

## Knowing the Postcolony

The Republic of Mali became an independent nation in 1960 with the break-up of the Mali Federation and the socialist option of September 22nd. And again in 1961, with the expulsion of French troops from military bases on its territory. And again in 1962, with the creation of the Malian franc. These at least were the perceptions of the ruling party, the Union Soudanaise-Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (US-RDA). But when did Mali become a society? This chapter asks how party leaders understood what they sought to govern and what the effects of that understanding were. It asks what it meant in Bamako in the 1960s for the US-RDA leadership to perceive of Mali as a society and to attempt to govern it as such.<sup>1</sup>

One place to begin to think about these questions is on a quay in Conakry, in the neighboring territory of Guinea, where two young men met in 1946.<sup>2</sup> One, waiting dockside, was Mamadou Madeira Keita, a low-level civil servant and archivist. Years later, when he was a political prisoner in the Malian Sahara, some would argue (with a good deal of exaggeration) that he was “the first francophone African ethnographer.”<sup>3</sup> The other, descending the gangplank, was the Frenchman Keita had come to meet. Georges Balandier was unknown then, but his name is familiar now.<sup>4</sup> Conakry was his second African port of call. The work with which

<sup>1</sup> These questions are partly provoked by a reading of Mitchell (2002) and Latour (2005).

<sup>2</sup> Balandier (1966), 228.

<sup>3</sup> Guiart (1976), 153.

<sup>4</sup> On Balandier and his influence, a sample of work representative of different decades and approaches might include Adler and Balandier, eds., (1986); Maffesoli and Rivière, eds., (1985); Meillassoux (1981), preface; Moore (1994), 99–104; Copans (2001a; 2001b); Saada (2002b); Balandier, Steinmetz and Sapiro (2010).

he would make his name remained literally over the horizon, in Brazzaville. Yet the encounter between Keita and Balandier was foundational for both men. For the young Frenchman, Guinea, like postwar French Africa, was more than a laboratory. It was a workshop;<sup>5</sup> he was one of its creations. Conakry, and Guinea at large, was also the crucible in which a powerful anticolonial politics would be forged by Madeira Keita and his allies. In this particular corner of West Africa, that politics and an emergent, engaged social science conditioned each other, like the two strands of a double helix, each a necessary yet ultimately contingent element of the other's structure. Those links did not last long. In fact, they proved nearly as ephemeral as the conjuncture that enabled them. Still, they were not without effect. Diverging from a well-established literature on the connections between the social sciences – notably anthropology – and European colonial rule,<sup>6</sup> here I privilege the political, arguing that anticolonial activism both effected and was affected by a shift more profoundly epistemological than methodological in the practice of the social sciences (more precisely, sociology and ethnography) in West Africa.<sup>7</sup> One forgotten moment when the two began to come together was on that quay.

#### THE ANTICOLONIALIST

The young archivist who awaited Balandier on the quay in Conakry was an exceptional figure, one of the architects of a new form of radical anticolonial politics in francophone West Africa that is now largely obscured. Mamadou Madeira Keita was an agent of the West African social science research institute (Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire; IFAN). He was also a founding figure of both the interterritorial, anticolonial political party known as the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA) and of its Guinean chapter. Born in Kourounikoto in the Soudanese (later Malian) *cercle* of Kita around 1917 and educated at

<sup>5</sup> I draw the workshop analogy from Schumaker (2001). The distinction between Africa as a site for the working out of scientific models developed elsewhere and as a site of scientific production in, of, and for itself merits further reflection; see Bernault (2001); Cooper (2005); Mbembe (2001); and Tilley (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Recent interventions into that discussion include Tilley (2011) and Sibeud (2011).

<sup>7</sup> This finding complements that of Schumaker (2001) and echoes to some degree that of el Shakry (2007), in which the focus extends to human geography and demography, in addition to anthropology. My approach differs from that of Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, who focuses on the "social history of agents and institutions of research"; see Jézéquel (2011), esp. 53.

French West Africa's highest institution of learning, the *Ecole Normale de Gorée* (later the *Ecole William Ponty*), Keita had trained as a librarian and archivist in the office of the governor general in Dakar and in Conakry before the Second World War. Mobilized from October 1938 to October 1940, he served in Dakar and left the ranks of the colonial military (the *tirailleurs Sénégalais*) as a staff sergeant (*sergent-chef*). Keita then worked as an archivist and librarian for the government of Guinea in Conakry and Kouroussa. In 1944, he established the IFAN center in Guinea, a center that grew out of the archive, and which Balandier would be sent to take over. He would remain there, periodically serving as interim director, until 1950.<sup>8</sup>

While at IFAN-Conakry in April 1946, Madeira Keita stepped into a pivotal role in the city's emerging Communist Study Group (*Groupe d'études communistes*, GEC), which had been animated by French Communists until Keita, Sékou Touré, and a few other West Africans became involved.<sup>9</sup> Six months later, he would write to Théodore Monod, IFAN's director in Dakar, asking for a leave of absence to represent Guinea at the conference in Bamako at which the RDA would be created on October 22nd. Monod granted his request on the condition that he arrive back in Conakry on October 24th in time to greet the new director, Balandier, who would arrive shortly thereafter.<sup>10</sup> This must have been a rushed trip, and it meant that when Keita met Balandier, he had only just returned hours earlier. In the same days and weeks that he worked with Balandier, he was also working with Touré (who had also been in Bamako), Ray Autra, and others to found the Guinean branch of the RDA, the party that would evolve into the Parti Démocratique de la Guinée (PDG).<sup>11</sup> Within months of returning from Bamako, Keita was holding meetings at Conakry's Rialto cinema to establish the RDA's

<sup>8</sup> *Notice de Renseignement Concernant Madeira Keita*, 1960, ANM NIII 1C1542; "Activités du Centre IFAN," *Etudes Guinéennes* 7 (1951); Autra [Traoré] (1964): 5–35; see 14–16.

<sup>9</sup> Suret-Canale (1994), 57–9. Letter of Madeira Keita to Jean Suret-Canale, April 17, 1987, Fonds Suret-Canale, ADSSD 229J65.

<sup>10</sup> Mamadou Madeira Keita, aide technique de l'IFAN, to M. le Directeur de l'IFAN, Dakar, Oct. 3, 1946, #164 IFAN/G, and note in margin signed "Monod." IFAN-Guinea A1/17, Collection IFAN-Dakar.

<sup>11</sup> "Ray Autra" is a moniker based on reversing the syllables of Traore's family name in the French slang style known as *verlane*. As he appeared in archival records and signed his own publications as Ray Autra, I use that name here. Autra will play an important supporting role in our narrative. Touré would become Guinea's first president at independence in 1958, ruling autocratically through the PDG until his death in 1984.

Guinean chapter.<sup>12</sup> Keita quickly folded one of the colony's fledgling political parties, the Parti Progressiste Africain de Guinée, into the inter-territorial initiative, and in years to come he and Touré would struggle to integrate the other, ethnically or regionally based parties. Police reports echoed the press in referring to Keita as the Guinean RDA's chief organizer ("responsable"), and he would be elected its first secretary-general.<sup>13</sup> His wife, the schoolteacher Mme. Keita Nankoria Kourouma, was a leader and cofounder of the women's wing of the movement in Guinea, and their house served as a meeting ground for anticolonial activists.<sup>14</sup> Madeira Keita's importance in anticolonial politics is less often underestimated than overlooked entirely by historians hypnotized by Touré,<sup>15</sup> yet a 1948 report from the head of security in Guinea makes his importance clear:

Very intelligent, subtle, and an ardent partisan of the Communist doctrine, Madeira is indisputably the soul and the brains of the group (i.e., the RDA), and it seems certain that, if he were transferred to another territory in the Federation . . . , the RDA could not easily find in Guinea a leader and a coordinator who would be his equal.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Announcement, *la Guinée Française*, 3014, March 6, 1947.

<sup>13</sup> *Renseignement, Conakry, Destinataire: Haut-Commissaire de la République, Gouverneur Général de l'AOF (Direction des Affaires Politiques et Administratives)*, March 10 1947, ANS 17G573; Madeira Keita, Secretary-General, "la Vie de la Section," *Phare de Guinée*, 1, 1, Sept. 27, 1947. The RDA in Guinea would become the PDG in 1950, although it is frequently referred to as the RDA through Guinea's independence in 1958; *Rapport politique, Guinée 1950*, ANS 17G573; Morgenthau (1964), 234.

<sup>14</sup> On the women's movement, see Schmidt (2005), ch. 5; Pauthier (2007). An image of Madame Madeira Keita's *carte d'électeur* can be found in S. Keita (1978), vol. 1, n.p.; her status as a teacher apparently gave her the right to vote several years before other West African women obtained it. Mme Keita was a leader of the RDA women's wing in Guinea and Mali, which sent her as a delegate to many international meetings and conferences through the mid-1960s. According to one of her sons, the demands of her family eventually took precedence over her international activism; int., Papa Madeira Keita, Bamako, June 21, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> E. Schmidt's work is symptomatic, according Keita a minor role, occluded by that of Sékou Touré, and failing to recognize the interterritorial basis of French West African politics. Schmidt's focus on "the masses" and Sékou Touré tends to obscure the collective leadership of the PDG-RDA and the role of leaders other than Touré; see Schmidt (2005, 2007b). Schmidt's *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–58* recognizes Keita's role more systematically, but sends him offstage after his 1952 transfer to Dahomey, which merely marked the end of his Guinean sojourn; (2007a), 38, 64. It is no surprise that work published in Conakry while Touré was in power also diminishes Keita's role: Camara (1973); S. Keita (1978).

