Manding Ajami samples: Mandinka and Bamana
Valentin Vydrin, Gérard Dumestre

To cite this version:

HAL Id: halshs-00948996
https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00948996
Submitted on 26 Feb 2014

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L’archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire HAL, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d’enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.
Manding Ajami samples: Mandinka and Bamana

Valentin Vydrin, INALCO, CNRS-LLACAN
Gérard Dumestre, INALCO, CNRS-LLACAN

1. Introduction

The Manding Ajami writing tradition is much less mysterious today than it was thirty or forty years ago, when scholarly literature would settle for its passing mentions and practically no single authentic text was available. However, the number of texts published still remains extremely low, and they reflect poorly on the geographical spread of this writing system. We are still at the stage where every new text introduced into scholarly circulation is a discovery: with a high degree of probability, it represents either a new variety of the writing, a new literary genre, or even establishes the use in a new geographical area where the existence of Ajami was hitherto unknown. The texts presented here exemplify this situation.

In the following, texts of the manuscripts will be represented in four columns: the source texts in Manding Ajami, i.e. Arabic-based script orthography, a Roman script transliteration, a Roman script standard transcription, and an English translation.

In the transliteration, we tried our best to remain true to the Ajami text. We had to interpret spellings in order to segment texts into words, 

1 The authors would like to thank Charles Riley who volunteered to correct the English texts.
whenever Arabic script (based) graphemes are written disconnected to the left. This applies to the letters 'alif, dāl, dāl, rá', zāy, wāw, which are always spelt disconnected to the following letters in Arabic script. Therefore, it is most often impossible to judge whether a word boundary was intended by the author of the manuscript after such a letter or not. In the standard transcription, Bamana text is represented following the official orthography of Bamana language, while dialectal forms are being eliminated. We suppose that they can be easily restored from the transliteration. Although tones are not marked in Arabic based script, lexical tones are marked in the standard transcription, while contextual and grammatical tonal changes (among them, the tonal article) are ignored.

The Mandinka document is a sample of a magical text. Unlike all the other authentic documents published so far, it is authored, most probably, by an ordinary Muslim, rather than a Muslim cleric, for hunt remains a domain far remote from the sphere of pious Marabouts. 'Allāh and Muḥammad are nevertheless mentioned in these texts, and Arabic words are inserted here and there for possibly extra effectiveness, such as e.g. tamāli (3:3, 3:4), and probably also qalaqa (2:2). In essence though, the religious core of this text is quite animist.

---

2 The Ajami writing reflects a dialectal form, different from the Standard Bamana one.
3 In Bamana, a definite article is represented by a floating low tone following a noun or a noun group. In current transcription practice, it is rarely marked even in texts with tonal notation.
4 In referencing to the texts, the first number (preceding the colon) represents the number of the text, and the second one (following the colon) represents the line. For the Bamana two-page texts, the figure preceding a slash represents the number of the text, while the second figure (following the slash) represents the page number, and the third figure, following the colon, represents the line.
The other set of texts is the very first sample of the authentic Bamana writing tradition published.\(^5\) They come from San, an ancient commercial center in the southwestern part of Mali, and might represent the earliest piece ever of authentic Bamana literature.

In the following, the texts are reproduced in digitalized form, provided with an exact Roman script transliteration, a normalized transcription (with tones in Mandinka texts following Creissels et al. 1982), and an English translation including comments. Each text is followed by an analysis of the peculiarities of the Ajami variety.

2. Mandinka hunter's incantations.

The incantations were shown to Valentin Vydrin by Abdulay Daafée, who was his host in the Samakun village (Sédhiou region, Senegal) in October 2007. His oral comments were very helpful in decoding and transliterating of the texts. However, certain passages (given in italics in the Roman transcription) remain obscure, and their respective transliterations and translations therefore remain tentative. In particular, personal pronouns of second singular \(í\) and third plural \(í\) differ only in tone, and the context is usually insufficient to opt for one or the other interpretation. In such cases, decisions were taken more or less at random.

Each incantation begins with an Islamic preamble, followed by magic formulae, which sometimes consist of words which are non-existent in

\(^5\) The only Bamana texts published so far (Vydrine 1998) were written at the request of Valentin Vydrin. Therefore, they may be considered as evidence for the study of the orthographic tradition of Bamana Ajami, but they do not exemplify its genres.
Mandinka language (at least, they are absent from Mandinka dictionaries and are not recognized by Mandinka speakers as true words). At the end, the objects and substances are mentioned (apparently, those which are necessary for the magic action), followed by the Arabic word اسمه 'ismuhu 'his name'.

Text 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bismi 'Ilh</td>
<td>1. Bismi Ilahi</td>
<td>1. By the name of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muham°adi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wa‘la‘liy`</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muham°adi ` nari</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šubu nari mina°</td>
<td>Minankaña kòto</td>
<td>3. Animal, stop! Old male antelope, ruins will cut you (?).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kay°a kutu tu° bu bi‘ i ku°tu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu°bu ti°kun1u f1a°ku°dama ba°ku°dama</td>
<td>4. túnбуŋ t‘i kùnuŋ, faakundamaa baakundamaa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i°ya°šubu ‘i°ta°dina i° safa°1 i°y2a°</td>
<td>5. i° ñáa sùboo , i°tàa, diïna (jïnna?), i° s‘a fàa i° ñáa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šutu kiy2itadina°? safa°°a i°y2a°</td>
<td>6. Sùboo këeñëeta, diïna (jïnna?), ñ s‘a fàa ñáa.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šubu musu ‘i°ta°di°? na°? safa°1 tt</td>
<td>7. Sùbu musoo yitandi ñ ná , ñ s‘a fàa tata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ti°yuw ‘ani°° mina°° kaya ti°yuw ni°° bu°°ba°° sulu</td>
<td>8. Tíò ânïï minankaña, tíò nïï bumbanj sùlloo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'smh man1.kara binamu sulawul°n</td>
<td>9. Its name is the horn of the mànkaña antelope, red monkey.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments
Line 1. The first spelling could be read as $\xi_{\text{hsbiy}_1}$. However, such a reading hardly makes any sense. Most probably, it is an ordinary basmala ($\text{bsm}$) written in a fanciful way.

