultural fact. On the other hand, from a structural point of view, the existence of an African psychology is far from proven... "There is no doubt that the historical situation of a society affects aspects of psychosis. The changes in mental illness in Africa could be compared to those observed in 19th century France when it came to bringing peasants into factories. Changes in space and time have influenced the expression of madness. They have rendered obsolete rural social structures that could accommodate it safely. These findings are not without practical consequences. In the bush, the image of the madman inhabited by spirits is largely preserved. On the other hand, in suburban areas where the population is flocking, a new pathology appears. New pathologies have developed with modern life: anxiety neuroses, addictions, psychopathies, decreased acute delusional psychosis in favour of schizophrenia and surprising remissions of schizophrenia that suggest that they are rather hysterical psychoses. "Finally, we will have understood that the mentally ill of Africa are not strange, except the strangeness common to all those whose word is not heard. Some truths do not age; Baron Roger testifies to this. He wrote in 1829 in the "Philosophical Research on the Ouolofe language": These men, whatever one may think of it, differ from Europeans only by colour. A very strange claim than that of wanting to find them better; impudent lie than to say them meaner!"

I would like to report here four situations encountered in my clinical practice in Ouagadougou, between 1996 and 1998, to give an overview of these new pathologies developing in urban areas. The geniuses of the bush and the ancestors of the tribe, usually incriminated to account for the psychic disorders in³ Africa, take no part. The first three relate to subjects received in my liberal practice, the last case is that of a woman with whom I spoke while she was hospitalized in the psychiatry department of the main hospital in the city where, at the time, I spent one day a week. As I also gave psychology classes to psychiatric nursing students in an adjoining room, I would do a tour before or after my teaching.

A haunting thought

I once received a student from Niger in April 1996. The fact that I was a teacher in the same faculty where I sometimes saw her - rarely because she was in a state of great suffering and rather stayed away from the crowd, in the nooks where she could be forgotten - probably explains why she didn't come back to me. (In Niger, she had already approached a psychologist whom she had also interrupted because she knew her).

His request for an appointment had taken a complicated detour. It was another student who had called me to say that he had "psychological problems" and that a girl, who did not know me but had obtained my name from one of my students (also peule), had advised him to come and see me. I propose an appointment to this gentleman who does not come. Four days later, he came to me to explain that it was his friend who had great difficulties in his family and thought he was not loved by anyone. Appointment is taken for another day in which this gentleman shows up with a girl who seems very frightened. I receive them both, and the young man explains to me that his friend wanted to talk to me alone.

She is 21 years old and came to Burkina Faso after her Baccalaureate, obtenu in the second round, to study sociology. Her parents and the couple she currently lives with in Ouagadougou met in Senegal. Then her parents stayed in France where she herself was born. She spent the first years of her life there. His first intention was to continue his studies in Canada or Morocco after his baccalaureate, but the scholarship for these countries was only awarded to the brightest students. It was her mother who convinced her to come to Burkina for her studies, because of the political unrest (Tuareg revolt, etc.) that shook Niger at the time.

³"The disease remains above all a cultural phenomenon by the image it is made of it, the origins and causes that are assigned to it, the use of the myths it implies, the play of the signs by which it is recognized, the therapies that the community invents for the Master... No wonder though, to explain this maladie, and also come to grips with it, it is important to take into account of course the sick subject (assaulted or guilty, or both) so his personal history, but also his parentage to the ancestors of the clan and lineage and his social environment, both the village "civilized" and the "wild" world of the bush" [8].

What had his father's opinion on the matter? "He didn't say anything. He agreed that I should come here. He would also agree if I had stayed in Niger".

She has redoubled the first year of sociology, has managed painfully to pass in 2nd year, but thinks she risks being "deported" because her grades are not very good.

She is currently in serious trouble with her guardian's wife (the family where she lives in Ouagadougou) who keeps blaming her while accusing her of sulking everyone. There is also the daughter of the tutor whose room she shares, who does not like her very much, and because of whom she is continually scolded. An employee of the house (the driver or the cook?) accused her of being a thief: she would have taken objects to Niger when she had been there during the holidays. As soon as something is missing, she is suspected of stealing it.

On the other hand, she gets along well with another girl (a cousin of hers) who is also entrusted to this family for her studies. They have come closer especially since the mistress of the house began to treat them in the same way.

The first year of his stay with this family, everything was going well at home. However, she had accumulated poor grades on partial exams in February when she thought she had done a good job and had not passed the end-of-year exams either. She had returned to Niger and returned in September. That's when everything was spoiled. Her landlady had put her and her cousin in a young girls' home and then taken them home without explanation. This lady had accused him of leaving Niger without informing anyone, when everyone knew it, except the father of the family who leaves early in the morning and comes home very late so that she does not see him much.

If she passed her exams despite this bad start, and was still in Burkina the following year, she plans to move to a university town. She told her landlady who was still angry, accusing her of probably justifying to her parents her desire to leave the house by gossiping about them.

She has another problem that was the reason for her approach to me. For some time now, every time she thinks of God, "insults" or "blasphemy" come to mind. She doesn't want to tell me "because it's a sin". It was like a "fixed idea" and it scares him. For a long time, it was the same insults, and then the content had changed somewhat.

She is a believer, but her parents have not imposed any obligation on her in religious matters, even though they themselves are practicing Muslims; there are marabouts in his mother's family.

She prayed a lot and fasted in the hope that those evil thoughts attached to God would go away, but nothing had been done about it.

It had begun while she was preparing for her exams for the September 1995 session. She was rereading a course on "Representation Systems" when it happened. What exactly was it then? She can't remember. Then, after a moment of reflection, she says that it was a passage on kinship according to Claude Lévi-Strauss. And what does Levi-Strauss say about that? "He explains kinship by the prohibition of incest". I point out to him that it was also at this time that the difficulties with his landlady had begun. Have thoughts of this nature ever come to him before? Yes, in June 1994, when she was due to pass the second round of the Baccalaureate. Then they disappeared until September 1995.

Her academic background had always been excellent, and she had never repeated any classes in elementary school, middle school or high school. So she thinks that her failures in the first round of the Bac, the first year of university and her current bad grades come from there: it is God who punishes her for her blasphemous thoughts. I point out to her the chronological contradiction: she had failed in the first round of the Bac before these "bad thoughts" imposed themselves on her mind.

She must have loved her father a lot? "Yes!" she replies immediately, and then, as after a moment of amazement, she hurriedly adds, "My mother too".

Thinking of seeing her again, I had not communicated to her that very day - it would have been too premature anyway - the impressions that had come to me. His desire to go to Morocco or Canada may have been motivated by this fear of incest. Geographical and cultural remoteness would have put her out of reach of the object of her unconscious incestuous temptations (her father probably). After the failure in the first round making this project unworkable, she was doomed to stay with him, and then felt like a bad person tempted by sin. His mother may have unconsciously understood what he was going to do and had taken her away by sending her to Burkina Faso. The wickedness of her landlady to her and that of her cousin may have come from the jealousy of this lady aware of the seduction that these young girls could exert on her husband.

When the heart sobs

1st meeting: Habibata, 40, came to see me on December 6, 1996, accompanied by her older sister (Alizèta) and her daughter. She was coming out of one of those fits of madness that she sometimes had been doing since 1990. The niece and her mother explained to me how Habibata behaved during the first seizure. It itself intervenes from time to time and vaguely evokes this first crisis.

She would get naked in her room and groped the walls around her. The children of his co-wife had built a chicken coop next to the maison, against his room. At night, "the hens behaved like human beings". It was around the same time that the father of the older sister's husband (Alizèta so) died.

