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Gabriella Clabot

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EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste

via Weiss 21 – 34128 Trieste

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Son of the root
Djedwa Yao Kuman Kulango healer and hunter

Ilaria Micheli
Translated by Mark Brady

EUT EDIZIONI UNIVERSITÀ DI TRIESTE

To Djedwa Yao Kuman
and all the Ivorians killed by politics

Table of contents

Collected texts

Foreword

Writing this book presented itself as a dual challenge. My first aim was to offer as detailed a description as possible of the theories and practices of traditional Kulango medicine and hunting. The second was to provide linguists with a collection of authentic texts in Kulango, one of the least studied Gur-Voltaic languages. I think that the conversations with Djedwa Yao Kuman[1] presented here fulfil both purposes.

Both subjects, traditional medicine and the Kulango language, are virtually absent from international academic debate. On the work of healers in West Africa in general there are a few essays (on the Yoruba by Anthony D. Beckley and on the Dogon by Keyta-Coppo and Dieterlen-Zahan) and a small series of articles on isolated cases, but nothing dealing specifically with the Voltaic peoples of Ivory Coast, let alone the Kulango.

As regards the language, the first grammar and dictionary of the dialect of Nassian (where the material used in this book was collected) were published in 2007 (Micheli I., *Profilo grammaticale e vocabolario della lingua Kulango*, Dissertationes VI, Napoli: I.U.O.), and in 2008 a grammar was published (though without a dictionary) on the dialact of of the Bouna region (Elders S. †, *Grammaire kulango, parler de Bouna Côte d'Ivoire*, Köln: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag). But neither the few other academic studies (Bianco, Crevatin, Boutillier) nor the unpublished material held by the Society of African Missions contain transcribed collections of spontaneous texts.

This book is the result of 12 months of field research in the prefecture of Nassian in Ivory Coast, and of a long series of conversations with Djedwa Yao Kuman, the oldest traditional healer in his village. Only too well aware

[1] In official documents the healer's name appeared in the French rendering as Djedoua Yao Kouman. I decided to use the spelling which seemed to me closest to its actual pronunciation.

that his knowledge might die with him, he decided to tell me a great many things about his life, explain his methods of treatment and introduce me to the beliefs in which traditional healing is anchored, so that I could leave for posterity a trace of what had been.

As time went by he went into his experiences in increasing depth, and during my last stay in Nissian, from June to September 2006, old Kuman at last decided to tell me about his world of hunting, including the existence of a traditional Kulango hunters' association, the *sawalɛgɛ* (literally: "hunt"), which proved to have several features in common with the two brotherhoods best known in West Africa: those of the Donzo and the Senoufo.

Following the thread of Kuman's memories was not always easy, but the journey was a highly interesting one. His words revealed his passion for and pride in a world rapidly disappearing. Memories of hunting and healing were intricately intertwined in his stories, which always gave a sense of the depth of Kulango thought (or rather practice) in spheres which straddle the border between the human experience of natural life and the mystical experience of encounters with the supernatural powers populating the *dy̰y̰kɔ*, the non-social world conceived at once as a physical space outside the *decontaminated* area of the village and its fields and the invisible space which explains all the events beyond the normality of everyday life (illness, death, birth, magic happenings). Hunters and healers, professionals whose work often takes them into this ambiguous space, have in common the feeling of being creatures between the human and the non-human, able to modify the natural course of events by virtue of the powers given to them by their terrible, potent and dangerous contact with the denizens of the *dy̰y̰kɔ*. As a hunter and a healer, Kuman lived precisely this experience.

In an effort to provide a clear exposition of the content, I decided to follow the general introduction with two distinct sections. The first is a narrative account of Kuman's history and a description of his practices analysed from an anthropological standpoint. The second is a documentary section containing the transcription in the Kulango language of extracts from interviews with the old healer-hunter, translated into English (from their initial translation into Italian) and provided with detailed linguistic (phonetic, morphological and syntactic) and cultural notes as a commentary on the texts.

Introduction

THE COMPLEX KULANGO IDENTITY: THE VOLTAIC AND AKAN TRADITIONS

A Gur language spoken by about 250,000 people[1], Kulango (like Lohron) derives directly from what Manessy (1975) defined as Proto-Oti-Volta and Heine and Nurse (2000) call Proto-Gur.

Nowadays the Kulango are settled farmers. Although they nominally recognise four canton chiefs, most of them live in village communities, defining their system of descent as matrilineal. They are located mostly in the north-eastern territories of Ivory Coast, from the Comoé river National Park to beyond the Ghanaian border and to the old Begho/Bitu region. The Kulango population is bordered to the north by the Lobi and Birifor peoples, to the west by the Djimini and the Senoufo, to the south by the Anyi and the Abron and to the east, broadly speaking, by the Nafaara and the Abron (see ethnic map, p. 280).

The region's terrain is pleasant wooded savannah, generally flat. The only hills of any size are in the Zanzan area near the town of Bondoukou, in what was once the great kingdom of Gyaman[2].

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[1] According to Ethnologue (1993) there are two distinct variants of the Kulango language: Bouna, with about 157,000 speakers, and Bondoukou, spoken by about 100,000 people. The same source maps the Nassian region as part of the Bouna variant, but a comparison between the grammars published by Micheli (2007) and Elders (2008) brings out clear differences between the Nassian dialect and Bouna (such as the distribution of noun classes and verbal extensions). Although the two variants are mutually comprehensible, I would thus consider the Nassian variant closer to the dialect spoken in the town of Bondoukou (with which the Kulango also have more extensive trade relations), not counting the features resulting from contact with the Abron in the Tanda region.

[2] See Terray 1995.

Running north from Abidjan, the country's main port and commercial capital, a single paved road reaches Bondoukou and then Bouna, and continues to the border with Burkina Faso. It follows the old caravan route whose southern terminus was the slave market in the town of Bondoukou[3].

In the last 500 years this region has undergone repeated political reorganisation. With the rise of the Gyaman state to the south in the 17th century it became a border area, and thus a place of economic, linguistic and cultural transactions between the Kulango kingdom of Bouna and the Abron kingdom of Gyaman, respectively representing the two greatest West African traditions: the Mande-Voltaic, coming from the north-west, and the Akan-Ashanti, coming with increasing strength from the south-east.

A historical overview is provided in the works of Tauxier (1921), Labouret (1931), Wilks (1971), Boutillier (1993), Terray (1995) and Micheli (2006 e 2008a). For our purposes suffice it to point out that the region's current ethnic and cultural configuration is the result of two distinct migrations of Kulango peoples. In one, probably the first of the two, a number of families came south in the wake of Bunkani, the Dagari chief who founded the kingdom of Bouna in the 17th century. The other was the movement en masse of Kulango from the Begho region in present-day Ghana (where they had settled to work in the great gold mines) in the period of Akan-Ashanti pressure following the Denkyira and Akyem wars and above all the death of great king Osei Tutu in 1717. It was this migration that gave rise to the Abron-Kulango kingdom of Gyaman in the territory between Tanda and Bondoukou, and to the Bawlé kingdom of queen Abla Poku in the Sakassou region.

In both cases the immigrants were technologically and militarily more advanced than the resident population (probably Lohron farmers) and were able to keep their cultural models intact for a time. In the area under the sway of the old kingdom of Bouna traces of Voltaic culture are still visible to this day, and the Gyaman region continues to assert its Abron-Akan cultural identity even though the population speaks authentic Kulango.

The regalia worn by the descendants of the two royal courts are completely different. The king of Bouna wears a typical Senoufo-Mossi tunic, with blue and white cotton stripes sewn together vertically, above trousers of the same material tied tightly below the knee, and the classical cone-shaped Voltaic headdress with the point falling on one side. Neither he nor his family are allowed to wear gold-set jewels – the most evident symbols of royalty are horses and a sceptre made from a horse's tail. The Gyaman king wears a typical Ashanti *pagne kita*, seven metres long and made up of tiny scraps of multicoloured cloth interwoven with gold thread. His head is wrapped in a bolt of dark cotton covered in gold pins symbolising Ashanti proverbs; his gold necklace reaches down at least to the navel. His fingers are full of gold rings.

[3] See Micheli 2008a.

The royal sceptre is an elephant's tail; when required by ceremony the king appears in public accompanied by the queen mother, a tangible sign of the legitimacy of his descent and thus of his kingship. Other Gyaman regal symbols include the two big talking drums (*atumblã*) which on special ritual occasions "address" the throng by reproducing Abron tonal sounds[4], a gilded chair, a sedan chair on which the king reclines on official parades and the great royal parasol (*katawia*) carried by his courtiers to protect him from the sun.

Nassian, the village where my research was conducted, is right on the border between the Bouna and Gyaman kingdoms, but has always maintained a substantial degree of independence from both courts. At various times its lands have passed from one kingdom to another but have never been of any great interest to either power apart from the collection of agricultural tribute. As a result, the area has never been subjected to great cultural pressure.

Because of this basic independence and its constant contact with the two different cultures, Nassian has absorbed typical features of both and reformulated them in an original and interesting cultural synthesis.

FIRST MEETING WITH DJEDWA YAO KUMAN

"fílu̯ nūısı ndagbolo lɛ tegebɔ nyɪŋmɔ-rı"
"A beard grows not only on the elder's face, but also on the goat's".

I first met Djedwa Yao Kuman in the winter of 2000, when I was conducting research on the Kulango language. To collect spontaneous spoken texts I had arranged with the village chief to organise a meeting with the elders so as to piece together a history of the Kulango settlement of Nassian, starting from the oral tradition of which the elders were the custodians. As I had been living in the village for several months, everyone knew that there was a white woman interested in "ancient things" and on such occasions enjoyed watching the foreigner struggling to deal with the grand old men and their difficult way of speaking. That day the subject of the meeting was a sensitive one, full of symbolic implications and questions of identity, so all the heads of family had been invited. The village of Nassian is made up of nine quarters, each inhabited by a specific family group headed by an elder, who is also head of the quarter. The nine elders, each the representative and spokesman of his family and quarter, enjoy absolute respect. When I was there for my research, Kuman was one of them.

[4] In Kulango tone is confined to a grammatical function on verbs; it is not a lexical marker.

As tradition would have it, we had gathered for our meeting under the village's most imposing *arbre à palabre*, at the centre of the quarter adjacent to the market, and everyone, including the women and children, had been invited to take part as observers. In accordance with traditional rules, I had provided drinks for all. These included alcoholic drinks[5] since, as a friend of mine had told me, "the elders are happier to speak when their throats are well watered". The afternoon was very hot and the conversation was beginning to drag when the day's proceedings were suddenly disrupted. An old man, not a family head but sitting among them on the grounds of his age, staggered drunkenly to his feet and started talking nonsense, winking and making remarks decidedly out of keeping with the occasion. It was a serious problem, because the old man's behaviour was ruining what was an important formal event for the whole community. For a long moment nobody said a word. Sensing the elders' discomfiture, I looked the drunkard in the eye and slowly recited an old Kulango proverb, trying to maintain the volume of my voice so that all those present could hear: "*fílụ̰ nūsɪ ndagbolo lɛ tegebɔ nyɻ̰mɔ-rɪ*","A beard grows not only only the elder's face, but also on the goat's"[6]. The man was speechless. Shortly afterwards one of the elders sitting near the man stood up and led him away without a word. I realised I had done the right thing; everyone else remained seated and the meeting continued without further incident.

That evening I was sitting as usual on the veranda of the mission where I was staying, thinking that the episode was over, when I saw the approach of a delegation of two of the elders, led by the man who had taken the drunk away. They were both dressed in their best traditional *pagnes* and were accompanied by a boy holding a big red rooster. After the ritual *amanɪ*, the formal exchange of news[7], the head of the delegation apologised for the afternoon's incident, adding that he would see to it that the old drunk was not present at our subsequent meetings. He then took the rooster from the boy and offered it to me, saying that I had shown remarkable sensitivity to Kulango tradition by avoiding a direct verbal confrontation with the old man, who despite everything was a village elder and therefore worthy of respect *a priori*. He added that my deed had been appreciated by the whole council. Before going he took my hand and looked straight into my eyes. In spite of his age,

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[5] The majority of the population of Nassian are animists. About 10% of the adults declare themselves as Muslims, while Christianity (in various forms) is practised by about 4% of the people. This information was given to me personally by Victor Pieretto, former parish priest in the village's Catholic mission

[6] Lit.: "Hairs are on the face of old men and goats"

[7] Common to most West African societies, this rule requires that a guest be welcomed with the ritual offer of a seat and a drink of water. The host will then ask news of the guest's family and health, to which the ritual response is that everything is fine. Only on completion of this initial exchange may the guest begin to explain the reason for his visit.

his handshake was firm and his gaze proud and bright. That man was Djedwa Yao Kuman. From that day we became friends, to the extent that an authoritative and respected elder can be friends with a young female researcher.

THE LIFE OF DJEDWA YAO KUMAN

"a bà káa-mı dɛɛnɑ̰gbragɔ bɔ bi̱i̱..."
"And they called me son of the root..."

Djedwa Yao Kuman, son of Kofi Djedwa, was the oldest traditional healer in Nassian and the longest-standing member of the hunters' association. He was head of the Djedwa quarter, one of the nine original quarters in the village[8]. It is hard to be certain about his age. His birth certificate, which gives his year of birth as 1934 (or 1935?), was drawn up when Kuman was eight or nine years old. He only married one woman, who lived with him until her death in 2008; he had ten children, nine boys and a girl, many of whom were already grandparents when I met them. So I think it may be reasonably assumed that although Kuman's official age in 2006 was 72, in fact he was closer to 80 than 70.

I recount the story of his life as he himself told it to me[9].

Before coming into the world Djedwa Yao Kuman was in his mother's womb for more than four years. During that time his father Kofi Djedwa, also a healer, administered a great number of medicines in an attempt to bring his wife's pregnancy to a conclusion[10]. The strong and curious son who was finally born was given the name "*dɛɛnɑ̰gbragɔ bɔ bi̱i̱*[11]" – "son of the root".

The boy immediately understood everything he was taught and learned by heart everything shown to him. Very soon he began to follow his father in his work. Kofi Djedwa would let his son sit beside him and watch as he

[8] The name Djedwa derives from that of one of the sons of the mythical Baba Sié, a founder of the village in the late 18th century. It bears witness to direct descendance from him.

[9] No detailed comment on his statements is felt necessary here. Extravagant as they may appear, they fall within the general framework of values and beliefs extant in Kulango culture. Only the elements most alien to western thought are explained in these footnotes.

[10] Reading this mythical birth through western eyes we could probably say that Kuman's mother was initially sterile and after four years of treatment by her husband finally managed to conceive.

[11] Here Kuman uses an animate possessive adjective – the inanimate adjective would be *hɔ*. This exemplifies the ambiguous status of vegetable objects, which are sometimes understood as animate, sometimes inanimate.

administered to his patients, and before long the boy understood the use of each and every plant. His father told him that this particular gift was a result of the medicines he had ingested when still in his mother's womb.

Kuman had fond memories of his father. Although Kofi Djedwa was not a particularly powerful healer, Kuman was grateful to him because he knew that without him he would never have been initiated into the secrets held by plants. Like all Kulango fathers, Kofi Djedwa made good use of the time spent with his son, teaching him practical things such as weaving and the techniques needed to make ropes and cords – skills that would stand Kuman in good stead when he became a hunter.

When he was eight years old Kuman healed his first patient. While his father was in the forest looking for medicinal plants, a man complaining of bad abdominal pains entered their *ben*[12]. Instead of telling him to come back later, Kuman decided to try by himself to prepare the man's medicine. Having spoken to the man and ascertained that his illness was probably of natural origin, he went to the store of remedies, took some herbs and put them in the man's *canari*[13] . Repeating the exact same medicinal incantations that he had heard his father pronounce a thousand times, he gave the man back his *canari* and explained how he was to use it. When his father returned home that evening and heard what Kuman had done he was extremely cross with him, but on discovering a few days later that the man was cured Kofi Djedwa realised that Kuman was the son destined to take his place.

Some time later another unexpected event confirmed to Kofi Djedwa that his choice was the right one. Walking out with his son towards the fields one day, by the path he saw a gigantic termites' nest with a rainbow rising from it[14]. Something so unusual could only be a presage of great misfortune. Instinctively sensing the great danger they were in, the boy began to whine to his father and persuaded him to steer clear of the nest. So they entered

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[12] The courtyard where the family spends the whole day, by the three stones of the hearth, in front of the earth-built house which serves as a night-time shelter.

[13] *Canari*, in Kulango *daminyo*, is an earthenware container used to keep medicinal plants and, when necessary, to put them to simmer over a fire. It is often an article originally in everyday use which then becomes the receptacle for traditional medicines. Once this change of function has occurred it must be treated with the greatest ritual care since any contact with impure people or circumstances may lead to the neutralisation of the curative properties of the plants contained in it.

[14] The belief that a rainbow is born in a termites' nest is common to many West African sub-Saharan traditions; it is accompanied by the conviction that anybody getting too close to the nest will be killed by the rainbow. In ethnographic terms one of the most interesting explanations was given by some Bawlé informants to F. Crevatin (personal communication – 2008). According to the Bawlé rainbows are begotten by dangerous savannah spirits which manifest themselves in the form of black snails (called *tamlan kissi* in Bawlé) which live near the nests. Together with the rainbow, these snails are said to give off black smoke which is able to pursue and kill humans.

the forest and continued along the trail to the fields. When they passed by the termites' nest again on their way home that evening they saw that some mushrooms had grown on it, and straight away Kuman set about picking them. When it was discovered that they were an effective remedy for cardiac problems, Kofi Djedwa understood that this was a sign that Yego[15] had accepted his son as a healer, marking the occasion with this prodigious gift.

From that day Kofi Djedwa began to explain to his son everything he knew about traditional medicine. He allowed to boy to treat his patients, stepping in only to correct him when he made a mistake. When he thought Kuman was ready, he slaughtered a kid and laid on a feast. Then he took his son into the forest to offer an egg to the local *jinn*[16] for the first time, asking that he might use its plants to heal people.

That was the only celebration of Kuman's initiation to the job of healer. It took place in the month of *Gyɛmɛnɛ*, which corresponds approximately to the end of the season of the harmattan wind. It is considered an ill-omened time because it falls at the end of the agricultural year, when Yego is said to settle his accounts with human beings and take the lives necessary to balance the numbers of births and deaths.

Soon afterwards Kuman was sent to live with his mother's two brothers, one of whom, Yao Kra[17], was also a healer. This maternal uncle initiated him to hunting and continued his training in traditional medicine.

As a boy, Kuman would go to the fields with his maternal uncles and help them as much as he could. He collected firewood and water to cook yams, and his uncles let him sit with them around the fire at mealtimes[18]. Before too long one of the uncles left the village to go to work in the great cocoa plantations on the *Basse Côte*, but Yao Kra, the healer, stayed behind.

With one less adult to work in the fields, the family began to find it hard to produce enough food, so Yao Kra decided to teach Kuman the art of hunting.

He began to hunt with traps made of wood and string, with no little success. Then the first time he ever took hold of a musket, even though he was unable to load it by himself, he bagged six guinea fowl. Soon after that his uncle gave him a musket of his own, asking in exchange that he continue to give part of his haul to the family and stop working in the fields, since hunting would be much more profitable.

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[15] *Yego* or *Yegolimia* is the Kulango name for the Supreme Being. Kuman's rendition of the full name was not consistent – it varied between *Yegolimia* and *Yegomilia*. This is reflected in the text.

[16] *Jinn* (ar.), in Kulango *gyiŋa*, is the name given to the spirits usually living in natural features such as rivers, rocks and particular trees.

[17] In keeping with the rules of matrilineal descent, the figure of the maternal uncle is considered highly important. Kuman would probably also have been Yao Kra's heir.

[18] Boys normally eat with the women and the girls.

As Kuman was wise beyond his years, he persuaded his uncle to allow him to continue working in the fields, saying that he would be able to hunt early in the morning and tend the crops in the afternoon. His uncle agreed and Kuman continued to work his section of land; in view of the subsequent hunting bans imposed by the government for certain periods in the year, he proved to everyone that he had made the right choice. It was about that time that Kuman was officially initiated into the hunters' brotherhood, the *sawalɛgɛ*, and was given his *hafṵ*, a protective fetish-shirt.

Kuman stayed with his uncle until his death, bringing up his own children to respect his uncle as if he had been their father. When Yao Kra died Kuman already had two sons.

In the village at that time there were a number of healers, and Kuman continued his training with them. One of them in particular became his teacher. Named Kwaku Wara, he was widely considered to be a witch-doctor because he knew potent magic remedies. According to Kuman he was the best healer in the area. One day when Kuman was working in fields he was given an urgent message to go home because his wife, who had given birth three days earlier, had not recovered and was complaining of terrible pains low down in her belly. As Kuman ran back to the village he met Kwaku Wara, who gave him some medicine for his wife. As soon as he got home he gave her some water with Kwaku Wara's remedies, and she recovered immediately. As Kuman told this story, he could not hold back his tears.