Line 2. Apparently $\text{sala'ali}$ is a modified form of $\text{sala'ali}$ which might be an abbreviated version of the Arabic language formula $\text{salla 'Allah 'alayhu wa sallam 'May God bless him and grant him peace'}$. In the second and third incantations, it is spelled as $\text{salali}$.

The word $nari$ is absent from all available Mandinka dictionaries. The translation 'stop!' was suggested by Abdulay Daafee.

Line 3. $Koto$ may be also interpreted as another word for 'male' (it usually appears in compounds $b\text{àakoto} 'he-goat', s\text{àakoto} 'ram'$).

Line 4. $Faakundamaa, baakundamaa$ are ideophones depicting the antelope's walk.

Lines 5, 6. $j\text{înna} 'bush spirit'$ is a reading suggested by Abdulay Daafee. The literal reading $d\text{iîna} 'religion'$ does not fit the context.

Line 6. $k\text{èeñee}$ is a word from the respectful vocabulary$^6$ for 'to sleep'.

Line 7. The final element of the line is transcribed here as tata. In fact, it might be a decorative element indicating the end of the magic formula. Cf. a similar element at the end of the San Bamana text 5.

Lines 8 and 9. It seems to be an enumeration of ingredients for the fabrication of a fetish or amulet. It looks like they were written post

$^6$ A special register used for expressing respect. For more information, see Vydrin (2008).
textum, in the blank space, and line 9 was fitted into the left margin of the page.

Line 9. mànkara or mànkari is an unidentified species of antelope.

Text 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ǧi̱nbi̱n ḍi̱nbi̱n</td>
<td>Jimbiŋ kalaka kalaka jimbiŋ.</td>
<td>2. qalaq1ala q̱a kalaka jimbiŋ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ǧi̱nbi̱n qalaq1ala ǧi̱nbi̱n</td>
<td>Jimbiŋ kalaka kalaka jimbiŋ.</td>
<td>3. M̱ṉaŋ kaña ḵo to. Minaj ṉi'] té à lá jimbij.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ǧi̱nbi̱n ṉiti̱ala</td>
<td>Jimbiŋ kalaka kalaka jimbiŋ.</td>
<td>4. kudasi 'smh kasala ḵa̱bamu ḵásalaaj̱âmba mú.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ǧi̱nbi̱n ṉiti̱ala</td>
<td>Jimbiŋ kalaka kalaka jimbiŋ.</td>
<td>5. kudasi 'smh kasala ḵa̱bamu ḵásalaaj̱âmba mú.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

Lines 1-2. Jimbiŋ kalaka kalaka jimbiŋ is a magic formula. There is a Mandinka word jimbi 'a headgear with fringes', but it hardly fits this context. Kalaka is not a Mandinka word, but might possibly be related to qalaq 'anxiety, insomnia (Arabic)'.

Line 4. Kudasi is a verb meaning 'to remain underdeveloped', 'to fail to reach normal size' (absent from Creissles et al. 1982).

Kásalaa is an unidentified type of grass, also known as kàcàncàároo.

Abdulay Daafee commented: Í s'ā buru jàŋ 'After the incantation is pronounced,) you should rub it'.

Text 3
Transliteration  Transcription  Translation
salali muḥamʿadi 1. Salali
waʾlaʿaliy1  Muḥammadī wa-l-
muḥamʿadi  Ṣali: Muḥammadī.
dājīn dājīn warika1n  2. Dajiŋ dajiŋ
warika1n ku1tu1  warikaŋ warikaŋ
kuntuң,  kuntuŋ,
tama′li sakata1n  3. tamaali sākatuŋ
 tama′li f1abi  tamaali fāa bii.
tama′li f1ubi  4. Tamaali fō bii
 ‘abada1n tt  abadaŋ.
asmhe kς  5. Ismihu kese
 mu  mösoraŋ mu.  móso raŋ mú.

Comments

Line 2. *dajiŋ dajiŋ warikaŋ warikaŋ* are magic formulae - These are not Mandinka words.

Lines 3, 4. | <tama′li> *tamaali* is certainly Arabic *tamallī* 'always' (this word is absent from the everyday Mandinka).

Line 3. | <sakatan> *sakatan* was read by Abdulay Daafee as *śkot̀ŋ* 'that is'. Cf. in Creissels et al. 1982 *s̀ko*, *s̀ko* 'surtout, encore plus, à plus fort raison'.

Line 5. *Mósoraŋ* is an instrument name from the verb *móso* 'to rub while spitting and pronouncing incantations'. This line denotes the destination of the incantation.

