

AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS
AMONG THE DOGON

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DONALD J. WHITE

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AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL SYSTEMS
AMONG THE DOGON

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Donald J. White
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ABSTRACT

The objective of this thesis is to discuss and analyze political systems of lineages, villages, and groups of villages among the Dogon of Mali, and the sources of information are published ethnographic reports. The study emphasizes the structures of political systems and the ways in which men attempt to maintain or improve their positions in the structures. In the structures status is accorded ideally on the basis of age, and the oldest man in a group should be the leader. In villages and groups of villages the lineage or village which was established first should have the highest status. Elders direct religious activities, and Dogon ideas about superhuman beings, particularly as expressed in myths, and about elements which compose the individual help to explain relations among men and to support the superior status of the elders. Older men direct most economic action, and elders control the highest-ranking goods and receive priority in distributions of goods. Usually elders or specific "outsiders" intervene in disputes, and a decision should favor the older of two disputants. The most important political officials are priests of cults formed of the groups which they lead. These leaders act as central agents for redistributions of goods within the cults and have nominal control over specific goods and economic processes. Within their groups they have primary responsibility for resolving conflicts. The normative position of elders is challenged by practical difficulties which arise from differing capabilities of men and the weaknesses of old age. In villages and groups of villages

sometimes relations between component groups vary from the structural norm.

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NOTE ON FOREIGN LANGUAGES

All of the material quoted from French sources I have translated into English. In a couple of instances to clarify the passage for the reader, I have included the relevant French word or phrase and indicated it with an (F). As far as it is possible to determine, all of the Dogon words which are used are from the "sub-dialect" of the region of Sanga. Except for personal and place names, I have underlined the Dogon words. I have changed the ou of the French spelling to u and have reduced certain of the double consonants to single consonants.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Opening Comments

My objective in this thesis is to present an analysis of the political systems at different levels of social organization among the Dogon. Settled mostly in small villages, the Dogon live in a plateau region in the east-central part of the Republic of Mali inside the great bend of the Niger River. Among themselves they recognize no single leader or council of leaders, and in terms of early writers on political anthropology (e.g., Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940), one can describe the Dogon as "stateless" and as lacking "centralized government." The elders hold the dominant positions in the systems of political relations among groups of villages and within villages and the lineages which inhabit village quarters. In this paper the emphasis is on describing the structures of these systems and how the elders are able to justify their positions within them.

This study is based primarily on the published reports of several French anthropologists who began to study the Dogon in 1931 and have furnished one of the largest bodies of ethnographic literature on any group of people in Africa. Although researchers have investigated nearly every area of Dogon life, they have concentrated on culture--on questions of religious beliefs, systems of thought, myths, language, psychological concepts, and so on--and have given less consideration to more

sociological problems. Those who read this literature in search of descriptions of social structure akin to those produced by British social anthropologists do not come away very satisfied (see Tait, 1950; Douglas, 1967, 1968). With the exception of only a few articles, Denise Paulme's excellent monograph on social organization published in 1940 remains the only work devoted solely to sociological analysis of the Dogon, and nowhere is there much "hard" field data, for example, demographic and case history material, which illustrate or reinforce the generalizations about Dogon social life which one finds throughout the literature. Nevertheless, nearly every writer has linked his analysis to social organization in some way and, in doing so, has helped to demonstrate the importance of aspects of culture for the observed relations among men. Although many writers touch on the political systems, most notably Paulme (1940a), none of the works on the Dogon has circumscribed and analyzed these systems in depth. In an outline of Dogon culture and social life based on sources published before 1957, Montserrat Palau Marti (1957:50) devotes just seven sentences to a summary of "political organization." Palau Marti's book offers a general and concise view of the Dogon in French. There are three major sources in English: David Tait (1950) provides a critical review of the literature of Dogon social structure and comments on the relationship between the lineage and political systems; Marcel Griaule (1965) and M. Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen (1954) give a partial but clear picture of religious beliefs, symbolism, and systems of classification.

The research which has produced most of the information on the

Dogon has been done in an area comprised of only a few villages, Sanga, and within Sanga it has been concentrated in two closely-related villages, Upper and Lower Ogoi. On the basis of confirmations by Dogon from other regions of the material collected at Sanga, Geneviève Calame-Griaule (1965:14-15) has defended the generalization of this information to the "Dogon." There are a sufficient number of exceptions noted in the literature to cause one to question the position of Mme. Calame-Griaule, and although I accept her approach in order to smooth the presentation, I attempt also to indicate variations in certain practices among different groups of Dogon.

Although at some points writers mention the impact of French colonial rule on Dogon life, most of the ethnographers seem to describe the Dogon in terms of their existence prior to the imposition of foreign rule. In this paper I disregard the presence of the French colonial government and other outside influences and assume that the political systems discussed existed around 1850. Jack Goody (1967:iv-vii) has decried the inadequacy of an approach to studies in political anthropology in which a writer mentally "lops-off" the effects of colonial rule to create his image of a political system of the "past." Although I agree with Goody's point of view, the published data on the Dogon are amenable neither to an historical study of change nor to the type of "phase development" analysis proposed by Marc Swartz and his colleagues (Swartz, 1968; Swartz et al., 1966). I consider the presentation which follows as a preliminary stage of analysis which could be followed by intensive studies in the field and in archives.

Political Systems, Structures, and Support

I view a system as simply a "set of elements in interaction" and assume that the political systems of the territorial units of village quarters, villages, and groups of villages, or "regions," which are discussed here are in "stable equilibrium" (Hagen, 1968). Each of these social units is a corporate group, "an enduring, presumably perpetual group with determinate boundaries and membership, having an internal organization and a unitary set of external relations, an exclusive body of common affairs, and autonomy and procedures adequate to regulate them" (Smith, 1966:116). Following Bailey (1969:23-24) I call these groups "political communities," and in each the relationships are "multiplex," that is, they serve several different ends and "constitute systems of social ties which are contained within the total social system [of the group] and mutually influence one another" (Gluckman, 1955:18-19). Political action is an "aspect" of these relationships, is "embedded" or "implicit" in them, and within these relationships action can be distinguished analytically as "political when it seeks to influence the decision of policy" (Smith, 1956:48). Policies, or goals, are valued ends of interest to the whole group and vary in kind and in importance according to the political community in question. By a "political system," then, I refer to those parts of the total of relationships among members of a given political community which relate specifically to the determination and implementation of public policy (see Fried, 1967:20-21; Swartz et al., 1966:4-8).

The focus of my analysis is on, first, the structures of relations in these systems and, second, the actions which men use in

order to entrench or improve their positions in a structure or, perhaps, to withdraw from or modify a structure. A political structure can be defined as "a set of rules about behavior: these rules list the rights and duties of particular roles; they say what a . . . [person] is expected to do in . . . [a] particular capacity and what he may expect others to do for him" (Bailey, 1969:10; cf. Leach, 1954:9-10). Such a structure is characterized by asymmetrical relationships which grant to people in certain roles more prestige and greater control over public policy. The assistance or recognition which men seek in these relationships can be labelled generally as "support." Broadly defined as "anything that contributes to the formulation and/or implementation of political ends" (Swartz et al., 1966:10), support "may consist of actions promoting the goals, interests, and actions of another person" or of "a deep-seated set of attitudes or presuppositions, or a readiness to act on behalf of some other person" (Easton, 1957:390). The process of generating support involves the "mobilization of bias," the manipulation of the "values and the political myths, rituals, and institutions which tend to favor the vested interests of one or more groups, relative to others" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1962:950).

The quantities and types of support directed at an individual depend on his position within the structure and on his ability to play the roles in which he finds himself. Ordinarily changes in support correlate directly with variations in prestige (see Nadel, 1957:88), and the amount of esteem and deference accorded a person increases generally with the importance of the role of that person in the political structure. At the same time, the prestige of a person can increase or

decrease depending on how he plays his role. Among the Dogon, "the desire for prestige prompts the individual to act in conformity with the established rules" (Paulme, 1940a:561), and thus, there is an incentive to fulfill obligations and to contain demands on others within the bounds imposed by a role. The expansiveness of prestige affords an opportunity to create a willingness in others to support actions which may go beyond the bounds of a particular role. Because in most cases the relations in a political community are multiplex, a person's political actions gain resources from and are constrained by his relations in other spheres of social action, for example, the religious and economic systems. A person must consider how actions in these other areas of social life, the "environment" of the political system, affect the support which comes to him from persons involved in the same sets of relations.

From the point of view of those who wish to maintain a political structure, David Easton (1957:399) has suggested that "normally the chief mechanism" for gaining support in "primitive systems" is "politicization." Politicization is that part of the general socialization process in which an individual "learns to play his political roles, which include the absorption of the proper political attitudes." For Easton this learning process should result in the belief that a structure is "legitimate." I view legitimacy as a set of attitudes which is based on a common subscription to certain values and which proclaims an order of relationships to be "right" and "good" (see Fried, 1967:21-26). Once a political structure is established, that is, made legitimate, the evidence among the Dogon, as among most

peoples, indicates that maintenance of that structure becomes an important policy of the political system. However, a given structure represents only one option among several modes of organizing a group and, thus, is vulnerable to pressure for change. Those who support an existing set of relations "mobilize bias" by emphasizing normative attitudes and rules of behavior, and they attempt to nullify or to censure the moves of others who try to challenge the legitimacy or act outside of--and thus threaten--the structure.

Power and Authority

The management of group affairs entails relationships in which one person commands the actions of another under some circumstances. The different modes of "command," of bringing about a desired change in the behavior of another person or group, are subsumed in the category of what Robert Dahl (1968:407) has called "power terms" which can include "power, influence, authority, persuasion, dissuasion, inducement, coercion, compulsion, [and] force." To use any one of these terms to describe a relationship implies that in fact the action of command has been an effective measure, that is, has gained the intended compliance. In a command relationship the person complying is assumed to have expected to receive something in return for his compliance which he values more than that which he has foregone in order to comply.

My use of two common "power terms," "power" and "authority," should be made clear. Fried (1967:13) and Parsons (1963b) agree that the threat and possible use of "negative" sanctions, that is, actions aimed at punishing or showing disapproval, are features of power which

distinguish it from other methods of gaining compliance. Although I believe that sanctions may be associated with power, I prefer to follow the proposal of Bachrach and Baratz (1963:633) to restrict the use of power to describe relations in which compliance is gained through the rational perception of a threat by the person complying. In this sense, when a person resorts to a sanction which he has threatened, he demonstrates a lack of power in that particular relationship.¹ Although this is a narrower definition of power than is frequently encountered (as in Beattie, 1959:98), it helps to separate it clearly from "authority" which is described often as a type of "formal" or "legitimate" power.² Here I use authority to describe a relationship in which a group or individual complies with a command "because he recognizes that the command is reasonable in terms of his own values" (Bachrach and Baratz, 1963:638; see Perlman, 1969:32-34). Usually among Dogon authoritative relationships seem to include all the characteristics of "vertical authority," as described by Walter Miller (1955:275-276), which is a relationship between actors in two established, enduring roles in which one with greater prestige

¹The literature on "power" and related concepts is quite extensive, and one need not wade far into it to understand Robert Dahl's conjecture that some people see "the whole study of 'power' . . . [as] a bottomless swamp" (Dahl, 1957:201). The reader is referred to the few items cited here in which the authors have offered some stimulating proposals and also have reviewed some ideas previously presented.

²Bachrach and Baratz (1963:638) illustrate the problem well: "if authority is 'formal power,' then one is at a loss to know who has authority at times when the agent who possesses 'formal power' is actually powerless."

and greater access to the rules of the relationship directs the other to act in a certain way and gains, the latter's compliance. However, as in Miller's examples of authority among the Fox Indians, there seem to be a few Dogon groups, such as a raiding party, in which certain of these factors are not present and yet in which there are "authoritative" relationships according to the sense of the above definition.

In addition to these more familiar terms, several writers have refined other "power terms," such as influence, inducement, persuasion, and manipulation, in order to describe more accurately the relations which they analyze (e.g., Bachrach and Baratz, 1963; Parsons, 1963a; Swartz *et al.*, 1966). The use of these finer distinctions is not very fruitful with the data on the Dogon, and in spite of increases in conceptual clarity which these latter terms might provide, certain difficulties arise in attempting to apply either them or the more common terms. Bachrach and Baratz (1962, 1963) have demonstrated the importance of the stated or unstated motives of the actors in a political relationship and the implication which these motives have for the label one applies to an observed or unobserved action. A person or group may or may not comply with a command for a combination of reasons and perhaps state a reason for action which is not the "real" reason. In addition to this, a person may act not in response to an immediate command or action but, rather, in anticipation of what another may do. This could arise from such divergent sources as a feeling of fear or a desire to reach a particular goal through a series of tactical maneuvers. These briefly stated qualifications suggest one of the constant operational problems of any

of the "power terms"--the difficulty of demonstrating a causal link between any two actions in a political system (see Dahl, 1968). Where the evidence is not clear, in the discussion below I use these terms while assuming certain attitudes on the part of those involved.³

The Dogon Case

At the levels of the regions, villages, and quarters, Dogon are linked by a variety of kinship, religious, and economic relations, and in each the general principle underlying the political structure is the same. Within a group a person holds a unique position situated between others immediately older and younger than himself. Over time his relation to the rest of the group shifts for "as a man advances in age, the number of his 'superiors' diminishes, that of his 'inferiors' increases" (Paulme, 1940a:557). At the same time, generally, his access to economic resource grows, his knowledge of men's relationships with superhuman beings increases, and his prestige is heightened. In the management of the affairs of a group "each generation obeys the older generations, and the most serious offense against the social order consists in rebelling against the authority [autorité (F)] of [one] older than oneself" (Calame-Griaule, 1965:382). Rightly then, direction of group affairs should rest with the man at the top of the age

³Easton (1959) and Winkler (1970) have reviewed the anthropological literature of the past two decades which has dealt with problems of political theory. Among the books on the general topic, Balandier (1969) provides a critical discussion of the central issues, approaches, and difficulties.

pyramid.⁴

Among the Dogon the relationship which best exemplifies this basic principle--and one might consider it prototypal--is that between father and son. The differences in age and generation and the close kinship tie are associated with the inferior, dependent position of a son. Through the duration of the relationship, until the death or total senility of the father, a son owes him respect and deference and works under his direction on the fields. A son depends on his father for instruction in fundamental technical skills and in the principles of the systems of ideas which classify and relate the plants, animals, and objects of the Dogon milieu. A father assists his son at critical stages of life, for example, at circumcision and in particular ritual contexts. After a man dies, his son inherits some of his goods. The importance of this relation for the political system is the pattern of command and compliance which it establishes. Meyer Fortes has contended that

the condition of filial dependence, from infancy to adulthood, is the model of subordination to authority throughout the domain of kinship and descent. Hence, the experience of filial dependence, as recognized and interpreted by the culture, provides the material for the code of symbolism and ritual by means of which reverence for authority can be regularly affirmed and enacted (Fortes, 1965:139, italics in original).

Acknowledging the difficulty of demonstrating the exact contribution

⁴In Dogon language there are terms which refer to men at four stages of life beyond circumcision: the "adolescent," the young man, the mature (mur [F]) man, and the "old man" or "great man" (Paulme, 1940a:243). In this paper I use the term "elder" to refer to a man in the latter category.

of this experience to the development of beliefs regarding political relationships (see Mayer, 1970:xviii-xix), I believe that Fortes' explanation--based, of course, on his work among the Tallensi--could be extended probably to the attitudes regarding the relations of dependency which link younger to older men in most Dogon groups.

The importance of the principle of age order for the structures of political relations among Dogon is demonstrated well in their religious and economic systems. Chapter III is a discussion of religious systems at different levels of social organization and reveals the dominant position of elders in ritual action. I describe some beliefs of the Dogon regarding superhuman beings, analyze examples of their myths, and discuss their ideas about the constituents of an individual in order to illustrate the potential function of these concepts and beliefs as support for sets of political relations. Chapter IV focuses on economic systems and the tendency of transfers of goods to support political structures. Older men hold the goods which are assigned higher values, and, generally, the eldest in a group directs economic activities and acts as the center of a redistribution system. In Chapter V I discuss conflict resolution and the support it may bring to a political structure and note the possibility of change resulting from conflict. There also, I describe some of the limitations on men in certain leadership roles. As background to these chapters, Chapter II is a general introduction to the Dogon to place them in their West African setting ethnically and historically and to outline some fundamental characteristics of their social organization.

CHAPTER II

THE DOGON: HISTORICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

The Ethnographic Setting

The plateau which the Dogon inhabit rises gently eastward from the right banks of the Niger and Bani rivers. At its eastern edge the plateau ends in a jumble of rocks which marks the top of an escarpment. Extending southwest-northeast for about 130 miles between 14° and 15° north latitude and 3° and 3°40' west longitude, this escarpment has become famous in anthropological literature as the "Bandiagara cliffs." In many places deep ravines slice the face of the escarpment, and piles of rock rubble, screes, slope against it. At the base of the escarpment, 600 to 700 feet below the ridge, lie sand dunes and patches of savannah lightly covered with trees, the western edge of a plain which stretches along the whole face of the escarpment. The villages of the core of the Dogon population are built along the eastern edge of the plateau and on the screes. Settlement extends onto the plateau west and north of the town of Bandiagara and spills over onto the plain, Gondo Seno, to the south and east of the plateau. In smaller numbers Dogon live in the region of Duentza at the north end of the escarpment, in the Dalla and Hombori mountains to the east of Duentza, and in the eastern areas of the Gondo Seno (see Dieterlen, 1941; Paulme, 1940a).

The Dogon are agriculturists who rely on a few varieties of millet, sorghum, and rice as well as beans and sorrel. They supplement these with tree crops, which they cultivate with skill, and with some hunting (Griaule, 1947a). They do very little fishing. Apart from the ubiquitous chickens, goats and sheep are the only common domestic animals. Since vegetation is scarce and the few trees are treasured, farmers do not rely on slash-and-burn agriculture to obtain fertile soil. Instead, they collect the stalks of the harvested grain crops and keep them in the courtyards of their compounds. Trampled underfoot over the year and soiled and mixed with animal excrement, human urine, and other waste organic material, the stalks become the basis for an effective fertilizer which men spread on their fields before planting. The calendar of agricultural work follows the seasons. The Dogon begin their year with the millet harvest about the middle of October. This marks the beginning of the dry season, the ba go, which lasts about three and one-half months. During this time, men, women, and children all apply themselves to their own small "market gardens" where they grow some things for their own use and some to sell at the markets. For example, men grow tobacco and women grow condiments such as pepper as well as non-food plants like cotton. By January when the full dry season, nay banu, begins, little agricultural work is performed, and there is much greater intercourse between men within and between villages. Market activity is at its height, and people gather for celebrations, such as the second funeral rites, or dama, of dead kinsmen. The last moon before the rains begin, the ba do, about the month of May, finds men preparing for the planting. Following the

bulu, or sowing festival, men put fertilizer on their fields, and their wives and children help them with the planting. Then everyone waits for the rainy season, the jine, to begin (Paulme, 1940a:130-137).

There is no reliable information on Dogon population before this century. Since 1900 there seems to have been a greater amount of migration from the plateau to certain areas of the plain, ostensibly for better farmland (Gallais, 1965:130-131; Griaule, 1938:vi), and the population has increased. However, the settlement of this population in small villages as described in the literature suggests a pattern which has persisted for a very long time. In the census of 1951 cited by Palau Marti (1957:8), 574 of the 695 settlements studied had fewer than 500 inhabitants, 87 from 501 to 1000, 28 from 1001 to 2000, and only 6 had over 2000. These figures represent a total population of about 225,000, but Mme. Calame-Griaule (1965:9, n. 1) has suggested that the same figure given for a 1954 census was "certainly below reality." Gallais (1965:123) estimates the number to be 250,000. Even assuming a general annual increase, estimating the size of the population accurately for any time before 1950 is rather difficult. Before this date, writers who are describing the same group of people give population figures which vary considerably. Arnaud (1921:242-243) reports 81,862; Paulme (1937a:3) estimates between 70,000 and 75,000; and Griaule (1963:39, n. 1) gives a figure of 148,898 for 1938.

Despite these differences, it seems likely that the general distribution of the population has been marked consistently by concentration near or on the escarpment and on southwestern areas of the

plain. Almost all of the 225,000 Dogon in the 1951 census lived within the administrative district, or cercle (F), of Bandiagara (Palau Marti, 1957:7). Of the 278,019 inhabitants in the Bandiagara subdivision of the cercle, 200,386 were Dogon while in the subdivision of Duentza to the northeast, only 20,403 Dogon lived in a population of 82,000. This is corroborated by an estimate of the sizes of dialect groups from the same period and based on a total of 220,000 (Calame-Griaule, 1956). For example, this study shows that around Dalla to the east of Duentza, Dogon inhabited only five of thirty-three villages and numbered only a few thousand in the mountains further east. An estimated 90,000 lived within the relatively small area of the eastern end of the plateau along the length of the escarpment.⁵

Confirming the assumption that the population is most dense in the area of the plateau ridge, Jean Gallais reports that in 1960 in a band along the top of the escarpment roughly twenty-seven miles long and three miles wide between latitudes 14°15' and 14°35', the density was above fifty persons per square kilometer, or about 130 per square mile. Along another strip twenty-five miles long at the northern end of the escarpment, the figure dropped to ten to fourteen per square kilometer. Still lower was the example offered for an area of the plateau about thirty miles north of Bandiagara where only five to ten people inhabited each square kilometer on the average. Fewer than

⁵In a general way the earlier writers support these figures. Arnaud (1921:242) gives 66,587 for Bandiagara, 10,275 for Duentza, and an additional 5,000 for the cercle of Hombori. Griaule (1963:39, n. 1) reports 142,536 for Bandiagara and 6,362 for Duentza.

five people per square kilometer lived in most of the western part of the plateau up to within twelve miles of the ridge (Gallais, 1965: 123). On his population density map for West Africa, Yves Urvoy (1942) shows this same low density on the dry, sandy Gondo Seno and offers figures similar to those of Gallais for the other areas. There are at least two reasons for the heavier settlement along the escarpment. Most writers, Mme. Paulme, for example, suggest that the rugged terrain makes the villages there less accessible to mounted enemies. On the other hand, Gallais (1965:124) has demonstrated that the escarpment ridge receives a marginally more plentiful and consistent rainfall than surrounding regions making the area more appealing for farming than the drier remainder of the plateau and the Gondo Seno.

Many other peoples live near the Dogon, but interrelations between these groups and Dogon have been analyzed very little. On the northwestern and southwestern fringes of Dogon settlement are Bambara while Samans live on the plateau in a few towns such as Kani Goguna (Griaule, 1963:574, n. 2). With the Bozo who live along the Niger the Dogon maintain a joking relationship, or "cathartic alliance," the real social implications of which still remain obscure (Griaule, 1948; Paulme, 1939). In the wide region of Dogon habitation on the plain to the south of the escarpment, the distribution of people has been described as Dogon "strongly mixed" with Marka (Soninke) (Calame-Griaule, 1956:65). In the same area are groups of Bwa and Samo. Further east, Mossi villages occupy the southern fringes of the plain, and on the eastern end of Gondo Seno, the furthest east of Dogon settlements, are found Kurumba (Fulse) who are the Tellem

whom the Dogon claim to have replaced on the escarpment (Dieterlen, 1941). In the far northeast around Mts. Hombori and Tabi the Songhay form a large part of the population (Arnaud, 1921:242; Barth, 1965: 218-239; Boulnois and Hama, 1954:17-18). Songhay also live in smaller numbers in the regions of Duentza and Dalla where Fulani predominate.

The Dogon assume an origin in "Mande" in the area of the upper Niger southwest of the plateau, and they claim to have ousted the autochthones, whom they call Tellem, from the escarpment. They do have institutions and beliefs which resemble some of those of the Malinka and Bambara, but a similar comparison can be made with peoples to the south and east as well (see Dieterlen, 1957, 1959; Boulnois and Hama, 1954; Ganay, 1941).⁶ Greenberg (1963), Westermann and Bryan (1952), and Bertho (1953) agree on assigning the Dogon language or "dialect cluster" to the group of languages generally described as "Voltaic" or "Gur" which includes such peoples as the Mossi, Senufo, Tallensi, and Bwa (Bobo). Although she has hesitated to assign Dogon to a specific group, Geneviève Calame-Griaule (1965:264, n. 3), the only linguist to study the language in depth, concurs with these other writers that Dogon appears to have a greater affinity with this eastern group than with the "Mande" languages which are spoken by people who

⁶The Mossi have a large population and border the Dogon to the southeast in modern Upper Volta. Several points in their oral history seem to indicate that their relations with the Dogon shaped the histories of both groups to some degree. Dieterlen (1941:3-8) and Leiris (1948:Introduction) have quoted or cited passages which discuss the Dogon in the major works on the Mossi. On the basis of this same literature David Tait (1955) has suggested that Dogon social organization was affected greatly by the integration of some Mossi invaders. For an example of the mention of Dogon groups in Mossi legends, see Ouedraogo (1968).

live generally to the west of the Dogon.

Notes on Dogon History

There seems to be little doubt that Dogon have lived in the region of the escarpment for the past five or six centuries and perhaps longer. The best evidence for their lengthy presence in this area is the remains of the tall carved poles, "Great Masks" or imina na, which are created in certain villages for each sigi, a ritual which is performed every sixty years over a period of six years, in a different region each year (Griaule, 1963; Leiris, 1948). The poles are stored in caverns alongside poles of previous sigi. In the 1930's at Ibi there were nine such poles in various stages of decay. Assuming that a period of sixty years had intervened between the carving of each and that the last sigi had been performed about 1910, the earliest should have been carved early in the fifteenth century. Other examples were the earliest at Barna, dating from about 1725-1730, and that of Yendumam Damma, about 1790 (Griaule, 1963:245, n. 2, 247, n. 2). Even a shortening of the number of years separating one sigi from another, which is not likely (see Dieterlen, 1971), would not alter much the significance of the presence of so many imina na in a single location, as at Ibi. This suggests that the Dogon were established in the region of the escarpment by 1400.⁷

Undoubtedly the continual rise and fall of various states

⁷On the basis of the ages of certain trees, Griaule (1947:71) has suggested a founding date between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries for a village in the region of Sanga.

in the areas surrounding the plateau from 1400 to 1893 affected the development of Dogon culture and social organization. Given the inhospitable nature of the plateau and escarpment, the need to improve their ability to defend themselves against more mobile and aggressive peoples remains the most plausible reason for the Dogon establishing themselves in their present home. For the period before 1500 the evidence is not very clear as to the impact of other groups on the Dogon, but many writers assume that the latter fell within the compass of the Mali empire in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Songhay empire followed Mali, and Boulnois and Hama (1954:45,47) mention that on his march to Jenne which he conquered in 1469, Chi Ali Ber (Sonni Ali) pillaged the regions of Hombori and Bandiagara and thus cleared the way for Songhay settlement in the area around Hombori. The Songhay empire lasted until 1591, and the Bambara kingdom of Segou, which pushed into the Dogon region, began to flourish in the latter half of the seventeenth century. From perhaps as early as the fourteenth century onward to the French conquest, the Mossi-Dagomba group of states controlled the whole area to the south and southeast of the Dogon with varying degrees of success.