<sup>16</sup> Pierre Ottavy, Chef de Service de la Sûreté de la Guinée Française, to M. l'Inspecteur Général de la Sûreté en AOF, Nov. 5, 1948, #1176/PS, ANS 17G573.

In years to come, Touré would become that man, and more. But in 1948, his alliance with Keita seems to have been based on a loose division of tasks. Keita, the intellectual, led the party – albeit in close collaboration with others – served as its spokesperson, and would later edit one of its short-lived newspapers, *Coup de Bambou* (1950–51).<sup>17</sup> Touré was the secretary-general of the Guinean chapter of the powerful, French Communist trade union, the *Confédération Général du Travail* (CGT), and in 1948 he exchanged a position in the Guinean postal service, in which he had led early postwar strikes, for one as an accountant in the federation-wide colonial civil service.<sup>18</sup> Touré's strong allies in the labor movement in West Africa and Europe helped to protect him to some degree from persecution by the colonial administration, but on the other hand his status as a civil servant – one long held by Keita – made him vulnerable to punitive transfers from one territory to another. This balance was a delicate one, and it tipped in June 1950, when Touré led a general strike in Conakry over the minimum wage.<sup>19</sup> He sought a leave of absence from the civil service, which the administration refused, assigning him instead to Niger. Touré in turn refused to go, and after a voyage to Warsaw that raised his international profile, he was dismissed from the civil service early in 1951. He left almost immediately for a long sojourn in France, returned to contest unsuccessfully a seat in the territorial assembly, and finally came out of the political wilderness in July 1952 when he succeeded Keita as secretary general of the Guinean RDA, and 1953, when he won both a seat in the assembly and a territory-wide increase in the minimum wage, following a 67-day strike.<sup>20</sup>

In the wake of the 1950 general strike, Keita too was on the ropes. Guinea's governor had already banned meetings of the RDA. In August, after years of harassment from the colonial administration – this at least was mutual – Keita was suspended from his duties and his salary cut off after he refused a transfer out of Guinea.<sup>21</sup> In November, a court fined Keita 100,000 francs for libel in a case brought by Iréné Montout, a

<sup>17</sup> The phrase “stroke of bamboo” refers to the fatal sunstroke the French believed might befall those who went without a pith helmet; Bianchini (2011), 32–33. The newspaper redefined it as a fatal blow to colonialism; *Coup de Bambou*, 1, April 5, 1950.

<sup>18</sup> Lewin (2009), 76, 157.

<sup>19</sup> Lewin (2009), 159–60; Cooper (1996), 280.

<sup>20</sup> Lewin (2009), 143–44, 160–63, 185; Cooper (1996), 310.

<sup>21</sup> *Notice de Renseignement . . .*, 1960, ANM NIII 1C1542; *Premier Congrès Territorial du PDG (Section Guinéen du RDA), Rapport Général d'Activité 1947–1950, Présenté au Nom du Comité Directeur par Mamadou Madeira Keita, Secrétaire-Général*, ANS 17G573; Lewin (2009), 160 n308.

colonial administrator from the Antilles, against *Coup de Bambou*.<sup>22</sup> A six-month suspended sentence hung over his head after that case, and other judgments had already gone against him, leaving him with heavy fines to pay and the prospect of multiple months' imprisonment.<sup>23</sup> Ironically, the article that provoked Montout's lawsuit may have been written by Touré, under the pseudonym Erdéa (phonetically, RDA).<sup>24</sup> Whoever the author was, Keita was the defendant. He was silenced, and *Coup de Bambou* swept from the table. This was check, but not yet checkmate.

That year, politics was souring all around. Keita found himself on the wrong side of a battle to maintain the parliamentary alliance between the French Communist Party (PCF) and the RDA. Led by the Ivoirian Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the RDA had decided to break with the PCF altogether. Keita disagreed strongly, but his dedication to party discipline would eventually oblige him to accept a maneuver designed to make the party less threatening to the colonial state and more effective in its metropolitan legislative coalition.<sup>25</sup> Touré had been persuaded to follow the new party line, and over the next few years would work to keep his CGT and his RDA activities distinct.<sup>26</sup> For Keita, this compromise must have been especially galling. Unlike Touré or Houphouët-Boigny, he never enjoyed parliamentary immunity or the relative protection from the colonial administration that presence in France or a high profile in the labor movement could provide.<sup>27</sup> He was more vulnerable than his peers, and suffered accordingly. Nonetheless, Keita would maintain his position as secretary general of the Guinean RDA affiliate (now renamed the PDG) until 1952, when he was reintegrated into the ranks of the civil service and transferred to Dahomey.<sup>28</sup> His transfer was meant to neutralize him politically and to

<sup>22</sup> *Semaine Politique et Sociale en Guinée*, Nov. 13–20, 1950, ANS 17G573.

<sup>23</sup> "En Correctionnelle," *la Voix de la Guinée*, 29, Aug. 10–17, 1950; 32, Aug. 24–Sept. 7, 1950; also, Lewin (2009), 142–43.

<sup>24</sup> The article in question appears to have been Erdéa, "Montout, Colonialist Nègre," *Coup de Bambou*, 6, April 14, 1950. Lewin states that Touré signed articles under that name; (2009), 142–43.

<sup>25</sup> After the PDG broke its ties with the French Communist Party on the orders of the interterritorial RDA and of Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1950, Keita would contest Touré's accommodationist alliance with Houphouët-Boigny; *Note sur la Position Politique Actuelle de Madeira Keita*, n.d. (Dec. 13, 1951), ANS 17G573. The maneuvering behind this disaffiliation is detailed most recently in Schmidt (2007a), ch. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Cooper (1996), 311, 412–13.

<sup>27</sup> Morgenthau notes that "in French law, trade unionists had special legal protection"; (1964), 227.

<sup>28</sup> On his position within the PDG, see Territoire du Niger, *Renseignements a/s Copie Document PDG*, July 3, 1952, #530/C/355/PS, ANS 17G573. On the transfer to

decapitate the PDG, just as Guinea's security chief had proposed four years earlier.

For a short time it would seem to have worked, but Keita's political career was far from over. In 1956, he was reassigned to Bamako, where he quickly rose in the ranks of the US-RDA. By then, Sékou Touré had long filled the void opened by his departure from Conakry. From Bamako, Keita reported to his colleagues on the political situation in Guinea, where opposition to the RDA remained strong and electoral violence was common. Keita argued that much of the violence was ginned up by the colonial administration and that the stakes in Guinea were particularly high.<sup>29</sup> This proved prescient. In 1958, Guinea would be the only territory to refuse to join the French Community under the constitution of the Fifth Republic. By rejecting that constitution in a referendum, the country would gain immediate independence. Within months, Keita would be leading the negotiations for Soudan's own exit from the French empire.

Overlooking the politics of Keita and his allies contributes to the misapprehension that francophone Africa was "always" neocolonial, and it occludes the region's tradition of political radicalism. What it meant to be anticolonial changed over time. In the 1940s, it meant contesting the dual authority of French administrators and canton chiefs in the countryside, demanding equal pay for equal work in the formal sector, and struggling to give content to the promise of colonial citizenship held out by the Fourth Republic and its French Union. By 1960, it meant seeking distance from France on an international stage. Concretely, it was expressed through support for the Algerian revolution and nonalignment, attempts to establish multiterritorial political units such as the Mali Federation or the Ghana–Guinea–Mali union, the expulsion of French military bases, and the creation of national currencies. Abolition of the chieftaincy represented an important fourth element. In different ways, Mali and Guinea pursued each of those objectives, but at its heart this was a transterritorial politics, just as the RDA was a transterritorial party.

Dahomey, see *Notes Africaines* 57 (1953), 32. Riven by regionalism and skeptical of federation (the *raison d'être* of the RDA), Dahomey lacked a strong RDA affiliate party; Morgenthau (1964), 315–16. I have found no trace of political activities on Keita's part while in Dahomey; this question requires further research.

<sup>29</sup> Madeira Keita, "ancien secrétaire général du PDG, pour le Bureau Politique de l'Union Soudanaise," *Etude sur les événements de Conakry*, Nov. 1956, attached to Direction des Services de Police, Territoire du Soudan Français, "Renseignements . . .," no. 239/CL/SU, Nov. 27, 1956, ANM NII 1E1244.