3. Grammatological remarks to the Mandinka hunters' incantations
On the grounds of the spelling of the palatal nasal sonant ɲ, these texts would belong to the main Mandinka Ajami variety (cf. Vydrin, this volume): ɲ <ŋ> is OK represented by ی. Further grammatological characteristics of this document are:

- -s is usually written as sīn, except for one case where it is written as  شب | <شبو> sùbu 'animal, meat'.
- -j (a voiced palatal affricate) is spelled as eiher ژ or چ, with the latter appearing both word-initially and word-finally.
- ی is used as support for any diacritic expressing a vowel, when it is not preceded by a consonant. Furthermore, it also is used for spelling of the palatal oral sonant ی, although there is only one occurrence in the text, i.e. ی | <یتانی> yitandi 1:7 'to show'.
- The nasal syllabic phoneme ې (which appears in Mandinka in only two words: ې 'I', ې 'we') is written as hamza, i.e. ې (Which could also be an ی in, i.e. ی) without any support or vocalic diacritics.
- Letters representing emphatics in the orthography of Arabic are not used, with the only exception of the rather obscure word ې (incantation 1, line 5 and 6).

Nūn, qāf and fā' are written in the Mağribī way: In word-final positions, nūn has normally (with only one exception) no dot, while qāf is always spelled with one dot above, i.e. ق, and fā' always with one dot below, i.e. כֿ.

7 In the text, there is not a single word containing a p, which makes the other diagnostic criterion (see Vydrin, present volume) inapplicable.
8 In one word j is probably written using دل | <دینا> (incantation 1, lines 5 and 6). However, we are not sure about the interpretation of this word.
Only the three standard vocalic diacritics, i.e. ـ, ـ،, and ـ،, are used and there are no attempts to differentiate closed and mid vowels.

'Alif, wāw, and yā‘ do not indicate in any way length of vowels. These letters appear mainly at the end of words, sometimes in disagreement with the preceding vocalic diacritic, and always without any visible correlation to vowel length, e.g. ٣ be ‘imperfective marker’. However, such ‘fake length' is much less frequent than in some other Mandinka Ajami texts.

The syllable-final nasal element is usually rendered by tanwīn, e.g. سْلَوْنَي سَلْوُنٍ | <sulwuln> sulawuleg ‘red monkey' (1:9), and rarely by nūn as in مْكَرَ | <man kara> mānkara ‘species of antelope' (1:9).

4. Bamana texts from San

In 1972, during one of his sojourns in Mali, Gérard Dumestre dispatched a friend of his, Almamy Malik Yattara, to the ancient commercial town of San to look for old Bamana manuscripts. Almamy Yattara was a remarkable representative of the Muslim intelligentsia of Mali, and two books were dedicated to him (Yattara & Salvaing 2000; 2003). Being a Muslim cleric, it was much easier for him than for a white man to gain confidence among his coreligionists. A couple of weeks later, Almamy Yattara returned to Bamako with copies of five manuscripts: Bory Bary, the head of one of the Islamic families of San, allowed him (for a modest recompense) to copy by hand texts, which had originally been written by Bary's father, Amadu Bary, in 1911.
Being literate in French, Almamy Yattara provided each manuscript with a brief comment, which yet proved difficult to understand at times. These comments are reproduced here in an English translation, while the French originals are given in footnotes in the author’s own orthography. There is also a comment written by Almamy Yattara referring to the entire set of the documents:

The length of this sheet is equal to the origin. I have written them from a white paper, the characters are equal.

The gift for these five documents was 6000 Malian Francs, for I gave 3000 Francs for two initial ones, when I saw that I was too tough, and I did it in order to have more, if any. And for the other three manuscripts I gave 3000 Franc. It is the time of working the farm. Nobody has time. By Almamy Yattara.9

Today, 39 years after the manuscripts were copied by Almamy Yattara and exactly 100 years after they were created, we proceed to their publication.

Text 1
Almamy Yattara's comment:

9 The original text:
les longere de sette feille et egal de loriginale. je les estrie de papié Bilansse le karactere et egalla
le cado de cet 5 dockimen. eté 6000 faran. pissique les 2 prumier je done 3000 F lorsque jevi jessi tro diure et je faï sa pour avar encor si yana. et avec le 3 manisci- lotre je done 3000 F. ya le travaus de samnp. toule monde nonpa de tan. par Almamy Yattara

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page 1</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Karantela</td>
<td>karan'tela</td>
<td>1. Big well of Karantela. When the entire village found it here,</td>
<td>4. they should not see it. But if Fulbe see it, it will blind them,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kulo'ba. duk4-u</td>
<td>kulo'ba. duk4-u</td>
<td>2. when the village was founded the well was here.</td>
<td>5. if they are lucky, otherwise, they will die. If he does not die,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beya' su1ru1 yan1</td>
<td>beya' su1ru1 yan1</td>
<td>3. Old people told us that the taboo of the well is: if Fulbe</td>
<td>6. he will become blind. Plays are organized near the big well Karantela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tumamin1. duk4-u</td>
<td>tumamin1. duk4-u</td>
<td>Karantela</td>
<td>7. every year. When the time of fishing comes, people go to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sik1ira kaku1lu1n1</td>
<td>sik1ira kaku1lu1n1</td>
<td>kolonba, tulonke</td>
<td>8. to the river. The river whose name is Sankeere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>su1ru1 yan1</td>
<td>su1ru1 yan1</td>
<td>be ke a dala</td>
<td>9. If games are not played near it, there will be no fish. First,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ma' ku1u1w0 ya' fi0</td>
<td>ma' ku1u1w0 ya' fi0</td>
<td>9. if they are lucky,</td>
<td>10. they play near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'w yey1 ku1- ku1u1n1</td>
<td>'w yey1 ku1- ku1u1n1</td>
<td>5. n'aka kunnadiyara, n'o te, a tigi b e sa. Ni a ma sa,</td>
<td>6. he will become blind. Plays are organized near the big well Karantela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tanay1 de yey1</td>
<td>tanay1 de yey1</td>
<td>6. abe fiyen.</td>
<td>7. every year. When the time of fishing comes, people go to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nif1ulaw0 na'na</td>
<td>nif1ulaw0 na'na</td>
<td>Karantela</td>
<td>8. to the river. The river whose name is Sankeere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'u kana' yey1 ka</td>
<td>'u kana' yey1 ka</td>
<td>kolonba. Dugu be y'a soro yan</td>
<td>9. If games are not played near it, there will be no fish. First,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la'gey1. br nif1ulaw0 ya'</td>
<td>la'gey1. br nif1ulaw0 ya'</td>
<td>2. tuma min', dugu sigira ka kolon soro yan.</td>
<td>10. they play near</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>la'gey1 'a bufiyye1</td>
<td>la'gey1 'a bufiyye1</td>
<td>3. Maa k drow y'a fo' anw ye ko kolon tana de ye ni fulaw na na,</td>
<td>11.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Natives know the well. Foreigners don't know its whereabouts,
2. only natives do.
3. When Traore children are born, they bring the child there and say to the
4. "Karantela, the Big Well, good evening! You are the