In the last two centuries the nomadic, cattle-herding Fulani seem to have been the most important outsiders for most of the Dogon. Since by the fifteenth century they had settled in Macina, the interior Niger delta region to the west of Dogon territory, the Fulani must have encountered Dogon groups as early as 1450 (Fage, 1969:36, citing Henri Labouret). Fulani moved into almost all parts of the area settled by the Dogon, particularly on the plain and in the Duentza region. Even

on the plateau, as at De, the Fulani and Dogon have lived near one another for some time (Desplagnes, 1907; Gallais, 1965:127; Griaule, 1938:72). Some authors have offered the long-lived state of conflict between these two peoples as the principal cause for the move by the Dogon to the escarpment. Many of the Dogon living on the Gondo Seno were destined to become the rimaibe (Fulfulde?), or "serfs," of the Fulani. A position on the plateau afforded some protection against raids from the plain and gave Dogon the opportunity to take the initiative against the Fulani camps on occasion (Paulme, 1940a:26-27; Arnaud, 1921:241-242).

About 1820 Cheiku Amadu, head of the Fulani empire in the Macina, built his capital at Hamdallay above the right bank of the Bani only thirty-five miles across the plateau from Bandiagara (Ba and Daget, 1962:45). One of Cheiku's sometime Fulani allies controlled the area around Gundaka twenty-six miles northwest of Bandiagara. Another, whose army "seeded terror in the cliffs of the region of Hombori, Duentza and Bandiagara," had his base in Dalla (Ba and Daget, 1962:39). Subsequently, separate armies patrolled specific sectors of the empire, and one was on the eastern frontier watching the Dogon, Mossi, and the whole of the plain around to Hombori; another was in the region of Duentza and ranged east to Dalla (Ba and Daget, 1962:69). Some light is shed on the position of the Dogon in this state by the attitude that Amadu Cheiku, son of Cheiku Amadu and his successor in 1845, held towards them. In 1847 in a general discussion of policies with Cheik el Bakkay of Timbuctoo, Amadu defended his enslavement of the "brave" and "hard-working" Dogon on the basis of

Laws passed long before his time, and yet because his father had concluded a truce with them, Amadu forbade holy war against this non-Muslim population which lived so close to Hamdallay. The contradiction was only an apparent one for making slaves of brothers of the faith was probably repellent to the Islamic purists of Macina, and the exploitable pagan population of Dogon in the nearby hills served the faith better by remaining excluded from the fold.

In 1862 Macina fell to the Tucolor troops of El Hadj Umar who was killed between Hamdallay and Bandiagara in 1864. Following this Umar's brother's son, Tijani, installed himself at Bandiagara and provided the Dogon of the area with horses and arms to use against the Fulani. When Colonel Archinard marched on Bandiagara and entered the town on April 29, 1893, the Dogon were still allied with the Tucolor (Meniaud, 1931:414-426). Indications in the literature suggest that the French took over when the Fulani exercised, or had pretensions of exercising, some form of administrative control over large groups of Dogon (Arnaud, 1921:254). At least the French seem to have assumed this for from 1893 until 1902 they recognized a Fulani, Aguibu, as the king of Macina, which made him the titular administrative head over a large area which included the Dogon (Leiris, 1948:3). Had the Dogon lived up to Archinard's prediction that "left to themselves, they would submit without firing a shot" (in Meniaud, 1931:418), the task of the French in the area would have been much simplified. Unfortunately for the colonial administration, the Dogon cared as little for French overlords as for any other kind, put up vigorous resistance in some areas, and were "pacified" finally

only in 1921 (for examples of Dogon resistance, see Arnaud, 1921:286, n. 1; Diougodié, 1936:32-33; Ouane, 1941:88).

Social Organization

Despite their distribution in small, separate groups and differences of tribal affiliation and language, against outsiders, such as the Fulani, the Dogon view themselves as a toгу turu, or "single family." For most Dogon the bond which connects the many disparate groups is a myth of common origin in Mande. This myth relates their emergence from Mande and their establishment in the area around the escarpment and reveals two primary links between all Dogon, one based on kinship and another on a common institution, the lebe cult.⁸ At the time that they lived in Mande, men did not die. When they became old they transformed themselves into large snakes, yuguru na, as the first stage to other possible metamorphoses. The man mentioned earliest in the Dogon myths, Lebe, ashamed at the feebleness of his old age, asked the great creator god, Amma, to make him disappear. Placed in a deep sleep by Amma, Lebe was buried in the ground by other men. When the four sons of Lebe's two sons decided to emigrate from Mande, they wished to take his bones with them as a gesture of respect. Opening the grave, the eldest grandson, Dyon, did not find the skeleton of the old man but a great snake and

⁸Lifchitz and Paulme (1936:96) suggest that the wide distribution of the lebe cult allows it to be characterized as a virtual "national" institution. For different versions of the myth see Dieterlen (1941), Ganay (1937, 1941), Lifchitz and Paulme (1936), and Ouane (1941).

a small stone bead, duge, which represented the presence of Lebe and his good intentions towards his descendants. Because the soil of this tomb had been so good as to allow the proper transformation of the grandfather into a yuguru na, Dyon decided to carry some of it with him to assure its benefits of increase wherever he settled. Wearing the duge on a cord around his neck and carrying the parcel of earth Dyon, with his three brothers, Ono, Domno, and Aru, left Mande. After taking different routes, they met at Kani Na at the southwestern end of the escarpment and constructed there an altar from the earth which Dyon had carried from Mande. The brothers became the apical ancestors of four Dogon tribes which spread out from Kani Na. The Dyon moved in a generally northerly direction onto the plateau, the Aru along the front of the escarpment, and the Ono and Domno northeasterly over the plain.⁹ Each group took a piece of earth from the original lebe altar and used it in the construction of a new altar when they reached their destination. With the exception of the Aru for whom there is only one lebe altar, groups which broke off from these original migrants later took a part of those altars to their new homes. In this way the division of the lebe altars occurred in parallel with the division of the land occupied by the Dogon and the segmentation of the groups forming the

⁹"Tribe" is used here in order to be consistent with the literature on the Dogon. Domno is described sometimes as the "son" of Ono, and there is at least one other group, the Kor, which seems to be a major offshoot of the Ono. The addition of Domno as the fourth ancestor represents perhaps an attempt to stretch a genealogical point in order to make this myth compatible with other Dogon myths and systems of classification where the number four is important.

different tribes.

In her description of these migrations, Germaine Dieterlen (1941) has shown that these mythical routes indicate only roughly where members of these tribes might be found in this century (see Ouane, 1941). Although within each tribe there is a genealogical reckoning from a single origin for the dispersed groups which compose it, there is no clear distribution of tribes among regions. Frequently members of different tribes inhabit the same region and even the same village. Sometimes the members of a tribe in regions all within the same general area recognize common descent from "brothers" or "brothers-in-law," but as with the tribes as a whole, except the Aru, these larger tribal fractions engage in no corporate activity on the basis of this affiliation (Ganay, 1941:26-30). The question of "tribe" among the Dogon has not been probed in depth, and on the basis of the evidence from Sanga, there appears to be the possibility that tribal connections may have been manipulated to reflect changes in political alignments of different groups.

The distribution of tribes correlates in no way with the distribution of groups speaking separate dialects. No single "Dogon language" exists, and at least twelve major dialects are spoken. Some of these are unintelligible to other Dogon, and sometimes strangers must converse in a "foreign" tongue like Fulani. Each major dialect is found within a single territory enclosing at least a few regions, and certain dialects are spread over a considerable area. Jamsay tegu is the principal dialect of the northeastern half of the plain,

and around 1950 an estimated 40,000 people spoke it. At this same period in the southwestern area of the plain, tene tini was spoken by perhaps 50,000 Dogon. On the plateau and along the escarpment, the uneven terrain and a tendency towards regional insularity seem to have restrained the spread and interrelations of dialects for there the separate dialects are more numerous and more restricted in the territories in which they are spoken. One major dialect is tombo so which is spoken in the northeastern area of the plateau. Along with jamsay tegu the Dogon consider tombo so to be the oldest of all the dialects. Calame-Griaule has confirmed this in her studies finding jamsay the major source of names and of special song texts and tombo the primary language of songs throughout much of Dogon country. Within the territories circumscribed by speakers of one of these major dialects, subdialects are spoken in regions. Differences in speech, for example in accent, morphology, or vocabulary, are the bases of mutual joking and mockery which occur between members of different regions or villages in a region. Distinctions of speech are recognized even between quarters of a village, and individuals as well as villages are ranked informally according to the "clarity" and "purity" of their speech (Calame-Griaule, 1952, 1954a, 1956, 1965; Bertho, 1953).

A region is a named territorial unit encompassing a group of villages. Sometimes referred to as "cantons" or "districts," regions rather than villages are usually the smallest units shown on maps of Dogon country. Although the situation is not clear, on the plain there appear to be "regions" composed of only one village. On the

plateau and along the escarpment there are regions with from fifteen to over twenty-five villages (Dieterlen, 1941). Usually not extending over three or four miles across, regions are often "twinned" or "doubled," divided into two groups of villages with a qualifier, usually "upper" or "lower," added to the name of the region to distinguish the group of villages in question. Although a region would be the largest territorial unit which might be called a political community as I have used this term, in many cases the villages of a region are only loosely integrated. The first group established in a region is accorded a higher status with regard to certain rituals, ceremonies, or offices. Sometimes the villages of a region trace their origins to a single ancestor who was the first Dogon to settle in the region. Founded by "brothers," "sons," or "grandsons," of this man, the villages together should represent a "faithful image of the first family" (Paulme, 1940a:195). In other cases different tribes or separate groups of the same tribe live in the same region. Frequently, settlements of blacksmiths and leatherworkers are interspersed with the villages of the cultivators. The smiths make the iron tools used in farming but cannot grow grain themselves. The leatherworkers tan hides and make sandals and other articles for wear. Having the lowest status among the Dogon, people from these two groups are forbidden to have sexual relations with any of the cultivators and are excluded from most of the social activities of the latter (Paulme, 1940a:182-192).

One general focal point of common allegiance of the people

in a region is the market, ibe, which is coordinated with those of three or four nearby regions. The market of a region is held every fifth day and gives its name to one day in the five-day Dogon week within a region. Theoretically there is only one lebe altar in a region, but Paulme (1940a:25) indicates that there may be one in each of several villages of a region. Although no examples of the latter case are provided, one would assume that within a region one of these altars is perhaps considered superior to the others. The priest of the single or dominant lebe cult who presides at rituals at this altar is called the ogono (Hogon [F]). Most writers consider this man to be the most important political figure in a region, but undoubtedly among the regions the extent of the authority and power of an ogono over the component villages varies. For the whole Aru tribe there is only one ogono.

Like the regions, villages differ considerably and can be "double." The figures above drawn from Palau Marti (1957) give some indication of the possible variation in population. In her 1935 census of Sanga, Denise Paulme (1940a:50) found that the smallest village in Upper Sanga, Barna, had 52 inhabitants while the largest, the "twin" villages of Upper and Lower Ogo1 together, had 797. The Ogo1s are a good example of a double village which means in fact two villages separated usually by only a short distance and tied together socially in many ways. Villages are made up of "houses," ginu. Generally each of these consists of a courtyard and thatch-roofed granaries surrounded by a wall of dried mud enclosing also or abutting a dwelling, made of adjoining flat-roofed, dried-mud buildings. In

an open space where the village assembles at times stands the toqu na, or men's "house," a kind of thick-roofed, open-sided shelter where the men meet during the day and evening. In the toqu na the elders of the village discuss problems in the village and sometimes try to settle disputes between village members. Some important altars may be found on this square also, including usually the amma na, the village altar to the creator god Amma. Other altars, cone-shaped mounds of clay, are found scattered through the village. Isolated houses with their painted facades streaked with white and brown from libations and sacrifices mark religious sanctuaries in the charge of certain priests. On the edge of the village are one or more small buildings, ya punune ginu, where the women stay during menstruation. Close by are ponds or a well, and stretching out from the village are the fields, minne, which encroach on the uncultivated land, the bush or ulo.

When a wife comes to join her husband, they will live in a house apart from but generally near that of the husband's father. As a result a house is inhabited usually by a man, his wife, and his unmarried children, what I shall call a "household." I describe as a "family" the members of the household of an older man, whose own father has died, along with the members of the households of his married sons. These domestic units have no special name and are always part of a larger group, a patrilineal lineage spanning about six to ten generations called a gina, to which I shall refer generally as a "lineage." Usually the houses of a gina form a territorial whole which can be a single village or, more frequently, a quarter, or toqu, of a village. Normally the inhabitants of all the quarters of a village trace descent through

the founder of the village. Occasionally a lineage "attached" through a "sister" of one of these gina inhabits a quarter also. The person from whom the members of a gina claim a common, demonstrated line of descent is regarded also as the founder of the quarter. The name gina is a contraction of ginu na, "great house," which refers to the house which the ancestor built at the establishment of the quarter (Paulme, 1940a:47). Although sometimes located in a special shelter, more often the altar of the ancestors, the wagem, is placed either on the roof of or in a corner inside the ginu na. This altar consists of the small funeral pot, bundo, of the apical ancestor and the pots of most of the deceased adult males of the lineage of the previous four or five generations. At least two other altars are found in the courtyard of a ginu na. One is the common, cone-shaped altar, the gina amma, and the other, a cone enclosing a pot filled with water and special barks called an ommolo ana altar.¹⁰ Both of these serve the whole gina. The man who inhabits the ginu na, the gina banga, is the oldest man in the lineage and simultaneously the priest in charge of the altars of this house and the titular leader of the group (Dieterlen, 1941; Paulme, 1940a). He and other elders of a gina meet with their cohorts from the other gina in a village to discuss affairs and make decisions concerning the whole village.

¹⁰The superhuman being with which the ommolo ana is associated is the "water spirit," Nommo (Griaule and Dieterlen, 1965:242-243). Information on this altar and many others has been fragmentary, and one can hope that they will be explained in full by Mme. Dieterlen in fascicle II of Le Renard Pâle.

A person becomes a member of a gina (lineage) by being born into it. A gina is exogamous and is comprised socially of the men tracing descent from the ancestor-founder, the wives and unmarried children of these men, and their married sons and their wives and children. Neither the wives nor the married daughters of these men lose their membership in the gina of their fathers when they marry. As a corporate group the gina possesses the ginu na (lineage great house), some of the houses of a quarter called "houses of the old world," several fields associated with these houses, and like the village as a whole, a toqu na (men's shelter) in an open area of the quarter. The gina does not own livestock, but heads of households can own their own houses, fields, and livestock. Usually unmarried men work the fields of their fathers, and married men have a right, in principle, to cultivate a field for their households. Rights to particular houses and fields of the gina are allotted according to age.

Over a certain size a gina can be divided into two or more tire togu, "families of the ancestors,"¹¹ groups which include rarely more than three or four men. Although a tire togu can refer to a group of contiguous houses whose inhabitants have close bonds based on daily interaction and mutual assistance, it is most frequently a lineage segment of the gina. The members of a tire togu own at

¹¹The sources have translated toqu as "famille" (F), and I have translated the latter as "family." In this quotation and others from French sources, usually "family" does not refer to the same social unit to which I have ascribed it in this paper.

least one house, the tire ginu, and a few fields in common. The oldest man of the group lives in this house and administers the use of these fields. The tire ginu contains an ommolo altar as well as altars for specific groups of ancestors. The anayimung altar consists of the funeral pots of those men who had inherited the wives of other lineage members whose pots are in the wagem (ancestor altar). Sacrifices to one in the presence of the other would not be acceptable to the first-deceased (Dieterlen, 1941:163-164; Paulme, 1940a:326). Frequently the ancestor altars for the female members of a lineage, the yayimung, are placed in the tire ginu as well. Generally they represent women no further back than two or three generations (Dieterlen, 1941:176-177).

Despite the fact that frequently two or more gina (lineages) are found together, "each gina, conserves its independence and governs itself" (Paulme, 1940a:196). In part the independence and the relatively small size of the gina result from a major constraint which the physical environment imposes: the scarcity of cultivable soil. Technically the Dogon respond to this limitation by building their villages on rock, dredging the beds of water courses, and terracing hill sides. The gina can be viewed as a type of social response to the problem. When the population of a village becomes too great to be sustained by existing resources, the group which moves away to found a new village establishes one or more new gina at the same time. Since it is the gina and some individual households, rather than the villages, which own the goods necessary for food production, the fields, whether settled with other gina or in relative isolation a gina is a viable economic unit.

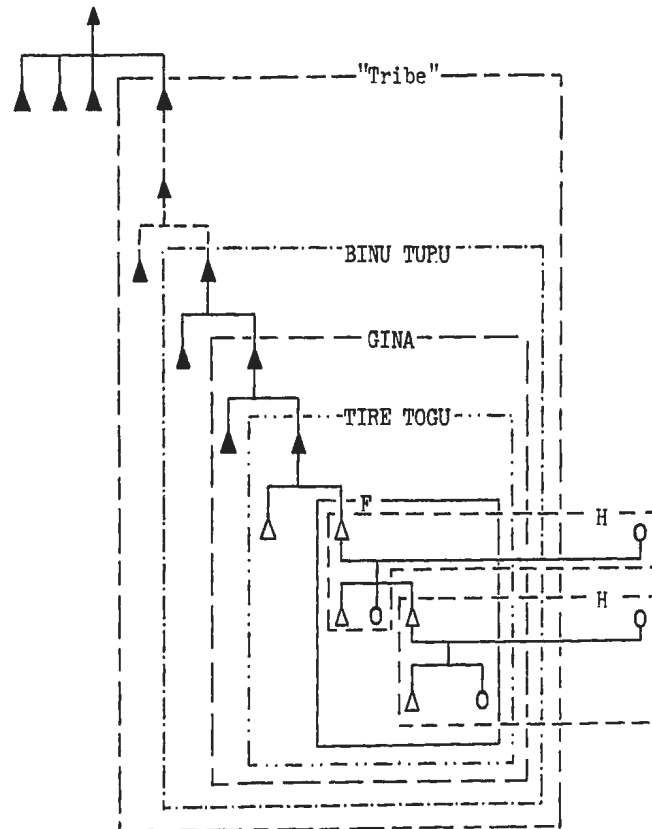
Marriage among the Dogon has been described as "generalized exchange" (Dieterlen, 1956). However, in the literature no writer provides a model of such a system of linking lineages (gina) or discusses any ethnographic evidence which either supports or opposes Dieterlen's view. Consequently, there is too little information to determine the extent to which marriage patterns affect or are affected by political relations.¹² A man cannot marry his father's brother's or sister's daughter or his mother's sister's daughter, but marriage with the daughter of the mother's brother is possible. Blacksmiths and leatherworkers marry only among themselves and can marry the daughter of the mother's brother or father's sister (Bourouillou, 1939: 345; Paulme, 1940a:82,356-357).¹³ Paulme (1940a) has described the

¹²Denise Paulme (1940a:288-290) has noted certain parallels between the relations of a man with his mother's brother's group and the mangu tie, or "joking relationship," which joins two groups in mutual obligations and services. As she points out, the evidence does not allow one to assert that a mangu relation is based on a marriage exchange.

¹³Germaine Dieterlen has contended consistently that marriage with the mother's brother's daughter is preferred and has suggested even that "this is frequently done" (Griaule and Dieterlen, 1954:93). Although conceding that "formerly" (jadis [F]) this could have been the case, and perhaps still possible, Paulme (1940a:80,82,356-357) has stated that this type of marriage no longer takes place or at least only infrequently. Dieterlen (1956:137) has voiced open disagreement with Paulme over another matter regarding marriage, the rituals making it "official," but so far as I am aware, nowhere has she refuted Paulme's contention concerning cross-cousin marriage. Mme. Dieterlen does not always state a specific time referent for her material and on some other issues seems most concerned with the "former" situation, and Paulme discusses practices current in 1935 (for example, cf. Dieterlen, 1956:136 and Paulme, 1940a: 101-104 on the selling of gina fields). Given such opposed opinions, it is difficult to discuss the situation with any assurance of accuracy. Neither author offers any concrete examples as evidence for her descriptions of this practice, of other marriage options, or of the relations between groups linked by marriage.

two most common types of Dogon marriage. The first, ya biru, is contracted between parents of a boy and a girl and involves a series of specific gifts and services from the husband and his parents to the girl and her parents. But divorce is common (see the table in Paulme, 1940a:392) and in the type of marriage which is contracted usually following separation, the wife is called ya kedu. This relationship demands much less in the way of prestations from the husband and his family. Mme. Dieterlen (1956) has described the mythical precedents for different types of marriages, including institutions like the levirate which Dogon practice.

Sometimes only one, but usually two or more, gina related by descent form the body of a binu turu, a religious group which has been regarded as totemic and labelled usually as a "clan." The binu cult is central to the Dogon system of classification of the world and relates to an ancestor who had "gone away and come back," usually in the form of an animal, to make contact with a male descendant with the offer of a duge (stone necklace) like the one found in the grave of Lebe. The ancestor of a major binu cult, a babinu or binu na, is immortal, that is, he did not die but performed a metamorphosis into another being before the appearance of death among men. The animal which delivered the duge became the "totem" animal of the group concerned and thus could not be eaten or harmed by them. As with the lebe duge the stone is a witness of the ancestor's protective concern. While a babinu interests one or more gina, a cult which is formed by a man within a gina with a babinu is a binu i, "little binu," which is the concern of only the man, his children, and perhaps his brothers.



F - "family"

H - "household"

▲ deceased

△ living

Fig. 1.--Model of Units of Social Structure

A binu i is not maintained after the death of the founder.¹⁴ On the other hand, a babinu persists through time, and a priest, binukedine, who wears the duge of the binu at his neck, oversees the performance of sacrifices at the altars of the binu ginu, the binu sanctuary under his care. Like the village and gina, a babinu can be divided, and by this means men form new cults which can keep the same name as the previous one or become independent from it in name as well as sanctuary, cult objects, and membership. Except in Sanga the distribution of particular binu turu and the relations between these groups have not been studied in depth (Dieterlen, 1941:216-227, 1962; Ganay, 1942).¹⁵

All the male members of a village are divided horizontally and vertically into distinct groups. In any village there is a minority of men, the inne puru, who are considered impure, puru, a condition which they inherit from an ancestor. Being puru releases these men from certain restrictions affecting the inne omo, or "living" men, and allows them to deal with matters regarding death, the greatest of "impure" conditions. They wash and dress corpses and take them to the burial site. They construct and repair the houses where women stay during their periods, when the latter are particularly impure for

¹⁴While the distinction between a binu na and a binu i may appear to be clear, there are no complete "case histories" of the latter available. In addition, Griaule (1963:31, n. 4) suggests that a binu na could become a binu i and implies that the latter could persist beyond the death of the founder, indeed for several generations.

¹⁵Mme. Dieterlen has mentioned in several places (e.g., Dieterlen, 1962:108) that she and her colleagues possess "the list and tribal distribution of these totems" and lists of related elements of the institution, and it seems likely that these will be published in fascicle II of *Le Renard Pâle*. However, probably the study of the concrete social relations between binu turu will remain to be done.

the rest of the group. Only they can consume animals sacrificed in funeral rites. The inne omo avoid such tasks and, unlike the inne puru, can eat the animals sacrificed to the binu. Theoretically each type of man is ineligible for certain offices (Dieterlen, 1941; Griaule, 1963: 69-70, 263-265). Cutting across this division of men, as well as the gina and binu turu, is the stratification of the men of a village into tumo,¹⁶ or age sets (Mair, 1962:80). Every three or four years a new tumo is formed of the boys who are circumcised together. Members of the same age-set are obliged to help each other with work for their future fathers-in-law and assist at the next circumcision after their own. Up to perhaps the age of forty they may dance together at certain ceremonies or form military units. Little is known of the latter possibilities or of the full significance of the tumo for married, adult men (Leiris and Schaeffner, 1936; Paulme, 1940a).

Having passed through circumcision, males of a village become members of the men's society, awa, which represents the adult men as a body opposite the women and children of the village. Members weave costumes and carve masks in which they dance for certain individuals at the ceremonies of burial and of the end of mourning, the dama. A central feature of the awa is the imina na, or "Great Mask," mentioned above, which is stored in a cave outside of the village where there are a special altar of the awa, the buguturu, some rock paintings related to the awa, and sometimes some other objects of the society. Certain members are charged with the care of this shelter, the organization of

¹⁶Leiris and Schaeffner (1936) and Paulme (1940a:245) use tumo, Griaule (1963:348, n. 2) gives toru, and Griaule and Dieterlen (1965: 33) have tonno.

ceremonies and rites, and transmission of texts in the group's secret language, sigi so. Those who play the major role in these tasks, the olubaru, are inne puru and are initiated at a sigi, the regenerative ritual performed every sixty years in which the awa is the organizing force. The level of involvement of the awa in the political organization of a village appears to be much lower than that of some secret societies elsewhere in West Africa (Griaule, 1963; Leiris, 1948).

Development of the Structure of a Region:

Sanga

In order to show how some of these elements of social organization interrelate and to provide some material for illustration later in this paper, I shall describe the region of Sanga briefly and relate some oral history which tells of the development of relations between villages in the region. This sketch of Sanga reveals exceptions to the model of relations given above, and information on other regions indicates similar histories of conflicts, realignments, and aberrations from the model.

Sanga is about twenty-five miles northeast of the town of Bandiagara. The villages which compose the region are scattered over an area of about four square miles on the edge of the plateau. Viewed from above they appear to be beside the villages of the Banani region, but in fact the latter villages lie on the scree and along the bottom edge of the escarpment, 200 to 300 feet below Sanga. All of the villages are built on stretches of sedimentary rock. In places the rock rises up as hillocks and in others is furrowed with hollows filled with sand and thin layers of soil where trees grow and most of the gardens are planted. The market place is on a table of rock about one hundred yards southwest

of Upper Ogo1. Counting the "twin" villages as two, Sanga is comprised of sixteen villages divided into two groups called Upper and Lower Sanga, sanga da and sanga donyu. Including a small settlement of leatherworkers, Upper Sanga has ten villages, and Lower Sanga has six:¹⁷

Upper Sanga: Upper Ogo1, Lower Ogo1, Upper Sangi, Lower Sangi, Upper Engel, Lower Engel, Barna, Barku, Dini, village of leatherworkers.

Lower Sanga: Dyamini Na, Dyamini Kuradondo, Gogoli, Upper Bongo, Lower Bongo, Kangadaga.

As mentioned above, the Ogo1s together are the largest agglomeration with 797 people, and in Upper Sanga Barna is the smallest with 52. Figures are not available on the other villages, but a map of the region in Griaule and Dieterlen (1965, map 2) shows Kangadaga in Lower Sanga with fewer than 20 people. The other villages of the region have 100 to 200 inhabitants and Bongo perhaps 400 or more.

