

The djina-koï (generalissimo, commander of the "vanguard") was the only one in the entire army entitled to sit on a rug during the audience with the king; he covered himself with flour instead of dust.

The kurmina-fari or kan-fari, whose residence was at Tindirna, was a veritable viceroy. He did not have to take off his headgear or cover his head with dust.

The dendi-fari, governor of one of the most important provinces of the empire, the one bordering on Upper Dahomey, was the only one who could speak frankly to the king without fear.

The bara-koïs alone had the right of veto. It will be recalled that all of them (with one exception) were born of noble women, in contrast to the Askias, all of whom (with one exception) were sons of slaves, of "concubines," according to the same author. The prince was obliged to heed their veto willy-nilly. One gets the impression that the bara-koïs must have been the former legitimate masters of the soil from whom the Askias usurped the *tin-touri*, that emblem of power of the earliest occupants of the land.

The dirma-koï alone could enter the enclosure of the imperial palace on horseback.

Only the cadî could employ the servants of the king. He was entitled to a mat when he came visiting.

The guissiri-donké alone could question the king during an audience.

Only a Sherif could sit next to him on his "platform." Eunuchs (an Oriental custom introduced into Africa with Islam) stood to the left of the Askia, who rose only for scholars and returning pilgrims.

The Askia ate only with Sherifs, scholars, and their children, as well as with the "San," even when these were very young. The latter, whose district in Timbuktu was San-Koré (from which the university got its name), constitute the authentic noble class. It should be remembered that meals were eaten sitting on mats around one common platter.

Kâti attributes all these institutions to Askia Mohammed exclusively, as if they had not existed before his reign and survived him only partially.

In reality, Kâti and Sâdi, being fervent believers, tend excessively to embellish the reign of Askia Mohammed and attribute to him even part of the glory of his predecessors. It is unlikely that institutions so entrenched and so detailed could be of so recent invention.

The attributes of the *bara-koï* show that they reflect a tradition much older than the advent of the Askias. The explanation suggested by the author concerning these attributes merely confirms this point of view.¹⁷

The *bara-koï* who accompanied the Askia on the pilgrimage presumably took advantage of their presence together at the Kaaba to bind the Askia by an oath at the tomb of the Prophet: "Promise me that henceforth you will abide by my counsel," whence the right of veto . . . "I promise you!" . . . and so forth.

The author was not able to show by what necessity the Askia, sovereign of all, voluntarily and so easily allowed himself to be bound by these oaths.

It is notable that, in Mossi country where African tradition remained in effect, only one case of political conflict around succession to the throne is cited, in the whole history of Mossi, although it is longer than that of Songhai. That was the struggle of Tuguri against the *naba* Ba-Ogo, in the nineteenth century, hence in very recent times, at the end of Mossi history.

THE CASE OF CAYOR

The political situation in Cayor was halfway between that of Mossi and that of Songhai. All political positions below that of the king were hereditary. It was impossible arbitrarily to assign one to anyone who did not have a right to it by virtue

of belonging to the corresponding caste. Until Faidherbe, the Badié Gateignes, the Botalub NDiobs, the Lamane Diamatils, etc., came exclusively from the same families; apart from competition between family members, there was no intrigue possible regarding these successions.

The situation was different in the case of the king. At the end of Cayorian history, there were seven dynasties of *garmis*, or nobles, each with an equal right to the throne. All being of different origins, they were in perpetual rivalry. Unlucky claimants were frequently sent into exile. The *djîn* was a common practice: this consisted of beating the tom-tom and calling out the name of the prince being banished and outlawed. He then emigrated to another more receptive kingdom. If circumstances were favorable, if he could muster forces by buying slaves or getting some from the hospitable king, if he kept in contact with the dissidents in Cayor, if he established sustained relations with the Diaraff N'Diambur, who made and broke Damels, his return to the throne might be assured. It often happened that in utmost secrecy the Diaraff N'Diambur sent for an exiled prince, to place him on the throne, if the reigning king displeased the people. It seems that it was in this way that Maô, one of the bravest princes of the Dorobé dynasty, acceded to the throne. Prior to the Cayorian monarchy, it seems the country was divided into landed "estates" belonging to the Serers: these native lords were called Lamanes, a term which means "successor" in Serer and Tuculor. The kings who, around the fourteenth century, consecrated this organization seem all to have come from outside: they were immigrant kings, rebellious, exiled, hunted princes, perhaps from Mali, Songhai, or Ghana, who had gone to seek their fortune in an outer province of the empire, and willingly led an uprising in it if necessary to gain control. It was common for members of the nobility, who had tasted power at home but lost it, to go and look for it elsewhere. The history of the Macina provides a typical example. One of the early

kings of this country, Djâdji, wanted to marry his brother's widow, who turned him down. He began to hate his other brother Maghan, whom he believed responsible for her rejection. Maghan emigrated to the home of the Bâghena-fâri, the governor of the region situated north of the Upper Senegal-Niger. He was welcomed and invited to settle wherever he wished, within the province: in addition, he was recognized as king of all those who had accompanied him into exile, instead of being treated as a prisoner by the Fâri. Some other Peuls of the Termès region from which he came soon joined him. Such, according to the *Tarikh es Sudan*, was the origin of the dynasty that reigned in the Macina, the territory chosen by Maghan.

Generally speaking, these outside kings did not in any way modify the sociopolitical structure they found established in the area. We can then see why the less important traditions remained unchanged while transformation occurred only at the royal level. And one can readily conceive that such kings could not be sacrosanct in the eyes of the people. There was no worship of them; they were just Tieddos embodying brute force. They form a third category of African kings who must be distinguished from both the traditional kings who, with their people, retained their religion (Mossi: Moro Naba; Yoruba: Alafin of Oyo), and the Islamized kings (Songhai, Futa-Toro, Futa-Djallon).

Until the conquest of Senegal, the seven Cayorian dynasties systematically refused to embrace the Islamic religion, whose followers were scorned and often mistreated. These dynasties were: the Muyôy, Sogno, Ouagadou, Guelewar, Dorobé, Guedj, and Bey.

We know very little about the origin of the Muyôys. The Sognos are considered to be Socés. The Ouagadou dynasty was founded by Détié Fu N'Diogu Fall: it was the very first; its name brings to mind the cradle of Ghana; its creator, says tradition, baptized it with this name in remembrance of his

mother's native country. The Guelewar were probably a Mandingo aristocracy who went to rule over the Serers of Sine-Salum: a tradition common to the history of both countries tends to confirm this origin. We know with certainty that according to tradition Sudiata Keita, king of the Mandingo, had been helped by his sister to triumph over his enemies; in exchange for this service he instituted a matrilineal succession in the royal branch. The present-day Guelewars of Sine-Salum also claim that matrilineal filiation was introduced among them in the same circumstances. This was confirmed for me by a conversation I had with Fodé Diouf, head of the province of Salum and traditional king of this country, during his visit in Paris in 1956.

As for the Dorobé, although they do not like to admit it, they seem originally to have been Peul, or Tuculor. Indeed, there presently exists, among the Mossi, in Upper Volta (Burkina-Faso), a Peul clan called Torombé. Also at Futa-Toro, there is the Tuculor clan of Torobé, which supported Ousman Dan Fodio. The *bé* is merely a plural ending in Peul and in Tuculor. Torombé, Torobé, and Dorobé seem to be only variants of the same word derived from Toro. Moreover, the very names of the first ruling princes of this dynasty—Maô, for example—prove that they were Peuls or Tuculor. The Dorobés differed from the other dynasties in that the king actually took command of his army, instead of remaining at the rear and communicating orders; in defeat, he must die at the site. Members of the dynasty who survive a defeat are excluded from it, if not in fact, at least in effect. Such was the case of the Damel Madiodio who, starting in 1861, was defeated several times by Lat-Dior, without committing suicide; since he dared to survive a defeat, in the popular mind he was no longer worthy of being a Dorobé.

The Guedj come from common people. They are distinguished by their adaptive ability and their military genius. The dynasty is named for the country of origin of the first

founding Damel's mother. She was a commoner from the seacoast, who married the king; *guedj* meaning "sea" in Wolof. Her son, though he had no right to the throne, succeeded in being crowned, through his energy and mental agility.

The Beys were in the beginning merely a good-luck family among whom pretenders to the throne went to select virgins. According to a curious tradition, it was enough to have contact with a virgin daughter of this family for one's chances of accession to the throne to increase seriously. The family, then, progressively became an integral part of royalty.

As can be seen from the above, within each of these dynasties, succession to the throne was matrilineal. The dynastic founders remembered only their mothers or sisters, whose names were sacred; this was also true for the sons of Gongo or Konko Mussa. Gongo Mussa was one of the most powerful emperors of Mali, and Gongo was the name of his mother, according to Kâti.¹⁸ Thus, it was the existence of several parallel, rival dynasties that introduced so many problems into the succession to the throne of Cayor.

SIGNIFICANCE OF ROYALTY

The Vitalist Concept

The African universe was run in a strictly orderly manner, metaphysically speaking. The works of Marcel Griaule, Germaine Dieterlen, and Father Tempels revealed these fundamental ideas to the West.

According to Fr. Tempels, the Universe was ruled by only one set of hierarchic forces: every being, animate or inanimate, could occupy only a specific place according to his or its potential. These forces were cumulative: thus, a living being who had as talisman the fang or claw of a lion, in which the

vital force of the animal was concentrated, increased his own power by that much. In order to overcome him in battle, one had to have a sum of forces greater than his own plus the lion's. Therefore, the struggle between two kings was, above all, a magic struggle on the level of these vital forces; it took place long before the physical combat in the arena, around the water jugs and libation stumps set up in the ground, during the night, in the sacred groves. We can be sure that, from the beginning of African history until the conquest by the West, each traditional king before going into combat indulged in these practices, and therefore firmly believed that victory was on his side. Islamization did not change this: it just displaced the center of interest. Instead of turning to the traditional priests who mediated between them and the hidden forces of the universe, the princes now went to the Muslim clergy, the marabouts who practiced Eastern Kabbalah and gave them grigris to assure their victory.

This metaphysics, far from constituting a minor fact in African historical sociology, was a predominant trait. If scientific explanation ignores it, all that it will grasp will be lifeless, external forms with no apparent logical connection. No one has revealed the internal logic of this African society better than Marcel Griaule, as has been pointed out by André Leroi-Gourhan and Jean Poirier:

All work and human activities . . . remind us of [universal movement]: pottery, cattle breeding, dance, music, decoration, and particularly the prestigious art of the forge—the Monitor was a blacksmith—the rhythm of the bellows and anvil of which inspired the first dance . . . The world is ordered like a vast equation; human animation corresponds to the animation of nature, and each gesture extends back to its mythical precedents. The Black African world which seemed to some so simple is simple indeed, but only because of its internal logic. It is very complicated in appearance; creation takes on a sense that can be called philosophical. The Black Universe had seemed crude; it now turns out to be profoundly elaborate.¹⁹

Within the framework of this universal harmony, in which each being has his place, the king has a precise function, a definite role: he must be the one with the greatest vital force in the whole kingdom. Only in this way can he serve as mediator—he being sacrosanct—with the superior universe, without creating any break, any catastrophic upheaval within the ontological forces. If he is not a legitimate king, fulfilling these exact conditions of established filiation, and appointed according to the rites of tradition, all of nature will be sterile, drought will overtake the fields, women will no longer bear children, epidemics will strike the people. As long as the tradition was carried on in isolation from external influences, the king fulfilled a function in which no usurper could replace him. The obligations were strict and the succession to the throne was practically without incident, as we have seen among the Mossi. The council which convened to invest the king (Moro Naba) in reality examined the degree of legitimacy of the different claimants: it was not actually an election—the term is improper—for they were compelled after a thorough enlightened examination of each case to appoint, not according to their preferences, but in accordance with tradition, the one who had all the requisite qualities.

Along the same lines, when the level of vital force of even a legitimate king decreased, he was put to death, either actually as was apparently the case in the beginning, or later on, with evolution, symbolically. This was the general practice in Black Africa and ancient Egypt, where the symbolic execution coincided with the festival of Zed. By this means, the king was supposed to die and be born again, revitalized; he regained the vigor of his youth, he was once again fit to rule. This same practice is found among the Yoruba, Dagomba, Tchamba, Djukon, Igara, Songhai, Wuadaï, Haussa of the Gobir, Katsena, and Daoura, the Shillucks, among the Mbum, in Uganda-Ruanda, in what was ancient Meroë.²⁰

In Cayor, a king could not rule when wounded, probably

because his vital force was thus decreased. In any case, it was said that it would bring bad luck to the people. The king, and all those who assumed high responsibilities, whether temporal or spiritual leaders, were considered mystically superior, whence the Wolof expression *ep bop* (having more head, in the metaphysical sense). That meant that those who might go against their will, or who tried to contest their authority, might go mad as a result.

