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Power and Knowledge. The Representation of the Mande World in the Works of Park, Caillié, Monteil, and Delafosse

' . . . any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer [. . .] any representation is *eo ipso* implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the "truth", which is itself a representation.'

(Said 1978: 272).

In an article on the use of tropes in ethnographic writing, Mary Louise Pratt (1986a) points out that anthropologists have a tendency to distinguish ethnography from earlier genres of writing about the Other. She goes on to suggest that in doing so, they limit the critical examination of ethnographic writing and gloss over the fact that contemporary discursive practices are often inherited from these earlier genres. Pratt's challenge to anthropologists broadens ongoing efforts within the discipline to scrutinize the production of ethnographic texts. The recent attention accorded to the rhetoric of representation comes from a new awareness of the power of discourse and involves not only an exploration of textual strategies but also a reexamination of the fieldwork process. At issue is the transformation of personal experience into an authoritative ethnographic text or, as Clifford (1988: 25) has aptly put it:

' . . . how [. . .] a garrulous, overdetermined cross-cultural encounter shot through with power relations and personal cross-purposes [is] circumscribed as an adequate version of a more or less "other world" composed by an individual writer'.

Considering that fieldwork has become the legitimizing foundation of twentieth-century anthropology, it is not surprising that this problematic

should generate reflection as well as heated discussion. Nonetheless, the privileging of direct experience as a source of authority goes back much further in time and is, in fact, no longer restricted to anthropology. Fieldwork has also become part of the methodological repertoire of the other human sciences. Ewald (1987) has only recently reconfirmed its importance for historians of Africa. While the specific techniques of fieldwork may vary with the focus of inquiry, its practitioners, regardless of disciplinary background, must grapple with the issue of representation.

It is in this context that I wish to focus on four authors—Mungo Park, René Caillié, Charles Monteil, and Maurice Delafosse—whose writings have loomed large as secondary sources for more than one generation of scholars interested in the Mande world. I will examine their modes of authority and representation and, in the process, elucidate the interplay between power and knowledge. Following Rosaldo (1986: 88) I differentiate between ‘. . .the individual who wrote the work, [. . .] the textualized persona of the narrator, and [. . .] the textualized persona of the field investigator’. My analysis begins with the first Europeans to reach the Middle Niger and publish accounts of their experiences (Park and Caillié). It then moves on to two colonial administrators who produced scholarly works about the people they had come to govern (Monteil and Delafosse). This will allow me both to compare different individuals who work within the same genre and to probe for continuities and differences between genres.

The Visions of the Travellers-Narrators

In contrast to later explorers of the region, Mungo Park and René Caillié did not undertake their journeys as members of large expeditions, nor were they emissaries sent to negotiate treaties with African potentates. Yet the travels of both of these men were not motivated so much by personal quests for knowledge, enshrined in Enlightenment philosophy, as by national interests promoted by the societies which sponsored exploration. Although Mungo Park made two trips into the Middle Niger region, I will confine my discussion of him to the account of his first voyage. He perished during his second trip so that the notes he had taken prior to his death were published without his intervention.

Park grew up in Scotland and was trained to be a physician. But rather than practicing at home he took a position as assistant surgeon on a ship which went on a year-long voyage to the East Indies. Following his return he presented himself to the African Association as a potential successor to Major Houghton, an explorer who had died in an effort to reach the Niger river. Even though Park was not yet 24 years old at the time, he was nonetheless successful in obtaining the appointment and

sailed in 1795 for West Africa. He was sent with explicit instructions from the African Association to explore the source and course of the Niger river and to visit riverine cities. In the preface to his journal, Park the narrator (1799: 2) expressed the motivation of Park the fieldworker *qua* explorer as follows:

'I had a passionate desire to examine into the productions of a country so little known; and to become experimentally acquainted with the modes of life, and character of the natives. [. . .] If I should perish in my journey, I was willing that my hopes and expectations should perish with me; and if I should succeed in rendering the geography of Africa more familiar to my countrymen, and in opening to their ambition and industry new sources of wealth, and new channels of commerce, I knew that I was in the hands of men of honour. . .'

There is thus no pretense about the interests which underpin the quest for knowledge. His noble intent is coupled with humility about his achievements. Park downplays his abilities as a narrator but suggests (*ibid.*: a2) that the deficiencies of the author might be compensated for by the achievements of the explorer: 'As a composition, it [the account] has nothing to recommend it, but *truth*. It is a plain, unvarnished tale; without pretensions of any kind, except that it claims to enlarge, in some degree, the circle of African geography'. Upon his arrival at Pisania, a British trading station on the Gambia river, the explorer begins by acquainting himself with his surroundings and endeavoring to learn the Mande language. His five-month stay at Pisania was disrupted by a lengthy illness so that it is unclear just how much progress he made in his Mande studies. Park collected information from traders about the areas he intended to traverse but concluded that their accounts were unreliable and that they did not want him to take the journey. His difficulties in obtaining satisfaction from the traders only increased his desire to 'get at the truth' by seeing with his own eyes. When members of a caravan which he wanted to join were as evasive as those he had contacted before, he decided to set out on his own. His British host Laidley arranged the employment of an interpreter, a freed slave from Jamaica who had returned *via* England and who spoke both Mande and English. Laidley also gave Park one of his slaves as a personal servant; the latter's reward would be his freedom should Park be satisfied with him. The unequal relationship which linked Park to his interpreter and his slave was symbolized in their respective modes of transport: Park would ride on a horse while each of his companions received a donkey. Before the three could set out on their quest, however, a small group of travellers did offer its services for a portion of the journey. Park, though lacking the requisite knowledge to travel on his own, imperiously subsumed the men among his servants and stated (*ibid.*: 30): 'Thus I had no less than six attendants, all of whom had been taught to regard me with great respect; and to consider that their safe return

hereafter, to the countries on the Gambia, would depend on my preservation'. By what means their return to the Gambia could be compromised by Park's British friends is left unclear though the threat may have been added by the narrator for its rhetorical effect and also to suggest that British merchants in the area were in a position of power.

Park's host and two other British traders accompanied the small caravan for the first two days of the journey before they took leave. The narrator uses the drama of separation to convey a sentiment of loss and apprehension about the explorer's personal safety and to establish distance between himself and the people he would be encountering:

'...I [...] rode slowly into the woods. I had now before me a boundless forest, and a country, the inhabitants of which were strangers to civilized life, and to most of whom a white man was the object of curiosity or plunder. I reflected that I had parted from the last European I might probably behold, and perhaps quitted for ever the comforts of Christian society' (Park 1799 : 33).