Her older sister, who lived in Ouagadougou, had gone to see her in Bobo-Dioulasso. She had taken her out of the marital home to take her to their father, who lives in another part of the town of Bobo. And there she had seen Habibata repeat the same scene: naked, groping the walls of the house. As neighbours flocked from all over to inquire about her news, Alizèta had preferred to take her to her home in Ouagadougou. She had then formed the plan to keep her with her for a year, because she was convinced that this disease came from Habibata's marital problems. She is not happy at home.

Habibata has 4 children, 3 boys and one girl; the eldest is 19, and the last 14 years old. This one is alive, playful, every time she visits Alizèta in Ouagadougou; but as soon as she returns to her father's house in Bobo, she closes in on herself, becomes morose. The other three children are "all very calm".

For several years, Habibata has been making sandwiches at home and carrying them for sale outside the front door of a high school in the city. One morning, she had lent her moped to a neighbor who wanted to do some shopping and then bring it back to her so she could carry her sandwiches in front of this high school. She was waiting for him, sitting on a stool in front of his door, with his container of sandwiches by his side. She had started selling her sandwiches to passers-by who asked her, but refused to take their money. Then she began to give them to all those who passed within her reach. When the neighbour returned, she told him that she no longer needed the moped because the sandwiches were all sold.

Since 1990, she has had about four seizures of the same type, without delirium but sometimes with some sporadic verbal hallucinations. She's calm, but deeply depressed. In general, a few days later, she even speaks of what she calls her "madness".

Three days before this appointment with me, on 03 December, she had been taken to hospital because she had refused to eat for several days and had fallen into the apples; there she had consulted in psychiatry. She protests when her sister tries to forcefully feed her, says she doesn't want to be treated like she's a baby. She doesn't want to eat, otherwise she would...

She accuses her older sister, Alizèta, of letting her marry against her will and of being responsible for her death. Furu ti fanga yé ("marriage is not strength" in dioula), she keeps repeating. She learned after everyone else that she was going to be married: it was her brothers and sisters who told her, making fun of her, that she was going to be married to an old man. She, of course, didn't believe them. One day,

however, she had seen women gather in the family yard, but had not been alerted by it. Then, another day, it was brutally seized, and the ceremonies were done. She had tried to escape, struggled, climbed the wall, but on the other side she was also waiting for her and she was quickly caught to bring her back inside. Then she was forcibly taken to her husband, an old man who already had another wife. (During one of her fits of madness, she stood up, stood on her legs, as if she were making an effort to advance but could not, and compulsively grabbed her left wrist with her right hand, squeezing very, very hard).

At first in the husband's home, she was in such a state of fury that he had not dared to touch her and had even ended up letting her return to her parents. There, she had been lectured by all the well-meaning people against her, reproaching her for her stubbornness. She had a friend whom her father did not want to hear about. She had agreed to return to her husband's house and claimed in vain that he find her a house elsewhere, and that she would not share the same house as the co-wife.

After the first crisis, that of 1990, the older sister had, as I said, had the plan to keep her at home in Ouagadougou for a year. But her husband had opposed it, and negotiations had been undertaken: Alizèta agreed to let her go on the condition that her husband find her a house elsewhere where she and her children would live. She found Habibata's request quite legitimate, since she had never felt at home in the marital home. She could not receive her nieces and nephews there while her own children could go to their aunts' homes. (But I don't know if the husband had met that request; it seems to me that he did not).

Her husband, who is a shopkeeper, brings bread back from the mosque every morning, makes his breakfast, which he takes alone, his wives and children having to settle for leftovers.

Habibata explains that at the beginning of her seizures, she first experiences severe headaches, followed by great fatigue. She does not eat, sleeps little at night, speaks alone at night, gets up, lights up, turns off, etc. At the time of the last crisis, she had started tidying up; he had to put the clothes and shoes in their place, wash everything, fold the bed sheets.

One night, she woke up the niece whose room and bed she shares in Ouagadougou to change the sheets. Another night, this niece had been awakened because Habibata was caressing about her. She had pushed her away, but feared that she would return to the attack, had preferred to change rooms.

She is currently praying even though she is "indisposed" (that she has her period), Alizèta and her daughter explain. She also asks the niece, the one whose room she shares, to pray with her, but the latter claiming that she is "indisposed", says that she cannot. Habibata insists that this does not prevent her from praying because she knows the rules well.

She complains that her youth was stolen. Her last daughter never goes to meetings with parents of students at school because she would be ashamed if her classmates knew that her father was so old.

Habibata's father himself has two wives: his mother (who also has two other daughters: Alizèta, the oldest, and one younger than Habibata), and another who is a mother of four or five children. Alizèta is his father's second child.

Alizèta, on the other hand, had refused the merchant to whom she was wanted to marry her and had put her father before the fait accompli to marry the one she wanted to marry without asking her opinion. Since then, she has been kept away from her sisters' marriages because of fears that she would put her salt in it.

Alizèta blames her father for the death of their younger sister on March 22, 1981. He-ci had claimed to be forcibly marrying her, when she was already pregnant with another, and she had run away from home to live with her friends. Her father had banished her from the family. Her child had died, she had then married her friend, and was also dead. And it was only after her death that her mother went to the home she shared with her husband to pick up her belongings and take them back to her father's house.

The father has specific requirements for the choice of his daughters' husbands: a) they must be of the same ethnicity as him; (b) that they are from the same region as him (located nearly 600 km from Bobo-Dioulasso) but live in Bobo-Dioulasso like him; c) that they are merchants like him; (d) and finally that they are Muslims like him.

His granddaughters nicknamed this terrible man, who spoke of marrying them in the same way if their fathers gave him permission: John Wayne or Sheriff!

Assumptions: 1) The formula: "Chickens behaving like human beings" must be reversed; rather, we should hear that human beings are treated as if they were chickens. The hen is indeed the poultry offered abroad who comes to visit the family, which is slaughtered to feed a host during his stay, and the sacrifice animal most often used in traditional atoning and propitiator rites. Habibata was given to this old man as one offers a hen, which must first be chased, seized and tied its paws. 2) This man being too old to satisfy her sexually, Probably content to satisfy her own needs, Habibata finds herself with a sexuality trapped within the walls of her room: hence probably this ritual where she gets naked and gropes the walls of her room. 3) The distribution of sandwiches to passers-by: she gives herself without receiving anything in return, since the husband shares nothing, not even the sumptuous breakfast he offers every morning. sitting on a stool offering passers-by reminds passers-by of the attitude of prostitutes, sitting at their door to wait for the clients to whom they take turns to take turns. 5) In this way, the loaves are quickly distributed: if she sold herself, she would earn more quickly enough money to become independent. 6) The change of sheets in the middle of the night: after each pass, they are soiled, and they must be changed for the next customer. 6) The term used (indisposed) to say that she has her rules would rather suit that one that a girl would use to say that she cannot have relationships. because she has her period. But this does not prevent her from praying, since her husband behaves like a pious man on his way to the mosque every morning, but there are no rules for him, having her without consideration.

2nd meeting (07/12/1996): Habibata is accompanied this time by the niece alone. She's talking about her seizures. At first, her "heart rises, rises" (in *dusu bi wuli*), that is, she is more than angry, in great fury and then, gradually, her "heart takes a bad taste" (in *dusu mandi*). After that she stays at home, loses her appetite.

Does she remember what had happened in the days before the first crisis? She had first made food, then went to a wedding of people from the same region as her father, her father's relations. His co-wife did not want to participate in the ceremony. On his return, his co-wife had made everyone eat (before the usual time), and had left him nothing. She had protested...