The king is truly guarantor of the ontological, and therefore the terrestrial and social, order. It is remarkable that not one African constitution provided for his replacement during the interregnum following his death for the maintenance of material order: whenever the throne was vacant, whatever the reason, social anarchy descended upon the people. The prisons were emptied among the Mossi, without any representative of the law intervening to oppose it. The situation was identical, perhaps worse, in Songhai, even though it was Islamized. The *Tarikh es Sudan* reports that Askia El Hadj (accession: August 7, 1582) had Mohammed Benkan imprisoned at Kanato on the advice of Amar-ben-Ishâq-Bir-Askia. The three sons of Benkan—Bir, Kato, and Binda—stayed in hiding through the entire reign of El Hadj and that of Bâno, his successor. But they took advantage of the interregnum between the death of Bâno and the accession of Askia Ishâq II, to come out of hiding with impunity and do everything they could to kill Amar, who was responsible for their misfortunes. The latter, warned in time, disguised himself in order to escape certain death, which would have gone unpunished. But he shed his disguise immediately after the crowning of the new Askia, "for, the disturbed situation having come to an end, no one could then commit an act of aggression against another."²¹

Most assuredly, in Songhai this was a vestige of a religious past the death of which had not yet been fully incorporated into the existing institutions. The ontological function

of the king had not yet been forgotten. Under the Moroccan occupation, Pasha Ali ben Adb-el-Kader on June 19, 1632, launched a surprise attack on the city of Gao; he was defeated by the inhabitants, who seized his treasure and his wife. They also captured Prince Benkan, the descendant of the Askias, who accompanied him. However, the latter was treated with much respect "and the people of Gao asked him to come and live amongst them, so they might thus obtain the blessings of heaven."²²

Obligations of the King

The Fondoko Borhom, "Lord of the Macina" (1610), thought that any person invested with royal authority was the servant and shepherd of his people.²³

Although the major figure of the country, the king was therefore no less obliged to lead a life strictly regulated by custom. Among the Mossi, his schedule was planned down to the slightest details. The Moro Naba did not have the right to leave Ouagadougou, his capital, not because of royal pride, but because ritual forbade it; that is no longer true today, as traditions are beginning to fade. However, the Mossi emperor Nasséré, who laid siege to Ghana and fought against Sonni Ali and Askia Mohammed, must have broken this rule because of the great danger which menaced his kingdom. Indeed, he is said to have directed in person the expedition against Ghana.

It may also be that this tradition is recent and was instituted only at the height of the Mossi empire.

The life of the Kaya-Magha of Ghana was as strictly governed by tradition as that of the Pharaoh of Egypt: each morning, he rode around his capital on horseback, followed by his entire court, preceded by giraffes and elephants, according to Idrisi. Anyone who had a complaint could at that time address him and submit his case, which he settled on the

spot. In the afternoon, he traveled the same route alone, and no one was allowed to speak to him. These kings were sometimes so conscious of their role that they tried in every way to maintain contact with the people, to investigate grievances directly, so as to feel its political and social pulse, whatever the cost. Thus, the Moro Naba disguised himself at night and went through the lower-class neighborhoods of his capital in absolute anonymity, listening to conversations. So did certain Damels of Cayor, but it must be recognized that they did this as a ruse, to sound out public opinion for personal reasons: to safeguard their power and prevent palace revolutions in this climate of dynastic rivalry, they had to keep constantly informed.

However, the concept of royalty in Diâra or Kaniâga in the Termès region, not far from Upper Senegal, was rather original. The king was obliged to remain in his palace and never leave it. He was surrounded by no pomp at all. Apparently, the people paid very little attention to him, not out of disdain but because they felt a king was great enough in himself not to need all these external signs of majesty. . . . Its inhabitants were not Peuls, and harbored against the nomadic Peuls a hatred typical of sedentary peoples. This kingdom was at first governed hereditarily by the Niakkaté (Diakkaté), then by the Diawara. With its army of two thousand horsemen, it was dependent first on Ghana, then on Mali. The inhabitants revolted and murdered the representative of Mali. But it cannot be affirmed that their concept of royalty grew out of that revolt.²⁴

The traditional kings thus governed with minimal constraint, except for such administrative abuses as were committed by civil servants, which will be discussed in chapter VIII. The tax system they established appeared not as exploitation, but as the part of one's goods and crops that ritual decreed must be turned over to the sacrosanct authority who linked the two worlds, so that order might be maintained in the universe and nature continue to be fruitful.

Actually, the historical reality is less sublime: this almost divine order of things must have begun to degenerate from the very start. The description given above reflects an ideal situation which was not always realized because of the need for an administration dependent on an army of civil servants. But, in either case, the evolution of the system never gave rise to a revolution. Ghana probably experienced the reign of a corrupt dynasty between the sixth and the eighth centuries. Kâti tells of an extremely violent revolt of the masses against it. The members of that dynasty were systematically massacred. In order to wipe it out completely, the rebels went so far as to extract fetuses from the wombs of women of the royal family. Yet this did not constitute a revolution, for the monarchy itself was not eliminated; it was apparently not even seriously questioned.

Filiation was matrilineal: the emperor Kanissa-ai, contemporaneous with the prophet Mohammed (sixth century), had chosen as his capital not Ghana but Koranga, the native city of his mother.²⁵

The practice of matriarchy from the beginning in the royal succession is an important argument against those who support the theory that Ghana might have been founded by Semites, for the latter recognized only patrilineal filiation.

Whatever our present attitude toward this metaphysics of social positions, this ontology, for more than two thousand years it ruled in an absolute manner the minds and consciences of our ancestors: it explains, to a certain extent, their failure or success when confronted with the tasks of civilization. This is why it cannot be too minor a factor in the historical explanation; we cannot fail to consider it.

Separation of Secular and Religious

In pagan antiquity, as in traditional Africa, secular and religious powers were long identified one with the other. As a consequence of Christianity and Islam, they were separated in

both places, in the sense that the king no longer performed religious services even when, with Pépin the Short, he once again became sacrosanct. In Arabia, Islam blotted from the mind of the people the very memory of Sabaism: a new religious order, which seemed to emerge from the absolute, blended with the secular in the social organization. The regime of the caliphates rapidly evolved into a theocratic monarchy. No more Sabeian king vegetating, like a fossil, next to the Kaaba. This would obtain in all the Arab kingdoms, of Egypt, North Africa, and Spain. In Black Africa, the social order remained practically as it had been before Islamization; but in those places where the people and the king became Islamized, one particular fact appeared. The king no longer exercised a religious function; he was progressively secularized, and was seen now only as a simple temporal governor of the country. He was not like those Islamic empire builders, propagators of the faith who established themselves as kings after the conquest of a country, thereby becoming sacred beings uniting the two powers in themselves.

He was no longer a preacher; the halo of holiness which surrounded him was progressively to fall onto the shoulders of representatives of the foreign religion (a Muslim clergy of lower-class origin), whereas he, the king, more and more symbolized the secular with its implications of coercion and administrative impositions. Under the influence of religion, he would progressively be discredited and considered the very incarnation of Satan. What had created his spiritual force, was traditional religion; that, along with the cosmogony, justified his place in society. When those were overcome by the "foreign" religion, the same fate would befall the institutions to which they had given rise.

If this analysis is correct with regard to the king who preserved his religion and ruled over an Islamized people (e.g., the Damels of Cayor), and if it is basically correct in the case of those like Sonni-Ali (1464) whose conversion was merely a

formality, it proves inadequate in the case of such prophet-kings as the Tukulors of Senegal: El Hadj Omar, Hamadu-Hamadu, etc., whose precursor was the one in Songhai history who might be referred to as His Most Muslim Majesty Askia Mohammed, prince of believers. He carried out a coup d'état by seizing the throne after having defeated the son of Sonni-Ali (Abubaker-Dau—March 3, 1493). He instituted the dynasty of the Askias, a term of unclear etymology. He maintained friendly relations with the Muslim clergy and the scholars of Timbuktu; contrary to Sonni-Ali, he governed by using them, asking their advice on all important decisions. By protecting the believers, he won their praise. He can almost be compared to King Clovis, protected by the Roman church.²⁶ He made a celebrated pilgrimage to Mecca, accompanied by 1,500 men (500 cavalry and 1,000 foot soldiers). He took with him part of the treasure of Sonni-Ali, 300,000 gold pieces which had been stored with the preacher Amar. Upon his arrival, he gave 100,000 as alms to the cities of Mecca and Medina and purchased in Medina a mansion which was to serve as a hostel for pilgrims from the Sudan. This mansion must have been large, for the cost of maintenance came to 100,000 gold pieces. Africa thus opened its doors to international life by way of its Muslim kings.

In the Holy Land the Askia met the fourteenth Abasside caliph of Egypt (April 1479—September 1497) and asked him to appoint him as his representative in the Sudan. It was to a purely spiritual designation. The caliph accepted, asking the Askia for three days to give up his power, mentally speaking, and come back to see him. This was done and the Askia was solemnly proclaimed by the caliph his spiritual lieutenant in the Black countries. He received for this a cap and turban which made him the delegate of Islam. Was this a way of regaining the moral authority the African Kings had been losing since their Islamization? Or was it a profoundly religious act? Whichever, the Askia on his return undertook the

first important holy war waged by a Black sovereign. The enemy was the Mossi emperor Naséré (August 1497–August 1498). The Askia fulfilled all the religious requirements to give his enterprise a sacred character.²⁷

Askia Mohammed was the monarch whose attitude coincided with completion of the Islamization of the Songhai monarchy. Before him, a king such as Sonni-Ali had tried to resist: he had, beyond any doubt, attempted to dam the Muslim flood which, in his eyes, was growing too serious. His harshness toward the clergy of Timbuktu, his manner of practicing Islam, to which he was theoretically converted, must be considered gestures of self-defense. Seen from this perspective, his conduct seems very consistent, rather than reflecting a “blood-thirsty” temperament. The terms in which the *Tarikh es Sudan* judges the two monarchs are significant. The author, a fervent Muslim, said of Askia Mohammed:

Thus did God deliver the Muslims from their anguish; he used the new prince to bring to an end their misfortunes and restlessness. Askia Mohammed displayed, indeed, the greatest zeal for strengthening the Muslim community and improving the lot of its members.²⁸

On the other hand, he drew a very unfavorable portrait of Sonni-Ali:

As for this tyrannical master, this infamous villain . . . he was a man endowed with great force and powerful energy. Evil, licentious, unjust, oppressive, blood-thirsty, he caused so many men to perish that God alone knows their number. He persecuted the scholars and the pious by threatening their lives, their honor, or their reputations.²⁹

Sonni-Ali had no lack of excuses. The reason he gave for the massacre of certain scholars of Timbuktu was that they were “friends of the Tuaregs, their courtiers, and that he was therefore against them.”³⁰

Thus, as has been mentioned, his conversion was very

relative, if we are to believe the *Tarikh es Sudan*, which considered him a monarch who made light of religion. He was in the habit of postponing until evening or the following day his five obligatory prayers; when he did decide to say them, he merely sat down, made several gestures while naming the different prayers, then said to them as if they were people: "Now divide all that among you, since you know one another so well."³¹

The struggle for political power against Islam by the native clergy seeking to discredit it colored a whole period of African history. It was characterized in Senegal by the exodus of the marabouts from the city of Koki in the region of Luga Linguère (between Dakar and Saint Louis) toward the peninsula of Cape Verde. This event took place during the reign of the Damel Amari N'Goné Ndella (1791-1810). The contempt between the secular and the religious powers was reciprocal. The marabouts, especially those who were not part of the court, who were not responsible for the mystical defense of the dynasty through the establishment of the grigris and in other ways, made no mystery of their disdain for everything mortal here on earth. The non-Islamized king was just another "Kaffir," an infidel to them. And since they were often of noble blood, and thus imbued with the same pride as the rest of the aristocracy, they often preached civil disobedience, exactly the way Saint Paul preached against the cult of the emperor. This was why the marabouts of Koki were persecuted and forced to go and ally themselves with the Lebous of Dakar. It is interesting to analyze the kind of authority they would set up on the Cape Verde peninsula after the success of their revolution.

The Lebou "Republic"

It would not be outside the framework of our main topic—the meaning of royalty—for us to examine the nature

of this new power which has been inaccurately dubbed a "republic." To do this, it is indispensable that we trace the genesis of events and return to the village of Koki-Diop.

We cannot be certain of the origins of the Diop clan, for, in the present state of research, it is difficult to trace their migration across Africa by relying on totemic names, for example. There is no doubt, however, that some Diops were to be found in Nubia (cf. map of migrations). Were they fishermen on the Senegal River? *Thiubolo* means fisherman in Tuculor and Peul. And that was the occupation of the Diops in Futa-Toro. Considering the idea that Africans like to have of their birth, such a modest origin would cause indignation among the Diops of Cayor who considered the Diops of the river as only an isolated nucleus, reduced to dependency on the Tuculor majority. That being as it may, they arrived in this area already Islamized and founded all the villages in Senegal called Koki: Koki-Diop, their homeland near Luga, Koki-Kad, Koki-Dakhar, Koki-Gouy (the second terms of the last three names designate the species of trees that grew around each village). We shall later see that there are many indications of a link between Koki and Kukia, the latter word referring to an historic city on the Niger downstream from Gao. In that case, we would have to look toward the East for the origin of the Diops, of whom a few at most would have made a stopover in Futa. In any case, the Diops of Koki were part of the *Domisokhnas* (Muslim clergy of noble or distinguished origin).