It was about that time that Kuman became Kwaku Wara's apprentice. The master introduced him to the supernatural world of the *gyinan̰ṵ*[19], the spirits of the savannah, and taught him how to communicate with them. He also taught him to "charge" magic amulets with *kpan̰yɔ*[20] and allowed Kuman to join him in the annual festival of ritual thanksgiving for medicines. After his master's death, Kuman continued to celebrate that occasion until the end of his days.

Now that Kwaku Wara was no longer with him, Kuman took on apprentices of his own, who came from all over the region. Even Senoufo and Abron boys came to learn from him. Hunting was still his second job but, as he had promised his fetish, he left the brotherhood when his wife gave birth to a daughter[21].

Kuman's greatest regret was that none of his sons had followed him in the family hunting tradition, but he was happy to point out that at least one of his grandsons, Yao Roger, who is now about 18 and had not converted to

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[19] From the Arabic *Jinn* through the Djula language.

[20] The immanent force of the universe, which some people are able to channel for their own purposes, be they good or evil (healers, *féticheurs* or witch-doctors).

[21] This subject is examined in detail on p. 91; for now suffice it to say that the bond between the hunters' world and the fertility of their wives is a very strong one, often featuring noteworthy ritual sacrifices.

Christianity with the rest of the family, was learning the practice of traditional medicine from him, though he had yet to be initiated.

When I was working with him Kuman had not hunted for a long time, but his fame as a healer was considerable, and many people came to him from nearby villages. He was a strong and intelligent man, fulfilled in his life, accompanied at all times by the benevolence and protection of Yegolimia[22].

Djedwa Yao Kuman is no longer with us. He joined his ancestors in their village on October 24th 2008 at 10.36 in the evening.

Field research methods

"hɛrɛ hʊ̀ʊ̀ hɛ̄-gɛ mʊ̀ dɛ, a hɔ́ɔ dɔ̄ʊ̀ mɪ-rɔ."
"What you're doing here is a good thing for me."

This book is the fruit of 12 months of field research in the village of Nassian (November 2000 to May 2001, July to September 2002 and June to August 2006). When I first met Djedwa Yao Kuman (during my first sojourn) I was working on a Kulango dictionary and grammar, and at that time we did not concentrate specifically on his profession. It was during my second stay, from July to September 2002, that I had the chance to talk to him about his work.

By that time I was reasonably proficient in Kulango, and since I could understand about 80% of a normal conversation I had started to devote some serious attention to cultural questions; from that standpoint Kuman's work was a subject of some interest to me. In those months our meetings were fairly sporadic because I was also working with other traditional specialists such as sacrificers, weavers and farmers. My essential purpose was to compile as detailed a description as possible of the Kulango lexical heritage and document how the speakers used certain particular expressions and certain culturally loaded terms; the idea of writing a whole book on traditional healing practices had not crossed my mind. It was only when I returned to Italy and perceived the extraordinary wealth of information Kuman had given me and compared it with the few scraps available on traditional West African medical practices that I decided to concentrate on him, his history and his work. That is why my last stay was devoted entirely to him.

[22] *Yegolimia*, lit. "celestial vault", is another name for *Yego*, the Supreme Being in Kulango cosmogony.

When I returned to Nassian at the beginning of June 2006 I immediately called on the village chief and asked him if I might talk further to some of his elders on questions regarding their language and some facets of their culture which were not entirely clear to me, such as traditional medical practices. After being welcomed by the chief and getting his permission to work with his people, I asked Thomas Kwame, the ablest and most intelligent informant I had met in the village and a member of the Djedwa quarter, to arrange a meeting with Kuman.

When we came into his *ben*, Kuman was sitting under a small *appatam*[23] in a corner of the yard. His wife was cooking and some of his grandchildren were playing with a puppy. I remember noticing this detail because as a rule the Kulango have no love for dogs – in this respect they are closer to Akan custom than to Voltaic. Kuman bade us sit down and offered us some water. After the *amanu*, the ritual exchange of news, he told Thomas Kwame to ask me the real reason for my visit. Although, as I said, I had a decent command of the language, I always followed the local tradition of *kyɩamɩ̃*[24], whereby all official occasions must be graced by the presence of a spokesman who can, if necessary, bear witness as to what took place in the meeting. Our conversation lasted about an hour. I explained that I was interested in his life and that what he told me four years earlier had made me think hard about his wish to leave his heirs and all the Kulango yet unborn a record of his knowledge, since in such a fast-changing world all traditional lore was in danger of being swept away and forgotten. As I was speaking Kuman stared into my eyes, without saying a word. Thomas Kwame finished repeating what I had said. After a long silence Kuman said he was proud that a white woman had come to Nassian especially to speak to him and the other village elders, that he felt moved that a European should consider Kulango culture so valuable while the young Kulango themselves were forgetting everything about their traditions. He agreed to tell me everything I wanted to know about illness and his methods of treatment, about his life, his work and his beliefs, but he stipulated a non-negotiable limit: he would never show me any plant, herb or root in the forest. I would be able to see the remedies prepared for his patients but not the ingredients that went into them. To explain this decision he told me the story of a traditional healer in Ghana who in the 1990s had found a remedy for HIV. The news reached the ears of an American pharmaceutical company, who sent an agent to promise him a large sum of money and much gold. The healer agreed to reveal the remedy to the agent and to go with him to America, after which nothing was ever seen or heard of him. Numerous consultations were had with various fetishes, and the

[23] An *appatam* is a kind of straw sunshade supported by wooden poles. It should be remembered that a typical Kulango day is spent entirely out of doors, the inside of the house being used exclusively as sleeping quarters.

[24] Another Akan custom; for the various roles of *Okyeame* see Rattray 1969.

response finally came that the man had been killed as soon as he arrived in the United States. As a result, said Kuman, the healers' association had decided that no plant should ever be shown to anyone outside the community[25].

I agreed to his conditions; not being a botanical expert I knew perfectly well that even if Kuman did show me his plants I would not be able to identify them. We began to work together on an intensive basis. Between the beginning of June and the end of August we had about three meetings a week. I recorded every word of our formal interviews in the presence of Thomas Kwame, who immediately took on the role of our official spokesman[26]. On the rare occasions when Kuman asked me to switch off the recorder I did so at once; what he then told me is destined to remain between me, him and Thomas Kwame.

Other information was gathered through participation and observation. Every afternoon, even when we had no official meeting, I went to Kuman's house.

Sometimes I would find him with a patient, sometimes he was out in the savannah looking for remedies, at other times he was under the *appatam* with his grandchildren, weaving together his tiny lengths of twine. On those occasions I sat with them by the hearth where his wife was cooking or braiding a granddaughter's hair and chatted with the family or others who passed by. When I went there on a Thursday I would often find Kuman deep in conversation with the village chief, who considered him one of his wisest counsellors. In those cases I just left a message of greeting and returned to the mission[27] because it was clear that they were discussing important village business[28] and my presence would not be particularly welcome.

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[25] After this first meeting Kuman never spoke of the association again, but there are indications that relations may exist between all the region's healers. I even think that Kuman may have had connections with the Ghana Psychic and Traditional Healing Association, founded by the Nkrumah regime in 1962.

[26] Thomas Kwame had worked with me on my previous visits, when he proved to be intelligent and sensitive. He is a kind and willing worker, a man who has always abided by traditional Kulango rules and so was accepted with good grace by the elders in the meetings held to discuss matters related to their oral tradition or Kulango culture in general. He also lived in the Djedwa quarter and was well known to Kuman, with whom he was on very good terms.

[27] During all my visits to Nassian I was generously and amicably hosted and supported by the Catholic missionary priests of the Society of African Missions, in particular fathers Victor Pieretto and Marcel Prévost, to whom I express my deepest gratitude.

[28] Besides being market day Friday is the day ritually devoted to resting the land, and on Fridays nobody works in the fields. For this reason it is also the day for the village elders to meet when they have to make important decisions. In the summer of 2006 the most pressing problem was connected with the theft of a number of centuries-old trees from the Comoé National Park and their sale to unscrupulous European traders for 30,000 CFA each (about 45 Euros). The Ivorian government fined the villages where they thought the thieves might be living; Nassian was one of these.

In our official meetings I always had my notebook with me, using it to write down all the questions that came to mind while Kuman was speaking. He laughed at this, astonished that someone could risk forgetting something in such a short time.

Initially he was somewhat bothered by the recorder's microphone cord[29]; as he gesticulated to emphasise what he was saying his hands would get caught in it, but by our third meeting the problem had been solved.

On other occasions I took nothing with me and confined myself to noting my most important observations in the field diary that I kept at the mission. When I had gained Kuman's complete confidence he allowed me to take some photographs, and he asked me to take shots of his wife and the two grandchildren who were always in the *ben*. Towards the end of my stay he gave me a snapshot of himself, taken about 40 years earlier, whose surface was flaking away. He asked me to make copies of it in Italy and send them back to him so he could give one to each of his children.

Thinking now of how fond we became of one another, I am not able to trace the development of our relationship. But I think one episode did mark the day on which Kuman decided to trust me completely.

It was our second official meeting and we were talking about his *kpaɣɔ*, his healing power, when he asked me if I would be afraid to see it manifested. I replied that I wouldn't and he repeated the same question to me three times[30], laughing and looking at Thomas Kwame, who immediately got to his feet and walked away. When we were alone he told me to get up and follow him into his medicine store; being windowless, it was very dark inside and he said we would have to close the door. My curiosity aroused, I stood up and strode ahead of him across the courtyard towards the house. As Kuman followed me he picked up a glowing ember from the fire beneath the cooking pot. When we reached the store I let him enter first and closed the door behind me as I followed him in. Inside it was almost pitch dark, the only light coming from Kuman's ember. I saw him take something from a container in one corner and put it in his mouth; then all at once he ate the red-hot ember right in front me, without turning a hair. Then with a laugh he said we could go out. Back at the *appatam* he asked me if I was frightened by what I had seen. I said no, adding that on the contrary I felt honoured that he should have trusted me so much as to let me see such a thing. Perhaps he noticed that as he was speaking I looked curiously at his tongue and lips, because he told me I could approach him and look inside his mouth and find nothing burnt.

Only several days later did I realise that I had been subjected to a kind of test. In one of our subsequent meetings Kuman said that someone up to no good could never enter a medicine store without feeling very ill, or even dying.

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[29] My recorder was a small Sony ECM-T145.

[30] Perhaps it is no coincidence that in the Dogon tradition four is the feminine number.

Entering the room that day I had felt nothing, which for Kuman was probably the best possible proof that my intentions were good.

Besides working with Kuman and his family I also interviewed other people in the village. What they told me about the healer is the subject of the last part of this book.

Chapter I
Kuman the Healer

The healer and his world in African tradition

> *"[...] it is not possible to compare the being-in-the-world of a Dogon healer or farmer with that of anyone living in literate societies, industrial or post-industrial. Their world is full, there is continuity between the living, those who preceded them and those to come; between humans, plants and animals; between natural creatures and spirits. The surrounding space is not empty, it is inhabited; shadows and movements of the air hide presences. People are immersed in a flow which connects times and places; they are nodes in a network, not isolated individuals closed in a separate space-time."*
>
> *(P. Coppo 1994: 46)*

Reflecting on the concept of illness and cure in sub-Saharan Africa means reflecting first of all on the visions of the world and events which characterise the cultures in that region.

The average African does not perceive himself as an independent entity mechanically arranged amid millions of others on an objective and static plane of reality, governed exclusively by the laws of physics. Rather, he feels as a particular element of the universe who like many others has been given a spiritual dimension which is able to put him in constant contact with a different and mysterious plane of reality which compels him to live his earthly life in an alternation of experiences natural and unnatural, ordinary and magic, good and bad. This supernatural plane of experience is given different names in the various West African languages – *àùljá* in Bawlé[1], *dṵ̀ṵ̀kɔ* in Kulango (literally "desert"), *hùn* in Gun[2] are examples – but the basic concept is the same.

[1] See Crevatin 2008.

[2] See Saulnier 2009 and Metraux 1997.

Nothing that happens in world of the living does so by chance, everything has to have an explanation, be it *natural* or *unnatural*[3]. The two planes of reality are not contiguous, there is no physical border that is crossed to pass from one to the other, they are constantly intertwined and co-present. Before being habitable, the social space of the village has to be purified by the priest of the land, who must agree a pact with with the non-earthly forces by offering sacrifices and prayers so that they will not trouble the human community which is about to settle there. Beyond the protected space of the village man never feels safe, so he often covers himself with amulets and magic bracelets for protection. The trees and streams that he comes across could be the abodes of supernatural creatures, the wind that blows in his face may become the voice of a divinity or an ancestor, any encounter he has may produce a surprise, the accidents or good things that happen to him may be the result of the action of an invisible creature or force; faced with anything out of the ordinary, good or bad, it is always best to consult a fortune-teller to know how to behave so as to avoid offending entities which may be highly dangerous. In this parallel dimension live Presences, such as the *jinn* of the natural elements; it is the realm of witch-doctors and magicians, where the will of ancestors is made manifest. All the creatures living in it have a special power which is also given to some humans; their job is to manage relations with the non-earthly world, working on the border between life and death, between the here and the hereafter, be they healers, midwives, grave-diggers, hunters, witch-doctors, counter-witch-doctors, fortune-tellers, *féticheurs*, priests or men of the mask.

Precisely because of their closeness to the non-earthly world and to death, all these professionals of the extraordinary are viewed with a mixture of suspicion and reverence, they are at once feared and sought after, avoided and adulated.

Besides playing a crucial role in the field of herbal medicine, traditional healers are thus compelled to work in the sphere of occult knowledge and magical practices, which makes them ambiguous figures. It is not always easy to distinguish between knowledge real and alleged, and above all since they have the task of negotiating the life and health of people who turn to them and the Presences they are often perceived to be on the level of witch-doctors.

For the Kulango the *warɪsɛ*, the traditional healer, is a professional who sees his work as a mission to serve others. In Kuman's view a *warɪsɛ* cannot afford to use his power to harm a human being. His duty and his ethics require him to restore the ill to health, and all the forces in the cosmos contribute to the effectiveness of his practice. Yegolimia, the Kulango Supreme God, ancestors and the plant spirits act on the herbs collected by the healer and infuse them with their curative power only when they think that it is worth it, that the patient deserves to be cured, but never would they agree to arm

[3] On the Bawlé concepts of causation and chance see F. Crevatin 2007.

the hand of one man against an innocent one, so they cannot help a wicked healer enact a plan to destroy an individual. The *warɪsɛ*, it is true, knows dangerous poisonous herbs, and his practice may compel him to face magic attacks brought by witch-doctors. In such cases, and only in such cases, his cure may be the cause of evil, not to the patient but to the witch-doctor who has captured his soul; if his power is much stronger than that of the attacker during the invisible struggle that ensues between the two, the latter may even die. If the healer is weaker than the witch-doctor the patient is done for, but the magic devised for and directed only at that individual cannot be turned against the healer.

As in many West African traditions (as well as in many traditional cultures elsewhere in the world), the ethics of the Kulango *warɪsɛ* do not allow him to ask a patient for money in exchange for his services. Though the healer receives no payment for the treatment given to patient, if the treatment is successful the patient will thank him with spontaneous gifts.

As stated above, therapeutic practice compels the healer to enter into contact with Yegolimia, with the world of the *jinn* and with that of ancestors. This means that the *warɪsɛ* may operate only in a condition of ritual purity. Contact with Presences is dangerous, especially when they are not accorded the greatest respect; it is not advisable for a healer to present himself to them when his *kpg̱yɔ*, his powers, are weakened by contamination with the baser things of the earthly world. To attain a state of ritual purity he must observe a series of food taboos, and abstinence from sexual relations is obligatory. A true healer is temperate, balanced man, not easily given to anger. He remains aloof from the banal disputes of his fellow villagers on market day and consequently his words and his judgements carry great weight; a healer is often able to settle the bitterest disagreement with a few well-chosen words.

In confirmation of the wider validity of this depiction of the Kulango *warɪsɛ*, referring specifically to Bantu culture Kwuto Ndeti (1976)[4] wrote,

> "*A native doctor in traditional African societies was a man of critical mind endowed with many abilities and he was dedicated to his vocation; he was well informed about the problems of his environment and possessed practical knowledge of botany (herbistry), pathology, psychology (divination), surgery, animal and plant curative agents, climatology, cosmology, sociology and psychiatry. He was a man renowned for his critical abilities.*"

It should also be borne in mind that at the root of traditional African medical practices lie highly complex ideas and concepts which bespeak profound reflection on subjects such as the distinction between human nature and supernatural reality and between the nature of remedies and the nature of ill-

[4] In Grollig/Halej, *Medical Anthropology*.

nesses. Following the logic of these concepts gives an understanding of man's place in the world, in harmony with it or in such distortion as to lead to illness and then death.

Unlike western medicine, based on the abstract scientific concept of cause and effect according to which every action is matched by a precisely predictable reaction, Kulango philosophy requires that every event must have a specific explanation within a context and at a precise moment in history. In societies where chance is not contemplated the same goes for illness and death, and for luck, to explain which Crevatin[5] writes,

> "*Fortune 'has a meaning, a reason', a personified cause which determines it: fortune* (like illness and death)[6] *is a sign originating in an 'elsewhere' as yet unclear* (*àùljá* for the Bawlé and *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ* for the Kulango)[7]."

The causes of illness are thus often to be sought in the individual's relations with the Presences which inhabit non-earthly space. Something similar seems to be meant by Samuelsen[8], writing on the Bissa in Burkina Faso: "*Substances, people, and spirits move in space and between spaces, and danger arises with the improper sharing of space*".

To conclude this initial analysis of the supernatural forces which can play a decisive part in causing illness and in the healing of a patient, mention should be made of the primary role played by ancestors in traditional African philosophy. Ancestors have the task of observing the behaviour of their descendants and punishing or rewarding them for their actions in accordance with the rules of tradition. In a way they are the guarantors of order in this world and are thus called into play in all acts of traditional medicine[9]: remedies are "charged" by invoking their power, which, added to that coming from the immanent force of the universe which abides in all animate beings, including plants (*kpa̰yɔ* for the Kulango), can help the healer find a solution to his patient's problem.

The main role of the traditional African healer, and the Kulango healer in particular, is therefore that of acting as a mediator between the various natural and supernatural wills and forces: of the patient, of *Yego*, of ancestors and of plants. As A. Keita and P. Coppo[10] put it, "*L'action thérapeutique consiste justement dans la possibilité d'orienter, à travers les sacrifices, le déroulement des choses*."

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5 See F. Crevatin 2007: 25.

6 My parentheses.

7 My parentheses.

8 See H. Samuelsen 2004: 90.

9 On this point see also Bierlich 1999: 319.

10 Coppo/Keita 1989: 93.

"Wɛ-ti hɔ nyʊ̰'nɪ gyāba lɛ kpʊ̰kɔ, yʊʊkɔ gboɰ̰,
nyʊ̰'nɪ gyabaʊ̰ lɛ kpʊ̰kɔ lɛ hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ hɔ̀ gbé-ge..."
"If for example that man is wicked and selfish and his thoughts are bad,
that's why he got the disease..."

According to traditional African thought, as we have seen, everything that occurs in the world has a specific cause and nothing that happens to man is the result of chance. Since everything is the consequence of the intentional will of the universe, the various types of illness are analysed by the healer from this standpoint.

Despite various attempts in recent years to interpret African culture in a different light, I have decided to follow the Kulango method of classifying every medical problem according to its ultimate cause, and thus to eschew other theories, interesting though they may be, such as that propounded by Samuelsen (2004) on the concept of contagion[11].

According to the Kulango, illness is the bodily manifestation of physical or moral unease. When a traditional healer sets out to treat a patient, his first concern is not to investigate his symptoms but to seek their deeper origin. A headache, a bout of malaria, an ulcer or a persistent sore may easily be different manifestations of the same illness, the same unease, the same transgression of a shared social norm[12]. If the healer did not attempt to correct the imbalance that constitutes the etiological cause of the malaise (such as an insult to the ancestors) and confined himself to treating the symptoms, he would prolong the patient's condition. Having recovered from his immediate

[11] In her article on the Bissa in Burkina Faso (see bibliography), Samuelsen attempts to explain their concept of the causation of illness by offering an interpretation which replaces the traditional one with a new concept based on the idea of contagion. In comparative terms the results of her study are certainly interesting. She identifies four principal forms of disease transmission by contagion: 1) ingestion of impure substances; 2) breaking of social taboos; 3) witchcraft; 4) improper interaction with spirits. These four categories could, forcing things only slightly (the ingestion of impure substances could, for instance, be interpreted as the consumption of substances forbidden by an individual food taboo), be applied to Kulango culture and certainly to many others in West Africa. But the point is that in speaking of their belief system on illness, the Kulango insist on classifying, or rather distinguishing, the various factors on the basis of the *causes* of an illness. Since I have never heard any of them propound a hypothetical idea of *contagion*, I cannot concur with this interpretation.