When she had her first son, she had tried to get closer to her co-wife. But she had pushed her away. Since then, she too had kept her distance. (So, when she became a mother, she wanted this change in status to put her on an equal footing with the co-wife who had not wanted to hear anything).

Habibata is very concerned about her children's schooling. Her eldest son is currently in Ouagadougou, but he has not come to see her since she was there (one week). He interrupted his schooling, as did his second son. Her husband does not take care of their schooling at all and is not even interested in it, she is the one who enrolls them every year.

Her father must have known her husband during their business activities that took them to Abidjan (Ivory Coast) from where they brought goods to sell in the Bobo-Dioulasso market. It was probably in Côte d'Ivoire that they had to meet.

When she was little, there were often quarrels between her father and her mother; his mother is the father's first wife. He did not hesitate to "respond" to him when he gave him unwarranted remonstrations, so that the father used it as an excuse to say even more wicked words to him. Among other things, he accused her of not liking people, of not wanting people to come and visit them at home. Her father's way of treating her mother made her suffer a lot (the "tired", *segin*), hurt her (*a bin dimi*).

Her father and husband are from the same village. The father's first name means i.e. in their language "Fighting", but a nuance in the pronunciation changes the meaning to give "Evening".

Whenever she talks to her mother about her problems, she advises her to be patient.

3rd meeting (12/12/1996): Habibata is accompanied by her niece, but I receive her alone.

The eldest son has paid him three visits since we last met. In fact, if he had not come to see her at Alizèta's home before, it was because he did not know he was in Ouagadougou. He found a job in carpentry and construction, he makes fake ceilings and plywood.

His father and mother were married in their home village before moving to Bobo-Dioulasso. The father then married a woman of a different ethnicity, whom he met in Bobo-Dioulasso. I point out to her the contradiction in the conduct of the father who wants to impose on them husbands of the same ethnicity when he himself violates this law, but she replies that Islam does not forbid it.

The older sister, Alizèta, who had disobeyed the father by marrying a man of his choice, had nevertheless married someone of the same ethnicity, religion and from the same region as the father, but he was not a merchant and did not live in Bobo. As a child, Habibata lived with this elderly sister and her husband in Koudougou; y 13 years ago there was a gap between her and Alizèta, and she was like their daughter in fact, especially since they did not yet have children. She had lived with them since she was 9 until she was 15. At the age of 15, the father had asked that she return home to Bobo-Dioulasso. And it was to marry her.

Habibata did not know her in-laws, who both died when she was married.

During her follies, she sometimes hears voices, male and female, who speak mostly of children, in a kind of endless commentary, continuous discussion, endless palavers (baaro in dioula)⁴.

The younger sister apparently died as a result of an abortion. She was hospitalized, and Habibata had gone to see her with her son (the second-to-last child obviously). At night, his son had not stopped crying. On the night before her sister's death, Habibata heard crying and screaming out of her bedroom window. A local child also kept crying. So, she had changed rooms to go to her husband's where she had stayed for quite some time. When she returned to her room, the crying had stopped.

Her husband doesn't say anything, you never know what he's thinking, or his feelings, you always have to interpret.

I ask him to try to remember the first crisis again. She had got up one morning (the day after she had been at a wedding and her co-wife had deprived her of the meal she had prepared). The neighbour who had borrowed his moped was in fact a "brother", someone of the same ethnicity and from the same region as his father. Habibata had pulled out his sandwiches and was waiting outside the door. Passers-by bought him sandwiches. A state of confusion had gradually invaded her; it returned the change without being certain that it was the exact sum. Then she refused to take their money, and then began to distribute the sandwiches to all those who passed within her reach. And after a while, he didn't have any sandwiches left. The "brother" had brought the moped back, but Habibata had explained that she no longer needed it. It had become impossible for her to enter her yard, and she had been sitting in front of the house all day. Passers-by asked her what she had, and she would say, "Nothing at all!" She had not drunk or eaten anything that the day and meant nothing. After dark,

⁴"The master of Zurich [E. Bleuler], in his 1911 book, distinguished, in the symptomatology of the major mental disorders, the primary signs and secondary signs: the primary signs derive directly from the process, cannot be reduced to anything simpler and can only be seen in the disease defined, not in others; thus, in schizophrenia, disorders of the course of thought and autism. Secondary signs, such as verbal hallucinations, can be observed in various conditions, have content that varies with culture and time and, despite their frequency, have a much lower diagnostic value" [9].

someone (the brother who borrowed the moped?) had come to take her by the hand and forced her into the yard. She recognized people's faces and voices, but in a kind of sense of unreality. An impulse, pushed her to take off her clothes and rub herself against the walls. She heard voices in the henhouse, which were silent as soon as she went out to find out what was going on.

One day, we came to tell her that her father wanted her to go home to his house. Her older sister, Alizèta, having been informed of her condition, had come from Ouagadougou to see her, and then took her to the hospital. Her husband had protested: it was not done, we wanted to take his wife from him... She had therefore had to return to his home in Bobo, but her condition had improved significantly. Soon after, the troubles began again. Alizèta had come back to pick her up and take her to the father's home village. There she had married in her husband's family; his brothers had had him treated by healers. His mother's family, who are from the same region, also brought remedies that were made to be taken. His condition had improved again.

Before this episode, he sometimes was in this state, to stand, but voluntarily in some way. Since her husband did not tell her anything, she too sometimes confined herself to a rigid position and obstinate mutism.

When she is in this state, she does not eat, drink, say nothing (like a lifeless body). She sees her daughter looking at her crying, "it completely destroys her heart" (in *dusu bee bi kien*), but she can't say anything.

Interpretation draft: I explain to him that his old father, who is also called "Evening", acts as if he is afraid of the night in which we will enter. He's afraid that everything will get lost, and he's fighting a fierce battle against a changing world. It was as if he wanted to refound his tribe in this place of exile. As he is the father of many daughters, he fears that their children will lose their language and customs if they marry strangers. Hence this relentlessness, this stubborn demand of the same.

4th meeting (14/12/1996): Habibata has a half-brother who lived in Abidjan (Ivory Coast) and who claims to have a wife and children there, and another who has lived in Nigeria and also says he has a wife and children there. The father's contradictions go as far as aberration since he has made all his daughters in modern school and wants them to continue through them. Two of his sons were also educated at the modern school, those who have children elsewhere, outside the family circle. I point out to him that these two sons, schooled in the Western school, were finally like girls who had to marry and procreate elsewhere, while the daughters were treated as sons who had to procreate within the family circle.

The father's other sons were all educated at the Koranic school. (Apparently the father has many more children than the number communicated in the first interview).

Does she know the motives for her father's exile? She only knows that he was the only son of his mother (and his father too?), and that he had been entrusted to the Peuls but does not know why. He had fled from their homes, had gone on an adventure, and had finally settled in Bobo-Dioulasso. He had probably gone back to his home village to marry Habibata's mother and bring her back with him to Bobo-Dioulasso. The father's mother died in 1976. (I point out to him that the father had almost become a stranger to his ethnicity, having been entrusted to the Peuls for unknown reasons. It had probably terribly anguished him, he had fled, and now it was this terrible fear that his descendants would lose their ethnic identity that seemed to dictate his conduct).

Habibata knew the father's home region after the marriage of his older sister, Alizèta, who had accompanied him to his in-laws. She had returned a second time after her own marriage to get to know her husband's family. (It is through marriage that the girls discover the place of origin). Then a third time during his illness.

5th and final meeting (21/12/1996): She had been "informed" of her marriage by one of her half-brothers who mocked her by saying that she was going to be married to an old man. She didn't believe him. The night before, she had gone to bed very early, at almost 6 p.m.,

when the sun was setting. (End of the Evening cf. cf. Father's first name; she went to bed like a hen, as soon as the sun went down while the others were still chatting outside: cf. the chatty chicken coop).