The first chief of the Lebou state, Dial Diop, was the son of one of the marabouts who had emigrated from Koki. He was appointed, after the victory, despite his foreign origin, because he was the one who dared to head the resistance, organize it within the walls of the peninsula, and stand up to the Cayorian Damel whose maneuvers and state of mind he very well knew and, unlike the Lebou, was not intimidated by. That makes clear a capital fact, that must be definitely stressed

in order to clarify the political history of the peninsula. Through a now-habitual confusion, the reigning Diop family has become analogized to the general population and thought of as being Lebous. But we have shown that the Diops originated in Koki. The Lebous are a group midway between Wolofs and Serers. They are closer to the latter, whose ethnic names they share: Diagne, Faye, Ngom. They have the same tradition and practice the same libations. They are of the same ethnic type. The homogeneity of totemic names within an infrequently crossbred human group in Africa allows Lebous and Serers, as well as Wolofs, to be certain that Diop is not a typical Serer-Lebou name.

Having clarified this point of history, let us go on to the analysis of the form of power established. It was not a republican power, as all the manuals state. It would indeed be hard to imagine a republic in which power passed from father to son within a single family from its origin to the present day: Dial Diop, 1795-1815, Matar Diop, his son, 1815-1830. Following a dispute over an extradition he refused to agree to, the French intervened and after lengthy negotiations managed to have him replaced by his cousin Elimane Diop, 1830-1852; Momar Diop, son of Matar Diop, was his successor, 1852-1855; Demba Fall Diop, a descendant of Dial Diop, then acceded to the throne, 1855-1861; the French definitively occupied the peninsula during his reign. From then on, they kept a close eye on the succession to the throne, always trying to have it occupied by the Diop most favorable to them. Things continued in this manner until the time of the Seringe El Hadj Ibrahima Diop, chief of the Lebous early in this century.

When the marabouts arrived from Koki, the majority of the Lebous were non-Islamized, as are present-day Serers. Not until the beginning of the twentieth century was there mass conversion of the populations of the interior, brought about by Ahmadu Bamba and El Hadj Malik Sy. So, it was the Diops who Islamized the Lebous and instituted their govern-

ment, a theocratic monarchy identical in every way to that founded on the Senegal River by the Tukulors in 1776. It is characterized by the existence of a dynasty, as in all monarchies; it is theocratic and Muslim, in that its only code of laws is the Koran. One must not forget that, after Islamization, the cadis of the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai dispensed justice in strict accordance with the laws of the Koran; the Dakar regime, thus, was no more republican than the governments of those empires. The "king" had the same character as the sultans of the Arab Orient: he once again succeeded in uniting within himself the temporal and the religious.

MONARCHIC AND TRIBAL AFRICA

Africans thus never experienced a lay republic, even though the regimes were almost everywhere democratic, with a balance of powers. That is why every African is at heart a hidden aristocrat, just as every French bourgeois was before the Revolution. The deeper reflexes of the present-day African are more closely tied to a monarchic regime than to a republican one. Rich or poor, peasant or urbanite, all dream of being a small or great lord rather than a small or great bourgeois. The quality of their gestures and attitudes, their manner of seeing things, whatever their caste, is lordly and aristocratic in contrast to bourgeois "pettiness." There is still one revolution's distance between African and Western consciences, in terms of instinctive behavior. These aftereffects of aristocratism would have been extirpated only if the African, in the course of his history, had become responsible for his own destiny within the framework of a republican regime. Western colonization, even when republican, could not change these facts. That also explains why many Blacks adjust perfectly to the manners of the British aristocracy. It is hard to trace to this factor a certain aesthetic approach of the Black,

although it does seem to be an important trait of the African character.

This judgment, contrary to what one might think, is applicable to all of Black Africa, to different degrees. In the precolonial period the entire continent was indeed covered by monarchies and empires. No spot where man lived, even in the virgin forest, escaped monarchic authority.³² But we must recognize that not all peoples living under the same political regime had the same cultural level. Some outlying populations still lived in a scarcely shaken or liberalized clanic organization, whereas the large numbers in the cities were detribalized. A striking example of this is the empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. One can indeed contrast, on the basis of the remaining documents (Al Bakri or Khaldun), the teeming city life of Timbuktu, Gao, Ghana, Djenné, or Mali, which contained only isolated individuals, with the collective life that still held sway in the outlying clans of the goldbearing regions to the southwest, located on the Upper Senegal, and even farther south, where detribalization was scarcely even beginning. According to Idrisi,

Blacks who went about totally naked, got married without dowries, and were prolific goat- and camelherds with tattooed faces, lived to the West of Mali. The other, more highly developed inhabitants of Ghana went slavehunting in this region, which must have covered part of Lower Guinea and the southern part of present-day Senegal.³³

These clans and tribes were in every way comparable to those who lived at the borders of the Roman Empire at the time of its decline and fall, when the Romans were already completely detribalized. This was the politico-social condition at the time Africa encountered the West at the start of modern times (sixteenth century).

What happened then? The Africans gradually lost their ability to decide their own fates. The local federating authority dissolved, or was at any rate diminished and rendered

powerless. Internal evolution was consequently thrown off balance. In the cities where detribalization had already taken place, a return to the past was out of the question: individuals would continue to be united by social bonds. But where clanic organization still predominated, where social limits were still determined by the territory of the clan or tribe, there would be a sort of turning inward, an evolution in reverse, a retribalization reinforced by the new climate of insecurity. Collective life again took precedence over individual life. But, as can well be imagined, such clans were far from being as primitive as one might offhand have thought: They were not without the after-effects of the earlier imperial epoch. They were already developed and complex. That is why ethnologists, to their immense surprise, but without exception, always discover in them traditions that do not correspond to this stage of social organization, but are more advanced; they often do not hesitate to attribute this to a phenomenon of degeneration, supposing that these populations, living today in so primitive a state, had in the past experienced some forgotten great period. We have tried here to demonstrate how they actually reached this point.

At any rate, monarchic vestiges being less prominent within clanic life, we can proceed to these partial conclusions which have a measure of moral and social significance. We can certainly see that there was a monarchic Africa and a tribal Africa. If we tried to state the factors favoring evolution in one direction or another, we would have to recognize that African spiritualism, which we have already mentioned, and aristocratism within monarchic Africa were psychological and intellectual factors unfavorable to a socialistic evolution. But the African was an aristocratic collectivist: all of the foregoing underlines what separated his attitude from that of a proletarian collectivist. In the light of his politico-social life, his solidarity was a lordly one; despite that, he was not loath to share; the reflexes of accumulation of material wealth re-

mained very slight in him. Consequently, his materialistic habits rather favored a socialistic evolution.

Tribal Africa had the same characteristics, with this exception, that the aristocratic, monarchic factor was almost totally absent; clanic collectivism was proletarian. Justice was also more immanent within the clan: the repressive political apparatus had become less crushing, without however reaching the same degree of withering away as in the tribes and clans conceived by Engels.

Such data bespeak an original type of development.

ORIGIN OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REGIME

In analyzing the significance of royalty, we reviewed the cases of traditional kings, Islamized kings, and emigrant non-Islamized kings. We also analyzed the content of the constitutions. The time has come to suggest what may have brought these about. Many facts would lead us to feel that at the beginning royal power, being sacrosanct, was absolute. The generally accepted idea of African royalty does not allow for supposing that at the very start its authority might have been limited by some kind of constitutional system. On the other hand, it is not conceivable that this authority might have been exercised in an abusive manner, considering its religious character. But within the royal court, design and spontaneity both playing a part, everyone began to serve within the framework of his own profession; a tradition was born, grew stronger, and finally took root with the ideas that the warrior nobility, linked to the development of the monarchy, had toward manual labor. The latter was rather despised, as against the military calling. It would therefore not have been possible, at the start, for a prince, within the framework of life at court, to be assigned work of a manual character: the equerry, the executioner, the head ostler, the guardian of the

treasury, and so on, could not be noblemen. For the nobles, when not fighting, indulged their idleness or played at sports, games of skill and courage, hunting, or *yôté* (a local chess game involving strategy). These first professionals, by caste, were the forerunners of the future government ministers, whose functions, considering the emoluments involved, quickly became hereditary. By this natural mechanism, it worked out as if each caste, from the start, had been called upon to designate its own representative at court. No such thing. The system was not born out of idealism. Only a deceptive appearance can lead to such conceptions: it grew out of the local reality based upon the caste system, the division of labor.

But, as time went by, the council so constituted was to take on importance, by the very dialectic of social relationships. No text, no tradition forced the king to take its advice: he did it first voluntarily in order to rule more wisely; then, he was forced more and more to do so, by the effect of an internal social necessity. The freemen, in particular, the *grandees* of the kingdom, represented by the Prime Minister, soon made their weight felt, discreetly but effectively limiting the power of the king. In reality, this limitation everywhere extended only to the stopping of abuses. The Prime Minister was the one who could initiate the procedure which, in Cayor for instance, would lead to the deposing of the king, if the latter disagreed with him, that is, with the people; if, in fact, he ceased to rule wisely.

This way of conceiving the genesis of monarchical constitutions is confirmed by the tradition within the courts of African marabouts. Members of the masses, often on their own initiative, without having been specifically designated as at the courts of temporal leaders, carry out activities related to their professions. If this proves satisfactory, they are after awhile duly appointed, confirmed in their positions, without this, however, assuming any hereditary family character. That

is how it happened with Amadu Bamba, the founder of Muridism in Senegal, with his brother Cheikh Anta, with Cheikh Ibrahima Fall, during the past fifty years. The identity of appearances of the lives of temporal and spiritual leaders was not without its drawbacks for the latter. The French government often thought that hidden behind the religious facade were temporal ambitions for power. As a result, Amadu Bamba was deported to Gabon for seven years and Cheikh Anta to the Sudan, to Segou, from where he returned only in 1935, after intervention of the deputy Galandou Diouf.

Fustel de Coulanges is quite correct in warning historical researchers against the error of imagining the past in terms of the present. But all the earlier developments relating to the stability of African societies, show that the danger of intellectual adventures is negligible in this case.

CROWNING OF THE KING AND COURT LIFE

To the extent that African history, up to now, has been confined to a monotonous succession of dates and events, drily related, it has seemed important to us to try to picture the local color of the past, with maximum intensity, relying nevertheless very closely on available documentation.

Songhai

In the present state of research, we know practically nothing of the enthronement rites of the *Magha* of Ghana. On the other hand, we can trace the details of this ritual for Songhai. The Askia had a throne in the form of a dais, perhaps inspired by those of the Orient; however that may be, there is no doubt of its existence. When the Askia Mussa's brothers formed a coalition to fight and kill him, they all quickly returned to seize the throne. The Châa-Farma Alou

found the Kormina-Fari already on the throne: a short bloody fight ensued, resulting in the death of Alou and the accession of the Kormina-Fari, who was none other than Mohammed-Benkan.³⁴ He thus owed his accession to the vigilant support of his brother Otsmân-Tinfiran.