## THE SOCIOLOGIST'S ASSISTANT

In 1948 such events were years in the future. Nonetheless, recognizing Keita's political commitments and establishing the weight of his influence are necessary steps in understanding the context in which Balandier would produce his canonical diagnosis of "the colonial situation."<sup>30</sup> Keita's career as a militant and party leader was intertwined with his work as a researcher and archivist. Other leading RDA militants also worked for IFAN, but Keita would become the most politically powerful of them.<sup>31</sup> His exposure to the social sciences colored the ways in which Keita thought about two of the key social issues – youth and urbanization – that would animate postcolonial politics, and it informed his vision of a closely related problem that would provoke great controversy in Mali, namely the reform of marriage and marriage payments.<sup>32</sup> In short, illuminating the political commitments Keita brought to the intellectual project in which he was engaged reveals a complex shared lineage of particular, historically situated forms of anticolonial politics and social science.

It is hard to imagine that Keita's years with IFAN had no effect on his approach to political problems. The nature of that effect cannot be

<sup>30</sup> First published in 1951, "*La Situation Coloniale: Approche Théorique*" is the rare academic article to spark (and to merit) sustained engagement on the fiftieth anniversary of its publication and in the years since; Balandier (1951). On the article's canonical status, see Copans (2001a; 2001b); Smouts (2007); and Saada (2002b), which includes Balandier (2002); Conklin (2002). See also Cooper (2005), Chapter 2.

<sup>31</sup> Other Soudanese active in both the RDA and IFAN were Mamby Sidibe and Dominique Traore. Sidibe established IFAN in Niamey in 1944 and Traore became "head of the ethnography laboratory" in Bamako; Jézéquel (2007), 161. Sidibe was an early, leading member of the RDA in Niger and Soudan and the doyen of Soudan's Territorial Assembly, an important point in West African politics; *Assemblée Territoriale, Soudan Français – Procès-Verbaux, Session Ordinaire*, March–April 1953. He was also a proponent of reforming the chieftaincy by marginalizing the powerful canton chiefs and submitting the village chiefs to elections; this policy was in keeping with US-RDA's drive toward the gradual abolition of the chieftaincy (see Chapter 2). See Mamby Sidibé, "Soudan: Justice ou Bon Plaisir?" *Afrique Nouvelle* (Dakar), 7, Jan. 17, 1952; Snyder (1965), 11–13, 40–41. Belonging to an older generation, Traore's political career was more limited. However, at the founding RDA congress in 1946, he served as president of the Commission on Social Issues, for which Madeira Keita served as secretary; Lisette (1983), 36–41. Another important figure in the early RDA, the Dahomeyan S.A. Adande, worked for IFAN in Dakar. He became Minister of Justice in independent Dahomey (later Benin); Adedze, (2003), 39.

<sup>32</sup> The best work on youth and urbanization in this period remains Meillassoux (1968). Marriage reform under the US-RDA was immensely important politically; see Burrill (in press). Here mention should be made of two of Keita's early publications: "La Famille et le Mariage chez les Tyapi," *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947), 63–66; "Aperçu Sommaire sur les Raisons de la Polygamie chez les Malinké," *Etudes Guinéennes* 4 (1950), 49–55.



assumed; the traditionalist intellectual Amadou Hampaté Bâ, then the sole African to hold the same rank at IFAN, was closely allied with an officer in French military intelligence, Commandant Marcel Cardaire, who in his scientific endeavors, was in turn a protégé of the influential ethnographer Marcel Griaule.<sup>33</sup> Together, Bâ and Cardaire sought to protect what they saw as a distinctly African Sufi tradition from West African, Egyptian, and Saudi reformers. Keita, on the other hand, participated in studies of emerging urban societies undertaken from a theoretical perspective attentive to relations of power and committed to engaging with the dynamism of the objects of study. He was involved with one of the most innovative of the social science research agendas then at work in francophone Africa, one that tried to take the measure of contemporary African social life as it was lived, while recognizing that political struggle loomed large within it.

In IFAN-Conakry, that innovative agenda was in its infancy. Nonetheless, it is worth lingering there, while considering the research center as a kind of workshop in which the spheres of social science and politics (understood narrowly in terms of activism, and broadly as an ethics) were not entirely distinct.<sup>34</sup> In the last years of the Second World War, just before he began to build the Guinean RDA, Keita worked to establish the new IFAN center in Conakry and to organize the colony's archives. On a peninsula jutting from Guinea's coast into the Atlantic, Keita labored alongside Ray Autra in a recently abandoned leprosarium that lay at the end of the road dividing the city's European and African cemeteries. In another part of the former leprosarium, which served as an antechamber to the burial ground, the bodies of Africans would linger before burial, the cemetery reserved for them being so crowded that still decomposing corpses often had to be displaced to make room for new ones.<sup>35</sup> Here, in the intermittent absence of a European director, Keita remained a librarian-archivist "responsible for day-to-day

<sup>33</sup> Only one African in French West Africa held a higher rank than Bâ and Keita. On IFAN's hierarchy, see *Décision Constatant les Passages d'Echelon des Fonctionnaires du Cadre Supérieur de l'IFAN*, April 17, 1958, ANM NIII 2G1317. On Cardaire, Bâ, and the counterreform movement, see Brenner (2001, 2000). Bâ would go on to direct Mali's Institut des Sciences Humaines, which succeeded IFAN-Soudan, before serving as ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire and dedicating himself to his literary career.

<sup>34</sup> Here my interpretation of IFAN-Conakry diverges sharply from those of Benoît de l'Estoile and Agbenyega Adedze, who see the IFAN organization as a whole as an instrument centralized in Dakar to practice a social science designed to further colonial rule; see de l'Estoile (2005); Adedze (2003).

<sup>35</sup> Moving the African cemetery to a more accommodating site was one of the RDA's first successful initiatives; Autra (1964), 14 n18; Balandier (1948a), 401.

administration and financial management.”<sup>36</sup> Mere days after returning to Conakry from the founding Congress of the RDA in Bamako in October 1946, he went to the port to welcome the center’s new director, who was arriving from Dakar.<sup>37</sup> Relations that Balandier would later describe as “affectionate, friendly” and “not very hierarchical” began there, in a situation that could hardly have been more colonial, as the Frenchman assumed the leadership of IFAN-Conakry. For Balandier, Conakry would represent a transformative episode in his political awakening. When he left Guinea in August 1947, Keita was “the only person who came to see [him] off . . . standing helpless in the rain . . . in that primitive and sinister Conakry airport.”<sup>38</sup> After his departure, it would appear that Keita once again took over the day-to-day running of the Institute under the supervision of Jean Poujade, a jurist presiding over the city’s court.<sup>39</sup>

As the publications emerging from this place, and more broadly this moment, make clear, in the brief period that Balandier and Keita worked together, IFAN-Conakry had begun to incubate a critical, politically engaged social science. At the time, the IFAN centers of the different French African colonies were establishing their own journals; in Conakry Balandier launched *Etudes Guinéennes*, asserting in an editorial foreword, “We have to go beyond the stage of picturesque relations and colonial novels. There is more here than those childish surroundings. There are men who are neither as simple – you know the classic assimilation of the Black man to a child – nor as strange – when the observer relied on superficial impressions – as it was customary to say. In this domain,” he wrote, “everything remains to be done (*nous avons tout à faire*)” in order to understand what Guinea had been historically and to attempt “a thorough and objective analysis” of what it was

<sup>36</sup> *Notes Africaines* 37 (Jan. 1948). Keita appears to have been acting director of the institute from its founding early in 1944 until the arrival of Raymond Schnell, a botanist, in November of that year. Schnell served as director for one year. A three-month interval separated his departure and the arrival of his replacement, Jean Joire, who served from February to July 1946. In November 1946, Balandier arrived. He left in August. Keita appears to have served as acting director during each moment of transition until Balandier’s arrival, even if he did not hold that title. The best account of IFAN-Guinea in these years is Autra (1964). See also IFAN-Guinea A1/17, Collection IFAN-Dakar. I thank Dr. Jean-Hervé Jézéquel for sharing his photographs of this collection with me.

<sup>37</sup> Mamadou Madeira Keita to M. le Directeur de l’IFAN-Dakar (Théodore Monod), Nov. 15, 1946, IFAN-Guinea A1/17, Collection IFAN-Dakar.

<sup>38</sup> Balandier (1966), 230; Balandier, Steinmetz, and Sapiro (2010), 53.

<sup>39</sup> “Activités du Centre (2<sup>e</sup> semestre 1947),” *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947), 77; “CentrifAN ‘Guinée,’” *Notes Africaines* 37 (1948), 12, 16.

becoming.<sup>40</sup> In the pages that followed, both men wrote on issues that would continue to capture their interest in the years to come. Balandier, in an article on “*Ethnologie et Psychologie*” in the very first number of the new journal, would embark on an exploration of the relationship between the two fields of inquiry that would also animate “*la Situation Coloniale*.”<sup>41</sup> In it, he rejected the ethnographic impulse to offer totalizing portraits of “pure” or traditional collectivities and insisted instead on the study of “societies *as they are now*.”<sup>42</sup> Based on concrete examples, such studies would need to focus on individuals, not groups. That is where psychology came in, as a necessary tool for ethnographers committed to analyzing in a rigorous and concrete fashion life as it was lived by individual people.