The exigencies of travel, however, did not allow him to maintain this stance of isolation for long for he was approached by a group of people who demanded that he pay his respects to the local ruler or pay taxes. Park portrays himself as the subject of action in the ensuing exchange, effacing the presence and mediation of his interpreter: 'I endeavored to make them comprehend. . . I reasoned. . .' (*ibid.*). But his efforts at persuasion are unsuccessful and, lacking the wherewithal to impose his will, he deems it prudent to comply with their request. This was to be only the first such incident. His powerlessness is expressed time and again: '. . .as I was now entirely in his power, I thought it best to smooth the way by a present. . .' (*ibid.*: 53); and when the king of Bondou is shown to be coveting his coat he comments on it:

'The request of an African prince, in his own dominions, particularly when made to a stranger, comes little short of a command. It is only a way of obtaining by gentle means, what he can, if he pleases, take by force; and as it was against my interest to offend him by a refusal, I very quietly took off my coat, the only good one in my possession, and laid it at his feet' (*ibid.*: 55).

He has to tolerate even a violation of his person and is unable to protect his servant when a group of women surround him and demand presents: 'They tore my cloak, cut the buttons from my boy's clothes, and were proceeding to other outrages, when I mounted my horse and rode off, followed for half a mile by a body of these harpies' (*ibid.*: 50). His departure seems surprisingly easy under the circumstances but worse abuses await him. Travelling northward he comes into contact with Moors who seem to confirm his stereotypes of Muslims as fiercely religious and greedy. He is taken captive by the Moorish ruler and is harassed and insulted during his confinement. Park ultimately concludes that

even Moorish physiognomy expresses malevolence and that Moors are 'like the roving Arabs' (Park 1799: 159).

The explorer's vulnerability affects his relations with his travel companions who, with the exception of Demba, his slave, want to part company. Demba's loyalty is fateful when the Moors do not release him from captivity in spite of Park's implorations. This becomes the last straw for his interpreter Johnson; he simply refuses to continue. Park now has to make a crucial decision: should he attempt to continue alone, in spite of his difficulty in making himself understood and his loss of most of his material goods, or should he turn back. He resolves to face the risks rather than return to England without accomplishing his goals. He therefore takes leave of Johnson and hands over his notes. Johnson is never heard of again.

The tribulations Park undergoes in the course of his solitary quest often make him appear like a sad buffoon. By the time he approaches Segu, his horse is so weak that he has to walk and drive it before him. This, and his own ragged appearance, become the object of merriment in the Bambara villages he passes so that he is led to conclude: '. . . I believe the very slaves were ashamed to be seen in my company' (*ibid.*: 194). Lagging behind his travel companions and having to spend the night in one village, the headman limits his hospitality to a sleeping place and a drink of water. The following morning Park nevertheless attempts

' . . . both by entreaties and threats, to procure some victuals from the Dooty, but in vain. I even begged some corn from one of his female slaves, as she was washing it at the well, and had the mortification to be refused. However, when the Dooty was gone to the fields, his wife sent me a handful of meal, which I mixed with water, and drank for breakfast' (*ibid.*: 193).

This is not the only time that a woman takes pity on him. On the last leg of his journey, after having been robbed, stripped naked, and left for dead, he is taken in by a kind merchant, Karfa Taura, who then accompanies him back to Pisania. Despite the sentiment which links him to his host, the latter is denied coevalness (Fabian 1983); he belongs to a different age and cannot be an equal. For when Karfa admires things European in Pisania, Park takes this as a sign 'that he possessed a mind *above his condition*' (*ibid.*: 360). This is a fitting illustration of what Mudimbe (1988: 15) has called 'the negative category of the Same': 'Explorers do not reveal Otherness. They comment upon "anthropology" that is, the distance separating savagery from civilization on the diachronic line of progress'.

Given his ordeals and the length of his trip Park must have been unable to keep track of time. Yet his journal is arranged in chronological order with all of the entries carrying dates according to the conventions of travel literature. The dates lend authority by separating into clearly defined units experiences which have been reconstructed from memory

and which must often have been both like a dream and a nightmare. Toward the end of the account, there is an allusion to the differences in knowledge acquired by someone on the move as opposed to someone who remains in one place over a period of time. Having recovered from his illness and while waiting for his host Karfa Taura to prepare for the trip to the Gambia, he decides to devote his time to the goal of

'... augmenting and extending the observations I had already made on the climate and productions of the country; and of acquiring a more perfect knowledge of the natives, than it was possible for me to obtain, in the course of a transient and perilous journey through the country' (Park 1799: 257).

Up to this point descriptions had been brief and had related to phenomena encountered in the course of the protagonist's journey. The observations which follow are informational in elaborating directly on the material and human potential on the area. They are organized topically and interweave general statements in the passive voice with anecdotal evidence. The only parallel description had occurred early on in the account when he was still at Pisania, waiting to begin his trip.

There is reason to believe that Park did not write the account of his journey on his own. The anonymous editor of the journal of Park's posthumously published second trip discusses rumours suggesting that Park's account was written in large part by a certain Bryan Edwards. This man had been a plantation owner in Jamaica but had returned to England when abolition became an issue. He defended planters' interests in the House of Commons. As secretary of the African Association Edwards prepared a report for its members based on Park's reconstruction. A large part of this report was supposedly incorporated into the journal which was later published for the general public and translated into other European languages. Park himself states in the preface (*ibid.*: ix) that 'Mr. Edwards has kindly permitted me to incorporate, as occasion offered, the whole of his narrative into different parts of my work. . .'. The editor of Park's second voyage contends that Park was in constant contact with Edwards throughout the preparation of his publication. He further affirms that there is little doubt that Edwards' assistance was considerable even though it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the latter was involved in the composition. Park's account of his first voyage must therefore be read as a production of two writers—and consequently as two layers of "truth": a primary one who "saw, heard, and experienced" and a secondary one who, to a greater or lesser extent, shaped the narrative in the interest of literary and "scientific" merit.

René Caillié, the explorer who followed Park, had only an elementary education and reveals in the preface to his narrative that it was edited

by the geographer Jomard. Like Park, Caillié the narrator professes humility with respect to his account and its utility to science. He apologizes for the delay in publication, pointing out that he had no experience with writing and that the notes he brought back were concise and barely legible because often written "on the run". To reproduce them as the basis of his narrative thus required 'perseverance and all the scrupulous fidelity of my memory' (Caillié 1965, I: v). As in Park's case then, his text is constructed largely from memory and involves two authors. Caillié too employs the convention of dating entries, in many instances even suggesting at what time the caravan departed from a given location. In the preparation of the text, the explorer's observations change status to become "research", though qualified as being without solid foundations because of the necessary rapidity of his travel. The narrator states (*ibid.*: VII) with hindsight that:

'Mon but principal était de recueillir avec soin, avec exactitude, tous les faits qui tomberaient sous mes yeux, de quelque nature qu'ils fussent, et de me livrer spécialement à tout ce qui me paraissait intéresser les progrès de la géographie et de notre commerce en Afrique'.