The account of the development of this region draws mostly on versions of the story recorded by Germaine Dieterlen (1941), Solange de Ganay (1941), and Denise Paulme (1940a). The versions are very similar but differ on some details. The story centers around the two Ogo1 villages, the largest settlement and the home of the ogono of Sanga, a member of the Dyon tribe. However, these twin villages were not the first established in the region. At least two Aru groups preceded all other Dogon in this area. The first, Sangabinu, had settled at Go and the second, Sangabilu, at Bargo. Subsequently, both were to abandon these original settlements. There may have been other groups

¹⁷The villages of Go and Bara are listed sometimes as part of Upper Sanga, but at times since 1930 each has been uninhabited.

at the present locations of Sangi and Dini. The groups to follow the Aru men were the "families" of two Dyon brothers which came from Kani Goguna to the west. Part of a wave of Dyon settlers who moved into the neighboring regions of Banani, Ireli, Nini, and Ibi, these families lived first at keke kommo, a shelter in the rock near Dyamini Na. The group consisted of one man, Kekewala, his younger brother, Dyandulu, the wives and children of these two men, and a third, childless brother, Tire.¹⁸ Kekewala, or a son, founded Dyamini Na. A second son built the first house at Dyamini Kuradondo. A third settled at Gogoli and a fourth at Bongo.¹⁹ Kangadaga was founded by a man with unspecified kinship links with the inhabitants of these villages. When Kekewala died, Dyandulu believed himself to be the successor and argued with the sons of Kekewala about the inheritance. The latter refused to submit to Dyandulu who resolved to leave.

Near a small pond about a mile to the west, Dyandulu built his house on a raised expanse of rock over-looking the surrounding country. At the same time he founded a new binu cult, Gumoyana, related to his discovery of the pond. In establishing a new village apart from the other village group, Dyandulu should have constructed a new lebe altar with a bit of clay from the altar which Kekewala had erected at Dyamini.

¹⁸Although given as the brother of Dyandulu, Tire is not mentioned as the brother of Kekewala. In some versions Dyandulu died en route to Sanga, and in others he died after founding Upper Ogol. In the former case his oldest son, Kanna, is described as the leader of the group settling the Ogols.

¹⁹In Dieterlen's version the latter two villages were founded by two brothers from another "family." Whether all of these villages were established before the Ogols were founded is not reported.

Instead, he took the whole altar, brought it to (Upper) Ogol, his new home, and proclaimed himself ogono. Forced either to accept the supremacy of Dyandulu and offer sacrifices at his lebe altar or to turn elsewhere to join another lebe cult, the descendants of Kekewala turned to the ogono of Aru and became Aru tribesmen.

After the death of Dyandulu, his funeral pot was placed in the first house built at the Ogols. His eldest son, Kanna, took over his position as ogono and delimited a field, the ogo digu, in front of the settlement which was to be attached to the office of the ogono. Kanna became the founder of Sodama quarter, and subsequent ogono came from this quarter and those founded by the other sons of Dyandulu. The latter's second son, Antime, established Gyendumo quarter, and the two younger sons, Antandu and Anay, founded Pamyon and Do quarters, respectively. As the population became larger, a son of Kanna, Danadyomo, moved across the ogo digu to another rock table where he established Amtaba quarter. Two "sons" of Antandu followed and founded Ginna and Tabda quarters in this new village, Lower Ogol. A third son of Antandu stayed behind in Pamyon quarter. Sometime after the founding of the Ogols, the descendants of a man of the Sangabilu group in Bargo who had married a woman from Do quarter came to reside in this quarter beside their maternal kin. The Dozyu quarter of Lower Ogol was made up of two Aru lineages. Leaving Go to come to Lower Ogol, the Sangabinu group lived in half of the quarter, and the other half was settled by the descendants of a man originally from Dyamini, Gomo, whose links with the Ogols are uncertain but seem to have been based on a marriage with a woman from the Ogols.

Following a quarrel at Upper Ogol, a group led by a man called

Igibe established Sangi and also switched its allegiance to the ogono of Aru. A son of Igibe moved to Lower Engel, and three grandsons of Igibe founded the settlements of Lower Sangi, Upper Engel, and Dini. Upper Sangi was inhabited also by an elder brother of the Sangabilu man who had settled in Do quarter, Upper Ogo1. Barna and Barku, together known as Baru, were founded by a group of Aru tribesmen. Enne settled at Barna, and his brother's son's son established Barku where some Sangabilu people came to live as well.

Along with the movements and shifts of alignment of these groups occurred a dispersal and division of binu turu. Dyandulu and Kanna had brought the cult articles of babinu Yebene with them to Sanga. Yebene had originated in Mande and was, therefore, the oldest of the Dyon binu cults in Sanga. When Kanna took over his father's position as ogono, he confided the duge of the Yebene binu to one of his own sons. In this office the latter became the sacrificer for the ogono, and he established the village of Bara where he built a sanctuary for the binu. Followers of this cult would go to Bara to sacrifice at the sanctuary. After an argument about the procedures of a ritual, the people of Sodama and Gyendumo robbed the Bara sanctuary of some of the cult objects and constructed their own sanctuary in Sodama. Conflict between the inhabitants of Sodama and Gyendumo led to regular rotation of the priesthood between these two quarters. At a later point in time, the descendants of Kanna's son left Bara for Sodama with the funeral pot of their ancestor and the duge and other instruments of the Yebene cult. They constructed a sanctuary for the binu in the courtyard of a house in Sodama which became a "minor" ginu na of the quarter. As

a result two altars for this babinu are found in Upper Ogol, one in Sodama quarter, the other moved between Sodama and Gyendumo quarters (Ganay, 1941:111; 1942).

In the Ogols in 1935, Sodama, Gyendumo, and Amtaba quarters constituted the Yebene babinu cult; the quarters of Pamyon, Ginna, Tabda, and Do (Dyon members) followed the Tire binu and rotated the priesthood among them; for the Sangabilu of Do quarter, Sangabilu was the name of their babinu also; in Dozyu, Dozyu Orey had Dandulu babinu and Dozyu Sangabinu followed Ogoyne babinu. With the exception of the sanctuary of Dandulu, which was in Dyamini Na (or Kuradondo?), all the sanctuaries of these babinu were in Upper Ogol. In addition, several binu i had been established in Upper Ogol, particularly in Sodama. Sangi, Engel, and Dini all participated in the Nommo babinu. Like their kinsmen in Upper Ogol, the Sangabilu of Upper Sangi and Barku maintained their own binu cults. In Lower Sanga Dyamini Na and Dyamini Kuradondo followed the babinu of Dandulu, and Bongo and Gogoli shared the binu cult of Assama. In the latter cult men from each village took the priesthood successively. There were some binu i in some of these villages as well (Ganay, 1941).²⁰

Summary

The ethnographic evidence suggests that the Dogon have had a long history of relations with neighboring peoples, relations which may

²⁰Outside of the Ogols and particularly for Lower Sanga, the data on the babinu cults are not complete.

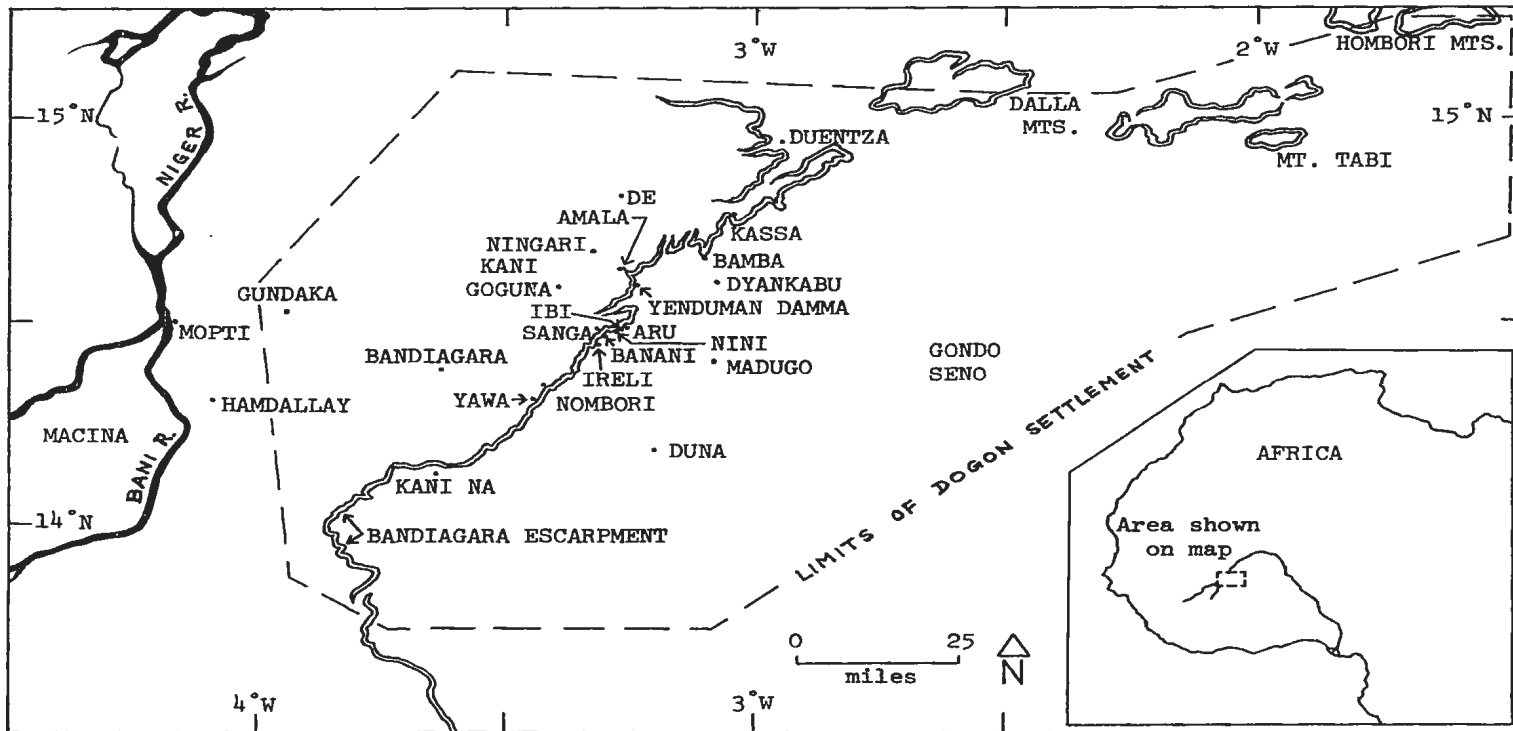


Fig. 2--Map of Territory Inhabited by Dogon

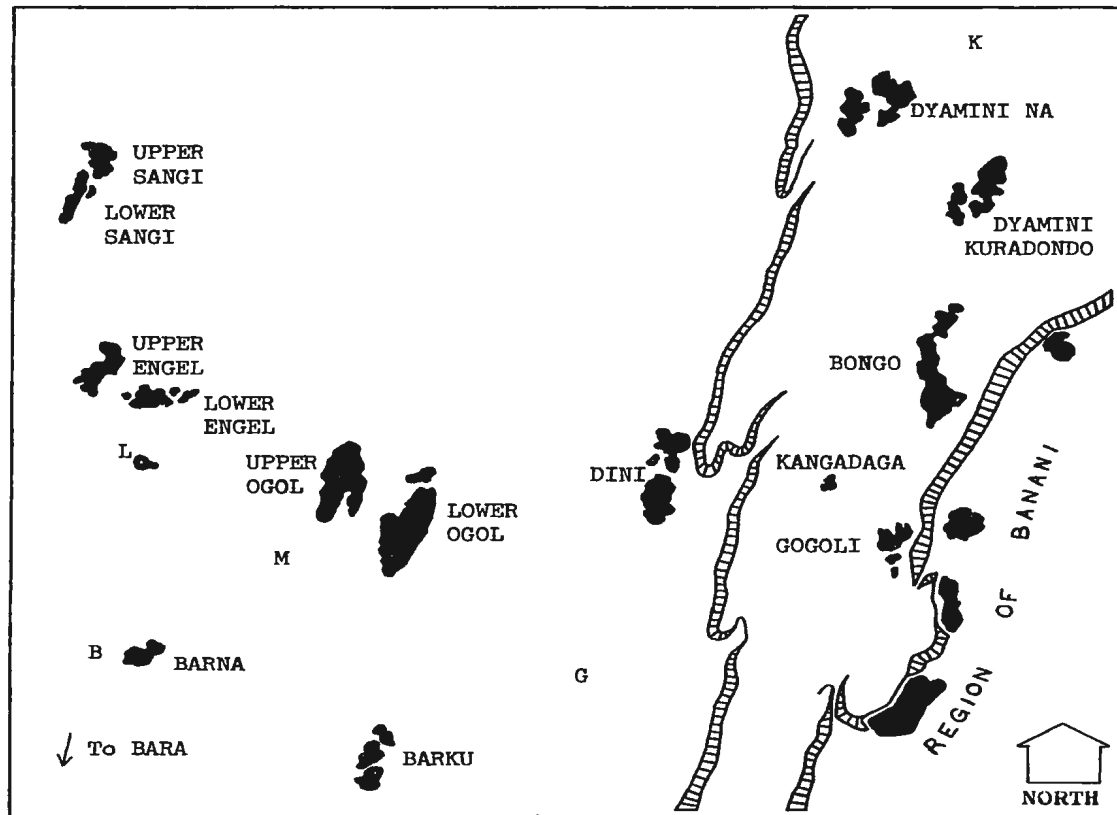
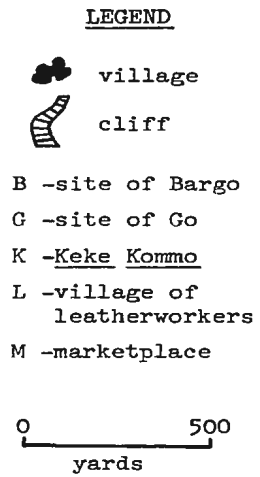


Fig. 3.--Map of Sanga Region

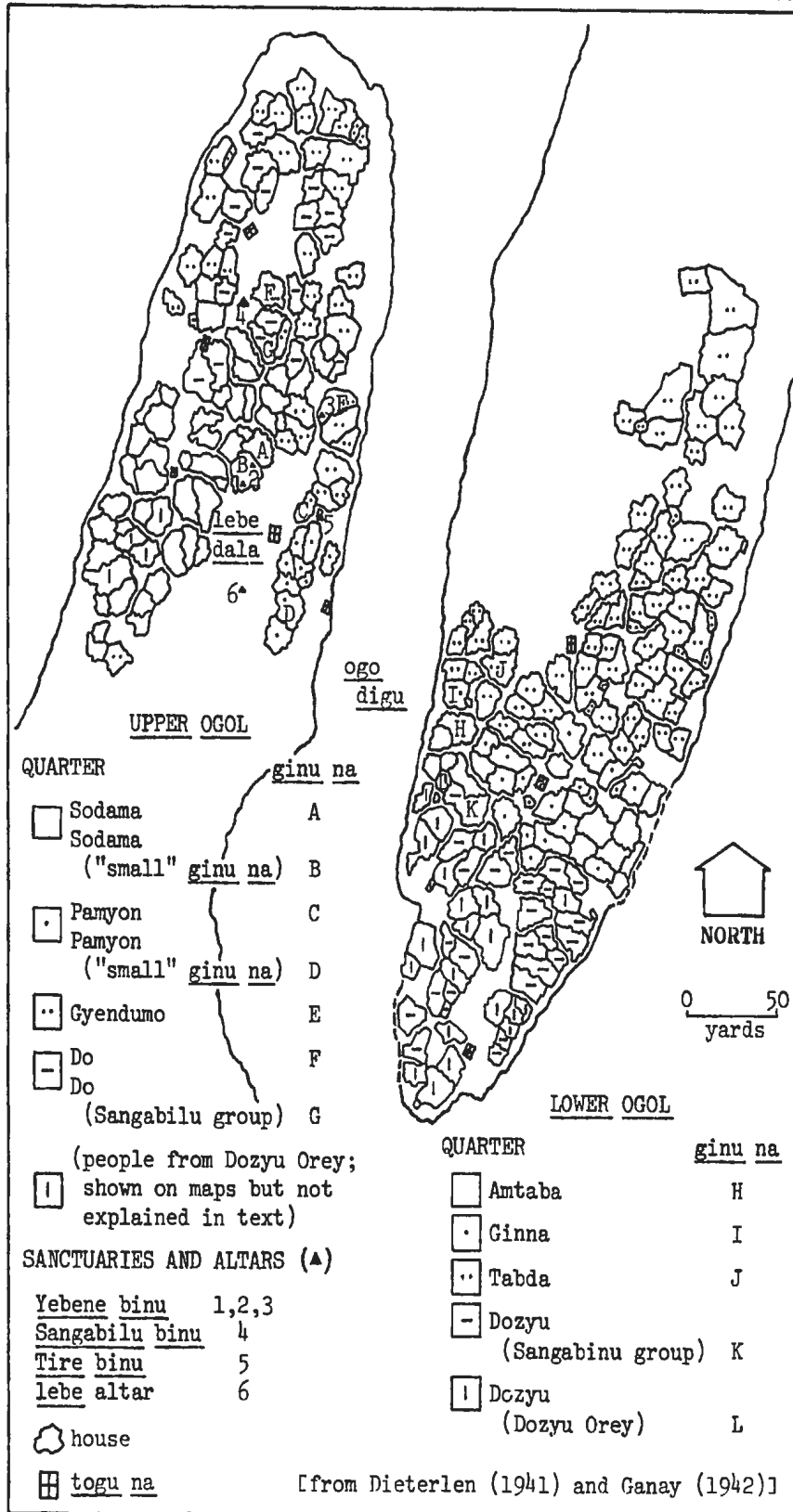


Fig. 4.--Map of Ogol Villages

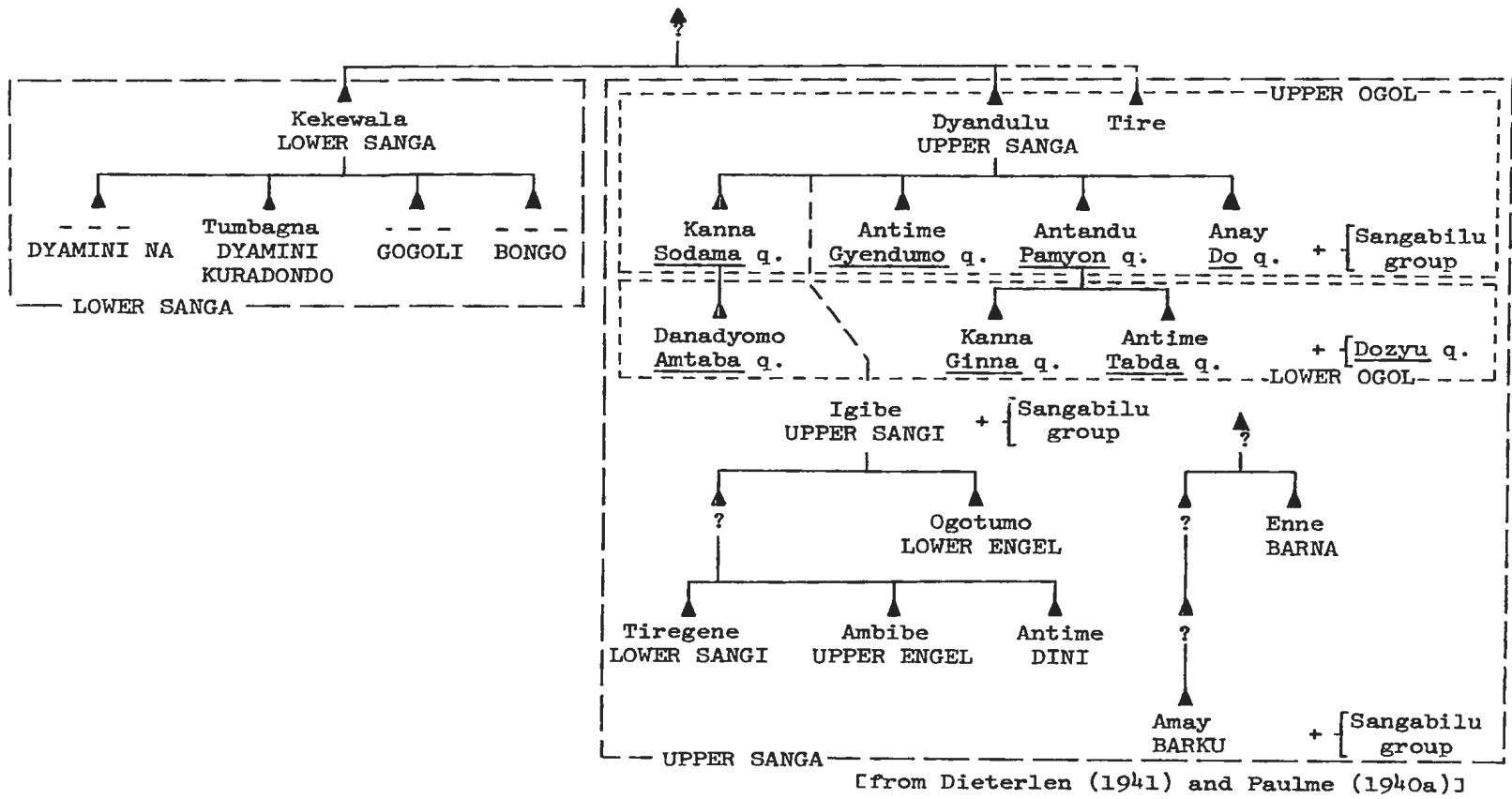


Fig. 5.--Kinship Chart of Sanga

have been the cause, in part, for their settlement on rough, hilly terrain. The broken landscape provides an apt setting for and encourages the modes of grouping which characterize Dogon social organization. The types of groups which I term political communities include the gina, villages and regions. Each of these is a distinct territorial unit, but as one moves from the gina to the largest unit, the region, the greater physical distance separating the gina and villages represents also an increasing social distance between these groups in terms of kinship, economic, and religious relations. A gina is a compact social unit, a lineage integrating its members in economic and religious action. Since it is exogamous, a gina has ties through marriage with other lineages, but beyond the gina, economic relations shift often to another plane, the marketplace. A binu turu pulls together some agnatically related gina towards a religious end, but the component lineages may not form a territorial whole. Normally binu groups share no economic interests apart from the transfers of food at the rituals. By bringing members of different gina together in daily contact, a village helps to attenuate some of the differences between lineages, and the latter usually cooperate in the timing of their rituals and agricultural work. The gina banga and elders of a village meet to discuss problems of common concern. Although scattered about a region, villages may trace descent from a common, though distant, ancestor and may be tied together by marriage relations. More importantly, members of the villages attend the market of the region together, and in some cases they may all participate in the annual rituals of the lebe cult of the region. All of the relations within and between gina and villages fall within the limits of the

political systems of each of these levels of social organization and contribute towards defining the political system of a region. Either directly or indirectly, the direction and coordination of these relations are in the hands of the elders of the respective political communities.

CHAPTER III

RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The Religious Outlook: Superhuman Beings

The religious and political systems of the Dogon are closely interrelated, and I assume that ". . . an important emphasis of religious action is upon creating and restoring in members of a political community the capacity to obey officials, commands, and judgements that it simultaneously declares to be legitimate" (Swartz *et al.*, 1966:88). Melford Spiro (1966:96) provides a definition of "religion" as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings," a definition which places religion in a social and cultural context and includes the critical notion of a belief in superhuman or supernatural beings (cf. Goody, 1961, and Horton, 1960). Some of the interactions with these beings reveal the political system in operation, and beliefs held with regard to the superhuman provide support for the political system. The Dogon believe that each of the superhuman beings is interested in certain spheres of social activity and that some of them help to maintain the political system by acting on those who disrupt the order of relations of this system. Those who direct and act as intermediaries in rituals,²¹

²¹Victor Turner (1967:19) describes ritual as "prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine, having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers." Leaving to Turner the task of defining "mystical," I accept this rendering of the concept

the general term I use to refer to the patterned interactions between men and the superhuman, are usually elders and always at least "mature" men. In the cases of the gina and the region considered as religious groups, the oldest man in each is the ritual leader, or priest.²² Elders are the repositories of knowledge about the religious system, and the younger men must depend on the elders to communicate this knowledge to them. One part of this knowledge, the myths, describes the origins of the relations prescribed by the political structure.

A Dogon views man as an integral part of the universe, and "the image which he develops of the world is that of a man" (Calame-Griaule, 1958:10), man as the symbol of a universe with which he interrelates continually (Griaule, 1949). Through a system of corresponding series, Dogon are able to classify and draw relationships between virtually everything in their experience (e.g., Dieterlen, 1952; Griaule, 1952a; Griaule and Dieterlen, 1950).²³ The principal mechanism for creating this order of cosmic and worldly interrelationships is the

and the type of "ritual" described by Goody (1961:159) which refers to "supernatural beings." By restricting "ritual" to a form of religious behavior, of course, I use the term in a narrower sense than does Edmund Leach (1954:10-14) in his study of the political systems of the Kachins.

²²By "priest" I mean a person who directs and leads the rituals of a group and is recognized as the main intermediary between the group and the relevant superhuman being.

²³M. Griaule and Mme. Dieterlen have devoted much of their work to the investigation of the Dogon systems of classification. Indeed, these systems encompass the whole of the universe perceptible to the Dogon. They interrelate series of such things as plants, animals, stars, planets, graphic signs, objects, gestures, parts of the body, and language, and integrate the cardinal points, the seasons, and the four major constituents of the world--air, earth, fire, and water.

"word," speech and language.²⁴ The Dogon believe that it is the word in three increasingly complex forms which has been responsible for creating and organizing the world and that it has been the actions of superhuman beings which have introduced this system of order (Griaule, 1965). Along with and implicit in this order is an element of disorder, equally the result of an action by a superhuman being, which the Dogon view as ". . . necessary to the maintenance of the equilibrium of the world" (Calame-Griaule, 1958:20). Thus, for the Dogon the dualism inherent in the opposition of life and death has existed from the very beginning of the universe (see creation myths below).

The prime mover in the creation of all things is the highest ranking of the superhuman beings, Amma, who inhabits the sky. Amma has a general interest in all human activity and can affect the lives of everyone. He manifests the ambiguity typical of "authority" figures. Dogon view him as the ultimate provider of all that is good and yet at the same time fear the harm which he can cause men who break a prohibition with regard to him, who "disrupt the order" of this human-superhuman relationship. Men begin prayers to all superhuman beings by addressing Amma and consecrate altars to him in various places. Each ginu na and each binu sanctuary contains an amma altar. Various specialist groups, goatherds and weavers, for example, have amma altars as well. On occasion, with the help of her husband, a woman founds a cult of Amma for which she wears a duge and controls an amma altar.

²⁴Mme. Calame-Griaule (1965) describes the Dogon as having a "science" of language.

But when she dies, the cult is not passed on to another (Dieterlen, 1941:240-245).

Most of men's interest in the superhuman centers on those beings which Amma sent into the world as agents of creation or to inhabit the world before introducing death among men. Although all of these beings rank below Amma, they are not fixed in any rigid hierarchy. These superhuman beings did appear at different points in time, and they differ as to the types of human behavior to which they respond and the specific groups of the living with which they interact. Like Amma, most of these superhuman beings are potentially harmful to man as well as beneficial.