Madeira Keita’s article in the same number illustrated just how difficult that task would be, even as it seemed to ignore Balandier’s advice. Qualified by an editorial footnote – surely Balandier’s – specifying that Keita drew his own examples from “the Malinké of the regions of Kouroussa and Kankan,” “*le Noir et le secret*” suggested a paradox between the rapidity with which news traveled in rural Africa and the high value African societies placed on discretion, secrecy, and “esotericism.” In it, Keita noted that faced with “metropolitan and even native researchers . . . informants are reticent . . . they lead the interviewer astray. They are perfectly aware that ‘paper’ is very indiscreet.”<sup>43</sup> He went on to

<sup>40</sup> Balandier, “les Etudes Guinéennes,” *Etudes Guinéennes* 1 (1947), 5–6; Balandier (1977), 64. Adedze misapprehends this journal and its stance, assuming like de l’Estoile that its financing and institutional structure entirely predicated its politics. He fails to note the evolution of *Etudes Guinéennes* after the departure of Balandier and Keita, when it became much weaker; Adedze (2003), 342.

<sup>41</sup> The pairing was a crucial element of the original argument. The perspective behind it can be seen in “*le Noir est un Homme*.” It juxtaposes rather sharply with a contemporary concern to reassert the historicity of diverse “colonial situations,” both in their particularity and in their broadly comparative dimensions, including across the *longue durée*. In other words, in a strand of work conversant with avowedly postcolonial work but skeptical of both its novelty and the ambition of some of its claims, historical reasoning is now assigned a task similar to that once given to psychology. See Bayart (2011); Burbank and Cooper (2008); Cooper (2005); Schaub (2008); and Stora (2007). As Emmanuelle Sibeud has observed, the pre-eminent role accorded to history, rather than to literature, distinguishes a predominantly francophone conversation around postcolonial scholarship from a predominantly Anglophone one; Sibeud (2007); Smouts (2007). The volume edited by Patrick Weil and Stéphane Dufoix represents a significant and relatively early intervention in this regard; Weil and Dufoix, eds. (2005).

<sup>42</sup> Balandier, “Ethnologie et Psychologie,” *Etudes Guinéennes* 1 (1947), 47–54. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>43</sup> Madeira Keita, “Le Noir et le Secret,” *Etudes Guinéennes* 1 (1947), 69–78; see 77.

note that a *griot* (traditionalist) had told him as much when his questions on the history of the Mali empire (13–16 c.) had gone too far: “We cannot give you the information that you want. You will write it down for the schools, and we will lose a source of income.”<sup>44</sup> No native informant, Keita had gone beyond transcription and translation to lay bare the material conditions in which knowledge was produced and exchanged.

Given his political activities at the time, it is perhaps understandable that in the pages of *Etudes Guinéennes*, Keita was as discreet as his informants. Nonetheless, in a review dominated by European authors, he would publish two other articles. They are notable less for the richness of their exposition – very brief pieces were the norm at the time – than for their author and their subject matter. The first, “*la Famille et le mariage chez les Tyapi*,” comments favorably on marriage practices among a very small ethnic group that favored “the liberty of the individual, and especially of women,” emphasized a bride’s consent, and kept marriage payments modest.<sup>45</sup> The article, however, would seem to have been drawn from the archive, rather than the field. Based, as a footnote to the title explains, on an administrator’s 1910 response to a questionnaire from the *Société anti-esclavagiste de la France*, this short piece is evidence of Balandier’s policy of publishing the rich material on Guinea that could be found in the colony’s archives, which Keita managed.<sup>46</sup> In the second article, on his own ethnic group, the Malinké, Keita broached the questions of polygyny, bride-wealth, and levirate marriage. With a mild critique of previous ethnographic work on the question, which poorly understood the economic motives of polygyny and tended to regard the widow in a levirate marriage as “movable goods” (*un bien mobilier*), Keita suggested that economic and political forces had begun to change these family structures in fundamental ways. Levirate marriage was on the way out, the family itself had lost its cohesion, and women of all social classes were waging a “patient, stubborn” campaign against polygyny. That campaign, he wargered presciently, would prove to be a long one.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Keita, “le Noir,” 78. Part of Keita’s duties at IFAN included transcribing the discourse of griots; “Activités du Centre (1<sup>er</sup> semestre 1948),” *Etudes Guinéennes* 3 (1949), 84.

<sup>45</sup> Keita, “la Famille,” 66.

<sup>46</sup> Indeed, two other articles in the same number were the work of a colonial administrator, A. Delacour, who had written them in 1910. Keita and Balandier had drawn them from the archives, and Balandier had made minor adjustments to “Sociétés Secrètes.” See Delacour, “La Propriété et ses Modes de Transmission chez les Coniagui et les Bassari,” *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947), 53–56; and “Sociétés Secrètes chez les Tenda,” *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947), 37–52.

<sup>47</sup> Keita, “Aperçu Sommaire.”

These were observations made without real method. Still, they testified to a particular way of seeing the world – as had Keita’s first published work in 1938<sup>48</sup> – and their subject matter would prove more than pertinent to Keita’s political and administrative career. In the absence of direct evidence, one can only wonder if he found the time to revisit his notes on secrecy when, a few short years later, he became Minister of Information for the République Soudanaise. By the same token, if it seems unlikely that his mind turned toward the pages of *Etudes Guinéennes* when the US-RDA debated its new marriage code a decade later, he would have been one of the few people in the room to have thought systematically about the issue from both within and beyond a social scientific frame of analysis still then moving beyond the frames of ethnicity and custom.

Another journal was just beginning to appear at the same time. *Présence Africaine* is rather better known than *Etudes Guinéennes*, but Balandier had a role in the creation of both.<sup>49</sup> Both he and Keita would publish in its pages, although the latter’s contribution would appear only in 1960.<sup>50</sup> In addition to holding a place on the editorial committee of the new review, Balandier published a set of quite distinct articles in its first numbers. “*Femmes possédées et leurs chants*” would have been at home in *Etudes Guinéennes*, were it not for its setting in the Lébu villages between Dakar and Rufisque where Balandier had conducted his first research on the continent. However, “*l’Or de la Guinée Française*,” “*Erreurs noires*,” and “*le Noir est un homme*” reveal another side of Balandier’s emerging perspective.<sup>51</sup> They both echo and go beyond what Balandier had published in *Etudes Guinéennes*; not for the last time, his work published in France re-assembled and refined his work published in Africa. “*Erreurs noires*” and “*le Noir est un homme*” argue for what might now be termed a critical antiracism, and the latter article, which appeared in the first number of *Présence Africaine*, resonates strongly with Balandier’s editorial foreword to the first number of *Etudes Guinéennes*. “*Erreurs noires*” is

<sup>48</sup> Madeira Keita, “Tombouctou: notes de voyage (septembre-octobre 1937),” *Bulletin d’Information et de Renseignements du GGAOF*, 192, May 9, 1938, 142–44.

<sup>49</sup> As indeed did Guinean anticolonialism. After Balandier’s departure from the editorial board of *Présence Africaine*, Ray Autra joined the board beginning with the new series in 1955. Autra would become *Directeur adjoint* of IFAN-Conakry, and in 1965, director of the renamed *Institut National de Recherches et de Documentation*. He would relaunch *Etudes Guinéennes* as *Recherches Africaines* in 1960; Autra (1964). In 1961, he was imprisoned by Sékou Touré. On his release, he returned to the institute before being named ambassador to Algeria.

<sup>50</sup> Madeira Keita (1960).

<sup>51</sup> Here my reading differs from that of Hassan (1999).

even more striking, as Balandier states bluntly the anticolonialists' antagonism toward the canton chiefs yet dissimulates the identity of his interlocutor, who is clearly Keita. Keita accuses the chiefs of "collaboration," and Balandier ponders this word, still a powerful one in the wake of the war, coming to it as an existentialist. "On whom do scorn and the blow of the whip fall," the article asks? "On the slave (*nègre*), on the Jew, on you who accept it."<sup>52</sup> Even if Keita's name was obscured, the links between a specific anticolonial politics and the intellectual world of the new journal could not have been more evident.

Following Balandier's own injunctive, let us continue to privilege the concrete. A brief empirical article, "*l'Or de la Guinée Française*" offers a tantalizing hint of the links between fieldwork and political activism.<sup>53</sup> A study of "artisanal" gold-mining around Siguiri – the region bordering those Keita studied in "*Aperçu sommaire . . .*" and "*le Noir et le secret*" – "*l'Or*" is the product of fieldwork possibly conducted with Madeira Keita, including translations of several terms from Malinké into French.<sup>54</sup> In the article, Balandier reports visiting a site along the road to Bamako where as many as 10,000 people were at work; he notes that other sites supported populations twice as large.<sup>55</sup> These were not industrial sites; they were smallholdings worked by hand. The limited role industrial technology and capital played in the process of mining, as well as the diminished presence of political institutions, rendered the mines a productive yet inchoate space, one in which "the ethnic community . . . breaks apart in favor of the cosmopolitan society that is established at the placer mine. This becomes, for a good half of the year, the real living [social] unit, to the detriment of the village. It demonstrates, in its political and ritual aspects, flexibility and eclecticism."<sup>56</sup> In short, social life was regenerated beyond the confines of the village, in innovative and improvised sites that resembled cities less than camps.

