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Islam, Ritual and the Politics of Truth in Maryse Condé's Segu

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In the end, we are judged, Condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power (Foucault 1980: 94).

> On the grey bank of the Joliba, dotted with the shells of giant oysters, women were drawing water in great gourds. Slaves were being driven along in single file by an overseer. Everyone carefully avoided looking at the priest, for it was never wise to get in the way of a master of *Komo*. You never knew when he might be angry and unleash the forces that brought barrenness, violent death or epidemics. So Koumare met only with lowered eyelids, closed eyes, attitudes of furtiveness and fear. (Condé 1988: 42-43)

Every society, according to Foucault, produces its own regime of truth, that is, privileges statements that induce certain practices that perpetuate the conditions of its possibility and existence, to function as `true'. This means the 'general politics' of truth (Foucault 1980: 131). This paper examines how myth and ritual function as the regime of truth in African communities. Effort is also made to use the novel *Segu* by Maryse Condé as a reference point, verify the claim that "rituals […] served to restore the corporal integrity of the Monarch" (Foucault 1980: 54). The novel is an historical representation that reveals how the participative and celebrative presentations of ritual, traditional and Islamic, antithetically and ultimately operated as mechanisms of control in Africa.

A number of fictional works have been written about the destructive influences of Christianity in Africa. The best examples can be found in the works of Chinua Achebe and Ngugi wa Thiong'o. However, little has been written about Islam giving credence to the argument by the likes of Ali Mazrui that Islam, being much older than Christianity in Africa, has become "naturalised" as an African religion. Condé has started the reversion of this imbalance by showing that Islam is as contrary (and as hostile) to traditional African ways as Christianity would be upon its own arrival. In the view of the fact that Condé is a Caribbean of African extraction and a non-Muslim, her "outsider perception" may present some problem as to how she is being received.

The novel *Segu* presents two major conflicts which are interwoven into each other. One is the travail of the family of Dousika Traore, whose son Tiekoro gets converted to Islam. It plays out a record of the wrath of the gods and ancestors on

the family by bringing about the misfortune of this aristocratic family. Four of its sons (Tiekoro, Siga, Naba and Malobali) out of about twenty are "scapegoats to be wantonly ill used by fate so that the family as a whole might not perish" (42). In spite of the rituals and appeasement performed by Dousika's family priest, Koumare, the damage could only be limited. Tiekoro's scorn and desertion of the gods and ancestors, with the vanity of Dousika himself and "the combined efforts of Dousika's many enemies, had made them deaf to all prayers and unmoved by any sacrifice" (41). The other conflict is that within the court which leaves the Kingdom unprepared and is overtaken by the emergence of a new context and scheme of power - Islam.

It needs be shown first of all that Segu community is more or less essentially identical with its ritual practices and how these practices inevitably engendered specific modes of governance that operate on its basis. Ritual is the definitive custom of Segu. If it happens that the "great fetishes honoured every year in brilliant ceremonies were ever scorned or forgotten, Segu would no longer be Segu, but only a concubine, a captive, a subject to a conqueror" (42). For this reason, the delegates who had gone to negotiate the alliance of Segu with the Fulani of Macina against the invasion of El Hadj Omar could not but feel horrible in the monotony of the life of the people, particularly the manner in which their king was buried. "They were deeply shocked by Amadou Cheikou's funeral. Did they call that a royal burial? Where were the offerings? Where were the sacrifices, the singing, the music, and the recitation of genealogies and of the exploits of the dead man's family? They compared this hasty, unimpressive ceremony with those attending the death of a Mansa in Segu “(465). This instance gives solid validity therefore to Murnion's position that "the concomitant cultural achievement of primal culture is ritual" (Murnion 1993: 69).