During the coronation ceremony, a whole group of people, all equally wearing the burnous, surrounded the king right into the throne room, in solemn procession:³⁵ they were the *souma*, among whom Amar, when pursued by Benkan's sons, had hidden away in disguise, dressing like them in a burnous.³⁶ The enthronement was followed by the swearing of oaths. Generals, soldiers, all the people, even the clergy, had to swear on the Koran an oath of faithfulness and obedience to the new Askia. It even seems that this ceremony was more important than the actual enthronement, because it obligatorily took place for each new reign, whereas it was not rare for the Askia to be invested with power in some small outlying city where in all likelihood there was no throne at all. The king had to be present at the Friday prayer, which was said in his name. There are some indications that this oath was not purely a matter of form, and that the masses of people, to the extent that they were fervent believers, truly felt themselves bound by it.³⁷

Indeed, the Askia Ismael believed that the hemorrhage which struck him on his accession was due to the fact that he had not respected the oath of faithfulness he had sworn on the Koran to his brother, Askia Benkan. The royal audiences in Songhai were strictly regulated; every high dignitary had a set place in the Assembly, corresponding to his official role; each also had its distinctive uniform and insignia. Following the death of the Dendi-Fari Sinbalo, Askia Daud gave that title to the Koï Kamkoli, but he had him take the insignia off his uniform and allowed him to wear only the official headdress during receptions. We must deduce from this that his appointment was not permanent. During an audience shortly there-

after, the Askia claimed to have consulted the Almighty in order to find out whom he should name to lead the people of Dendi, and appointed Ali Dudo, who had presumably received the divine approval. In the Assembly then sitting before the king, Kamkoli was in the place of the Dendi-Fari; he politely, but firmly and with dignity, took note of the hypocrisy of Askia Daud, then left the Fari's place to take that of the Koi. Of course, the king had even more insignia and emblems which were duly removed from him if he was deposed by a coup d'état, which is what happened to Askia Ishâq.³⁸ Askia Mohammed received from the Abbaside Caliph Mulay Abbas a turban, a green skullcap, and a saber to wear around the neck. Since he inaugurated the reign of the Askias, these objects were thereafter added to the royal insignia, which already included a royal drum, twelve standards, and the aforementioned *tin-toûri*, which made the Askia master of the earth.³⁹

The emperor of Ghana, in addition to his crown which was more like a diadem, had several banners and a single flag, according to Idrisi.⁴⁰

The Fari's uniform must have included a double-tailed tunic and a turban. After the death of Fari Abdallah, this was the outfit, apparently corresponding to his functions, that Askia Mussa gave to his brother Ishâq; the Farma, at least of certain regions, was entitled to a drum. When in 1524 the Adiki-Farma Bella, Askia Mohammed's nephew, was named Binka-Farma, he became entitled to a drum, of which all his other brothers were envious. The *Tarikh es Sudan* notes that the position thus held in the governmental hierarchy was a very high one. When his brothers threatened to smash his drum the day he came to Kâgho, Bella had a very African reaction of defiance.⁴¹

The ceremonial of court life was very strict and seems, give or take a few variants, to have been the same throughout Black Africa. On approaching the king, one had to cover one's

head with dust, as a sign of humility. The chief, in Africa, is by definition the one who must not raise his voice: his rank and dignity require him to speak very softly, whether he be a spiritual or a temporal leader. Thus, the Mansa of Mali, like the Askia, and present-day marabouts, all had their heralds who audibly transmitted to the assembly the words of the chief. The herald in Songhai was called the Wanado. Listening to the orders of the king, even when he was not present, one had to remain standing, provided one had recognized his authority.⁴² This was how Otsmane had to act toward Askia Mussa, when he finally temporarily recognized his authority, after having been lectured by his mother.⁴³ Obviously, one also bared one's head in the presence of the king. In traditional African monarchies, the king alone wore a headdress in early times, as was the case with the Pharaoh of Egypt; even the heir apparent of Ghana, the emperor's nephew, wore nothing on his head in his presence.

Askia Benkan (Bunkan) was the one who embellished life at the court of Songhai:

The prince maintained the royalty in the most remarkable way; he heightened it, embellished it, and adorned his court with more numerous courtiers than before, dressed in more sumptuous outfits. He increased the number of orchestras and singers of both sexes and lavished more favors and gifts. During his reign prosperity spread throughout his empire and an era of wealth began to be established.⁴⁴

According to Kâti, Bunkan had cloth clothes made for himself, decked his servants with bracelets of precious metals, and went accompanied by drummers in canoes. He introduced the trumpet (*fotorifo*) and the deep-toned drum (*gabtanda*). Before him, these two instruments had been the exclusive possession of the King of Aïr. Silk bedding was customarily used.⁴⁵

As can be seen from the following, the luxury of Songhai went into real decline, as compared to Ghana and Mali. This

would explain the disappointment of Djuder and Leo Africanus on their arrival at Kaoga.

The court music was polyphonic, like the music of the griots and the murids of today. On the other hand, there was the main singer (*debékat* in Wolof) and the choir (*avukat*), which might vary in composition. At the courts of temporal chiefs, the singers were of different sexes, but at those of the marabouts, they could be only male.

In 1706, before the time of the Askias, the insignia of the king of Kaoga, according to Al Bakri, were made up of a seal, a sword, and a Koran, all of which were said to have been sent by the Umayyad sovereign of Spain: the dynasty having already become Islamized, the king was always a Muslim. Kaoga at the time was made up of two cities, the king's and a Muslim quarter. The king was then called the Kanda, which is reminiscent of Nubia.

The people dressed in a loincloth and a jacket of skin or other material, the quality of which depended on the individual's means.⁴⁶ They had not yet become Islamized and followed the traditional beliefs. While the king took his meals, a drum was beaten, all urban activity stopped, and Black dancing women in wigs portrayed dance scenes around him. At the end of the meal, its remains were thrown into the river: a different drumbeat informed the city, which resumed its activity, and the courtiers who were present shouted and exclaimed with joy. Such was the local color of life at court in the period of the Kandas, according to Al Bakri.⁴⁷

Cayor

The enthronement of the Damel of Cayor, except for the secret religious side of it, was rather rudimentary. The people foregathered, making a huge pile of sand (in this flat country) atop which the king went to be enthroned, comparably in this to a Frankish king being raised on a shield. It was his elevation

above the others, his exalted rank, that was thus made tangible by the building of a throne of sand. His distinctive insigne was a circular grigri on the left ankle: *ndombo'g tank*; originally, it would seem to have been a ring: *lam'u tank*. Whence, *laman*, the heir, the landed owner, in Serer, and *lam toro*, the heir to the Toro in Tuculor. Under Damel Meïça Tenda of Cayor, whose reign was a happy one, the temporary capital of "Maka" was lighted by jars of fat in which dipped a narrow strip of material to serve as a wick. They were placed at every street corner.

Ghana

In Ghana, the luxury evident at court, as the documents allow us to reconstitute it in detail, was equaled only by that of the Aegean period. The emperor, his heir apparent, the notables all literally dripped with gold. The pages, horses, and dogs of the Tunkara were equally covered with it. People were literally living in gold, as is shown by an Al Bakri passage about the audiences of the king who was called both Tunkara and Kaya-Magan. According to him, only the king and his sister's son, that is, the nephew who is heir apparent, were allowed to wear tailored clothes. All others following the same religion as the Tunkara—i.e., the tradition—wore loincloths of cotton, silk, or brocade, according to their means. The men were clean shaven and the women shaved their heads. The king's headpiece was made up of several gold caps wrapped in very delicate cotton materials. When he held an audience for the people, to hear their grievances and remedy them, he sat on a throne inside a pavilion around which stood ten horses caparisoned in gold materials. Behind him, stood ten pages carrying shields and swords mounted in gold; the sons of the princes of his empire stood to his right, dressed in magnificent clothes, their braided hair intertwined with gold threads. The governor of the city sat on the ground before the king and, all

about, were the viziers, that is, his ministers, in the same position. The door of the pavilion was guarded by dogs of excellent breed who almost never left the king's side: they wore gold and silver collars, from which dangled bells of the same metals. The sound of a drum (*deba*) made of a hollow piece of wood announced the opening of the session. The people came running, clapping hands, poured dust over their heads, and presented their grievances.

Through the description of one of the emperor's audiences, we get an idea of how both the Tunkara and his retinue were dressed, the insignia they wore, how the pages were armed, the women coiffed, and so on. Alongside these audiences, or royal sessions of justice, which were common to Ghana, Mossi, Mali, and Songhai, there were no less general horseback rides through the capital. The Tunkara, like the Moro Naba, rode on horseback, followed by his entire court, through the various neighborhoods of the city, also to hear his subjects' grievances and remedy them.

That, by and large, was the court ceremonial of Ghana, as the documents allow us to reconstitute it.

We must add that the emperor, according to Al Bakri, lived in a stone castle, surrounded by a wall.⁴⁸ Idrisi is even more precise: according to him, the emperor lived in a fortified château, built in 1116, decorated with sculptures and paintings, and boasting glass windows. Understandably, Delafosse was reluctant to accept that text too literally.⁴⁹

Idrisi wrote in 1150; he was one of the best Arab geographers of his time. In Sicily, he drew up the first navigational charts that were to be used in modern times. Nevertheless, it is customary to point out that in his "Description of Spain and Africa" he relates facts about this continent on which he was not as well informed as Al Bakri. However that may be, it is hard to believe that so scrupulous and thoughtful a geographer would invent out of whole cloth such precise details in describing the château.

Mali

Ibn Battuta who visited Mali in 1351–1353, under Mansa Soleiman, left testimony which allows us to recreate the local color of the royal audiences. On audience days, the emperor sat in an alcove that had a door leading into the palace; it had three windows made of wood covered in silver foil, and below three others decked with gold plate or vermeil (which leads us to conclude that the palace had at least two stories). These windows had curtains: a handkerchief with Egyptian designs, attached to a silken cord, was slipped through the grillwork that protected them on audience days. The people were summoned by horns and drums. Three hundred soldiers carrying bows and javelins lined up in double columns on either side of the window in which the emperor was to be. Those with the javelins were on the outside and standing, while those with the bows sat in front of them, the four columns facing each other. Two saddled, bridled horses and two rams were brought in: a custom reminiscent of Ghana. Nearly three hundred subjects went looking for Candja Mussa. The ferraris, the emirs, the preacher (*khatib*), and the jurists arrived and took seats, to the right and left in front of the soldiers, in the space between their columns. Dugha, the herald, stood at the door, wearing *zerdkhanan* clothes: on his head a fringed turban, typical of the country; he alone had the privilege of wearing boots on this day; he had a sword in a gold scabbard on his side; and he wore spurs, two gold and silver javelins with iron tips. Soldiers, bureaucrats, pages, Messufites, and all others, remained outside, in a wide tree-lined street. Each of the ferraris was preceded by his subordinates carrying blades, bows, drums, and horns made of elephants' tusks. One of the musical instruments was the balafon, which was made of reeds and gourds and was played with drumsticks. Each ferrari had a quiver of arrows at his back and a bow in his hand; he was mounted, and his subor-

dinates, both foot and horse, stood in front of him. When the emperor arrived behind the window, Dugha served as mouthpiece, transmitting the orders, recovering the grievances and submitting them to the sovereign, who gave his decisions.

Sometimes the audience was held inside the palace courtyard. Then a silk-covered seat mounted on three tiers was placed under a tree; this throne was called *ben-bi*. A cushion was placed on it and the whole thing covered by a dome-shaped silken parasol, with a golden bird at the top, as large as a hawk. The Mança came out of the palace with a bow in his hand, a quiver on his back. He wore a turban of gold cloth bound by golden ribbons ending in metal tips more than a palm in length, looking like daggers. He wore a red coat, of European material: the *montenfês*. Singers walked before him, holding in their hands gold and silver vessels; he walked forward slowly, followed closely by three hundred armed soldiers, and stopped from time to time. Before taking his place on his seat, he would make a slow turn around; then the horns, the trumpets, and the drums sounded as soon as he was seated. Once again the two horses and the ram were brought to drive away bad luck. Dugha was at his habitual place near the Mança; the rest of the people were on the outside; the ferraris were called in and the session began in the usual conditions, as in Ghana.⁵⁰

When in October 1559 Askia Daud defeated the Mança of Mali, at the battle of Dibikaralâ, he married his daughter Nâra; she then lived in a luxury comparable to that of Helen of Troy.

She was covered with jewels, surrounded by numerous slaves, both male and female, and abundantly supplied with furniture and baggage. All of her household utensils were made of gold: dishes, jars, mortars, pestles, and so on.⁵¹

Obviously, an illustration of African history is possible: there are more documents than generally stated. They allow us

to reconstitute, sometimes even in detail, over a period of almost two thousand years, African political and social life. We know how the members of the different classes in Ghana, Mali, Mossi, Songhai, and Cayor were dressed; what they did with their spare time, their daily routines, and so on. We know what social relationships governed society, and thus the behavior of an entire society which we can vividly bring back to life before our eyes, even on the stage or in films. The local color would be authentic.

This description of the different aspects of African life will be fleshed out in succeeding chapters by the addition of facts no less abundant or detailed, concerning the administrative, juridical, and military administration, as well as the intellectual life, and so on. In the course of these developments, we will be able better to see the convergences and divergences between them and the European societies contemporaneous with the period under consideration.

NOTES

1. In Ethiopia, all the pretenders to the throne were locked up in a fortress, to await the decision announced by the Prime Minister after deliberation (Baumann).
2. Tauxier, *Etudes Soudanaises: Le Noir du Yatanga* (Paris: Ed. Emile Larose, 1917), Bk. VII, pp. 339-360.
3. The testimony of Cada Mosto confirms this (1455).
4. Al Bakri, *Description de l'Afrique septentrionale* (trans. Slane) (Algiers: Typographie Adolphe Jourdan, 1913), pp. 327-330: "Description de Ghana et moeurs de ses habitants."
5. Ibn Khaldun, *op. cit.*, p. 110.
6. Al Bakri, *op. cit.*, pp. 327-328.
7. Cf. Diop, *L'Unité culturelle de l'Afrique noire*, esp. ch. III.
8. Ibn Khaldun, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
9. Ibn Battuta, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-15.
10. Sâdi, *Tarikh es-Soudan* (trans. O. Houdas) (Paris: Ed. Ernest Leroux, 1900), ch. XVIII, p. 184. (Reprinted by A. Maisonneuve, 1981.)
11. *Idem.*, p. 185.

