

NOTES

Methodology

While going through a notebook with its owner, I generally left it to the writer to comment – or not – on each page. Thus, for some pages the information on the page is supplemented by detailed comment, whereas for others I do not have much explanation. Demba's notebook is not as thoroughly commented upon as Moussa's.

I have decided to offer the reader a view of the whole notebook, even of pages for which I do not have additional information, in order to give an overview of its content in terms of genres, languages and lay-out.

The descriptions of each page

Photographs are legible and as such do not require a full transcription. Given the highly heterogeneous nature of the documents, a full transcription in a text-like manner would miss the juxtaposition of short notations, lists and other non-textual elements that make up the notebooks. Referring directly to the photographs provides the reader with a visual sense of the handwriting and the graphic lay-out, which are essential features of these texts.

Furthermore, the two notebooks presented here contain texts for which transcription and translation are both challenging and present little interest: Islamic texts, which are provided in a form of transliteration that does not follow scientific norms, are meant to be recited in Arabic by the writer who only gets a partial understanding of the meaning; Bamanan incantations have a literal meaning often obscure even to their owners, and even more elusive in a literal translation.

Thus the choice has been made to provide detailed description for each page, presenting the languages in use, the source if known, and the general meaning or use of the text. Transcripts are provided for some of the text units when it seems relevant. Titles and other notations are translated into English and their signification detailed.

Conventions

For each textual unit I detail the language and source when known, either from an interview with the writer or from textual evidence. I use the following conventions:

In brackets () I insert explanations and glosses.

In hooks [] I propose conjectures.

introduces an orthographic correction of words or phrases when necessary.

Translation into English is provided after a slash /.

I use the following abbreviations:

Bam. for Bamanan

Ar. for Arabic

Fr. for French

Confidentiality

Personal names have been blurred on the following photographs: Demba's 5 and 7; Moussa's 1, 2, 6, 11, 12. Some first names appear in list of credits without blurring, since given the commonness of these names it is not sufficient to identify individuals.

DEMBA COULIBALY'S NOTEBOOK – PHOTOGRAPHED IN MARCH 2003 (PAGES 1–11) AND JULY 2003 (PAGES 12–13)

Photo 1 (p. 1)

Content: a prayer, continued on p. 3 and p. 5.

Language: Arabic, transliterated using the Latin-based alphabet with a French-like orthography.

Source: this text is said to be a copy of a text copied from the son of Mamadou Hakilidouman, a local Islamic scholar.

(Page 2 was blank and wasn't photographed.)

Photo 2 (p. 3)

Continuation of the text beginning on page 1.

Photo 3 (pp. 4–5)

Page 4

Abbreviated notation about taxes.

Language: French.

D... (for Demba)	Rest[ant] / Reminder	Imp[ôts] / Taxes	3590
B... (for another first name)	Recup[érer] / To recover	"	60770

(A person's name)

Page 5

End of the text beginning on page 1.

Photo 4 (pp. 6–7)

Page 6

Content: notes on farming and a *wird*.

Languages: notes on farming are in French; the text of the *wird* is in Arabic, with French used for instructions.

Distribution Intransit can [common abbreviation for *campagne*] 2002 / Distribution inputs for 2002 campaign

20/5/2002	Semence coton	/ Cotton seed	8 sacs 50 kgs / 8 50kg sacks
21/5/2002	Herbicide coton	/ Cotton herbicide	27 Bids [<i>bidons</i>] / 27 cans
11/7/2002	Engrais compl[exe]	/ Complex fertilizer	16 sacs / 16 sacks
" – " – "	Urée	/ Urea	8 " / 8 sacks
6/7– 2002	Eng[rais] compl[exe]	/ Complex fertilizer	6 " / 6 sacks
" – " – "	Urée	/ Urea	1 sac / 1 sack

Roudi Alassane (a *wird* with this title)

Bissilahi rahamani arahimi

Alahoumassali alassahidina mohamadu alanabihou, alikarimou.

(100 fois / 100 times) Lahilaha- Ilalahou, malikoulihaquou almoubinou,
mohamedourassouroulahi

Page 7

Another text titled as a *wird* (in Arabic and Bamanan) and two Qu'ranic verses (in Arabic). The whole page is dated in French, 'Le 30-6-2002' / '30 June 2002' in the top margin. The first text is introduced as a *roudi* (*wird*: see main article, note 7), but the content is a mixed text that includes Bamanan words, notably the term *nasi*, which refers to the water obtained by washing off a Qu'ranic board. Numbers also appear in the margin. This entry was not commented upon by Demba and I am unable to provide a further description.