Facts, therefore, present themselves to the gaze of an interested observer and are "collected". Caillié makes the primacy of vision explicit but also hints that more is involved when he regrets his lack of training in the 'natural and geographical sciences'. He notes (*ibid.*: x) that skills in this domain would have been useful when '. . . seul et livré à mes faibles moyens, je me trouvais chaque jour sur le théâtre d'un monde inconnu et vierge encore des regards de la curieuse et scientifique Europe'. His imagery of an unfolding play here reinforces the importance of the senses, especially vision, but he also implies that an untutored observer may not grasp all that is given to see. In short, facts do not simply present themselves but are shaped by the observer's background. This becomes all the more important when dealing with an "unknown world", unknown because not yet subjected to the penetrating gaze of an inquisitive Europe. The statement moreover establishes distance between the two worlds by making Europe the active subject which reveals a passive object.

Caillié's narrative depicts him as a young adventurer who went to Senegal at the age of 16. After several bleak months in Dakar he went to St. Louis but returned to Dakar when he heard about Major Gray's plans for an expedition into the interior. Having made the trip from St. Louis to Dakar on foot, he had second thoughts about taking part in the expedition and accepted free passage to Guadeloupe instead. Caillié became restless again after working there for only six months. Reading Mungo Park's journal reconfirmed his desire to penetrate into the African interior. He therefore sailed to Bordeaux and from there back to West

Africa. He arrived in St. Louis toward the end of the year 1818. Caillié now successfully appealed to the French governor for material support in order to enable him to live in a Moorish camp northeast of the Senegal river. The goal of this experiment was to gain an understanding of the Arabic language and the Muslim religion as a way of facilitating a future exploratory trip into the interior. Returning to St. Louis in order to obtain more funds, he found that the governor had left and that his successor was not amenable to extending his credit. He therefore made his way to Freetown in the hope of convincing the British governor to sponsor him. The latter refused his request but helped him find a job.

The news that the Société de géographie de Paris had offered a prize for the first person to reach Timbuctoo was all the incitement Caillié needed to use his small savings to help him realize his desires. Perhaps inspired by Mungo Park's difficulties with the Moors, Caillié conceived a shrewd plan to ensure himself safe passage: he would pretend to have been kidnapped from his Egyptian parents by Napoleon's soldiers and taken to France where he was eventually set free. Having made his way to Africa, he now wanted to traverse the interior to rejoin his parents. The smattering of Arabic and of the Koran he had learned during his stay with the Brakna Moors along with Arabic dress would serve to authenticate his story.

Caillié made contact with several Mande merchants in Freetown to win them over as potential travel companions. He asserts (1965, I: 217) that he had obtained their trust, a sentiment which he immediately turns into a resource: '. . . j'en profiterai pour les interroger sur les contrées que j'avais l'intention de parcourir. Enfin, pour gagner tout à fait leur amitié, je leur donnai quelques bagatelles; puis un jour, d'un air très mystérieux, je leur appris, sous le sceau du secret, que j'étais né en Égypte. . .'. Although he does not speak the Mande language, he assumes the posture of investigator and questions *them*. And if, as he thinks, their complete "friendship" could be bought with a few trifles, they nonetheless did not seem to believe his story at first so that he felt compelled to go one step further and recite some verses from the Koran as well as pray with them in the evening. His zeal as a Muslim was rewarded with their 'complete trust'. The relationship became so close that *they* could no longer do without him and, to his displeasure, invited him for dinner every night. But it all comes to naught when one of them accuses *him* of having stolen a silver toothpick and the others do not intervene on his behalf. He leaves their company and approaches another merchant who, however, prevents him from joining his caravan under a pretext. Caillié then concludes that his failure is due to the incongruity between his European attire and his professed faith. Feeling that the local white population would not be sympathetic to a change of dress, he leaves for Kakondy where 'there are no European establishments'. This assertion does not prove correct but is never modified.

Though he spends only nineteen days in the area and does not speak any of the local languages, he decides to 'use his time' to obtain information concerning the morals and habits of the indigenous populations. Only after providing the description does he reveal that, in the absence of his French host, he had undertaken some excursions with two local British merchants. The ethnographic present of the description conveys "facts" and hides the cultural and linguistic barriers not only between the Europeans and Africans in question but also between the Europeans themselves. Information about the Bago people, with whom Caillié never even came into contact, is also provided as statements of fact (1965, I: 240-241): 'they *are* idolatrous' and 'they *are* rather bizarre'.¹ Their morals are different than those of the other populations and this difference seems to reside in the fact that 'they are more industrious, and consequently happier [. . .] they prepare their fields the way we do in Europe'. The traveller thus sees, evaluates, and classifies. And, according to Mudimbe (1973: 39), this always seems to have the same effect:

' . . .le voyageur comprend qu'une fois l'objet dominé il saura comme les dieux savent et pourra, de ce fait, dire ce qu'il avait pressenti, ce qu'il a vu et appris dans cet ailleurs et comment il a pu y faire son creux. . .

La pertinence du discours du voyageur est en ceci: à l'instar des dieux, le voyageur est seul à savoir les fondements et les limites de ce que les autres ne sauront et ne pourront expérimenter que grâce à lui. Il peut donc librement et d'après ses humeurs interpréter un univers et lui donner les couleurs et les aberrations surgies de sa propre pensée comme il peut chercher patiemment normes et canons ayant présidé à sa structuration'.

When Europeans interact with Africans at trading posts, the former usually assume a commanding stance in the narration. Castagnet, Caillié's host, contacts some Mande merchants who are 'locally respected for their judgement, experience, and wealth' and *has them come* to make arrangements for Caillié's travel. He tells them Caillié's "myth" with eloquence but they seem unmoved and are won over only after some negotiation. According to the agreement they receive the equivalent of an ox for their services and they, in turn, provide a slave porter for Caillié.

Soon after their departure, his guide, through the mediation of a caravan member who speaks English, gives Caillié to understand that he might have difficulties traversing the Fouta and requests a piece of cloth. Here, Caillié uses his linguistic incompetence to his advantage and pretends not to understand. The incident is made to serve as confirmation that local merchants are greedy: White dependence translates into having to submit to exploitation. In this instance, however, Caillié

1. This and all subsequent translations from the French are my own. Emphasis here is mine, MGN.

resists and seems to get away with it. Apart from this interlude, daily accounts generally focus on travel progress and on the areas traversed so that the reader learns very little about the interactions between caravan members. Caillié's travel companions are usually depicted as social types ('les nègres esclaves, la femme de mon guide') or simply as 'Negroes' rather than as people with a personal identity with whom he interacts and on whom he depends. Only upon reaching a caravan-member's village does he introduce the person by name. When he speaks of local people in their absence, he simply refers to them as 'les naturels', i.e. as primitives, beings who are part of the environment. When, on the other hand, he reports meeting other travellers they are referred to in ethnic terms. Villages, too, are categorized according to the (assumed?) identity of their inhabitants. Along with the ethnic label of a village he frequently lists the number of inhabitants, as if he had personally counted them or as if there were a village registry open to any passerby. It becomes part of the text, as though counting people were the most natural thing in the world. When Caillié is laid over in a village at points where he needs to find another guide he alternately lauds people's hospitality and declares them stingy. There is a tension between his apparently successful interactions with them and the rhetorical devices which convey distance, such as "these Mandingoes" or "as they live in the ignorance and simplicity of our earliest ancestors" (Caillié 1965, I: 319).