[12] See De Martino on healing practices in Lucania (1959 -2002: 31). "*In this magic conception of illness as bewitchment, or 'a thing done', an entirely secondary role is played by the quality of the symptom, the etiology of the disease, the diagnosis and treatment in the scientific medical sense. The primary role is played by 'feeling acted upon' or 'dominated' by the occult force of the illness and the desire to feel free of this domination*".

disorder (a headache, say) the patient would suffer a relapse, probably manifesting physical problems different from and worse than the first one. For the Kulango there are three basic causes of illness, and the effectiveness of treatment depends not only on the work of the healer.

In the first place an illness may have a *natural* origin, and in that case it tends to strike humans in their old age. Such illnesses are certainly caused by *Yego* to let the old know that it is time to cross to the hereafter. In treating this type of illness the healer accompanies the preparation of remedies with specific invocations, sacrifices and prayers whose purpose is to alleviate the patient's pain and keep him alive long enough for him to say his goodbyes to his family. If *Yego* refuses the offerings of the healer and the patient's family, the *warɪsɛ* can only help the patient to die, trying at least to ease his physical pain.

An illness may also have a *non-natural* origin and suddenly and violently strike a young and seemingly strong individual. In such cases the first hypothesis that a good *warɪsɛ* must consider is an attack by one or more witch-doctors, who are trying to kill the patient to take his *mgyɔ*, his life soul. When this happens the healer fights a full-blown battle against the witch-doctors and the patient can recover only if the healer's *kpgyɔ*, his mystic power, is stronger than the witch-doctors'. The remedies prepared by the *warɪsɛ* have two distinct purposes: to treat the patient's body and at the same time magically to strike at the *drɛsɛ*, the witch-doctor. Since the witch-doctor's attack is devised and "loaded" to strike a particular individual and cannot change target, if the witch-doctor's *kpgyɔ* is stronger than the healer's the consequences strike only the patient, the real target of the sorcery, and in many cases he will die. When the healer's power is greater than the witch-doctor's, the sorcery will turn and strike its producer with the same force as that summoned to harm the patient. As the magic struggle between the witch-doctor and the healer is a potential danger to the former, he will go to any lengths to avoid it. One of the tricks most commonly used by witch-doctors to avoid open conflict is to strike women with violent attacks of illness while they are menstruating, that is to say when they are impure and thus unable to turn to a *warɪsɛ*. Menstrual blood is one of the main contaminants in a great many cultures, and in West Africa menstruating women are considered so dangerous as to be able nullify the strongest remedy simply through physical contact. In the Kulango tradition it is believed that if a menstruating woman touches a traditional remedy she will immediately become barren.

Lastly, illness may have a *non-natural* origin and strike a young person whose behaviour deviates from the norm. In this case it is supposed that the illness comes from *Yego* and the individual's ancestors, who wish to mete out punishment for anti-social behaviour, the infringement of a taboo or the violation of traditional law. Transgression may place the individual in such an impure state that the illness can degenerate into something very serious. The most common cases are violations of the rules governing sexual behaviour.

Sexuality is a social matter, something to be experienced within the social space of the village. When a couple have sexual relations outside this space, in the savannah or in the fields, their ancestors take offence because they have shown no respect for the dictates of tradition. For illnesses thus procured the healer's remedies can only obtain the desired effect if the miscreant repents his sins and shows a willingness to return to the norm.

The need for a clear distinction between *natural* and *unnatural* illnesses is common to many West African traditions. One emblematic example is the Winneba, who classify illnesses on the basis of their natural or spiritual cause, though it is often difficult to distinguish between the two, as R. W. Wyllie[13] observes: "*Winneba healers* [...] *did not view most illnesses as being exclusively spiritual or exclusively natural in causation*". Faced with this type of situation, a healer often finds himself compelled to resort to divination.

In the Kulango tradition each specialist may use the method of divination he chooses. In the Nassian area the most common practice is to throw the *cauri*, many healers consult Muslim marabouts, while in other cases a healer (such as Kuman) will trust only the personal fetishes he keeps in his medicine store, fetishes which enjoy a special relationship with his remedies[14].

As P. Coppo and A. Keita observe[15]:

"*La divination, partie intégrante de la thérapie, constitue le point central du diagnostic. C'est à travers la consultation des puissances surnaturelles que le thérapeute peut savoir quel est le type d'aggression dont le malade est victime;* [...] *quelle est l'entité du travail, la force qu'il aura de "soutenir le poids de la maladie" quels sont les sacrifices à faire avant de commencer la cure, quelle sera donc la charge pour le malade et sa famille*".

In Kulango society an illness is a problem that affects and involves not only the patient's family but the entire village community. The healer's purpose is not only to treat the patient's physical problem but to help him find a new place in society, reconstructing his social person as well as his physical person. Chilivumbo in Grollig/Halej (1976) puts it in the following terms:

"*The cure is mysterious, carried out with the main objective [...] of effecting the orientation of the patient to bring him back to his social contact point, his integration in the social fabric*".

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[13] See R. W. Wyllie 1983: 49.

[14] Details on this point are provided below.

[15] See P. Coppo/A. Keita 1989: 92.

MEDICINAL PLANTS

“Ʊa míɩ sī lɛ lɔ-rɔ lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ wārɩ, hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ ú dɛɛkɔ lɔ̄”.
“It’s you I pick to heal, so that he will recover, (because) you, plant, heal…”.

It is not easy to explain the nature of curative plants in traditional Kulango thought, so it is hard to decide whether they are considered animate beings or not – or to put it better, whether or not people see them as inhabited by a life soul (*ma̰yɔ*). In the two biggest West African cultures, Akan and Bambara, plants are seen simply as objects which have the capacity to host a certain supernatural or divine power (what the Kulango call *kpa̰yɔ*), but in their essence plants do not share the same vital ingredient as living, sentient and mobile beings, even though they may be seen to be born, grow and die (or rather wither); in other words, plants are not “alive”. Animals and humans are animate beings[16] because they can move and interact physically and intentionally with other animals and with their surroundings – they can kill to eat, produce offspring and do many other things that everyone can see. Plants do not have this ability. A feature common to many languages in the region is the presence of two different words for shadow: one for when it is projected by a living being (animate) and another when it is cast by an object (inanimate). In Bawlé and Bambara, for instance, the word indicating the shadow cast by a plant is that used for inanimate objects (*fɔ̰*vɔ in Bawlé and *suma* in Bambara)[17] and it is obvious – to the speakers too – that in those cultures plants are considered inanimate. Kulango has the same lexical distinction: *dṵṵlio* is the shadow of animate beings and *bogoton* that of objects. Considering how Kuman used the two words on many occasions and how they are used by many other Kulango speakers, here too it would appear that plants are considered inanimate – their shadow is invariably called *bogoton*. In addition, the Kulango believe that the life soul of living beings resides in their blood (as do the Bambara), which is precisely what makes it rich in magic power.

I once asked Kuman if he thought that plant sap had the same magic power as animal or human blood, which is important in ritual sacrifices to fetishes and local divinities. He replied without hesitation that the two do not hold the same magic power, that blood is a thousand times more potent (see texts p. 147). I took this as conclusive proof that plants are to be considered inanimate beings, with no life soul. It should be remembered, though, that they can play host to a different power – the *kpa̰*yɔ that the healer tries to obtain through his prayers and offerings (eggs or kola nuts) to treat his patients.

[16] Although, as will be seen in many of the texts below, the Kulango freely use both animate and inanimate pronouns when referring to animals which are prey.

[17] The words indicating the shadow of animate beings are *wawé* in Bawlé and *dya* in Bambara.

The same is true in the Dagomba tradition, of which Bierlich[18] writes:

> "*Healing with plant medicines is very common. The production of botanical substances involves a sacrifice (*baga yuli*) or the pouring of libations accompanied by prayers. Medicinal plants are not potent in themselves. Their power is derived from external sources* [...]"

Kuman said that any plant, even plants he did not use in his work as a healer, can be inhabited by the same power and that other more proficient healers (or he himself after a revealing dream or an encounter with his *gyiŋ̰*) might be able to recognise its hidden properties. Perhaps that is why he said that in his language there could be no word other than *dɛɛkɔ* to distinguish curative plants from the others, since each of them is considered to have the same potential power.

For positive results in the treatment of an illness it is not enough to be able to recognise medicinal plants in the savannah and collect the parts of them that contain curative ingredients. There is a rite accompanying the collection of plants which is common to all West African traditions[19]. According to Kulango healers, as bearers of *kpa̰yɔ* plants are worthy of the greatest respect; whenever a healer needs them he must therefore go to them with an offering (an egg, a kola nut or the like). This is for two specific reasons: firstly to ask the forgiveness of the spirit living in the plant for the wound he is about to inflict on its body, secondly to obtain permission to treat the patient who needs help[20]. When he approaches the plant he needs, the healer thus explains the patient's condition so that the plant's spirit can decide whether or not to cede its *kpa̰yɔ*, which then effectively becomes the curative ingredient in the remedy that the healer will prepare with the parts taken from the plant. If the healer's intentions are good and he shows compassion for the condition of a just man, the plant immediately "reveals" itself and does not resist his plea.

In traditional thought, the effectiveness of a remedy is largely determined by the healer's ability to negotiate with plants and their spirits. As Bierlich[21] observes of the Dagomba:

> "*Medicines are very personal and are associated with an individual's identity; they imply particular images of personal power, the ability to protect oneself and others, to cure, or to harm and kill one's enemies if necessary.*"

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[18] Bierlich 1999:319.

[19] See P. Coppo/A. Keita 1989:101, who write on Dogon practices: "*le savoir exotérique qui accompagne les connaissances en pharmacopée concerne tous les gestes et les rituels qui doivent accompagner la cueillette et la préparation des médecines*".

[20] P. Coppo/A. Keita (1989:102), again on the Dogon: "*le thérapeute utilise des graines de mil, de sorgho, de fonio, des cauris, pour "payer" la plante qui a donné une partie d'elle même, pour acheter le médicament; formules à réciter pour augmenter le poids de l'action thérapeutique*".

[21] Bierlich 1999:318.

In the preparation of traditional remedies the Kulango may use any part of a plant – flowers and buds, bark and roots, and in some cases the sap. Healers may also cultivate the most common medicinal plants in a special section of their field or courtyard, taking care that no-one should touch them. They may also water them and protect them from insects without compromising their curative power or their *kpa̰yɔ*.

THE HEALER'S TRAINING

"hɛrɛ mì núı faı dɛ,mìa kórɔsʊ ɪgbrabɔ ha".
"When I was there I would watch the great old men".

The traditional African healer is not simply a herbalist, although the ingredients of his medicines are mostly of vegetable origin. A herbalist is not a specialised professional; all African village-dwellers are herbalists to some degree because they are all familiar with the main herbs used to cure everyday disorders such as stomach-ache, sore throats and headaches. It could be said that the herbalist, of which there is one in every family, is the first stop on a therapeutic journey; if the problem proves to be more serious and professional help is required, people turn to a recognised healer. As we have seen, the traditional African healer is in constant contact with the supernatural world and it is from that world that he draws his power, in that world he finds the allies who can make his remedies work, through the invisible passages in that world he succeeds in counteracting the deeds of the witch-doctors.

To differentiate between these two sets of skills, the Kulango language has two specific terms: *lɔsɛ* is a herbalist and *warısɛ* is a healer. The verb *lɔ* means "to treat" whereas the verb *warısɛ* means "to cure" or "to heal". There is another term used to refer to a professional healer: *sisɛ*; less significant for this analysis, it derives from the noun *sinyo*, which means "traditional remedy". For the Kulango, then, the main distinction is between *treatment* and *healing*. The simple process of treatment is a superficial act performed by someone trying to deal with the symptoms of a physical disorder, while the pathway to healing entails, besides the treatment of physical symptoms, the restoration of the equilibrium lost by the patient and the healer's ability to manipulate not only physical substances but also potentially lethal powers of non-earthly origin.

Although the objective basis is the same, the level of knowledge achieved by a herbalist is very different from that of a healer, and the training of each follows a very different path.

A herbalist draws on a body of knowledge which is basically shared by all adult members of the community. His training is conducted entirely within the family and a few exchanges of prescriptions for remedies can easily occur at the village market. In addition to the shared herbalistic dimension of treatment processes, a healer has to be trained in the mystic dimension of the healing process, and it is the passage from one to the other that makes him a professional. Access to the latter type of knowledge is confined to a few members of the community chosen after proving that they have particular characteristics, or after passing a series of specific tests. As P. Coppo and A. Keita[22] put it: "*l'élu est celui qui sait suivre les traces de son maître, qui a un talent naturel, celui, en somme, qui montre avoir "le don*".

The training of a true healer entails a highly intense *master-disciple* relationship, which often continues after the death of the former in the form of a *(chosen) ancestor-descendant* tutelage. In the course of his training an apprentice may follow more than one master, and they do not necessarily have to belong to his lineage. Among the Kulango the passing down of traditional medical knowledge is marked by a high degree of openness, which may even extend to people from a different ethnic group. On several occasions Kuman said that he had had apprentices from regions far removed from the lands of the Kulango, Senoufo and Abron, and that he had been compelled at times to use one of his sons as an interpreter for them. The only restriction seems to be bound up with gender: women are inititated and educated by women and men by men. A master who takes on a disciple usually has him as a guest in exchange for services such as agricultural or domestic work. Step by step, he instructs his apprentice in the mystic aspects of the healing process: ritual purity, food taboos, the rites attached to the collection of plants and the preparation of remedies, the magic rites of protection and of counteracting witchdoctors' deeds and the ways of contacting the world of the *jinn* and the guiding spirits. Once the disciple has been initiated to this new healing dimension, the master can allow him to return home and begin his professional life or to decide to follow other masters – from that time the "learned" exchanges between the two may even acquire an equal basis.

Indeed, a traditional African healer never stops learning. Forms of learning change and as the years pass and knowledge increases masters transcend the human state and become *jinn* who may be consulted when the need arises (often through the use of psychotropic drugs or altered states of consciousness), ancestors or supernatural presences which manifest themselves through dreams or divination.

The training of a healer is divided into at least three dictinct stages: the first involves human masters, the second entails contact with the guiding spirits and the third concerns the oneiric dimension.

[22] P. Coppo/A. Keita 1989:85.

In Kuman's case the three stages were rigorously observed. What follows is an attempt to present an orderly rendition of what emerged from his own account.

STAGE ONE: HUMAN MASTERS

> *"Il faut que la construction de la connaissance suive les temps de la construction de la personne à la fin de laquelle l'individu est considéré ilè, comme un fruit parvenu à maturation. Seulement à ce moment là il aura le jugement nécessaire pour exercer."*
>
> *(P. Coppo/A. Keita, 1989: 86)*

In Kuman's life and training as a healer an important role was played by three men: his father Kofi Djedwa, Yao Kra, one of his maternal uncles, and Kwaku Wara, a village healer with whom he had no ties of kinship.

Kuman made his first steps along the path of medicine with his father, who, as tradition would have it, decided to raise him as a true healer only after witnessing three remarkable events. The first surprising event in Kuman's life actually occurred before his birth. We have already seen that Kuman declared he had been in his mother's womb for at least four years before being born and that for all that time his father gave her medicines, which endowed the boy with above-average intelligence and curiosity. In his father's mind these circumstances must have led to the creation of a special connection between Kuman and medicinal herbs – to the extent that the boy was immediately named "son of the root".

The second significant episode for Kofi Djedwa occurred when Kuman, at the age of eight, healed a patient in his absence, simply by performing all the ritual acts and repeating the propitiatory phrases he had heard his father intone so many times. The patient's recovery meant that *Yegolimia* and the other supernatural forces had somehow agreed to be channelled into the medicines by Kuman, which was an unmistakable sign of their support for the boy who could one day become a healer.

The last sign which told Kofi Djedwa that Kuman was ready for initiation to the world of healing was the episode of the termite's nest. After saving himself and his father from the poison given off by the nest and the rainbow, he then found it sprouting fungus which was effective in the treatment of heart conditions.

In Kofi Djedwa's mind that was probably the moment when Yego, the Supreme Being, declared definitely and unequivocally that he had accepted Kuman as one of his mediators in this world.

Back in the village a few days later, a kid was slaughtered for the ritual feast which marked the public recognition of Kuman's graduation from the world of childhood to the adult world and to the role of apprentice healer. From that day Kofi Djedwa openly taught his son everything he knew about plants and the ritually proper way of channelling their curative powers.

Kuman's second important master was Yao Kra, one of his maternal uncles. In the Kulango matrilineal tradition a child must learn very quickly to respect his mother's relatives, so after being weaned he is normally sent to live with his mother's brother, of whom he will eventually be the heir. This does not mean he can no longer see his mother and his natural father, especially if they live in the same village, but simply that the maternal uncle officially becomes the child's social father. On this point Kuman's own words were not very clear. In some of his accounts it seemed that he has been sent to his uncle very young, in others he appeared to have stayed for a long time with his natural father, who was certainly the one who laid on the feast of passage when Kuman was ten or twelve years old.

When he described his life with his mother's family he spoke of the little jobs they gave him – gathering firewood and lighting the fire for meals, collecting water in the fields for everybody. Since these are tasks normally assigned to a boy of about ten it may reasonably be supposed that the age at which he was entrusted to his mother's family was effectively that. The problem here is that in Kulango culture this rite of passage normally takes place at a much earlier age (about two, no more than four), and such a delay in Kuman's life would be highly unusual – but unfortunately there is no way of knowing what actually happened. What is most important, and I would say consistent with the delay in sending the boy away, is that Kuman's parents decided to send him to live with the maternal uncle who could continue to instruct him in traditional medicine – Yao Kra, himself a healer.

Speaking of his two fathers, Kuman said that neither was as potent as he later became. It may be inferred from his words that they must have worked almost exclusively with curative plants, that is to say with the natural and herbalistic branch of traditional medicine. Kofi Djedwa provided remedies for problems of pregnancy, diarrhoea and abdominal pains, while Yao Kra was able to treat swellings, articular pains and rheumatism. According to Kuman, neither of them ever showed him the magic dimension of a healer's work. They never taught him to make contact with the *jinn*, the spirits of the forest, or to give magic charges to protective rings and bracelets or how to fight a witch-doctor in a mystic struggle.

Most of what Kuman told me about Yao Kra was to do with hunting rather than healing, so the relationship between the two will be analysed below. The man who did complete Kuman's training was Kwaku Wara, one of Nassian's most renowned healers, universally feared and respected and considered by many to be a powerful witch-doctor. It emerges from Kuman's life story that

he was an adult when he met him and he probably began to follow him while his maternal uncle Yao Kra was still alive. It is likely that Kuman approached Kwaku Wara precisely because he wanted to know more about the mystic dimension of healing. From his father and his uncle he had learned everything he could about herbalism, but his curiosity and his character led him to seek more knowledge, to go beyond that bound to the natural world and immerse himself in the dimension of magic and the supernatural, so he turned to the best master that the time and the place had to offer.

There were four particularly significant episodes in Kuman's life with Kwaku Wara. The first two concerned the master's remarkable therapeutic abilities.

One day Kwaku Wara saved the life of Kuman's wife. She had given birth to her first child. Her labour had been long and painful and three days after the boy's birth she was still suffering severe abdominal pains. Desperately worried, the villagers ran to the fields to call Kuman, who on his way back met Kwaku Wara, intent on gathering medicines in the savannah for Kuman's wife. On his return to the village Kuman gave the remedies to his wife, who promptly vomited and then recovered.

The second episode also concerns a mother at death's door. The woman was in Kuman's care; after giving birth, she appeared to be dead. Not knowing what else he could do, Kuman sent for Kwaku Wara, whose remedies restored her to health in a remarkably short time.

The third and fourth episodes regard the master-apprentice relationship that developed between Kwaku Wara and Kuman; each one features a prodigious act which Kuman witnessed when Kwaku Wara manifested his *kpa̰yɔ*.

The first was one of Kuman's favourite stories – he told it to me several times.

One day, when Kuman had just begun his apprenticeship, Kwaku Wara sent him into the savannah to look for some palm wine. Making his way back to the village, Kuman met his master on the path and the two of them sat down, with the wine close by. The master sat next to Kuman and rested a foot on his apprentice's foot, after which they started to drink. Kuman was worried because it was late in the afternoon and people on their way home from the fields might see them, stop and have some of their wine. When the first villager appeared on the trail, Kwaku Wara pressed Kuman's foot lightly with his own and told him to keep quiet, no-one would see them. Sure enough, Tatamtua – the man's nickname, given to him because of his stammer – walked past, tripping over Kuman's leg without seeing it. Gyine, the next man to pass by, could smell the wine but was unable to see the two men sitting there. Remembering the scene, Kuman laughed and said that his only regret was that Kwaku Wara had died before being able to show him how to prepare that splendid remedy.