Generally the Dogon identify Amma with the sky, conceptually "above" man, and the other beings with forms of existence more closely related with the earth. One of the primary superhuman intermediaries between Amma and other superhuman beings and between Amma and men is Nommo, the "master of water." Green in color and made of water, Nommo is human-like above the waist with a reptile tail as a lower half. At the same time one and many, Nommo is associated with all things related to rain and is present in water wherever it is found, even in a puddle. Symbolically, his role as intermediary between the sky and earth is illustrated well with the falling of rain, the presence of water in ponds and streams, the rising of water as vapor, and the formation of clouds in the sky. Providing this essential for life, Nommo also causes people to drown and can take numerous human, animal, vegetable, and mineral forms to tempt people to this fate. It is Nommo who sends down lightning bolts on those who break a prohibition of their binu

cult (Dieterlen and Ganay, 1942). Nommo was not the first being created by Amma and came into the world in order to re-order the destruction caused by the first being, Yurugu, the "pale fox." Both are regarded as offspring of Amma, but Yurugu, the rebel, was bound to the earth and became the symbol of dryness, darkness, death, and disorder, the anti-thesis of Nommo. The struggle between these two beings symbolizes and is symbolized in the eternal confrontation of the opposites which they represent.²⁵ Yet the Dogon view Yurugu in a partially favorable light as well and read the foxes' pawprints in the sand of the diviners' tables as the silent "voice" of Yurugu communicating a response to a question about the future. Diviners who use this mode of divination, in fact, have a cult of Yurugu and sacrifice at an altar to him every year (Griaule, 1937; Paulme, 1937b).

At a later point in time Amma created the yeban. Short and thin with over-sized heads, the yeban are similar to men in appearance, but they are invisible and do not speak. Like men, they live in villages with their wives and children. Before the Dogon arrived the yeban owned all the land. In order to assure no reprisal from the yeban against one's crop when clearing a new field, one offers them the grains of several cereals, and in certain situations one offers them libations. Certain plots of ground are recognized as theirs, and they "herd" the wild animals (Griaule, 1963:153-155). Not all

²⁵On the implication of the relationship between these two beings for the political structure, see the discussion of the creation myth below. For a detailed account of their relationship, see Griaule and Dieterlen (1965).

yeban were created by Amma. Before the time when men began to die, old men transformed themselves into snakes and then, sometimes, into yeban. After the appearance of death among men, some of the men who had transformed previously into yeban wished to establish a new relationship with some of their descendants among the living. Revealing himself to a descendant, usually in the form of an animal, this "immortal ancestor" offered to the living man a stone, a duge, as a sign of alliance. To seal the alliance, the living man and his group established a binu cult of which the ancestor/yeban became the superhuman agent and protector (Dieterlen, 1938:120).

Among the superhuman beings are two of relatively minor importance, the jину and the andumbulu. With only one arm and leg and covered with hair and green leaves, the jину inhabit trees from which one cannot distinguish them. They protect trees against unauthorized cutting and can cause diverse diseases in men. In a few regions Dogon have cult groups which sacrifice regularly to these beings, but generally, men view jину as negative and more harmful than beneficial. The andumbulu were "the first human beings." Of small stature, the andumbulu lived high up along the face of the escarpment and taught the Tellem how to build their houses there. Although apparently no longer present, the Dogon believe that they exist still, invisible. In the myths related in the sigi language, the experiences and institutions of the andumbulu are parallel to those of men, but the persisting relationship between these beings and men is vague and maintained tenuously in cults related to the "Great Mask" in some villages (Griaule, 1963:156-160).

The final category of superhuman beings is that of the "ancestors," those dead men from whom the living trace descent. In the first versions of the myth telling the origins of the Dogon, Lebe is the earliest ancestor mentioned. In a subsequent version Lebe is described as a descendant of the eighth of a group of eight original ancestors (Griaule, 1965). A still later version shows Lebe as one of four brothers who all have female twins, and as in the previous version, all Dogon are considered to be the descendants of these eight. The four brothers, Amma Seru, Lebe Seru, Binu Seru, and Dyongu Seru, correspond to the leaders of four different institutions and to the four Dogon tribes. In addition they relate to the four cardinal points, to the four essential elements, and to certain species of trees. Part of this set of correspondences is as follows:

Ancestor	Tribe	Institution/Position	Direction	Element
Amma Seru	<u>Dyon</u>	<u>wagem cult/gina banga</u>	West	Air
Lebe Seru	<u>Aru</u>	<u>Tebe cult/ogono</u>	North	Earth
Binu Seru	<u>Ono</u>	<u>binu/binukedine</u>	East	Water
Dyongu Seru	<u>Domno</u>	<u>awa/olubaru</u>	South	Fire

(From Dieterlen, 1956:110,132; Calame-Griaule, 1965).²⁶

Except for Dyongu Seru in this last version, humans mentioned in these myths lived before the appearance of death among men, and they are regarded as "immortal" ancestors. In one of the earliest versions of the myth, a son of Lebe is the first man to die (Ganay, 1937:204). Griaule (1965) gives the same myth without suggesting that the man was a "son" of Lebe. In the last version, the first man to die is Dyongu

²⁶A similar list given by Griaule and Dieterlen (1954:89) is inconsistent with other such information published by them elsewhere.

Seru (Dieterlen, 1956:119). As for the first dead man in the earliest versions, the other men dance with masks for the second funeral rite of Dyongu Seru and carve a wooden image of the snake which becomes the object of the cult of the "Great Mask," the awa. After the introduction of death into the world, men no longer transformed into other beings. When they died, they became "mortal" ancestors for certain of their descendants, and it is the persisting relevance of certain dead men for the living which provides the basis for the ancestor cult among the Dogon and gives the living their most perceptible link with the superhuman.

The Dogon concepts of their relationships with these superhuman beings and the relations between these beings are a counterpart to the principle of age-order ranking as the ideal guide for political relations. These concepts rest on the beliefs developed in the ancestor cult of the gina. Accepting Meyer Fortes' definition of an ancestor as ". . . a named, dead forebear who has living descendants of a designated genealogical class representing his continued structural relevance" (Fortes, 1965:124), the ancestor cult ties individual gina members to individual ancestors in the nani relationship. Either during pregnancy or shortly after birth, a child is "touched," that is, designated, by an ancestor as his nani. Usually this ancestor, who is reciprocally the nani of the child, is determined either by his appearance in a dream of the pregnant woman or by divination. For a boy this ancestor is a male ascendant going back up to four generations in the paternal lineage and for a girl, a woman in either the paternal or maternal lineage. Unlike the binu or lebe cult in which only the priest wears a duge,

in the ancestor cult the priest, the gina banga, wears no special stone to indicate his position, and every gina member wears a duge representing his link with his nani ancestor. The tie between nani is recognized as "official" by a blood sacrifice over the duge resting on the funeral pot of the nani ancestor in the gina wagem. Annually at the wagem bulu ritual a man is required to make a similar sacrifice on the duge and the funerary pot of his nani (Dieterlen, 1941:126-139; Paulme, 1940a:427-430).²⁷

The significance of this relationship lies in the fact that the Dogon believe that these ancestors are attentive to the behavior of gina members and are able to affect the lives of the living under certain conditions. When a person breaks a prohibition regarding his nani ancestor or when a conflict within a gina is not settled quickly and draws the attention of people outside, the ancestors may intervene to cause the transgressor to suffer, usually by making him ill. In each case the living have disrupted the order of their relationships with the ancestors, and the latter, who are "older" than the living by definition, act to re-establish the normative structure of relations. Only by offering libations and sacrifices to the ancestors which indicate the superior position of these beings can men correct their fault (Dieterlen, 1941:173-175). By interpreting certain events and conditions among the living as the effects of actions of ancestors, lineage members assign to these superhuman beings a role in the political system of the gina.

²⁷A woman sacrifices to her nani on a yayimung altar shortly after the bulu, or sowing festival (Dieterlen, 1941:177).

Among the Dogon "ancestors symbolize the continuity of the social structure, and the proper allocation, at any given time, of the authority and right they held and transmitted" (Fortes, 1965:137). One can suggest that this authority relation between men and their ancestors could be the basis for Dogon beliefs about their relations with the other superhuman beings in which they believe. This is one of the implications of the hypothesis proposed by Fortes, noted above, that the parent-child relationship acts as the model for authority relations in general among peoples like the Tallensi and Dogon. Robin Horton has expressed the similar view that religion can be conceived "as an extension of the field of people's social relationships beyond the confines of purely human society" (Horton, 1960:211; see Horton, 1964). One can go a step further to suggest that "the pantheon of any society can be seen as a projective system, whereby the essential features of the social organization of the projecting society are attributed to a group of supernatural beings, whose relations reflect those existing among the people themselves" (Miller, 1955:278-279). From the Dogon point of view, the structure of the relations with the superhuman which they experience regularly as well as the structure of relations among men are anticipated by the relations between the superhuman beings themselves as described in the myths.

Myths

Although one may analyze myth from several different perspectives (see Turner, 1968), in attempting to relate it to Dogon attitudes about their political system I am concerned primarily with myth as

". . . one way of describing certain types of human behavior" and as a form ". . . of symbolic statement about the social order" (Leach, 1954: 14). Among the Dogon myths are regarded as tanye, "etiological tales" (Paulme, 1940a:353), and ". . . form the framework of religious knowledge" (Griaule, 1963:774). Dogon scale this knowledge in four levels according generally to one's age and intelligence, from the simplest knowledge known even by children to the most complicated, that held by less than ten percent of the male population (Griaule, 1952b, 1952c). Children are exposed early to this knowledge in the form of riddles and fables which they exchange among themselves. These tales describe the adventures of animal characters like the hare and hyena, and as he grows older, a Dogon learns that in the myths such characters have their counterparts in Nommo and Yurugu (Calame-Griaule, 1954b). A father instructs his sons, especially his oldest son, in the basic concepts of this knowledge. In theory a gina banga is responsible for passing on to the younger members of a gina the more detailed versions of the myths and the more esoteric knowledge about the series of graphic signs, systems of natural and celestial classification and symbolic correspondences (Griaule, 1952b:29-30). The latter sets of ideas comprise most of the third level of knowledge and enable men to interpret and make commentaries on the myths. Priests learn all of the symbols related to their cults, and full knowledge of the whole system of thought requires years of study with older, instructed men. Those who master all or portions of the highest knowledge, the "clear word," threaten fines for those among them who would pass on such knowledge to those not worthy to receive it (Griaule, 1965:17,68). "One guards knowledge jealously because it is too precious to be

misused, and also because it confers to the one who holds it a superiority that he is not obliged to share with just anyone" (Calame-Griaule, 1965:389, n. 4). Thus, possession of the higher levels of knowledge brings prestige to the elders and allows them to manipulate the information received by younger men to make it function, as Malinowski has stated, as a charter of social relations in order to entrench the elders' position, for "the myths, like the details of ritual, are exploited by them. Even the most insignificant detail of the tales serves to prove the superiority of the elders" (Griaule, 1963:783).²⁸

Dogon recite myths at funeral rites, at sigi, and at points of the annual cycle of rites in the gina and regions. In order to illustrate the relevance of myth for political relations, I have selected myths describing the beginning of the creation of the universe and the appearance of death among men and a more mundane tale, still a tanye, about the conflict between generations.

CREATION-Before the existence of anything else, there was Amma, the great omnipotent creator. He made the stars and planets, the sun and moon, and finally with a wad of clay, the earth. The earth became a woman lying on her back with an ant-hill for a vagina

²⁸As among most other peoples, among the Dogon the idea of myth as "charter" must be qualified. First, the myths dramatize some behavior which the Dogon proscribe. Secondly, since the general framework of some of the Dogon myths, particularly the creation myths, is common to many other peoples in the Upper Niger region (Dieterlen, 1957, 1959), details of the stories and the commentaries by the elders are necessary in order to draw the myths into the orbit of Dogon social experience.

and a termite hill for a clitoris. When Amma came down to mate with the earth, the clitoris became erect in order to prevent Amma from approaching the ant-hill, but Amma cut down the termite-hill and copulated with the excised earth. From this union was born, Yurugu, the "pale fox," but since all beings were to be produced in pairs this single birth represented a failure caused by the revolt of the termite-hill. Yurugu continued to live on the dry earth alone and without the "word." However, from other relations between Amma and the earth, now properly excised, were born a pair of Nommo, whose birth foretold of the vegetation and germination to follow. Endowed with the word they rose into the sky and were assigned by Amma to watch over the development of the universe. Their first act was to cover their naked mother, and to do this the Nommo descended again to earth and covered the ant-hill with a skirt woven of fibers. The moisture in the fibers helped to promote the fertility of the earth. Since at the same time this moisture was the elementary word, the earth received language with the fibers. Yurugu desired to have this word, and he tried to take the skirt from his mother. In the form of an ant, his mother resisted and crawled deep within the ant-hill. The fox pursued her, and unable to resist any longer, she admitted defeat. This act caused the circumcision of Yurugu and a menstrual flow of the earth/mother which reddened the fibers. Yurugu obtained the primitive language with which he "speaks" with his paws on the sand tables marked out by diviners. Made forever impure by this incest, the earth was rejected by Amma who proceeded to create a human couple directly from clay. This human couple produced eight offspring. The Nommo entered

the ant-hill to guard against Yurugu, and these eight humans joined the Nommo there to be transformed into Nommo-like beings as part of the unfolding of another stage of creation and re-ordering of the universe, marked by their ascent to the sky and return with the new world order contained in a celestial granary (Griaule, 1947b, 1965).

This same theme of disorder at the outset of creation is given in another version of the myth collected several years after this one. In this second version, the universe began to form within a giant egg which contained two twin placentas, each with two opposite-sexed pairs of Nommo, the model creations of Amma. However, before the proper period of gestation was completed, the male of one of the pairs broke out of the egg. A fragment of his placenta broke off with him, and together they descended through space. The piece of placenta became the earth. The being, Yurugu, was male and, lacking his female counterpart, made the earth incomplete, impure, and shrouded in darkness. In order to try to accomplish his aim of creating his own world, Yurugu, returned to the sky to get his female twin. But Amma had entrusted her to the other pair of twins, and Yurugu descended again and copulated with the earth, his mother. From this incest came single offspring, the antithesis of the ideal of twin births. In order to correct this disorder, darkness, and incomplete fertility, Amma decided to send the Nommo of the other placenta. Before proceeding with this, however, Amma sacrificed the Nommo, the two regarded as one here, and threw his dismembered body into space in all directions. Reintegrated, the Nommo transformed into a blacksmith and descended in a great arch (or granary) which held four other pairs of Nommo, the ancestors of man

(listed above, p. 56). Contained in the arch as well were all the animals and plants, the grains necessary for subsistence, and with the blacksmith, the skills required for agriculture. With the descent of the arch onto earth came light and purifying, fertilizing rain, and from this time the social life of men began to develop into its familiar forms (Griaule and Dieterlen, 1954, 1965; Dieterlen, 1956).

APPEARANCE OF DEATH-Myths describing the introduction of death in the world have two basic themes. In one case a woman is at fault; she "buys" death from Amma. In the other case a disruption in relations between generations brings death to men. The latter theme is found in two episodes of the myth in the sigi language which describe the coming of death to the andumbulu and to men. Death comes first to the eldest in the group, and it is because the younger men do not give due regard to the superior position of the elder that the latter dies. Instead of dying, very old andumbulu changed into snakes or jinu which spoke the sigi language among themselves. After the oldest of the andumbulu had made his metamorphosis into a jinu, he began to speak this new tongue, but a non-metamorphosed andumbulu overheard him. In response to the request of the other andumbulu, the new jinu agreed to teach him this language in exchange for some food. The jinu warned the andumbulu that to teach the language to others would cause death to come among the andumbulu and to strike the eldest first. Disregarding these warnings, the andumbulu taught the sigi language to his fellows, and they spoke it among themselves without the knowledge of the eldest, the leader of the group. As a result this andumbulu elder died, and the younger andumbulu were obliged to dance the sigi as reparation

(Griaule, 1963:55).

A parallel myth describes the introduction of death among men. At a later point in time some young men were able to seize the regalia of the sigi from some andumbulu whom the men had observed performing this rite. Captured along with the skirts, hoods, bracelets, and other sigi objects was an old andumbulu. The men hid him and the sigi goods in a cave and received instruction about the sigi from the andumbulu. The latter warned the young men repeatedly that they should inform the oldest man of these activities, but they disregarded his warnings. On the day on which the old man was making his metamorphosis into a snake, the young men had dressed in sigi costumes and were going into the village to dance. On the path going into the village, the masked men encountered the snake, their elder. Outraged at what he saw, the elder burst out with angry words in the Dogon language. Once having made his metamorphosis, he was required to speak in the sigi language. Having spoken in the language of men, he had made himself impure for the world of the yeban, and in his new physical state, he could not rejoin the men. Consequently, he died. The young men hurried to tell the other elders what had happened. After submitting the problem to divination, they carried the snake into a cave and covered it with the red-fiber skirts. The dead man designated a child as his nani, the first of such relationships. Subsequently, in order to repair the fault of the young men towards the elder, the men had to carve an image of the snake out of wood, ". . . to sacrifice above [it] a hen, a cock and a dog and to dance the sigi" (Griaule, 1963:61-63).

THE FIRST SOCIAL DISORDER-In a discussion of purification rites

among the Dogon, Denise Paulme relates a mythical tale which ". . . explains clearly the consequences of a first transgression of the established order . . . [that is] . . . the order of relations between generations" (Paulme, 1940b:69,75). The daughter of the chief of Ibi was married but still living at the home of her parents. One day her father set aside a plate of cooked meat to eat the next day. The girl took the food and shared it with her husband. Sometime later at a market, a stranger was able to persuade her to leave her husband and to go away with him. The girl, her lover, and two of his friends left early in the evening, and when the husband discovered she had gone, he set out in pursuit. Finding them settled for the night near some wells, the enraged husband set upon the group and was able to kill two of the men. Asked to return with him, the girl drowned herself in one of the wells. Soon after, the husband killed himself. The grieving mother of the girl told her second daughter that the theft of the food from the father by the older daughter had been the cause of all these deaths. In order for "calm to return," the mother directed the girl to offer a plate of meat to her father and to purify herself with a specific, purging rite (Paulme, 1940b:69).

Each of these examples of Dogon myth illustrates well a structure of relationships between superhuman beings which has close parallels with the structure of political relations among men. In each case the man's child or the younger men in the group of which the man is leader show a disregard for the superior status of the father-elder, and the results are disastrous: the death of the elder

and the introduction of disorder into the world. To re-establish order in the system, sacrifice or purification is necessary. In each version of the creation myth, the all-powerful Amma sets out with a scheme for the universe but is thwarted at the beginning by the revolt of his first offspring, Yurugu.²⁹ Amma is able to overcome the challenge, first with a sacrifice and then with the work of his agent in the process of reordering the world, Nommo, who is also Amma's child. In one sense the image is that of a father confronted with the demands and challenge to his authority of the person of the next younger generation who will inherit control over his personal goods and his position within the family, his eldest son. Similarly, Yurugu could represent the "next oldest," the younger brother, who would inherit his older brother's position within the group formed by them and their children. From another perspective, Amma can be viewed as the "elder" of a celestial "lineage," as it were, defied by the younger men who should act under his direction. In a more general sense, Amma represents the established order which is manifest in stability and "progress," that is, new life and fertility, hence light and moisture together. By offering a challenge to the elder, the eldest son or younger generation is identified with the symbols of Yurugu which are the reverse of these of the elder, Amma, and the latter's messenger to earth, Nommo: infertility, dryness,

²⁹In fact, the first to "revolt" against Amma is his wife, the earth, whose male element, symbolized by the termite hill-clitoris, attempts to check Amma. Amma's supremacy here is a symbol of male supremacy generally, and the less-esoteric versions of the myths refer often to the inferior position of women.

darkness, and death, "retrogression" in the realm of existence and in social life, disorder.

The response of the "elders" to disorder reveals the ambiguity of their role. Those who revolt against Amma feel his wrath: the termite hill is beaten down; Yurugu is an outcast, unable to speak. Amma even sacrifices his own "son," Nommo. In the second myth the immediate cause of the death of the human elder is his angry outburst-- a fault on the part of anyone who should react to problems with a calm and pensive demeanor. Here the ambiguity is symbolized most clearly in the snake's speaking the language of men. Following the disruption in all three of the myths, as is the case in the Dogon religious and political systems, the person who directs the process of re-establishing order is one who has a higher status than the one called upon to actually perform the renewal; Amma, the elders, and the mother direct the Nommo, the younger men, and the daughter, respectively. In the first and last examples, the person who performs this act is the younger sibling of the one who caused the disorder. The relationship symbolizes the inferior position of the younger sibling in the political system, and in the myth the anti-order action of the older sibling implies the negative side of the ambiguous attributes of higher political status. Also this relationship is symbolic of a relationship between two types of priests, the gina banga and binukedine. This relation is described explicitly further on in the later version of the creation myth where in each of the four original lineages, the oldest son, the "first son," of the first tire togu becomes gina banga and his oldest brother, the "second son," is the binukedine. Since the binu priest

is linked directly with an immortal ancestor and thus more closely with the order of the universe, his status in the religious system can be considered higher than that of a gina banga whose tie with the superhuman is with the lineage ancestors. The religious group which a binukedine leads can include more than one gina. Nevertheless, the "first son" status of a gina banga has its parallel in social life where the head of a lineage is older than a binukedine from his own gina and ranks above the latter in the political system.³⁰

The myths demonstrate the use of purification rites and blood sacrifices as means of re-establishing order. In the two versions of the creation myth, the "excision" of the termite hill and the sacrifice of Nommo allow Amma to proceed with the creation of the world. In order to correct their misdeed and disrespect towards their elder, the andumbulu and men must dance the sigi, in the latter case sacrificing fowls and a dog over the wooden representation of the ancestor. In the case of the daughter's disrespect for her father's rights, her younger sister performs a purification rite to restore the order of relations between parents and children. Similarly whenever the order of relations between a man and other men or a superhuman being is disturbed in certain ways, the man is required to perform the proper rites. Events demanding purification include murder, illness, bad luck, theft, "a serious lie," and ". . . in the opinion of the elders, the lack of respect with regard

³⁰Extending this analogy to another level of political organization, one can cite the position of the sacrificer of an ogono. In Sanga he is the highest-ranking of the binu priests. He sacrifices for and installs the ogono and is considered ". . . the most important personage in the Ogols after the ogono . . ." (Paulme, 1940a:206).

to old persons" (Paulme, 1940b:67). Certain of these and other situations require sacrifices as part of the purification. For example, on the day following a murder, the kinsmen of both men involved meet at the spot of the act to sacrifice a cow or goat (Paulme, 1940a:120). To conclude peace between two fighting regions, the elders build a cone-shaped altar on which they sacrifice animals (Paulme, 1940a:43-44). The end of a short conflict between gina members is marked by libations thrown on the door of the ginu na. In the case of more prolonged quarrels resulting in the illness of one of the parties, reconciliation is signalled by a libation and the sacrifice of a chick on this door (Dieterlen, 1941:173). If a man becomes ill because he has neglected to sacrifice to his nani, he is healed only by making that sacrifice (Dieterlen, 1941:135). If he breaks a prohibition with regard to his binu, often he and other members of his binu turu must submit to a rite of purification and attend a sacrifice for which the transgressor provides the victims (Ganay, 1942:56-62).

The myths do make "statements about the social order." The principle of age ranking is clearly evident as the basis for the order of relations among these superhuman beings. The ambiguity characteristic of a leader is represented, and purification and sacrifice are revealed as the means of correcting disturbances in the order of relations. Although the myths given above illustrate these points, they are not just "straw men" to be knocked over with the analyst's pen. Other myths carry through the same themes. Myths about the founding of the lebe cult and many of the binu cults describe the way in which the

"elder," the immortal ancestor, establishes a link with a descendant precisely because the latter has shown his ancestor the deference proper to their relationship, and sacrifices maintain the link (e.g., Dieterlen, 1938:120-123). One myth relates how the youngest of the apical ancestors of the three major Dogon tribes, Aru, is able to become more important than his brothers. The myth tells how the older brothers, Dyon and Ono, punish Aru for acting out of line with his role of youngest brother. After a separation during which Aru receives certain gifts from an old woman, the three brothers meet again. Now, however, the older brothers find themselves dependent on Aru who uses the gifts he had received from the old woman--a knife to kill a cow for food, flint to start the cooking fire, and the ability to draw an inexhaustible supply of water from the stomachs of the cow, the part his older brothers had given him because of his inferior status.³¹ In this case the irregularity of the ascendance of the youngest of the group is legitimized in Dogon eyes by the fact that the old woman who had given Aru the gifts allowing him to change his status was none other than Amma himself (Ganay, 1941:16-20; Dieterlen, 1941:24-25).

The "Elements" of the Person

These examples of relationships from the myths and from the religious and political systems of the Dogon demonstrate that for them,

³¹The corresponding gift was an "unknown object" which was in fact an andugo altar, an altar for "making" rain. Among the Dogon the ogono of Aru is regarded generally as having the most effective andugo altar.

as Fortes and Horton have observed for other African peoples, the structures of relations between men and the superhuman and between men themselves correlate in important ways. Dogon ideas about the content of these relations, how sacrifice actually "works," for example, provide additional support for the existing structures in the form of commentaries by elders on mythical and empirical events. The ideological basis for these commentaries is the set of Dogon notions about the elements which constitute the individual, that is, what makes up a man's "personality," and how these elements change over the life of a man according to certain conditions. Together with a man's body, these elements compose the "whole" person, but some of them can exist independently of the body. One major part of these elements are the "spiritual principles,"³² the kikinu, which direct an individual's action. The earliest researches describe two kikinu, the intelligent, kikinu say, and the unintelligent, kikinu bumone. Both are unique to a person. The former is the active principle, the seat of knowledge and conscious action, sometimes referred to as "will," (volonté [F]), while the latter is the shadow of the body. The kikinu bumone is tied to the body and remains and diminishes with the corpse (cf. Dieterlen, 1941). The kikinu say can separate from a person as he sleeps and persists after he dies. Later works describe four principles, each of the kikinu being divided into

³²In early works the "spiritual principles" are described as "souls," âmes (F) (e.g., Dieterlen, 1941, 1950). The term which I use here (principles spirituels [F]) is drawn from Calame-Griaule (1965) and Griaule and Dieterlen (1965). I believe it is inadequate as a descriptive term, but I do not wish to pursue this point here.

male and female (Dieterlen, 1950), and then eight kikinu, where two pairs of each sex are related in a general way with the body of the individual and four others with his sexual parts (Dieterlen, 1956; Calame-Griaule, 1965).