## Page 2

1. Kölln, dügulenw dè b' à dôn. Dunanw t' à yôrë dön, 2. fôo dugulenw . Dügulenw ye Taraworew yê , Teeraw yé móriw yê. 3. Nî dénw wólola Taraworew lá , û bë tåa n' à yë yèn k'à fô Kölln yè. 1. fôo kôlôn dálà, kà sôrë kà jánya 11. then the fishers descend to Sankere. At that time the
game 12. that is played there . . . ? near the
well. The same thing is done at the fishing
place, 13. near Sankere. If the village does not abandon it (the
rite), food will be abundant,
14. the harvest will be good, the peace will advance. If the
village abandons it, food
15. will be scarce,
diseases will get
ahead, there will be
a war in the country, rulers
16. will die, children will fall ill, fire will
wreak havoc.

## Page 3

1. ku1lu1n10 dukulew0 de b’ du1. Dunaw0 t’ yu1ru1 du1n10
2. f1u1w dukulew0. dukulew0. yetaraư rew0 ye1 tey’raw0 yemu1rew0 yey1
3. nidew0 wu1lu1l’a tarawarew rew la . ’tu bita’ na’ yeyen10 ka’ f1u1 ku1lu1n10 yey1
4. ”Karantela köllnba, à nisù! É dë yë dügulen yë, dë yë dünanw

## Page 4

1. su1ru1 bik-e sene la. heyrey1 bita’ ya’.
2. nidade u ya’ bila suman1-
3. bke4leya’ bana’ bita’ ya’ kelebik ek kamana’
ku1nu1 masa’w0
4. ba’ dimis’aw0 bibana’ tasma’ bityslik-e yu1ru1w0 la

## Page 5

1. fu1lu1 ku1lu1n10 da la. kasu1ru1 ka’ k4iyeya’
2. wu1 kuf1e1 y1 nu1k4ebaw0 bi4gik4-i san’keyre la wu1 tuma
tulu1n0k4-e min’keyra yen10 yey1 ku1lu1n10 da la. wu1
y3u1k4u1n10 bik-e mu1nikey1 yu1ru1 la.
3. Sankeye1r la. wu1 yey1 sanwu1wu1 san1
4. niduka-u ma’ bila sumay1 by3ey1

## Page 6

1. fu1lu1 ku1lu1n10 da la. kasu1ru1 ka’ k4iyeya’
2. wu1 kuf1e1 y1 nu1k4ebaw0 bi4gik4-i san’keyre la wu1 tuma
tulu1n0k4-e min’keyra yen10 yey1 ku1lu1n10 da la. wu1
y3u1k4u1n10 bik-e mu1nikey1 yu1ru1 la.
The possessor of the document "Janaba koli" is the same Bory Bary, inherited from his father who wrote (it) in order to teach religion to the Bamana people. The copyist Almamy Malik Yattara.¹¹
Transliteration
nin'yey1 ñn'bi kwilyey1 ñgana'ba ku1wli bik4-e
‘i?i bik-e ni ȳny
sanya'lenyey1 ‘i?i
bif1ulu1 k-a

Transcription
1. Nin yé jànaba kóli yé.
2. Jànaba kóli bé né ké, à bé ké ní jí sániyalen yé. Ê bë fòlo kà
3. Ê kórla kò kà í tége fila kò kà í dá múguri
4. Kà í núny kò k ‘í nédà kò k’i bólo
5. Fila kò k ‘í kùnkolo máss12 k’i túlo mássá
7. Ê bë fòlo ní kùnkolo yê k ‘à kò síjë sàba
8. Kà ì fànn kélé kò kínóbó f’èt, kà númabólo
9. Kò k’à láj è ní jí sírè à b’èe lá. Ê bë jí lássé
10. Ê kòton nà kà jí ké júkunaw mà. Ê bë jí lássé
11. I kò à kà nà kà jígin ìbàrák ɔrɔ mà, í kà jàntò ì yèrè lâ
12. Ê kà nànà sè i ‘í keya’ la ni ‘í bòlo
13. Ê bë jí lássé
14. Ê bë jí lássé

Translation
1. These are the ablutions.
2. The ablutions are performed with clean water. First of all,
3. Wash your lower parts and your both hands, rinse your mouth,
4. Wash your nose, wash your face, wash both of your hands, scrape your
5. Head and your ears, wash your feet.
6. Wash your feet. Then begin your ablutions.
7. Start with your head and wash it thrice,
8. Wash one side with your right hand, whash your left
9. Hand and examine if water has reached everywhere. Bring water
10. To the lower part of your back, pour water on your buttocks. Make it in a way
11. That the water may reach the lower belly, take care of
12. Not touching your private parts with your hand. Then the ablutions
13. Are performed, the ablation water

12 A form inexistent in Standard Bamana, which might be Maninka in origin.
yey₁ ġn’b ku₁wliyey₁ dè yé jànabakoli yé
min⁵f₁u₁wra Ꙁl₂a⁹h 14. mín f ṣira Ála sira lá.
‘ğl₂a⁹h ma’ Ɱn¹ u demena’ Ꙁmyn₁. 15. Ála má án demena. Āmiina.