The last episode also goes back to the early days of Kuman's apprenticeship with Kwaku Wara.

The two of them were in the master's *ben*, Kuman was sitting by the fireplace. All at once Kwaku Wara stood up and entered the medicine store, leaving him alone in the courtyard. Shortly afterwards Kuman saw an elephant come out of the store, and he realised that it was his master displaying his magic power. The animal approached Kuman, repeatedly shaking its head so that its huge ears flapped with a loud noise – *papapapa* – but Kuman stayed where he was and the elephant turned back into Kwaku Wara[23]. The old healer was astonished by Kuman's aplomb; he had thought that his disciple would run off in fear at the sight of an elephant coming out of the medicine store. It was on that occasion, Kuman told me, that the master made up his mind to take him on as his apprentice.

It behoves me to make an observation at this point. Many of Kuman's stories seem incredible, perhaps leaving the impression that the teller was joking, or lying.

That is not how I see it. As in all human affairs, the truth is always a subjective truth, derived from a personal interpretation – and only secondarily a cultural interpretation – of a given fact; a fact which is composed of the event itself and the observer who attempts to interpret it. And the more the realm of magic is involved, the more this is true. Here is a practical analogy which may be more familiar to us[24].

Fact: Friday November 17th, a car speeds along Via Mameli. After swerving to avoid a completely black cat, the car hits an old lady who is taking flowers to her husband's tomb in the nearby cemetery. How many Italians would interpret the event as a simple misfortune and how many would say that on that date, after crossing the path of a black cat, the driver was bound to run into in serious trouble? [Translator's note. In Italy 17 is an unlucky number, rather like 13 in English-speaking cultures. And black cats bring bad luck.]

To put it another way, when we believe in certain things we experience events in the light of those beliefs. Like many of his countrymen, Kuman believed firmly in magic remedies that confer invisibility[25] and enable people to turn into animals, so he could only see his reality through the lenses given to him by his culture.

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[23] What Kuman actually said was that the elephant turned into Yao, but I am convinced this was a slip. Later on he no longer reported that Kwaku Wara finally resumed his human form, he confined himself to recounting how their conversation resumed at that point (see texts pp. 173-176).

[24] On this subject De Martino's *Sud e Magia* (1959) remains a classic text: *"The historical meaning of the protective techniques of magic lies in the values that such techniques reawaken when they are part of critical moments in a given regime of existence; and it becomes manifest only if we consider those techniques as part of a cultural dynamic perceptible to and within a single civilisation, a particular society, a given epoch"*. (Ivi, ried. 2002: 111-112).

[25] In this regard see F. Crevatin 2007.

I cannot claim to interpret what Kuman meant by his statements. I only know that ethnographic literature on Africa (and elsewhere) is full of such cases and that virtually every researcher who has worked in the field has heard stories of this kind. It would be ridiculous simply to write them off as inventions or lies.

It is worth repeating that although Kuman was already competent in healing with medicinal plants when he began to study under his last master, by manifesting himself in animal form Kwaku Wara subjected him to a further test, this time magic in nature, before definitely deciding to accept him as his pupil. This is another indication that in Kulango thought there is a clear distinction between the common herbalistic practice of a *family doctor* and the professional practice of a *healer*, who must first of all prove that he is predisposed to contact with the world of magic. Kuman continued to learn more about plants with Kwaku Wara, but it was only through his training under this third master that he learned how to enter into contact, when he felt the need, with the *gyinąų*, the natural spirits, the *jinn* of the forest, and how to charge protective rings and bracelets with magic power. When the time was right Kwaku Wara initiated Kuman into the annual celebration of medicines, which was also a private rite of thanksgiving to his ancestors and masters and a public confirmation of the magic and curative powers of the professional healer[26].

As Kuman told me himself, those who had been his three human masters continued to help him from the hereafter, sending him messages through dreams of revelation, and their relationship remained very close. Kuman said that every time he prepared a *canari* of medicines he invoked the *pruŋo*[27] (visible spirit – ghost) of his ancestors and asked them to augment the medicines with their *kpąyɔ* to strengthen their beneficial and curative effect.

According to Kuman, when a healer breaks this bond and forgets to invoke his ancestors' *prumo* and to offer them the required sacrifices, they can take revenge by ruining the medicines and letting the patient die.

The bond between a healer and his ancestors is common to all West African cultures, as exemplified by Bierlich[28] on the Dagomba:

> "*To understand the local curer and his community orientation, one must bear in mind that when producing his medicine, he always invokes his ancestors. The power to heal is not his, but comes from the ancestors* […]".

[26] On this celebration more details are provided below.

[27] The word *pruŋo* means "ghost or spirit of a dead person"; in Kulango ancestors are called *ndagbolobɛrɛ*.

[28] Bierlich 1999:320.

STAGE TWO: *GYINĄŲ̲*, THE GUIDING SPIRITS

"Gų̲ wɛ nąkɔ bɔɔgɔ!
Hɔ sinyo lɛ nna, lɛ úu sī-ge lɛ pēi-gye, lɛ úu gyere nyī̲-bɛ."
"There are other things over there! There's a remedy, madam,
that you take, you use to wash yourself and then you see them."

Gyinąg is the Kulango adaptation of a Mande loanword of Arabic origin: *jinn*, which in Muslim tradition refers to the *spirits* or *genies* of natural features such as deserts, rocks and rivers. The same word has entered many African languages; in Kulango it also indicates the spirit that giudes the healer or the hunter.

In cultural terms this specialised *gyinąg* plays an ambivalent role, like all the creatures living in the anti-social space of the savannah or the forest. It is good to those who respect it and ferocious to those who invade its space without asking permission; it is sometimes capricious but also capable of great generosity.

In Kulango tradition, *gyinąg̲ų̲* (this is the plural form) usually reveal themselves and communicate only with humans endowed with a special *kpągyɔ*, who have something to do with death, illness and the *dų̲ų̲kɔ*.

Because of the benefits it can confer on the strength of its profound knowledge of the laws governing the non-earthly world, meeting a *gyinąg* is the wish of all those who operate in the sphere of magic.

Gyinąg̲ų̲ can take on various forms to frighten people in the *dų̲ų̲kɔ*: they can appear as gigantic or minuscule people with a vertical opening on the face similar to a human mouth but with massive pointed fangs growing out beyond the lips; their feet can point backwards and they can also manifest themselves as wild animals, snakes and birds of prey. They can even appear as normal people so as to deceive those they encounter, but experts swear they can recognise them by the foul smell they give off.

What is said of these *jinn* in other West African cultures is not very different from what we know of Kulango thought, as is clear from the observations of Coppo and Keita[29] on the Dogon in Mali:

> "*Yeben, andúmbulun, gyinu (dérivation des jinn de la tradition arabe) etc., créatures dont l'apparition sur la terre aurait précédé celle des hommes, elles habitent selon le mythe dogon les arbres, les rochers, les eaux. Seigneurs des "lieux vides", aux caractères étonnants et terrifiants (un seul oeil, un seul bras, un seul pied tourné en arrière, la bouche fendue verticalement, la peau très blanche ou rouge, les cheveaux lisses, le corps petit ou très long etc.) ils sont invisibles à la plupart des hommes, sauf aux gens doués de "double vue"*."

[29] Coppo/Keita 1999:87.

According to Kuman there are evil *gyinɑ̰u̱* which will stop at nothing to disrupt human activity. When talking about them he always used inanimate pronouns and called them *zɪna*, the Kulango for "beasts". When he recounted events in which they had played a positive role he used animate pronouns, as if to assimilate them to humans. In so doing he assigned them a status outside the chaotic world of wild animals and the anti-social space, placing them on a higher level.

When a healer or a specialist in the occult encounters a bad *gyinɑ̰*, there may ensue a physical or magic battle between them which can only be won by he who has the greater *kpɑ̰yɔ*, exactly as happens in the invisible struggles between healers and witch-doctors. One of the foremost abilities of a specialist of *kpɑ̰yɔ* is therefore to decide whether his own power is sufficient to risk this type of fight or relinquish the struggle and attempt to negotiate.

When a healer kills one of these bad spirits he can use parts of its body (usually hairs or nails) to charge magic rings which are able to ward off other mischievous *gyinɑ̰u̱* because they cannot approach those who wear them. Kuman said that *jinn* make regular attempts to rob humans of these talismans, but the amulets are so powerful that they never succeed.

This is a particularly complicated point because any attempt to interpret Kuman's account could prove embarrassing. There is no doubt that he spoke of creatures killed whose body parts were used as components in the preparation of magic amulets, but what creatures were they? Human beings? Animals? One explanation may be possible. When the Kulango are in the *dv̰v̰kɔ*[30], that is to say any location physically outside the social space of the village and its fields, their cognition of the world and the things in it changes. All the objects, animals and people they encounter which are not part of the normal composition of their environment are automatically classified as dangerous manifestations of occult forces. So if a hunter is alone in the forest hunting, or if a healer is alone in the savannah looking for curative plants, and he comes across a stranger, perhaps a man from another village or a madman wandering alone naked and filthy in a non-human space, the hunter or the healer in question knows he is faced not with a human but with a *gyinɑ̰*, and if by chance there is a confrontation and the stranger dies, the hunter or healer will think he has defeated a wicked supernatural creature. Or perhaps, more simply, if a healer or a hunter accidently or in self-defence killed an animal, better still a predator[31], he might easily perceive it as a *jinn* in one of its metamorphoses.

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[30] It is interesting to observe that the word *dv̰v̰kɔ* is almost always translated into French by its speakers with *désert*, even though it may indicate the savannah or the forest, in addition to the desert proper. My impression is that the social perception is prevalent and that the *dv̰v̰kɔ* is seen as a *social desert*.

[31] See p. 96 on the status of predators and the general ban on their killing.

What is certain is that amulets require the use of real body parts, so in the savannah something equally real must necessarily happen.

Another characteristic of *gyinɑ̰ʊ̰* in Kulango philosophy is that they may be highly capricious, so a healer has to face them with extreme caution. There is nothing strange in a well-disposed *gyinɑ̰*, faced with unacceptable behaviour on the part of his healer friend, taking offence and suddenly turning nasty, vindictive and aggressive.

Even though *gyinɑ̰ʊ̰* may be kind to humans, it should never be forgotten that they are creatures of chaos. Their world is one in which human rules do not count, so they should never be trusted. Even if they often give presents to humans they like, *gyinɑ̰ʊ̰* always expect something in return. As long as a man gives them what they want everything is fine, but if by chance one day a request of theirs is forgotten, their vengeance can be violent and highly dangerous.

One last thing that emerged from my talks with Kuman on *gyinɑ̰ʊ̰* concerns how a healer can spontaneously contact a guiding spirit. He said that although his first contact with a *gyinɑ̰* had been fortuitous, his master Kwaku Wara taught him how to summon it whenever he wanted to. As these two statements seemed contradictory, I brought up the subject many times; in the end I managed to understand how they could be reconciled.

When anthropologists speak of encounters between specialists of the occult and their guiding spirits, they usually classify such episodes as visions or states of trance, be they spontaneous or brought on by conditions of ritual stress. Kuman never told me of any particular rites preceding the encounters with his *gyinɑ̰*, but I was convinced that something of the kind was behind them. After I had badgered him for days he finally told me that Kwaku Wara had given him a potion that he was supposed to rub on his face whenever he wanted to see his guiding spirit, and that it was extremely potent. This may be an indication of the use by Kulango healers of natural hallucinogenic drugs, which is common to many cultures around the world[32] and therefore not implausible in this context.

Kuman recounted a great many anecdotes on the guiding spirits during our long afternoon talks. Those presented here below are significant in that they represent the character of these supernatural beings.

1) Good *gyinɑ̰ʋ̰*.

Kuman's first encounter with a *gyinɑ̰* came about by chance. His natural father Kofi Djedwa was dead, and he was still with his maternal uncle. Hunting alone in the savannah one day he saw a gigantic man walking towards him. As he approached the giant shrank in size until he stood before him with

[32] See M. Winkelmann (1986) and J. Waniakowa (2007) on the use of belladonna for similar purposes. Also elswhere in the bibliography.

the stature of a normal man. The two faced each other, each with his musket on his shoulder, but the stranger's weapon was much bigger than Kuman's. Realising immediately that he was standing before a *jinn* of the forest, Kuman was delighted finally to have met a possible valuable ally. They began to talk. The *gyinɑ̰* asked him what he was seeking and where he came from, to which he replied that he came from his camp and was out hunting. The *gyinɑ̰* said that he too was hunting and decided to go with him, showing him where the game animals hid and teaching him some magic incantations to find them. Kuman told me that those incantations were so powerful that when a hunter used them he could go into the savannah deciding in advance what to hunt, certain that he would come across his chosen quarry with no problem at all.

At the end of the day the *gyinɑ̰* asked Kuman for some tobacco, which he was happy to procure for him, and the two of them became friends. The *gyinɑ̰* ordered Kuman to observe a series of food taboos and then asked him for an egg in exchange for his permission to collect the plants growing in his part of the savannah to prepare his medicines. Their friendship lasted many years, during which the *gyinɑ̰* told his disciple many other secrets about animals, hunting techniques, remedies, plants and their curative properties.

Kuman's first training with his supernatural master was long and intensive, lasting several months. At times Kuman would stay out all day in the savannah with his *gyinɑ̰*, learning his language and discovering many new remedies and incantations for treating his patients. Only when the spirit considered Kuman's training sufficient did he allow him to return to his family.

Kuman told me that his relationship with his guiding spirit never faded. Although in later years it had been forced by deforestation to withdraw to the dense interior of the forest and no longer appeared as before, it always made its presence felt, giving off its bad smell every time the old healer went into the savannah. Over the years Kuman came to know his *gyinɑ̰*'s family (a wife and two sons) and make friends with them too. Whenever he was in his camp and the *gyinɑ̰* and its wife, out hunting for the night, passed that way, they would stop at his hut and tap on the roof by way of a greeting.

When Kuman spoke of this *gyina* he seemed to be thinking of a creature in flesh and bones. When he described it to me he drew its foot in the sand, a foot which was about twice the size of a normal adult male's. As he drew it he added quite seriously that like all of its kind his *gyina* had to observe food taboos – in his case it was onions.

2) Bad *gyinɑ̰ʋ̰*.

One day Kuman was hunting a group of chimpanzees. He had been following them since the early morning, and as the sun went down he spotted the tree where they had settled for the night. He returned to his camp, where there were two other men from Nassian: Samoa and his son Kofi, with their own sons. He rested for a while, having decided to go back to the tree at

dawn to catch the chimpanzees by surprise when they woke up. When he got there the following morning he found an evil *gyinᾳ̰*, which started laughing out loud and banging hard on the trunk of the tree in which the chimps were sleeping so that they would take fright and escape. As the *gyinᾳ̰* was a notorious character who had already terrorised a number of people, Kuman decided to kill it. He shot at it several times, and it ran off into the undergrowth howling in pain. It lost a lot of blood; Kuman said that every liana he saw as he pursued it was stained with blood, which made him sure that it had died somewhere – from that day on he never smelled its horrible odour again (see texts, p. 222).

3) Capricious *gyinᾳ̰v̰*.

Out in the savannah late one afternoon, Kuman lost his way back to camp. He suddenly met a *gyinᾳ̰*, who asked him who he was and what he was doing there. Kuman introduced himself and said he was lost, whereupon the spirit said it would take him to his camp and asked him to follow. After a long walk they reached the camp and the spirit vanished. The next day Kuman returned to the savannah in search of the place where he had met the *gyinᾳ̰*, but when he got there and called out his new friend's name there was no answer. He rubbed the remedy Kwaku Wara had given him onto his face and immediately saw a big snake, which he recognised as his *gyinᾳ̰*. Surprised by being recognised so soon, the snake asked Kuman what he wanted, and Kuman replied that he had just come to thank him for taking him home the night before. Taken by Kuman's courtesy, the spirit gave him some important medicines, an incense to treat mental illness and a magic remedy able to show the way back to someone lost, as Kuman had been, on the way home. It was enough to wash your face with some of the medicine and give your eyes a good rub, and you would easily find your way home.

Then he asked Kuman to return again with three eggs and leave them in the exact spot where he had seen the snake. So he went back to camp, got the eggs and took them to the *gyinᾳ̰.* The spirit thanked him, saying that he had to go and the snake did the same (*sic*), adding that he would be back and they would meet again. For a time Kuman saw no more of that *gyinᾳ̰,* but working in his yam field one day he struck a long strange-looking animal with his hoe. He left that part of the field, but the animal appeared to him again in the opposite corner, and so it went on for a while. Then Kuman recognised his *gyinᾳ̰* snake and splashed some water on it by way of joke, after which he started out on his way back to camp. On his way there he got a thorn through his foot (at this point in the story, Kuman showed me two scars on his foot, saying that the thorn had gone in on one side and come out of the other; see texts p. 168-169) and was forced to return to the field where the animal was. The snake ordered him curtly to take him in his arms and cover him, because he was dying of cold. Kuman found a container, put the animal inside and cov-

ered it with a white loincloth[33]. Then the snake demanded four eggs, which Kuman immediately brought him, and from that day the snake was seen no more. Kuman said that he had consulted his fetish many times and been told every time that the *gyinu̱* would return, but in 2006 it had not yet done so.

STAGE THREE: REVEALING DREAMS AND *PRUMO*, THE ANCESTORS' SPIRITS

"lɛ míı dīɔ mı taa lɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm dawakɔ, lɛ hʊ̱ʊ́ yi"
"So I sleep alone and it is like a dream; he comes..."

To understand the profound trust African healers place in revealing dreams I think it is first necessary to analyse how oneiric experience is interpreted in their culture.

According to the Kulango a dream is not unconscious activity of the mind; it is an act performed by an individual's *u̱sɛ* – soul force – when it leaves the *tɔgɔ* – material body – which contains it, in order to have non-earthly experiences in the *dʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ*. Everything that happens to the *u̱sɛ* in this dimension of reality is no less formative for an individual than what happens in the natural world, and is thus as real and as credible as the events occurring in everyday life.

While the experience of a normal individual's *u̱sɛ* in this dimension is often too confused to be of any practical use, on its forays into the *dʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ* the healer's *u̱sɛ*, more accustomed to dealing with non-earthly forces, can enter much more easily into contact with the knowledge, or the power – the *kpa̱ɣɔ* – of Yegomilia which pervades all things. It can also encounter the *u̱sɔgɔ* or *prumo*[34] of his ancestors, from whom it often obtains information or explanations concerning new methods of treatment or prescriptions for the preparation of medicines hitherto unknown.

Alongside *gyina̱u̱* then, *prumo* and *u̱sɔgɔ* are the entitites that enable the healer to acquire knowledge throughout his life, forever deepening his awareness of disease and the dynamics of treatment.

In Kuman's direct experience dreams appeared in at least two main ways: being summoned as a method of divination and manifesting themselves following specific rituals, or occurring spontaneously and unbidden.

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[33] In the Kulango region, as in much of West Africa, white is used on all occasions involved with the sacred.

[34] The term *u̱sɔgɔ* refers to the spirit powers of the dead and the living alike; they have no visible form. *Prumo* (sing. *pruŋo*) are not unlike what we call ghosts, that is to say the spirits of the departed which make themselves visible in apparently human form.

In the first case, when he received a patient the cause of whose illness he was not immediately able to detect, it was often only a dream which led him to understand the problem; the oneiric dimension gave him the information he needed regarding the treatment to adopt.

If he did not know what to do when faced with symptoms he had never seen before, Kuman would spend the night in his medicine store praying to his ancestors for their help. Then he stayed there and the solution would usually come to him as he slept. The next morning he would get up with the remedy in his mind and go into the savannnah, where the plants he needed bent towards him as he passed and offered themselves for collection.

In his dreams Kuman did not always meet his ancestors' *prumo* in person. Sometimes he visualised nothing more than the herbs he would need to prepare his patient's *canari*, but he knew that the assistance came from their *u̱sɔgɔ* and was grateful for it, repaying them with sacrifices and prayers. Other times, while he slept his was visited by his *gyina̱*, which behaved as *prumo*, and on occasions a dream would come directly from Yegomilia, the Supreme Being.

In one of our conversations I asked Kuman if he really thought that every plant he dreamt actually had curative powers, and he replied that he was sure of it. I persisted, asking him what he thought when a patient, having taken the herbs collected and prepared in the *canari*, failed to recover. He said that was not possible, and even if things did happen as I said the problem would not be the plants but the healer's interpretation of his dream. Dreams never lie; if a remedy revealed in a dream does not work it means that the healer has used it to treat the wrong illness (or the wrong patient) and must continue to try it until he discovers its true potential.

Every plant growing in the savannah is part of the universe's *kpa̱yɔ* and thus has the potential to treat all the ills human flesh is heir to. But no human can know all the world's plants; only *Yego*, through his intermediaries – *prumo*, *u̱sɔgɔ* and *gyina̱u̱* – can give man another crumb of knowledge, if he sees fit and only when necessary.