Kourssiyou is the name of the Qu'ranic verse known as Verse of the Throne, II, 255. It is given in a transliteration that follows French orthography.

Laqad diâ-a Koum are the first words and usual designation of verses 128 and 129 of sura X.

Photo 5 (pp. 8–9)

Page 8

Three *kilisiw* or 'incantations' (in Bamanan, with some French words).

Each is titled *Bissimilaye*, the opening formula borrowed from Arabic. Here the word is used as a title and underlined; the full text follows. The texts display the formal characteristics of the genre, notably parallelisms. The closing formula is the usual phrase 'ne ko Ala, ne ko a kira' / 'I say God, I say his Prophet', or 'in the name of God and His Prophet'.

Each *kilisi* is followed by instructions.

For the first one, after the text of the incantation, a prescription is given in French: 'Récité dans l'huile et masse sur le ventre avec trace croize + sur le dos' / 'To recite on oil and massage on the belly while tracing a cross + on the back'.

The second is followed by an instruction mixing Bamanan and French:

jiri : jangarable boulou, kourou 3 homme femme 4 kourou, (#jiri: cangarabilen bulu, kuru 3 homme femme 4 kuru)/ tree: kinkeliba leaf, 3 balls [for a]man [, for a] woman 4 balls.

The third is shorter and also includes reference to a tree, with the instruction that it is or should be combined with a herbal medicine (*fura*).

Page 9

An address in French and a prayer in Arabic.

The address of a relative in Libreville with his phone number is given (personal information has been blurred in this photograph).

The prayer is a *roudi* (analysed above) associated with one of the names of God (*Latifou*, from *Al-Latîf* / The Gentle), referring to a specific Qu’ranic verse. The Bamanan *dugahou* (*#dugawu*) is another Arabic-derived term – from *du‘a* / petitionary prayer. This prayer is normally recited after Verse 19 of sura XVII, which here appears just after. Finally, an instruction for use is provided in French:

à Roudi chaque Vendredi dans 1 mois / [Repeat] the prayer every Friday for one month.
Répéter lablution chaque moment / Repeat ritual ablution each moment.

Photo 6 (p. 10)

This page displays two columns providing accounting for expenses on a feast, maybe on the occasion of a marriage.

Both Bamanan and French are used. Note that Demba follows the convention, which was in use in early literacy classes, of writing Bamanan in block letters and without any form of capitalization.

In the right hand column expenses for preparing an important meal are listed in French and Bamanan: kilo 200 ɲɔ #ɲɔ / 200 kg of millet; riz 100 kgs / 100 kg of rice; 4 poulets / 4 chickens; nɔnɔ / milk. Prices are given in *doromé* (the count unit of 5 FCFA) as in usual oral accounting: thus, 7,000 for 200 kg of millet means 35,000 F CFA. Other entries refer to gifts: *woro 12 songo* / the price of 12 kola nuts, or, in the other list, *bilasira*/ literally, ‘the gift you offer when accompanying someone back’. Personal names also appear. Some notations are abbreviated.

Photo 7 (p. 11)

Two records of arrangements with herdsmen in charge of his cattle, and unidentified calculations.

Languages: French and Bamanan.

As discussed in the main article, these contract-like entries register agreements with Fula pastoralists to whom Demba entrusts his cattle when they are taken to graze in distant locations for long periods.

The first text is particularly detailed and follows an institutional model, with dates according to both the civil calendar (the Gregorian calendar in use in Mali) and the ‘Bamanan’ moon-based calendar, along with Demba’s signature.

The second text begins in French but continues in a mixed French and Bamanan form.

Photo 8 (pp. 12–13)

Page 12

A series of three prayers, each to be repeated a specified number of times, numbered, and a notation regarding farming.

Languages: Arabic and French for instructions.

The text of the first prayer is followed by the instruction ‘à réciter 129 fois’/ ‘to be recited 129 times’ and specifically labelled ‘Ouverture’ / ‘Opening’. As on page 9, this is Verse 19 of sura XVII.

The second prayer is identified as ‘roudi de Latifou’ (see comments on this title on p. 9), ‘à réciter 9 ou 19 fois’ / ‘to be recited 9 or 19 times’.