The foundation of the African life-world found in Segu is a bounded cycle in which the community projects upon its environment its imagination that has been formed by its history and self-experience and then introjects the same without recognising any more that such configuration originated from it. Scientific consciousness is the antithesis of mythological and ritualistic identification of man with nature because it atomises and negates the relationship. The state of fused and mythological identity has its best-known expression in totemism. There is the sense of kinship between man and nature. The manifestations of totemism abound in the novel. Siga, after becoming the *fa*, writes to Cheikou Hamadou to request for Muhammad whom Tiekoro had sent before his death to study Islam:

> I am now the head of the family, and I shall not rest until I have brought all these children together, under the same roof, that our ancestors may be consoled and satisfied. I repeat; wherever they may now be, all our children shall take the road back to Segu ... I hereby ask you to give us back our child of your own free will. He is ours. His *diamou* is Traore. His totem is the crowned crane (381).

The crowned crane is a symbol of self-definition and mark of identification. Again, when the team sent to look for young hunters got to the Bani, "at the sight of [the]

holy birds, the sources of language, everyone dismounted and the griots recited some verses" (72). Still on totemism, there is this incident of a big python that uncoiled itself on the ground beside the choir at the wedding of Malobali and Romana, and the people said:

> Dagbe the python, incarnation of the Supreme Being! What had he come to announce? Some took it for a good omen, some for a bad. Everyone was troubled (282).

Incarnation! In Segu, anything in nature is capable of being possessed by gods, spirits and ancestors. In the very first pages the narrator speaks of the *dubale* tree, which might be called "the witness and guardian of the life of the Traores":

> Beneath its powerful roots the placentas of many of their ancestors had been buried after a safe delivery... In the night the spirits of the ancestors hid in its branches and watched over the sleep of the living. When they were displeased, they show it by making faint sounds at once mysterious and clear as a code. Then those experienced enough to decipher them shook their heads and said: "beware - tonight our fathers have spoken!" (Condé 1988: 4)

This, of course, reveals nature as the meeting point of the people's relationship with being. Ancestral motif and reverence thus necessitate a particular mode of being and ethos within which the life of the individual and the community are thereby predetermined and ordered. The possibility of communication between the living and the dead through nature, its reality, imposes certain epistemological imperatives which are absolute and which discourage rational inquisition. The words “witness and guardian” that are being used to describe the *dubale* tree in Dousika's compound encapsulate the whole relationship and kinship of man and nature and also symbolises the position of the Monarch in the community.

In Malobali's dream, when he was under detention after he had been set up by Romana, Naba's widow, who falsely claims he wanted to rape her, there is also this mystic communication:

> But scarcely had he shut his eyes than his spirit left his body to wander through the invisible world ... and landed in Segu ... They were celebrating a birth ... a son called Kosa ... Then suddenly the child opened its eyes; adult eyes, deep and black, full of malice. It stared at Malobali and asked: "Will you have as much luck as I ... Naba?" (276 - 277).

This passage gives the evidence of the success of the mission of the *urubu* of death. The bird has witnessed the death of Naba and has flown over miles and miles to inform Koumare of his death so as to make it possible for rituals to be performed so that Naba could find a place in the earth and be reincarnated. But it also shows that Naba has become a 'witness and guardian' of the family. In Kosa, he has come both as a reincarnation and as a protecting ancestor, to warn his brother who has now met his wife by act of providence to beware and not die a similar death as he did.

Siga also is deemed to have reincarnated in Franko, the baby he was expecting through his last slave-concubine, Yassa, shortly before his death (451). The description is also given in the novel of how Dousika, in death, sought the womb of Sira, his self-exiled, Fulani slave-wife to be born again (138-9). In this world view, life and death are but a recycling process by which nature renews itself and man and all the totality of existence are already part of nature. This consciousness does not permit any form of finality of being or of heritage. It is therefore closed to the idea of change of the status quo. As it was in the beginning, so it is now and so shall it ever be, world without end. The eternal presence of the ancestors through the inimitable *dubale* tree and the concept of reincarnation, a shuffle by which a person survives himself, present strong metonymic expressions of an hegemonic will to existential and essential continuum. Once a family becomes privileged through one of its members to the throne, that heritage becomes an eternal hegemony.