In the second case a revealing dream can appear spontaneously to a healer without the latter having prepared an encounter with the denizens of the *dv̱v̱kɔ* through the required purification rites.

When such dreams do occur they normally bring no fresh information on plants or methods of treatment. They carry messages of another kind, such as special invitations to important and unusual events, so that in the following days the healer can make the ritual preparations, taking the required offerings to the spirits of the savannah and making the due sacrifices to his ancentor's *prumo*. After which he shuts himself inside his medicine store, where he will be visited by a Presence with which he will undergo a kind of supplementary training lasting hours or even days.

Kuman told me that every so often when he was asleep he would receive a visit from Kwaku Wara's *pruŋo*, which asked him to prepare for the following

night, when it would return to teach him something new. Sometimes his old master's *pruŋo* gave him the name of someone else Kuman was to invite to the encounter to share the supernatural experience with him.

Kwaku Wara's *pruŋo* also appeared regularly to Kuman a few days before the annual festival of medicines. As the day approached he would receive a series of signs, some from his master and some from the *gyinɑ̰ũ* of the savannah (this point is explored in detail below – see p. 57).

It is important to point out that the healer's relationship with the *prumo* and *ʉ̰sɔgɔ* of his ancestors, and that with his own guiding spirit, requires a form of exchange. *Prumo*, *ʉ̰sɔgɔ* and *gyinɑ̰ũ* answer the call of their favourite only if the worship due to them is properly observed, and they offer their knowledge in return for respect and sacrifices.

THE *KPɑ̰YƆ* OF THE HEALER AND HIS REMEDIES

"lɛ hɛrɛ kpɑ̰yɛ'rɛ hɔ drunya'rɛ-dɪ dugu,aYègo gyere nyɑ́-ŋa siʉ̰'nɪ↓?"
"And that power that was once in the world, did Yego put it in the plants?"

A brief word is required at this point regarding *kpɑ̰yɔ* in Kulango philosophy and its role in the treatment and curing of illness. Hitherto reference has been made to the term *kpɑ̰yɔ* with the generic translation of "mystic force" or "supernatural power", but for a proper understanding of its value the perspective has to be broadened.

As we have seen, in Africa it is widely believed that only people endowed with a particular gift are able to play specific roles, for which they have to enter into contact with Presences of a different nature. These people include traditional healers (but not necessarily herbalists), hunters, midwives, fortune-tellers, witch-doctors, priests of the land and gravediggers.

The abundant ethnographic literature on the subject has accustomed us to imagine this special gift as a physical substance, or a visible defect to be sought on the practitioner's body, as in the case of the *mangu* of the Azande[35] or the *evur* of the Mafa[36] – a sort of polyp endowed with magic powers located in the stomach of certain individuals.

For the Kulango this special gift is invisible. Like the life soul, the *mɑ̰yɔ*, it resides in people's blood, in everybody's blood; it is called *kpɑ̰yɔ*[37].

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[35] See Evans-Pritchard 1976.

[36] See P. Boyer 1983:47.

[37] Perhaps it is no coincidence that the words *mɑ̰yɔ* and *kpɑ̰yɔ* have the same class marker *-yɔ*.

Not a physical substance, then, *kpa̱yɔ* is a force, intelligent and active, which pervades all animate creatures in the universe, natural and supernatural alike, and comes directly from Yegomilia, the divine creator. When I asked Kuman to explain who Yegomilia was, all he could say was "*Yégo hɛ̄ kpa̱yɔ*", *Yego is/makes kpa̱yɔ*, which means that the divine essence is composed of the same power, the same force, that lives in his creatures – *kpa̱yɔ* is therefore the divine breath that animates the world. So what distinguishes normal people from the professionals of the *dv̱v̱kɔ* is not the presence or absence of this vital substance, but its quantity. The more *kpa̱yɔ* with which a man is endowed, the better he is able to enter into contact with supernatural forces and control them.

A similar concept is found among the Gun, in Benin. In Gun philosophy man is composed of body, *sé* and *yɛ́*. The *yé* is the human's shadow, the life soul that accompanies him on his earthly journey and which is lost upon death. The *sé* is the individual's active spirit; it resides in his blood and leaves his body during dreams and upon death, and it can also be harmed by witchcraft. *Sé* in Gun also means destiny and *ségbo*, "great destiny" is one of the names given to *Mǎwu*, the divine creator. This means that every human being in some way belongs to the essence of the *sé* of the universe, of *Mǎwu*, and here too healers and witch-doctors possess more *sé* than ordinary people do[38].

For the Kulango and the Gun alike, the professionals of the non-earthly world can train their active power and increase its strength, not only through exercises but by negotiating agreements with supernatural forces willing to lend some of their powers in exchange for offerings and sacrifices.

What is more, according to Kuman the Kulango consider *kpa̱yɔ* to be an independent sentient being. He told me that when a healer collects curative plants he must offer them an egg or a kola nut, asking forgiveness for the damage he is causing and directly requesting their *kpa̱yɔ* to stay in the parts he takes so that his remedy will be effective.

When a healer prepares a *canari* of remedies he must be ritually pure in order to have as much *kpa̱yɔ* as possible to channel into it. His last act is to invoke his ancestors' *prumo* and ask them to add their own personal *kpa̱yɔ* to the herbs so as further to increase the medicine's potency.

It may be considered – at least this is the conclusion to which I am driven – that in Kulango philosophy all the curative power of traditional medicine lies solely in the universe's *kpa̱yɔ* and that plants and medicines are nothing but the material medium in which this force is ritually and magically confined in order to be administered at the appropriate time to the individual who needs it. If we then consider that in traditional African thought disease is nothing more than the symptom of a disruption in the natural balance of things, it is by no means strange to see the only remedy in a balm as potent as the very force of the universe, summoned to restore the lost order.

[38] On this point see P. Saulnier 2009.

In this light it is comprehensible that Kuman should remark that a plant dreamt by a healer could not fail to cure – if it is true that *kpa̰yɔ* is the only curative force, it must also be true that it does not really matter which type of herb is used as the vehicle for its transmission.

THE HEALER'S FOOD TABOOS, SACRIFICES AND FETISHES

"Mɩ kyízʊ̰rʊ̰ wɩ̰nɩ lɛ dā̰, ʊ̰ mɩ-rɔ pa ka"
"The taboos they gave me, I still observe them all!"

Since continued contact with the world of the *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ* and the dangerous creatures who live there puts humans at constant risk, to have an untroubled life they have to negotiate peace with the Presences in that place. The means of attaining such a precious and precarious equilibrium is through food prohibitions, sacrifices and fetishes.

The first element of protection is food prohibitions. They are a sort of identity card, inherited from the ancestors and often originating from a story lost in the mists of time involving an animal and the founder of a family lineage (or a branch of one). Observance of family food taboos ensures the ancestors' protection and confers a feeling of justification as a positive member of the village community. Comparing individual family food taboos is a highly interesting exercise, especially in a context such as Kulango society, which boasts a strong matrilineal structure but has a large number of mixed features. Often, as in Kuman's case, a Kulango inherits not only his maternal uncle's food prohibitions but also those of his natural father; people from the same lineage thus find themselves with a common core of taboos and a periphery of different ones deriving from the genealogy of the two sides of their kinship.

Like his father Kofi Djedwa, Kuman observed a taboo on the small red antelope called the *na̰bai*, and forbore from eating uncooked oil and *somara*, the extremely bitter fruit of a type of acacia called *kyompia* in Kulango, exactly as his maternal uncle Yao Kra had done. Our spokesman Thomas Kwame, who was from Kuman's matrilineage, also observed a taboo on uncooked oil and *somara*, and did not eat viper, just like his natural father before him.

It is worthy of note that food taboos of this kind are usually observed even by people, such as Thomas Kwame, who state that they no longer follow the traditional religion, which shows how important they are still considered for the maintenance of balance in village life. An individual's observance of family food taboos is the exact equivalent of showing the most unequivocal respect for his ancestors, and breaking them places him in a state of ritual impurity.

In addition to family food taboos a traditional healer has to observe a number of other prohibitions (not only on food) imposed by his master, or masters, during his training as tests enabling him to prove his true commitment to the profession. The main function of these further prohibitions is to strengthen the magic bond between the healer and the universal *kpa̰yɔ*; by observing these taboos, the healer offers Yego something of himself and receives support and benevolence in return.

Kuman was given his professional taboos by Kwaku Wara, who imposed on him a special relationship with fire. For Kuman fire was the natural element *par excellence*, the one which a healer could never afford to underestimate, the one whose heat brought remedies to the boil and enabled magic substances to confer protective power upon the amulets he made on the occasion of a special celebration, which will be described below. It was not by chance that when Kuman decided to put me to the test, he took me to the medicine hut and showed me his power by swallowing a red-hot ember without burning his throat, tongue or lips.

The prohibitions deriving from Kuman's very special relationship with fire compelled him to stop eating whenever a woman raised sparks from the fireplace while sweeping the yard, or when they were blown up by the wind. He was under the same constraint when somebody took the liberty of removing a burning ember from the hearth near which he was sitting, or when he heard a gunshot in the distance while eating, or whenever someone sneezed in his presence, or even passed behind him. If any of these things happened without Kuman abandoning his meal, he was fully convinced that he might die.

There are also taboos related to remedies. They can be ruined when someone takes wood or coal from the fire under a boiling *canari*, or in the worst case possible, when a woman sees or touches a *canari* while she is menstruating. If she does so she may become barren.

Lastly, there is a series of temporary food prohibitions that a healer can prescribe to his patients during their treatment. Their function is to set up a ritual connection between the patient, the illness, the healer's medicines and the universal *kpa̰yɔ*. Their observance is a sign of the patient's willingness to submit to the decisions of the *kpa̰yɔ* while enabling him to provide visible proof of his repentance for any possible offence he may have occasioned to his ancestors or any other supernatural Presence. These prohibitions may be abandoned only when the patient feels better and repays the healer for the sacrifices offered to the plants and any other inhabitants of the *dʋ̰ʋ̰kɔ*.

The second link in the chain of protection against supernatural powers is the ritual sacrifice of objects (eggs or kola nuts) and animals (kids or small game) to fetishes or spirits with which there is a special connection.

The sacrifices offered by the healer to the *kpa̰yɔ* of plants usually involve small things such as eggs and kola nuts. Kuman said that he would usually give the plant an object similar in size to the part he intended to remove; if he

was looking for a small piece of bark he would take an egg with him, while if he wanted to cut out a large root he might leave a red kola nut or two in its place.

Other sacrifices, usually much more substantial, are offered to ancestors when their intervention is requested for the solution of a particularly complicated case, or to beg their forgiveness for an impure deed or an offence to tradition committed by a patient. As such cases require more than eggs and kola nuts, the throat of at least a chicken or a kid will have to be slit, but a healer may also be ordered to demand a bigger sacrifice from the patient – a ram or an ox – to wipe out the insult inflicted on his ancestor's village. In this case the healer may ask the patient's family to procure the sacrificial victim, but if the patient is seriously ill and risks imminent death the healer may offer the sacrifice himself and wait until the treatment is complete to be reimbursed for the animal he advanced in order to expedite the patient's recovery. If the patient fails to make good such a debt his illness will return, this time leading to death.

Another occasion on which a healer has to perform important sacrifices is the annual festival of remedies, of which more will be said below.

The last link is made up of fetishes, of which in the Kulango region there are three main types. Collective fetishes, such as the Truyego in Nassian (a compound name from *trugo* "forest" and *Yego* "god"), have an official code of worship and a dedicated priest. Family fetishes are normally natural objects (such as stones) secreted somewhere in the *ben* or the camp. Personal fetishes are often specially made by masters of the occult from a wide range of components (cloth, soil, blood, hairs etc.) and jealously guarded in leather pouches carried or worn about the body. Healers set great store by their fetishes, which often stand as the last resort when they find themselves unable to solve a particularly complicated case.

Kuman's relationship with his fetish was so important to him that for one reason or another it came up in every conversation. Because I kept hearing the word *kpalıgv*, fetish, in one of our first meetings I made the mistake of calling him *kpalısɛ*, *féticheur*, which made him very cross indeed. He demanded to be called *warısɛ*, healer, because although it is true that a healer has a special relationship with his fetish, which assists him in many circumstances, unlike many *féticheurs* he does not use it to make money.

The healer's relationship with his fetish is therefore a private one, and so it must remain.

Kuman had a great many fetishes, but his main one was a stone, not very big but particularly heavy, he had found near his camp. For years he had been looking for a powerful fetish and had performed many sacrifices to find one, but without success. Then one fine day, on the edge of his field he noticed a rock he had never seen before, a rock that could not have been lifted even by

seven[39] strong men. Kuman gathered his friends and family and at last they managed to move it and took it to the village in a spot near his *ben*, where it can be seen only when it decides to show itself. This happened many years before our meeting; after that time Kuman had six more sons and a daughter[40].

When he had problems with his work or in the fields Kuman turned to his fetish for help, which it was always able to provide.

HEALING, MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT

"bɔɔ hɛɛn'nɪ dɛ, drɛsɛgɛ hʊ̰-rɔ, hą́ą̰ kʊ̄"
"There's a fellow over there, he's got witchcraft, he kills"

In Africa healing, magic and witchcraft are three dimensions of the single supernatural reality of the *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ*. If it is true that a disease which resists treatment is usually the external symptom of damage to the patient's soul or life force, it is also true that its cause is to be sought in the non-earthly world, so an effective treatment must also originate from that world.

In Bawlé culture an incurable disease of this type would be classified as *àtré*, "*the most disturbing phenomenon, the inexplicable which totally contradicts normality (...) always alarming because normality cannot disrupt itself, not through 'normal' causes, so* àtré *must be the work of somebody, a Presence, or a human being using non-human means*"[41].

In Kulango philosophy harm and benefits to the human *mą̰yɔ*, life soul, are caused by damage to or a restructuring of the normal flow of the *kpą̰yɔ* in the blood/body. Apart from the supernatural forces *par excellence*, ancestors and *gyinąą̰*, only healers (*warɪsɔgɔ*) and witch-doctors (*drɛsɔgɔ* – probably from *dɹryɔ* "night" + *sɔgɔ*, plural morpheme indicating the person), through their manipulation of the universe's *kpą̰yɔ*, are able to affect the integrity of common people's *mą̰yɔ* and consequently their health, according to their beneficial or harmful intentions.

Healers, magicians and witch-doctors are thus professionals of the supernatural who all work by using the same mystic knowledge and substances. It is precisely for this reason that even those who assert that they work only for the good of the people are feared and respected but often kept as far away

[39] Seven is a symbolic number throughout traditional Mande Africa.

[40] When Kuman said this he merely wished to indicate the time-scale of events, not to imply that his children were a gift from the fetish.

[41] F. Crevatin 2008:153.

as possible from other members of the community who are afraid of them because they are potentially so dangerous[42].

For many Akan peoples witchcraft (*bayi*) is more straightforward. Their conception of it may be summed up in the words of Debrunner (1961): "[...] *some supernatural power of which man can become possessed, and which is used exclusively for evil and antisocial purposes*".

What remains unvarying is the fact that in the face of a case of witchcraft, in Kulango society the first therapeutic step is to consult a traditional healer, with a fortune-teller or counter-witch-doctor, who will have the task of indentifying the witch-doctor and if possible devising a strategy to counter his attack. The first place to look for a such a witch-doctor is in the victim's extended family, because an act of black magic always derives from personal rivalry or envy connected with conflicts of interest that can only arise within the circle of mutual assistance – and often forced co-existence – of a single family line.

For the Kulango a *drɛsɛ*, a witch-doctor, can use magic to attack his victim by entering into him through his reflected image, his *dų̣ų̣lio*, or animate shadow. According to Debrunner (1961), the Akan believe that in order to "eat" the life soul of their victims witch-doctors enter them through their lungs or open infected sores, or by making him drink poison charged with his bad *kpa̧yɔ*. Here too, what harms the victim is not a physical substance he is made to ingest, but the negative magic that is skilfully channelled into it. That is why Kuman described the treatment of a victim of witchcraft as a magic struggle between the *warɪsɛ* and the *drɛsɛ*, a fight which could only be won by the contestant whose active power (*kpa̧yɔ*) was stronger than the other's.

Sometimes a healer initially fails to recognise that an illness is caused by a witch-doctor because the patient bears no particular signs. To find out, he relies on the sensitivity of the magic remedies always kept in his medicine hut. After reciting the required incantations he enters the protected environment of the hut and shows the remedies the patient's *canari*. If they bend towards the container it means that the disease is caused by a witch-doctor's attack, whereas if they remain unmoved on their shelves the illness has a different origin – natural or connected with the patient's ancestors.

When a healer prepares a *canari* for a victim of witchcraft the incantations he recites over the medicines serve both to treat the patient physically and attack the witch-doctor magically, bringing the effect of his own spell down upon him. That is why, after asking for the protection of his ancestors and the plant spirits while holding the *canari* in his right hand, the healer passes it to his left hand, which is connected to darkness and bad things, so that the evil contained in the patient's illness will turn against the witch-doctor by passing through a special gateway which is always on the healer's left.

[42] As Barnard writes about the Nharo: "*People who are skilled in good medicine often know how to make evil medicine too* [...]" (1979:68).

If the witch-doctor's *kpɑ̰yɔ* is stronger than the healer's, the patient is bound to succumb to his disease. A witch-doctor's spell can only strike the individual for whom it was prepared and can never change target. So even if a healer loses a magic battle he never himself falls victim to the witch-doctor's actions. It should also be remembered that healers, like all the professionals of the occult, are always covered by a number of protective amulets and thus consider themselves all but invulnerable.

Precisely because he is aware of the healer's magic power, a witch-doctor tends to attack his victims when, for whatever reason, they are most vulnerable: in the case of women it is during their menstrual cycle, a period when they cannot touch a *canari* of remedies because they are impure. If such an attack occurs there is little hope for recovery, because all the healer can do is wait until the end of the cycle to begin treatment, by which time the witch-doctor has almost a week's advantage over his power to intervene.

One other important factor remains for analysis: the preparation of protective amulets, a task assigned to healers with a complete traditional training.

The work of a healer is the exercise of magic power on the part of a professional who treats his patients by involving the magic of the universe, plants and ancestors in the preparation of medicines, but a considerable number of the remedies prepared by a *warɪsɛ* have the purpose of preventing undesirable situations, increasing an individual's capacities and protecting him from the envy and jealousy of his relatives and neighbours. These remedies are composed of herb compounds, metal amulets and other varyingly common objects. Kuman had learned the art of magically "charging" these remedies from Kwaku Wara, his last master.

Every magic remedy is given a specific name, which seems to have within it the same magic power as the object itself. Kuman knew and was able to prepare nine of these remedies. During a specific meeting on the subject he told me each of their names and explained their properties, leaving out the details in one case because, according to my spokesman Thomas Kwame, that must have been the most powerful, probably lethal when necessary.

Kuman's nine remedies were as follows: *Gyara* ("lion"); *Tiŋo* (meaning unknown); *Tiniŋoro* (meaning unknown); *Druŋya* ("world", through the Mande languages, originally from Arabic); *Nibo* (meaning unknown); *Koteŋo* (meaning unknown, though the second part of the compound, *Teŋo*, means "ear"); *Mɑ̰rɑ̰miriŋo* (meaning unknown, though *mɑ̰rɑ̰* means "to have a consultation"); *Kɔrɔtɪ* ("sore") and *Gyobri* (meaning unknown).

Gyara is used in business and to bring success in legal questions; it is a wash made from herbs and other substances. Kuman said that after washing with *gyara* and drinking a few sips people are always able to find the right word to get themselves out of trouble. It can also be used by hunters or ordinary people who go into the savannah where dangerous animals lurk; if one is encountered it is enough to shout the name of the remedy and the animal will

run away. *Gyara* seems to entail a close relationship with the healer. Kuman told me that if he personally washed the feet of the footballers in the team he protected before a match, and then went to his medicine store and stayed there in meditation for the whole of the game, his team would certainly win it. He gave me this example at the end of June 2006, when the World Cup semi-finals were being played. He joked that if the Elephants (the nickname for the Ivory Coast team) had taken some of that remedy with them to Europe they would definitely have won the cup.

Nibo is a protective bangle worn by hunters at the top of the arm. If they are wearing it when they enter the forest and come across a dangerous animal, the animal will drop dead without the hunter having to do anything[43].

Drunya serves to make people feel at ease anywhere and in any situation.

Mg̰rg̰miriŋo is used to treat mental disorders. It has to be boiled and inhaled and also used as a wash. It should be remembered that mental illness is always considered to be supernatural in origin, caused by the actions of a witch-doctor or evil *jinn*, and can therefore only be treated with magic remedies[44].

A medicine for treating deep and infected sores, *Kɔrɔtʋ* is a herbal remedy that actually does work wonders. Kuman considered it a magic remedy, though, probably because of the influence of the nearby Akan culture, where sores are seen as a special gateway through which witch-doctors can enter to steal a man's life soul.