12. Mahmoûd Kâti, *Tarikh el-Fettach* (Trans. O. Houdas and M. Delafosse) (Paris: Ed. E. Leroux, 1913), ch. XIV, p. 274. (Reprinted by A. Maisonneuve, 1981.)
13. This term must be understood to mean women of the slave class who were legally married in religion and in law, after the first wife, who was generally a freewoman. They were called *târa* in Wolof.
14. Sâdi, *Tarikh es-Soudan* (hereinafter referred to as *T.S.*), pp. 147-148.
15. *Idem.*, p. 167.
16. Cf. Kâti, *Tarikh el-Fettach* (hereinafter referred to as *T.F.*), XIV, p. 274.
17. *T.F.*, ch. I, pp. 13-44.
18. Cf. *T.F.*, p. 55.
19. André Leroi-Gourhan and Jean Poirier, *Ethnologie de l'Union française*, Vol. I, "Afrique" (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1953), p. 369.
20. Westermann and Baumann, *Les Peuples et les Civilisations de l'Afrique* (trans. L. Homburger) (Paris: Ed. Payot, 1947), p. 328.
21. Sâdi, *T.S.*, ch. XVIII, pp. 187-188.
22. *Idem.*, ch. XXXIII, p. 359.
23. *Ibid.*, ch. XXVII, p. 299.
24. Cf. *T.F.*, ch. III, pp. 71-72.
25. *T.F.*, ch. IV, pp. 75-77.
26. Merovingian king of the Franks (481-511), who converted to Christianity in 496 A.D. (Tr. Note).
27. Sâdi, *T.S.*, ch. XIII, pp. 117-122.
28. *Idem.*, ch. XIII, p. 118.
29. *Idem.*, ch. XII, p. 103.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
32. Cf. Robert Vigondy's map of Africa, 1795.
33. *Idrissi géographe* (trans. Amédée Jaubert) (Paris: Royal Printshop, 1836), I, p. 19.
34. Sâdi, *T.S.*, ch. XIV, p. 144.
35. During ordinary sessions, the Askia sat on a kind of platform or divan which could accommodate several people. Only a Sherif was allowed to sit beside him.
36. Sâdi, *T.S.*, ch. XVIII, p. 188.
37. *Idem.*, p. 185.
38. *Idem.*, ch. XXII, p. 231.
39. Kâti, *T.F.*, ch. XIV, p. 173.
40. *Idrissi géographe*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
41. Sâdi, *T.S.*, ch. XIII, p. 131, and ch. XIV, p. 142.
42. Marabouts today are greeted as the kings were greeted, however without covering oneself in dust.

43. *T.S.*, p. 135.
44. *Ibid.*, ch. XIV, p. 145.
45. Cf. Kâti, *T.F.*, chs. VIII–IX, pp. 158, 166. Sonni Ali had several residences (Maduga) at Kaoga, Kabarra, Djenné. Kâti saw the remaining walls of the last of these.
46. And later a loincloth of "windi," held up by a belt and a silver bracelet on the right wrist, according to Kâti, *T.F.*, p. 189.
47. Al Bakri, *op. cit.*, "Route de Ghana à Tademekka," pp. 342–343.
48. *Idem.*, "Description de Ghana et mœurs de ses habitants," pp. 327–330.
49. Delafosse, *Haut-Sénégal–Niger* (Paris: Ed. Larose, 1912), Vol. I, p. 15.
50. Ibn Battuta, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–26.
51. Sâdi, *T.S.*, ch. XVII, p. 170.

Chapter Five

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

POWER OF THE AFRICAN EMPIRES

Before undertaking a detailed analysis of the political organization of precolonial Africa, we must show the actual power and the extent of the African empires. These factors are often minimized, or left vague. Insofar as there exists a certain persistent tendency to allude to more or less mythical White conquerors to explain African civilizations, it is worthwhile to reestablish the truth strictly based on facts and documents, with regard to the relationship between White and Black cultures toward the close of the First Millennium—when Africa's history was beginning just about everywhere.¹

Delafosse, quoting Ibn Khaldun, relates that, as early as the eighth century, after the conquest of North Africa by the Umayyads, Arab traders crossed the Sahara as far as the Sudan.

STRENGTH AND EXTENT OF THE EMPIRES

Ghana

Henceforth new connections, never again interrupted, were being forged with the outside, particularly the Arab Orient and the Mediterranean world. These first traders discovered that the Sudan was governed by a Black emperor whose capital was Ghana. The empire at its highest point

extended from Djaka on the west of the Niger River to the Atlantic Ocean and, north to south, from the Sahara to the edge of Mali. The gold-rich region of Upper Senegal, centered around Gadiaru, Garentel, and Iresni, belonged to the Empire. In Bakri's day the outlying village of Aluken was an Eastern border territory governed by the son of the late Emperor Bessi, uncle of the reigning Tunka Min.

The white populations then inhabiting the land were under the strict authority of the Blacks. In 990 the Berber center of the Lemtunas, Aoudaghast, was governed by a Black *farba* who levied taxes, tariff duties, etc., in the name of the Emperor on the goods and merchandise of the city's population, made up almost exclusively of Berbers and Arabs; these two groups moreover hated each other at the time.

Immediately following the occupation of North Africa, the first Umayyads sent an army to attempt the conquest of the Empire of Ghana. It was defeated, but its survivors were not executed: they were allowed to settle on the land and live there in the same conditions as others. They were known as the El Honneihîn, a portion of whom broke away and settled in the village of Silla, on the Senegal River, where the ruler was already Islamized. In 1067, during Bakri's time, the El Honneihîn minority had practically been assimilated into the Black society whose religion it shared. Those who had settled along the river were called El Faman.² Can there possibly be an etymological link between that name and *Laman*, *Lam-Toro*; heir of the *Toro*? Is that, perhaps, the White origin often claimed by the Tuculors and, in particular, the ruling dynasty of the Lam-Toros? However that may be, it was through peaceful intermarriage that this white minority must have fused with the Black element.

Not until the decline of Ghana did it cease to rule Aoudaghast, after the attacks of the Almoravides in 1076. While the Berbers remained vassals of the Black emperor of Ghana for centuries, the Almoravide revenge on Ghana lasted only ten years; it ended in 1087 with the death of Abubeker-

Ben-Omar, killed by the arrow of a Black warrior inside the borders of present-day Mauritania. The Almoravides displayed extreme cruelty at the time of the taking of Ghana: goods were looted, the inhabitants slaughtered. After this ten-year interruption, Ghana was once again to be attacked by the Sosso vassals but succeeded in holding its own until the siege of the capital by Sundiata Keita in 1240.

The Empire of Ghana, according to Bakri, was defended by two hundred thousand warriors, forty thousand of them archers. Its power and reputation, renowned as far as Baghdad in the East, were no mere legend: it was actually a phenomenon attested to by the fact that for 1250 years a succession of Black emperors occupied the throne of a country as vast as all of Europe, with no enemy from without nor any internal tensions able to dismember it.

The capital was already a cosmopolitan and international city; it had its own Arab quarter where Islam existed alongside the traditional cult, before the conversion of the royal dynasty and the people: in Bakri's time the city already boasted a dozen mosques located in the Arab sector, with their imam, muezzins, and salaried "lectors."³ It had a large number of jurists and scholars. Ten thousand meals, cooked over a thousand bundles of wood, were served daily. The Emperor himself attended these feasts to which he treated the populace outside his palace.

The Empire first opened itself to the world-at-large through commerce; it already enjoyed international repute, which would be inherited and extended by the future empires of Mali and Songhai. But domestic slavery at this time was rife in African society: one could sell his fellow man to another citizen or a foreigner. Which explains why Berber and Arab merchants, grown rich since settling at Aoudaghost, though still vassals of the Black sovereign, could acquire Black slaves on the open market. Some individuals in the city owned as many as a thousand slaves.

This shows the peaceful means by which the white world

could possess Black slaves.⁴ It was not through conquest, as has often been asserted. These empires, defended when necessary by hundreds of thousands of warriors, and having their centralized political and administrative organization, were much too powerful for a single traveler, thousands of miles from home, to try any sort of violence against them. The reality of the matter was much simpler, as evidenced by the preceding; for reasons to be explained later on, slavery would cease to exist in the white world, especially Europe, while still subsisting in the Black. One sees here the complex facts that it has often been very tempting to use so as to obscure certain points of history. All the white minorities living in Africa might own Black slaves, but slaves and white masters alike were all subjects of a Black Emperor: they were all under the same African political power. No historian worth his salt can permit the obscuring of this politico-social context, so that only the one fact of Black slavery emerges from it.

Mali

The boundaries of the Empire of Mali stretched from Kaoga (Gao) all the way to the Atlantic and from the Sahara to the tropical forest. According to Ibn Khaldun, the Emperor of Mali reigned over the entire Sahara: “. . . Mansa Mussa was a powerful sovereign whose authority extended as far as the desert near Uargla.”⁵

In Bakri's view, Ifrikyia (North Africa) was bounded by a line parallel to the Equator, passing through Sijjilmessa,⁶ and had the same universalist tendency, the same cosmopolitan character as Ghana. The capital city, Mali, also had its own Arab quarter, its mosques and jurists, its Muslim cemetery, etc. The Emperor, Mansa Kankan Mussa, made a celebrated pilgrimage to Mecca (1324–1325). He exchanged embassies with Morocco, maintaining commercial and diplomatic ties with Egypt, Portugal, and Bornu.

There were African interpreters in Egypt. Ibn Khaldun, speaking of the frontiers of Mali which extended as far as the Atlantic Ocean, mentions the name of El Hajj Yunos, a Tekrurian interpreter in Cairo.⁷

Africans were already in the habit of traveling to North Africa, and sometimes settling there to study. Mali's international activity thus increased. Delafosse was quite right to be impressed by the might of this nation.

Meanwhile, Gao had recovered its independence between the death of Gongo (Kankan) Mussa and the accession of Suleiman Mansa, and approximately one century later, the Mandingo Empire began to decline under the attacks of Songhai, while preserving enough power and prestige so that its sovereign could meet on an equal footing with the King of Portugal, then at the height of his glory.⁸

The might of the Empire was such that the Arabs at times called on it for military aid. Such was the case, according to Khaldun, of El Mamer, who fought the Arabo-Berber tribes from the region of Uargla, in the North Sahara. He appealed to Kankan Mussa, on the latter's return from Mecca, to come to his aid militarily. Khaldun also tells of the size of the Moroccan embassy in Mali and the interest the Sultan of Morocco displayed in it.

The Maghreban sultan even had prepared a selection of the finest products of his realm and entrusted to Ali Ibn-Ghanem, Emir of the Mâkil, the task of transporting this truly royal gift to the sultan of the Blacks. A deputation made up of the highest-ranking individuals in the empire accompanied Ibn-Ghanem.⁹

Contrary to the notions prevailing today, the relationship then existing between Whites and Blacks could not have been those of masters to slaves. A passage from Ibn Battuta, who visited that very Empire of Mali, clearly reveals the state of mind and the pride of Africans of this period (1352). The border regions of the Empire, such as Ualata, at the edge of the

Sahara, were governed by Black *farbas* who levied customs duties and other taxes on caravans bringing merchandise into the country. Upon arrival, the merchants had to clear administrative formalities with them, before being allowed to carry on their trade. It was in such circumstances that Ibn Battuta, accompanying one of these caravans, met the *farba* of Ualata, Hussein.

Our merchants stood up in his presence and, even though they were close to him, he spoke to them through a third person. This was a mark of the little consideration he had for them and I was so unhappy at this that I regretted bitterly having come to a country whose inhabitants display such bad manners and give evidence of such contempt for white men.¹⁰

Ibn Battuta was an eyewitness; it is difficult to contradict him regarding the feelings and attitudes he attributes to the speaker. But, if the pride and dignity of the *farba* are beyond question, the contemptuous intentions attributed to him by Battuta seem to derive from the latter's ignorance of the proper ceremonials governing receptions and audiences of any African chieftain. As we have already seen in chapter IV, the latter addresses a crowd only through a herald; this was how the *farba* must have acted at his own court in Ualata.