Hegemonic dispensation of power is obviously a necessary contingency of this kind of belief world. The chain of mythic truth and its dispersal and inculcation in ritual operates as a mighty girdle and bond. Murnion further claims that rites of passage "invoke and transmit the lore of the tribe while they integrate individuals, with their common human fate, into the bosom of the tribe" (Murnion 1993: 69). Segu as a community is kept compact and distinct by a ritualistic circulation and dispensation of myth that conserves a specie of power within its universe. Ritual in traditional Africa is an enunciation and re-enactment of myth, which is the symbolic discourse of political invention. Ritual is part of the strategic political armature for the preservation, expression and extension of values of the kingdom as determined by the king who is the custodian of the knowledge of the rituals and the secrets of the tribe. The relationship between myth and ritual is then taken somehow to be that between theory and practise.

The intersection of human reality and the mysterious serves in the ultimate creation of the principle of the monarch with a divine right to rule and an essentialism by which his progeny will continue to rule. Because the individual member in the community already identifies completely with the ultimate mythological truth he inevitably by so doing also identifies with its custodian power wielded by the king. It is through this kind of essential identity that he experiences self-plenum. In that claustrophobic essentialism, the individual in his world does not believe he is self-constituting. The belief is in a stable sense of self and identity with and in relation to the community. This is why the characters could not adapt to the changes happening around Segu. Every where they reach, they are apt to say, "I am a Bambara from Segu". The stable identity is the identity shared with the Segu universe and with its people. Tiekoro and Siga were simply said to be sharing a destiny:

> Siga and Tiekoro are two contrasting breaths of the same spirit; doubles. One has no identity without the other. Their fates are complementary. The threads of their lives are as closely interwoven as those in a strip of cotton coming off the loom. (43)

Here is the pulsation of the eternal rhythm of life, of collapsible identity that exists between man and self, man and man, and man and the community in an animist world. Everything is integrated into every other thing and there is no strict individual identity.

The power of the king is therefore the expression and consummation of the totality of communal beliefs, identity and aspirations. In most African communities there is always a myth of origin. This myth makes the king the dogma of the community and it is entrenched through a collective participation in rituals that set the ancestral progeny aside as the custodian of the knowledge and practice of the ritualistic relationship of man and god *in illo tempore*. The full import of the primordial, historic and symbolic friendship between Biton Kulibaly, the founding ancestor of Segu and the god Faro is the permanence of the throne and royalty of blood it grants to the Kulibalys.

Every traditional community thus has a myth of origin that distinguishes it and by which it identifies itself, which incidentally also inaugurates the kingship and the religion of the people. The myth is usually about how the ancestor, the founding father of the kingdom, either was a child of, or encountered, certain god that becomes the special god of the kingdom. Communal ritual, therefore, re-enacting this historical demiurgic encounter as an "imitation of a transhuman model" (Eliade 1975: 28), celebrates and acknowledges the founding ancestor as the civilising hero of the community. This gives his progeny, the royal family, a symbolic privilege of leadership, by which the priest is also the prince. This can be buttressed in the novel, by the myth of origin of the Ashante, who descended from "the womb of the moon, the moon-woman" and the story of the founding of the kingdom and the adventures of Osei Tutu, the first Ashantehene. The gods upon invocation, "had sent down the stool of gold onto Osei Tutu's lap, thus marking him out for universal veneration" (249).

The myth of origin of Segu is the story of the people's delight and goes thus:

> A hundred or a hundred and fifty years earlier Segu was not numbered among the cities of the Sudan [Ghana, Kanem, Songhay and Hausa]. It was only a village where Ngolo Kulibaly took refuge, while his brother Barangolo settled further north. Then Biton, his son, made friends with the god of Faro, master of water and knowledge, with his protection transformed a collection of daub huts into a proud city at whose name the Somono, Bozo, Dogon, Tuareg, Fulani and Sarakole people all trembled (7).