The latter, more-detailed description of these principles reveals how the Dogon associate them with specific cognitive and affective states and certain types of actions. The kikinu bumone is no longer described as passive but in a general sense represents the antagonist of the "intelligent" kikinu. For example, the intelligent male principle of the body is seated in the brain and is related to intelligence and abstract thought. However, the unintelligent male principle of the body is in the shadow and "provokes anger, all the violent sentiments which are opposed to the action of reason. . . ." Similarly, the intelligent kikinu of sex are associated with semen, impregnation, and the pleasurable aspects of sexual relations while the unintelligent principles relate to disagreements, impotence, and menstruation (Calame-Griaule, 1965:36-37). Thus, at this abstract level the Dogon notions of man's spiritual principles incorporate a duality of thought and action which confronts man's propensity for rational, agreeable, and procreative actions with the opposites of these. These concepts recognize in man the potential for action not only for promoting good relations, that is, order, but also for disrupting that order, a reflection of the mythical struggles of Nommo and Yurugu.

A second major component of the person is the contents of clavicles (clavicules [F]). The Dogon believe that seeds of the eight

original food grains are found in the clavicles, four on each side and related symbolically with the eight kikinu. A child receives grains from such sources as his father, mother, nani ancestor, and binu. The order in which these grains are arranged in the clavicles differs according to the sex, tribe, gina, stage of life, and social position of a person. Moments at which these grains change positions include birth, circumcision, marriage, the sigi, and death. When a man becomes impure, either an impure grain, fonio, is substituted for one of the usual grains (Dieterlen, 1950:361-363) or the seeds leave their positions (Griaule and Dieterlen, 1965:366). In each case purification is necessary to re-establish the original order of the seeds. Some men, the inne puru and leatherworkers, for example, have this imbalance all of the time, and others, women during their periods, for example, experience this disarrangement temporarily. On the other hand, at their installation the priests of the binu and lebe cults receive not a new order of grains but eight supplementary seeds which signal their differentiation from other men (Dieterlen, 1950:361).

A third constituent of a whole person is a substance or "vital force," nyama, which animates man and is believed to be in everything, including the superhuman. Described as "an available (en instance [F]), impersonal, unconscious energy . . ." (Griaule, 1963:161), nyama is the same substance in whatever vehicle it is found, and it can be transmitted between vehicles. In man Dogon describe it as a fluid which is produced by the continual germination of the seeds in the clavicles and which flows in the veins with, but separate from, the blood (Calame-Griaule, 1965:59-60). During a man's lifetime the amount and purity

of his nyama can vary, and Dogon explain changes in a man's physical, mental, and social conditions in terms of these fluctuations (see Griaule, 1940b). The nyama of an individual is not a homogeneous mass but is composed of separate parcels coming from several different contributors. At conception one receives an initial contribution of nyama from one's father and a smaller quantity from one's mother. By designating the child as his nani, a lineage ancestor gives to him a part of his own nyama which had remained with his kikinu say at death. The transfer of this nyama is accomplished with a blood sacrifice which encloses the nyama in the nani duge (Dieterlen, 1941:132-135). When a person is bestowed his names, he receives nyama from the ancestors of the wagem in general and from his binu. After the new mother emerges from her house for the first time with her baby, she takes the child to the binu sanctuary and to her husband's ginu na where the binukedine, on the one hand, and the gina banga, on the other, grant the child one of his three names before the altars of their respective sanctuaries (Paulme, 1940a:443-444; see Lifchitz and Paulme, 1953).³³

Through his life by taking part in rituals directed at these and other superhuman beings, Amma, Lebe, and Nommo, for example, and by dancing a sigi in particular, a person receives additional quantities of nyama from the superhuman beings in question. In these rituals the actual transfer of this nyama from the superhuman to the human is accomplished by sacrifice. In terms of Dogon ideas of this process,

³³The gina banga of the mother's gina gives the child a third name, but it appears to have little importance.

the flow of blood from the slit throat of the victim onto the altar releases the nyama of the victim which flows with the blood and is absorbed by the altar. Alerted by the prayer of the priest, the superhuman being related to the altar comes to the altar to "drink" the blood and the nyama of the victim, imparting some of his own nyama to the altar by his presence. This parcel of nyama from the superhuman being is transferred back up the stream of blood into the body of the victim where it tends to concentrate in the liver. Following the sacrifice, the priest, the sacrificer, and usually some other elders eat the cooked victim, and the priest takes the first taste or eats the whole of the liver. Often other members of the group share in a meal in which part of the victim is used. Even in cases where there is no meal, since nyama can be transferred by the vapor of speech, some of that absorbed by the priests or elders comes to the other members of the group in conversation (Griaule, 1940a; see Dieterlen, 1941; Calame-Griaule, 1965).

Over the years the quantity of nyama which a man receives from his parents and these superhuman beings is augmented by the nyama of such things as the food that he eats, someone's calling his tige, or slogan, and various other interrelations with men. In general, the quantity of one's nyama is related to one's well-being so that a pleasurable affective state like "happiness" or a feeling of success in one's endeavors "heightens" one's nyama. The food one eats helps the seeds in the clavicles to "germinate" nyama. Verbal exchanges which have much "water," the tige, for example, exemplify good relations and provide each interlocutor with added moisture for his clavicles (see

Calame-Griaule, 1965). As a result of this continual increase, ". . . the old man has a much more important social position than the child. A ritual gesture effected by a man has an effectiveness so much greater as he is older, that is as his nyama is more powerful" (Griaule, 1963: 163).

Although most men experience this gradual increase of nyama during their lifetimes, they suffer also from losses or impurity of their nyama which corresponds to such conditions as fatigue, illness, injury, and bad luck. Frequently divination reveals that such a condition has been caused by one of the superhuman beings with whom a man is tied through the seeds in his clavicles and the different parcels of nyama in his body. Because a man has committed a fault with regard to a superhuman being, has not performed a sacrifice or has not observed a prohibition,³⁴ for example, this being has replaced the related, benign parcel of nyama in the man with one which is harmful. A man can become pure again and restore his health or good fortune only by performing a purification rite which may or may not include a blood sacrifice. In effect, purification withdraws the harmful nyama and allows the return of the nyama which the being had removed. In interpersonal relations the speech of arguments is "hot," and since it carries little moisture it does not promote increases in men's nyama.

³⁴These prohibitions vary with the superhuman being in question and relate to a wide variety of things such as the eating or destroying of certain plants and animals and actions deemed inappropriate at certain places associated with these beings, for example, sanctuaries, altars, fields, caves, water courses, and rocks (Dieterlen, 1947:83-84).

Since some people have either a temporary or permanent state of impurity, pure men, inne omo, must observe certain restrictions in relations with these people. Anytime nyama is set free from its support and not directed immediately into another, it becomes a potential danger to other supports and, thus, to men. For this reason any flow of blood can jeopardize the pure state of one's nyama.³⁵ Particularly impure and dangerous are the blood of the menstrual flow, the blood of a man or animal one has killed, or the blood of one's comrade fallen during battle. By channelling the nyama released under these circumstances into an alternate vehicle, a wood carving or a rock painting, for example, a man can protect himself from the effects of this nyama. However, an impure condition results when, from contact with one of the dangerous vehicles, the impure nyama displaces a part of one's own nyama. In order to expel the impure nyama and replace the original, one must perform a purification rite (Dieterlen, 1947; Ganay, 1940).

Priests and Ritual Action

These ideas about the structure, components, and processes of men's relationships with superhuman beings help to legitimate the functions of the priests and the general direction of religious affairs by the elders. Since the elders have more knowledge about religious matters, younger men must depend on them for advice as well as direction in the conduct of religious action. As was noted above, the elders are believed to have more nyama and, consequently, are better equipped to

³⁵The nyama of a sacrifice is fixed immediately in the altar on which the victim's blood flows and is, therefore, not impure.

fight an impurity than a younger man in the sense that, for any given impurity, an elder would have more nyama, more "strength," "in reserve." Their right to eat the livers of sacrificial victims with the priests recognizes their position and the advantage of even more nyama which this brings. As the intermediaries between a particular group of men and a specific superhuman being or beings, priests are regarded as having more nyama in relation to the other members of the groups they lead. Since a gina banga should be the oldest man in the lineage, his nyama is highest by virtue of his age. As mentioned above, at their installation rites binukedine and ogono receive eight additional seeds in their clavicles which gives them an increased capacity to produce nyama. Also at their installations, these priests receive especially large quantities of the nyama of the superhuman being in question with the bestowal of the duge of the cult. These stone beads contain the nyama of the relevant "immortal" ancestor and, in the case of a binu duge, at irregular moments the kikinu say of the binu (Dieterlen, 1941:220-234).³⁶

Ogono, binukedine, and gina banga alike are in charge of the altars of their respective cults and are responsible for directing the rituals which involve these objects.³⁷ Since the altars are the "cross-roads" of relations between men and the superhuman (Griaule,

³⁶It is the periodic entrance of the kikinu say into the duge which causes the trances of a binukedine; such trances are expected of a binu priest (Dieterlen, 1941:224).

³⁷There are other kinds of priests, of course, the priest of a binu i cult, for example. I discuss only these three because of their importance in the political systems.

1940a:128, n. 3), control over them provides control over a major part of cult members' relationships with the superhuman. At the rituals at these altars, a priest delivers prayers to the superhuman beings in question, but he does not perform the sacrifices himself. To perform these a special sacrificer, polugelene, is designated. For an ogono the priest of the earliest-established babinu cult in a region should be the sacrificer, but there are variations on this according to the tribal affiliations of the two priests, as in Sanga, for example. At the annual rituals of a binu cult, the sacrificer is sometimes the priest's sister's son, and at the purification for a binu member, a mangu partner performs the ritual (Ganay, 1942:22,58-61). At sacrifices at the altars of a ginu na, a sister's son of the gina banga ". . . plays almost always the role of . . . polugelene. . ." (Paulme, 1940a: 81). In the cases of the mangu partner and the sister's son, these men are closely related to the groups which they assist, but they are members of cults different than the ones for which they sacrifice. Their differentiation is explained not only in social terms but by the different order of the seeds of their clavicles and the different combinations of the parcels of nyama in them.

The close and continuous contact with the nyama of superhuman beings in the altars or duge requires that priests observe several important prohibitions in order to keep impurity from this nyama. Since the gina ancestors are in fact "mortal," a gina banga is least restricted, but like the other two kinds of priests, he must observe the prohibitions of the inne omo. None of them eats fonio, or the

animals sacrificed at funerals or on the altars of the awa; drinks beer made for funerals; or drinks from the same calabash with or eats with blacksmiths, leatherworkers, or inne puru (Dieterlen, 1941:136, 154). Since anything related to death is incompatible with, that is, impure for, the nyama of the "immortal" ancestors of the babinu and lebe cults, the binukedine and ogono are required to observe several other prohibitions. Neither of these priests drinks with other men, particularly in a ginu na where the altar of the lineage ancestors is placed. They do not attend funerals and avoid contact with mourners. A binukedine cannot kill in war or in hunting. He is restricted in his sexual relations, and an ogono should avoid sexual relations altogether. In addition, an ogono must remain always within his own village and cannot be touched by other men, even to assist him when he is ill (Dieterlen, 1941:223-224,234; Ganay, 1942:18-19).

The positions of the priests as leaders in the religious system are most evident in their roles as directors of the rituals of their respective groups. A gina banga and a binukedine preside at rituals which introduce new members into the gina and binu turu. Following the beginning of sexual relations between a husband and wife, the latter draws water which the gina banga of her husband's gina spills into an old stone mortar in the courtyard of the ginu na. The water and a prayer which accompanies the act are for the lineage ancestors. This rite makes any child born to the woman a wagem i, or "ancestors' child," and thereby establishes the legitimacy of the birth. If a woman does not do this, a child would be considered a bastard, sile i, and would

be without a father and the support of the groups of which he would have been a member otherwise. Rejected by everyone, he would have neither a house to live in, a field to cultivate, nor any ancestors for assistance and protection (Dieterlen, 1941:155; Ganay, 1942:52). Consequently, when a woman finds herself pregnant and without a husband, a frequent option for her is either abortion or infanticide (Bourouillou, 1939:354; Ortoli, 1941:55-58; Paulme, 1940a:432). At the birth of a child, the binukedine of the father's babinu gives the father one of the sticks which are kept in the niches of the facade of the binu ginu. When several births occur in close succession in a gina, the order in which the sticks are handed out determines the ranking of these children within the lineage. The priest keeps the order in his memory (Ganay, 1942:16, 53). An alternative to the sticks is the feeding of a light porridge to a new-born child, priority being given to the one who is first to have the porridge on his lips (Ortoli, 1941:60). Since one's place in the age order indicates the order in which gina members have a right to certain fields and houses, to inheritances, to parts of meat and beer at sacrifices, and to a position in dance formations and other activities, this offer of a stick or a few drops of porridge can be very important. The name-giving functions of the binu priest and the gina banga have been noted above. The rite which the latter performs before the ancestor altar with all of the adult males of the gina present "marks the official recognition of the child by the family of his father" (Paulme, 1940a:444). A few years after this, the gina banga will preside at the sacrifice over the nani duge of the child.

At specific times during the year, the priests lead the members of their cults in the performance of rituals at their sanctuaries. In Sanga, for example, there are four major annual rituals in which members of a gina participate, and these rituals should occur, in theory at least, at the two equinoxes and the two solstices (Griaule, 1952b:30).³⁸ Two of these rituals, the sowing festival, or bulu, and the harvest or first-fruits festival, or bago di, involve all the members of a lebe cult and thus could engage a whole region where all follow the same lebe cult.³⁹ Each of these festivals lasts several days, and the ogono decides on what date they should begin. During the festivals libations and sacrifices are offered at the altars of the lebe cult and of the various binu cults as well as at the ginu na. At a bulu sacrifices and prayers are directed at superhuman beings in order to receive rain and a good crop. A bago di follows a similar pattern of rites and is aimed at thanking those beings for having helped to provide sustenance for another year. In each case the order in which libations and sacrifices are made at different altars and the order of the priests in processions should follow a set pattern.

A bulu takes place around the end of May or early June, and on the first day a sacrifice is offered first at the oldest amma altar of the region or village and then on altars on the roof of the ogono's house.

³⁸Among regions the number and timing of rituals seem to vary somewhat. See Arnaud (1921:263) and Desplagnes (1907:300-305).

³⁹In Sanga the Dyon tribesmen participate in the bulu and bago di of the ogono of the region. Nearly all of the Aru members of the region send representatives to the rites performed by the ogono of Aru (Dieterlen, 1941:232).

That night the men of a gina meet in the ginu na for a sacrifice on the amma na altar of the gina, and afterwards they share a meal of millet porridge and the sacrificed chickens. On the second day members of the babinu cults meet at their sanctuaries to witness prayers and sacrifices there. This too is followed by a distribution of food. A few days later everyone meets before the house of the region or village founder, the binu sanctuaries, and the house of the ogono to receive millet thrown from the roofs with the cry, "Millet, millet, millet!" This millet which the crowd scrambles to collect is part of the previous harvest from the fields of the lebe and binu priests which had been stored especially to maintain its purity and which is imbued with the nyama of these superhuman beings. Later some goes on the field of the ogono and the rest is mixed with the planting seeds of the households. Only after the bulu ends can men begin to plant their fields. Symbolically, this special grain is delivered to the people from the roofs of the sanctuaries, that is, "from above," the direction from which all things come ultimately (Ganay, 1942:25-28; Lifchitz and Paulme, 1936). At a bago di, held usually about the middle of October, the libations consist of porridge made of the first grains to be harvested. Men cannot consume the grain until the bago di is completed, and with this offer to the superhuman beings, men recognize the superior position of the superhuman. Members of a binu turu and a gina meet as for a bulu, but gina members participate also in a special rite on the altars of the twins of the lineage (Dieterlen, 1941:165-168; Ganay, 1942: 28-29).

The two other rites, wagem bulu and gina ommolo bulu,⁴⁰ are almost solely the concern of the individual gina. About five or six weeks after the bago di, that is, about the end of November, the men of a gina meet at the wagem in the ginu na.⁴¹ After a prayer at the amma na altar and a libation, sacrifice, and prayer over the wagem, a chicken is sacrificed over the duge and funeral pot of the nani ancestor of each man, in order of age beginning with the oldest first. The livers of the victims are shared among those present, and the elders eat some millet cakes and drink some unfermented beer of first-fruit grains. After this the men all drink beer together. Ten days later on the anayimung, usually found in the tire ginu, the same sacrifice is performed for each of the ancestors who had not received any in the ginu na (Dieterlen, 1941:168-171).⁴² At approximately the spring equinox in late March, but as likely in April or early May, gina

⁴⁰Paulme (1940a) describes the latter ritual but gives it no name. The name used here is taken from Griaule and Dieterlen (1965: 481). In another publication Griaule (1952b:30) uses the term bado for this rite, but Paulme (1940a:137) applies bado to a period of the year. Griaule says also that the bado involves a sacrifice to the ancestors which, if he refers to the same ritual as Paulme, does not seem to be the case.

⁴¹The gina of the two Ogol villages celebrate this rite on the same day, and the gina banga of Sodama quarter, the first established in the Ogols, decides the day on which a wagem bulu is to take place (Dieterlen, 1941:168-169).

⁴²Though the wagem bulu is considered to be an annual ritual, Dieterlen (1941:171) has stated that, if a man of the gina had died during the previous year, there was no obligation to sacrifice to the nani ancestors as usual. "Such an event was interpreted in effect as the expression of the will of the ancestors who had not wished to wait for the blood of the [sacrificial] victim and who 'drank the blood of a man.' From this fact the rite becomes useless"--and, one might add, probably not "annual."

members meet at the ommolo ana altar in the courtyard of the ginu na. After having previously put the proper barks to soak in the pot enclosed in the conical altar, the sacrificer assigned to this altar spills a libation and sacrifices chickens, accompanied by a short prayer by the gina banga. This ritual is performed in order to help to maintain and improve the health of the lineage members (Paulme, 1940a:109-111).

Conclusion

At each level of political organization, in a gina, village, or region, the action of ritual is an expression of one aspect of the political structure. The dominant position of the elders in the direction of all ritual is the "structural statement" of ritual which has the most general validity for the political structure as a whole. In a gina the structure of relations between men revealed through ritual should correlate with the political structure of the lineage. Within a village gina cooperate in organizing their rituals, and the role of coordinator is assigned to the gina banga of the first lineage established in the village. At the level of the region, those gina or villages which participate in the rituals of a lebe cult also follow the directives of the priest, the ogono, in certain other areas of social life as well. The positions of gina banga and ogono as leaders of their groups in other than religious matters is a key factor shaping their positions in the political structures of these groups. The less important political position of a binukedine has been mentioned above and results from the more limited role of this priest outside of the affairs of his binu cult. Although members of a binu turu own the

sanctuary and the field which are given to the priest to care for, ordinarily they hold no other goods in common. Apart from the redistribution of contributions of food at rituals, a binukedine takes no special part in the organization of economic affairs of the members of the cult. Although a cult includes usually two or more gina, relations between these groups are normally the affairs of the gina banga, and in most cases a binukedine plays only a minor role as an intermediary in matters not concerning the binu. In many cases the installation of a man as binukedine is a direct expression of the desires of the elders of the gina making up the cult, and in every case the priest must rely on the support of the elders in order to play his role. Finally, within his own gina, a binu priest is always younger than the head of the lineage. If he becomes the oldest in the gina, he should give up his office as binu priest for as gina banga he must tend altars of the dead lineage members, a function which would bring impurity to the binu (see Dieterlen, 1941; Ganay, 1942; Paulme, 1940a).

The functional overlap characteristic of the political communities can result in a reinforcement of group cohesiveness, and although directed at religious ends, rituals can function to integrate these groups. Simply by taking part in a ritual a member signals his attachment to the group. Like other activities which might bring a group together as one, ritual action requires the cooperation of group members and can renew the awareness in each of them that he shares a common interest with the others. As in kinship behavior, economic affairs, and situations of conflict and conflict resolution, the

experience of participating in ritual action can reinforce a person's concept of his position in a group vis-à-vis the other members, and attitudes which develop through participation in this sphere of social life can affect a person's relations in other types of action within the group. Some of the possible disruptive effects of such an overlap of group actions are considered below.

Since religious ideas assist men to explain that which they cannot explain otherwise (see Horton, 1964; Spiro, 1966:109-112), in a political community these ideas can complement the integrative action of ritual by providing a means of explaining the structure of relations among men and, hence, can generate support for a political structure. The Dogon concepts about the components of the individual and the manner in which they develop over his lifetime help to define and to justify the position of a person within a group. The different sources of his nyama and the amount and pure or impure condition of that substance provide a person with a specific identity in relation to other people. Ideas about the kikinu of men offer a basis for describing situations of cohesion or disorder in a group. Commentaries on and interpretations of the myths help to justify the particular order of relations which in its mythical context transcends human experience. Beliefs in the ability of superhuman beings to bring men harm as well as benefits allow these beings to be viewed as possible sources of sanctions for those who disrupt the political system. Within the gina, villages, and regions, the priest-political leaders, the gina banga and ogono, promote actions and ideas which not only help to integrate their groups but also to

legitimate their positions as directors of ritual action and as guardians of the altars, the primary means of interacting with the superhuman.

CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC SYSTEMS AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Basic Issues and Processes

The operation of the economic systems of the gina, villages, and regions helps to reveal the structure of political relations within these types of groups. The "true" nature of an economic system is still a matter of discussion (cf. Dalton, 1971; LeClair, 1968). One gains a more concrete image of such a system by considering it in terms of basic functions which include the determination of what goods and services are to be produced by a group and how the output is to be shared among the members of the group. These functions are carried out in processes which involve "three classes of events: production events, utilization [or consumption] events, and transfer events," the latter shifting ". . . control over, or rights in, an economic good from one individual to another or from one group to another" (LeClair, 1968:201-202; latter quote originally in italics). The importance of economic action for the political system lies in the fact that the older men in general and the elders in particular control the goods used for producing food, the fields and the fruit and nut trees, direct the use of these goods, and supervise the transfers of these goods and the products derived from them both within the gina and, in most cases, between the gina and outside groups.

Dogon assign different ranks to goods in some categories--for

example, houses, fields, and crops, and generally, rights in goods which are highly valued are allotted to and services performed for men with higher statuses in a political structure. By accepting a normative distribution of goods and performing some services, other members of a group support that structure. Usually, the transfer to a man of a good which he has not held previously or which has a higher rank than a good of the same type which he has already is associated with an increase in status. Greater prestige may attach to control over goods of higher value. However, I assume that prestige can vary, to some degree, according to the ability of a person to manipulate the goods at his disposal (see Sahlins, 1960). A person with a higher status, who holds more valued goods, is in a strategically better position to gain prestige than a person of lower status, but he is also more vulnerable to losses of prestige because of the greater obligations which he has to fulfill, the greater expectations which he has to meet.

The normal means of fulfilling such obligations is through a process of redistribution. Redistribution channels goods and services within a group to a central agent, usually a person or persons with high status, who provides goods and performs services, in turn, for the whole group (see Dalton, 1971:53; Sahlins, 1965:139-145). This process can be identified within the household as well as at the level of the gina and region. In each case the process should bring some support to the political structure. There is the flow of goods and services to the "center" and back out again, of course, but, also, although younger members of a group may contribute an equal or greater

share of services or goods than older members, the central agent redistributes goods differentially, giving priority in order of distribution or in the type or quantity of goods to members according to their places in the age order. In nearly every group the redistribution of foodstuffs is an important part of economic action, and the central agent has the special task of "transforming" the contents of the transfers. The person of high status calls on people to cultivate his fields or to provide foodstuffs in particular situations and later reallocates these goods among the group. The foodstuffs which go "upward," or to the "center," are unprocessed. The pooling agent oversees the processing of the food, and the food which he reallocates is cooked. The specific appearances of these and other features of economic systems and their relation to political structures are discussed below.

Food Production

The most important function of the economic system of a gina (lineage) is the production and distribution of the staple foods--millet, rice, and other grain crops. Within a lineage the family is the basic unit producing and consuming food. Often the head of a family owns⁴³ a house and one or two fields, and usually he has the right to use a field belonging to the tire togu or to the gina. His wife and children assist him in the cultivation of the fields under

⁴³By "own," "possess," "belong to," and the related nouns I refer to the exclusive right of a person or group to transfer control of a good to another person or group.

his control, and he directs the work on the fields. The harvests of these fields are stored in the granaries of his compound, and throughout the year, he and other members of his compound consume that grain. When one of his sons brings his wife to live in his father's quarter, the family head is obliged to allow the young man to use one of the fields under his control. A married son continues to work on the fields of his father, and during the period of the work in the rainy season, the son, his wife, and children eat their main meals at the father's compound from grain provided by the latter. During the remainder of the year, a married son and the members of his household eat at their own house the grain harvested from the field allotted to him by his father and perhaps from a field of another family head (Paulme, 1940a:103,148).

If a man lives in a large gina which is divided into tire togu (lineage segment), he and his sons have a right to cultivate part of the fields belonging to this group. When he becomes the oldest member of a tire togu, he lives in the tire ginu. As the oldest man he has a greater share of the fields which belong to this group than any other man, and in principle he allots the fields among the group members (Paulme, 1940a:111-112). If a family head is one of the older men in his gina, usually he has the right to use one of the fields belonging to the group. If he is one of the three or four oldest, he may live in one of the few "houses of the old world," houses owned by the lineage and considered the most important in the gina, and, together with his sons, would cultivate the gina

fields which are attached to this house. "Houses of the old world" are ranked according to the expected output of the fields associated with them, and the older a man is relative to other men of the gina, the better should be the productive capacity of the fields of the "house of the old world" in which he lives. The house inhabited by the oldest man, the gina banga, is the ginu na, and the fields which are attached to it should provide a harvest larger than that of the fields of any other house in the gina. The houses and fields of a tire togu and a gina are the possessions of the groups, and no person has the right to sell them (Paulme, 1940a:96-101; Arnaud, 1921:248).⁴⁴

The heads of households and families insure that their dependents receive food from the fields on which all have worked, and fathers should provide fields for their married sons. While the provision of cooked food by a family head during the rainy season work period is in a sense a recognition of the labor contribution of a married son, the food, like the allotment of a field, symbolizes also the subordinate position of the son within the family. Along with the right to cultivate gina (lineage) fields and to live in "houses of the old world," elders have the obligation to allocate those fields of the lineage which they and their sons do not need to younger married men from other families who are unable to find enough land within their own families or elsewhere in the gina. Although this redistribution allows all of the members of a gina to share in the total cultivation rights of the group, the control

⁴⁴By 1935 men were selling possessions of the lineage (Paulme, 1940a:101; cf. Bourouillou, 1939:359).

of the allocation by the older members and the direction of the allocation from them to the younger men reveals the inferior position of the latter. Until a man is old enough to take charge of a gina field in his own name, that is, until he is at least past the age of forty, he is often dependent not only on his father but also on other elders, particularly those in the "houses of the old world," for the use of fields in order to produce enough food (Paulme, 1940a:97,100, 339).