While for Balandier the mines were dynamic sites to be analyzed scientifically, Keita and his comrades sought to mobilize Siguiri politically. In

<sup>52</sup> Keita is identified elsewhere by name, but here by his initials; Balandier (1948a), 400, 403–04.

<sup>53</sup> Balandier would return to this theme and this research in *Ambiguous Africa*; (1966), 65–75.

<sup>54</sup> It is also possible that this fieldwork was conducted with Ray Autra or another Malinké-speaking IFAN research assistant. However, Autra does not figure prominently in Balandier's memoirs. To the contrary, Keita does, and the publications of Keita and Balandier suggest very strongly that they conducted their research in the same places and times, as do Keita's other activities.

<sup>55</sup> Balandier (1948b), 523.

<sup>56</sup> Balandier (1948b), 547.

other words, what Balandier saw – a new, nonethnically bound community coming into being – the RDA sought to realize as a political party organized around a common cause, rather than ethnic or regional affinities. Keita's own traces in Siguiri are unclear, but the sequence is suggestive. In the first number of *Etudes Guinéennes* in 1947, Keita reported that Balandier had undertaken fieldwork there; this was clearly the trip from which the *Présence Africaine* article was drawn.<sup>57</sup> A year later, in *Phare de Guinée*, an RDA newspaper that both Touré and Keita helped to edit, one of the party's allies, the ethnic and regionalist Union du Mandé, published an editorial opposing plans by the colonial administration to establish a cooperative structure in the gold mines.<sup>58</sup> The administration's move was portrayed as a naked attempt to stabilize the mines and control the market in gold while keeping prices artificially low. Itinerant miners would thereby be pushed out of a market that they had created and away from sites that they had opened up. Meanwhile, implied the article, African gold traders and middlemen would be cut out of the formal sector and forced into smuggling. Better to invest in modern methods of production and regulate conditions of labor than to regulate the market itself, it was argued.<sup>59</sup> The Union's intervention had echoes in Paris, where Guinea's Mamba Sano and other RDA representatives proposed legislation liberalizing the West African gold market.<sup>60</sup> In doing so, the party hoped to secure the patronage of Dioula traders and the support of the Union du Mandé. In the end, it would lose the latter.

In any case, the article is not Keita's. His traces can be found elsewhere. Keita and his long-time ally Dr. Koniba Pléah, who was stationed in Siguiri, established an RDA section in the town in November, 1948, thereby bringing competition between the Union du Mandé and the RDA into the open.<sup>61</sup> Originally from Soudan, Pléah had only arrived in

<sup>57</sup> M. K. (sic; Madeira Keita), "Notes," *Etudes Guinéennes* 1, 1 (1947). The mines were then producing a small fraction of what they had before the war; "Siguiri: Reprise de l'Activité des Mines d'Or," *la Guinée Française*, 2094, Feb. 11, 1947; Balandier (1948b), 539.

<sup>58</sup> Union du Mandé, "A Propos de la Coopérative de l'Orpaillage," *La Phare de Guinée*, 7, Feb. 1948 (article dated Jan. 2, 1948). Keita had briefly succeeded in incorporating this regionalist party, of which Sékou Touré had been an early member, into the Guinean RDA; *Renseignements, Origine: Conakry*, July 13, 1947, ANS 17G573; letter of Madeira Keita to Jean Suret-Canale, April 17, 1987, Fonds Suret-Canale, ADSSD 229J65; Lewin (2009), 95–96. The party would soon join an anti-RDA coalition; *Voix de la Guinée*, 1, Aug. 7, 1949; *Coup de Bambou*, 5, April 12, 1950.

<sup>59</sup> Here Balandier would have disagreed. Capital-intensive, industrial mining had never proven profitable in the area; Balandier (1948b), 542, 545.

<sup>60</sup> Lisette (1983), 175.

<sup>61</sup> In a letter, Pléah characterized the Union du Mandé as a regionalist party holding contradictory positions; Pléah to Doudou Guèye, Oct. 12, 1948, BPN 136d528.

Guinea the year before. He had quickly fallen into the orbit of Keita, his “*koro*” or “elder brother,” lodging with him in Conakry and “accompanying him in Communism.”<sup>62</sup> Posted to Siguiiri by the colonial medical service in June 1948, he would only last six months there, having incurred the enmity of both the colonial administrator, a strong Gaullist with whom Keita had clashed, and of the Union du Mandé.<sup>63</sup> By the time he was transferred elsewhere, Pléah’s organizational work had already been done, but the biggest political question remained the mines: Who had the right to work them, who set the prices, and to whom did the subsoil belong? With Pléah gone, and the alliance between the RDA and the Union du Mandé broken – but before the RDA split with the PCF – the administration would give the Union what it sought: a free market in gold and assurance that the mineral wealth of the Siguiiri region would constitute a “*reserve indigène*” closed to European mining companies.<sup>64</sup>

From the mines around Siguiiri, questions emerge. Was the kind of political work Keita engaged in merely incidental to the work of social scientific research? Did this climate of anticolonial activism and political maneuvering influence Balandier’s study of Guinea’s gold fields, or his later diagnosis of the “Colonial Situation”? Did anticolonial politics and engaged social science go hand in hand, or did they simply happen to run on parallel tracks? In any case, even before Siguiiri, the paths of Keita and Balandier had already diverged. Keita would soon endure persecution, repression, and unemployment. Having in his telling been hustled out of Guinea in August 1947, Balandier had been reassigned to French Equatorial Africa, a posting considered one of the least desirable in the empire.<sup>65</sup>

#### THE “COLONIAL SITUATION” IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

There, in the Fang villages of northern Gabon, Balandier encountered a crisis of social reproduction that he attributed to what he would term “the colonial situation.”<sup>66</sup> In 1950, that argument moved from embryonic form

<sup>62</sup> Pléah to Doudou Guèye, Oct. 12, 1948; Pléah to S.-G. du Symepharsa (sic; Professional Trade Union of African Doctors, Pharmacists, and Midwives of Guinea), March 7, 1949, BPN 136d528.

<sup>63</sup> *Renseignements, Origine Kankan, als Activités du Médecin Africain Koniba Pléah, en Service à Siguri*, Dec. 19, 1948, ANS 17G573; Pléah to S.G. du Symepharsa, March 7, 1949, BPN 136d528.

<sup>64</sup> *Voix de la Guinée*, 24, July 6–13, 1950; 27, July 27–Aug. 3, 1950; 31, Aug. 24–31, 1950.

<sup>65</sup> Balandier, Steinmetz, and Sapiro (2010), 53.

<sup>66</sup> On Balandier’s work in Gabon see Mann (2013a), 109–14.



in the *Bulletin* of the Institut d'Études Centrafricains in Brazzaville to an article on "Aspects de l'évolution sociale chez les Fang du Gabon" in *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*. The next year it would achieve its mature expression in the same pages as "*la Situation coloniale*." In that canonical article, Balandier would argue that contemporary Africa represented a particular situation in which colonized society – African societies – and colonial society – that for which empire was a condition of its existence and reproduction – formed an ensemble or system that had to be studied in its concrete manifestations and as a totality ("*en tant que totalité . . . [ou] un complexe*").<sup>67</sup> Anthropology had failed to capture the dynamism of colonized societies because it was caught between theorists in search of purity and applied anthropologists slavishly devoted to empiricism.<sup>68</sup> Sociology was the best instrument for such a study, he argued. "Dynamist" and "engaged," it represented a discipline suited to a "new Africa."<sup>69</sup> His preference for sociology harmonized with that of a nascent African intelligentsia which rejected with increasing vehemence the traditionalist, even "folkloric," ethnographic approach that seemed to them – and to him – to characterize the discipline of anthropology.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> It has been argued that Balandier adopted the concept of the "situation" from Max Gluckman while being informed by the sociology of Marcel Mauss; Naepels (2010); Cooper (2005), 35–36. See Gluckman, *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*, which was originally published in *Bantu Studies* 14, 1 (March 1940) and 14, 2 (June 1940), and in *African Studies* 1, 4 (Dec. 1942) and later republished in book form (1958). However, Balandier's sources for the phrase and the concept were multiple, and Gluckman may not have been the most important among them; Copans (2001b). In both the eponymous article and in a forerunner to it published in the same journal one year earlier, Balandier cites the psychologist Octave Mannoni as his source for the phrase "*la situation coloniale*," while tracing it back to Louis Wirth; (1951), 46; (1950a), see 77. Indeed, one section of Mannoni's *Psychologie de la Colonisation* is entitled "*la Situation Coloniale et le Racisme*"; (1950), 108–120, see also 10–11. Balandier was originally less hostile to Mannoni's project than some readings of "*la Situation Coloniale*" suggest. In a review of the book, he proclaimed it "brilliant" if deeply flawed and lacking specificity and methodological rigor, and it inspired a second article by him as well; see his review (1950b) and (1952). Finally, the concept of the "situation" played an important role in the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, who published the first of a series of collected writings under the title *Situations* with Gallimard in 1947. Sartre's influence on Balandier's writing is apparent in the young social scientist's first articles in *Présence Africaine*, for which both men sat on the editorial board. Balandier discusses the existentialist influence in (2002).