Biton Kulibaly is therefore the great individual and ultimate warrior through whom the Segu civilization was inaugurated. However, this myth has its nurture within the will of the species itself, that is, the total economy of the sacralized collective unconscious of the people of Segu. Biton Kulibaly, by his heroic act as an outstanding warrior becomes the nexus archetype around whom the nobility revolves. This solar myth in the novel is established and complemented by a consciousness that integrates man and nature.

The African community of Segu, a spiritually centered world of ritual observations with a mythological mode of discourse, encodes and perpetuates feudal power relations because of the bond with the earth. Animism culminates in the ontological predisposition for an agrarian relation of production: the cultivation of the land. Tiekoro interrogates Siga thus:

> "Do you mean to say you're going into trade?" Tiekoro explained in horror. As a Bambara nobleman he despised trade and considered agriculture the only occupation worthy of him" (81).

Also:

> Siga's project of starting a tannery had been rejected with horror. Were the Traore, nobles born to cultivate the land, to imitate the *garanke*, men from the caste of leather workers? Was Siga mad? (319).

The agricultural mode of production, as is being argued here, is strategically connected with the mythic association of man with nature. In fact, the study of primal cultures reveals that "the round of ritual reflected its origins in agricultural feasts" (Murnion 1993: 72). Moreover, since the agricultural mode of production of wealth requires human labour at this point in history, there arises another strategic necessity: the constant warfare to capture slaves. The cultural pattern that emerges in *Segu* is a feudalistic one. This means that in Segu we have a hierarchical ownership of land. Thus, it is understandable to read. "War was the essence of Segu's power and glory" (7). The following extract sums up the point made here:

> Anyone who crossed the threshold of the Traore compound knew at once what sort of people they were, guessed that they owned plenty of good land planted with millet, cotton and *fonio*, worked by hundreds of slaves - house slaves and captives (4).

The feudal system based upon a hierarchical expenditure of power over land is thus thrown up by the contingencies of the belief and agrarian systems. It is "a vast chain of Being" based on gradations. The power that rules Segu is thus secured in the mythological discourse that guarantees the existence of Segu as a feudal community and not as a civil society distinguished by heterogeneous institutions and formalised structures.

All that these go to prove is how the grand mythology of the monarch is constituted. The mythology of the sovereign subsists in the overall economy of mythological production in the community. The power of the king is the “guardian and witness” of the community, the over-arching symbol and expression of the gradations and relations of power over the earth and the nucleus of the corporeal identity of the community; hence the sense of his absolutism. A significant book *Yoruba Sacred Kingship: A power Like That of the Gods* by Pemberton and Afolayan (1996) is very instructive on these points.

In analysing *Segu,* one has been mindful of Sandra Barnes' observation that "ritual does not simply express power and power relationships, but is power […]

part of the power of ritual is derived from the fact that it masks other agendas [...] dominance is automatically built into ritual relationships" (Barnes 1990: 256). But this position though not formulated as such is the dialectical theory of ritual, namely: that ritual is a means of entrenching special political and economic interests (Lawson and McCawley 1993: 48)

Ritual relations laid structural foundations for the operation of monarchical power and there can be no monarchical power without the ritualistic and mythological mode of production and repertoire of knowledge which extend and legitimise it, just as there could not have emerged bourgeoisie power without scientific knowledge. The “totality orientation” of the ritualized community produces and conditions it for monarchical form of totalitarianism.

It is in these terms that Ogunba position becomes significant as he contends on the allegorical essence of these rituals and myths:

> In many African cultures there is no religious dogma in the strict sense, what we have are stories and myths of the supreme beings or high gods, of deified ancestors and other supernatural beings, and of the relationship among gods, goddesses and spirits. But, whatever the disguise, these stories are usually human stories and these relationships, human relationships (Ogunba 1978: 7).