Tiŋo serves to protect small and sickly new-born babies and help them grow stronger. This is another natural remedy, but since its purpose is to keep in this world creatures who seem inclined to reach the hereafter before living their lives, it is considered to be magic.

Tiniŋoro is a magic bracelet which improves performance at school, particularly in writing tasks.

Koteŋo is a protective remedy that produces a sort of dull bubbling noise whenever an evil-doer comes near the medicine hut.

When he started to tell me about *Gyobri*, Kuman said that if a bad man, a witch-doctor, came close to his house this remedy would make a sharp snapping noise and the man would be unable to enter. Then he corrected himself, saying that this was the job of *Koteŋo* and he had better not speak of *Gyobri*[45].

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[43] I wonder whether this amulet may have something to do with the *nyama* catalyst used by *Donzo* hunters. See Dieterlen 1988.

[44] Something very similar may be said of the Dogon. Presenting a case study B. Fiore and P. Coppo (1988: 18) write: "*The healer had a good look at him and said that it was the yeban and anybody who is attacked by yeban and not treated will certainly become keke. He prepared the remedies, he tried them. After a while he sent the patient away saying that he could not stand the dose of the illness on himself, that it was too strong*". In this specific case the patient was suffering from trypanosomiasis, which he had contracted in Ivory Coast and was unknown on the Dogon uplands in Mali.

[45] A similar practice seems to be common among the Bissa in Burkina Faso. Samuelsen

Two things distinguish these remedies from the others, which are purely curative. First, they are not prepared specifically for a single individual. Second, precisely by virtue of their essence, they can only be "charged" on the occasion of the annual festival of medicines, and their preparation is an integral part of the manifestation of the healer's power.

THE MEDICINE FESTIVAL

"A zɪ úa dī hɛrɛ gbigɛ'rɛ↓?"
"And how do you celebrate that day?"

Kuman's annual festival of medicines was an event that involved the whole village as well as the healer himself. It was an occasion for the community to gather around its health guarantor and for him to show his power to one and all, year after year. He said such events were common to all the healers in the region, which means that the festival stands as a cultural feature of the area rather than an individual initiative. This raises an interesting question: hitherto there seems to be no record of a similar practice in traditional medicine in West Africa, so further research will be needed to throw some light on the matter.

The festival performed three concurrent functions. It was an occasion for Kuman to strengthen his alliance with *Yego*, his ancestors, the spirits of the savannah, the *kpa̰yɔ* of the universe, medicinal plants and the remedies he prepared; it was a solemn thanksgiving to the supernatural forces that contribute to the success of the healer's work; it was a public demonstration of the healer's magic and curative powers, a resounding assertion of the continuity and legitimacy of his social role.

The first part of the celebration was a private affair, while the second, with its concluding rites, culminated in a sumptuous public feast. It was timed to coincide with the end of the dry Harmattan season, in late February or early March. In the Kulango calendar this is the month of *Gyɛmɛnɛ*, which is considered the most dangerous of the year because it is when *Yego* comes into the world to balance out the numbers of births and deaths, taking with him a good many human lives. It is a statistical fact that at the end of the dry season the number of deaths far outstrips that of births, but it is hardly surprising. In the period of the Harmattan temperatures can drop to 14

(2004:101) writes: "*Karim* [the name of a traditional healer] *protects himself against sorcery by hanging a small medicine bag at the entrance of his compound. If a sorcerer enters, Karim explains, he or she will start to tremble and will leave the compound immediately*".

degrees centigrade at night and soar to above 40 degrees during the day; such temperature changes cause severe problems to people with respiratory or cardiovascular conditions. What is more, crop production in the dry season is meagre, and cultivations are often damaged by wild animals which encroach into village areas in search of water.

The month of *Gyɛmɛnɛ* is thus an important time in the Kulango calendar, and it is no coincidence that the medicine festival was celebrated just then.

This is how Kuman described it to me. As the established date approached he would receive messages from his ancestors' *prumo* and his guiding spirit telling him to begin his ritual preparations because the festival was nigh. They asked him to prepare sacrifices and go to the forest with kola nuts, kaolin, pure water and a chicken or two to offer to the *gyiŋa̰ʋ̰*. The nearer the festival came, the more insistent were the requests. When he was in the savannah gathering the herbs he needed for the celebration, or while asleep at night, the *gyiŋa̰ʋ̰* would visit him and keep repeating, "the festival is coming, you must be ready". According to Kuman (see texts, p. 189) every real Kulango healer ought to have celebrated the same occasion at the same time, which was normally ten days after the *Gyɛmɛnɛ* new moon. And at the same time the same celebration was held by the *gyiŋa̰ʋ̰* of the savannah. This shows the effective continuity between the world's two levels: the human, natural and social level and the non-human, supernatural and anti-social one. Firmly convinced that the festival should be held on the one appointed day, Kuman said that many consultations were needed to be perfectly sure of the exact date.

When that day dawned, Kuman rose very early to perform the private part of the ritual before the other villagers awoke. He took his best rooster and went to Kwaku Wara's grave, where he sacrificed the animal and asked his old teacher for his support during what would be a very long and demanding day. He immediately returned to his camp where the public ceremony was to be held; everyone was invited, especially those (with their families) who had been treated and cured by Kuman during the agricultural year. There he prepared the nine magic medicines and charged a series of bracelets, rings and other protective amulets, following which he made a large quantity of "black remedy", a charcoal-based medicine used to treat intestinal problems. In the meantime he gave a public demonstration of his powers, swallowing hot embers and performing other acts with fire: he walked on hot coals just taken from the hearth and went through rings of fire wearing only a loincloth, he cut wounds in his abdomen with red-hot blades and dressed them with compresses which would heal them with astonishing speed (he sported a web of scars on his belly). Then he washed everyone, particularly the children, with *Tiŋo* and in the last part of the celebration the patients he had healed regaled him with animals to be sacrificed to his ancestors, to Yego and to the *kpa̰yɔ* of remedies. Kuman slaughtered all the chickens, goats and sheep given to him and offered them to the Presences so that their blood would seal

a new pact of alliance and collaboration, leaving aside one rooster. As a final demonstration of his own *kpa̱yɔ* he picked up the surviving rooster, held it at head height before the assembled throng and killed it with his gaze alone, simply by thinking of the animal as a sacrificial victim. After this final rite the meat was given to the women, who prepared a great feast for all those present – the party lasted all night, with dancing and song around the hearth.

On this a number of comments suggest themselves. In the first place, in no other instance is the figure of the healer revealed so clearly in all its ambiguity. The decision to hold the festival of medicines in the month of *Gyɛmɛnɛ*, known to be the most dangerous time of the year, may be interpreted as an act of defiance against the forces of chaos to prove to everyone that the *warɪsɛ* has what it takes to keep them at bay and to bend them to his will, be they good or evil. Indeed a good many villagers, particularly those who considered Kuman a witch-doctor, said that it was during the festival that he showed himself for what he really was – a man no less dangerous than his master Kwaku Wara. Commenting on such aspersions, Kuman smiled and told me that the people who cast them were those who tried to approach him on the quiet before the festival to ask him to visit harm upon other people – so who, he asked, was the real witch-doctor?

The festivals' ritual is full of acts of protection performed by the healer for the benefit of his community. In private he asks his ancestors' *prumo* for help and protection to ensure the successful completion of the day's events. As he demonstrates his powers during the preparation of the medicines, it is as if he were proving that people can trust him, that he is able to defend them against supernatural forces that would otherwise crush them. After preparing the remedies he washes everybody with a magic medicine to restore strength and vigour at a time of year which is, as we have seen, hard on everyone. He offers himself as a mediator between the people and the Presences in the act of sacrificing their animals for them.

All these factors point to an interpretation of the festival as the annual comfirmation not only of the relationship between the healer and the forces of magic, but also of his relationship with the community, which confirms him as its mediator with chaos.

It should also be borne in mind that the celebration is not an individual choice, it is an act of collective worship which is probably common to the entire Kulango region but about which, hitherto, nothing was known. Behind this gap in our knowledge there is certainly an unwillingness on the part of professionals like Kuman to speak of such important matters, but listening carefully to his words I formed the distinct impression that there is a sort of private communications network among traditional healers (the veto on my seeing the plants was based on a collective decision made by the healers' association, p. 21) and it is perhaps through that network that the exact date of the festival is made known. I should add that initially Kuman was highly

reluctant to go into a detailed description of the celebration. Perhaps his first mention of it was accidental, because when I asked him to tell me about it he withdrew, pretending not to understand what I was saying (see texts, p. 181); a few days later, I imagine after some consultation, he brought up the subject himself and what is reported above is the result of that meeting.

THE TREATMENT PROCESS

"Mʊm mú lā lɛ mú hɛ̄-gɛ,mʊm mì hé-gɛ hɔ,mʊm Yegomılıa lɛ a mì hé-gɛ, lɛ mú dālı Yegomılıɛ'rɛ, mʊm hū̱ nyā̱-ŋa-mı lɛ hū̱ kyērɛ kyɔ".
"When I have finished the treatment, when I've done it, if Yegomilia is there and I've done it, I pray to Yegomilia to give me the power, and the patient gets better".

Having given a broad outline of the dimensions within which a Kulango *warısɛ* lives and works, I shall now describe the stages of the treatment process, from when the patient is taken on to the end of the therapy. As in all cultures, each step in the curative process is marked by ritual elements; full recovery is achieved not with the disappearance of symptoms (the outward signs of illness) but with the re-establishment of the natural order and the balance between natural and religious elements. A course of treatment may be summarised in seven main stages:

1. meeting with the *warısɛ* and examination of the symptoms;
2. divination to identify the cause of the illness;
3. imposition of food taboos, performance of sacrifices and collection of plants;
4. preparation of the medicinal *canari*;
5. herbal therapy;
6. end of treatment and healer's recompense;
7. "discharge" of the *kpa̱yɔ* of any medicines not used by the patient.

The process starts with an initial meeting between the *warısɛ*, the patient and the latter's family, or at least closest relatives. In the healer's *ben*, his guests are required to sit outside the medicine hut, whose door must be open so as to allow the remedies to hear the patient describing his symptoms and his fears. If necessary the medicines themselves can thus help the *warısɛ* to decide on the treatment to be adopted. Since every African healer is an accomplished psychologist, this initial consultation in the presence of the patient's family serves to bring to light any problems stemming from the individual's family relationships, any justified or groundless fears he may have, or possible

over-reactions to other people's general opinion of him. A Kulango healer is careful to discern the real cause of an illness because his primary concern is to remove that underlying cause, not simply to treat its symptoms[46]. By observing the patient's behaviour and his relatives' attitude in their first meeting, the healer can decide if it is likely to be a case of witchcraft, the violation of a traditional law or simply something to be considered a natural event which follows the logic of worldly things.

A traditional healer's diagnosis is never abstract or decontextualised – it is always rooted in the practicalities of the case in hand. Many scholars still seem unable or unwilling to acknowledge this, mistaking the confused answers of their informants to abstract questions for a kind of traditional ignorance[47]. On contextuality and the practical nature of traditional lore F. Crevatin[48] observes:

> "*The narrative mode is widely used, and not only in Africa. It is by far the predominant mode among my informants, to whom it would be unthinkable to couch a question in decontextualised terms. Such a question would not produce an answer worthy of the name.*"

Kuman usually ascribed a natural origin to an illness when it responded readily to treatment, whereas he immediately suspected an unnatural origin (sorcery or the breach of traditional rules) when it was particularly virulent, lasted too long or failed to respond as expected to traditional herbal remedies.

After diagnosis, if the healer is certain that the disease is natural, caused by parasites or bacteria, his course of treatment goes directly to stage three, which is the preparation of the *canari* of remedies, over which he recites the ritual incantations.

If the symptoms and causes of the illness remain unclear he has to proceed to stage two, which is divination.

In some cases a healer may be said to rely on passive divination, meaning that he does not have to resort to consulting his fetish because he receives an immediate answer from the magic remedies found in his medicine hut. As the patient explains his condition, if the proper remedy is in the hut the *canari* containing it will make itself known spontaneously to the healer by bowing down when he enters the hut with the receptacle in which the treatment is to be prepared. In such cases the illness is often the result of witchcraft, because the remedies already prepared in the healer's hut are the magic ones prepared during the annual festival of medicines.

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[46] See also Bierlich on the Dagomba; 1999:323.

[47] See Wyllie – 1983:55 – on the alleged oblivion of supernatural categories among the Winneba.

[48] F. Crevatin 2007:21.

In more complicated cases, where the illness stems from the breach of the rules of tradition or serious offence given to the village ancestors, the healer receives no initial response from his medicines and the only way to get to the bottom of the problem is by recourse to active divination.

Every specialist may use his own method of choice. Kuman relied exclusively on his personal fetish, to which he offered sacrifices (eggs, kola nuts or in the most diffucult cases a chicken) in order to get a nocturnal response in his dreams. It has already been observed that in the Kulango scheme of things every herb dreamt by a healer must have some curative power, and if it is not suitable for the case in hand it will certainly work in the treatment of another illness. In practical terms this means that in difficult cases the traditional method of treatment entails a process of trial and error until the appropriate remedy is identified. If the patient dies in the meantime, no blame is attached to the healer and his competence is not questioned – it is simply acknowledged that the death was result of Yego's will or that the witch-doctor's *kpo̱yɔ* was too strong for the healer.

Once the cause of the illness has been ascertained, the healer may prescribe a series of food taboos which have to be observed until the end of the treatment and until the completion of the thanksgiving sacrifice that must always follow complete recovery (usually chickens or goats, according to the seriousness of the disease).

After the first divination sacrifices and the imposition of food taboos, the healer decides whether he himself will collect the medicinal plants needed to prepare the patient's *canari* or send one of the patient's relatives into the savannah in his name. This usually happens when the patient has already been given his first dose of medicines and the treatment has to be continued; a relative of the patient may go into the savannah for this purpose when the *gyino̱u̱* have been informed of the case in question.

The collection of medicinal plants is a highly serious business, however, and requires a specific ritual. First of all the healer must go into the savannah explaining the patient's condition to the plant spirits and their *kpo̱yɔ*, trying to persuade them to help him. This is because the plants allow themselves to be readily identified only if they are convinced of the need to grant health to a patient since, all things considered, he deserves to live. When he finds the plants he seeks, the healer thanks the spirits that inhabit them and their *kpo̱yɔ*, removes the parts required and in exchange leaves an egg or kola nut.

Having returned home he has to prepare the patient's *canari*, which also requires the performance of a specific ritual. He puts the remedies to simmer outside the door of his medicine hut, where the curative *kpo̱yɔ* is at its most concentrated. While the *canari* is being prepared no-one may come near the fire; if anyone takes wood or embers from beneath the receptacle the medicines instantly lose their curative power and become useless. As he puts the

plants in the *canari* the healer *dalɩ bɔ kpelego*, literally meaning "prays their words"; that is to say he invokes the ancestors' *prumo*, calling upon them to add their *kpa̰yɔ* to his remedies, and then asks Yegomilia to allow the patient to recover. In so doing he charges the medicines with the *kpa̰yɔ* of the universe, the balm able to restore balance and harmony, in the certainty that the remedies will have the desired effect. Then he directly addresses the illness, ordering it to leave the patient's body. Reciting a series of incantations, he takes the *canari* in his right hand, pronounces the name of the patient three times in the case of a man and four times for a woman[49], and if he thinks that the illness is the work of a witch-doctor passes the receptacle to his left hand so that the medicines, entering through the bad door, can act against the man or woman who caused the illness. All the invocations of the ancestor's *prumo*, *Yegomilia*, the *gyina̰ṵ* and the *kpa̰yɔ* are uttered in the magic language of the savannah, which Kuman said he had learned from his guiding spirit. During our meetings Kuman would sometimes repeat some of those incantations and I can say that the language he used bore no relation to Kulango nor, as far as I am aware, to any neighbouring language. It would be interesting to ascertain whether it was really a special language known to all the healers of the region or, as may be suspected, simply a litany of magic formulas devoid of any real lexical meaning.

In this regard an interesting case study has been conducted by F. Crevatin[50] on a secret society of elders in the Bawlé village of Wamlakplì. The rituals used there include incantations in a corruption of Bambara, which appears to bear witness to a geographical and ethnic derivation from that linguistic origin. Chants and incantations often travel beyond language borders and beyond the linguistic awareness of those who use them.

When the *canari* is ready the healer gives it to the patient, explaining how it is to be used (traditional herbal remedies can be taken in the form of infusions to be drunk, inhalations, compresses, balms or powders for wounds, and liquids for whole-body washes and massages) and what rituals have to be observed to prevent any accidental spoiling of the medicines (such as not allowing women to set eyes on the *canari* when menstruating, or preventing anyone taking fire from under it while it simmers). From this point on the patient continues the treatment independently.

If the treatment does not achieve the desired effect, the failure can always be put down to the patient's improper use of the medicines, so the healer's reputation remains intact. From the first meeting to the end of the treatment the healer does not usually touch his patient's body – unless he has to examine open sores, wounds, boils or such-like – because, as has been stated, the

[49] In Dogon and Mande society, the numbers three and four are symbolically related to males and females respectively.

[50] See F. Crevatin 2004.

cause of an illness is hardly ever to be found in the physical body but is to be sought in the patient's life.

Having recovered after the course of herbal therapy, the patient must return to the healer and offer a final sacrifice to give thanks to the supernatural forces. This normally involves the slaughter of a chicken or goat, whose meat goes to the healer. Only after this last sacrifice is the patient ritually absolved of the food taboos imposed at the beginning of the treatment.

Since the practice of traditional medicine is seen by the Kulango as a mission or a gift bestowed by *Yego* himself on special men, a true healer should never ask for money in exchange for his services – a point Kuman repeated many times, such was his consideration of its importance. The idea is similar to the one illustrated by Bierlich[51] with regard to the Dagomba tradition:

> "[...] *the Dagomba notion that money corrupts curing ("spoils the medicine"). Local herbalists* [...] *serve their families, neighbors and the community with their knowledge and do not charge money for their services*".

The Kulango *warɪsɛ* acts as a mediator between those who suffer in this world and the supernatural forces which can alleviate their pain. The healer's mystic power alone, his *kpa̰yɔ*, is not sufficient to cure an illness – he must always turn to outside supernatural agents, which is why he cannot request payment for something he has not done himself, except in small part. All he can ask of his patients is confined to the sacrifices offered to the Presences, and can never go further. Kuman liked to add in this regard that when he treated particularly impecunious individuals he would often buy the animals required for sacrifice himself, in the expectation that the patients would make recompense in kind as soon as they were able. To the Kulango way of thinking, if in the final analysis an animal is not offered up by whoever has upset the balance of nature the illness will return, because the sacrifice is not considered valid by the supernatural beings. If a patient to whom Kuman advanced sacrifices recovered and continued to enjoy good health without paying his animal debt, that meant that he had been healed at the exclusive behest of *Yegomilia*, the only being who acts expecting nothing in return.

Once cured, a patient will often decide to express his gratitude in the form of gifts to the healer, in which case he can only gratefully accept what his former patient is able to offer him (see texts, pp. 189-190 and 195-196).

The same holds true for the Dagomba, of whom Bierlich[52] observes:

> "In other words, patients express their gratitude and appreciation and acknowledge the treatment they have received by giving a gift".

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[51] Bierlich 1999:317.

[52] *Ibidem* p. 321.

The final stage, the act which marks the end of the treatment process, is discharging the used medicines. It has already been observed how traditional remedies are charged with a particular *kpa̰yɔ* for a specific individual in a precise set of circumstances and that their healing power depends on *Yegomilia*, the ancestors' *prumo* and the *gyina̰ṵ* deciding to grant the patient's recovery. Once recovered, if the patient has even the smallest trace of medicine left in his *canari* he must take it back to healer, who will ritually discharge and thus eliminate it.

Kuman explained to me that as used medicines are highly dangerous to common people he had to take them a long way into the savannah, where he would recite specific incantations giving thanks to the spirits of the place before disposing of the contents of the *canari*. According to the ritual, the healer must throw the *canari* into the undergrowth and hurry back to the village without looking round to see what happens; looking back would bring down dire consequences upon him.

Behind this behaviour may lie the same explanation offered by Samuelsen[53] for the practice adopted by the Lozi:

> "[...] *one of the notions that describe the Lozi's thinking about disease is that of circularity. After being used in treatment the rest of the medicine, which now contains the disease, must be placed at the crossing of paths so that the disease will enter into the next passer-by*".

Although I think the idea of direct human contagion is only contemplated by the Kulango in relation to exanthematous child diseases, they are clearly fearful of handling medicines used by ill people and their rules provide that such substances should be left in the thickets of the savannah so that no-one may see or touch them. But I also believe that this practice cannot be dissociated from the mystic dimension of the essential link between a particular individual and the specific remedies prepared for him and no-one else at that particular time in his life and no other.