Compared with the first appearance of this ‘Latifou Roudi’ on p. 9, this page reverts to the order initially followed (with the sura before the *dugawu*), and thus provides the correct order for the *wird* (as for instance in A. Tall’s book, quoted in the main article, note 9).

The third prayer is again followed by an instruction on the number of recitations required (‘à réciter 7 ou 17 fois’/ ‘to be recited 7 or 17 times’).

Finally appears a text titled as: ‘aide-mémoire’:

Sanikourika falatanessa

A écrire [#écrire] 7 fois (Chaque Lundi) ou au début lecture recité [#réciter] 3 ou 7 fois / To be written 7 times (every Monday) or recited at the beginning of a reading 3 or 7 times.

Page 13

An instruction for a prayer and a farming-related note

Languages: the first text is mainly in Arabic (in a slightly different style of transcription, suggesting a source distinct from previous Arabic texts) with a phrase in Bamanan and a word in French; the second mixes French and Bamanan.

The first text provides the instructions for a prayer in the course of the accomplishment of a ritual prayer (Ar. *salât*), as evidenced by the mention of the *rakan* (Ar. *rak‘a*), the elementary unit within the Islamic prayer. The name *fatiya* #fâtiḥa refers to the first sura of the Qu’ran, always recited while performing the *salât*, and the closing formula ‘salamuhaleykum’, which is the end of the *salât*, indicates that another series of fâtiḥa should be recited after the *salât* itself.

‘I’ refers to sura 108 by quoting its first verse.

‘II’ provides the full text of sura 94, apart from the first two words (Alam nashrah) which here are replaced by the Bamanan phrase ‘alaminesiraba’ / ‘the large way where one accepts ordeals [as coming from God]’. This is enigmatic and could be either a mistake while copying giving the phonetic proximity of the Bamanan phrase to Arabic original, or an attempt at translating.

The two final notations pertain to the agricultural domain.

Le Moringa = Basi yiri #jiri /The Moringa = couscous tree (tree whose leaves are used as an ingredient in a sauce served with millet couscous).

Date Semis Kente ani ñeṅebile #kende ani ñeṅebilen / Date of sowing of sorghum and another (unidentified) plant.

Le 14–15–16/8/2003 juillet / On 14–15–16/8/2003 July [sic].

Photo 1 Cover

First name (blurred) Coulibaly
NICOLLE 1933 (as the writer told me, this was an inscription on a truck in the garage he was working in in Koutiala)

Photo 2 (page 1)

First name (blurred) Coulibaly
Cahier de cōtrole #contrôle
Nicolle 1933
(List of three names of people, some of whom communicated information reproduced within the notebook.)

Photo 3 (pp. 2–3)

(Page 2 is blank.)

Page 3

Mardi le 23 octobre 2001 / Tuesday 23 October

A page listing credits he granted his customers, that he crosses out after reimbursement.

Photo 4 (pp. 4–5)

Page 4 continuation of p. 3.

BK : Petti mil [#petit mil] / small millet)

A note related to a friend of Moussa's, a teacher in post in the village. Moussa had been buying millet for him, and keeps a record of money spent with each line giving the amount of millet bought, in brackets the price per kilogram, the cost (by *doromé*, the 5 FCFA unit used in counting money, as discussed above) and what remains.

Page 5

Mardi le 1 janvier 2002 / Tuesday 1 January 2002

List of family members harvesting cotton, with some indications on weight.

Photo 5 (pp. 6–7)

Table on the same matter, displaying an accounting process in order to determine how much each harvester should get from participation in the harvest. The calculation is rather complex, since it implies diminishing for each harvester the initial amount in a 'fair' measure (which works only approximately).

Photo 6 (pp. 8–9)

Page 8 is blank.

Page 9 contains unidentified calculations.

Photo 7 (pp. 10–11)

These are the first pages in a section (pp. 10–15) written in green ink, indicating religious matters.

Languages: Arabic, transliterated using the Latin-based alphabet with a French-like orthography, with short instructions in French.

Page 10

M[ardi] 26.8.[2]003 / Tuesday 26 August 2003

This page provides the main elements in order to perform the ritual prayer (*salât*): the *fâtiḥa*; then the formula ‘of the salutations’ to be recited while seated; then the formulas to be said while bending one self, in standing and seated position.

The source for this section is very likely to be a booklet on Islamic prayer, as frequently found on markets and in Islamic bookshops in Mali.