The king is referred to in the novel as “Master of gods”. This is because in the order of power in the community, the king is also a spirit. He is a “fantastic personage” and a “meta-power”. For him, religion and beliefs mask strategies of domination. This is well articulated by the king's temporising below:

> Da Monzon couldn't understand how anyone could make war in the name of religion. Were not every people free to worship whomever they liked? Though Segu ruled over many foreign cities it had never tried to force its own gods or ancestors upon them. On the contrary, it had taken over its subject’s gods and ancestors, the better to control the subjects and to expand Segu's own pantheon (133).

This assimilation and accommodation of metaphysical foundations as a means to political control by the king is a direct effect of the relationship that believes that the earth, to wit, everything, is a brother, and it must be utilised and not destroyed.

The Islamic invasion of Segu in the novel is meant to block this field of relations upon which monarchy is founded, that is, its religious traditions and practices. Islam undermines the king's position by stimulating in the individuals of the community the “will to truth”. The king as a collective dogma can only be challenged and substituted by another dogma this time, Islam. The encounter is that of absolute power against absolute truth. While the power of the king is that of repression, that which says NO, the power of Islam appears ironically, as `truth’, as a form of liberation from the awfulness of the king. Thus, Islam came to the young impressionable Tiekoro like the alluring song of the siren from outside.

The narrator describes the curiosity by which Tiekoro's conversion began. He went into a Mosque. He had heard the call of the muezzin the day before, and

"something inexpressible had awakened within him. It was to him that a sublime voice was speaking, he was sure of it" (20). When riding alongside El Hadj Omar, who had come to visit him towards the end of the novel, Tiekoro relives this same epiphany.

> Then the voice of the Muezzin rent the air. Tiekoro could never hear the call to prayer without being moved to the core. He remembered the first time he had heard it ringing out over the walls of Segu and felt that God was speaking to him; him personally a wretched creature with scales still over his eyes. He shuddered (352).

The “will to truth” is also the will to power because of its coercive effects on the body and mind of the individual. It demands its own mode of being and ethos that must govern the individual by reducing the inner being of that individual to emptiness and destitution through the sheer power of its manifest attraction. In Tiekoro, it is the hierophantic call of the Muezzin that opened him up to the outside knowledge and an abysmal urge "for another religion, which would forbid those sinister sacrifices! That would free man from fear! Fear of the invisible, and even those of the visible! (21). The battle for the soul is thus a paramount strategy of power used by the invaders of Africa. It became active in the game of power. It is important to remember that the “will to truth” is what starts the major conflict of the novel when Tiekoro converted to Islam.

This “will to truth” challenges the collective assumptions of the community because it is a different and alternative individuation process based on personal rather than a collective conviction. This cuts the ground under the collective stake of being within the control of the monarch. For this reason, Mansa Monson, whose reign in Segu the novel begins with, temporised that "Islam was dangerous: it undermined the power of kings, according sovereignty to one supreme god who was completely alien to the Bambara universe" (41). It is not surprising therefore that Tiekoro is executed because he replies the emissary of the king who had come to call him while in prayer with El-Hadj Omar that "I have no sovereign but Allah" (362).

The West and the Arabs in their game of power brought with them their educational institutions. These institutions as agencies of colonial cultures, reconstruct the imperial conditions of existence in Africa. Eucaristus, who is in Lagos while preparing to go to England to study theology, projects thus:

> He saw himself for what he was: a teacher in a mission school, without any definite status, unable to make a place for himself in the society he admired ... He must get away ... To go to a theological College in London and become a man of God. Weren't they the harbingers of the new conquering civilisation (392)?