KUMAN THE DENTIST

"nyṵ̀ wɛ nyḭ́ka-ga-mɪ lɛ sá-ga bɔ nuŋo-rɪ, lɛ sá-ga mɪ kagaŋmɛ'rɛ-dɪ a hɔ̀ póí".
"A man showed it to me; he put it in his hands and he put it on my tooth and that fell out".

One of Kuman's specialisations was dental care or, to be exact, tooth extraction. I have devoted a specific section to this part of his practice because some of its features are worthy of comment.

[53] H. Samuelsen 2004:93.

When I first met Kuman in 2000 he was completely toothless. In a photograph he gave me, taken in the 1960s (see photo 2), his condition was not very different, even though he was only about 30 at the time. To explain how he had lost his teeth he told me the following story.

When he was still young he woke up one day with terrible toothache; his gums were swollen and painful, and he could find no relief. Wandering into the savannah in search of a remedy for his pain, he suddenly found himself unable to move. Then he saw someone approaching, to all appearances a normal man. It was a *gyinᾳ̱*; without uttering a word, he stretched out his hands, opened Kuman's mouth, put something in it and the afflicted tooth immediately and painlessly fell out. The spirit then asked Kuman what he thought of the remedy and, pleased by Kuman's immediate appreciation, told him that he would make him a gift of it. He took Kuman's right hand and made two cuts, one on the thumb and one on the index finger, filled them with a medicine and let him return to his village, telling him to come back whenever he wanted. But a few days later Kuman's gums swelled again because of another bad tooth. Mindful of the spirit's gift, he went into the savannah again and called out for him, but this time there was no sign of the *gyinᾳ̱*. Summoning all his courage, he gripped the tooth with his medicine-loaded thumb and finger, and ripped it out. Since the extraction proved to be simple and painless, at that point Kuman was certain that the gift was real.

From that day Kuman set himself up as the village dentist, charging 200CFA (about 30 Euro cents) per extraction. This seems decidedly at odds with the healer's ethics referred to hitherto, whereby a true *warɪsɛ* cannot ask for money in the fulfilment of his mission – a point on which Kuman was always most insistent.

Yet there is a way to resolve the contradiction. Unlike the ability to enter into contact with the Presences of the non-earthly world, the capacity to extract teeth was not a natural gift with which Kuman was born, but something he received. He received it not from Yego, but from a *gyinᾳ̱*, and it derived not from any supplementary *kpᾳ̱yɔ*, but from a magic remedy.

We have seen that the only supernatural being prepared to heal the sick while asking for nothing in exchange is Yego, whereas if a patient cured through the good offices of a *gyinᾳ̱* fails to pay his debt with a sacrifice, the disease will return to punish him.

In the light of the above there is no contradiction in considering a healer, working as a mediator for Yego and respectful of his generosity, as barred from asking for payment, whereas when he uses magic remedies given to him by the spirits of the savannah it is as if he has entered a circuit in which barter is the norm, in which case being paid for his services comes naturally.

There are additional factors pointing to a clear distinction between the work of a tooth-puller and the practice of traditional healing. Tooth extraction seems to involve no particular rituals or invocations other than

a simple incantation of invocation and thanks to the *gyinạ* who initially offered the gift. This means that it is not considered bound to a supernatural intervention on the part of Yegomilia, the patient's ancestors or their *kpạyɔ*, but rather to derive exclusively from the healer's ability – even though this stems from the magic remedy given to him by the spirit. The work of the dentist is thus comparable to the service provided by any competent artisan – a smith or a potter – whose work is assisted by a guiding *gyinạ*, and as such comes with a charge.

Although Kuman's sons were (unwillingly) reconciled to his work as a healer, they were firmly opposed to the continuation of his work as village dentist. They feared lawsuits in the event of a patient picking up an infection or losing too much blood during an extraction, so they found a way of making him desist, against his will.

When the *gyinạ* gave Kuman the ability to draw teeth he forbade him to eat *die*, a sauce made from the bitter fruit of a type of acacia. When his sons decided he had to give up his dentist's practice they put a tiny amount of the sauce in the old man's food, so from that day on he was no longer able to extract teeth. All he could do to relieve the pain of toothache was administer a herbal remedy to anaesthetise and bring down the inflammation in the area affected by an abcess.

MENTAL ILLNESS, SPIRIT POSSESSIONS, THE RETURN OF THE DEAD AND THE HEALER AS EXORCIST

"mʊm gyínạ̱ụ̱ kyēi gʊ-rɪ hɔ, usʊnạ mɪ-rɔ bɔɔgɔ (...)
wɛti hɔ́ɔ dạ̄ bɔ nyụ̱ŋmɔ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ sagasaga hɔ, siụ̱ bɔɔ..."
" If a jinn captures you, I have an incense (...)
If someone should happen to go mad, here there are remedies..."

Another of Kuman's abilities was the treatment of mental illness and possession by spirits, a feature which in the region seems to be common to the healers of the Dogon in Mali[54] and the Vodúnsì Fon and Gun[55] within the cult of Vodún (voodoo), though in Ivory Coast this form of worship is frequent only in outlying areas. The methods adopted by Kulango *warɪsɔgɔ* in treating behavioural disorders are very similar to those of the Dogon.

[54] On this subject see B. Fiore/P. Coppo 1988; P. Coppo/A. Keita 1989 and P. Coppo 1994.

[55] Micheli 2011.

In Kulango philosophy diseases of the mind cannot originate from Yego, nor can they be considered natural; they must necessarily come from other supernatural Presences: the spirits of the savannah (*gyinąų*) or the spirits of the dead (*prumo*).

The most frequent cause of mental illness is possession by evil *gyinąų*. They live outside the social space of the village, so people who have to go to their fields or nearby camps and return to the village after sunset, women who go to get water from the stream before sunrise, hunters and healers whose work takes them into the savannah, children who unwittingly wander into it as they play – they can all encounter such spirits and come under attack.

The healers and hunters who often come into contact with *gyinąų* go into the savannah covered with protective amulets, but since ordinary people are unarmed against attack by the Presences, bad spirits are more likely to strike those who find themselves in their territory by chance.

People thus attacked "lose their faces" and appear to go mad. Some become violent and perform senseless acts, some grow weak for no reason and seem perpetually tired, others withdraw into themselves and remain apathetic in the face of any stimulus. The same was found by H. Samuelsen[56] among the Bissa in Burkina Faso: "*Bad spirits might cause sickness, and, in the case of bad zin*[57]*, this often takes the form of psychic illness, with the spirit attacking the person's mind*", to which she added the following explanation, gathered from a traditional herbalist who worked on cases of possession: "*The spirits like open spaces. If a person likes to walk in such places, she can meet them. It is during these encounters that they bring about sickness*".

To treat such disorders when particularly acute, Kuman had a remedy which had to be simmered and then inhaled while steaming. He covered the patient's head with a thick *pagne*[58] and held his face over the boiling *canari* to induce intense sweating, repeating incantations of liberation – sometimes for hours on end. Then the patient would wash all over with the water in which the medicine had boiled. Though he would usually feel better after this treatment, the patient was not necessarily out of danger; behavioural disorders could easily recur, and Kuman would repeat the process again and again until the patient's complete recovery (or liberation).

People who encounter evil spirits in the savannah sometimes manage to evade their attacks and return to their village without being "captured". In such cases the *warɪsɛ* is immediately summoned for a ritual disinfestation of the site. He takes a special remedy and sets it to boil in the exact spot where the *gyinąų* appeared; the direction taken by the steam rising from the boiling

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[56] H Samuelsen 2004:103.

[57] *Zin* is the Bissa form of the Arabic word *jinn*.

[58] Traditional material made of bands of cotton sewn together to form a cloth measuring about 150 by 90cm.

canari indicates the way the spirit went. At that point the healer can pursue the spirit and, if possible, kill it or drive it from the area in a final act of liberation (see texts p. 206 & foll.).

In addition to the mental problems caused by attacks from *gyinąų*, people may fall victim to psychological disorders after coming into contact with the *pruŋo*[59] of a dead person.

Considered cases of possession, these may come about in two ways. First, someone may go mad because the death of a friend or relative to whom he was particularly close affects him so deeply that the spirit of the deceased enters his body. The symptoms of this type of possession are varied: the patient sees the face of the deceased on everyone he meets, or he hears a voice in his head constantly repeating "the deceased is here, the deceased is here" – either will gradually drive him mad.

In this case Kuman's treatment was the same as that described above: the patient covers his head, inhales the vapours from the boiling *canari* and special incenses until he is able to calm down and the attack of the *pruŋo* is beaten off.

In the second type the *prumo* of the deceased can return to this world to carry special messages to their relatives and ask for their assistance in reaching the hereafter. In this case the *pruŋo* which takes possession of a person speaks with its original voice, asking for sacrifices to its ancestors so that they will allow it to enter the village in the hereafter. These are usually the *prumo* of people who have done something bad in their earthly lives; having practised witchcraft or broken some traditional rule without having time to repent and make reparation, after death they wander aimlessly because they cannot find their way to the hereafter. They return to their village of origin and enter the body of a relative in the hope of assistance and salvation. In such cases the inhalation treatment is not enough; the family must offer the ancestors the sacrifices demanded by the *pruŋo* in order to be rid of it. If the demands are too great or insistent and the family cannot meet them, the *warɪsɛ* can step in with stronger remedies, acting almost as an exorcist, asking the *pruŋo* to leave the body of its descendant immediately and telling it to find its own way. When one of these *prumo* returns to the village, the healer must first perform a collective rite which prevents the same type of deceased being presenting itself again in the same house. He then prepares a protective magic remedy which has to be kept somewhere in the family's *ben* or buried in the courtyard so that the bad *pruŋo* may not return.

The Kulango believe that good *prumo* can also return to this world, to carry messages to their communities. Rather than entering a person's body, in such cases they show themselves in human form to the people they contact in order to deliver their messages.

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[59] *Pruŋo* is the singular of *prumo*.

One example is the *prumo* of Kuman's teachers, who visited him in his sleep; another is featured in the following story, which Kuman told me (see texts, pp. 208 & foll.).

One day, some time before I arrived in Ivory Coast in 2006, a boy died suddenly in the village of Gbuduyo. For several months he had been working in the *Basse Côte*[60] and had saved a small sum of money (7,000 CFA, approximately 10 Euros – about a week's wages for a farm labourer) which he stashed away in the straw roof of his mother's hut. Before he died he had no chance to tell his mother of the little nest-egg, so his *pruŋo* decided to come back. Gbuduyo was already in mourning for him, and his body had been buried by the road leading out of the village. Meanwhile, a man left Talahini to return to Gbuduyo, also his native village, and on the way he found the boy sitting on a white *paŋne* (his burial cloth) and asked him what he was doing. The boy replied that he was going to Bagaribo (the village where he worked as a labourer) but had forgotten to tell his mother about the money he left in the roof, so he asked the man to let her know about it as soon as he reached the village. The man agreed to pass on the message, said goodbye to the boy and went on his way. On arriving at Gbuduyo he found everyone in mourning, and asked what had happened. Someone said that Kwadio, the boy, had died. Somewhat taken aback, the man said that they must be joking because he had seen the boy that very morning and had a message from him for his mother. They took the man to the mother's home, where he saw that she really was mourning her son. He found a way to tell her what he had seen and explain the matter of the money. So she searched the straw in her roof and found the 7,000 CFA left there by her son.

I should point out that I also heard the same story several times in nearby villages.

One last observation on spirit possession. It is believed in Kulango culture, as in traditional cultures practically everywhere[61], that a bad spirit is more likely to take possession of a woman's body than a man's. In explanation Kuman said that a woman's skin is softer than a man's; in addition, women do not usually wear protective bangles, which could be ruined during menstruation, whereas men who are used to going into the savannah (healers, hunters and to a lesser extent farmers) wear plenty of them, forming a barrier which spirits are unable to penetrate.

[60] In Ivory Coast *Basse Côte* is the name given to the central-southern area of the country, rich in fruit, coffee and cacao plantations and an obvious attraction for workers in search of seasonal wage labour.

[61] For an example see De Martino (II ed. 2002) on Lucania in 1959.

THE COMMUNICATION OF KNOWLEDGE: KUMAN AND HIS APPRENTICES

"ɔɔ! Mʊm hʊ̰ʊ̰ gū fu̱ lɛ yīlɛ: "Mú yé nūʊ kyɪŋɔ lɛ úʊ sírg̱a-mɪ..."
"If someone comes from elsewhere and arrives here saying:
"I'll stay with you and you will teach me'..."

Kuman's life shows that the passing down of specialised knowledge in Kulango traditional medicine does not follow lines of descent: someone may become a *warɪsɛ* following his natural father, a matrilineal relative or even somebody with whom he has no ties of kinship. The bond tying an apprentice to his master is not an exclusive one, and an apprentice may be trained by more than one healer at different times.

Nor does ethnic identity appear to be a limit to the dissemination of the expertise of a Kulango healer; Kuman said that he had had apprentices from the Senoufo and Abron living in the neighbouring areas.

The only rule appears to be gender identity between teacher and pupil. In the Kulango tradition there are female healers but, like midwives, they can be trained only by female professionals; likewise, it seems that a male healer can only take on male apprentices.

It is clear from Kuman's descriptions that theory forms no part of training – learning takes place exclusively through the apprentice's imitation of his master. He learns by observing his teacher at work, asks no questions and takes in everything he sees. In Kuman's case it was only after he had treated his first patient and Yego had accepted him as a mediator that his father Kofi Djedwa began to correct him when he made a mistake in curative practice. Even then the correction was not given a theoretical basis but was applied to a practical act performed by the apprentice.

Some of the apprentices Kuman took on were former patients of his who decided after their recovery to stay with him and learn what they could about plants.

There does appear, however, to be a substantial difference between Kuman's training under his master Kwaku Wara and his apprentices' time with him. Before being chosen by his father as his successor and by Kwaku Wara as a disciple, Kuman had had to pass a number of tests, whereas he seems to have taken on anybody who asked for the chance to follow him. From his words (see texts, pp. 200-202) it seems reasonable to deduce that all he ever taught to those whom he called apprentices was the basis of traditional herbalism. He said that his pupils could stay with him for as long as they wanted and left his *ben* when they thought they had learned enough about plants – he made no mention of the esoteric dimension of the protection they afforded. Kuman never recounted magic episodes that had happened to him with his

followers, nor did he explicitly say that he had let them meet any *gyinąų* or taught them to invoke them when they wanted to; and especially in the case of his Senoufo and Abron apprentices, to whom he spoke through an interpreter (normally one of his sons), he never formed a bond with them as strong as his had been with Kwaku Wara.

Perhaps it was his personal decision, perhaps Kuman never found a suitable disciple to follow in his footsteps, or perhaps that dimension of traditional culture was nearing its end as Kuman was nearing his. The fact is that in 2006 the only pupil he had was his grandson Yao Roger. Though not much more than an adolescent, he had shown a real vocation for his grandfather's profession, being naturally inclined to compassion for those who suffer.

When Kuman told me of him, he regretfully added that Yao Roger was the only one of his grandsons who had not abandoned traditional religion and converted to Christianity. This remark gave me the impression that perhaps, deep down, Kuman was not entirely convinced by a choice that he had had to make by force of circumstances rather than as a result of dispassionate discernment.

KUMAN THE HEALER AND ADAPTING TO MODERNITY

"hɛrɛ nyą́ nyą̄ daa, aɪ lɛ nyą́ yī↓?"
"When someone's very ill today, where does he go?"

Kuman was very old when he died, and he saw his world changing all too quickly. When he was young the traditional village of Nassian was very isolated, but in the late 1960s it began to change. The first Catholic missionary to come to the region, Father Fuchs, founded its first church, and at the end of the 1980s a group of Catholic nuns opened the first dispensary to provide western medicines. A decade later a tarmac road reached the town of Bondoukou, passing about 80 kilometres from Nassian. A pharmacy and a maternity ward[62] opened in the village and a nurse was sent to run a small clinic[63], which by 2000 was almost completely unusable and had no more healthcare staff in it after the civil war of 2002. It was not until 2006 that a new young nurse set up his office in the crumbling building, and now it again stands empty.

[62] A glorified term if ever there was one. It was simply a concrete building of about 30 square metres without even a proper bed inside it.

[63] Equally optimistically described as a hospital.

Nonetheless, compared with Kuman's childhood the area's medical situation had changed radically. Though some people steered clear of western medical practice, others had begun to regard traditional medicine as a collection of pointless superstitions.

These days many people have a pragmatic attitude. If they need treatment their first resort is a specialist in the Kulango tradition, such as Kuman, but then they go straight to the nuns' dispensary if their condition fails to improve; those who go first to the nurse without success then visit the healer.

In 2006 Kuman was still a renowned figure and received many people from Nassian and nearby villages even though, as we have seen, some of his sons tried to dissuade him from his practice because they were afraid of legal repercussions if something were to go wrong with any of his patients.

Despite that Kuman continued to work – or as he put it, to do his duty – in accordance with the rules of tradition, certain that abandoning his culture would be a stupid thing to do. Though he knew he could not treat every case that came to him, he was equally sure that western medicine had its limits; even though it was more likely to mask the symptoms of an illness, it was certainly not able to to restore a patient to a stable equilibrium with nature, so he would soon find himself ill again, possibly presenting different symptoms. There were disorders which traditional medicine could treat better than western medicine, and vice-versa; when Kuman himself fell victim to a serious intestinal infection while we were working together, he took the nuns' medicines one day to alleviate his symptoms and postponed his traditional sacrifices and remedies to the next.

When I asked Kuman what naturally-occurring ailments he could treat with his herbs, he made no claim of omniscience; he simply gave me an honest list of the things for which he was known in the area. He said that he was specialised in the treatment of problems in pregnancy and breast-feeding, and toothache; he was able to treat intestinal disorders, skin infections and heart conditions; he had remedies for mental illness and spirit possession and could heal deep cuts and septic sores; he knew how to treat malaria and kidney problems and could deal with children's exanthemous diseases; he knew the antidotes for various types of snakebite and could obviously take action in cases of witchcraft.

He added that he was not able to set broken bones or perform surgery, neither could he treat AIDS or hepatitis – for these problems another specialist in the area would have to be consulted.

“ʊ́ʊ mā̰a̰ wātʊ gʊ̰ wɛ, hɛ́rɛ hɛ̄ wa̰wa...”
“Would you tell us about something else, something extraordinary…?”

When our meetings were drawing to an end I asked Kuman to tell me about any particularly difficult case he had dealt with in his long life as a healer. To my surprise he replied that he considered all the cases that had come to him on the same level, so he had nothing special to relate (see texts, p. 266-267). I was surprised because in the village I had heard a series of stories about Kuman’s healing abilities that verged on the miraculous, so I was curious to know which ones he would choose to tell me of his greatest successes.

With my own eyes I had seen a woman of over 70 breast-feed the son of her daughter-in-law, who had had to go to Bouna for a couple of weeks to see her husband; I knew that the compress she used to bring back her milk had been prepared by Kuman. I had personally seen one of Kuman’s remedies heal – in two days – a horrendous machete cut on Thomas Kwame’s leg; all that remained of it was a thin pink scar. I had also heard stories of premature babies saved by the old healer, cobra bites remedied when the victims were virtually in a coma, sores healed when the nuns had previously advised the victim to have his limb amputated at Bondoukou hospital, not to mention cases of witchcraft successfully fought off.

Kuman told me that healing was healing, that no healing was better than any other and there was no point in concentrating on one case rather than another. It was not a question of greater or lesser importance – what counted was that equilibrium had been restored.

Kuman did not want to say any more on the subject – to respect his wishes I shall do the same.

Chapter II
Kuman the Hunter

THE TRADITIONAL KULANGO HUNTER

"…A Dozobɛrɛ eh! Míı lā gyī hɛrɛ báa hɛ̄-ɪ́!"
"... but the Donzo, eh! I don't know what they do!"

For many peoples in West Africa, especially those of Voltaic origin, a traditional hunter is a true descendant of the mythical hero who founded a particular village or community. On the Dagara in Burkina Faso, Lenz observes[1]: "*Especially in accounts by earth priests* [...] *it is almost always a hunter who is named as the discoverer and first settler of the new habitat*"; the same is true of most of the Kulango and Abron communities in Ivory Coast[2]. This lies at the root of the primary importance hunters have always enjoyed in these societies.

Mande and Senoufo[3] hunters are organised in specific associations, usually known as *Donzoton* and *Kamajoisia*, which have a religious basis and comprise various levels of initiation.

Members of these associations are required to observe certain prohibitions and a number of internal rules. They may be able to give magic charges to highly potent protective amulets which they wear as bangles or rings or sew onto magic shirts which are impervious to bullets and arrows when the hunters wearing them are ritually pure.

On the strength of their esoteric knowledge, members of the *Donzoton* are thought to be invincible, hence their present-day employment as forest rang-

[1] C. Lenz 2000:196.

[2] See stories of the foundation of the kingdom of Gyaman in Terray 1995:278-279 and Micheli 2008:124-125.