Once the elders have fulfilled their obligations towards the men of their gina (lineage), they may allow certain outsiders to use fields which gina members do not wish to cultivate during a particular season, and "whether the field belongs to the joint family [gina] or to the tire togu, the beneficiary is often a uterine nephew, [a] son of a daughter of the group" (Paulme, 1940a:112). Those who wish to use fields in another lineage go to the gina banga or a family head to make the request. The fields which they are allowed to cultivate are usually the ones furthest from the village of the owners. Although a user may give a token "rent" of a small quantity of food, this serves to acknowledge ownership of a field, and normally no payment of cowries or part of a crop is required for use of a field (Paulme, 1940a:338).⁴⁵ Whenever the owners wish to have back the use of a field, the user is obliged to leave, though he is able to harvest a crop which he has planted (Bourouillou, 1939:360). Two or more gina which claim a common

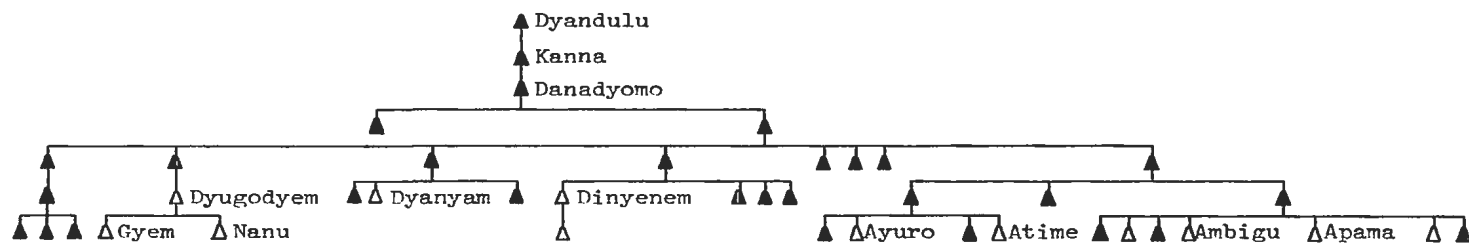
⁴⁵Arnaud (1921:248) states that a "stranger" may have to pay around one-tenth of the crop to the head of the family or gina who allows him use of a field.

origin, for example, where emigrants from one formed another, may maintain ties of mutual aid. In such cases, if a younger man cannot find enough land in his own gina, the elders of a related lineage can offer him the use of a field which is available in their group. On occasion two or more gina may own some fields in common. The age-order principle remains in effect, and the oldest man in all the groups directs the cultivation of the jointly-owned fields. For example, the major gina of the three twinned and single villages of Sangi, Engel, and Dini, which trace descent through a common ancestor and have the same babinu cult, own two fields in common. The oldest gina banga of these gina has the right to cultivate the two fields (Paulme, 1940a:94).

Within a gina the concentration at the top of the age pyramid of control over economic resources is revealed clearly in the role assigned to the lineage head. In addition to supervising the cultivation of the most productive fields in the gina, a gina banga (lineage leader) is responsible in general for administering the distribution of the other fields and houses among lineage members and must look after other lineage possessions, such as the fruit trees on the gina fields and, perhaps, slaves (Paulme, 1940a:89). Among the most valuable of the lineage goods in his care are the pyi ana, the blue and white checkered blankets in which members of the gina are wrapped to be carried to the cemetery. Such a blanket ". . . is the most general form of wealth. . . . It is, as it were, the end and object of family economy, the ultimate stage in the acquisition of wealth" (Griaule, 1965:207; cf. Dieterlen, 1941:100). Besides holding

the joint possessions of the lineage, in a general way a gina banga coordinates the agricultural work of the gina. At the end of the planting festival, he begins to put fertilizer on his fields which is the signal for the other members of the lineage to begin this task. Once this is completed, the planting can begin, and a group of men, women, and children of the gina initiate the process by planting one or more of the fields of the gina banga (Paulme, 1940a: 150,153). Below I discuss the redistributive function of the gina banga's role as priest of the cult of the lineage ancestors.

Figures 6 and 7 below provide examples of how fields are distributed in gina. The men of Antaba gina, Lower Ogoi, are pictured in Fig. 6. In this lineage there are three "houses of the old world," and the chart indicates the differences in the productivity of the fields associated with each. As gina banga Dyugodyem inhabits the ginu na. His two sons, Gyem and Nanu, cultivate most of the fields for him, and Dyugodyem has assigned one field to Ayuro, Atime, Ambigu, and Apama who work it together for both millet and market produce. Dyanyam and Dinyenem inhabit houses 2 and 3 respectively, and Dyanyam grants the use of a small millet field to Ambigu and Apama. Antaba was founded by a "son" of the founder of Sodama gina, and the two quarters, followers of the same babinu, consider themselves to be tied closely. Dinyenem has allowed a young man from Sodama to use one of the four gina fields under his care. In addition these two gina possess jointly two fields. The older of the two gina banga looks after the use of the fields and allows young men from both groups who lack sufficient land to cultivate crops there (Paulme, 1940a:99).



▲ deceased

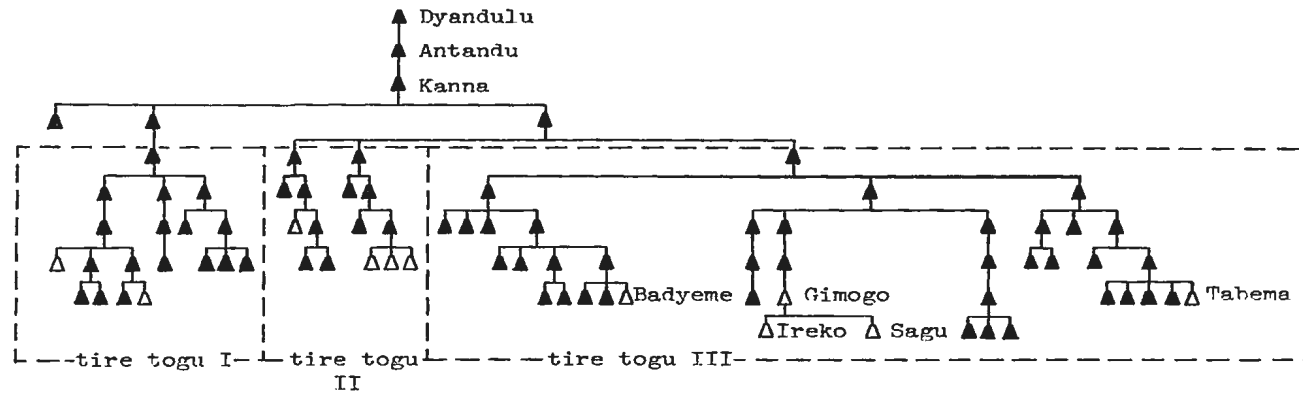
△ living

"HOUSES OF THE OLD WORLD"

HOUSES	INHABITANT	NUMBER/HARVEST (in liters)		
		MILLET	RICE	
1 (<u>ginu na</u>)	Dyugodyem	5/1100	2/720	(market-garden fields for each house, decreasing in size from 1 to 3)
2	Dyanyam	7/900	2/270	
3	Dinyenem	4/900	2/144	

[from Paulme (1940a:58,98-99)]

Fig. 6.--*Antaba gina* Genealogy



▲ deceased

△ living

[from Paulme (1940a:60-62,100,111-112)]

Fig. 7.--Ginna qina Genealogy

In Fig. 7 part of the genealogy of the men of Ginna gina, Lower Ogo1, is given showing the division of the lineage into three tire togu, only one of which is given in full.⁴⁶ Gimogo is the oldest man in tire togu III, and he is also gina banga. In this case Gimogo maintains both the ginu na and the tire ginu and directs the use of the fields of each house. Six millet fields are attached to the tire togu. Gimogo gets the harvest of two of them, and Badyeme, Ireko, Sagu, and Tabema get one field each. The five fields for market gardening are divided between these five members. In addition to these eleven fields, the tire togu owns also nine others further from the village. The members of the group do not always need these fields, and Gimogo may permit some of them to be farmed by "allies," frequently sisters' sons. Gimogo's older son, Ireko, cultivates the four fields attached to the ginu na. The harvests of three of these go to his father, and one is for his own use. Each of the four oldest men of the gina after Gimogo has the use of a field belonging to the lineage.⁴⁷ Tabema is one of these men, and the other three come from tire togu II. All of these gina fields lie near the village (Paulme, 1940a:60-61,100,111-112).

Distributions of Goods

Within a gina the pattern of the distribution of goods and of

⁴⁶Along with the genealogy of Amtaba, this genealogy is one of three published by Denise Paulme (1940a:55-61). Since Griaule (1963: 355-356, n. 3) and Dieterlen (1941:170) list names in addition to those given by Paulme for Ginna, the genealogy of this gina as given in Paulme's book cannot be regarded as complete.

⁴⁷Paulme (1940a:100) does not state if these four live in "houses of the old world."

the exchanges of goods and services expresses the order of relations among existing personnel. A change in the personnel of a lineage, through the death of a member, for example, results in a shift in the distribution of goods and the order of exchanges among members. The shift should follow the age-order principle, and thus, the overall structure of relations within the group should be maintained. Depending on the role into which a person moves, the transfer of a good to him may involve a transfer of specific types of goods from this person to other members of the group in which this change occurs. When the gina banga sacrifices over the duge (stone necklace) of a child for the first time at a bulu (sowing festival), on behalf of the child the father, and not the gina banga, provides the largest part of the millet for the beer to be drunk after the ritual. The beer goes to the men of the gina who, as they witness the fixation of the nyama of the child's nani ("special" ancestor) in the stone of the necklace, give recognition to the new position of the child within the group (Dieterlen, 1941:132-135,169, n. 2). A married man's right to a field and a house has been mentioned above. The grant of a field to him recognizes a major point in his life and gives him a slightly more independent existence within the family and gina. At the same time, and in a sense as his contribution to the gina, his marriage brings to the group a woman whose primary function is to bear children, thus perpetuating the existence of the lineage.

The importance of age order is more evident and the shifts more pronounced in the redistribution of goods following the death of a gina member. Regardless of the position of a man in the age order,

at his death no one older than him can inherit the gina goods which he held or his personal possessions, and none of these goods is re-distributed until after the dama (second funeral) which closes the period of mourning for him. The period from a man's death until the dama can be as long as two to three years. During this time the man's son continues to live in the house last inhabited by his father and harvests two crops from the fields of this house for beer and food for the dama. After the dama the gina banga calls the men together and supervises the redistribution of the man's goods. At Sanga if a man lived in a "house of the old world," the person who comes to replace him should be the next youngest man in the gina. When a gina banga dies, each man in a "house of the old world" moves into the one vacated by the next older and takes charge of the fields of that house. Within a tire togu a similar pattern of redistribution of rights to houses and fields is found (Paulme, 1940a:95-98). On the northern part of the plateau, Desplagnes (1907:210) states that the eldest son should inherit the "community" (gina ?) fields and with them the obligation to feed and clothe the old people, women, and children and to direct the work of the group.

The personal goods of a man can include cowry shell money, clothes, blankets, grain, farming tools, livestock, weapons, tobacco, and perhaps a field and a house. A man's eldest son inherits these goods, and in the case of a man with no sons, his goods go to his younger brother. When a man has more than one son, the eldest allots part of the inheritance to his younger brothers. In every case an heir becomes responsible for paying any debts owed by the dead man

(Arnaud, 1921:245-246; Paulme, 1940a:341,347). Arnaud (1921:246-247) cites a variation in this system of inheritance in the Mount Tabi region where the eldest son inherits the house and fields of his father but the eldest son of the father's eldest sister inherits the "movable" goods, livestock, cotton bands, money, and so on. Paulme states that men inherit only from agnatic kinsmen, and since Bourouillou (1939:362) says explicitly that "nephews do not inherit from their maternal uncles" and agrees with Paulme and Arnaud on other points, the practice at Tabi seems to be a significant exception among the Dogon.

The holder of a gina (lineage) field or the head of a family distributes cultivation rights to certain people, but unless the man who acquires the rights over another's gina goods moves into the ginu na as lineage head, these transfers of gina and personal goods which result in an increase in status for the "next oldest" entail no direct, reciprocal transfer of goods from the man involved to others in the group. However, in association with his inheritance of his father's or elder brother's personal goods, a man furnishes the largest part of the millet for the wagem bulu (ancestor altar sacrifice) at which the funeral pot of the deceased family head is consecrated. The son or brother provides the pot and other items which go into the wagem altar in the ginu na. In addition to the six or seven measures of millet, the son gives to the gina banga a goat and two chickens to be sacrificed over the new pot on the ancestor altar. Similarly, when a man has the funeral pot of his father or brother placed at an anayimung (secondary ancestor altar) altar, he provides the millet

and victims (Dieterlen, 1941:162-164).⁴⁸ With this sacrifice, the dead man becomes an ancestor and is established as a "superior" in relation to the living members of the gina. As described above, the man who provides the millet and animals for this ritual replaces the deceased in his role as family head.

In the same way as the privileged position of the elders in a gina entails certain obligations with regard to the younger men of the lineage, in their roles as priests of major religious groups the gina banga, binukedine, and ogono are accorded special rights to economic resources and, at the same time, are obliged to redistribute these goods or their products to the members of the cults they lead. The goods which come to them, the harvests of the fields in their care and the food contributions of cult members, are unprocessed, and the priests oversee the preparation and cooking of the food which they transfer back to their followers. At the rituals over which he presides at the ginu na during the year, a gina banga furnishes generally a slightly larger share of the victims to be sacrificed, and his fields provide the grain which makes a major part of the porridge and beer which is consumed at these rituals or offered to those who visit him (Dieterlen, 1941:152-154). For example, before the wagem bulu each man gives one measure, about three and one-half liters, of millet to the gina banga in order to make the beer which

⁴⁸Dieterlen (1941:164, n. 4) says that this ritual is "identical" to that at the gina wagem, but she adds that the amount of millet which the son should furnish is ten measures for an "ordinary" man and twenty for a man who was gina banga.

all will drink on the day of the sacrifice. To this millet, the gina banga adds six or seven measures. To the sacrifice at the wagem of the gina, each man brings one chicken for sacrifice, and the lineage head adds two (Dieterlen, 1941:169). On the first day of the bulu, or planting festival, a gina banga gives his wife three to eight measures of small millet which the latter and the other women in the gina pound, dampen, and shape into small, round cakes which are handed out to every gina member. The next day everyone can go to receive some of the beer prepared by the lineage head, and likewise, on the third day all visitors to the ginu na can drink beer and eat porridge provided by the gina banga (Dieterlen and Calame-Griaule, 1960:84-85). For a sacrifice on the altars of the dead twins of a gina at the bago di (harvest festival), each of the heads of families or tire togu furnishes one measure of millet for beer, and the gina banga contributes two measures and sacrifices two of his own chickens (Dieterlen, 1941: 165-166).

The members of a babinu cult entrust the binukedine (binu priest) with a field and some animals. At any time during the year a man can offer a sacrifice at the sanctuary, and he brings salt, millet, and a chicken. The priest gets the salt and millet, and after the sacrifice, he and his sacrificer share the chicken. As was noted in the previous chapter, some of the grain from the binu field goes to members of the village for planting. The largest part of this harvest goes for libations at the altars of the cult and for beer and porridge at the two major annual rites. At these rites the offspring of the animals in the priest's care should be sacrificed for the benefit of the

cult members. At the bulu the sacrificer kills chickens provided by the priest, and sometimes another member of the cult may bring a chicken to be sacrificed at the same time. Afterwards the sacrificer distributes millet cakes made from the grain of the binu field. For the bago di a goat or some chickens provided by the priest are killed, and the binukedine furnishes porridge and beer (Ganay, 1942:25-29,55).

As priest of a lebe cult, an ogono (region leader) acquires the use of a large field, the ogo digu or ogo minne. Men from the different gina supporting his leadership plant and harvest this field before all others in the region. The man immediately younger than the ogono looks after the cultivation of a field from which the harvest goes to feed strangers who come to visit the ogono (Paulme, 1940a:214, 216). As the most important religious and political official for a group of villages, if not a whole region, the ogono has the right to certain types of goods within this group. In some regions he receives the goods of sorcerers accused of having caused a death, of certain thieves, and of men who have made others bleed in fights. Some categories of animals go to him, for example, the first male offspring of a domestic animal (Arnaud, 1921:307). He keeps the fines which are paid to him, and in the case of a thief caught in the act, an ogono can sell the man into slavery and keep part of the cowries or goods received while giving the remainder to the man who captured the thief (Paulme, 1940a:223-225). In some regions the ogono controls access to the market and is able to impose a levy on the goods which people bring to sell (Paulme, 1940a:43,303). The men who police the market place report to him and his council. Although generally he has little

say in the production of millet in the gina, for those gina which make up his lebe cult he inaugurates the planting and consumption of millet ritually each year at the bulu and bago di. In a region in which the ogono is Dyon, an Aru village follows the ritual lead of the ogono of Aru at these two points in the agricultural cycle (Dieterlen, 1941:232). At each bulu some of the harvest from the ogo digu is distributed to the population as seed grain. Much more of the millet is used to make the beer which the ogono offers at each of these rituals. For the bulu (planting festival) at Sanga each man contributes forty cowries to buy the goat and chickens which are sacrificed at the lebe altar. At the bago di (harvest festival) the polugelene (sacrificer) of the ogono kills a sheep and a goat at separate altars (Dieterlen, 1941:165,231; Lifchitz and Paulme, 1936:99).

For the elders in general and for an ogono and a gina banga in particular, the redistribution function which they perform culminates after their deaths in the provisions of food by their gina for their funeral rites. The first funeral follows shortly after the cadaver is taken to the cemetery, and the second funeral, the dama, occurs up to three years later (see Dieterlen, 1941:92-125). At each of these funerals, the gina of the dead man provides food and beer for gina members and mourners in proportion to the importance of the dead man. His "importance" is measured in terms of his age and social status, and the more important a man is, the greater the number of mourners who attend the funerals. Much of the food is provided by the man's family and comes from the fields which he held at his death. The first funeral of an important man takes place only a few days after

his death but long enough for the women of the gina to prepare the necessary beer, porridge, and honey. A dama may require several hundred measures of millet, and during the one or two-year interval between the death and this rite, the sons of the dead man continue to cultivate the fields of the house last inhabited by this man and store the millet harvested there for use at the dama. In anticipation of their deaths, some elders set aside parts of the harvests themselves (Paulme, 1940a:500-521). Since a man should acquire the care of increasingly more productive fields as he ages, at his death the productivity of these fields should correlate closely with his status in the community.

For an ogono the ritual called yimu gongo corresponds to the dama of other men. Held two years after his death, the ceremony requires a prodigious quantity of beer as men from several villages attend. The largest part of the annual harvest of the ogo digu (ogono's field) is stored for this purpose, and the two harvests of this field after his death are used for this also. In addition, at the bulu the ogono of Sanga invites twelve of the most important elders to drink beer made from the millet of his field. Until the yimu gongo, nothing is required of them, but for this rite each must provide a fixed amount of millet beer (Paulme, 1940a:542-543). Hence, at the second funeral rite of an ogono there can be a redistribution from not only the field of the lebe priest but from the fields of some of the more economically favored elders as well.

Consumption of Food

At the annual rituals and dama those who work on the fields of

a cult, provide food for the rites, and support the priest's rights to these goods witness the priest's fulfillment of his economic obligation to them by returning food to the group in a processed form and in a ritual context. The regular redistribution of goods, and particularly food, through the central figure of a priest of a cult attenuates the possibility of a concentration of grain or livestock in the hands of one man for an indefinite period of time. In addition, the allocation of the most important goods to the oldest men helps to insure a relatively frequent redistribution of the products of their fields as cooked food at the dama of these men. However, as the distribution of goods favors the elders, the process of actually consuming the food at rituals reaffirms the superior status of the elders and the importance of the age order. In the daily life of a gina the consumption of food follows the pattern set down by the age order. Depending on the situation, within a household or family the father is the first of the group to taste the food prepared by the women. He gives a short prayer to Amma and throws a bit of food to the east, west, and north as an offering to the ancestors in recognition of their higher "status" with regard to the living. Also the father should be the first to drink the water brought to the household (Dieterlen and Calame-Griaule, 1960:78-79). When in the presence of an older person, a younger man asks his pardon before drinking or eating "for it is the utmost rudeness to drink and eat before one older [than oneself] if he has not 'tasted' the drink or food previously" (Calame-Griaule, 1965:360).

At regular gatherings of the men of the gina, the gina banga

offers a little of the food to the ancestors, and then he distributes the food, the millet cakes at the bulu, for example, to the men of the gina, beginning with the oldest first and continuing according to the age order. Following the sacrifices and libations at the wagem (ancestor altar) at the regular rituals, the gina banga and the lineage elders eat the largest share of the food prepared for the sacrifice, including the chickens which are killed, or the prized part, the liver, but every man in the gina shares in the beer drinking which ends the rituals (Dieterlen, 1941:168,171; Lifchitz and Paulme, 1936:101). When a goat or sheep is sacrificed in a gina, the meat is divided according to the ages and kinship ties of those attending the ritual.

One gives to the oldest man the right hind leg, liver, breast, heart, head, and skin; to the one who comes immediately after him [in age], the left hind leg; the right foreleg to the third [in] rank by age, and the left foreleg to the fourth; the kidneys to the oldest woman; the hindquarters to the maternal nephew, who cooks the meat for all; the neck goes to the sacrificer and the viscera can be distributed to all the others in attendance (Dieterlen and Calame-Griaule, 1960:51).⁴⁹

At a binu sanctuary during a bulu, the sacrificer for the priest distributes millet cakes to the men according to the age order. The chicken livers are crushed and mixed with a little salt. Three pieces are thrown on top of the sanctuary and three inside as an offer to the binu before the priest and men eat the rest of the livers and the

⁴⁹A maternal nephew is given a place here apart from that of sacrificer, a position a sister's son should hold often (see Chapter III). Paulme (1940a:81) states that, as sacrificer, a sister's son should receive a foreleg or hindleg which is not the case in the example quoted above. The order of distribution given here may apply to a similar division at a sacrifice of a binu cult.

remainder of the chickens which are apportioned according to age. After the libations and sacrifices of the bago di, the priest and the elders eat a little of the porridge made from the first-fruits and eat the sacrificed animals (Ganay, 1942:28-29). At the bulu and bago di the first to drink the beer are the ogono and the seven oldest men of the region after himself. Since only the inne puru ("impure" men) can eat the animals sacrificed at the lebe altars at these rites, the ogono and the inne omo ("living" men) elders do not have a share of this food (Dieterlen and Calame-Griaule, 1960:85).

The same principle of distributing food by age order is followed in the division of the beer at a dama (second funeral). The elders of the one or more gina which are to celebrate a dama oversee the production of the beer and direct the ceremonies of the dama. Once the determined quantity is accumulated for a more important dama, the elders set aside a part of it for beer for themselves and distribute the rest in equal portions to be brewed in all of the gina of the village of the dead man or men. At several points in the six-day period, beginning on the second day, the men drink a part of the beer. The oldest of the elders of the mourning gina should direct the distribution. The first part goes to the "Great Mask," the second to the elders who have attended two sigi, and the third to the olubaru. The remaining beer is divided among the other men of the village and among those of other villages who have come to the dama. In the latter cases the oldest man in each gina or village receives the first share, and quantities of decreasing size are handed out to those who follow in age. "The questions of precedence for the consumption [of the beer] are of the greatest

importance. . . . The first to drink the beer should be the oldest of all those who have celebrated the last or before-last Sigi in the locality where the Dama is celebrated [sic]" (Griaule, 1963:376). The importance of respecting this order in drinking the beer is illustrated by the fine of one thousand cowries which should be imposed on a younger man who would drink before the older men (Griaule, 1963:346-347,386).

Transfers on Changing Status

Above the level of the family and tire togu (lineage segment), the accession of a man to the leadership of a group or his entrance into a group of specialists involves a two-way transfer of goods. At the major transitional rites, the new office holder or group member transfers a relatively large amount of cooked food to particular members of the group. The acceptance of this offer is a sign of a change in the relationship between the two parties. The one offering the food attains a higher status, and those accepting the food recognize this change as legitimate. In return and as a symbol of this new status the latter transfer to the individual the rights to use certain goods or to acquire and use esoteric knowledge peculiar to the group or to the person's role. For men in leadership positions they recognize also the legitimacy of the leader to act with authority in specific areas and require that he fulfill some obligations towards them.⁵⁰

⁵⁰An example of a specialist group is those men who practice the mode of divination in which they interpret the footprints of the foxes, yurugu, on grids marked out in the sand. A man who wishes to learn the

After the dama for a deceased gina banga, the men of the gina replaster the walls of the ginu na, and then the successor of the dead man can take up residence there. Following the first sowing festival after he enters his new home, a gina banga offers a special sacrifice on the altar of the ancestors. For this he provides a goat as the victim and a large quantity of beer for the men of a gina and, in some cases, for those of the whole village. On the day after this sacrifice, the elders of the gina come to the ginu na to drink the beer that is left over, and by doing this they show their recognition of the new lineage head (Dieterlen, 1941:150; Paulme, 1940a:94-95). As described above the lineage leader resides in the most prestigious dwelling in the gina and becomes responsible for the gina property in general.

At the installation of an ogono the scale and prestige of the goods transferred increase. The new lebe priest should provide around 500 measures, about 1300 liters, of grain for beer for those who come to see the ceremony (Dieterlen, 1941:233). After the sacrificer of the lebe cult has placed the lebe duge necklace around the neck of the priest, visitors file into the courtyard where the new ogono and his wife sit in order to receive them. Each person salutes the ogono with the proper greeting and offers cowries to him and his wife, ideally forty for the priest and twenty for his wife (Paulme, 1940a:209). With

technique applies to the diviners with a gift of food, part of it cooked, which the diviners eat. After a man has completed his "apprenticeship," he is incorporated formally into the group with an installation rite for which he provides beer, porridge, and chickens (Griaule, 1937:133-134; Paulme, 1937b:8-9).

his installation an ogono acquires the special regalia of his priesthood which include, in addition to the lebe duge, a cane, hat, pair of sandals, robe, drum, and trumpet. He goes to live in the lebe ginu, which is often only a ginu na as in Sanga, and acquires certain rights and obligations in the economic system as mentioned above.

The followers of a babinu entrust the binukedine with the objects and fields of the cult; allow him to wear and carry the special robe, hat, blanket, and cane of his office; and oblige him to direct the rituals at the sanctuary. A binukedine is installed at rituals at three consecutive sowing festivals. The other binukedine of the villages of the region conduct and perform the installation rites, and at the first rite the oldest of these priests places the binu duge on the initiate's wrist. For this ceremony the new priest furnishes millet cakes, beer, and honey, and at the second he provides chickens and a goat for sacrifice as well as beer and porridge. At the final installation rite at which he furnishes a large quantity of beer, the binu priest receives gifts of cowries from members of the cult. These cowries go towards the purchase of goats and chickens which are raised to produce offspring to be sacrificed to the binu. The harvests of the field of the cult in his care go for libations at the cult altars, for distribution at the planting festival, and most importantly, for beer and porridge at the sowing and first-fruits rituals (Ganay, 1942:35-45).

Transfers beyond the gina

The transfers of goods and services to binu and lebe priests from gina members represents an extension of the redistribution process

within the lineage to two higher structural levels of which a gina forms a part. In the case of a babinu cult the structure of the group can be represented by a genealogy, and a gina can be described as a segment of the latter. Usually the component gina of a lebe cult trace a common line of descent as well. The goods and services which are transferred "upward" from a gina are channelled through the gina banga and the other family heads and form the contribution of the gina as a whole. Adherence to the regular pattern of these two-way flows of goods helps the gina to maintain their relative positions within the structures of these larger groups. However, certain other transfers beyond the gina flow between lineages outside of the structures of kinship and religious relations described above. These transfers fall into two basic categories which differ as to the nature of the content of the goods and services exchanged, the control of the exchanges, and the people who benefit from them.