The white minorities who lived in the Empire at the time of Ghana were now, in even greater numbers, under the rule of Mali: the Ullimidden, located on the bend of the Niger, the Medeza, near Ras-el-Mâ, and all the Berber tribes living in Mauritania, as evidenced by this passage from Mohammed Hamidullah, in an article entitled "Africa Discovered America before Christopher Columbus," based on a contemporary text:¹¹

Iban Fadallâh al-Umarîy (d. 1348) has left us an account of an attempt to reach America from West Africa. Of his voluminous encyclopedia, *Masâlik al-absâd*, only a minute fragment has so far been published. What follows is an excerpt from the fourth volume of this work (MS. Asasafia, Istanbul, fol. 18b, 19a, 19b, 23b):

Chapter Ten, concerning Mâli and its dependencies . . .
 "In these regions there is no one deserving the name of king, unless it be the sovereign of Ghânah, who is a kind of viceroy of the Emperor of Mâli, although in his own domain he is like a veritable king. To the north of Mâli, there are white Berbers who live as his subjects. These are the Yantasar, Yantafrâs, Maddûsah, and Lamtûnah tribes. They have their own cheikhs, who rule them, except for the Yantasar who have their own kings, vassals of the Emperor of Mali."

In actuality, when far from their homeland, the Arabs were often led by their isolation to adapt to the Black African milieu. Some of them thus traditionally took on the role of jesters at royal African courts. Though never before emphasized, this aspect of the relations between the two cultures was no less ancient or general. Khaldun thus relates the story of two Arab courtiers, Abu-Ishac el Toneijen-El-Mâmer, who were part of Mansa Mussa's entourage on his return from Mecca.

We were part of the royal cortège and even outranked the viziers and heads of the state. His Majesty listened with pleasure to the tales we told him and, at each stopping-place, he rewarded us with several kinds of foods and sweets.¹²

This tradition extended even to the smaller courts of Cayor, where it is very much alive. It explains the existence in this area of Moors who have expediently adopted totemic names of reigning African princes. Many of the white citizens of Mauritania are named Fall and Diagne, because the Damel of Cayor had always to be a Fall, while the Diagnes were the landed Serer proprietors of the earlier era. Khaldun stresses the coveted position which Es Sakli must have had at the court of Mali, in addition to the remuneration he received for building the "mosque" of Kaoga (Gao) for Mansa Mussa.

Songhai

The Songhai Empire extended from east of the Niger River as far as the Atlantic Ocean and "from the frontiers of

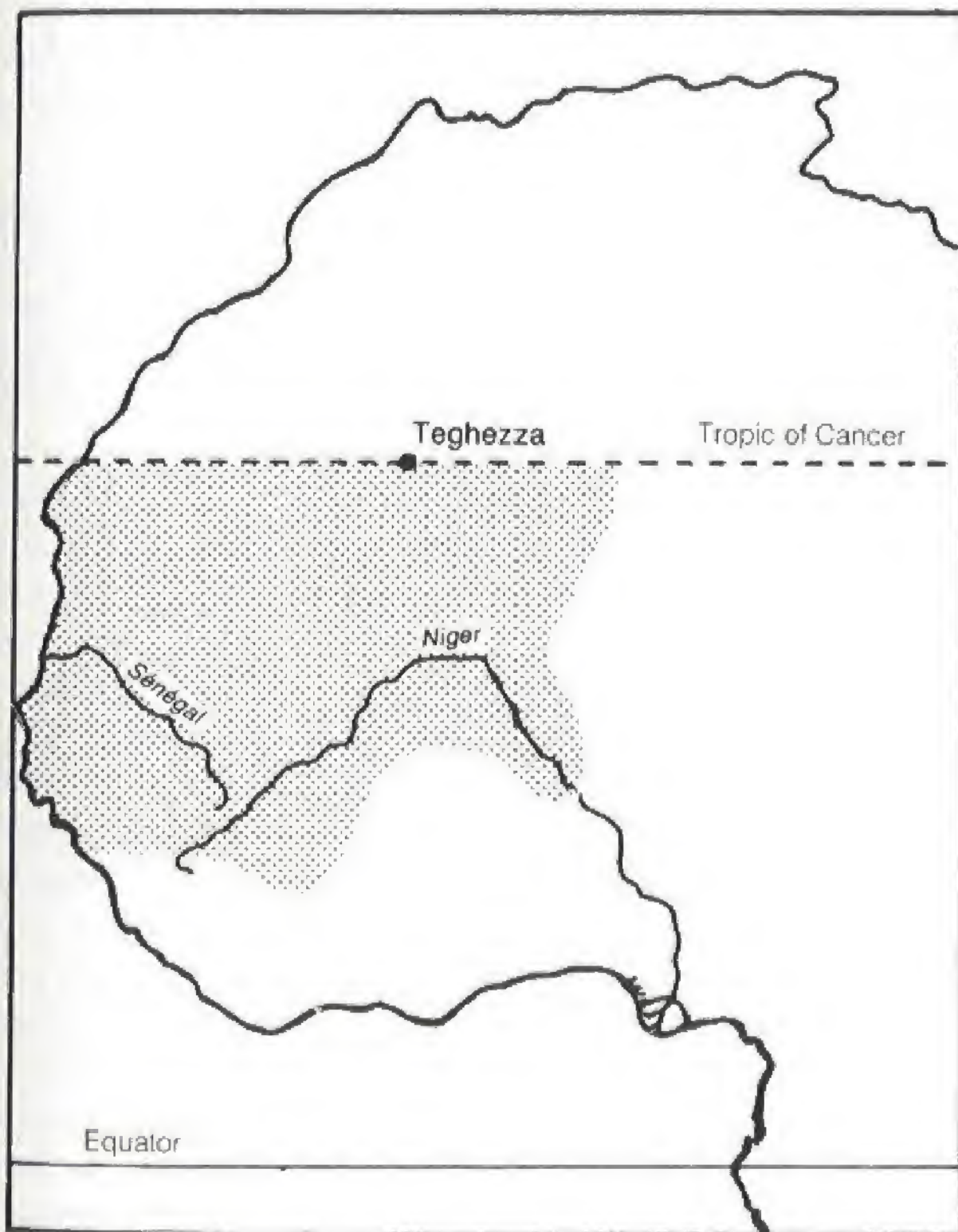
the land of Bindoko as far as Teghezza and its dependencies"¹³ under Askia Mohammed. The strength of the army hastily raised to fight Djuder was 12,500 cavalry and 30,000 infantry.

Songhai inherited the international renown of Mali. From Kankan Musa to Askia Mohammed, the memory of the voyages of African princes is recorded in the annals of the East, where the astonishment expressed at the power of the African empires is indescribable.

In their annals the peoples of the Orient told of the voyage of the Prince; they noted their amazement at the power of his Empire, but they did not depict Kankan Musa as an open-handed, magnanimous individual. For, in fact, despite the extent of his holdings, he gave as alms in the two holy cities only a sum of twenty thousand pieces of gold, whereas Askia-El-Hâjj-Mohammed bestowed upon them one hundred thousand pieces of gold.¹⁴

Sonni Ali,¹⁵ known also as Ali Ber or Ali the Great, drove out the Tuaregs who had held Timbuktu after the Mandingos, from 1434 to 1468. The Tuareg chief, Akil, fled to Biro (Ualata) without a fight at sight of Sonni Ali; he took with him all the jurists and members of the clergy who were in favor of Tuareg rule. The Tuaregs had committed the worst excesses during the thirty-four years of their domination. In actuality they had never permanently settled in the city; the earlier administration had remained: the city continued to be governed by a Timbuktu-Koï who collected taxes in their name. Only after a series of humiliations, pillages, and massacres did the Timbuktu-Koï call for help from Sonni Ali to free the city. Sonni Ali entered it on January 30, 1468. The Tuaregs had been content to remain nomads, making periodic forays into Timbuktu; their dominion had never extended to the right bank of the river, according to Sâdi. The Tuaregs then became not mercenaries but vassals of the Askias of Kaoga, until the fall of the Empire. Sonni Ali conquered Bara,

the Senhâjja-Nu Berber country governed at the time by Queen Bikun-Kabi. He seized all the mountain regions where the Berbers were camped, as well as Kuntaland.¹⁶ The conquered Berbers were assimilated and integrated into the Black politico-administrative organization; the Askia made their tribal chiefs into Koïs who owed specified periodic tribute. Thus, the Maghcharen-Koï and the Andassen-Koï were each



Approximate area of the empires of western Africa.

obliged to provide 12,000 soldiers in case of war. The Tuaregs were at that time far from seeing themselves as members of the same political community as the Arabs. It was with these forces, 24,000 Tuaregs, plus his other men, that Askia Daud campaigned against the Arabs of Bentanba in May 1571.¹⁷ The loyalty of the vassals stood every test; even during the war against Morocco, the Andassen-Koï remained loyal to the Askia, until his death. When Askia Ishâq I, who came to power in 1539, one day received an invitation from Mulay Ahmed, King of Morocco, to cede to him the salt mines of Teghezza, he replied:

“The Ahmed who listened [to such advice] could not be the present Emperor of Morocco, and as for the Ishâq who would heed him, he is not I; that Ishâq has yet to be born.” Then he sent two thousand mounted Tuaregs instructing them to sack the whole end of the region of the Dra’a toward Marrakesh, to kill no one, and then to retrace their steps.¹⁸

The order was scrupulously carried out; the market of the Beni-Asbih was pillaged, as well as all the wealth of the Draa region. The Askia thus demonstrated his power to the Sultan, who did not react in any way.

This invitation already implicitly raised the question of the frontiers of Black Africa, at least on a political level. All of the foregoing allows us to show that, for more than a thousand years, Black governors administered the border regions of Teghezza on the Tropic of Cancer, Ualata, and Aoudaghast. The belt of the desert situated between the Tropic and a line passing through the Draa and Sijilmesa, was always a no man’s land belonging equally to the two countries; it never was subject to precise political authority from one side or the other. An unadministered zone, it was dangerous to cross because of the Messufa Berbers, some of whom did not hesitate to attack caravans unwilling to pay them to serve as guides. One of the last Teghezza-Mondzos, in the service of the Askia, died there in 1557: he was called Mohammed

Ikoma.¹⁹ The universal character and cosmopolitan spirit abroad in this empire are nowhere so well displayed as in the prayer attributed to Konboro, King of Djenné, at the time of his conversion to Islam; he prayed, among other things:

(1) that he who, driven from his own land by indigence and penury, might come to this city, should in exchange discover here, by the grace of God, wealth and abundance such as to make him forget his old homeland; and (2) that the city be peopled by a number of foreigners greater than that of its citizens.²⁰

Aryan Europe during antiquity experienced the self-centered patriotism of the city-state; it experienced universality in the Church of the Middle Ages; it later ended with nationalism and the formation of modern national states. Black Africa was to remain at the level of that universal consciousness politically and sociologically speaking, until its encounter with the West. Then, having undergone the effects of a conquering, expansionist nationalism, it would attempt to retaliate with the same weapons; thus African nationalism would never sink to basic chauvinism; it would consist, at most, in a development of cultural, ethical, and material values which give strength to peoples and assure their survival in the present world, a liberation of the will to transformation latent in the common consciousness.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

The Empire of Ghana antedated by five hundred years that of Charlemagne, who was crowned Emperor in the year 800. From the dismemberment of the Roman Empire in the fourth century until that date, Europe was nothing but chaos, with no organization comparable to that of the African empire. With Charlemagne commenced the first effort at centralization; but one can say without exaggeration that throughout the Middle Ages Europe never found a form of

political organization superior to that of the African states. There is agreement on the fact that the African variety of organization is indigenous: it could not have come from the Aryan or Semitic Mediterranean. If one absolutely had to relate it to some earlier forms, the administrative centralization of Pharaonic Egypt, with its *nomes*, might be brought up. Each provincial governor in Black Africa was an image of the king, with his own small court. All the necessary elements were apparently present to give rise to feudalism. So we can ask ourselves why, up to their disappearance on contact with the West, the African empires did not evolve into a political feudalism through the progressive emancipation of these provincial governors. Yet, among the Mossi, once a governor was appointed, holding rank of minister, the King who had so designated him according to tradition could not dismiss him. We can cite four explanations for this cohesion which was so remarkable, if we except the periodic secessions of certain outlying provinces; but, in these latter cases, it is less a matter of a province becoming detached through the revolt of its governor than of a former small state, recently annexed, but not yet sufficiently assimilated into the Empire, finding enough character to dissociate itself at the slightest weakness of the central organization. This was the case with the Senegalese states vis-à-vis Ghana: Djoloff, El Feruin, Silla, and even Djara.

(A) One of the explanations is of a religious nature. It seems beyond doubt that, in traditional monarchies, such as the Mossi and the Uadai in eastern Chad, the constitution was lived up to by all the people. Those in charge had a religious notion of their functions, which prevented them from taking advantage of internal weaknesses in the political organization. We have seen that, among the Mossi, there was only one case of internal political struggle, and this came very late.

(B) In the Islamized empires, such as Songhai, tradition gave way to a strict administrative control that left very little

opportunity for feudal tendencies or possibility for secessionist maneuvers. Everything came from the Askia and everything ended with him. The *Tarikh es Sudan* relates that Askia Mohammed subdued all peoples "as far as Teghezza, by fire and sword," and that he "was docilely obeyed in the various states as in his own palace."²¹

The provincial governors were mere civil servants, dismissable at any moment, in Songhai; but they might remain in office for more than ten years, in fact for life, as long as they did not visibly nurture ambitions above their stations, and their administration was properly conducted.