Caillié alternately presents the explorer as the subject of action and as someone who requires another's intervention due to his inadequate command of the Mande language. His difficulties in communication, however, become evident only in the context of personal encounters rather than in the generalizations interwoven with direct experience. They are present as an undercurrent throughout the text but do not directly challenge his authority to represent.

In addition to his linguistic deficiencies, Caillié's assumed identity introduces another discordant element into the text. His attire had been meant to make him more alike, to allow him access to a trans-cultural community, and thus afford security of movement. Since he was not what he pretended to be, the reduction of difference and presumably of distance should have exposed to his gaze what might otherwise have remained hidden. But the superiority that might have been conveyed to his readers, had his disguise worked perfectly, is undercut by the fact that his story and his identity are continually questioned. This not only forced him to profess religious zeal and display his smattering of Arabic but also usually required the intervention of his host to authenticate his identity. In short, he depended on the complicity of his protector to convince, thus reducing the autonomy his attire might have given him. From the point of view of narration, Caillié's dual identity requires a double play: he must show the utility of his disguise while also reassuring the reader that he did not in fact become a Muslim.

When the explorer participates in Muslim prayers or recites verses from the Koran at several points in the text, the narrator quickly interjects that in reality he prayed to the Christian God.

The accounts of Park and Caillié are embedded in different national traditions but their modes of authority and representation are strikingly similar. Differences in the two narratives appear to be due to personal style and perhaps the respective *éminences grises* behind the text. Park's journal is more sentimental than Caillié's whereas the latter's account is heavier on description and allusions to economic potential throughout. Passing through an area Caillié might, for example, refer to 'a beautiful and well-cultivated plain' and comment on the industriousness of the people. Park, on the other hand, is generally more concerned with overcoming the obstacles he encounters. Both publications include 'scientific' appendices, prepared by geographers at home, which seek to draw out geographically significant facts, including calculations of distances. Jomard even laments the brevity of the vocabularies provided by Caillié as well as the fact that they are limited to only two local languages. Nonetheless, the appendices are clearly separated from the main texts so that there is no confusion of authority. The fundamental authority of the travellers-narrators derives from 'having been there' and not from a knowledge born of communication and involvement. But because description is embedded in personal narrative, the possibility of challenge is also given in the text. The textualized persona of the explorer appears both as hero and buffoon, actor and acted-upon.

The Perceptions of the Colonial Officials-Ethnographers

The continuity between these early travel writers and the two colonial officials-ethnographers who belong to a later phase in the European representation of the Mandé and their neighbors lies in the power to represent, a power which transcends the individuals involved. In the seventy years which intervened between the passage of René Caillié and the arrival of Charles Monteil and Maurice Delafosse there was a fundamental shift in the relationship between Europe and the Mandé world, and consequently in the context of interaction. Monteil and Delafosse, their personal sympathies notwithstanding, did not come as individuals whose trajectory (or even survival) was circumscribed by the good-will of those they encountered. Rather they arrived as representatives of a system that had the power to punish. It was their mission to impose a foreign will. Their writings are rooted in a scientific tradition which separates personal experience from 'objective' representation. Apart from any statements volunteered in the preface, their texts give no hint of the contingencies involved in producing them.

Background information about Charles Monteil is confined to a brief obituary and the short prefatorial statements which his son Vincent added to posthumously published articles. These limited sources indicate that Monteil was born in 1871 but make no reference to his educational background. He came to Ivory Coast as a member of the Kong column led by his brother and founded the post of Toumodi in 1893. Monteil remained in charge there until late 1894 when he took over at Thiassalé for a year. His stay in the Baule region was followed by assignments in what was then known as the French Sudan: 'chef de poste' at Médine from 1897 to 1899, and administrator of Jenne 'cercle' from 1900 to 1903. After his return to France he worked for one year at the Ministère des Colonies in Paris (heading the Bureau économique pour le Soudan), then at the Administration des Finances. He also obtained a law degree in 1906 and taught Sudanese languages at the École des langues orientales from 1904 to 1909. His departure from the École des langues orientales does not seem to have been initiated by him, for he states in a 1909 letter (Monteil 1968: 623) that he was 'not retained' for 1909-1910. Although he had no formal connection with African colonial affairs after this, he devoted a good deal of his spare time to the preparation of his 'field notes' for publication.

Monteil published four monographs² along with a number of articles without apparently exhausting the information he had collected. In contrast with his travellers-predecessors, Monteil the narrator does not textualize Monteil the colonial official *qua* fieldworker in the body of his works. The fieldworker is completely effaced from the monographs, appearing only in the brief introductions, and even the narrator remains on the margins. The reader learns nothing about the fieldworker's interaction with the local population or with his personnel. Monteil discloses that he relied on privileged informants and that he supplemented and verified what he was told by them with information from others; the identity of and his relationship to the latter are not revealed. In Médine, his three main informants included the village chief and his nephew, who had both received French schooling, and his interpreter, a man who had worked for the French all of his life. Another major source was the local tribunal where administrators of the time were involved in judging cases. The judicial context and his position as administrator-arbiter are made to appear completely unproblematic:

'...rien ne vaut comme d'être l'arbitre de maints débats judiciaires pour voir se révéler, sous ses aspects les plus caractéristiques, cette âme nègre, pour nous si difficilement accessible; il n'est certainement pas de moyen plus sûr de surprendre les secrets de la vie domestique et sociale, avec un luxe de détails ignoré des plus complaisants informateurs; sans compter que l'intérêt, cette clef de voûte des

2. *Une cité soudanaise. Djénné* (1903, revised ed. 1932), *Les Khassonké* (1915), *Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta* (1924), and *Les empires du Mali* (1929).

relations humaines, s'y révèle sous les formes les plus inattendues; en un mot, à écouter les plaideurs et à savoir provoquer leurs confidences, l'on assiste, par là même, à la vie indigène telle qu'elle est' (Monteil 1915: 5).

Monteil does display some sensitivity to the problem of communicating with his cultural Other, but then he immediately negates it with his assertion that functioning as a judicial investigator can be tantamount to having full access to the Other's daily life. He completely ignores the fact that the relationship which links him to the litigants is unequal, that the information is revealed under duress, and that, in 'eliciting their confidences', he himself guides, and thus shapes, *what* is revealed.

The overlap between official duties and ethnographic data collection was not limited to the judicial process. In his introduction to *Djénné*, Monteil (1971: XIV) makes it plain that: 'Notre documentation a été recueillie sur place, par nous-même au cours de nos fonctions administratives, qui nous permettaient des investigations souvent difficiles et, parfois, impossibles en dehors d'elles'. Monteil does not indicate whether or not he worked through an interpreter but leaves no doubt that he used his position of authority to obtain the information. His approach is underlined by his use of the juridical term '*investigations*' and by the admission that these were often unsuccessful when not backed by the symbols of office. Monteil was nonetheless aware of the tension between administrative duties and ethnographic inquiry. Responding to an administrative intern in Bamako who had apparently expressed the desire to pursue his inquiry in the Sahel, Monteil counsels him (1968: 621-622) to turn instead to one of his old acquaintances and also to cultivate indigenous personnel more generally as potential informants by showing good will and respect. He supports his advice by pointing out that:

'Il vous sera plus tard facile de constater que l'on se documente bien plus facilement sur les lieux où l'on n'est pas, et les gens que l'on ne voit pas, que sur les lieux où l'on vit habituellement, et sur les gens au milieu desquels on exerce une fonction administrative'.