<sup>68</sup> Balandier (1951), 45–6, 76. For astounding evidence of this impasse, see Godelier (2005), 252.

<sup>69</sup> Balandier (1955; 2nd ed., 1985), ix. See also Balandier (1955a); Balandier (1965); Copans (2010), 88–9.

<sup>70</sup> Copans (2010). Ironically, Balandier made precisely this point in a note on a 1949 conference of Africanists in Ibadan, Nigeria . . . one to which the delegation from French Equatorial Africa (AEF), included no Africans; Balandier (1950c), 80. For a defense of the ethnographic approach by one of Balandier's primary targets, see Griaule (1948).

Those insights – the political lessons learned mostly in Guinea, the scientific ones in Gabon – would animate Balandier’s work in the years to come, including his 1955 *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires* (note the plural). There, Balandier would insist that the city and the rural areas were interdependent, a relationship in which the role of the colonial state could not be discounted.<sup>71</sup> Among francophone social scientists Balandier’s work was innovative in that he significantly modified the long-prevalent thesis that Africans experienced urbanization as a form of “uprootedness” (*déracinement*) in which their static or primitive societies were transformed.<sup>72</sup> He recognized that the future of the city in Africa was neither colonial nor “White,” and he never ignored the intensity or rapidity of the transformation that mid-twentieth century African societies were experiencing.

#### SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT AND “SOCIOLOGY”

Keita and Balandier would not experience that transformation together. While Balandier observed it, Keita would attempt to master it. In 1956, in the wake of the *loi cadre* (framework law) that established territorial autonomy by dissolving the federal government in Dakar, Keita returned from his political exile in Dahomey to his home territory of Soudan Français. There he worked as an archivist and served as interim director of the IFAN center.<sup>73</sup> As that colony became an internally governed territory, and then a Republic within the French Community, he rose in the ranks of government as well as within the US-RDA.<sup>74</sup> Keita’s roots in Guinea’s early anticolonial politics, Conakry’s GEC, and the

<sup>71</sup> Balandier (1955), 32–45.

<sup>72</sup> For a rich and relevant attempt to think through such social developments, see Meillassoux (1968). Meillassoux was a student and something of an acolyte of Balandier. He was also attentive to Madeira Keita’s status as an anticolonial social scientist who had become a powerful minister. Meillassoux pays homage to Keita in the book’s preface, but in his fieldnotes rues the suspicion he encountered from Keita in his role as Minister of the Interior; Fonds Meillassoux, B7.2, B7.3. Keita’s attitude may have been conditioned by the fact that before training under Balandier, Meillassoux had worked as a translator in the United States. Indeed, *Urbanization of an African Community*, his major study of Bamako in the 1960s, was written in English and still awaits publication in French.

<sup>73</sup> *Notes Africaines*, 72 (1956); *Rapport Annuel de l’IFAN*, 1956, ANS 2G56–6; *Rapport Annuel de l’IFAN*, 1957, ANS 2G57–20.

<sup>74</sup> At independence, Keita would become Minister of Defense and Security, later serving as Minister of Information, of Labor and of Justice. *Notice de Renseignement . . .*, ANM NIII 1C1 542; Imperato and Imperato (2008), 169; *Livre d’Or de la République du Mali* (1963); and int., Papa Madeira Keita, Bamako, June 21, 2008.

transterritorial RDA meant that his presence in Soudan strengthened the hand of the US-RDA's more militant wing – figures such as Aoua Keita, Seydou Badian Kouyaté, and Mamadou Gologo – against the more moderate party leader Mamadou Konaté and his allies, such as Jean-Marie Kone. In fact, Madeira Keita almost certainly served to “stiffen” the politics of the US-RDA in the wake of Konaté's sudden death from hepatitis in 1956. In May 1957, he was named Minister of the Interior of the Territory of Soudan. It was his signature as minister – not that of head of government and US-RDA Secretary General Modibo Keita – that authorized the strongest single move against the colonial system made before independence, namely the dismantling of the chieftaincy and the gradual dismissal of the *chefs de canton* beginning late in 1957.<sup>75</sup> He would remain in government through independence in 1960, acting as a leader of the delegation that negotiated the Mali Federation's emergence within the French Community and as a key figure in establishing the Republic of Mali in the wake of the Federation's collapse in August. That same year, the editors of *Présence Africaine* claimed that he was “as popular in Guinea as Sékou Touré himself” even though he had left the country nearly a decade earlier.<sup>76</sup>

In Mali, Madeira Keita was more powerful than popular.<sup>77</sup> Under the socialist government of Modibo Keita from 1960 to 1968, he occupied various ministerial posts, changing one portfolio for another, but never leaving government. Madeira Keita's political influence would wax and wane, but his ministerial positions served as a barometer or bellwether of “radical” influence within the politburo, or *Bureau Politique Nationale* (BPN).<sup>78</sup> A well-informed French ambassador considered him both the most pro-Soviet and the most “xenophobic,” meaning anti-Western, of the Malian leadership.<sup>79</sup> Keita consistently held hard-line positions; for instance, in the wake of a high-profile treason case in 1962, he argued that, were it up to him, death sentences handed down by Popular Tribunals

<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>76</sup> Editorial footnote to Keita (1960), 3.

<sup>77</sup> For instance, Keita lived in a protected villa on the edge of Bamako, in what is now Korofina Nord, rather than in a popular neighborhood; Campmas (1976), 470; author's fieldnotes, June 21, 2008. Villas in that neighborhood were the subject of popular criticism; *Synthèse des Procès-Verbaux d'Assemblées Générales tenues les 11 et 12 Sept 1967 dans les comités de Bamako I par les délégués du CNDR*, BPN 50d138.

<sup>78</sup> Ambassador France to S. E. M. Couve de Murville, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE, France), Sept. 18, 1962, #258, 2522, MAE.

<sup>79</sup> Pierre Pelen, Ambassador of France to Mali to MAE, DAAM, April 28, 1965, #70, 2522, MAE.

would be carried out expeditiously.<sup>80</sup> Although he lost that particular battle, the CIA recognized him as a leader of the “younger militants” within the Party and one of the most powerful voices in the BPN, which was the heart of government under the US-RDA.<sup>81</sup> Within what had become a single-party state,<sup>82</sup> Keita served as a member of the party’s ruling bodies, the BPN and the *Comité National pour la Défense de la Révolution* (CNDR) that superseded it from August 22, 1967, until the coup d’état of November 19, 1968.

Keita’s politics had influenced Balandier greatly at a key moment in his “intellectual conversion.”<sup>83</sup> Did the type of analyses of African social life generated by Balandier and his peers influence Keita’s vision of the societies he would play such an important role in governing? I argue that they did, but the line is not a taut one. After independence, social scientific knowledge was both produced and consumed in West African capitals including Conakry and Bamako. However, Guinea and Mali never developed social scientific traditions that were as simultaneously “nationalist” and programmatic as was the case in Nasser’s Egypt, for example;<sup>84</sup> nor did positivism carry the same weight in what were both scientific and political interventions. Although social science, broadly construed, was valued as a necessary tool of ambitious independent governments, its use was above all rhetorical.<sup>85</sup>

Echoes of the type of social scientific discourse and analyses that emerged from the work Balandier and Keita conducted together can be found in the governing rhetoric of the US-RDA and in the party’s theoretical debates on the structure of Malian society. Those echoes emerge in the archives of the US-RDA’s BPN and its militia, the *Milice Populaire*. An engaged sociology not dissimilar from that of *Brazzavilles noires* (1955), *Sociologie Actuelle de l’Afrique Noire* (1955), or *Afrique ambiguë* (1957) can be seen in analyses of

<sup>80</sup> *Procès-Verbaux des réunions du BPN, 1962*, BPNCLN 77. The introduction of the Malian franc had provoked demonstrations in Bamako for which three prominent opponents of the US-RDA – Fily Dabo Sissoko, Hamadou Dicko, and Kassoum Toure – were held responsible. They would later die in custody; see Chapter 6.

<sup>81</sup> CIA, *Ghana and Mali as exemplars of African Radicalism*, National Intelligence Estimate, July 11, 1962. NSF, Box No. 8, Folder 60, LBJ Presidential Library. See also Mazov, who draws on similar sources; (2010), 155, 218–19. This perception was shared inside the US-RDA; Campmas (1976)

<sup>82</sup> Keita (1960).

<sup>83</sup> The phrase is from M. A. de Suremain, although she places that conversion in Dakar, which Balandier visited before Conakry; de Suremain (2004), 654–55.

<sup>84</sup> This in spite of the urging of Autra (1964). For Egypt, see el Shakry (2007), 218.