The “will to truth” in Islam is not only through the educational apparatus but also through the ultimate human sacrifice. El Hadj Omar's motto is "there is no god but God and if they refuse, cut off their heads”(447). In the novel this is presented as a

mask for power, as a tactic and a strategic development of imperial power. The islamization of Segu is not only to possess the people's souls but also to seize the city and "all its power - horses, men, gold, cowries" (434). In *Segu*, there is the deconstruction and demythologisation of religion as a body of ultimate truth upon which man is to subtend. It is demonstrated how in every "will to truth", which is "a system of exclusion... the prohibitions that surround it very soon reveal its link with desire and with power" (Foucault 1972). As Condé says in *Segu***:** "didn't Islam carry its own exclusion with it"' (429). It is in this direction that Tiekoro's *zawiya*, Islamic school in Segu, is to be seen as the seed of Islamic power; by it he attracted over "two hundred pupils, all from the most aristocratic families of Segu" (327). The children of the high and mighty including the nephew of the late Mansa Monson all give social credibility to this venture. This transforms Tiekoro into the vehicle of Islamic power in Segu, its open door to the outside.

Mansa Monson's successor, Mansa Da Monzon, faced with the threat of the Islamized Fulani, is forced to make the consideration that it has become "urgent to make peace with his brothers and rivals in Kaarta and forge a common front 'But on what pretext'" (132). The king, in dire need of support against the invading Islam, took counsel to reinstate Dousika who his father has banished from court. Dousika was banished from the court on the allegation by his rival, Samake, that he was in league with the same Kulibaly of Kaarta with whom the king now wants to forge a common front. This move fascinates Da Monzon because of the depth of understanding it reveals to him about power and how to hold on to it, even when Dousika had been ill to the point of death. Dousika dies while Da Monzon was on his way to visit him. However, his praise-singer was sent to the Dousika family and a 'royal burial' was accorded him on Tietigui's advice. The King

> Once again […] admired Tietigui's shrewdness. Births, marriages and deaths [rites of passage] - they were all events to be made use of by anyone who wanted to rule the world! He nodded (135).

Mansa Demba, in order to hold power and save his dynasty from the Jihad invasion of El-Hadj Omar signs alliance with Amadou Amadou of Macina on the condition that he and his people get converted to Islam. He commands the destruction of people's ancestral courts and altars by his army under the supervision of Alhadji Guidado, the Leader of Macina's delegation while he secretly shields the ones in his palace. However, this confounds the people of Segu who still so largely reject Islam that they ask rhetorically, "how does he hope to keep his power?" (472). Tiefolo, the fa of Traore's family resists this mock acknowledgement of Islam and conversion when the Fulani delegates, "entered [his] compound as if they were conquerors". Tiefolo is killed; the *dubale* tree and ancestral courts were also destroyed. Muhammad, whose father was the first convert and martyr of Islam in Segu, and Alfa, the son of Alhadji Guidado, head of the Macina delegates, witness, Islam de-mystified in this counterproductive action as a brutal political gimmick.

> In a short time, they had discovered all the horror of religious fanaticism, and of the scheming for power that so often lay behind it…. Alfa Guidado stayed

> slumped beside Tiefolo's corpse. A moment earlier he had never doubted his own religion. He had lived only through and for Allah, ... He suddenly understood there was no universal god ... and to take away a man's religion, the keystone of his life was to condemn him to death…. He felt he would never forget this sight of his father profaning the altars of the Traore (476-7).

And when war finally breaks open between the allied forces of Segu and Macina against the invasion of El Hadj Omar, Muhammad hears someone shout "La ilaha ill Alla" and wonders:

> Who was it who shouted that? Probably those who thought they were fighting in the name of God (409).

This discovery that Alfa and Muhammad make by actually experiencing the practice of the religious faith they have acceded to, that has delimited, defined, confined their appetites and positioned their angle to the cosmos, is the discovery that Condé would have everyone make. It is part of the point of injury and lamentation, and the burden of African memory today (Soyinka 1999) Koumare, the fetish priest of the Dousika Traore's family, has made this discovery right from the beginning of the novel:

> But Koumare was troubled. The spirits of the gods and of the ancestors hadn't concealed from him the fact that this new god, this Allah who'd adopted young Tiekoro, was invincible. He would be like a sword. In his name the earth would run with blood; fire would crackle through the fields. Peaceful nations would take up arms, son would turn away from father; brother from brother. *A new aristocracy would be born, and new relationships between human beings* (42, emphasis mine).