Text 3

Almamy Yattara's comment:

The possessor of the document "Kalan bidamine ni alatogo ye", Bory Bary, inherited from his father, the same Madou Bari, who wrote (it) in order to teach the Bamana people. The copyist Almamy Malik Yattara in San in 1972.¹³

---

¹³ The original text:
le detantere de locimen kalan bidamine ni alatogo ye Bory Bary airite a son pere le meme Amadou Bari que eciri pour enssenge le Bambara. le copisste - Almamy malick yattara. a san en 1972

¹⁴ The syntax of this phrase is not clear.
yé míin yé Ála, Muhamadu fána Ála kà cíden dón;
5. kà í jíjá sáli lá ànì sáníya ; kà sún sunkalo lá ; kà jáka bò;
6. kà hiji k é n’í sé b’á yé . Nin dúuru , ninnu dè yé silamaha yé .
8. Númanya: ñúman yé í ká Ála tinjétigiya ká Muhamadu tinjétigiya, í ká mèlekew 0
9. tinjétigiya, kà áljana tinjétigiya kà jàhanama tinjétigiya fána kà álikiyama
10. dón wò tinjétigiya, wò dè bë màa k é silama ñúman yé . Silamaha ,
11. à bë wàkali Áła lá . Wàkali ñúman yé . Wàkali dè yé: ní màa yé mín sòrò ,
12. k’à d ón, Ála dè y’ à d’ ì mà ; n’í mà míin sòrò , í k’à dón , Ála dè m’ à
13. d’ì mà . Ní ì bànà ì k’ à d sn , Ála dè y’ à s’ ì mà , n’ì sàra , Ála dè y’ à sé è mà .

kelen 0 yey 1 miyn 0 yey 1 'll 0 ñ mhm f 1 anay 1 'll 0 ñ k-a tiyden 0 du 1 kà 'i giğan 0 'i sali 1 'hani sáníya ' kasun 0 sun 0 kalu 1 w la ka ' zaká bu 1 w .
5. to be assiduous in prayer and in cleanliness; to keep Lent; to donate alms;
6. to make hadj if you can. These five (duties), it is the Islam.
7. If a person knows these (duties) and performs them, he is a Muslim. Goodness.
8. Goodness: It is good that you recognize the truth of God and Muhammad, the truth of
9. angels, the truth of Paradise, and also the truth of Hell, the truth
10. of the Doomsday, it is what makes one a good Muslim. A
11. he relies on God. To rely, it means: whatever one receives,
12. he knows that it is God who has given it to him; whatever you do not receive, you know that it is God who
13. hasn’t given it to you. If you have fallen ill, you know that it is God who has sent it to you, if you
Almamy Yattara's comment:

The possessor of the medical document for hernia that is named "kookily fora". The same Bory Bary. Written by his father Amadou Bary, a Muslim cleric. The copyist Almamy Malik Yattara in 1972 in San.  

15. N'á d ésəra, à ná s ęgęn. N'á kógəra, à ná sęgęn. N'á fāara, à ná sęgęn. N'tí sinog,  
16. à ná sęgęn. N'á méëna sinog lá, à ná s ęgęn. N'á méënna jìlì lá, à ná sęgęn. N'á méën(na)  
17. sigili lá, à ná sęgęn. Wò túma màa kā Ālā d' ón nì kó bęe (?) yē, ànì bāŋге yē (?), wò bē mògo  

Text 4

1. wò dè bē mògo kisi. Ālā mà̀n kísirə.  
2. À bānà.  
2. It is the end.  

Page 2
niye1 f1ura 
kumayey1 ku1w kili 
f1ura

f1ura miyn1 be ku1w 
kili f1ura k-e. ku1w kili

na’ banana’ ? bik-e 
baraku1 ru1 dimiye1

wu1 f1urak-e suk4uw 
’?je bi k4uwkun10 
muwk4a’n

Transcription

1. Nin yé fúra 
kúma y é, kókili 
fúra.
2. Fúra mín b é 
kókili fúрак é. 
Kókili,
3. n’à bànana, à 
bé ké 
bàrakárdimi yé.
4. Wò fúрак é 
súgú: é b é 
gòkun16 mûgan

Translation

1. These are words of 
a medicine, a testicle 
(hernia) medicine.
2. A medicine which 
heals testicles. 
Testicles,
3. if there is a 
disease, it manifests 
itself as an ache of 
the lower belly.
4. Here is a means to 
treat it: get twenty-
one beans of the 
the wonderbean plant 
(Canavalia 
ensiformis),
5. boil them till they 
are very well cooked.
6. Then peel them, 
put a little salt of 
Tombuktu

Translation

11. and eat them, 
and be reassured 
with it. Then abstain

le detantere de docimen medicalman pour le hérrni conapele kookili foura. le meme Bory 
Bary - eciri par son pere Amadou Bay marabou. le kipisste Almamy malick Yattara. a 
1972 a san.