The next morning, she had wanted to go out, but her father had prevented her from doing so, without telling her why. Then she was seized, and a loincloth was thrown at her head, and she was married.

Dusu kasi! "Crying from the heart!" She had cried, cried, to the point of having her eyes all swollen and had eaten nothing all day. Whenever she is sad, she thinks about it.

I suggest that she ask her father about her own childhood, she agrees and now feels strong enough to do so.

Has she heard from her children in Bobo-Dioulasso? No, she's waiting for them to write to her, to try to take her before inquiring about their own.

Toxic filiations

May 1997: I received a phone call from Mr. Denis T., a Voluble and energetic Frenchman living in Ouagadougou. He had obtained my name and contact information from a French aid worker (Madame C.) whom we both knew. He told me about a man, Adama P., who had just been confronted with a difficult situation; her little girl had just died and the child's mother had almost passed away as well. He fears that Adama himself will die. Adama has been several years, a heavy user of hard drugs; he returned to live with his father for an attempt at weaning, wanted by himself. Several previous attempts had all failed. But this time, as he was well supervised socially by the paternal family, there was a chance of success. He was, however, subject to excruciating pain, experienced significant suffering and was in a state of great physical weakness. Mr. Denis T. asked me if I would like to receive this man for psychological support. In addition, Ms. C. was approaching physicians to try to obtain substitutes that could relieve her during this period.

I want to know what connection he had to this young man so that he would worry so much about his health. He explains to me that Adama is the eldest son of a man who then married a woman from a high social background and had somewhat abandoned this eldest son. He himself had known Adama's father, Mr. P., during a stay in Burkina that dated back several years. He had returned to Burkina later with the choice to live there and had then taken Adama home. Adama had gradually settled into drugs. Denis T.'s work required him to make regular stays abroad and he left his bank card to Adama while he was away. Little by little, Adama had started to commit robberies at home, but also to extract large sums of money from his account. Besides Adama had a friend, Regina, and a child. Mr. Denis T. had proposed that Regina come and clean his house for a fee; he paid her well, but cleaning was rarely done. Adama had become so addicted to drugs that he had lost his sense of reality and had abandoned Regina and her child. The child was dead, Regina was skinny, and if he had not reacted, he was sure that Adama too would have died.

I propose to them an appointment for May 30, to which Adama comes with her father almost an hour late. I can't give them a lot of time. Adama explains that he takes 18 tablets a day (Spasfon, Doliprane, an anxiolytic, etc.). It is also necessary to go out to walk for two or three hours each day, supported by cousins. (He has a curious, somewhat Senegalese accent, but when I ask him about it later, he will tell me that he was never out of Burkina Faso). I suggest they come back to me on June 02.

Before leaving, the father insists on seeing me alone and tells me that he knew Denis T. when he was 17. He had come to Burkina Faso to go sightseeing. He had fallen seriously ill in the town of Ouahigouya where Mr. P. was working at the time. (Mr. P. was a civil servant but is now retired). He had taken him home and cared for him until he healed and could consider returning to France.

June 2, 1997: I receive Adama with her father. Adama explains to me that for several years he lived with Mr. Denis T. to whom he provided important emotional support. He had started to live independently when he was between 20 and 25 years old: he was doing a video cas-

sette business. Denis had convinced him to give up this activity and stay with him to help him in his work. He then gave her a salary. His father always insisted that he stay with Denis, even though he himself sometimes wanted to leave.

He starts to cry: "I wasn't like that before," he says. The father added: "He was a child, you could ask him anything, even to move a mountain".

Adama: "With Denis, we worked a lot and talked a lot. Denis could spend the whole night talking to him, he would even wake him up at 2 or 3am because he needed to talk. Denis spoke, until he finally fell asleep.

There are three things he thinks it's important for him to tell me about it:

- 1) Denis had a Togolese friend, whom he had taken with him on one of his trips to Europe. They had split up there. Later, this woman had phoned the house to find out if she could come back, while Denis was abroad. Adama had agreed to her, because Denis often told her about her. He was very happy to find her at home on the way home. But there were always problems between them, and Adama had become the confidant of both. Although she was younger than him, he considered her his mother, and he wanted Denis to stay with her. (He was a bit "like the child" who (hand)-holds the household). Then the woman had left one day while Denis was on a trip. When he got home, he had said nothing about his departure, seemed unhappy, but was also relieved no doubt. But Adama had the feeling that he had resased her.
- 2) From that moment on, he had wanted to leave Denis to live next door to his father's house, on a plot belonging to him. But the father insisted that he stay with Denis. (So he was like the child who holds together the couple formed by Denis and his father).

The father intervenes to explain that he had acquired a piece of land that he had divided into two plots. He had built a house on one of the plots, where he currently lives. But the second parcel was registered with the land registry in the name of one of his nephews. [It was probably under the National Council of the Revolution where no one was probably allowed to have two title deeds]. It was for this reason that he had asked Adama to stay with Denis while he resolved the situation, i.e. he would notify the nephew, take the necessary steps with the authorities to change the title to the property, etc.

Me: Adama must have asked himself a lot of questions at the time: why did he, the eldest son, moreover, not be assigned this parcel that the father had preferred to put in the name of a nephew?

Adama: He was never able to talk to his father. He was old enough to have a plot in his name, the father had not asked him for anything, had not told him anything, but had registered the plot in the name of the nephew. Moreover, it would have been sufficient for his father to bring the nephew in his presence and explain to him that his son wanted to occupy the said plot; it would have made no difficulty, not being the owner anyway. But he understood that his father wanted him to stay to support Denis, who needed someone by his side.

The father: Denis would have had a bad experience of leaving in this situation.

- 3) Denis told him that he would never be able to live with a woman again, otherwise she would necessarily be an African. To extreme rigor, a white woman, but then at least as old as him. Now he has a European friend, quite young, with whom he made a child for that matter. (He currently lives in this lady's house). "So he didn't respect what he said, which proves that he's in trouble". [With such an elderly white woman, he could not have had a child; with a black woman, he would have had more or less black children. But the white child he has just had makes the illegitimacy of Adama's situation with him even more glaring. On the other hand, at the same time, Adama himself was the father of a child. And his real father always refused to "recognize" him.

Before I stop the interview, I point out to him that he told me a lot about talking to Denis. However, his father's first name means in their language "(the) Who does not speak".

Adama: "I can't talk to him".

June 09, 1997: Adama came with a "cousin". He tells me about "his wife", his friend Regina, who recently visited him in the house where he currently lives: a house formerly occupied by his father, adjacent to his current home. He lives there with cousins and friends.

When he was a child, he lived with his paternal uncles Ouahigouya. He felt freer than in Ouagadougou, and he often went to play in the bush. This was how he had garlic known Denis, while he played in a mango plantation... He had once seen a white man who had started playing with him, and whom he had seen again the following days... He did not know his own father then; he had probably seen it, but did not know it was his father. This white man also did not know that the child with whom he was playing was the sons of the man had taken him, fed and cared for him several years before...

He's talking about his child, the first name he gave her. He had his first child (a boy) in 1990, with a daughter named Leocadie. But the mother (Adama or Leocadie?) did not want to hear about this child, and there was even talk of Leocadie having an abortion. Eight days after giving birth, Leocadie showed up at the house where Adama lived at the time, placed the baby in an armchair, and left. She had regretted her act and had returned a few days later to take it back, but the child was no longer there; Adama had taken him to an aunt father in Ouahigouya; it was this lady who had appointed him, because no name had been given to him until then.