The way this insight could also be combined with the power of office is perhaps best expressed in the way he collected oral traditions of the Segu and Kaarta states. As an administrator in Jenne, he simply had two praise singers come from Segu to relate their knowledge of these state formations to him. The reader never learns how these men were selected and induced to make the journey to Jenne nor whether or not they were compensated for their services. In sum, the fieldworker's tactics and mode of generating knowledge can only be glimpsed through the comments volunteered in the introduction.

Although Monteil never reveals the extent to which he had mastered any of the local languages, extracts from his posthumously published correspondence (*ibid.*) show that he considered indigenous languages

to be an essential tool for obtaining sound information. In several letters to former students who had taken up posts in French West Africa, he stressed the importance of language, especially comprehension and the ability to take notes in the vernacular. He recommended that they memorize texts (e.g. folk tales) rather than simply go for learning isolated phrases. And instead of questioning informants about principles of grammar, he advocated deducing them from texts. The monographs on the Khassonké and the Bambara both include folk tales for pedagogic purposes. Monteil's insistence on language competence along with his advice to correspondents on subjects of inquiry reveal an astute ethnographer.

Monteil's interests centered on history and 'customs', both of which he deemed essential to an understanding of African peoples. He concurred with Fustel de Coulanges that at any given period in time, man is the product and epitome of all the preceding epochs. Beyond this, he believed the African (*le Noir*) to be dominated by his past. Consequently, if the colonial project were to be successful, it had to be 'inspired by the past which contains the elements of the most appropriate politics needed to lead these peoples' (Monteil 1929: 1). This constituted one of the main reasons for writing *Les empires du Mali*, a critical synthesis of previously published work. He saw his own contribution in the application of his knowledge of 'custom' to the reevaluation of earlier sources, contending that 'to understand native history, one must understand native custom' (*ibid.*: 19). Custom in this context does not mean specifically Malinke custom but rather the social rules and principles he had elaborated in his earlier studies and which he considered to be common to the entire French Sudan.

In spite of his acknowledgement of cultural interpenetration, Monteil's first publication, the monograph on Jenne, essentializes cultural characteristics. This may be due at least in part to the fact that it is based on the "Monographie de Djénné" he had prepared as 'cercle' administrator and thus reflects the style of these documents. Nonetheless, he continued to stand behind these representations when he published a limited edition of hundred copies at his own expense in 1903 and then agreed to a republication in 1932. The monograph treats everything from flora and fauna of the area to history, trade, and industry. The portraits of the local population are grounded in nineteenth-century anthropology, combining a description of physical traits with mental characteristics. The Fulbe are depicted as being more pleasing to the white eye in physical characteristics and moral comportment. The Bambara and Bozo, on the other hand, are not only rustic in appearance, they are also maladroit socially and slow-witted. If these characterizations reflect local perceptions, the people of Jenne-ville do not fare particularly well either. While they do not constitute a particular physical type, they are said to be jealous by nature, a characteristic which they have supposedly retained from the

time of es-Sa'di. These representations are offered as statements of fact. Although Monteil's statistics show the Fulbe as the majority population in the area, his basic outline of social organization is confined to the Bambara model and indigenous concepts are provided only in Bambara. His sketch of indigenous religion also is that of Bambara religion and is justified by the statement that 'Bambara' is synonymous with animism ('L'animiste soudanais, que représente le Bambara. . .' Monteil 1971: 128). He points out in a subsequent section on Islam that islamization in the Jenne area dates far back into the past but does not consider how this has affected the Bambara population.

This tendency to avoid dealing with social change also characterizes his work on the Khassonké. In the introduction to the monograph he notes (1915: 8) that the indigenous world is changing, but then goes on to state that:

'je me borne à décrire le milieu indigène dans son intégralité antérieure, cela afin que l'on puisse mesurer les répercussions de notre action; afin, aussi, que l'on s'explique des apparences aujourd'hui singulières, résultats obligés des faits sociaux dont l'inexistence date à peine d'hier'.

The "native milieu" he describes in the ethnographic present includes material life, beliefs, family, clan, land tenure, and property ownership. It is essentially a manners-and-customs portrait framed by a section on Khasso history at the beginning and a chapter on Islam in Khasso at the end. The social domains that are presented as having experienced development are thus politics and religion: the history of Khasso establishes a genealogy of the ruling lineages and provides biographical data for the different chiefs, and the chapter on Islam traces the introduction of Islam and its characteristics. The active voice and specific social actors dominate in these sections whereas the passive voice dominates the central part which deals with the social universe. In the latter, references to social actors are generic (*les indigènes, le père, la femme*) and in the third person. The general impression of custom is therefore static. There are occasional comparisons with French custom though the account is not couched in an overarching comparative framework.

The analytical separation of history and social institutions also obtains in *Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta* (1924). Here, however, the descriptive analysis of social institutions is intended to serve as a "detailed commentary" on history. Family and clan (which, for Monteil, means ruling clan) again receive extensive treatment. In addition, Monteil places considerable emphasis on religious beliefs and associations. He focuses on religious ideas because of their perceived pervasiveness in social and political life. Monteil contends that the religious associations (*kòmò, kònò, etc.*) have greatly expanded their control over time and, through their manipulations, have undermined the family and caused

'dynastic convulsions'. These judgements are offered as general statements rather than being grounded in a specific socio-historical context. While he acknowledges the problem of cultural translation in other domains, his treatment of religion displays no such sensitivity. His presentation of religious ideas is punctuated by evaluations which create distance and assign "the" (*le*) Bambara a particular position on the evolutionary scale. Following are a few examples:

'...d'une manière générale, il convient de remarquer que le Bambara ne s'ingénie pas à chercher le pourquoi et le comment des choses, en dehors de ce qu'il voit ou connaît: la réalité le presse et le détermine. . .' (Monteil 1924: 125).

'Pour le Bambara, l'autre vie continue celle-ci et il ne croit pas pouvoir, par sa conduite, améliorer son sort dans cette autre vie [. . .]. Ses Mânes ou ses génies ne lui donnent pas une moralité en exemple. [. . .] Aucun code ne réunit donc les règles de vie des Bambara. Tout est dans la coutume: fil mystérieux [. . .] qui enchaîne l'une à l'autre les générations. . .' (*ibid.*: 129).

'Rien de plus touffu, incohérent, contradictoire, que les coutumes culturelles des Bambara' (*ibid.*: 138).