16 It could be also nkòkun ‘head of a species of locust’, although the following context 
makes this interpretation less probable.
The possessor of the document "cilissi foura" is again Bory Bary. Found in the belongings of his father Amadou Bary, a Muslim cleric. Copied by Almamy Malik Yattara in 1972 in San.

Almamy Yattara's comment:

The original text: le detantere de dociman de cilissi foura. tougoure Bory Barty tourve danles afer de son pere - Amadou Bary le marabou. copié par Almamy malick yattara a san en 1972 a san
k₄eyalen₁⁰ yey₁ gelevator yé m 3go fè, i b’á bólo mine₃
mu₁ku₄fu₁f₁ey₁ 'ʔi bá' bulu₃mine
ka’ y₁y₃es-i yiri ma’ wu₁ yirinᵣᵩ₃ tu₁₃k₄-u₁₃ k₄-u₁₃ kun⁰'gyey₁
3. k’a pèsin yiri mà, wò yirin t 3go kò kùnje.

'ʔi bá' f₁u₁ yiri ma' yiriba' kun⁰'gyey₁ ?i de yeey₁ yiri ku₁ru₁ yé yiri kɔrɔ yé, yiri yeey₁ yiri
ku₁ru₁ de bibana’ ku₁ru₁ f₁urakaey₁. banaba’tu₁nᵣ₃ ?a seray₁ ma’ ku₁ru₁w₀ bela
5. kɔrɔ dè bë bána kɔrɔ fùraké. Bànabaatɔ, ní à séra mà kɔrw bèe lá
'tu masey₁ kà bána' ku₁ru₁ f₁urakey₁ kà keneyya’ kun⁰'gyey₁.
6. ù má sè kà bána kɔrɔ fùraké kà kénèya. Kùnje

m⁰biydeli nif₄ura yey₁ miy₄n₁ bi’ti{k-a buluw₀ la tilebebulu
7. ñ b’i déli ní fúra yé mín b ‘i kàn buluw lá, tilebinbulu
niku₁ru₄n⁰f₁ey₁ bulu
8. ní kɔrɔnfèbulu ní báfànbulu ní wòrodogbulu yé, yeey₁
w₄₁ tuma ’ʔi byغو₁y₁ du₃₃u₃nᵣᵩ₃ wu₁tuma
9. wò tôuma ì b’i jọ dóni, wò tôuma ì b’olú kári fàn b èè fè,
’ʔi bulu₁k₄i bu₁₁k₄i nif₄b₁ey₁
10. ì b’ò màra ì b’è tāa n’á yé í ká só , ì b’á tòbi, bànabaatɔ
f₁a₀n₀bef₁ey₁

Bb₃₃w mara ’ʔi bitana’ yey₁ ’ʔi kasu₁w ’ʔi ba’ tu₁bi
11. b’à mìn k ‘à kò k ’à kò fùo sìne séégin
banaba’tu₁
ba’ mi kà k₄u₁w kà mi k₄u₁w k₄u₁w
f₁u₁w siy₃isék₄-i
tile₄k₄-i ku₁nu₁w
12. tile séégin kònɔ. Bànabaatɔ, à bé kénèya. A b’à múŋu dòɔnin
bnba’tu₁ ’ʔa bkeneya’. ’b’ múy₃u₃du₁wᵩniy₁
tuk₄-u tile sek₄-i nà’ m’ kénéy. ’ʔi bisek₄-i
13. tûgun tile séégin, n’à má

the person is
seriously ill, take
him by the hand
3. and direct him to
the plant whose
name is kunje
(Guiera
senegalensis
shrub).
4. You say about
the plant, kunje big
tree. You have seen
a big tree, it is an
old
tree that heals
old disease. A sick
person, if it was a
question of any old
person,
6. they could not
treat old diseases
and heal them.

Kunje,

7. I beg you, if all
the medicine that
you have in foliage,
the western foliage
8. and eastern
foliage, and
northern foliage and
southern foliage,
9. then stay a little
bit, then cut it
everywhere,

10. keep it and
bring it to your
house, cook it, let
the sick person
11. drink it and
wash him, let him
drink it and wash
him, and wash him,
up to eight times
12. during eight
days. The sick
person will recover.
Let him wait a little
13. again eight
days, if he has not
14. fà ká sé dàn ná. I bé tāa só, i b'ā tóbi k'ā kέ fólo
15. tá ñògon yé , fójó sì nẹ séegún. Ni bānabaatọ má kέ neya
16. this time, then he will die. It is the medicine of kunjɛ.
17. Á bánna. 17. It is the end.

5. Grammatological properties of the Bamana Ajami from San

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Phonemic value</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>∅</td>
<td>∅</td>
<td>∅</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>t, c</td>
<td>/t/, /tʃ/</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h</td>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>ħ</td>
<td>h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>/dʒ/</td>
<td>ġ</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>/r/</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j</td>
<td>/dʒ/</td>
<td>ġ</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s</td>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>/f/</td>
<td>f₁</td>
<td>f₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>/l/</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>/m/</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>/n/</td>
<td>n₁</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y</td>
<td>/i/, /iː/</td>
<td>y₁</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w</td>
<td>/w/, /wː/</td>
<td>w</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 18     | In final position. |
Comments:

- ḥ appears only in the name of the Prophet محمد <mḥmd> Muḥammad.
- ز is used representing j only once in an Arabic loan, i.e. زکا <zak'> jáka 'alms' (3:5) (from Arabic zakāt)
- ص appears only once, in an Arabic loan, i.e. صلیل <ṣalila> sāli lá 'with a greeting' (3:1) (from Arabic ṣalā).
- ع appears only once (2:15), with its meaning remaining unclear.
- ق (with two upper dots as in Mašriqī) representing g occurs only once, i.e. in the word خفتا <ku₁ku₁na'> kāgūra 'arrived to maturity (perfective form)' (3:15).
- Nūn in word-final position appears usually without a dot, i.e. as ن. However, the dotted variant, i.e. ن, is also encountered in the texts.
- The usual graphemic representation of ɲ as ٨ (with two lower dots and one upper dot) never appears in word-final positions. If a word has ɲ in the final syllable, ٨ is always followed by ى. Therefore, it is impossible to figure out which Arabic character served as its base, i.e. ب ى or ی.
- ی is used representing ɲ in only one single case, i.e. سینه <siyey₁> sīnē 'time' (1/2:6) (which may be a copyist's or author's error).
- ی appears in the texts only twice, i.e. in یومنیک <y₂umawn⁰y₃y₁> ینومنیک ی 'it is good...' (3/1:8), and in یومنیک <y₂u₁k₄u₁n⁰y₃y₁ > ینومن ی 'with each other' (5:15).
Prenasalization of initial consonants is marked in the same manner as word-internal nasalization by a \( n\,\) with a \( suk\,\)n, i.e. \( \text{ن} | <n^0>\), such as in \( \text{n\,\,ك\,\,ن} | <n^0\text{k}_4\text{eleni}> \) ngèłènnin 'ground squirrel'. Compare also a form \( \text{k\,\,ر} | <k_4\text{u}_1\text{w}> \) gò 'wonderbean (Canavalia ensiformis)' (4:4) which is attested in Charles Bailleul's dictionary (2007) as ngò (the prenasalization in this word might be absent from the dialect of the manuscript's author).

5.1 Diacritics

\( Fatha, \) kasra, and \( dhamma \) are used for representation of \( a, i, \) and \( u \) respectively, while \( suk\,\)n represents the lack of any vowel (in fact, it used only with \( n\,\)n).

\( Ta\,\,sh\,\,d\,\,d \) is rarely employed representing gemination of a nasal sonant as in e.g. \( \text{k\,\,ل\,\,ن} | <\text{k}_1\text{l}_1\text{u}_1\text{n}_2\text{a}> \) kòlôn ná 'to the well' (1/2:9) - mostly it is used with unclear purpose, e.g. \( \text{s\,\,ر} | <\text{dimis}_2\text{aw}^0> \) dénmisènw 'children' (1/1:16). Also, it occurs in Arabic loans in order to reproduce the original orthography, e.g. \( \text{ج\,\,م} | <\text{r}_a\text{d}_0\text{a}_0\text{g}_\text{an}_2\text{a}> \) àlijana 'Paradise' (3/1:9), \( \text{ن\,\,م} | <\text{j}_\text{an}_2\text{a}> \) jàhanama 'hell' (3/1:9).

In the Bamana Ajami orthography, new diacritics have been introduced for the representation of middle vowels: an 'inversed \( dhamma \)', i.e. \( \text{ـق} | <\text{u}_1>, \) representing o or ɔ, as well as a lower dot, i.e. \( \text{ـق} | <\text{e}>, \) representing e and ɛ. There is also a combination of lower dot + \( fath\,\)a, i.e. \( \text{ـق} | <\text{ae}>, \) which represents the open front vowel ɛ, and which is used only

\(^{19}\) The \( ta\,\,sh\,\,d\,\,d \) on top of the \( h\,\,ا \) was put here mistakenly by the writer.
in text 4: | <haera> héra 'be in peace' (4:11) | <yerae> yère 'self' (4:11).

Generally, vocalic diacritics are provided. However, they may be omitted from time to time, apparently due to negligence of the writer or copyist.

Diacritics representing vowels which are not preceded by a consonant are placed on top of a supporting `alif hamza, i.e. ā | <?’> or ā | <?’i>, such as e.g. in ā | <?’u> ü ‘they' (1/2:6), ā | <?’e> é 'you (singular emphatic)' (1/2:3).

Vocalic nasality is marked either by mīm in word-internal position, when the nasal vowel is followed by a labial consonant, or by nūn with sukūn, i.e. ٗ | <n⁰>, in all the other contexts, e.g. كُرْنَتْ مُلْئَيْتُا | <karan⁰ｔela ku₁lu₁m⁰iators > Karantela kɔ̀nba 'big well of Karantela' (1/1:1) | <yan¹ > yàn 'here' (1/1:1). Not infrequently, the nasality remains unmarked in word-final positions, such as e.g. ذ | <du₁> versus ذ | <du₁n¹ > dán 'to know' (1/1:1) (both spelling variants appear in the same line), بات | <ba’f₁a> bá fàn 'North' (1/2:7), آبي | <’a bifiyey₁ > à bí fíyen 'he will become blind' (1/1:6),كُلْ | <kele> kélen 4:5 'one'. More rarely, and probably by negligence, it also remains unmarked in word-internal positions, as e.g. in بَنْتُوْرِ | <den⁰kuwidi> dēnkundi ‘baptism' (1/2:8). When followed by the plural marker -w /û/, nasality is never marked in the spelling of vowels - e.g. نُذُرَ (1/2:2) | نذِرَ | <duk⁰lew⁰ > -dūgulenw 'natives' (1/2:2) | <dunaw⁰ > dūnanw 'strangers' (1/2:1) | نِذِرَ (1/2:1) | <nidew⁰ > ní dénw... 'if children...' (1/2:3).

The syllabic nasal ŋ, which occurs in the first singular pronoun of Bamana is featured in the texts only once, where it is followed by a labial
consonant and expressed by a mīm with a sukūn, e.g. <m⁰biydeli> ň b’í déli 'I beg you' (5:10). Supposedly, in all other contexts it is rendered by nūn (in the same way as prenasalization and syllable-final nasal).