In the first category are two important examples, the dama and marriages. Dama (second funerals) have been described above as part of the redistribution process within a gina and a lebe cult, but these rites perform a more important function as exchanges between gina. In a dama the gina of a dead man provides cooked food for its members and, more importantly, for members of other lineages who come to mourn and dance, to offer cowries and lengths of cloth, and to consume the food. Apart from the fact that often those who attend have kinship ties with the dead man's lineage, by attending a dama members of other lineages oblige those of the host group to attend the dama in their quarters and villages. For a gina a dama is an

opportunity to display its wealth and to enhance its prestige. The funeral blankets, pyi ana, are spread across the front of the ginu na, and members strive to furnish more beer than the visitors might expect (Griaule, 1965:207; Paulme, 1940a:511-514). The effort is worthwhile for "if the festivities are not celebrated with the requisite pomp, those responsible will be the object of endless commentaries and will fall in the esteem of their neighbors" (Paulme, 1940a:501; see Griaule, 1963:345). As already noted, the elders direct the dama, and whether in the role of host or guest, whole gina are affected by these rituals.

Among the Dogon the elders as a group do not have a direct part in marriage exchanges, and at least for a man's first marriage, the mothers and fathers of the intended husbands and wives take the role of directing the exchanges between gina. Generally, the first wife of a man should be a ya biru, a woman for whom he must "work" (biru). His work furnishes goods and services which go from his own family to that of a girl in another gina who will bear his children and, thus, help his gina to survive across the generations. The parents of a boy select the girl to be his wife and arrange this with the girl's parents, often when she is only an infant, making a first gift of 500 to 1500 cowries to seal the agreement. At specific points in the girl's development and in her relationship with the boy-- at the time of her "first skirt" at five or six years, after she is excised, when she goes to live in the "girls' house" of her quarter, after she agrees to marry the boy, when she becomes pregnant, and after she delivers her children--the boy and his parents offer certain

goods and services to the girl and her parents. The goods transferred include such mundane, but symbolically important, items as loads of wood, practical goods like spoons and pots, calabashes of grain, and cowries (Paulme, 1940a:355-362; Dieterlen, 1956:138-141).

Beginning just after the marriage is consummated, the husband works on the fields of his father-in-law for three seasons. During the first and third seasons the other members of the age-set of the son-in-law help him to clear and harvest these fields, and the latter is obliged to provide the same service for his age-mates (Paulme, 1940a:365,368). Once a wife establishes herself finally with her husband after the birth of a child, ideally after her third child, the obligations of the husband towards his parents-in-law are less precise, but he must maintain a profound respect with regard to them. He helps them in their work, makes occasional gifts of food, and invites them to some rituals at his gina. When one of his parents-in-law dies, at the dama the son-in-law is obliged to give his wife's gina twenty measures of millet and four lengths of cotton cloth. Properly, he should give cowries to members of the gina during the funerals (Paulme, 1940a:376,378).

The pattern of these transfers of services, uncooked food, and other goods from the man and his parents to the parents of his "fiancée"-wife reveals the inferior position of the younger generation. The parents decide on the match and indicate what is to be given. Until the marriage is consummated, with a couple of exceptions, the goods pass at the level of the parents' generation, not at that of those who are to be married. Usually even though the young man may

produce or buy the goods, he gives them to his mother or to the wife of an elder brother who gives the goods not to the girl herself, but to her mother. Once married, goods and services flow directly from the son-in-law to his wife's parents. In contrast with marriage to a ya biru, in marriage to a ya kedu, who was probably the ya biru of another man, the husband is sometimes of an older generation than his wife and therefore on a level perhaps comparable to that of his wife's parents. His obligations to them are vague, and he owes them only a generally courteous attitude (Paulme, 1940a:385). Since a lineage is as likely to be a "wife-giver" as a "wife-taker" in relation to any other lineage, the transfer of goods and services in return for the reproductive services of a woman of another gina is counterbalanced usually by such an exchange in the other direction, though at any one time the flow of goods between two gina may be greater in one direction. The economic and social relations which ya biru marriages entail do not stop with the generation of the husband and wife for their sons will have certain rights in the gina of their mother (see Griaule, 1954; on marriage exchange in general, see Meillassoux, 1960).

The Market

The elders and all family heads monitor closely the production and consumption of grains, the transfers of the latter and certain other goods beyond the gina, and the exchanges of women between lineages; and these processes are intended to benefit the gina as a whole. On the other hand, although the elders and other family heads do allot fields or parts of fields for the cultivation of market-garden crops,

they do not direct the cultivation of these crops and have almost no control over the use of the product. Following the harvest of the grain crops in late October, nearly every man, woman, and child in a gina sets to work on the cultivation of his own garden which may be only a few feet square. A man cultivates mainly tobacco but some vegetables as well. His wife grows plants to use as condiments in cooking--pepper, sorrel, onions, tomatoes, beans, and some other vegetables. Also she cultivates plants for other uses, such as cotton and hemp.⁵¹ The children grow some of the same types of food plants as the women. Each person has rights over what he produces. Some of the produce is consumed within the household, but much of it is traded or sold by the owner at a market⁵² (Paulme, 1940a:143,340).

In Dogon thought twins are a symbol of equality and interchangeability, and because trade is the invention of twins, in theory ". . . things exchanged must be of the same value and exactly equivalent to one another, whether the exchange . . . [takes] the form of barter or a cash transaction" (Griaule, 1965:200). However, at a market there are several factors which work against the ideal. Since a market brings together people from all of the villages of a region as well as Jula, Fulani women, and Dogon traders from other regions, in many

⁵¹The women make the cotton into thread, but only men can weave cloth. Although a woman assists her husband in the cultivation of millet, she is forbidden to grow any for her own use on a field which is harvested for her husband or her father-in-law, and in general she is restricted to growing market-garden produce (Paulme, 1940a:144).

⁵²By a "market" I am referring to both a "market place" and the whole range of economic exchanges which occurs there.

transactions kinship relations between parties are distant or non-existent, and the attendant constraint of kinship relations is absent. To provide security for outsiders and to control differences among villages of the region, the market place is considered "neutral soil" (Paulme, 1940a:301). There is also an altar of the market at which all of the gina banga of a region sacrifice together once each year, and the presence of the altar represents a possible sanction from a superhuman being for one who would disrupt the order of the market (Paulme, 1940a:304). In addition, to keep order a group of men, ogono seru, who may represent all of the villages of a region, are present to break up fights and to check measures for fairness. "Messengers of the ogono," they are under his jurisdiction. They act as a body and fine immediately those who are caught fighting, charging too much, or stealing. They use the cowries which they get from the fines to buy beer which they consume at the market during the day (Paulme, 1940a:219). In the region of Sanga around 1935 the ogono seru represented the different villages as follows (Paulme, 1940a:217):

UPPER SANGA	No.	LOWER SANGA	No.
Upper Ogo1	2	Dyamini Na	1
Lower Ogo1	3	Dyamini Kuradondo	2
Barna and Barku	1	Bongo	2
Upper and Lower Engel	2	Gogoli	1
Upper and Lower Sangi	2		
Dini	2		

At a market cowry shells are used as money.⁵³ Within the gina,

⁵³Here one can "let 'money' refer to those objects . . . that have token value rather than utility and that serve as means of exchange" (Sahlins, 1965:182).

binu turu, villages, and lebe cults, food, not cowries, is given for services, and cowries are rarely exchanged for any good. Ostensibly people haggle at the market in order to reach an "equivalence," but, of course, each party is working to gain a "more equal" position in the outcome of a transaction. In market transactions priorities of age and sex give way, and each works for his own gain. Usually the exchanges are immediate, and concern centers on the single transaction. There are no long delays as in exchanges between gina, and there need be little consideration of the relationship beyond the bounds of the market place (Paulme, 1940a:298-313; see Sahlins, 1965:147-148). Gina banga do not play their roles as group representatives at markets but only at the annual sacrifice on the market altar at which all lineage leaders give recognition to the market as a separate sphere of activity. Unlike relations outside, market relations are not ordered by the ties and differences between gina and individuals, and the potential sanction represented by a market altar applies to deviations from the norm of equality, not from norms relating to differences in rank. Thus, in this type of transfer of goods outside of the gina, the control of the elders, the norms of age order and kinship relations, and the characteristic modes of exchange between gina are of only minor or no importance-- a reflection of the fact that neither the prestige of the gina nor any of its essential resources are involved directly in market activity.

Conclusion

As in ritual action processes in the economic system illustrate a structure of political relations among men which is based on the

principle of rank in the age order. The economic resources are held primarily in the smallest political community, the gina, and within this group direction of economic action is the prerogative of the older members. The highest-ranked goods are put in the care of the elders. However, since the latter are obliged to redistribute parts of these goods and the products from them regularly to others in the lineage, they are little able to accumulate quantities of goods in excess of those which norms prescribe for their statuses. In addition, because the control over economic resources increases with age, the men with the largest shares of the resources have a statistically poor chance of controlling a given collection of goods for more than a few years. At the death of an elder the gina possessions he held, particularly the fields which would be among the most highly-valued and most productive in the gina, pass to the next oldest man who is almost never the dead man's son. With this system of inheritance no segment of the lineage is favored, and if he lives long enough, each gina member should gain the right to use some lineage goods. In distribution of food within the gina as well as within the cult groups, members receive a share in accordance with their rank in the age order. By contributing labor or the raw products of the fields and by accepting a particular share of the cooked food in return, members acknowledge and express a claim for their positions in the order and, hence, support the structure of political relations within each group.

The economic action of cult groups is often the joint activity of the lineages of a village. Frequently a binu cult consists of gina

which are grouped territorially in the same village, and if they are followers of one lebe cult, the inhabitants of a village celebrate their sowing and first-fruits festivals together. Each of the gina of a village attends the dama of the others, and because of the expense of a "great" dama, two or more may celebrate the ritual together for dead men in each lineage. Usually lineages in a village are linked by marriages as well. These overlapping ties incorporate participants into groups which expand beyond the boundaries of a single gina to include often all of the inhabitants of a village and which maintain still the essential structural principles which order relations within the gina. Beyond the village, and sometimes the nearby twin village, these different relationships combine to lesser degrees. Few gina go outside of the village to celebrate the annual agricultural rites. Marriage ties and dama obligations extend to other villages, but practical difficulties of distance and priorities among relationships work against frequent relations between affines or full representations of gina at dama in some other villages. Outward from the village-gina cluster, the dispersal and weakening of relations between gina permits market transactions which disregard the norms of exchanges within gina and between these groups in ritual and marital relations. While the latter reinforce differences in rank and persons' positions in groups, market relations promote a norm of equality and appeal to persons as individuals, relatively unencumbered by relationships which would make impossible the kind of competitive transactions which are an essential part of market activity. Attendance at a market on a regular basis brings together for a common enterprise the inhabitants of a region who

might have limited or antagonistic contacts otherwise and helps to reinforce their identity as a territorial whole in relation to other regions.

CHAPTER V

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND STRUCTURAL VARIATIONS

Introductory Comments

The discussions of those aspects of the political systems which are embedded in the religious and economic systems reveal the normative structures of political relations. However, Denise Paulme (1940a:568) has pointed out that "Dogon society does not have any rigid laws [lois (F)]; it dictates some rules of conduct, which all, in principle, should observe, but which, in daily life, will be followed more or less." The absence of an uncritical acceptance of rules is noted also by Griaule (1963:811-812) who says that "the Dogon enjoy an appreciable margin for their actions, and in numerous cases, the application of custom is preceded by discussions in which the pros and cons have been considered." These observations imply that among the Dogon a political structure is a relatively general framework for action. Indeed, in the literature on the Dogon, ethnographers have cited variations from the normative structures and their own models of those structures. The above quotes and the examples of modified relationships suggest that the political systems are not so tightly integrated as the last two chapters portray them. However, because the material published about the Dogon tends to focus on "ought" relations and to present only scattered examples of data on change or conflict, a thorough analysis of deviations from structural norms is not possible. In this chapter I

discuss some factors which can bring support to the political structures but which may also cause structural changes. My main concern is to describe processes of conflict resolution and the limitations on the men in the key political roles of gina banga and ogono.

Conflict: Intervention by Elders, Officials, and "Outsiders"

Despite the fact that men recognize and promote the virtues of normative behavior, from time to time they do break rules and conflict with their neighbors. Conflicts occur for a variety of reasons, such as the cutting of another's tree, an offensive remark, or disagreements over rights in marriage relations or over the boundary of a field (Calame-Griaule, 1965:277, n. 2; Dieterlen, 1941:173-174; Paulme, 1940a:95). In almost any dispute an intermediary should come between the two persons in conflict. "The intervention of the intermediary, generally an old man whose word has weight, . . . has the effect of making the two parties reflect, of permitting them to empty their hearts of rancor and bad feelings and to think about the social consequences of [their] quarrels" (Calame-Griaule, 1965:273). In a lineage the oldest man, the gina banga (lineage leader), is the person primarily responsible for maintaining good relations and for resolving conflicts. He works closely with the other elders of the group to "mediate" and "arbitrate" (see Bailey, 1969:63-64) disputes. During the period between the death of one gina banga and the installation of his successor, the designated successor may intervene in some disputes (Paulme, 1940a:95). Generally, the gina banga and elders listen to the comments of disputants either in the courtyard of the ginu na or under the toqu na, the men's shelter, of the quarter. Much prestige

is accorded most lineage heads, and most of the time they are able to reconcile differences between men. Gina banga have some power as well in the sanctions which may come from the superhuman beings, ancestors and others, whose altars they care for. By explaining their cases in the courtyard of a ginu na, the lineage leader's residence, disputants confront the altars of this house and are reminded thereby of the possible sanctions from the superhuman beings who are there, invisible, as "witnesses."

Men may discuss their disagreements before the gina banga and elders in the togu na of the quarter. The elders of a village intervene in disputes between inhabitants of different quarters, and these conflicts are discussed and settlements attempted in the men's shelter of the village. The procedures at both levels are public and marked by consultations among all concerned. There are no altars in either shelter, but other men are present to hear the deliberations and decisions of the leaders and to acknowledge the latter tacitly and verbally. In order to impress disputants with the gravity of conflict, cases are considered only during daylight, "for it is necessary to see the eyes and face of the one who renders justice [justice (F)] in order that his word produce more effect on the guilty and that the decision be better respected" (Calame-Griaule, 1965:386). The structures themselves have symbolic associations which enhance their value as places in which to resolve conflicts. Dogon believe that "the 'true word' is that which a speaker pronounces seated, [the] position which permits the equilibrium of all the faculties." The ceiling of a togu na is so low that a man cannot stand and must sit,

and, hence, quarrels should not occur there (Calame-Griaule, 1965:73). In theory, "the togu na should always be constructed on a flat rock in order to dominate the village [or quarter] square, as the word of the elders should 'dominate' that of others" (Calame-Griaule, 1965: 113).

An ogono (region leader) has an obligation to try to maintain orderly relations and to stop conflicts within his region, but in regard to these ends his rights are not clear. Calame-Griaule (1965:113,384) contends that an ogono "intervenes only in very serious cases," and as an example she cites a lack of rain during the growing season, a dry spell caused by sorcery or by the accidental breaking of a religious prohibition by someone in the region. This problem relates to the region as a whole, and although perhaps the problems of his region should be his focus of attention, he may become involved in settling disputes even within village quarters. Although the extent of his intervention in conflict may vary among regions, it seems probable that an ogono continues to maintain an interest in the affairs of the village in which he resides. Within that village, "if the maintenance of order demands it, [he] will go as far as to intervene in a household quarrel" by going to confront the disputants himself (Paulme, 1940a:231).

In some cases an ogono judges disputes in the courtyard of his house with his council and perhaps some other elders present. After hearing the adversaries give their stories, the elders discuss the affair either in the courtyard or secretly. On the basis of this discussion, the ogono decides who is right, but often his

official spokesman, the ogono tiri ayne, actually announces the decision. When the ogono and the group of elders cannot decide who is right, they make the disputants swear an oath which asks Lebe or Amma to kill the one who lies. In fear of the consequences of such a statement, a man who has presented a false case or is unsure of the validity of his position will hesitate to swear the oath. As an alternative to the oath, the men can drink the "water of Lebe," the water which collects in the unused, hollow stone mortar in the courtyard of the ogono's house. The man who dies within three years after drinking this water is considered to be the guilty party. However an ogono and his tribunal of elders reach a decision, the decision cannot be appealed by the one found to be at fault (Paulme, 1940a:222-229).

In different political systems the men of highest status are not the only actors to intervene in conflicts between group members. In theory, the ogono seru ("messengers"), who are under the general direction of an ogono, have the right to impose fines for fighting or for thefts of food within villages, but to what extent their actions overlap the legitimate concerns of gina banga and councils of elders is unreported. It seems clear that they do have a right to arbitrate conflicts at a particular place--the market (Desplagnes, 1907:317; Paulme, 1940a:217-218). During certain periods of time the men's society imposes a "truce," and the members forbid conflict and fine those who fight. During the twenty days which precede the annual planting festival and the periods of preparation before a "great" dama every three or four years and a sigi every sixty years, members of the awa keep peace among village inhabitants and take precedence over all those usually concerned with

conflict resolution, including an ogono (Paulme, 1940a:255). There are others who step in to stop conflicts who belong to specific categories of "outsiders." The most important of these agents from outside of a group of living men are lineage ancestors. Ancestors do not intervene in disputes which are settled quickly, but when a quarrel lasts a long time and draws the attention of people outside the gina, Dogon believe that ancestors intervene to designate the person who is in the wrong by bringing illness, injury, or perhaps death to him. This man determines the cause of an illness or injury by divination and must make an apology to the man he has offended in order to become well or avoid further injury (Dieterlen, 1941:173). Although ancestors are not physically present to hear each man give his explanation, a "decision" by these superhuman beings is regarded as just. Since ancestors tend to intervene when a dispute has continued for some time, usually their intervention presupposes attempts by the gina banga and elders to reconcile the disputants.

Under certain circumstances a blacksmith may arbitrate a dispute. If he sees men fighting or quarrelling, he can intervene, and when he approaches, the disputants should cease their conflict. The smith listens to the men and decides who is right, and the latter must pay the smith a measure of millet. People who have a disagreement may invite a blacksmith to settle the affair. This may involve even conflict within the household, and when the argument has ended, those who have asked the smith to come offer him some grain (Paulme, 1940a:185-186; Arnaud, 1921:268). A man who has wronged another may ask a blacksmith to present his apology to the other party, and the smith does this by

simply knocking three times on the door of the house of the latter with the handle of his hammer and calling the name of the man who has sent him⁵⁴ (Calame-Griaule, 1965:276; Paulme, 1940a:186). The offended person must accept the apology and give the blacksmith a measure of grain. The sources do not suggest any sanctions from a superhuman agent for not complying with a decision of a blacksmith. However, Mme. Calame-Griaule (1965:276) states that no blacksmith would work for a cultivator who refused to accept a decision, and, in theory, this would deny the farmer the tools necessary to his work. Different lineages, villages, and regions can be linked by a mangu relation, a "joking relationship." As described in Chapter III a mangu partner can perform a purification rite in a binu cult, and also a mangu partner can arbitrate a dispute. Based in theory on a "blood oath," a mangu relation requires that one partner not shed the blood of another. Consequently, when a joking partner moves to intervene in a conflict, those who fight or dispute should stop, in part from fear of injuring the mangu partner. The latter listens to the problem and announces a decision. Griaule (1948:248) states that "this intervention is always effective," but neither he nor any other writer offers concrete examples of such intervention or explains the consequences of noncompliance.

Responses to and Sanctions for Offences

Although intermediaries listen attentively to the explanations

⁵⁴In Dogon myth the blacksmith was one of the first intermediaries. An angered Amma had forbidden rain to fall on the earth. As the smith beat with his hammer--on what is not related--and a leatherworker pounded on a drum, Amma's anger cooled, and he allowed the rain to fall (Griaule, 1963:51-52).

of antagonists, usually the decisions which are rendered give recognition to the normative order of relations within a group. Intermediaries must consider the possible political consequences of their decisions--the prestige which may be gained or restored by winning a dispute and the shame which may attach to losing. In disputes between an older man and a younger man and between a man and his wife, the older man and the husband should be judged always to be "right," even though they may be obviously at fault (Calame-Griaule, 1965:274). When fines are imposed in such cases, both parties should pay, but a younger man or a woman should pay more. For quarrelling during the periods when the men's society intervenes in disputes, for example, theoretically women should pay five times as much as men (Paulme, 1940a:230-231,255).

Sanctions which men apply for other types of offenses are determined also less by the nature of an offense than by the relationship of those involved or affected (see Paulme, 1940a:223, n. 3). Since ancestors do not affect men's relations outside of the gina, an ancestor imposes injury, illness, or death on a man only if the latter has been involved in a "serious" quarrel with or has offended another member of the same lineage (Dieterlen, 1941:173-175). If a man and a woman from the same lineage are found having sexual relations, the act is considered incest. The woman is banished from the village, but the man incurs no formal sanction. However, if a married woman has relations with a man other than her husband--which means usually that the lovers belong to different lineages--normally the husband will do his utmost to give his wife's lover a sound beating (Paulme, 1940a:83-84). A gina banga and the elders of a lineage can banish a young man from his village if he

places the older men of the lineage continually in the obligation to pay his debts (Desplagnes, 1907:207), but generally a group wider than a gina is not involved in repayment of debts.

If a man catches a thief who is a member of the same gina, he can inflict only a beating. If the thief has never been caught before, he is not fined or punished in any other way, but the gina banga and council of elders can order a man to leave their village if he steals repeatedly. A man can beat a thief from another lineage and can hold the man while demanding a fine from the thief's family or lineage. Alternatively, he can take the thief to the ogono who sets a fine for the man's release. If the man's kinsmen pay the fine, the ogono releases him. If they do not pay, the lebe priest can sell the man into slavery, usually to Fulani herdsmen. The ogono takes part of the fine or goods exchanged for the thief and gives the rest to the man who captured him (Paulme, 1940a:223-226). A woman who interferes in activities of the men's society, disobeys her husband openly, or, most importantly, is accused of being a sorceress,⁵⁵ can be brought before a tribunal of the men's society, or awa, consisting of the men who have witnessed two sigi (sixty-year rituals) and the olubaru. The exact nature of the penalties

⁵⁵No descriptions of observed incidents involving sorcerers exist in the literature, and yet virtually every writer on the Dogon has made some reference to sorcery. Mme. Calame-Griaule (1965:300, n. 2) contends that "it has seemed to us that . . . [sorcery] was little developed among the Dogon and that . . . [sorcerers] were more imaginary than real." A hostile attitude towards sorcery and witchcraft on the part of the colonial government may have been responsible for a reluctance on the part of informants to discuss the subject. Whatever the reasons for a lack of information, the numerous references to sorcerers imply that they were more than imaginary, and further research into this topic might yield more substantive results.

which this council might impose is not described (Paulme, 1940a:253).

A man who kills a fellow lineage member must flee the region and becomes socially "non-existent" to other gina members, but nothing more occurs. Should a man kill someone who belongs to another lineage in the region, he must leave the region, but his act obliges his lineage to perform certain services for the dead man's gina. The day following the death, the proprietor of the place of the act kills a goat or cow provided by the lineage of the murderer and offers a prayer in the presence of the latter men and the kinsmen of the dead man. This rite is followed by a meal of the sacrifice victim shared by all those present. The gina of the killer must give the dead man's gina one of its most prized possessions, a pyi ana, or burial blanket. In addition, they offer to the dead man's kinsmen 100,000 cowries or a young woman of the lineage. This girl should bear a child who takes the dead man as nani (special ancestor) and, in a sense, replaces the deceased. Such obligations follow only a killing within a region for, in theory, to kill someone from another region--except one which is a mangu partner--is not "murder," that is, breaks no acknowledged rule (Paulme, 1940a:116-121).

Although conflicts disrupt relations, the processes of resolving them and of applying sanctions demonstrate possible means to create or maintain support for a political structure. When men in conflict allow others to settle their disagreements and accept sanctions which the latter may prescribe, they give support to their relationship with these intermediaries. Generally, those with high status in different groups--the elders, gina banga, or ogono--should be the most important persons in resolving disputes, and acceptance of the actions of these men

reinforces their statuses and justifies their roles. The bias in judging conflicts in favor of the elder of two opponents gives direct support to the age-order principle which underlies the political structures. Not only are fines usually less for older men but for the same offense, younger men may have to suffer more onerous types of sanctions (see Calame-Griaule, 1965:386, n. 1).

The variations in the persons who can intervene in a given dispute provides individuals and groups with some flexibility in their accommodation to a political system. The patterns of intervention in conflicts within different systems reveal links with outside groups, mangu (joking) relations, for example, as well as ranges of political effectiveness of men in certain roles. Individual differences affect the ability of persons to perform their roles as intermediaries, and in villages and regions the structures of kinship and tribal relations and the size of the political community have a direct effect on the political action of councils of elders and ogono. In probably every region the ability of the latter official to intervene in conflict situations is greatest in the village of his own lineage, or in the one in which he resides if it is not his home village, and least in the villages furthest "removed," in terms of both geography and kinship, from his own.

Those who support a political structure desire that processes of resolving conflicts do not produce situations which may engender further conflicts. Certain offenses, such as murder, incest, and persistent thefts, contravene basic rules of relationships and are so disruptive that the normative sanction for them entails the removal of the offending party from the group. Men may resent or be angered by

decisions or sanctions, and the processes of conflict resolution can give indirect support to a political structure by diverting anger and resentment away from the men of higher status within a group. There is not enough evidence to assess the efficacy or function of the intermediary roles of blacksmiths and mangu partners, but Dogon beliefs in the intervention of ancestors suggest that perhaps intervention by agents outside of a group may help to mollify disputants by reminding them of their common interests as members of the same group and, more importantly, may channel towards the outsider hostility which could arise from a decision or sanction. Actions of gina banga and ogono are backed openly or implicitly by sanctions from superhuman beings, and problems which befall those who do not heed the decisions of these officials can be explained as the actions of the superhuman agents, not of the priests. By asking disputants to swear an oath, an ogono and his council can rid themselves of responsibility for the ultimate "decision." In conflicts involving men of relatively high statuses or in which the evidence is not clearly in one man's favor, the swearing of oaths avoids a possibly wrong decision or one which might anger an important man. Peace is restored, hopefully, and a potential challenge to the rights of ogono and elders to act as intermediaries is averted. A gina banga or a council of elders may ask an ogono to intervene on their behalf in conflicts, and the resulting decision is attributed then to the ogono. In giving a decision, an ogono is able to direct attention, and possibly hostility, away from his person by having his official spokesman state the decision. Finally, in most cases group leaders or their assistants do not have to resort to force to gain compliance. "There exists no

particular body to apply a pronounced penalty; this is accomplished under the influence of the kinsmen of the condemned, who fear the consequences of a refusal of obedience" (Paulme, 1940a:229). Although the "consequences" could include the use of force, the evidence among the Dogon suggests that actions of superhuman beings are feared as much if not more. Thus, when force is avoided, the ability of the leaders to use force is not tested, and the man who would be the object of the force cannot form grudges or act in reprisal for the force which is not applied.