Two months after the birth of this son, Regina gave birth to Adama's second child, a daughter. Regina had been lying in the hospital "for eight days with eight staples". The same paternal aunt had come from Ouahigouya to take care of Regina, but since she did not know Ouagadougou, it was finally Adama who took care of everything. This girl was named by Regina's mother.

For 2 to 3 years, Adama has not really been interested in her son; previously he regularly sent money to his aunt for the child's needs.

His current project is to live with Regina and take her son with them.

The father who arrived while I was talking to Adama, waits under the porch with the cousin who accompanied his son. When I take Adama outside, the father reproaches her for not having waited, as he had expressly asked her, to take the letter he intended for me. Adama does not answer him and leaves with the cousin.

The father then gives me a letter. He explains to me that he keeps Adama under surveillance during his daily walks and asks the one who accompanies him not to let him get too far from the house, to prevent him from reconnecting with drug dealers. He expressed his indignation that Adama had not waited to take the letter, even though he had insisted that he would write to me. He tells me a complicated story about the cousin who accompanied Adama. He studied in the USSR, also has problems... He lost his mother, etc.

I don't understand it and hope the letter will teach me more. Now this one, written in a rather convoluted style, really contains no new or urgent information: "With all the recognition and respect I owe you, let me say good evening ... My wife got Mrs. C. on the phone last week. She said that not all the doctors she met have anything to help us right now. Today, my wife called Mrs. C's house again. as she had told him to call back. But Mrs. C. was out. Excuse me for being away from tonight's meeting. This young man who is accompanying Adama tonight is his nephew. It is also concerned by this "Adama problem". I have faith in him ... You can talk to Adama without him. (He's X Y. [name and surname]). Once again good evening and thank you very much. Mrs. P. called me the next day to say that Adama could not come to the next appointment (on 12/06/1997) because her father had fallen off his moped on his way out of my house and had slightly injured himself. She's asking me to postpone the appointment for a few days.

June 16, 1997: Interview with Adama alone, Mr. P. waiting for him outside.

Mr. P. had had a daughter before Adama; she is now 33 years old and married to Ouahigouya. Adama is 31, but officially he's 27. He had redoubled a lot in primary school, and in order for him to pass the Certificate of Elementary Education, his father had rejuvenated him by 4 years, falsifying his date of birth with the administration. (He himself does not know his father's date of birth).

His mother (who is not that of Mr. P.'s first daughter) lives in Ouagadougou; she was married and had 6 children (one of whom died) with her husband who died 2 years ago. The husband was a business worker and ran a company that went bankrupt after his death. The mother lives with her co-wife and their children, and manages to take care of the family. She often visited Adama when he lived with Denis.

Adama had gone to inform her of her daughter's death, and she had come to see the corpse.

Until the age of 25/26, his mother gave him everything he wanted. Then he began to give her what he could. When he was little, he lived with his uncles eternal in Ouahigouya and saw his mother when he came to spend his holidays in Ouagadougou.

The maternal grandfather had a court in Ouagadougou where he lived with one of his wives. He died on April 11, 1981, and he wrote that date on a wall of the house where he lived in Ouahigouya. (This inscription is still there). His maternal grandmother is the grandfather's first wife. She had stayed in Ouahigouya while her husband and his second wife lived in Ouagadougou.

It was the eldest son of the maternal grandfather who enrolled Adama in school. As a child, Adama thought this uncle was her father. It was only around the age of 8 that he was told that it was not his father. He probably saw his real father in Ouahigouya, since he lived there at the time, but did not know who he was. It was around the age of 10 that one of his uncles had taken him to a house about 2 km from where he lived to introduce him to a stranger and tell him that it was his father. This stranger that he was told to be his father was preparing to go on a trip. [Mr. Denis T. is also a foreigner who constantly goes on a trip, to whom Mr. P. wants Adama to live as if it were his father]. This man had also just completed the construction of his first house.

The uncle he thought was his father had two wives. By the time the second, before she had a child herself, she had treated Adama like a son. This uncle's first wife died about a year ago. She had also "fallen out of disgrace in the eyes of her husband: she had no right of access to the husband's room, he no longer gave her price of condiments, he refused to eat his meals". She had finally left home and her husband had "refused to recognize his last child". (I suspected that such treatment would punish some marital infidelity. This whole interview revolves around questions of misdirection and dates of birth, falsified, illegitimate).

He had repeated several classes during his primary schooling. After his failure at the CEPE, his uncle had sent him to his father in Ouagadougou, but he had not wanted to keep him with him, and had entrusted him to one of his nephews living near the city of Kongoussi. He had spent a year there and had obtained his certificate there. He had returned to Ouagadougou hoping to live with his father for high school, but he sent him to live with Denis T.

June 30, 1997: Adama comes with his wife Regina and her older sister. (Adama seems to be in better physical shape and moves more easily).

It is the older sister who recounts most of Regina's suffering, and talks about the difficult birth and the last days of the child. The child was ill and all the care he received had no effect on his condition. One day, they had rushed her to a lady who was healing with prayers. But she had been unable to pray for the little girl. They had then brought it to a priest, "who prayed, prayed, prayed..."; the child had opened his eyes at one point. The priest then said this sentence about the meaning of which the aunt had misunderstood herself: "She will glorify God soon!" She thought he meant that the child would live.

A short time later, she had to be transported to the hospital emergency room. The paediatrician and the nurses had tried in vain to find a vein. They had asked the two women to go out. The aunt had seen Denis leaving the service with the child in his arms. She had believed that the child was saved, and then realized that Denis was crying. It was the first time in her life that she touched a dead man.

“Since that day, I know that God does not lie!” The fact that the first lady consulted had failed to pray was sufficiently explicit.

Regina had been very unhappy; she had almost sunk into despair, having repeated nightmares. It had taken her a long time to resurface, and it was only then that she began to get better.

July 16, 1997: Adama, Regina and her sister. At first, I receive Adama and Regina, explaining to the sister that I will bring her in afterwards.

After leaving my home at the last interview, Adama and the two women went to his mother’s house to whom he had asked for money. [Although this woman was in great financial difficulty, it was to her and not to her father that Adama turned to ask for money].

Adama: Don’t want to stay with his father anymore. The father doesn’t trust him.

Regina: Denis does not pay her, on the pretext that she is still learning. But in the meantime it must feed, moves (mop). The moped’s down, she can’t get it fixed.

Adama: Actually Denis “forgets” to give him money. But it’s also a bit of her fault in Regina: why doesn’t she ask her to pay her? (I point out to him that obviously he doesn’t ask his father for anything either). Adama insists that Regina tell what she wanted to “say to Mr. Barry”.

Regina: Wanted to tell me about the beginning of Adama’s intoxication He insulted Regina’s parents, beat her. In the evening, he would come home later and later. [Obviously the couple and the child lived with Denis].

Adama: It was because Regina wasn’t doing what Denis expected of her. Regina also suspected him of looking for other girls, etc. On the other hand, he was not happy because Regina was taking her child to his mother who was selling dolo (millet beer). Dolo drinkers could give anything to the child. Second, Regina did not strictly respect the medical treatment prescribed to the child; he sometimes forgot to give him his medicine. That’s all that explained Adama’s wrath.

Regina: Is revolted that Adama allows herself to talk about her mother in this way, and to accuse her of not paying attention to her granddaughter. Would he have forgotten that it was mainly she who had raised the child during the first years of her life, and that she was doing wonderfully well then? “And then you can’t stop me from going to my mother’s!” Adama, on the other hand, conveniently forgets his father’s criminal behaviour in this case. When the child was sick, it was always her sister who bought the pharmaceuticals. Once, an urgent order was issued to Mr. P. who had found nothing better to say than, “I have no money”. And it was only after the return of Denis from France that these products could be bought.