(C) During the Middle Ages there evolved in European history a situation that has no parallel in Africa: the barbarian invasions. Of course, since prehistoric times, every continent has been invaded by peoples of other races; but, during recorded history, we know of no invasions of Black Africa that compare in suddenness and intensity with those experienced by Europe in the tenth century. The new European society, born of the fusion of Gallo-Romans with the barbarians who invaded in the fourth century, was already established. It had already developed its first political structures, its first tentative administrative centralization in Charlemagne's day. After his death, Europe was eventually divided into three separate kingdoms, ruled by his grandsons. It was then invaded anew by the Norse in the tenth century. As André Ribard has shown, the insecurity which was then prevalent in the rural areas impelled the peasants to organize around a strong protector, a lord, whose authority over those under his protection grew daily more meaningful, whereas that of the King, living in virtual isolation at his capital, was more and more symbolic. It was thus, under the threat of external danger against which protection at any cost was necessary, that European feudalism was born and grew concomitant with the seizure and occupation of the land by the lords.

Much has been made of Arab invasions of Africa: they

occurred in the North, but in Black Africa they are figments of the imagination. While the Arabs did conquer North Africa by force of arms, they quite peaceably entered Black Africa: the desert always served as a protective shield. From the time of the initial Umayyad setbacks in the eighth century, no Arab army ever crossed the Sahara in an attempt to conquer Africa, except for the Moroccan War of the sixteenth century. During the period of our study, from the third to the seventeenth centuries, not one conquest was ever launched by way of the Nile: that of the Sudan, accomplished with the help of England, came only in the nineteenth century. Nor was there ever any Arab conquest of Mozambique or any other East African territory. The Arabs in these areas, who became great religious leaders, arrived as everywhere else individually and settled in peacefully; they owe their influence and later acceptance to spiritual and religious virtues. The Arab conquests dear to sociologists are necessary to their theories but did not exist in reality. To this day no reliable historical documents substantiate such theories. We will cover the question of the later Moroccan occupation of Timbuktu in chapter VII. And we will see that the limited character of this phenomenon could not cause the outbreak of general panic such as took place in Europe, which would have been necessary for the birth of African feudalism. According to Ibn Khaldun, it was rather from Africa, from Ethiopia and Nubia, that an expedition to conquer Yemen took off:

Beside them [the Demdem], are the Abyssinians, the most powerful of Black nations; they live on the west coast of the [Red] Sea, in the neighborhood of Yemen. It was from their land that the expedition was launched which, at the time of Du Nuas, crossed the sea to seize Yemen.²²

This is most likely an allusion to the Ethiopian expedition which took place around the time of the birth of Mohammed, which is mentioned in the verse of the Koran entitled "The Elephant Leader."

(D) Whereas during the Middle Ages the entire feudal

system was to be based on possession of the land through progressive despoiling of the protected inhabitants—creating the landed nobility—neither king nor lord in Black Africa ever truly felt he possessed the land. Land possession there never polarized the consciousness of political power. We have seen the religious factors that opposed this. The king and the little local lord knew that they owned slaves and that they ruled the entire country, the extent of which they knew perfectly well, and whose inhabitants paid them a specified tax. Yet they never felt that they owned the land. The African peasant's situation was therefore diametrically opposed to that of the serf bound to the soil and belonging, along with the land he cultivated, to a lord and master. The conditions under which the very first "masters of the soil," such as the Serer Lamans, ceded plots of land were in no way comparable to those in force during feudal times: they could never result in the loss of liberty for a non-slave. Under the worst of them, they called for an annual rental guaranteed by verbal agreement, cancellable at the end of each season. Even the poor worker, the *navetane*, who possessed only the strength of his own arms, could not be reduced to slavery. In the morning he worked for the Laman, and in the afternoon for himself, on the same plot granted to him.

The acute feeling of private ownership that we come across today among the Lebou of Cape Verde is a recent phenomenon connected with the development and exploitation of Dakar since the governorship of Pinet-Laprade (1857). It was he who effected the first subdivision of land and issued authorizations for construction. The economic development of the port of Dakar very quickly gave a special value to all the land on the peninsula, so that the Lebou landowners, who until then had been little concerned about it, now came to appreciate the increased value of their lands.

These are the four causes which seem to explain the absence of a landowning feudal system in the history of Black Africa.

RESOURCES OF THE ROYALTY AND NOBILITY

Taxes

What, then, did this non-landowning nobility live on? What, in particular, were the material resources and the finances of the king? We have seen that the institution of a tax, first conceived of as a tithe, a ritual deduction on the wealth of all subjects, was present in all these empires. As everywhere else, it was at first collected as payment in kind, then later, in Songhai and Mali, in gold currency.

The litigation which opposed the Timbuktu-Koï to the Tuareg chief, Akil, which resulted in the intervention of Ali Ber, arose from the apportionment of the collected taxes. It had been the custom for one-third of the taxes to go to the Koï, but Akil refused to give him a single goldpiece out of the three thousand *mitkâls* he collected.²³ It appears that Askia Ishâq I practically crushed Timbuktu's merchants with taxes. A former singer, Mahmud-Yaza, was his collection agent. Seventy thousand goldpieces were recovered after the death of Ishâq.²⁴ These two facts prove the ubiquity of both taxation and the use of gold coinage in Songhai.

Customs

The second important source of revenue for the king was made up of customs duties. A strict customs system was established as early as the Ghanaian period; it was retained by the emperors of Mali and Songhai; duty was collected both on imports and on exports. According to Bakri, the Tunkara of Ghana took a fee of one gold dinar for every salt-laden mule entering his country, and two gold dinars for every load of salt exported. For a load of copper the rate was five *mitkâls*, and ten for a load of miscellaneous goods.²⁵

Gold Mines

The principal source of revenue for the sovereigns of Black Africa, from antiquity to modern times, from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic, i.e., from the Nubia of Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus to the Ghana of Bakri and the Mali of Ibn Battuta and Khaldun and the Songhai of Sâdi and Kâti, was gold extracted from mines. According to an anecdote supplied us by Herodotus, the abundance of gold in Nubia was such that even the prisoners' chains were forged of this metal. Of course, this sort of tale cannot be taken literally; nevertheless, it symbolizes an economic reality, a society in which gold seemed more prevalent than all other metals. The established facts conform well enough to this legend: the etymology of Nubia is said to signify "gold." Historically, Nubia was the country from which Egypt acquired all her gold.

Ghana's gold was accumulated, according to Bakri, in the fortified city of Ghiaru, eighteen days distant from the capital on the Upper Senegal. The abundance of this metal was such that the king left to the people all the gold dust they could extract from the empire's mines. The king, however, kept for himself all pieces of native gold found; without this precaution, reasons Bakri,²⁶ gold would have become so plentiful as to have virtually no more value in the land. Thus, instead of the total product of all the empire's mines, the Tunka kept for himself only that share of the metal that was found formed into chunks. One such chunk, according to Khaldun, weighed fifteen pounds; it had been inherited by and belonged to the Mansa of Mali: it was sold to some Egyptian merchants by Mansa Djata, the grandson of Mansa Mussa, who exhausted the Royal Treasury.²⁷

Mali thus inherited the Ghanaian mines situated in Bambuk, the same mines which were known to the Carthaginians and were explored by the Romans after the destruction of

Carthage by Scipio Africanus Minor (Bambuk = the Roman Bambutum).²⁸

The region of Gao to the east of the Niger also produced a vast quantity of gold dust and Bakri believes that it was actually the first country to produce this material.²⁹

This gold, which was always abundant during the history of the African states, was the currency essential to international trade, first with the Arab Orient, then with Mediterranean Europe (Portugal, Spain). It contributed powerfully to the economic prosperity of the country; it quite certainly meant the sovereigns did not have to overwhelm their respective peoples with taxes and tariffs. In order to grasp the distinction between the economic conditions, the monetary situations of the lower classes in Medieval Europe and Black Africa, we would have to imagine the king and the feudal lords, in 1067, allowing the serfs and the peasants the right to accumulate wealth equivalent to that of this African gold dust from the natural resources of their own countries. It is, therefore, most important to bear in mind this economic factor in explaining the peculiar aspect of Africa's sociopolitical evolution.

Royal Treasury

The treasury of the sovereign thus contained both gold pieces and chunks of gold in the raw state. There were lofts containing taxes in kind such as grains and storerooms for manufactured products: saddles, swords, harnesses, fabrics, etc. A fair share of the treasury of Sonni Ali was deposited with the *cadi* of Timbuktu, perhaps because the *cadis*, due to their positions, were traditionally honest men: this treasure did indeed exist, for it was where Askia Mohammed, after his coup and his accession, found the money for his pilgrimage to Mecca.

Booty

Foreign expeditions also were profitable. Whether to secure existing borders or to increase the size of their countries, the sovereigns undertook military expeditions, outside the territories inhabited by their own subjects, whom they had to protect. There was a favorable occasion whenever two contiguous states were not allies: the borders were then vigilantly guarded and sometimes a defensive reflex might spark a conflict. The properties of the losers would then be appropriated. Thus, in March 1513, El Hajj Askia Mohammed led an expedition into Kashena; in February 1514 he began a campaign against El-Odâla, the sultan of Agadez, which ended February 15, 1515. However, as he gave no share of the booty to his vassals, one of them, Kotal, the Liki chief, also called Konta, revolted against him: a battle ensued at the end of which the Askia's troops were not able decisively to defeat Konta's. The latter thus freed himself from the Askia's authority. That situation was to last until the end of Songhai. An unsuccessful attempt at reconquest went on from February 5, 1516 to January 24, 1517.³⁰

Three facts should be noted. Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, these expeditions were by principle directed against foreign territories, for the reasons already given, not against the sovereign's own subjects living within his realm. This major political error was only very rarely committed in desperation, by a few minor émigré kings. This was probably the case with some of the Damels of Cayor, who were confined within a relatively small, poor country, beyond whose borders lay powerful, hostile kingdoms that it would have been out of the question to attack.

Booty thus acquired was indeed a source of revenue.

Finally, Konta, the chief who won his freedom, was neither a civil servant nor an army leader who might have

mutinied, but the minor king of a foreign region which had been annexed and thus regained its independence.

The Askia was the center of the administrative system, all of whose workings were familiar to him. We have seen that he made the appointments to all offices, some of which might go to his son. He appointed the *cadi*, the generals, and so on. He sometimes asked a functionary promoted to a higher office to name his own successor. The Askia El Hadj (accession: August 7, 1582), after putting down a palace revolt, elevated the *kala-châ* Denkelko, who had remained faithful to him, to the office of *hi-koï*, in place of Bokar, who had betrayed him. To the greatest satisfaction of the *kala-châ*, he then asked him to name his successor: the new *hi-koï* did not hesitate to choose his own son.³¹

Fees Connected with Assuming Administrative Offices

Appointments to the various offices, in the traditional kingdoms, entailed the payment of a customary fee, not, however, necessarily to the king. Thus, among the Mossi, the "keeper of the sand" confirmed everyone in his respective office, including the king, by giving him, according to a religious ritual, a bit of sand from a hole specially prepared for this purpose: the appointee then had to reward him with something of value, varying with the importance of the office. Here once again we see this aspect of the African social structure, this aspect of the caste system: material wealth often bypassed the chiefs and notables to pass into the hands of men of the castes, skilled workers. No comparison with the feudal system in which the lord kept everything. Later on, with the profanation of the royal office, its secularization, this fee would return to the king. Thus, in Songhai, at the time of the conflict with Morocco, a *Fondoko* upon appointment was required to turn over two thousand cows.³²

GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Hostages

All the sovereigns of the Sudan found it politically and administratively wise to exact of the children of their vassals a variable term of service in the palace. Some of these young princes remained there all their lives as a sort of pages, obviously treated according to their rank, while others returned to their respective provinces after a number of years spent as hostages. Sâdi remarked that this custom lasted from the time of Mali until his own day, and was general throughout the Sudan.³³

Thus, Ali-Kolon, the future Sonni Ali, was first hostage of the Mansa of Mali at the time his homeland, Songhai, was a vassal of Mali. It is known that, despite the precautions taken by his father's suzerain, he had to make good his escape so as to found the true Kingdom of Kaoga, whose borders, before his accession, did not extend beyond the suburbs of that city. The plan nurtured and executed by Sonni Ali proves, if proof were needed, that the measures taken by the Sudanese kings were not necessary. During this period of raising the sons of their vassals, they hoped to bring them to share their own ideas, to get them to identify closely with the interests of the kingdom, so that they would no longer feel themselves strangers obligated to fight against them out of filial devotion. This was the farsighted pursuit of a policy of strengthening the bonds between the various provinces and the cradle of the realm, an effort at integration after the annexation of a province. In exactly the same way in an earlier period, the Egyptian Pharaohs acted toward the sons of Asiatic princes who were their vassals from the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty onward, after the conquest of Thutmose III. This process of assimilation was thus not the least of the factors in the African governmental and administrative methods.