Page 11

From this page onwards, Moussa has copied the text of the last suras of the Qu’ran from the end. These are the shorter suras most commonly recited during the *salât*, and they are taught in this order in Islamic teaching.

On this page Moussa has copied suras 114, 113 and 112.

Photo 8 (pp. 12–13)

Page 12

Continuation of this section, with suras 111, 110, 109.

Page 13

M[ercredi] 27.8. [2]003 / Wednesday 27 August 2003

Continuation of this section, with suras 108, 107, 106.

Photo 9 (pp. 14–15)

Page 14

Continuation of this section, with suras 105, 104, 103.

A date appears in the middle of the page: J[eudi] 28.8.[2]003 / Thursday 28 August 2003

Page 15

Lundi 9.1.[2]003 / Monday 1 September 2003

Continuation of this section, with sura 102, interrupted after the second verse, thus in the middle of the sura (which has 8 verses).

Photo 10 (pp. 16–17)

Double blank page.

Photo 11 (pp. 18–19)

Page 18 is blank

Page 19

Lundi 22 Avril 2002 – 4[e] mois / Monday 22 April 2002

An address in Bamako.

Another name and initials.

The following text was presented by the writer as a *dalilu*, a magical device to relieve a woman with an abundant period.

It is in Bamanan, with insertion of Arabic.

#juma fajiri nsanan neji
Qul huwa Allahu sijne 7, sijenikedaba
A mugu be bo ni o ye, lemuru kumun
O be ci fo u, o be ke k'a tege ko.
Ka mugu bo, o b'a lakari

Translation:

At dawn on Friday, the resin of the gum copal tree,
'Qul huwa Allahu' (Sura of Monotheism) 7 times, the weeding hoe,
It's the one which one uses to extract the powder. The small green lemon,
It's chopped, and used to wash your hands; you extract the powder which serves as an
antidote.

The following text was labelled a *kilisi*, a magical incantation or spell:

#Ne mago be karisa la
A kera juman ye, a kera juguman ye
O te ne ka sira ye
Ala n'a kira kana o sa. Deminsennin
Kana o sa. Dugutigi sen kana k'a la

Translation:

I need so and so.
Whether for good, whether for bad,
I don't care.
May God and His Prophet not die from it.
May the little child not die from it. May the village chief not be involved.

The last text on this page was presented as a *bamananfura*, a traditional medicine.
It is continued on the following page.

#Surukuntomnon ladon. A be ke k'o furake.
Ani jalabuluneru, o ni namabulu
Dayelebali. O bee be tige so, ni i tise, i te se a si ma.
Ni a be susu, kolonkala te jo a la.

N'a forokira ji kalaman be ke filen konɔ,
N'a sumana ka se minni hake ma,
Dɔ be soli minta ye, I be k'o a tɔ la

Translation:

The mistletoe of the Buffalo thorn. That is what is used to cure it.
As well as the green leaves of the African mahogany, and the leaves of the Wild bauhinia
Impossible to open. One should cut all of them at home, if you can't, you can't get to the seed.
While crushing it, the pestle should not stop.
Once crushed, one should put hot water in the calabash,
When cooled to the point one can drink it,
Some part of it is taken to be drunk, the rest you use to wash yourself.

Photo 12 (pp. 20–3) (the sheet corresponding to pp. 21–2 was cut as apparent in the photograph)

Page 20

Continuation of the *bamananfura*.

Page 23

Dimanche 8[e] Mois – 2003 / Sunday 8th Month 2003
A Bamako / In Bamako
List of people, with numbers and a count.

Photo 13 (pp. 24–5)

On these pages and the following Moussa has compiled results of matches of the Africa Cup of Nations football tournament hosted by Mali in 2002. He seems to have experimented with a hierarchical way of noting the results, with the semi-finals and the final isolated and framed on p. 25, but there are lacunae and errors (the first semi-final was between Nigeria – not Algeria – and Senegal; the date of the final was 9 (not 29) February; Cameroon won (not Senegal). Everything is rewritten anew on the following double-page. Some country names, initially written with errors, are corrected in later versions.

Photo 14 (pp. 26–7)

Pages 26 to 28 offer all the results, in strict chronological order, with more regular notations, and rectifying some errors.

Photo 15 (pp. 28–9)

Notations on the Africa Cup of Nations (2002), with unfinished notations on the 2002 World Cup in Japan.

Page 29 is blank

Photo 16 (pp. 30–3) A drawing of a truck.