These statements are extended to all Africans at certain points and culminate in the conclusion that

'...le Noir ne s'abstrait pas de la nature environnante, il n'est pas arrivé à ce stade où l'homme se considère comme une espèce d'intermédiaire entre le naturel et le surnaturel; le Noir fait partie intégrante de la nature, et c'est pourquoi il traite celle-ci comme lui-même' (*ibid.*: 156).

Given Monteil's goal of elucidating those social institutions which have played a key role in Bambara history, the move to a normalizing discourse is easy to make as is his reliance on second-hand information. Although he states that he wants to limit himself to a subsection of Bambara (those of Segu and Kaarta) in order to study the social matrix which is common to Bambara more generally, he focuses on people among whom he never lived. He does not write about the Bambara of the Jenne area with whom he interacted and from whom he obtained much of the information about the structures he describes. The extent to which his authority is anchored in the global perspective of erudition becomes clear in his introductory remarks to Bambara history. I have already mentioned that he had two praise singers from Segu come to Jenne to relate to him the oral traditions of Segu and Kaarta respectively. Having called them away from home puts him in a predicament: he does not want to prolong their stay unnecessarily but his duties as '*cercle*' administrator also limit the time he has for interviewing them. He solves the problem by cutting short their disquisitions, qualified as '*tirades*', and points out confidently that he believes that nothing essential has escaped him even though it may have been possible to "glean" much from what he had to

disregard. In short, Monteil's conception of history is at odds with that of the praise singers. Although his revelation is made as a way of supporting his authority, it is also a splendid illustration of the interplay of power and knowledge: given two differing conceptions of history, it is Monteil the outsider who determines what is valid and what should be discarded. He is the scholar who can separate 'real, precise facts' from 'vague and confused local traditions' (*ibid.*: 21). The praise singers are local historians who derive power from deploying their knowledge. But in the context of colonial domination, their knowledge is evaluated, appropriated, and classified by a representative of a voracious and systematizing Western power/knowledge.³ For Monteil, the task at hand is to *construct their history* rather than to worry about how *they represent their own history*.

Maurice Delafosse shared Monteil's intellectual curiosity about things African as well as his desire to demystify Africans for a European public. But rather than producing monographs on specific societies as Monteil was doing, he put his efforts into publications of a more general nature. He is best known for his three-volume contribution to *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*, a synthetic work about the colony prepared on governor Clozel's initiative. His books, *Les Noirs de l'Afrique* (1922), *L'Âme nègre* (1922), *Les Civilisations négro-africaines* (1925), and *Les Nègres* (1927) are not tied to a particular 'field experience'. They draw on a variety of sources and generalize about 'the Negro' with the aim of dispelling popular misconceptions about Africans and aspects of African culture. Delafosse also published grammar-vocabularies for several West-African languages and various articles. He initiated publication of the *Revue d'Ethnographie* and was cofounder of the Institut d'ethnologie and the Institut ethnographique international de Paris. His essays entitled *Broussard ou Les états d'âme d'un colonial* (1923) and a biography by his daughter Louise shed light on his background and intellectual stance.

Delafosse's interest in Africa was aroused by lectures he attended at the Sorbonne and at the Société de géographie while he was a medical student in Paris. He began taking courses in Arabic at the École des langues orientales and soon dropped his medical studies. In May 1891, at the age of 20, he secretly left Paris to join the recently created Institut des frères armés du Sahara in Algeria. He hoped to participate in the fight against the slave trade by stopping slave caravans, through the use of force if necessary, and settling slaves at posts where they would be given work. But the goals of the institute changed with its leadership

3. MONTEIL, in fact, complains in his introduction (1924: 24) that few praise singers have an 'extensive knowledge and a critical attitude which would permit them to make judicious selections from the welter of contradictory traditions'. This and associated negative comments about bards indicate that he misconstrues the role of the griot.

only five months later and a disappointed Delafosse enlisted in the army. After serving only one year out of three, his father obtained a dispensation for him on the condition that he continue his studies at the *École des langues orientales*. It is from there that he departed in August 1894 for Ivory Coast after having declined a teaching post at St. Louis. In December of that year he replaced Charles Monteil as *'chef de poste'* at Toumodi. Interrupted by home leaves, and assignment of over a year in Monrovia, Liberia, and a year of teaching at the *École des langues orientales*, he served in various locations in Ivory Coast until early 1909. His transfer to Bamako was conditioned by his unsuccessful efforts to obtain a post which would allow him to bring his young wife and by his difficulties with the new governor of the colony.⁴ Frustrated by his inability to receive the promotion he had desired and disliking life in Bamako, he returned to France after only five months in the capital of Haut-Sénégal-Niger. He was able to obtain appointments at the *École des langues orientales*⁵ and at the *École coloniale* to teach "Sudanese" languages and customs. During World War I Delafosse worked in the colonial administration in Dakar for slightly more than two years. He resumed his teaching activities in Paris after the war.

Delafosse's efforts to improve the image of Africa in France were coupled with a firm support for colonization. In his view however, colonial policy had to be tailored to African circumstances. While still in the colonial service, he compiled language materials to facilitate the study of indigenous languages and, by extension, customs and mores. Later, at the *École coloniale*, he transmitted his knowledge to students of colonial administration in preparation for their assignments in the colonies. His interest in African societies was thus closely intertwined with the colonial endeavor throughout his life. Perhaps because he never published a monograph on a specific society or locale, he never discussed the manner in which he had acquired his knowledge in the introduction to any of his works.

While Delafosse remained silent about his data collection, he did draw a portrait of the fieldworker's persona through his creation of 'Broussard', the 'man of the bush'. The essays compiled under the title *Broussard ou*

4. Delafosse had a Baule wife who bore him two sons. When he decided to marry Alice Houdas during his home leave in 1907 he told her about the children. With his sister's prodding, he completed the necessary paperwork to have the children legally recognized as his own before the wedding. He broke off the relationship with their mother after returning to Ivory Coast in May 1908. Louise Delafosse mentions in her biography that her father placed the children in the care of the local mission—against the protestations of their mother, it appears—but does not indicate if he maintained any contact with them after this point.
5. Delafosse was favored over Monteil, but this does not seem to have caused a rift between them. The two continued to correspond with each other thereafter.

Les états d'âme d'un colonial are divided into two parts: part I is a narrative of Broussard's life in the colonies, and part II consists of Broussard's opinions on a variety of contemporary topics. The first part is of interest not only as a representation of Delafosse's African career but also for the way it establishes his authority as an Africanist. Broussard is the prototypical first generation colonial official: adventuresome, tough, independent, committed but loathe of bureaucratic paper pushing. He is an individualist, a man of action who is not afraid of physical hardship; he knows that he is 'creating something'. His post becomes his fiefdom and he takes pride in it. When life at the post begins to wear him down, he recharges by going on tour. In the villages along the route he is treated with curiosity and respect and he responds with benevolence. He inquires about local mores, the needs of villagers, the last harvest, and similar subjects. Finally he returns to the post with tall stories, glad to see his likes again. Broussard develops an eclectic approach over the years, adjusts to the exigencies of the situation, and learns to accept his fellow official's methods even if they differ from his own. Having spent time at different posts and in different territories he gets to know the African landscape inside out, can greet in a dozen or more African languages and keep up a conversation in three or four. He is familiar with African ways, has participated in local rituals, and 'even knows approximately what goes on behind the skull of a Negro' (Delafosse 1923: 71). In sum, Africa no longer holds any secrets for him. Having married during one of his home leaves, he eventually tires of life in the bush where he cannot take his family and he retires. Then Broussard can think back and know that he has not wasted his life, and he can look forward to the day when a grandchild will climb onto his knees and demand to hear a 'story of savages'.