Conflict and Structural Change

Although the processes of settling disputes and sanctioning offenses may give support to a political structure, men who wish to preserve the structure stress the need for peaceful relations and seek to avoid conflicts for they realize that conflicts may precipitate changes in the structure. As related in the story about Sanga in Chapter II, following a dispute in Upper Ogo Igibe decided to withdraw support for the political structure of that village and left in order to establish another village, Sangi. A man or group may usurp the rights of another, in effect, "redefine" the terms of a relationship. If those affected simply accept the change or are unable to regain their rights, a new structure results. Alternatively, though unable to re-establish the previous order, the man or group which has fallen in status or lost prestige may choose, like Igibe, to withdraw support for its opponent, and such a move, in turn, modifies the new relationship. In the same story about Sanga, Dyandulu and the sons of his dead brother, Kekewala,

argued over who should lead the group. Kekewala's sons made their position prevail, but Dyandulu would not accept an inferior position and moved out of Lower Sanga. Subsequently, the latter succeeded in stealing the lebe altar from the men in Lower Sanga who, unable to retrieve the altar, acted to thwart this move by giving allegiance to the lebe priest at Aru, the ogono of the Aru tribe.

These responses to conflicts entail what Morton Fried (1967:12) has described as "the minimal use of sanctions . . . withdrawal of company or withdrawal of reciprocity." In addition, these examples reveal some of the most important types of support, which men can withdraw from their antagonists in order to sanction them, and illustrate the ramifying effects of action in a multiplex relationship. In these two examples action resulted in shifts of population as well as changes in kinship, religious, and economic relations and processes of dispute settlement. Dyandulu's initial action was to move away from his opponents. After he had stolen the lebe altar from the men of Lower Sanga, the latter refused to resettle near him. This separation and Igibe's move were accompanied by the creation of new binu cults in the new villages. When they broke with the men of the Ogols, both Igibe and his group and the inhabitants of Lower Sanga effectively negated their kinship relations with Dyandulu and his descendants by becoming followers of the ogono of Aru and, therefore, Aru tribesmen. This shift in allegiance had further implications. Looking to the ogono of Aru, these two groups denied Dyandulu's successors the right to intervene in internal matters, and since they did not participate in the lebe cult centered at the Ogols, the threat of superhuman sanctions by the priest of the cult was almost

neutralized. While continuing to attend the Sanga market, the two dissident groups no longer took part in the redistributive processes of the lebe cult of the region. As examples of further adjustments in these relations, in the celebration of the bulu, the planting festival, Upper Sanga performs the rite ten days, two Dogon weeks, after Lower Sanga. In organizing for war, Sanga region does not fight as a unit. Rather, the villages of Lower Sanga fight together under two men from Bongo. The men of the two Ogol villages are grouped together under one man, and all of the men from the villages of Sangi, Engel, and Dini, founded by Igibe and his descendants, follow the same leader. The latter group of villages is paired in a mangu relation with Lower Ogol and the Sangabilu gina of Upper Ogol but not with the group from which Igibe presumably departed, the Dyon inhabitants of Upper Ogol (Paulme, 1940a:148,272; Griaule, 1948:255).

Variations among gina banga and ogono

In Dogon political communities the men who hold leadership positions act more as coordinators than as autocrats or innovators, and their behavior is constrained in many ways. An important limitation arises from the contradiction embodied in the normative relation of age to political status. When men should be at the height of their political strength, they may be physically and mentally weaker than younger members of their groups. Nevertheless, the significance for their respective political systems of the roles of "elder" in general and gina banga and ogono in particular has been demonstrated in the preceding discussions. Below I describe some of the variable elements of the

roles of the latter two officials.

The oldest man and "master of the gina," a gina banga is the focal point of lineage unity and continuity linking together the living men and the ancestors of the gina. He presides at the annual series of agricultural and ritual events and is the major representative of his gina to the outside. His control over gina resources has been noted above, and he directs virtually all of the ritual action within the lineage. In this latter responsibility and especially as guardian of the altars of the ginu na, of all gina members he is considered to have the closest relationship with superhuman beings. His role in conflict resolution has been described above. "He is always consulted in serious cases, told first about all that happens of importance in the group of which he is the chief [le chef (F)]" (Dieterlen, 1941:154). Other lineage members should listen to a statement by the gina banga with respect and without comment, "even when they find it unjust . . ." (Calame-Griaule, 1965:382). Yet the behavior of others towards him is shaped by a belief that "he cannot command, but one should obey him" (Paulme, 1940a:92), for generally the rights of his position limit his directives to clearly defined authoritative relations, well founded on mutually acknowledged values. More importantly, other elders and the older sons of these men take an active part in managing gina affairs, and the extent to which the directives of a gina banga reflect his personal opinions and interests depends largely on the relationships between this man and other elders of the lineage. "One finds it hard to conceive of a regime in which the adult men, in full strength, would depend entirely on a weak old man, where the latter could dispose

of everything and everyone according to his whim" (Paulme, 1940a:89-90).

Whether he is able to make his opinion prevail or not, the lineage leader requires the support of the other men in order to fully carry out his duties. Indeed, the other elders can prevent a man from becoming gina banga if they consider his mental or physical health to be too poor, and they can exclude a man whom they believe might badly mismanage the property of the gina which would be entrusted to him (Paulme, 1940a:88). When in office a gina banga must take careful account of the opinions of these men. "He presides over the council of elders, formed of all the men of mature age belonging to the group, but ought to conform to the decisions which the council takes" (Paulme, 1940a:89). Personal attributes contribute significantly to shape his relationships with the other elders and to widen or narrow the scope of behavior of lineage members which he might influence. These personal factors can include such things as the quality of his behavior within the lineage before taking office, the extent of his ability to find agreeable solutions to disputes, and the level of his skill at expressing his thoughts and persuading others to accept his viewpoint. Usually old age and the experience which that is supposed to bring him furnish him, like other elders, with added prestige, but old age is often a liability. Normally if a man ever was a physical threat to other men in the lineage, by the time he is eligible to be gina banga this is no longer the case. As his physical vigor and his mental capacity decline, other gina members pay less and less attention to what he says, and he finds himself increasingly dependent on younger people. Should senility overtake him, his younger brother or his eldest son assumes certain of the functions of the office (Paulme, 1940a:87-92). For a period of up to

three rainy seasons and two dry seasons after the death of a gina banga, there may be no incumbent in the office at all. During this time the eldest son (or brother ?) of the late leader insures that libations are made on altars in the ginu na and continues to cultivate the fields attached to this house (Dieterlen, 1941:148).

In a region an ogono is the highest-ranking religious official and should be the most important person. His functions as priest of a lebe cult as well as his position as the major agent of redistribution within the cult and of supervision of market activity have been described above. In these capacities of leadership his actions are key points of reference for people in his region, and people accord him much prestige. In addition to the tasks he performs he is differentiated from other men by the prohibitions he must observe, by the house in which he lives, and by the material objects which are associated with his position. Among these, his red hat and his cane are perhaps the most important symbols of his role as political leader. Outwardly, his relationship with inhabitants of a region appears to be marked by deference to his authoritative directives and assertions of power. Dieterlen (1941:235) states that "his advice is followed and his orders executed without the least hesitation, even in the most delicate cases." Robert Arnaud (1921:250) suggests that an ogono "has in principle [the] right of life and death over the . . . [Dogon]." Although such statements may reflect the experiences of these writers, what they describe is likely the expected, normative public response of the people under an ogono rather than the "real" character of such relations. Whatever the true situation, however, the strength of an ogono's position varies among regions and

between individuals.

In order to be selected for the position of ogono, depending on the region, a man must be of a certain age, and he may have to belong to a particular descent group. Like a gina banga he depends on other leaders in the group who must regard him as "suitable." In regions in which he is selected from among Dyon or Ono tribesmen, he should be either the oldest man in the region or the oldest direct descendant of the founder of the region. Among Domno he is chosen from the mature men by election or divination. Delegated elders from the different regions which regard him as leader select the ogono of the Aru who lives at the village of Aru, and ideally he should be from a different lineage each time (Dieterlen, 1941:235; 1956:132; Paulme, 1940a:196-197). There are enough variations among regions to make such rules valid only in a general sense. For example, although the first Dogon groups to settle in Sanga were Aru, the ogono of the region is the oldest member of the Dyon lineages of the Ogot villages, that is, of the descendants of Dyandulu. In the region of Gimini which is almost totally Dyon, the ogono is not the oldest man but one chosen by divination from among those seeking the position (Dieterlen, 1941:229,236-237). There is almost no information on the processes of maneuver and compromise in the choice of an ogono, and no writer has displayed more insight into this problem than the earliest French observer, Louis Desplagnes. Having described the public ceremonies surrounding the selection of an ogono, he concludes that "it is useless to add that the choice of the candidate is the object of true campaigns of intrigues as in any European election" (Desplagnes, 1907:326).

Almost every writer assumes the existence of only one ogono for the Aru tribe, but Robert Arnaud (1921:253-254) cites the presence of ogono in at least four regions, in addition to the village of Aru, which are inhabited predominantly by Aru according to Dieterlen (1941): Amala, Kassa, Ningari, and Nombori. At one point Mme. Dieterlen (1941: 64-66) discusses the ogono of a group of Aru regions which include Kassa as well as Mori, Tin, and some other regions located along the northern end of the escarpment, and this ogono had always been the oldest man of this group of regions "whatever his residence." However, elsewhere in her writings the author seems to disregard the presence of any but the one Aru ogono. Her view reflects the belief expressed at numerous points in the literature that the ogono of Aru village is "on the general level the political and religious chief of all the Dogon" (Dieterlen, 1956:132). Yet among the comments about this official there is no indication of what his political power and authority consist, the extent of his influence in different regions, or how the Aru-dominated regions adjust their political structures with regard to his position. There is reason to believe that it is as likely that at different times this ogono has been "weak" rather than "strong." Returning to the example of the Aru regions along the northern part of the escarpment, Dieterlen (1941: 66, n. 1) notes that the French suppressed this office because the inhabitants of these regions fought to put in a favorite. Thus, while stating the norm of giving the position to "the oldest man," the members of these regions appear to have sought other options, possibly the triumph of one group or the installation of a man as ogono as a compromise candidate acceptable to all. The information about the ogono at Aru is

too scanty, but in the relations between him and the regions, the latter alternative--in which the "periphery," the regions, is strong and the "center" is weak--appears to be at least as likely as the reverse situation. The problems of communication created by the physical environment and limited technology and the distances separating Aru from some of the regions would seem to impose a limit on the ability of this ogono to affect policy in such regions.

Like a gina banga, an ogono presides over a council of men, and his relations with this body have an important effect on how he performs his role. At least two ideal conceptions of this council have been described in the literature. On the one hand, the size of a council should vary with the tribe of the ogono in question. Seven elders should make up the councils of Dyon and Ono ogono, and the Aru and Domno ogono should have councils of three or four (Dieterlen, 1956:132). On the other hand, an ideal region should consist of a village established by the first settler and other villages founded by the descendants of this man. In turn, the council should be made up of the gina banga of all the gina of the region, and the oldest descendant of the founder should preside over this group as ogono. The whole council is then a kind of genealogical image of an agnatic descent group representing the region founder and certain of the men tracing descent through him (Paulme, 1940a:28). Arnaud (1921:308) and Desplagnes (1907:326) agree with Paulme in describing the members of the council as gina banga and imply the possible presence of other elders. The description of Dieterlen does not indicate how elders are chosen to be on the council but suggests that there are not representatives for each village in a

region. In this case criteria for selection could be based on such factors as ranking among villages, divisions between groups of villages along kinship lines, and differences in tribal affiliations between villages. No author has provided a concrete example of an ogono's council, but the evidence which exists suggests that councils of different regions incorporate something of each of these two models. Different ways of designating an ogono and a council indicate that among regions the possible ranges of relations between an ogono and his council can vary and that the scopes of affairs in which they are able to act with authority can differ also.

Some of the prohibitions which an ogono must observe limit his ability to become involved personally in the direction of affairs within a region. Taking his meals alone and unable to meet with certain categories of individuals or to attend certain ceremonies, an ogono is isolated to some extent even within the village in which he resides. Moreover, he should not leave the village under any circumstances and, thus, cannot visit other villages or the market in the region. To overcome these restrictions partially, an ogono does have several men who assist him and provide links between him and different groups and institutions. The role of the special sacrificer of an ogono has been mentioned above in Chapter III. Also each ogono chooses a man to act as his official messenger, the ogono tire ayne. This man is the ogono's representative at ceremonies in other regions, and in some regions he receives questions directed at the ogono and gives the reply of the latter. As noted above when an ogono wishes to state a decision at a meeting of his council or in judging a case, often the ogono tire ayne announces the decision.

As a sign of his position, the ogono's official messenger keeps the trumpet of the ogono (Paulme, 1940a:221-222).

An ogono designates an "older, respectable" man in each village to declare the news of the region to his village every day. The ogono sends messengers to tell these men some news, and each town crier, or buno kunani, announces news about deaths, thefts, important lost items, and events in other regions. In regions where age is the primary criterion of eligibility for the office of ogono, the man who follows the ogono in age, in addition to caring for a special field, represents the ogono in the awa (men's society) of the ogono's village and presides sometimes at meetings of this group (Paulme, 1940a:220,216). Finally, an ogono is assisted by the ogono seru who serve a general policing function. While in some regions they may be from three to six in number, in Sanga there is usually one or two for each village as noted in Chapter IV in conjunction with their primary duty of patrolling the market place. In some regions they form a sort of body guard for the ogono. Paulme (1940a: 217-218) speaks of their responsibilities outside of the market generally in terms of levying fines for fighting, theft of food, and damage to crops. A position as an ogono seru ("messenger") is not hereditary. When a new ogono takes office, the men filling this function may be changed. However, Paulme's informants indicated that usually a gina banga designates a man for a vacant post, and the ogono chooses one only with the agreement of his council. In the latter case an ogono can select only one man from any particular gina. Since on the list of ogono seru for Sanga given above the number of these men does not match with the gina in the region--the two Ogol villages furnish five

of the eighteen men--certain gina may have priority in this selection, or there may be a system of rotating the offices among the gina in different villages (Arnaud, 1921:308; Desplagnes, 1907:316-318; Paulme, 1940a:216-219).

Although these various assistants do form bridges of communication for an ogono in special contexts and beyond the bounds of his own village, they may undermine as well as help to mobilize support for an ogono. The latter can designate his sacrificer, his official messenger-spokesman, and the town criers, but only the first two could be close kinsmen or inhabitants of the same village as the ogono. The town criers live in the villages and quarters of their lineages, and generally an ogono has little discretion in selecting the ogono seru. An ogono has to send out information to points within the region and requires a reliable return flow about actions in villages and at the market, and each of the functionaries under him is in a position to modify the content of this communication. In addition to the council members, the town criers and perhaps the ogono seru are the most regular links with outlying villages, and normally the first loyalties of these men are to their own lineages. It is not likely that an ogono would have kinship links with many of these men, and his authority and power over them rest on two major factors. First, he should perform his role according to the expectations of others, thus helping to maintain the legitimacy of his position. Second, his role as lebe priest affords him possible sanctions from this and other superhuman beings to threaten those who would not perform their functions properly. As an example of the latter, at the beginning of the rainy season an ogono calls together

all of the elders of his region to remind them that the ogono seru should apply the same rules to everyone and not abuse their right to fine others, and "in order to maintain the principle of his authority, . . . [he] appeals to divine wrath" in the presence of these elders (Paulme, 1940a:218-219; cf. Desplagnes, 1907:316-317).

Similarities in Roles of Officials

Although a gina banga is involved on a daily basis with the members of his lineage, an ogono is separated by prohibitions and physical distances from the people of his region with most of whom he has either minor or no kinship relations, and the goals of the political systems of gina and regions are quite different. Nevertheless, some of the strengths and weaknesses of the positions of ogono and gina banga are similar. Like a gina banga, in order to make authoritative directives and to influence others an ogono depends on his prestige and skill in interpersonal relations, that is, in part, on "his character and personality" (Paulme, 1940a:198). The roles as priests of ogono and gina banga bring them prestige, and the latent threat of sanctions from the superhuman beings whose altars they keep is the major source of their power. Each presides over a council of leaders of his group and is more or less influenced by their actions and opinions. In all regions the ogono is a mature man, and in many, like a gina banga, he is the oldest man of the group. However, with his old age and the greater knowledge and prestige associated with it may come the liabilities of declines in physical and mental abilities which bring decreases in prestige (Paulme, 1940a:202-203). Finally, in each case

the importance of the office over the man is indicated by the delay of over two years between the death of an ogono or a gina banga and the installation of a successor.

These officials are important symbols of the unity of the groups which they lead, and as the oldest men in their groups or at least as the heads of councils of elders, they fulfill the spirit of the principle of the political structure which accords precedence on the basis of age. As described in Chapters III and IV, in the different types of groups the elders hold favored positions in the religious and economic systems, and they play a major role in conflict resolution. As noted just above, they control access to the offices of ogono and gina banga and can determine many of the actions of the men in these positions. Under certain circumstances some younger men are given rights to direct the action of groups within villages and regions, but there as well the elders assert their control. A binu priest may not be an elder, but he gains his position only with the concurrence of the elders of the gina which form his binu cult group. Having a minor role in the economic system and in the process of conflict resolution, normally a binukedine is not a major figure in the political system of a gina or a village on the basis of his binu priesthood (see pp. 86-87 above). The role of an ogono seru demands that a man be physically sound and grants him the right to impose certain kinds of fines. However, as was mentioned, the gina banga and other elders select these men, and the ogono holds the threat of superhuman sanctions over them. An olubaru--a man responsible for transmitting the myths in the secret language of the men's society (awa), for sacrifices to the "Great Mask," and for

directing many of the activities regarding the masks--can be initiated into this role as young as fifteen years of age, and "even to his father, the Initiate [sic] can give orders in that which concerns the masks" (Griaule, 1963:265). For an olubaru this reversal of the age-order in issuing commands is confined to his function in the awa. Olubaru are selected by the gina banga and other elders of a village, and the oldest among the elders conduct the initiation and support the initiates in the performance of their duties. An olubaru is an inne puru, "impure," and in order to become a gina banga or ogono, he must make himself pure and, thus, give up his position in the men's society. These three types of offices allow some younger men to direct action and gain prestige, but since incumbents must depend on the elders of each group for support and have authority or power only within narrow ranges of action, their abilities to upset the structures of the wider political communities are limited. The requirement that ogono and gina banga give up these other positions restricts their political rights and prevents them from using these other offices to gain additional support.

Summary

The sets of rules which constitute Dogon political structures appear to be flexible and to allow a certain margin for individual differences and for short-run variations in relations. Elders, gina banga, and ogono try to keep conflicts from disrupting group relations too seriously and attempt to use the processes of dispute settlement to reinforce the normative order of relations and to divert threats from it. Potentially, men who come from outside of a group to intervene

in disputes can help group leaders to avoid jeopardizing their relations with disputants and, though performing one of the functions of a leader, do not threaten the position of any leader. In the larger political communities the structures may deviate from the normative pattern, and the limitations and assets of ogono demonstrate some of the possible variations of structural arrangements in regions. In the smaller social units relationships overlap much more to reinforce the prescribed order of relations, but differences among individuals can modify even these relations for periods of years.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

In this paper I have discussed the political systems of groups of villages, lineages, and lineages among the Dogon of Mali. My focus has been on the structures of these systems and on factors in the systems which help to maintain and, in a few cases, to change political structures. In principle, members of a group are ranked according to their places in the age order, the oldest having the highest status, and among groups priority should be accorded to the one which was established first. The oldest man should be the leader of a group and should be assisted in the direction of affairs by other elders. However, in the smaller groups the differences in temperament and intellect among men and the frailties of old age can lead to adjustments of political relations, and in the larger political systems, the precedence of particular groups can cause other criteria than age, such as membership in a certain descent group, to apply in the selection of leaders and their councils.

In the three areas of social life discussed--religion, economics, and conflict resolution--the elders have rights to determine and implement policies and have opportunities to gain support for their positions. Because they have participated in many rituals before and have learned the details of Dogon symbolism,

elders are the best qualified to conduct and advise on rituals. At points in a person's development which involve ritual, for example, entering cults or passing through circumcision, he is guided and assisted by his father and some elders who, over time, are responsible for giving him an understanding of religious concepts. In Dogon thought the structures of relations among superhuman beings and between these beings and men correspond to the structures of relations between older and younger men. Ideas about superhuman beings are conveyed in myths. Older men know the myths best, and often when they act, elders refer to mythical incidents or relationships in order to justify their actions. Dogon have a set of concepts about the non-material components of men. These concepts provide a basis for understanding relations between men and superhuman beings, especially the factors involved in sacrifice, prayer, and the breaking of religious prohibitions. The same ideas explain some of the differences between men which arise from changes in relations as well as from age differences and affirm the superior position of elders in relation to younger men. Belief in the ability of superhuman beings to intervene in the affairs of men makes such intervention a potential sanction for conflicts. Because the altars are the primary means to communicate with the superhuman, the men who are in charge of the altars, the priests of the various cults, are considered to be in the closest relation with the superhuman and, in this position, are better able to call upon the latter for sanctions.

In the economic systems, higher ranked goods are allocated to the older men. Heads of families direct the production of foodstuffs, and their sons depend on them and lineage elders to allow the use of

fields. In processes of redistributing goods, inheritances and distributions of food at rituals, for example, the first and highest-valued good or largest share goes to the oldest man, and the remainder of a quantity of goods is distributed according to the age order of those receiving it, the older of two men receiving a larger or prior share. Redistribution is an important aspect of action within cult groups, and the priest acts as the pooling agent, collecting goods and redistributing them at rituals. Transfers of goods outside of a lineage affect the prestige of the gina. Elders supervise the preparation and distribution of foodstuffs at funerals, and host lineages strive to provide an ample quantity of food and beer. When a man marries for the first time, he and his parents give a relatively large quantity of goods to the family or household of his intended wife, and these transfers are channelled through the parents of the young man and woman involved.

In the different political systems official leaders and elders are the men most concerned with stopping conflicts. By according the elders or a particular official the right to intervene and judge disagreements, disputants reinforce the legitimacy of their relationships with these men. The differential application of sanctions which favors the elder of two disputants and the older members of a group in general gives further support to the proper order of relations. Men from outside of a group and lineage ancestors can intervene in disputes and, in doing so perhaps, direct antagonisms generated by conflicts outside of the group and away from those of high status in the group who are responsible for resolving disputes in most cases.

An important incentive to reconcile disputes is the possible division of a group or re-ordering of relations within it which can result from conflicts. By participating in and accepting his position in processes of ritual and economic action and conflict resolution, a person declares his support for a set of relations, and those processes can help to promote men's allegiance to a particular political structure. By not taking part in some types of action or by rejecting his position in an order, a man, and a group also, can withdraw support for that structure. Because of the multiplex nature of relations in the political systems discussed, usually a change in a relation in one field of action affects relations in others. This mutual influence of relationships can move conflict from one relationship into others, but because of a desire to insure stability in other relations, this overlap should encourage normative behavior, including a willingness to settle conflicts according to the prescribed rules.

Some General Conclusions

One characteristic of those who have high statuses in political structures is their important positions in deciding and implementing policies not in just one, but in all three of the fields of action which have been discussed. This is clearest in the cases of the political officials, the gina banga and ogono, who work closely with elders on all matters of policy. Within their groups they direct collective action in the economic and religious systems and are the persons primarily responsible for resolving conflicts among members of their groups. They are the central agents of redistribution systems,

and in their command relations with members of their groups, they benefit from the support of the potential sanctions of superhuman beings associated with the altars of which they are the guardians. Although considered separately above, the different political systems are, of course, closely interrelated, and an elder or official may hold an important position in the structures of two or more systems. To some extent ogono are involved at all three levels, and elders can be on the councils of villages and regions as well as of their individual gina. Positions of leadership open to younger men, for example, the binu priesthoods or the offices of olubaru in the men's societies, are restricted to relatively narrowly-defined spheres of action.

The principle of according status on the basis of age assumes a model of development for men. As a man grows older his nyama should increase; he should learn about religious ideas in more detail; he should gain control over higher-ranking goods; his prestige should grow; and he should have more influence in determining and directing group affairs. Inevitably the debility of old age and death cut across this upward-sloping "curve." Legitimate leaders are generally no longer physically vigorous men, and on a frequent basis death removes men from the highest-ranking political positions. Moreover, every man is affected by bad luck, misjudgements, good fortune, and other factors which cause differences in life experiences, and combined with these factors are varying abilities among men to cope with political problems. As a result, although men may extol normative relations, at a given moment in a group, age may become a secondary criterion for involvement in

political action. Countering such weaknesses in the structures, there is continuity through belief in the legitimacy of a structure which can be reaffirmed regularly in collective action. In addition, men are able to follow the model of development more or less, and in general, as they grow older, men are able to improve their political positions. As they become less active as direct participants, they become more active as coordinators and directors. The most important political positions and the most complex systems of ideas remain exclusive to the elders or under their control. It seems likely that, with a continual improvement in their positions, men should entrench their ties with others and be less willing to disturb the sets of relationships of which they are parts. Thus, as some men increase in age, they become greater potential threats to the oldest men of their groups, but at the same time, the incentives to maintain a structure increase as well.

New Areas for Research

This discussion of Dogon political systems must remain incomplete. Many factors which affected the structures of these systems have never been recorded, and information about them cannot be retrieved now. For example, probably the roles of violent conflict in relations between villages or regions and of the men's societies in the affairs of villages will continue to remain obscure. Writers have tended to ignore other, important factors, such as the impact of Islam on Dogon thought and life. In this century several decades of alien rule and incorporation into a nation-state have brought about significant changes which I have chosen not to consider, in part from lack of

information. Some writers (e.g., Paulme, 1940a) have noted changes and explored their implications, but no one has investigated deeply the changed conditions, some of which affect the "parameters" (Hagen, 1968) of the political systems.

New roles, usually filled by younger men and sometimes by people of other ethnic groups, have appeared among the Dogon. Now policemen patrol the markets, and government-appointed officials have taken over some of the duties of ogono and gina banga (see Calame-Griaule, 1965:386-388). The need for cash to pay taxes has led to a greater concentration of effort on cash, rather than food, crops, particularly onions (Gallais, 1965), and the effects on collective economic action, with concomitant effects on religious action, could be great. In 1935 Paulme (1940a:101-104) witnessed changes in attitudes toward land tenure and control over economic resources in general which have surely affected the political structures of gina. Often young men go away to work for several years and are able to save relatively large sums of money compared to the amounts in the hands of some older men. The impact of European-type education on relations between older and younger Dogon entails a further threat to the foundation of the political structures. These examples suggest not only a few of the problems of Dogon social life which remain to be studied but a new orientation to research to complement the excellent work already accomplished.

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