Adama defends her father with obvious bad faith.

Regina: Can’t let it be said that she didn’t comply with medical prescriptions. “This child I loved her more than you!” Another time, the doctor had made a prescription, and it was her mother who had bought the products. That was when she had diarrhea, and had to be given Flagyl.

Adama: Flagyl is too strong a drug for a child of that age.

Regina: Sometimes she understood why Adama beat her, but most of the time it was for no reason.

Adama: It was because she suspected him of looking for women, when he was not well at all and she didn't want to see him.

Regina: On the day of the child's death, Adama's parents were not there, nor was Adama there either. It was her sister who had accompanied her to the various places of prayer and then to the hospital. And when the child died, it was Denis who carried her. "It's not normal, you should have worn it!"

When they seem to have exhausted their respective grievances, I bring in the older sister who explains that Regina had her life destroyed by Adama. They have a sister in France who bought her a sewing machine to establish herself as a seamstress and acquire an independent life. Their father passed away. Regina was starting to work with this machine. This was the moment Denis T. had chosen to ask him to come and work at his house. Adama is mean to her, he beats her, he insults their mother, even talks about their mother's sex in her insults. Neither Adama nor her father have any respect for their mother. Perhaps it is because she is not married (widow) and supports herself and her children alone that they treat her in this way.

July 17, 1997: Mr. P. and Mr. Denis T. come to the appointment that I had proposed to both of them in time.

Me: "Mr. P., that child, Adama, his mother, is someone in your family?"

Mr. P.: "You've got it all figured out, Mr. Barry! That's exactly what it is! That's the problem! He was born of an incestuous union. To this tare is added the fact that he is a bastard since his parents were not married. At that time, the existence of such children (bastards) was denied. That's where all the problems come from. He himself had not been raised by his own parents and he does not understand why one wants to make the fact that he lived apart from him responsible for the condition of his son. He had, if not, always taken care of Adarna, from afar, his schooling, etc. He had always had it housed by members of his family, but had never been able to bring himself to welcome him into his own house.

I suggest to him to abandon the idea of changing the title of the plot established in the name of his nephew (an idea to which he did not seem to hold with overflowing enthusiasm anyway), and, instead, to actively undertake, with Adama, the search for a plot for him to settle there, and to help him build his house, a kind of house that they would thus have in common, built together. (The word for "home" also means "family" in their language). He agrees with this suggestion.

Mr. Denis T.: He himself was a great drug addict; he had gone through all kinds of drugs, and then got away with it. But he had never touched the heroine, Adama's favorite substance. That was why Adama may have cheated on him and he didn't immediately realize that he was on drugs. He had left France to flee his family. At that time, he would have preferred to die rather than be forced to return to live with his family. The first time he left, he was 17. This was how he had arrived in Burkina And had been collected and cared for by Mr. P. It was only from here that he was able to reconnect with some members of his family. His father has a son he knew a short time ago. He had it with a Jew he had stashed during the war. One day when Denis was in Paris, someone had accosted him to tell him that he had a half-brother, a Jew, that he had gone to see on the spot...

When all places are combined

It was a psychiatrist from the psychiatry department of the Yalgado Ouédraogo National Hospital in Ouagadougou who asked me if I could follow this patient because she was of the same ethnicity (peuple) as me. I have read the following information in the medical file before I meet with her.

Mrs Hourétou⁵ Boly, entered on 24 May 1996. 52 years. Born in Djibo and living there. Only daughter of her mother. To a co-wife, is the husband's first wife. The father died when she was 29, the mother when she was 40. His parents were divorced (?). She was 8 years old at the time. She then lived with Grandma. She has convulsive seizures of the tonic-clonic type, has psychomotor agitations and is delusional.

⁵Boly is this lady's maiden name. (It's not his real name, of course). In traditional settings, women do not change their name after getting married. It definitely retains its name (patronym or matronyme depending on the case) of birth.

Start: March 1996. Chills, headache, untreated fever. Her husband had not wanted to take care of her. This careless attitude of the husband had created insecurity in her. The patient leaves her home to live in the family home (who lives in the same city) on the pretext that she was hot in her house.

All her children went to Djibo to see her. They find that she has mounting amnesia.

Then the picture improves until the end of April, when she makes new tonic-clonic seizures, with tongue bite, loss of urine and post-critical amnesia. For three days, these seizures followed one another at a rate of 3 to 4 times a day. Medical treatment was instituted without result. A traditherapy based on fumigations, baths with plant decoctions, and mixing powder (to be coated the body and consumed in porridge) was observed for 4 days, there no result.

She has behavioral quirks, visual hallucinations (people enter her room), incoherent words followed by mutism.

On 13 May, she was transferred to Ouagadougou, first to a general medical department and then to psychiatry 10 days later.

March 1994: The patient had the same symptomatology that had subsided after 18 days of hospitalization.

She is the president of a weaving cooperative that brings together many women. In the service, she is noted to have unmotivated laughter, visual and auditory hallucinations. Voices tell her that she is being replaced at the head of the cooperative. People in black enter her room and sit next to her on the bed. She has delusions of persecution with an imaginative mechanism directed against her co-wife who wants to bewitch her and make her leave the home. Ideas of indignity, guilt: she says that she knows how to have done wrong and asks God to accept her prayers and repentances.

She is part of apolygamous family of three wives. His mother is the father's second wife. She is the only daughter of her mother and the daughter of an inbred siblings of three daughters. Her parents divorced when she was 8 years old and she had been raised by her paternal aunt. She had been in school for 3 years and then expelled from school.

Married at 16, mother of five children. The husband, who was a schoolteacher, was dismissed in April 1984. [This is the strike that the teachers had carried out under the National Council of the Revolution in March 1984 despite the banning of the authorities; all the strikers had been dismissed in April 1984]. The husband married another woman in 1992, a woman much younger than him, who could have been his daughter. He lived with this woman in another city for 2 years, leaving Hourétou Boly in Djibo with the youngest of his children. The husband, who was reinstated to the civil service after the fall of the National Council of the Revolution, is now retired. He buys furniture with his pension for his second wife's house, to whom he also does not miss an opportunity to offer gifts, completely abandoning the first. When he was laid off, she was the one who took care of the family's material needs. She had sold her oxen, gold jewellery and all her valuables to feed the family and for the children to continue their education.

She says that objects (kitchen utensils, clothes...) disappear from the house, and that it is his co-wife who uses them to cast spells on her, and also to dethrone her from the head of the cooperative. She was reappointed twice as head of the co-op, and this had created a rivalry with another woman who coveted the position.

She had nine gestures: 5 living children (3 boys and 2 girls), one child died, 3 stillborn deliveries.

She is very logorrheic as soon as the husband is away. She then speaks of justice, says that she cannot forget, that her co-wife is pregnant, but so is she. "I can be forgotten, but I can't forget!!".

I saw very little of this patient during the month of June because of my university activities (exams) that gave me little time to go to the hospital, but also because she was still very delusional. Sometimes she screamed, screamed, because she saw people at her window.

This always happened as soon as her husband was away, but every time he was there, she remained calm. (In this ward, a patient is only admitted to hospital care if a family member stays with him or her. The husband had in the same room). But during my brief stints in the ward, I would always go to her room to say hello, and sit next to her in bed to try to make contact.