The king uses an inclusive strategy as a means of controlling his subjects; El Hadj Omar uses an exclusive strategy so that the moment you believe Islam, the king becomes irrelevant to you. The two are manipulating the people's concern for ultimate meaning and truth; both are single-mindedly engaged in the struggle for power and territory. The difference is that the political reality is foregrounded in the person of the king but is heavily disguised in Islam.

But the new mode of human relationships under Allah brings about a conflictual relationship of the individual with his body. The individual must now begin to win the victory over himself like Winston Smith in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1980). This, Soyinka and Ulli Beier say, is absent in the traditional societies. In traditional religion, the human personality is seen in a complexity that contains and bridges contradictions through an open and accommodating, and therefore liberating, ethos (Soyinka 1992). However, the ultimate effect of power is realised in the body. The displacement of traditional ritual by the introduction of the "will to truth" implanted through organised discourse, formalised apparatus of education, corporal punishment and ultimate threat constitutes the manipulation of body in Islam. Through the technology of learning, memory and practice, Islamic power

controls bodies, attitudes and actions of individuals. The power of Islam here manifests in psychosomatic relations. Muhammad and his peers were to live on the proceeds of their begging around no matter how rich their parents were. This is because of the need to mortify the body. A life of destitution is seen as akin to spiritual elevation and if anyone of them took ill, they were not to "intervene between life and death, the stronger wins" (378).

The result of all this is the creation of a double consciousness in the individual as revealed right from the very beginning of the novel in chapter two:

> A few years before, Tiekoro had looked up to his father as a god. He had admired him much more than the Mansa. When had he started to think of him as a barbarian and an ignorant drinker of dolo? It was when the achievements of the Muslims had begun to acquire importance in his life. But the fact that he'd stopped admiring his father didn't mean he didn't love him any more. So Tiekoro suffered from a conflict between his heart and his head, between instinctive feelings and intellectual reasoning (22).

In Tiekoro, therefore is the echo of the archetypal ambiguity perfected in the character of Samba Diallo, in *Ambiguous Adventure*. However, this schism was to reach a schizophrenic stage at the end:

> Contrary to what Siga thought, Tiekoro was suffering tortures ... He would have liked to throw himself on the ground and howl like a woman at a funeral to rid himself of his anguish and remorse. But the personality he had adopted years ago, that of a sage preoccupied by God alone, clung to him. He couldn't stop himself from saying the words; making the gestures and adopting the attitudes of his double (315).

Islamic ritual and erudition, the procedures of exclusion and mechanisms of discrimination, which operate in his body toward repression, finds equal resistance in that body. Therefore, we see his body, which is the repository of his whole ancestral and social history, struggle against the Islam in his mentality. The sub-structure of his personality is imbued with his experience of Segu but his consciousness is enamoured by Islam. This is a kind of schism between the individual and himself. This is bio-power or somato-power and here it is a counter power:

> [...] Worship God in truth and pure, colourless light. The divine truth blooms in the fields of love and charity. That was the degree of faith which Tiekoro aspired to *but would his body; his stupid, greedy, despicable body*, let him reach it (94, emphasis mine)

The clue to this obstacle, resistance that Islam faces in the subjection of his body is found here:

> Moreover; as Tiekoro had been used to making love to his father's young slaves ever since he was twelve years old, the purity and chastity laid upon him by his chosen religion was a torture (83).

The renunciation of the body is not only in Islam but also in Christianity. The individual is at war with himself, to place his body in a particular way of life that a particular conception of the relationship between himself and being to which he has subscribed and upon which is invested certain effects of power and privilege, requires. Eucaristus, the son of Naba while preparing for a seminary college in England also agonises in himself: “Yes; but what about his body? Well he would conquer that too, would turn his lamentable fleshy form into a temple worthy of its creator. What an inspiring task to conquer oneself!” (392).