<sup>85</sup> Copans (2010).

urban disorder generated within the US-RDA and particularly in Keita's Ministry of the Interior. For example, if a long synthetic CNDR/BPN report of 1967 on youth prepared under Keita's ministry had the ring of the familiar, this may well be because key points of its analysis had been heard before. The CNDR/BPN report, part of a discussion in which Keita clearly played an important role, made implicit reference to a vision of the African city that Balandier had developed 10 years earlier:

*Leaving to the sociologist the problem of going further into the question [of the link between capitalist modernity and the degradation of morals], one can nevertheless bear in mind the fact that our societies are moving from the stage of closed populations to populations open to the outside world.*<sup>86</sup>

In this new phase, the report went on, Mali encountered Western capitalism in decline, and its youth moved quickly from a “*situation innocente*” to a moral crisis. For sociologists, this might be mere food for thought. For an ambitious postcolonial government anxious to maximize rural production, the situation demanded action.

Controlling the youth in Bamako – fighting tea drinking, sexual exuberance, and “moral decline” – had become a predominant concern of the US-RDA by 1967. Young people had access to too much money and freedom of movement, the authority of fathers was weakening, families were in crisis, and sexual liberty abounded. Statistics showed that cases of pregnancy in schools threatened to double in 1967, and rather than being limited to schools, the rise in pregnancy out of wedlock could be seen in the villages as well.<sup>87</sup> These issues directly affected members of the highest ranks of government.<sup>88</sup> Whether in Bamako or in smaller towns, the urban scene remained the key battleground for the preservation of morals as, in the eyes of the US-RDA, exposure to the idle leisure of tea drinking in informal salons (*grinw*) and to dance societies focused on Western music and fashion corrupted youth absolutely.<sup>89</sup> That corruption, particularly in

<sup>86</sup> *Rapport de Synthèse sur le problème de la moralité et la licence chez la jeunesse*, 1967, BPN 110420. The identity of the author of this report is unclear. However, there is good reason to think that Madeira Keita was behind it. In July 1966, the BPN had charged him and Youth Commissioner Gabou Diawara with conducting a study on “*le militant vigilant et responsable [et] la dégradation des mœurs.*” P-V, CNDR, July 18, 1966, #5/CNDR, BPN 230835.

<sup>87</sup> *Rapport de Synthèse . . .*, BPN 110420.

<sup>88</sup> Modibo Keita to BPN, various government ministers, May 6, 1967, #161/PG/CSB, BPN 13527.

<sup>89</sup> See Meillassoux (1968); Rillon (2010); US-RDA, Section de San, Bureau Executif des Jeunes, 4<sup>e</sup> Conference de Section, *Rapport d'Activités et d'orientation*, May 29, 1967, BPN 103390.

terms of sexual liberty, was then transmitted to the villages via the very youth organizations – with their evening rehearsals, conferences, and competitions – on which the party relied.<sup>90</sup> Intervention in urban contexts called for urban techniques: more surveillance of cinemas, dances, and parties (*bals* and “*parties-surprise*”), action against hotels and brothels, and control over the circulation of automobiles, which could be used for illicit encounters. The CNDR’s counteroffensive to the moral crisis of the nation’s youth also had a discursive element. To combat the hedonist philosophy of *yéyéism*, interpreted here as sexual liberty and personal autonomy, the US-RDA leadership sought to promote alternative messages through the same venues by which intelligence was gathered.<sup>91</sup> These problems seemed to call for policing and propaganda, but the analysis applied to them was self-consciously sociological in nature. Governing cadres disdained ethnography as a colonial means of analysis that had sustained the power of Muslim religious leaders, canton chiefs, and elder men, but sociology appeared to be a particularly valid means of analysis of a new society.

As an applied science, sociology shared with African socialism the great theoretical challenge of the absence of classes as such. The US-RDA had long insisted on this point, in spite of strong pressure from Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev himself to hew closer to Soviet orthodoxy.<sup>92</sup> At the party’s second seminar, held in September 1962, both Madeira Keita and Seydou Badian Kouyaté lectured militants on the need for a socialism “adapted to our realities.” They envisioned a Malian socialism that would be built up from the villages and out from the party, one which recognized that Mali’s social hierarchies existed independently of control over the means of production.<sup>93</sup> When Kouyaté gave a presentation in Paris based on a book promoting these ideas, he was subject to a blistering critique by the *Association des Etudiants Maliens* (AEM), and notably by the young Ibrahima Ly. Only one student, Victor Sy, rose to defend Kouyaté’s position, arguing that “although he is not a Marxist-Leninist,

<sup>90</sup> The same phenomenon obtained in Guinea, in which participation in youth organizations was mandatory and more extensive, as was party membership; see Straker (2009). In Mali, the party struggled to subordinate various associations of young people to its own youth wing; Meillassoux (1968).

<sup>91</sup> P-V, CNDR, Jan. 23, 1967, #7/CNDR, BPN 230d835.

<sup>92</sup> Mazov (2010), 9, 221–23.

<sup>93</sup> U.S.-RDA (1962). As Kouyaté would point out, unlike imperial Russia or China, Mali did not have a class of landless peasants, or indeed of small-scale, rural landlords; (1965), 15, 143–44.

I reach out my hand to him . . . The essential point is not the class struggle [but that Kouyaté] is advocating socialism.” For his peers, however, Kouyaté’s socialism substituted a romantic vision of village life for a realistic assessment of the need for class consciousness among urban workers allied with the poor peasantry. They compared, him, damningly, to Tanzania’s Julius Nyerere and Senegal’s Léopold Sedar Senghor.<sup>94</sup>

Years later, as the party moved into the phase of the “Active Revolution” after 1966, the song remained the same. In 1967, in one of his rare public speeches, Madeira Keita openly rejected the possibility that “social classes” with distinct relationships to modes of production existed in Africa. By arguing that “class conflict” represented a lesser threat to Africa than did neocolonialism, Keita exposed himself to the criticism of students more doctrinaire than he.<sup>95</sup> To the language of class he continued to prefer that of “*couches sociales*,” or social strata, a term that Modibo Keita also promoted,<sup>96</sup> and that Balandier employed in his own contemporary discussion of the inadequacies of class as an analytical tool in the African context. Balandier argued that the new African nations were generating innovative social structures to which the analytic categories of sociology would be forced to adapt. In Africa, he noted, “the nation, the state, and modern economies . . . are *under construction*”; the only true social class coming into being was defined by its access to political power, not its economic role.<sup>97</sup> Madeira Keita concurred, but he and his comrades had drawn a bolder conclusion: because class distinctions were not acute,

<sup>94</sup> *Les Dirigeants Africains face à leur peuple, Ouvrage de Seydou Badian Kouyaté, Conférence du 7 Mars 1965*, and *Compte-Rendu sur la Conférence du 7 Mars 1965 de la FEANF . . .*, March 12, 1965, #363/AV, vu et transmis par l’ambassadeur Ya Doumbia; BPN 72d211. Ly was a former president of the FEANF, a hard-Left students’ organization with which the AEM was affiliated. Under military rule in the 1970s, both Ly and Sy would be imprisoned for their politics; see Chapter 6.

<sup>95</sup> Ambassador Pelen to MAE, DAAM, April 8, 1967, #27. *Als Conférence de M. Madeira Keita sur l’idéologie et la formation idéologique des cadres*, 2522, MAE.

<sup>96</sup> Modibo Keita spoke of “*couches sociales*” in a conference at Bamako’s Ecole Normale d’Administration (ENA) on June 11, 1966. Questions addressed to him on that occasion were skeptical but less overtly hostile than those addressed to Madeira Keita in 1967 and 1968. See Ambassador Pelen to MAE, DAAM, June 18, 1966, #59, 2522, MAE; and Ambassador Pelen to MAE, DAAM, June 14, 1966, #569/573, 2522, MAE. See also Ambassador Pelen to MAE, May 8, 1968, #58/DAM, pg. 3, fn. 1, Bamako 57 CADN. Modibo Keita also used the term in closed CNDR meetings; see, e.g., P-V, CNDR, July 4, 1967, #8/CNDR, BPN 23od835.

<sup>97</sup> Balandier (1965), 133, 141, original emphasis; see also Mercier (1965). The latter part of this argument was pursued in regard to Mali in Amselle (1978, 1985). It had become an important theoretical question. See, e.g., the work of Senegalese sociologist and leader of the Parti Africain de l’Indépendance (PAI) Majhemout Diop; Diop (1971).

countries such as Mali and Guinea could best be governed by single parties like the US-RDA, which encompassed difference within their ranks.<sup>98</sup> Thus, led by its cadres, a party like the US-RDA could realize the social revolution an absent proletariat could not assure. In Guinea, the same intellectual maneuver – insisting on the absence of classes – had helped to subordinate the once powerful labor movement to Sékou Touré's PDG.<sup>99</sup> As the “theoretician” of the US-RDA regime,<sup>100</sup> Madeira Keita seemed to draw on sociology to define an African socialism in which the party cadre, and not the worker, was pre-eminent.