The first time, with the help of her husband (Mr. R.), I try to get her to find herself in her family to get out of this confusion. She laboriously manages to appoint each member of the family, her brothers, her sisters, their offspring, her own children, and finally her mother's family members (brothers, sisters, children, etc.). Another time, a woman's first name comes back insistently and I want to know who it is. She is the wife of her half-brother. But again? It was this lady who was the president of the weaving cooperative and Hourétou supplanted her (as she herself was going to be supplanted by her co-wife). She talks about this cooperative that makes carpets and loincloths that it exhibits and sells, which participates in the Ouagadougou International Craft Fair (SIAO) every two years. Another time, I found her gently swinging her outstretched arms with her hands open, as if she were cradling a baby.

First hypotheses: This is a patriarchal society where the man is the head of the family. Moreover, this man was a civil servant; it was therefore he who provided for the family. But overnight, he was left without resources. And it was his wife who had taken over the family. The husband then found himself in relation to her, no longer in the position of the father of his children, but that of one of his children. He had gone from being a father to a son. And the daughter he later married was the age of his children. He is forced to go elsewhere to find a role as husband and father (this new wife being pregnant). As for this patient's imaginary pregnancy, perhaps she is motivated by the following question: is it because her husband wants more children that he turned to a younger woman?

On the night of July 03-04, she made an attempt to run away. She's tired of staying in the hospital. I am warned and I propose to meet them on July 05.

July 05, 1996: Interview with Mr. R. and Hourétou Boly. It is Mr. R. who tells, but Hourétou intervenes from time to time to emphasize a word, or as if what her husband had just said evoked a memory. He himself is not of Peule origin, but having always lived in Djibo, The Peul is his native language. Since his retirement in 1993, he has lived in Djibo in his backyard with his two wives.

After the divorce of Hourétou's parents, when her mother had left, she had first stayed with her father. His father had married another woman who had taken care of her and had her excised. (Excision is called taadorgal in them; It's Mrs. Boly who says the word. Nor a loincloth around its waist is taadaade). Then this woman had become very mean to Hourétou who had then gone to live with her maternal grandmother. Mrs. Boly says that this woman (her grandmother therefore) was called Inna Soumaïla - Mother of Isma-èL, also hunted because of a son (Isaac) that the father of hers had from another woman - (probably because she had a son named Soumaïl).

I told Hourétou that his father had not behaved as if she were equal to his other daughters. Hourétou says: BiDDo fuyo BiDDo ("every child is a child": one should not distinguish between one's children).

I said to Mr. R.: "She fears that her children (Mrs. Boly intervenes to say in French: "My children!) are not as considered by you as those you would have with your new wife".

Mr. R. intervenes to say that contrary to what Hourétou says, his second wife, Kadidja, is not pregnant. The maternal grandmother loved Hourétou very much, took her to school and went to look for her at the exit. Hourétou intervenes to say that his marriage with R. was good, it proved fruitful, so there are no problems!

I point out to Mr. R. that his wife's two episodes of madness occurred in March, and that it was in March (1984) that he too lost his job.

Hourétou began to delirious around March 1983 when she reportedly lost her daughter a few days after the birth. (But in fact it seems that it was his mother who died in 1983. Mr. R. said that the girl's death occurred in 1972).

Hourétou pretends to take off her clothes and asks if she should “detach” (firtude) her loincloth. (Firtude, here is the opposite of t-adaade: “attaching your loincloth”). The husband looks rather lecherous than embarrassed when she talks like that.

Assumption: Perhaps she means that if her husband felt the need to look elsewhere, it was because she refused him sexually, or did not give himself enough. Should she release her sex, her sexuality?

Hourétou began to talk about a judge, a marriage certificate. She wants a paper to sign. Her husband has to write, and she wants to sign. There’s a marriage certificate, she can defend herself, she’s going to the judges. (It seems to me that she repeats these words that may have been made by her children as we shall see later). She says she and her husband have always supported each other, “hand in hand”. I invite her to tell me a little about her co-wife (Kadidja), but she makes the one who does not hear.

Mr. R. says his wife had her first son after three years of marriage. She had returned to her maternal grandmother’s house to give birth. He had not had time to go and see the child there, as he died three weeks after birth.

Hourétou begins to talk about a Peul village called Toorodi on the side of Dori, where ToorooBe (Peuls from Fouta Tooro, Senegal) live. I say, “The words (words) that are similar go together: that’s why the ToorooBe live in Tooroodi”.

Halaaji na seed! (“The words are not the same, the words are separate!”) she said. Does she have family in Tooroodi? Not. Then she begins to cite a whole list of her husband’s colleagues whom they knew according to the various assignments of the latter. (A long history together during which they knew the same people. She had followed him wherever he had been assigned - it will be understood the interest of these clarifications afterwards).

July 13, 1996: When I arrive in the ward that day to see Ms. Boly, one of his sons, a nurse whom I knew a little, and who had come from the remote province where he worked to see his mother, was waiting for me because he wanted to tell me about the real situation of his parents’ couple, “telling me the whole story” which he knew his father had distorted to pretend to be what he is not.

Interview with the son: (I deliver here the notes I took afterwards. The words are sometimes not very clear to myself; I didn’t always understand what he was talking about. But he was in a state of great excitement, and at times gave the impression of being under the influence of psychotropic products, at other times he seemed on the verge of delirium. But when we read his version of events, we will probably understand the reasons for this agitation).

Her father’s second wife cheats on her husband. She allowed herself to write to Mr. G., asking him for money on the grounds that she had spent money on the wedding while her husband was not working. [It was only a few days later that I would understand what it was all about: one of Mr. R.’s and Mrs. Boly’s daughters had recently married Mr. G. And Mr. R.’s second wife complained to Mr. G. about the difficulties in which the expenses incurred her, her husband being retired]. So she intervenes there again as if she were the mother of this daughter (Mr. G.’s wife). She poses as a stepmother, wants to take the place of her rival (Madame Boly) everywhere! But first he has to tell me about the sources of the first conflicts.

His mother has been losing business since his father’s second wife arrived at the house. When Ms. Boly became ill, Kadidja went to people and asked them to support them financially so that they could cover the costs, as if her children could not take care of them. The father had no interest in Hourétou at all, even when she had fallen ill. It was only when he [who is a nurse] told him that it⁶ could be a tumor and that she could die from it, that he started bringing marabouts from the healers. Together with his younger brother, they decided that if after 15 days no improvement was observed, they would transport their mother to Ouagadougou. There’s a lot of tension between

⁶This is probably why she was initially hospitalized in General Medicine.

him and his father. He had threatened to fight with him (his father) if he did not take care of his mother. (His younger brother had also been forced to argue violently with his father, and they had even come to grips with it). Kadidja had intervened to say that there was no question of taking Hourétou to Ouagadougou, that it would cost too much, etc. Anger, the nurse grabbed a stick and hit it on the head; she had been hurt by it. His father (Mr. R.) had then gone to the police station to file a complaint against him; but the Commissioner intervened and had him withdraw his complaint.

The children transported their mother to Ouagadougou, and three days later, their father also came to take care of Hourétou. While here, the father learns that his older brother has died in Djibo; he y returns, then returns to Ouagadougou. A few days later, Kadidja came to join her, on the pretext that she would like to do x-ray examinations to ensure that the blow received had not left any after-effects. [The father is staying with a friendly family in the city where Kadidja also came to live there; he spends a good part of the day there and only comes to the service in the evening. Then a half-sister of Hourétou had come from Djibo to see her; therefore, it was this woman who looked after her sister day and night, Mr. R. making only occasional appearances, for daily greetings or participation in the scheduled interviews].