In this battle over oneself, there seems to emerge neither victor nor vanquished! This results in a duality, a hybris of consciousness and culture with a resultant tragic vision "infinitely forlorn, infinitely disturbing" (442). The human dilemma that the changing religio-cultural environment of the characters presents reveals the predatory and devalorising effect of Islam and Christianity on African humanism. Distortion and perversion are not only inscribed in the African character, but also symbolically represented in its space:

> Each of the occupying powers had left its own traces behind, so that the town was a jumble of buildings in different styles (204).

The significance of Olubunmi in the novel also expresses this kind of personality but in a form of dressage:

> Olubunmi had done several years of Koranic study; and also been initiated into the secret societies. So he wore gris-gris around his waist intermingled with squares of parchment bearing verses from the Koran, of which he could also recite a few Suras. He dressed like a Muslim but wore his hair long and braided. In short, he epitomised the transitional period through which Segu was passing (448).

How interesting to note that Olubunmi here is an epitome of the effects of changes that the relations of forces in Segu precipitate. Ironically this transitional period seems to be a frozen one as contemporary African individuals and cultures remain in this condition till this moment. It seems the way to stay alive! But while Olubunmi seems to have succeeded in navigating these differences, Muhammad has started losing the ability to give the situation any coherent meaning. He could no longer tell what he ought to be or do, neither did he remember his prayers. Acedia has started to set in, values are becoming indeterminate and the personality, devitalised.

The stable sense of personality and identity hitherto shared in the integrative world of traditional rituals has ceased with the coming of Islam and Christianity, and the human personality now fully manifests the investments of forces. Maryse Condé has captured the past for ideological reasons. She has shown the primary place of a regime of truth in determining what the community and individuals do, as well as why and how they do it. Condé has portrayed religious truth "as a “matrix of individuation” which forms, shapes, and governs individuality" (Smart

1986: 162). This allows for a picture of society that exposes the techniques and tactics by which relations of power and truth have constituted forms of domination through which the individual governs self and others, and is governed, and on the basis of which an elaborate social structure is built. The political rationality of this historical novel projects the apparatus of the feudal power, the whole ensemble and heterogeneous relations through which a complex process of power is exercised and its displacement by Islam.

The novel is more focussed on the threat posed by Islamic revolution than of western imperialism. The experience with the West happened outside Segu but the immediate problem of *Segu* is Islam. This is because it ambitiously portends the dethronement of fetish kings and the displacement of the religious traditions and fundamental relationships that guarantee the hegemonic relations which sustain the king and the aristocracy in Segu. Therefore, since it is impossible to create a fibre around any human community, the inevitable changes in the contemporary African society must be seen as against the traditional life and *status quo* that have been overthrown. The status quo is principally based on the symbiotic relationship between man and nature and as has been earlier pointed out, this is the distinctive feature of a feudal society that *Segu* depicts. Change in the community in *Segu* is not organic but violently triggered from outside, it shocks and shatters the system and the individual. Cheikh Hamidou Kane describes the forces from outside in *Ambiguous Adventure* thus: "The external is aggressive. If man does not conquer it, then it destroys man, and makes him a victim of tragedy" (Kane 1963: 79).

The tragedy of the Traore family made more symbolically evident by the cutting down of the *dubale* tree. By additional information in the footnotes, we are told that the Mansa on the throne at this point in time Oitala Ali, was the last Bambara Mansa. This shows that the ritual system and family structure are coterminous with the kingdom. The dubale tree does not only stand for the family but also for the kingdom. This point is crucial to understanding the concern of the novel. This is because the kingdom is projected as the family writ large. The ritual system, family and the kingdom are concentric circles and the ritual/family relationships and power are the micro-mechanisms of the kingdom.

Undermining the organic ritual unity the family is founded upon is the basis of the internal contradictions the kingdom of Segu, hence its weakening and the vacillation of its kings at the encounter with Islam. This demonstrates what Obierika says in *Things Fall Apart* of the colonialist: “He has put a knife on the things [rituals] that held us together and we have fallen apart” (Achebe 1958: 124-5).

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