Was anyone listening? In May 1968, over a year after his last public speech, Madeira Keita delivered another on “*la Révolution et son contenu au Mali*,” at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Badalabougou (Bamako). There, Keita found himself confronted by forceful arguments from skeptical students who rejected the government's vision of the Active Revolution, Keita's justification for the creation of the Malian franc and its 1967 devaluation, and his analysis of Malian society. If his language here had sharpened over the last year – he adopted the vocabulary of class – so had that of his audience. Keita was obviously not the only government minister to be interpolated by angry students around the world in that rebellious spring of 1968, but Bamako was not Paris, or even Dakar. In this case, Keita took several dozen questions in a marathon seven-hour meeting. In the judgment of the French ambassador, “The questions asked erred in the lack of political maturity of those who asked them. Others demonstrated indisputable treachery, if not absolute insolence, and M. Madeira Keita was obliged to react strongly to it.”<sup>101</sup> In the wake of this embarrassing episode, the CNDR went on the offensive, castigating on Radio Mali and in the daily *l'Essor* those it called the “parrots of Marxism.”<sup>102</sup> The National Youth Committee demanded a purge of institutions of “counter-revolutionary intellectuals,” while the increasingly powerful

<sup>98</sup> Keita (1960).

<sup>99</sup> Cooper (1996), ch. 11.

<sup>100</sup> Ambassador Pelen to MAE, May 8, 1968, #58/DAM, Bamako 57, CADN. Kouyaté might once have held claim to this distinction, but his voice had never been as influential as that of Madeira Keita.

<sup>101</sup> Ambassador Pelen to MAE, May 8, 1968, #58/DAM, Bamako 57, CADN.

<sup>102</sup> Ambassador Pelen to MAE, Tel., chiffrement, May 14, 1968, #405/409, Bamako 57, CADN. “La Conférence du camarade Mamadou Madeira Keita, membre du CNDR, Ministre du Justice et du Travail,” *l'Essor*, May 7, 1968, #5371; see also *l'Essor*, May 9, 1968, #5373; May 14, 1968, #5376. In this period Radio Mali and *l'Essor* maintained a hard “Leftist” editorial line; Campmas (1976), 426–27.



militia had two of Madeira Keita's Badalabougou critics hauled in for questioning.<sup>103</sup> There in the transcripts of the interrogation of one of them, the luckless student Djigui Diabate, emerges the question of sociology.<sup>104</sup>

Ironically, the very act of hauling in Diabate spoke to a particular vision of society. Although Radio Mali branded him a "parrot," Diabate was also a griot, and by custom he would have been accorded a broad liberty of expression. Keita and the militia would have none of it, because in their view such traditions relied on unacceptable social hierarchies.<sup>105</sup> All this remained unspoken during Diabate's interrogation, in which class rather than caste became the bone of contention. Although the questions themselves are absent from most of the transcript, Diabate's answers make it clear that he was sparring verbally with adversaries who were easily confused. What was the role of the intellectuals in the Revolution, they apparently asked him? And what was the role of the other social classes? "I'm not a sociologist," he replied, "and I can't offer a complete analysis of social classes, this is beyond my abilities."<sup>106</sup> Diabate's modesty was not necessarily misplaced; he had failed to pass his baccalaureate exam. Why then was he talking about sociology with militiamen? What Diabate expressed as essentially a question of intellectual competence – whether he had the training to propose a more rigorous analysis of Malian society and politics than Keita offered, a point on which he wisely deferred – his interrogators rephrased as the arid intellectualism of a "totally rootless element" who kept the company of a Frenchwoman. The anti-intellectualism of the militia comes as no surprise, and the record of the interrogation comes to no conclusion. Yet the confrontation at Badalabougou and the interrogations that followed demonstrated both the regime's intolerance and the inability of its "theoretician" to control the party's message before a crowd of intellectuals who spoke the same analytical language.<sup>107</sup> Why was that language "sociology"? And what did Djigui Diabate and the militiamen mean by it?

<sup>103</sup> Commission Nationale de la Jeunesse, *Rapport de Presentation*, n.d. (1967), BPN 50d138. On the militia, see Mann (2003).

<sup>104</sup> Milice Populaire, Secrétariat Permanent de Bamako, *Note ... sur l'Audition de Djigui Diabate et Yamadou Diallo*, June 3, 1968, BPN 146d568.

<sup>105</sup> Compare the robust practice of internal dissent portrayed in Keita (1960), 11.

<sup>106</sup> *Note ... sur l'Audition de Djigui Diabate ...*, BPN 146d568.

<sup>107</sup> Ambassador Pelen to MAE, May 8, 1968, #58/DAM, Bamako 57, CADN.

## SOCIOLOGY AS TALISMAN

Although sociology was taught at Bamako's Ecole Normale in the 1960s – and although the debate over “classes” versus “strata” was a charged one – it would have been an incidental element in the curriculum of the school for party cadres that was launched in 1967.<sup>108</sup> At Mali's new Institut des Sciences Humaines, efforts to create a sociology section had run aground against bureaucratic inertia, in spite of the argument that the initiative would have allowed the government to “link theoretical research to . . . social and economic planning.”<sup>109</sup> The term “sociology” was not being invoked rigorously by the CNDR, by Djigui Diabate, or by anyone else.<sup>110</sup> Instead sociology served a kind of talismanic function.<sup>111</sup> Yet whether sociology's function was analytic or talismanic mattered little, and it could be both at once. Like other newly independent African governments, and perhaps more directly, the US-RDA looked to sociology, among other disciplines, to provide the tools of analysis for a society experiencing rapid urban and demographic change. It did so partly because the discipline tended to frame its own analyses in terms of changing relations of production rather than of fixed systems of thought grounded in ethnicity, custom, or religion, but it was not ensnared in the concept of class struggle. Most important, it emphasized the possibility of a transformative future, a possibility in which governing cadres were deeply invested.

In 1960, that future seemed imminent, and once-progressive work such as “The Colonial Situation” no longer captured it. Years after George Balandier and Madeira Keita had met at the foot of the gangplank in Conakry, the link between the two men had long waned through force of

<sup>108</sup> *Programme de l'ENS, toutes sections, 1964*, ANM NIII 1G2697; *Rapport de la Commission de Politique Général sur l'ouverture et le fonctionnement de l'école supérieure des cadres du parti*, n.d. (1967) and *Rapport de la Commission de Politique Général du CNDR sur le fonctionnement de l'école supérieure des cadres du parti*, n.d. (1967), BPN 50d138.

<sup>109</sup> Maurice Godelier, *Proposition pour un programme de développement de l'Institut des Sciences Humaines du Mali (1964–1968)*, Jan. 1965, BPNCLN 56.

<sup>110</sup> Copans suggests this rhetorical practice was widespread; (2010), 77.

<sup>111</sup> Its rhetorical power is perhaps best illustrated in the forgotten title given by his publisher, François Maspero, to one of Frantz Fanon's canonical texts. In its 1966 version and in the integral 1968 version which includes Fanon's original preface, *l'An V de la Révolution Algérienne* was presented as the subtitle to *Sociologie d'une Révolution*; Fanon (1968). This is the text published in English as *A Dying Colonialism* or in the original 1965 edition, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*. The first French edition was published in 1959. Maspero invoked sociology, however loosely and “misleadingly” as the science appropriate to the study of revolution; Macey (2000), 398.

circumstance. The RDA and the PCF had also long parted ways. Nonetheless, lessons first learned in Guinea continued to resonate. Intellectual labor of the kind that Balandier and Keita engaged in generated tools for thinking through phenomena that a newly independent government would define as imminently political, thereby confronting itself with a daunting set of tasks. Convinced that – in the absence of classes – internal impediments to Mali’s modernization were grounded in its social structure, the US-RDA set out to stake a bold claim for what government would do: it would reorder society itself. The party would govern aggressively and brook no dissent. In 1968, when Keita and Balandier last saw each other, this strategy had nearly run its course as the party succumbed to cynicism and the use of coercion to pursue ever more implausible economic objectives. At that time, Madeira was a powerful government minister on yet another official trip to Paris. It would be one of his last. In November, a coup led by aggrieved junior officers overthrew the US-RDA government and the military hierarchy with it. Along with Modibo Keita and many other colleagues, Madeira was imprisoned, and he and Balandier lost touch entirely.<sup>112</sup> The coup of 1968 derailed the US-RDA’s socialist experiment, but could not reverse all of the party’s achievements. Under the party’s guidance Mali, like its neighboring territories, had left the fold of the empire for the ranks of “the Third World” constituted as a nation, considered a society – albeit one in which very little space was carved out for civic life or “civil society” distinct from state and party – and called a republic.<sup>113</sup> It is to the last of these characteristics that we now turn.

<sup>112</sup> Balandier (1997), 260. Balandier suggests that Keita died in prison, while in fact he lived another twenty years after his release; Balandier, Steinmetz and Sapiro (2010), 53. On Keita’s imprisonment see Chapter 6.

<sup>113</sup> The phrase “the Third World” was also tied to Balandier. He had not invented it, but had promoted it, thereby providing at least part of the intellectual scaffolding for constructing a new world of independent nation-states and dismantling empires. Balandier, ed., (1956); Balandier, Steinmetz and Sapiro (2010), 57.