He's very carried away by all this hypocrisy. Mr. R. was born to a mother who remarried several times. So he has three or four half-brothers of the same mother only. When the father was reinstated to the public administration in 1988, he was posted to another province, in the Seno in Dori. Hourétou refused to follow her, explaining that she was tired of changing her residence all the time and wandering from town to town indefinitely. [The fact that she was forced to take over the family, her husband having no resources, made her the head of the family; so it was as if it was up to her to determine the family's place of residence. The father had been during these 4 years of unemployment, stripped of his status as father, husband of this woman, to come occupy the same position as one of his sons, as we already anticipated]. So, she stayed in Djibo, in the family home, with the youngest of the children, while her husband went alone to Dori. It was there that he met Kadidja. [It was probably to escape this feeling of decay and abandonment, to fill the feeling of loneliness and to maintain sexual relations with a woman, that he had wanted to re-found a family elsewhere. Some of Hourétou's words -on sexual invitations, always following him - as well as hesitations about who was wrong with making decisions about the family (see below) are now becoming clearer].

The mother confides a lot in her granddaughter (Madame G.). The nurse and his father no longer speak, they are with knives drawn.

Kadidja managed to win the last daughter of Hourétou, who is the only one still living in the family home, to her cause. At home, all: Mr. R., Kadidja and Hourétou's daughter, are bound against his mother. The latter daughter was born after two stillbirths, which explains the significant age difference between her and her older siblings. He himself had just asked to be assigned to the hospital in Djibo to take care of his mother and to ensure that she would never again suffer all the humiliations she had suffered in recent years.

This nurse also tells me at one point that his mother would have lived for a time with a white lady. No one else had told me about this, I suppose it was because I was coming back from a stay of several years in France, that I was then married to a French woman, that I was dating white people in Ouagadougou, etc., that he said this: did he hope by then strengthening the bond between me and his mother? In any case, it is a word that has remained absolutely enigmatic to me.

Interview with Mr. R. and Hourétou Boly: (For the first time, although the words remain incoherent, Hourétou speaks directly to me. She speaks in a very correct French, surprisingly clear, whereas usually her husband had to translate everything that was said to her in Peul. Mr. R. seems overwhelmed to me - by the presence of the son, the fact that I gave him an interview first? -, more concerned than I had seen so far: usually he seemed in a rather frivolous mood, taking it all rather lightly).

Hourétou speaks of London and Popes Paul VI and John XXIII. I tell him that the popes are in Rome and not in London. She replies: "Rome is Rome, London is London!" I told him that it was indeed appropriate to keep separate what was separate. In Peul: Sennude ku

seédi, “separate what is separated,” “distinguish what is distinct”. “I’m me” “O. it’s O,” she says. But she continues, there are 3 O.: A school principal, a singer, and one who worked at the department. And then “in the Ministry, there is primary education and there is higher education”. I tell her that her husband was a primary school student and I was a primary school student, and that there were things that were completely separated (opposite), others that were not the same but looked the same, were getting closer. She says my glasses look like her husband’s. Then she talks about a Bookarè she knew ... I told him that Bookarè and Aboubacar (my first name) were alike. She talks about the former police station in Djibo, then the school principal and adds: “The Director is the Director, the police station is the police station!” It speaks of the “World Organization,” Hassan II, and John Paul II. Then Anabi Issa and Anabi Daouda (the Prophet Jesus and the Prophet David). I tell him that there are indeed things that are similar, but are not the same. She always talks about “her” daughter, as if she only had one (it’s Madame G.). She cites one by one all the cities where her husband served during his teaching career and where she followed him. “There is the Ministry of Health, and there is the Ministry of Education!” I tell her that, as a teacher, I belong to the Ministry of Education, but now I come to see her in a hospital, an institution of the Ministry of Health. My presence is confused between two normally separated ileus.

Now she wants to sign so that we know that she said all this.

She asks me if I find her pretty, with a charming smile and naughty winks. “I’m a madwoman! That’s what they say, or it’s not like that, Mr. Barry! (There I think it reunites her husband’s two wives: the madwoman she is now, and the thief of her husband that is her co-wife. But I didn’t dare tell him, given the husband’s presence). She asks me what city I’m from. I said, “I’m from Toma, it’s to Dédougou!” She cites several cities: “Dédougou is Dédougou, Kaya is Kaya, Tenkodogo is Tenkodogo, etc”.

Whenever her husband tried to intervene during this exchange, she replied: Yoppu (“Leave, don’t get involved”), a formula she usually addresses to the cantonade, when she is alone especially.

July 15, 1996: 1 (Last interview with Mr. R. and Hourétou Boly). Hourétou is very calm, very sad. She looks thoughtful, has a frozen face.

She is the president of a 108-person co-operative. There are only women, one man: her husband. (Here, too, she finds herself in the position of head of the head of her family). She speaks very little, but is no longer delusional at all.

The husband tells me of his intention to take her out of the hospital, with the consent of the psychiatrist who followed her. But he hesitates between two formulas: either they return to Djibo or they stay for a month in Ouagadougou; they could, in this second event, come to a consultation once a week and ensure that his condition continues to evolve favourably before returning home. Financial considerations must also be taken into account. He is retired and this extended stay in Ouagadougou costs him dearly. The children would support him very little financially.

He asks his wife what solution he thinks is best suited to the situation. She says she will comply with the decision he makes. (As if she had become aware of the “original fault” so to speak, and wanted to repair it, restore it to its position as husband and head of the family). But he, too, insists, not to give the impression that he wants to impose his decision arbitrarily and unilaterally (by taking me as a witness to probably mitigate the effect of what his son may have told me about him). So that the inevitable impasse eventually prevails. The more he insists, the less she understands what he is saying to her, and asks that he repeat and translate into Peul. I told him that everything was going on there as if the words were starting to look the same again. She nods: Haalaaji na seed!

As she is thrifty in words, I ask her husband if he knows where she gets her knowledge of the Catholic religion (the name of the various popes). He said he had once left it in Ouahigouya for two or three months. She then regularly received members of a religious congregation who came to talk at home at length and left her brochures. I ask him if he has observed any major memory problems, confusions (discordances) throughout his illness. He replies that he did not notice anything like that. On the contrary, it sometimes showed an extraordinary

memory. Everything she said about their shared history, all the cities mentioned where she followed her, all the names of the colleagues they knew there, all of which are rigorously accurate.

Before I take leave of her, I ask her if she had a question for me. She tells me she would just like to have a cotton ball (resume her work at the weaving cooperative probably). Then she closes in her silence.

Conclusion

The works devoted to Black Africa in the fields of ethnology, anthropology, sociology, history, etc., are more and more numerous and considerably enrich our knowledge of African cultures. On the other hand, since the research carried out by the team gathered around Henri Collomb in Dakar in the sixties, it can hardly be said that clinical psychology or psychoanalysis studies carried out in Africa abound. My clinical publications so far fill this gap in the form of a contribution to the reflection on a current African clinic. Breaking with the traditional approaches of ethnopsychiatry and culturalist anthropology, they generally combine the approach to the subject in clinical practice with an anthropological analysis of the social context in which its history is inscribed, from the rituals performed at birth, from a child in a traditional environment to the transformation of frameworks for the symbolization of pathologies in large urban centers. It is this confidence in the symptom that I renew in this discussion. It shatters the ethnopsychiatric superstitions developed in France by Tobie Nathan in particular. He claims, in his many interventions, to treat African patients with respect for their cultural authenticity and in accordance with the ways of thinking and doing specific to these populations. However, an examination of his writings shows that he has the most basic knowledge of these cultures. The fascination with the exotic eccentricities of African patient stories and the taste for folklore dictate most of its formulations. He has such a static conception of these cultures that he ignores the significant transformations that have taken place in these cultures, especially in urban areas. For him, everything happens as if nothing is lost, nothing is created, and even nothing is truly transformed in Africa. The four clinical situations examined in this text show, among other things, that neither the ancestor nor the sorcerer are incriminated as the causes of the suffering of these patients.

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