Vowel length is marked irregularly: | <beya’ su₁ru₁> bēē y’à sər 'all have found it...' (1/1:1), but | <tiy₂batu> tiyebaato ‘truthful’ (3/1:3). On the other hand, letters marking vocalic length in Arabic orthography, i.e. ١، ٢، ٣، ٤، ٥، ٦، ٧، ٨، ٩، may appear where there is no vocalic length in Bamana: | <na’na> nàna 'came' (1/1:3) | <sama’sen₀> sàmasen 'buttress' (3/1:3) | <miy₁₀> mǐn relativization marker (3/1:2).

Quite regularly, vocalic assimilation (usually referred to in the description of Bamana as "elision") is expressed by a letter representing a long vowel in Arabic orthography, particularly when the resulting vowel is a long aa or oo: | <ʕu kana’ yey₁ ka’ lağey₁> ù kàn’à [kànnà] yé k’à [kàà] lájé ‘they should not see it‘ (1/1:4) | <’ʔi bu₁w tu₁bi> í b’ò [bóò] tóbi ‘you will cook it‘ (4:5). If this assimilation results in an i, it is represented as a separate syllable: In such a case, ii is written as kasra below a supporting ’alif hamza, with an additional kasra on the preceding letter, i.e. | <’ʔi ?i>; e.g. | <k₂-i ’ʔi sen₁₀ ku₁w> k’í sën kò ‘to wash your feet‘ (2:6).

Very frequently, word-finally 'length letters' are encountered which do not express any length in Bamana Ajami orthography, as they do in other orthographic traditions, e.g. | <wu₁ ku₁f₁ey₁> wò kó fè 'after that‘ (1/1:11) | <sumay₁ by₃y₁> sùma bí nè ‘food will be abundant’ (1/1:13) | <suk₄uw> súgu 'sort‘ (4:4).
The plural marker, Ꙉ, is rendered by a wāw with a sukūn, i.e. ؤ | Ꙉ as in e.g. ماَّكَرُز | Ꙉ/ma’ ku₁ru₁w⁰> màa kəɾzw /màa kəɾẑu/ 'old people' (1/1:3).

The author of the texts makes an effort to maintain the original orthography in Arabic loans, although he does not always succeed, as e.g. in ÀlKiën | Ꙉ/’al⁰kiyaw⁰ma> àlikiyama 'Doomsday', which should rather be ÀlKiëma. In any case, the author writes Arabic loans which have undergone phonological changes following Bamana Ajami orthographic tradition, such as e.g. Jë | Ꙉ/ţi⁰y3y₁> jỳɛ 'world' (cf. Arabic dunyā) (3/1:14), ði | Ꙉ/haera> héra 'be in peace' (cf. Arabic ḥayra) (4:11).

5.1 Orthographic segmentation of words

Segmentation of written speech into graphic words in San Bamana Ajami is more or less orderly (especially in comparison with the specimens published in Vydrine 1998). Content words are normally written separately and are fused together only rarely, e.g. as in مَأَّنبَنَتَن | Ꙉ/ma’ tibënima’ yey₁> M̀a tɛʲ bën nî màa yé ‘people do not meet each other' (literally 'a man does not meet a man') (1/2:9).

Postpositions are mostly, albeit not always, written together with the preceding word, e.g. ḏë k’intë proprietary | Ꙉ/’e de yey₁ duk⁴ulen⁰yey₁> é dë yé dùgulen yé ‘you are the native' (1/2:4), ḏë k’intë proprietary, tīlībī tīlībī fərñntī, | Ꙉ/tilebif₁ey₁ ’ʔaniku₁ru₁n⁰f₁ey₁> tilebi fë à̀nî kórs fë ‘on the western side and on the eastern side' (1/2:6). Monosyllabic auxiliaries (predictive markers) are usually written together with either the preceding or the subsequent word.
In some instances, derived words are split up orthographically in accordance with their morpheme boundaries, e.g. دِلٖا | <du₁k₄-u₁ lila’> dògoli lá 1/2:9 'secretely'.

5.2 The dialectal characteristics of the texts

The manuscripts are written in a Bamana variety quite close to what is today Standard Bamana, with certain features typical of the eastern dialects, such as the imperfective marker bί, as opposed to bέ in Standard Bamana.

Most often, the lexeme for 'person' appears in its eastern dialectal form, i.e. م | <ma’> màa (1/1:3,5:5). However, occasionally it may also appear in the western dialectal form, i.e. م | <mu₁k₄-u₁> mɔŋɔ (5:1). Throughout all the manuscripts, western forms predominate, e.g. م | <tu₁k₄-u₁> tɔŋɔ 'name' (1/1:8, 3/1:1, 5:3) (cf. the eastern form twàa).

Occasionally, intervocalic velars are elided, as for example in س | <siyy₁> sii 'to sit' (4:7) (cf. Standard Bamana sigi), or پ | <y₃u₁w nay₁> nɔŋ nà 'to each other' (4:13) (cf. Standard Bamana nɔŋɔn nà). Elision of intervocalic velar consonants is typical of Maninka and Mandinka languages spoken in the western part of the Manding area, but also for numerous Manding variants on the southern and eastern periphery of that area.

Also, at times archaic forms are encountered in the texts, such as e.g. x | <k₄iya’> gìya 'to grow clear' (4:8) (cf. Standard Bamana jé or jé-ya, Proto-Manding *xóyi, and in certain Maninka varieties gé).
References