Governor Clozel draws on this vast storehouse of experience when he entrusts Delafosse with the preparation of the historical and ethnographic volumes for Haut-Sénégal-Niger. Upon arriving in Bamako in 1908, Clozel wanted to update existing documentation about the colony. He asked his '*cercle*' administrators to complete extensive questionnaires on customary law and generally furnish as much information as possible about their jurisdictions. Clozel then decided to have these materials synthesized into a publication which could paint a 'complete picture of our Soudan' (Clozel 1912: 2) in order to make them more useful and easily accessible. Of the five volumes, Delafosse authored three, entitled respectively: *Le pays, les peuples, les langues; L'Histoire*, and *Les civilisations*. In preparing them, he sifted through and synthesized the information provided by the '*cercle*' administrators and supplemented it with data culled from earlier authors (including texts written in Arabic), missionaries, and colonial officials. He also drew on notes he had taken himself over the years. His authority derives from his erudition and his 'field experience' as outlined in Broussard. Both

he and Clozel stress his 'sixteen years of African experience' in their introductions even though this period included time in France and only a minimal part of it was spent in the colony proper. But given the aim of the work, the extent and nature of interaction with the local populations did not need to be an issue.

The volume dealing with the "country, peoples, and languages" lays out the physical and human geography and presents an overview of the various languages spoken in the colony. Its centerpiece classifies and draws boundaries around local populations. Delafosse is well aware of the tenuous nature of the enterprise and outlines the problems associated with different methods of ethnic classification but does not question the need for classification itself. A scientific approach involved classification and served the needs of colonial government well. As Jean Bazin (1985: 121) has pointedly remarked: "'the ethnic point of view" arises more from the exercise of power than from knowledge'.

The volume on the history of the colony actually consists of several histories for, as Delafosse points out, the area did not constitute a single entity prior to colonization. An underlying assumption is that "history" is the history of empires and state formations. Delafosse narrates the rise and decline of the various states which have existed in the area, ending with European exploration and French occupation. His textualized persona is that of the scholar who weighs the evidence and establishes an authoritative chronology of events. His narrative is factual: social groupings and opposing factions are well-defined, and the actions of historical personages are unambiguous. If he notes occasionally that there are different versions of a particular event (e.g. the death of al-Hājj 'Umar), he does it in an unobtrusive manner which does not challenge the sequence of events. The French conquest follows naturally, it is only the most recent succession in the 'Sudanese epic'.⁶

Delafosse begins the volume on Sudanese civilizations by redefining '*civilisation*' so as to be applicable to all human societies. He argues that however different Sudanese populations might be from those of Europe, they have civilizations which are worth studying and describing. Having said this, he does not go on to identify the Sudanese civilizations to be described; he does not state, for example, whether he takes Sudanese civilizations to be synonymous with the ethnic groupings in volume one or with the historical formations of volume two. Instead, he suggests that they rest on a set of customs which vary in their application—hence the differences between civilizations—but whose principles show a common unity across the region. This reductive move makes the task of describing the civilizations of Haut-Sénégal–Niger considerably easier and the

6. DELAFOSSE (1912, II: 409) refers to the successive *commandants supérieurs* who participated in the conquest of the region as "the great actors in the Sudanese epic.

result more useful for colonial policy formulation. Delafosse (1912, III: 4) defines his method and goal as follows:

'...ce que je m'essayerai à faire, c'est de dégager de la diversité des modes [d'application] le principe de chaque coutume, d'énoncer ce principe, de le mettre en lumière et d'initier le lecteur, pour ainsi dire, à la mentalité indigène, à la façon de penser, de concevoir, de raisonner et d'apprécier qui constitue cette mentalité et la différence de la nôtre'.

Although the goal of 'initiating the reader [. . .] into the native way of thinking' is well-intentioned and broadly conceived, the outcome more narrowly reflects the concerns of a power faced with governing populations about which it knows very little. The "principles" underlying indigenous customs are pressed into categories derived from Western social reality: property, contracts, marriage and the family, social organization, the state, and religion.

Delafosse's treatment of indigenous religion is more sensitive and less judgemental than that of Monteil. Here, as in his general works, he attempts to define African Otherness and to valorize it. Yet Delafosse's relativism has its limits and is not synonymous with an attitude of 'different but equal'. His position within the system of power relations, and the limits this places on his version of cultural representation, comes to the fore in various ways: for example, he justifies his admonition not to codify indigenous customs not only by pointing to their variety and different applications but also by concluding that this 'would risk crystallizing native civilization at a point in its evolution which is certainly not the summit it is capable of reaching nor that which we have the right to expect of it' (*ibid.*). The underlying assumption here is that "Sudanese civilization" has not yet developed to its "full" potential. What this potential is or might be and wherein its current inferiority lies remain unstated. More importantly, he can assert that *we* have a *right* to expect that it evolves further without having to explain *why* we have this right. His ability to take this right for granted shows that he speaks from a position of power, a position which is supported by social evolutionary thinking. Delafosse does not elaborate on his model of social evolution in this context but he does set it out in broad terms in his books aimed at a general audience. In *Les Noirs de l'Afrique* and in *Les civilisations négro-africaines*, he is at pains to show that the "Negro" is not different in kind but only in degree: Africans still occupy an evolutionary level equivalent to that of Charlemagne and his contemporaries. Their inferiority lies in their rudimentary material culture, their ignorance, and their collectivist mentality.⁷ He attributes this "retardedness" to

7. For Delafosse, being ignorant meant being untutored rather than lacking intelligence, and a collectivist mentality was a characteristic of Primitive Man in contrast with the individualism which was the hallmark of advanced civilizations.

a lack of contact with superior civilizations, claiming that the nature of trans-Saharan and maritime contacts with Whites did not promote intellectual development. Progress is therefore the result of diffusion, but it is possible. Broussard daydreams at one point that 'perhaps hundreds or thousands of years hence when [...] the role of the white race in the world has ended and the yellow race is in decline, the black race might have its turn in directing the destiny of humanity. . .' (Delafosse 1923: 81). It is significant that Delafosse distinguished degrees of primitiveness in his overview of different African regions but that in the end he assimilated all of the populations surveyed into one Negro race, occupying a single evolutionary stage. The conception of different evolutionary levels as occupied by 'races' rather than 'peoples' or 'nations', as was the case before 1800, is characteristic of nineteenth-century evolutionist thinking (Stocking 1968).