Songhai

The generals in Songhai were not necessarily slaves; they could be men of any class; likewise, the civil servants. The career of El Amin eloquently illustrates this fact. Under the Askia Mohammed he was only a simple hostler, a member of the royal cortège, one of those who, in turn, were called upon to saddle the king's horse. Askia Ismael promoted him to chief of pedestrians, or routemaster; he pursued these duties until Askia Daud came to power, when the latter made him a Djenné-Monzo or chief of the city of Djenné. Rising from the position of hostler to that of governor of one of the largest trading cities in the empire, can truly be called coming up in the world.³⁴

The previously established barriers within the caste system, by division of labor, had now partially given way; we get the impression that one could, therefore, aspire to any position made possible by luck, intrigue, and merit. It must be remembered that the founder of the Askia dynasty, called Mohammed the Great, the Believer Prince, was only a lieutenant of Sonni Ali who usurped the throne after defeating his son, Bekr Dau (March 3, 1493). One important notion would seem to have vanished: that of legitimacy.³⁵ Any victorious leader is legitimate, as the facts prove: the numerous coups d'état throughout the history of Songhai. The people immediately recognized his authority; they held no rancor toward him. A royal branch was thus born and developed from a very lowly common stock; at the end of one generation it had acquired almost the same prestige as the other already-existing royal families. We thus witness the parallel development of several dynasties, rivals insofar as they are confined to certain relatively distinct families: a situation exactly identical to the one in Cayor in the seventeenth century, which may have been inherited from Songhai. The existence of the Kharejjite sect of Islam may not be unconnected to this state of affairs; this sect is characterized by its refusal to recognize any supreme au-

thority for all Islam, any *caliph*, any sort of Muslim Pope, and by the fact that any believer, however modest his social origins, might be elevated to the rank of king if he otherwise possesses the requisite qualities. Sonni Ali nominally belonged to this sect.³⁶

Various Ministries

The hierarchy of offices in Songhai was inflexible. The country was divided into provinces, cantons, villages, large cities of commercial character such as Djenné and Timbuktu, border areas which were strongholds such as Teghezza, Ualata, Nema, etc. A sultan or *fari* governed certain provinces, as might a *châ*: there was the Dendi-fari, the Kormina-fari, the Kala-châ. A *farba*, a *mondzo*, or a *koï* governed cities of different types and their immediate environs. There was the Timbuktu-koï, the Hi-koï, the Dirma-koï, the Hombori-koï, etc. The governor of the Ualata border area, with its dependencies, was a *farba* in the days of Mali: the equivalent term for *farba* in Songhai was *farma*. The border area of Teghezza on the Tropic was governed by a *mondzo*. The *balama* was a kind of supply officer; the title itself was older than that of Askia, according to Kâti.

The *assara-mundio* was a kind of police commissioner: viz., the *assara-mundio* of the city of Djenné or the city of Timbuktu.

The *anfara-kuma* was the traditional judge in pre-Islamic times. It was a hereditary office always held by members of the Kuma clan. They were *anfaras*, or judges, whence the term *anfara-kuma* which came to mean the *cadi* in Songhai. Kâti insists on the point that this is the inevitable adaptation of the traditional expression for an equivalent Arabic term after Islamization.

The *kan-fari* or *kormina-fari*, was a new office created by Askia Mohammed and occupied for the first time by his own brother, Amar Komdiago, who was *tondi-farma* under Ali

Ber: it corresponded to a veritable viceregency with Tendirma as its capital.

The *tunkoï*, *kuran*, and *soira* were subaltern military positions that might exist in a city such as Djenné.

The *Djenné-koï*, *Bani-koï*, and *Kora-koï*, were administrative and military chiefs of cities and regions; they thus had under their command a territorial guard.

The *Guimi-koï*, or *Gumei-koï*, was the port director.

The *Hi-koï* was responsible for ships and smaller craft.

The *Yobu-koï* was in charge of the market.

The *gari-tia* repaired saddles.

The *berbuchi-mundio*, or *mondzo*, was the administrator in charge of affairs concerning the Berabic Arabs.

The *koïra-banda mundio* was a suburban administrator of a city.

The *barei-koï* was the chief of etiquette and protocol.

The *uanei-farma* was the minister of property.

The *sao-farma* was the superintendent of forests.

The *lari-farma* was the superintendent of waterways.

The *koreï-farma* was in charge of affairs concerning the white minorities inhabiting the country.

The *tara-farma* was the cavalry chief.

The *tari-mundio* was the inspector of agriculture.

Certain offices could be held at the same time: one might be a *fari-mondzo*. The *fari* was above the *koï*; the *Hi-koï*, Ali Dudu, provisionally named *dendi-fari*, was obliged to go back to his old seat in the Assembly when he lost this title (as we have already seen). But the *koï* was above the *châ*; we have observed that naming a *kala châ* to the post of *koï* corresponded to a promotion. We will not repeat the description of official insignia and uniforms connected with these offices. The identity of the terms designating the administrative offices of Western Sudan would give evidence, if this were needed, of the earlier administrative unification of this region.

Administrative Unity

Delafosse pointed out that

in many parts of the Sudan the following terms were and still are in use: Fari, Farima, Farhama, Fama (Mande), Faran (Songhai), Fara (Hausa), Far-Ba (Wolof), all of which may derive from the root *Far*, meaning summit, apex, chief, prince, from which also derives the title of the Pharaohs.³⁷

In Wolof, in fact, there exists beside the term *farba* that of *fari*, which is an imperial epithet: *bur* meaning King; *bur-fari* meaning the supreme king, the emperor, the one whose power and greatness cannot be surpassed. The Egyptian term is not etymologically what Delafosse suggests; it is formed from the plural of *per*: the wall of the house, and by extension the house of the Pharaoh. The meaning of *per* in modern Wolof is identical to that of *per* in ancient Egyptian. In Wolof, words beginning with *p* form their plurals by alteration to *f*: *Peul bi*—the Peul; *Feul yi*—the Peuls; *per mi*—the wall; *fer yi*—the walls; whence *fari*. We recall that if Pharaoh was derived from the Egyptian plural of *per*, it was because the king was customarily identified with the name of his house, which was a double house. Would this then suggest that the creators of the first West African states recollected an earlier political organization which, by way of Nubia, leads us back to Egypt? The ubiquity of this term in all African languages, the etymological explanations that can be offered, leave little room for doubt. If that were the case, a new light would be shed on this initial period of African history; it would no longer be a question of an absolute beginning, but rather of a continuation following emigration; there would then be nothing surprising in these monarchies' being constitutional from the start: their originators, instead of being creators *ex nihilo*, would have had the benefit of an earlier political experience. Thus it would be equally comprehensible that the forms of

sociopolitical organization of the African states were related only to those of Pharaonic Egypt, and could finally be understood only in terms of them.

No insurmountable objections are raised by supposing it would be materially impossible to govern an empire the size of Europe or administer it without a minimum of bureaucracy. It is difficult to realize that, for fifteen hundred years, the Tunkas, Mansas, and Askias simply issued verbal orders and got verbal accounts and reports in return. The customs activities of the border areas, based on what we have just said, would presuppose some kind of precise accounting, just as the payment of taxes and other fees would seem to imply the issuing of receipts, especially to the peripatetic merchants at the markets of Timbuktu, Djenné, etc. The same held true with regard to relations of all sorts between the central authority and the various provinces, to allow administrative coordination. We shall see, in chapter VII, that writing had already long been part of daily life and that intellectual activity had reached a level barely conjecturable today. Epistolary correspondence was common: when Askia Mussa came to power, he wrote two letters, one to his brother Otsman, the other to the latter's mother, so as to avoid any eventual conflict.³⁸ The Askias who thus carried on private correspondence, did as much on the administrative and political levels. Sâdi and Kâti allow us to be sure of it. The concept of documentation and records clearly existed in the people's consciousness: the author of the *Tarikh es Sudan* stresses that he saw the original of the document addressed by the Sultan of Morocco to Askia Ishâq II, concerning the salt mines of Teghezza.³⁹ It was customary to accompany these missives with some token of authenticity, if they did not bear an inimitable seal: thus, when the Timbuktu-Koï decided to open the gates of his city to Sonni Ali, he made sure to send one of his boots with the messenger so that Sonni Ali might have proof positive of the authenticity and sincerity of the

mission.⁴⁰ The existence of African archives will be confirmed by further data when we discuss education and child-rearing.

MILITARY ORGANIZATION

In mentioning above the numbers of men in the armies of Ghana and Songhai, we showed only the size of the imperial forces. The time has come to analyze the structure of these armies, their components, their weapons, their strategy, and even their tactics.

Structure

In Mali and Songhai, we know for certain, the king who appointed the generals was himself the commander-in-chief of the army and personally directed military operations, as would later the Dorobé Damels of Cayor. The *Tarikh es Sudan* points out that Askia El Hadj was never able to undertake an expedition during his entire reign, because at the time of his accession he contracted a disease that kept him from riding a horse. He was an exception, in sharp contrast to all the other Askias.⁴¹

In each kingdom, each nation, the army was divided into several corps assigned to the defense of different provinces, although under command of the civil authority. Thus, each provincial governor had at his disposal a part of this army to which he could assign tasks under the orders of a general whose powers were purely military. On the lower level, below the king, in political or administrative affairs, the distinction between civil and military powers was thus very clear. The king of Mali, when he conquered Songhai, Timbuktu, Zâgha, Mima, the Baghena, and the environs of that region as far as the Atlantic Ocean, had two generals under his command. One was responsible for the defense of the southern part of the

empire, on the Mossi border, the other of the northern part at the edge of the desert. Their respective names were Sankar-Zuma and Faran-Sura. These were the titles corresponding to their military functions. Each of them had under his command a certain number of officers and troops.⁴² The western borders of the state of Djenné, before the conquest of the city by Sonni Ali, were defended by the commanders of twelve army corps deployed in the country of Sana: they were specifically assigned to surveillance of the movements of Mali. The Sana-faran was their general-in-chief. We even know the family names of some of the officers under his orders: Yausoro, Soasoro, Mâtigho, Karimu, etc. Likewise, twelve commanders of army corps were assigned to the east of the Niger toward Titili.⁴³

Among the Mossi, the Moro Naba whom tradition prohibited from leaving his capital, could not personally direct military expeditions: as a result, this became the task of the active generals. The Mossi conscripted everyone. When the danger had passed, each citizen returned to his home, his village; the army was then demobilized, except for a few security units.

In Songhai, beginning with the reign of Askia Mohammed, a distinction began being made between the people and the army. Instead of mass conscription, a permanent army was created; civilians who were not part of it could go about their business. During the reign of Sonni Ali, all able-bodied nationals were subject to enlistment.⁴⁴ The major divisions of the army were: knights, cavalry, foot soldiers, auxiliary bodies of Tuaregs, élite infantry regiments, the royal guard, and an armed flotilla.

Knights

The princes of Black Africa who could afford to outfitted themselves in complete or partial armor like that of the knights of the Western Middle Ages. After the accession of

Askia El Hadj, the *kormina-fari* El Hadj, on February 13, 1584, started a revolt with intent to seize power. But he failed: the Askia, who was well informed, made him take off the flowing boubous he was wearing; beneath he wore a coat of mail.⁴⁵ When *balama* Mohammed es-Sâdek revolted against Askia Mohammed Bano and in March 1588 attempted to march on Kaoga, the Askia, who came forth to challenge him to battle, wore an iron breastplate.⁴⁶ As it was extremely hot and the Askia was very fat, he died of the effects of his armor.

The rebellious *balama* wore an iron helmet; when Omar-Kato threw a javelin at his head, it ricocheted off the helmet.⁴⁷

Another sultan of Morocco, Mulay Ahmed, in December 1589–January 1590, renewed the request made by one of his predecessors about the mines of the Teghezza. Ishâq II, who was then Askia, reacted violently, and as a sign of defiance and a show of force sent the sultan an offensive letter, some javelins, and two iron boots.⁴⁸

Complete knight's armor was thus in use, as we have seen: coat of mail and iron breastplate, helmet, boots, javelin . . . all of it. The African princes of Songhai were armed as knights. This practice was certainly not as widespread as in Europe, if only because of the climate, as shown by the death of Askia Bano, who died of suffocation.⁴⁹ The explorer Barth saw such knights in the kingdom of Bornu in more recent times, about 1850. It is likely that such armor came from Europe, as did certain fabrics; but no documents exist to prove it. It might have come into Africa from Spain. We may suppose that African blacksmiths made replicas from these models, better adapted to the climate, which could be worn either inside or outside clothing. The use of iron armor was common in Benin; the subjects appearing on the bronzes of the time as decoration were in the first instance real armor.

Cavalry

All other mounted soldiers of more modest birth and fortune formed the cavalry. They were armed with shields and