If Europeans have a right to expect Sudanese civilization to reach greater heights, Sudanese, and Africans more generally, are not free to choose their own mode of development. Delafosse, like Monteil, was not interested in contemporary social change and even less ready to acknowledge the impact of colonization. Speaking through Broussard, he railed against Western education for Africans, arguing that it would only produce social misfits and agitators against French colonial rule. He claimed not to be against education for Africans as long as instruction would be suited to their circumstances and mentality. In sum, if African Otherness is valorized, it also has to be contained. Africans should be nothing but Africans, that is to say, they should develop within the framework of traditional culture in spite of colonial intervention. This is underlined by the conclusion to his discussion of Islam when he states that:

'...l'islamisation de nos sujets africains serait en tout cas moins redoutable pour nous que leur christianisation; mais j'ajouterais que, si l'on se place dans le domaine purement objectif, n'ayant en vue que l'intérêt et l'avenir des races indigènes, bien que là encore l'islamisation soit préférable à la christianisation, le mieux serait que les populations soudanaises se bornassent à perfectionner les religions locales. Et peut-être, en fin de compte, serait-ce là pour tout le monde la meilleure des solutions' (Delafosse 1912, III: 215).

Similarly, Africans should be presented only in a particular way and be represented only by certain people. They are allowed to 'reveal themselves' through their proverbs—the goal of *L'âme nègre*, a collection of proverbs from different societies—but they cannot be depicted by someone like René Maran and especially not in the way he does. Speaking through 'Broussard', Delafosse suggests that the characters in Maran's novel *Batouala* are not 'real Negroes', at least not like the majority one encounters, and that they do not converse like Negroes, notwithstanding the many Banda words which infuse their speech. It might be, he

allows, that Maran had listened to his “boys” rather than to his subjects. Finally he asserts that if the objective, in awarding the Prix Goncourt to René Maran, had been to encourage literature about Africa, then there would have been better candidates for the prize. These other candidates all happen to be from metropolitan France, of course. René Maran, who is an educated ‘Negro’ from a former colony and thus belongs to a category of African whom Delafosse holds in low esteem, cannot but paint a skewed portrait. In the words of Said (1978: 308), the ‘powerful difference posited by the Orientalist as against the Oriental is that the former *writes* about, whereas the latter *is written* about. For the latter, passivity is the presumed role; for the former, the power to observe, study, and so forth’.

Neither Delafosse nor Monteil ever published any historical or ethnographic work on any of the Ivorian societies among whom they lived. Given their commitment to the dissemination of knowledge about Africa, it is hard to imagine that this is purely coincidental. Clozel’s statement validating the publication of *Haut-Sénégal-Niger*⁸ may provide a clue, to this conspicuous neglect: Ivorian societies had not developed any pre-colonial state formations comparable to those which emerged in the Sudan and therefore had no history and no civilization meriting a scholar’s labors. Although Delafosse must have spoken Baule, he apparently did not teach it. More background research would be required to find out why Delafosse chose to concentrate his efforts on preparing general works aimed at a broad audience as opposed to writing monographs for a more restricted readership as Monteil was doing. Monteil felt (1968: 614-615) that synthetic works were of little value because, in contrast with monographs, they were not sustained by any serious analysis.

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In comparing the accounts of Park and Caillié with the writings of Monteil and Delafosse, more continuities than differences emerge in spite of the fact that the shift in genre gives the appearance of an epistemological break. The most fundamental link is the privilege accorded to vision as the path to knowledge. “Having been there” is the primary source of authority and is complemented by erudition. Erudition gained in importance in the course of the nineteenth century but was already prefigured in the travellers’ apologies about their lack of it; this is partially

8. ‘A la différence de la plupart des Colonies africaines, dont le passé aussi vierge que leurs forêts, se réduit à l’historique de l’effort des Explorateurs européens pour les pénétrer, le Soudan a une histoire. Histoire peu connue, imparfaitement documentée, mais réelle, et susceptible de prendre forme et de récompenser le labeur de celui qui en débrouillera les obscurités et les incertitudes’ (CLOZEL 1912: 3).

rectified by the scientists behind their accounts and especially by the scientific appendices to their works. In the transition to "scientific writing" the manner of data collection became less important than the judicious use of information. While the travellers incorporated the reactions of people whom they encountered into their accounts, the colonial ethnographers alluded to contingencies of encounter only in prefaces or in secondary works (e.g. Broussard) and only in very general ways. Even Delafosse's popular works are an "objective" third-person narrative and provide no indication that he actually lived among some of the peoples he writes about. Both he and Monteil presented their knowledge as the product of a disinterested science even though it was clearly circumscribed by political relations. And although all four recognized the importance of speaking a local language in order to achieve their desired ends, the emphasis was on *receiving information* rather than on communicative reciprocity.

Along with the growing emphasis on the definition of Otherness and on classification went a concern for norms and rules rather than for the texture of daily life. This meant that observation from a distance or information obtained from a third party could readily substitute for interaction. In Park and Caillié this was confined to descriptions embedded in the narrative whereas in Monteil and Delafosse it governed the entire account. In both genres difference is presented as distance in time. In the travel literature however, individuals or peoples characterized as belonging to a different age were nonetheless seen to be interacting with the European explorers whereas the scientific accounts denied coevalness even in their manner of presentation (use of the ethnographic present, effacing of "fieldworker", etc.). By assigning Africans to a different level on the evolutionary scale it was possible to move from the particular to the general without difficulty. That is to say, observations on the Mande or their neighbors could readily be extended to Africans in general. The procedure was essentially tautologous: Africans were assumed to be inferior and particular examples only confirmed the assumption.

Neither Monteil nor Delafosse problematized their acquisition of knowledge and Park and Caillié simply evoked their mobility as a disadvantage. Although the exigencies of travel only permitted the latter a "snap shot" of the peoples with whom they came into contact, this did not prevent them from typecasting, comparing, and ranking different population groups. The outcome was a frozen image devoid of any potential for development. In spite of Monteil's and Delafosse's openly sympathetic stance and their interest in history, their approaches also did not allow for change and autonomy on the part of the subject. Monteil considered Sudanese to be dominated by tradition which he represented as a mysterious force, resistant to colonial domination and attendant structural change. Delafosse, as indicated earlier, was very

firm about the fact that any change should be within the parameters of traditional culture, thus in effect reifying it. Both of them tried to show that the Islamophobia of many of their compatriots was without foundation but, in the process, went to the extreme of arguing that the conversion of most Sudanese to Islam was not genuine; Islam was but a veneer under which indigenous religion continued to hold sway.

I have shown above that manner of representation and ideological positions may change without this necessarily implying a rupture in the underlying epistemological system. This invites reflection on contemporary practises of knowledge production and representation and how these are infused and circumscribed by, but also sustain, existing structures of power. The fact that a counter-hegemonic discourse is possible at a given point in time does not necessarily signal the end of an earlier episteme.

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