[3] See Dieterlen 1988, Zahan 1949 and Cissé 1994.

ers in a number of West African countries[4] and as private security guards by well-off inhabitants of the cities of Mali, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Sad to say, they are also known for their active involvement in the recent civil wars that have afflicted Liberia, Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso[5].

Less well known, perhaps, is the fact that something similar to these associations is found in many other Voltaic traditions, including the Kulango in Nassian. As stated earlier, the Kulango are now sedentary farmers who as a rule only go hunting in the dry season, when the yams are still unripe, other crops are scarce and sheep and goats struggle to find water and fresh grass. In addition, in all the oral traditions I have encountered in which hunters play a prominent role[6] they are presented as solitary men; there has never been any hint of the existence of any kind of organised association. This may be a consequence of the restrictions imposed by the Ivorian government, which in 1974 outlawed hunting, with the proviso that "*farmers can shoot and trap animals if they are causing crop damage*"[7]. It would be remarkable, however, if such measures had been able to suppress almost entirely what in Mande society today seems to be enjoying a second spring.

Be that as it may, the fact is that my conversations with Kuman brought out a host of details that showed up notable similarities between the Kulango *sawalɛgɛ* (literally "hunt") and the renowned Mande *Donzoton*.

In one of our last meetings, after we had spoken many times of the *sawalɛgɛ*, I ventured to ask Kuman directly whether he had ever heard of the Senoufo *Donzoton* and if he thought that the Kulango *sawalɛgɛ* was better. At that question he almost jumped out of his chair, proclaiming that the *sawalɛgɛ* had absolutely nothing in common with the *Donzoton*. He added proudly that the *sawalɛsɔgɔ*, Kulango hunters, are highly adept in the use of their rifles and know what can and cannot be shot. They abide by the laws of *Yegomilia*, while the *Donzo*, he said, shoot at who knows what; they kill human beings as if they were animals, they don't shoot to hunt but kill people for money – something that a Kulango *sawalɛgɛ* could never contemplate.

Kuman's violent reaction was perfectly in line with his culture and its traditional rules, which in the final analysis should also apply to the neighbour-

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[4] PACIPE, Programme d'Assistance Technique à la Communication et à l'Information pour la Protection de l'Environnement, a communication programme launched by the European Community to promote environmental protection through "*a blending of the traditional and the modern*", relies heavily on the promotion of traditional hunters' associations as primary collaborators in the implementation of its projects and those of other European donors (see M. Leach 2000:580-581).

[5] See, among others, Cissé 1994, F. Crevatin 2008, M. Leach 2000 and T. J. Basset 2003.

[6] See Micheli 2005, PhD thesis.

[7] T. J. Basset 2003:7, note 4.

ing populations. *Donzo* ethics made no allowance for a hunter killing a man on commission for money, and the modern transformation of a hunter into a mercenary is entirely alien to the association's original values.

This is of a piece with what T. J. Bassett[8] has to say about the *Donzo* in a village in north-east Ivory Coast he chooses to call Kalikaha, a name invented to protect his informants from the unwelcome attentions of the Ivorian authorities:

> *Just thirty years ago, initiation took place over a three-year period. [...]. Today the initiation process has become greatly simplified. [...]. One senior hunter summed it up by saying, 'today, all you have to do is give a rooster to a donzo, buy a rifle, and kill animals and you call yourself a donzo'.*[9]

Moussa Konde, an old hunter in Mandiana prefecture in Guinea, said much the same in a radio interview cited by M. Leach[10]:

> *We hunters have seen that hunting has abandoned its customs a little. Today, anyone who puts a gun to his shoulder declares himself a hunter. It is this we want to discourage. No one who hasn't been initiated at the hunter's altar (*dankun*) can be in our association, today or tomorrow* (Kankan Rural Radio, 29 August 1998).

Returning to the classical figure of the West African hunter, of particular interest are the characteristics he has in common with the traditional healer. Both spend most of their time in spaces believed to be anti-social, that is to say outside the confines of the village and its fields. There, in the savannah and the forest, they live cheek-by-jowl with supernatural forces, the bush spirits and the *gyinɑ̃ɑ̃* with which they are able to communicate and from which they can obtain personal advantages in a range of circumstances.

In many respects they are therefore considered similar, particularly in terms of their ambiguity: on one hand they are valuable because they work for the benefit of the community; on the other they are regarded with suspicion because they are able to deal with magic forces and possess deadly powers, deriving from their supernatural friends, which they can use to do harm.

On hunters, here are the views of M. Leach[11], "[...]. *One is the ambiguity of hunters' 'social' position. In some sense, hunters are seen as operating on the*

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[8] T. J. Bassett 2003:5-6.

[9] In point of fact the initiation currently required by the Binkadi *donzow*, the official hunters' association, is supposed to comprise three stages: 1) introduction to the association by a full member; 2) the presentation to this *donzo* of a red rooster and twelve kola nuts for the necessary sacrifices; 3) the payment of 1,000 CFA in return for an official membership card (see T. J. Bassett 2003:5).

[10] M. Leach 2000:585.

[11] M. Leach 2000: 581-582.

fringes of 'normal' social relations, in their fraternizing with bush spirits, their long sojourns alone in the bush, their reputation for possessing powerful and esoteric 'fetish' medicines with the capacity to harm and disrupt the social fabric"; and T. J. Bassett[12]: "*Because they generally use these special powers for the benefit of society, the* donzow *are widely respected by the general public in their role as crime fighters. However, a concern that some* donzow *might use their prowess for socially disruptive ends (crime,* coups d'état*) produces some fear and ambivalence towards the invigorated* donzo ton".

Though there are men, like Kuman, who are both hunters and healers, this is not the rule in Kulango society. Many hunters are familiar with some plants and know how to prepare curative or magic remedies, but others rely on specialist healers, above all for the charging of the protective amulets without which they would not even venture into the savannah. By the same token, there are healers who can prepare amulets but are not hunters: one such case was Kwaku Wara, Kuman's last teacher.

Mastery of the two disciplines, traditional medicine and hunting, is also common to many *Donzo*, but for them too it is a case of a possibility rather than a rule.

THE HUNTER'S TRAINING

"U̱ŋowalɔɔgɔ mì bi̱-kɛ lɛ..."
"I worked thick ropes too..."

The Kulango do not seem to have any set pattern of training for hunters. Like the *warɪsɛ,* the *sawalɛsɛ* begins his development as something of a game or hobby, watching and following an adult relative and trying to imitate him in his work, though in the case of a hunter there is no unusual event at his birth to indicate his future profession. What is similar to the healer's training is the process of initiation, which is marked by specific rituals and membership of a secret society. It cannot commence until a boy shows a particular aptitude for hunting by succeeding in killing a large animal single-handed. Many Kulango reach old age without ever being properly initiated to the art of the *sawalɛgɛ*, the Hunt as a cultural category, and they do their best to trap what game they can for food; by contrast, others are formally invited to join the *sawalɛgɛ* at a very early age. Today, unfortunately, the *sawalɛgɛ* are a dying breed. Apart from Kuman, in the village of Nassian only one old man – Mansunu Yao, whom I met and who died between 2002 and 2006 – belonged to the broth-

[12] T. J. Bassett 2003:2.

erhood, and it is to my regret that I did not have the opportunity of hearing him tell his story. Set out below is a description of a complete system, but it is based on the words of one man. The biggest gaps in it concern the mechanics of entry into the brotherhood and initiation to it; these are characterised by secret rites of passage to which I, as a woman and as an outsider, could not be made privy. The *sawalɛgɛ* as a brotherhood of initiates will be discussed later; the section below confines itself to the first steps in the preparation for initiation: apprenticeship with a master hunter from the family, usually the man who procures the pupil's first firearm, and the mystical apprenticeship with the guiding spirits.

FIRST STEPS: HUMAN MASTERS

"ah! Kyɛrɛ úv gyī tüü'rɛ pa mʊnʊbıɔ!"
"Ah! Now you really know the rifle!"

By Kuman's account, traditional hunters are not obliged to undergo a specific period of training based on their age, at least not before official entry into the brotherhood. But anyone wishing to become a good hunter has to start by following a senior one, who in a way acts as his master. The old hand lets the boy come with him on his hunting trips, on which knowledge is acquired exclusively by means of imitation, participation and demonstration.

Kuman gave me the following account of his introduction to hunting, which began when he was sent to live with his mother's brother. His father had taught him a great deal about ropework, and on his first steps on the path to hunting he used those skills in the preparation of ropes and strings of all sizes to build various types of trap for the big and small game to be found in the bush.

He also used steel snares and other devices that required the construction of small wooden cages and the digging of holes of various sizes into which animals would be made to fall. A speciality of his was a simple snare comprising a rope tied to a tree and ending in a noose hidden under leaves and earth or animal droppings. The bait placed inside the noose was fresh cassava leaves or oily palm seeds which would attract animals of the size of an antelope or gazelle; caught by the rope around their necks, they would be killed in the evening when Kuman returned to see whether the trap had sprung properly. Meat thus obtained was given to the old hunter, in this case Kuman's uncle Yao Kra, who then distributed it to all the families of the *ben*.

It was only when one of the adult members of the *ben* left the village that Yao Kra decided that time had come for Kuman to hunt with a firearm. He

summoned him and gave him his own weapon, saying that just as others had once taught him the arts of the *sawalɛgɛ*, the time was ripe for him to teach the same things to his nephew. Kuman's first weapon was an antique – a muzzle-loading musket which he was not yet strong enough to load by himself. So his uncle loaded it for him, and from his first outing with that old musket Kuman brought back no fewer than six guinea fowl.

During his training period a strong bond developed between Kuman the apprentice and his master Yao Kra. Kuman's right to hunt as an apprentice depended on his old uncle, who answered for him to the *sawalɛgɛ* association, since the boy had not yet been initiated.

As Yao Kra was the owner of the musket, he always bought the ball and powder Kuman used for hunting. This bond of dependence, which Kuman continued to abide by after becoming a fully-fledged hunter, an active member of the brotherhood and a married man, obliged him to offer his maternal uncle a paw (or foot or hoof) and the breast of every animal he brought home, as a mark of respect for the association's hierarchy.

In short order – about a year – Kuman proved to be a highly gifted hunter; since he was able to kill even big game animals single-handed he was judged proficient enough to join the *sawalɛgɛ* officially as an automous hunter. The day that he returned to the village with a gazelle and two splendid *biche*[13], Yao Kra decided that his nephew's apprenticeship could be considered complete and organised the feast that would mark his graduation and the public presentation of a new candidate for admission to the *sawalɛgɛ*.

On the day appointed for the feast Yao Kra bought Kuman a modern 12-bore shotgun from the Lebanese shop in Nassian[14]. He had Kuman officially summoned and told him that now he was sure of his hunting ability because he had shown that he would be able to live on what he could hunt, so the time had come to abandon his fields and his crops. Somewhat discomfited by the concluding part of that statement, Kuman asked his uncle for permission to continue in the fields because he could go hunting early in the morning and work the land in the afternoons – it would be foolish to walk away from an activity that had thus far fed the whole of their big family. Publicly acknowledging the boy's honourable intentions, Yao Kra granted his nephew permission to continue to look after his fields, after which he embraced him[15] and the feast commenced.

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[13] Small antelopes, about as big as a medium-sized dog, they are considered a delicacy.

[14] Lebanese traders are to be found all over Ivory Coast. Their shops are often the only places selling western food products and a whole range of merchandise which is hard to come by elsewhere.

[15] The embrace is far from common among the Kulango in Nassian, hence its symbolic significance in this episode.

Before the feast Yao Kra presented Kuman with his new shotgun, with a powerful protective amulet fixed to the barrel. As he did so, for the first time he publicly relinquished the share of the game to which he had hitherto been entitled as a senior hunter, telling his nephew that from that day on he would be able to sell it and use the proceeds to buy the cartridges he needed to shoot. That marked Kuman's acquisition of independence from his tutor and passage to his new status as a young *sawalɛsɛ*, a full member of the hunters' association (see texts, p. 237). Then Kuman was washed with a number of remedies prepared by members of the association to enhance his prowess, after which the oldest hunter gave him the *nibo* (see p. 53 & foll.), a powerful force against attacks by wild animals (see texts pp. 238-239).

When I asked Kuman about the average training period for a traditional hunter, he said that there was no set time, that it depended on an individual's ability. There were people, like him, who had shown in a few months that they were good enough to join the association, while others had spent years trying to qualify, but to no avail (see texts, pp. 218-219).

On his relationship with his uncle, Kuman added that he continued to honour him until his death, always offering him the best parts of everything he brought home from a hunt. Yao Kra was his only master in the arts of hunting.

What Kuman told me is worthy of at least three comments. Firstly, as was traditionally the case with the *Donzo*, the only way to get into the hunters' association was through the demonstration of individual ability in the single-handed hunting of big game, providing the community with proof of the true, practically-acquired maturity portrayed in anthropological literature as the typical pre-requisite for many rites of passage[16].

Secondly, it is probably the case that Kulango hunters were originally professionals who were not allowed to do anything else. Otherwise it would not be clear why Yao Kra asked Kuman to leave his work in the fields when he presented him as a new member of the *sawalɛgɛ*, or why he agreed to celebrate his social promotion to the rank of *sawalɛsɛ* even after Kuman's public refusal to comply with the request.

Evidently this rule, if it ever was such, must have fallen into disuse in recent generations. Although there was a memory of it, indicated in Yao Kra's public ritual request to Kuman on the day of his promotion, there seemed to be no attempt to enforce it. It should also be pointed out that Yao Kra himself, master hunter, had fields which he cultivated with this brothers – so his generation already effectively disregarded the rule (see texts, p. 148 & foll.).

There remains an observation on the custom of offering the senior hunter particular parts of the game bagged by an apprentice. Something very similar

[16] See Van Gennep 1981.

is described by T. J. Bassett[17] with regard to *donzow* apprenticeship as practised by the Mande peoples. For a three-year period, he says,

> *apprentice hunters gave all their game to their teachers, who acted as if it was they, not their apprentices, who had successfully hunted. This was a public display of the successful transmission of knowledge/power from a* donzoba *to his apprentice*.

This also seems to be a usage shared by the Ashanti[18].

The idea behind it is that an apprentice must make formal payment to his teacher for the knowledge that he has agreed to pass on to him. The fact that he continues to share the fruits of his work with the whole community also serves to emphasise the individual's membership of the group and his respect for the older hunters.

More details will be provided below on how every Kulango *sawalɛsɛ* would send the oldest member of the Hunt a part of the game he had bagged on a particularly successful trip and how all the association's members and the villagers were invited to the celebrations.

IN THE *DṴṴKƆ*: GOOD AND BAD *GYINA̰Ṵ*

> *"... bɔ pḭkpo lɛ bɔ ṵno lɛ bɔ tüi baaŋɛ'rɛ hú bárı... úa tāa lɛ mı baaŋɛ'rɛ-í".*
> *"...his smell, his head and his rifle, which he carried on his shoulder... those things were not like mine".*

Like traditional healers, hunters spend most of their time in the anti-social space of the savannah, the *dṵṵkɔ*, where it is easy to come across bush spirits and other supernatural creatures. It is precisely this proximity that allows them to establish special relationships with *gyina̰ṵ*.

The same idea is common to other West African hunter communities, as exemplified by M. Leach's observations on the Mende[19]:

> *The region's hunter-warriors attribute their success to what can be broadly glossed as 'medicines' (Mende* halei*), including 'contractual' associations with specific bush spirits which require certain forms of reverence and which reveal the secret of decoctions to provide invisibility, invincibility, and uncanny shooting powers.*

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17 T. J. Bassett 2003:5.

18 See Rattray 1969.

19 M. Leach 2000:588.

One of the most important lessons an apprentice hunter has to take on board before entering the brotherhood is how to deal with the bush spirits, because, as T. J. Bassett[20] puts it:

> *Any attempt to exploit their*[21] *space (e.g. establishing a settlement, hunting, farming, extracting natural products) requires that sacrifices be made to appease these place-specific spirits. If such rituals are not performed, intruders and their kin risk misfortune (poor harvest, illness). It is through initiation into the hunters' association (*donzo ton*) that hunters learn how to minimize these dangers*.

In his long hunting career, Kuman encountered many *gyinɑ̰ṵ*, which in some cases would help him and in others oppose him. A lot of them were those with which he said he had stable relations as a healer, while others he met only when he was hunting. Set out below are some episodes Kuman recounted to me about his encounters with spirits while on a hunt.

1) Good *gyinɑ̰ṵ*.

The first time Kuman killed an African buffalo – one of the biggest game animals, greatly prized but highly dangerous – a *gyinɑ̰* appeared to him in the guise of a normal man. He came up to him and told him how to prepare a magic potion which would protect him in the event of an attack by the dead animal's spirit[22] and explained how to proceed to the ritual division of its body among his relatives. The kidneys and back should go to his wife, and the head and neck to his children, while the heart should be set aside for his favourite son. The hunter could keep the animal's belly for himself, taking care that his wife did not eat it lest she become barren[23].

The *gyinɑ̰* then asked Kuman to return to the same spot the next day. So as soon as he awoke he went into the bush and reached the appointed place, where he found a gift from his new friend lying on the ground: it was a magic charm, a string of beads and *cauri*[24], which he decided to tie to his ankle. With that amulet he would be able to walk barefoot in the *dṵ̰ṵ̰kɔ*, day or night, without hurting his feet on any thorns or stones scattered along his

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[20] T. J. Bassett 2003:3.

[21] This possessive adjective refers to the bush spirits.

[22] Common also to Donzo and Bambara hunters in general, this idea is discussed in more detail on pp. 97-98.

[23] It may be noted here that the division of the animal spoils within a family does not comprise the paws (or feet, etc.), which as a rule are ritually offered to the oldest member of the association.

[24] *Cauri* are small white shells which were once used as currency in West Africa. Now of ritual value only, they are used in divination and as offerings to ancestors and other supernatural beings.

path. To the barrel of Kuman's shotgun the spirit tied another magic remedy that would prevent any animal in his sights being able to bolt before he fired his shot.

Good *gyinα̰ʋ̰* often show hunters where their quarry can be found, or tell them to lie in wait at a specific spot in the savannah while they see to it that the desired animal presents itself to them. In exchange for such favours they ask for little: eggs, kola nuts or other things from the village that cannot be found in the bush – sheep, goats or mirrors.

I once asked Kuman whether the *gyinα̰ʋ̰* had ever asked for some of the meat he hunted in return for their help. He replied, as he often did, by telling me a story. At one point the family of spirits which often assisted Kuman in his work as a healer began to play an important role for him as a hunter. The family – father, mother and two sons – became valued collaborators in the savannah. After every successful hunting trip in their area he would make a small square-shaped shrine, with a stone at each corner, under the tree where the spirit family lived and on each stone leave a large piece of meat from the animal just killed. He would do the same at the end of a group hunt: he waited for his fellow hunters to leave so that he was alone in the bush and then placed the gifts on the stones for his spirit friends. One day in the *dʋ̰ʋ̰kɔ* Kuman lost one of his magic charms. He spent hours looking for it, but in vain; it was a tiny amulet, about half the size of a little-fingernail, on the thinnest of strings. Kuman returned disconsolately to the village and went straight to a fortune-teller, who told him that his amulet was in the possession of the man to whom he always gave the meat he had hunted – he had found it and was waiting for the chance to give it to him. So the next day Kuman returned to the tree where he always left the shrine and there, in the middle of the square, he found his charm.

Good *gyinα̰ʋ̰* can also ask hunters for much larger sacrifices in return for their help. They may even ask a hunter to make a vow, usually involving his progeny. If he cannot have children, they will often help him to become an expert hunter, brave and fortunate, and when they decide they need him no longer arrange for him to have a son and at the same time compel him to leave the *sawalɛgɛ*. Should the hunter fail to fulfil his vow, the spirits will take offence and turn against him, becoming highly dangerous as they do so.

Something similar happened to Kuman, who told me the following story. He was by this time a middle-aged man, whose wife had borne him eight sons. The problem was that they longed for a daughter[25], but could not have one. Kuman offered sacrifice after sacrifice to the bush spirits until his pleas were finally heeded and his wife had a daughter. The first time he went into the *dʋ̰ʋ̰kɔ* after the baby's birth he met his *gyinα̰* friend, who congratulated

[25] This desire should be seen in the light of the declared matrilineal structure of Kulango society.

him on the happy event but after a while ordered him to give up hunting, since he had obtained what he most desired in the world. For fear of losing the daughter he had craved for so long, Kuman did exactly what he was told (see texts, pp. 256-258).

This story gives a clear idea of the importance attached to hunting in traditional Kulango society. Being intimately bound up with family descent, which is an indispensable value in natural societies and the only good that can truly be claimed as private, hunting could only be considered as something extremely precious.

Stating that *gyinn̰ṵ* could compel a hunter to choose between his profession and the guarantee of his line of descent therefore amounts to saying that the decision to leave the association was such a painful sacrifice that there must have been a real and unquestionable justification for it in the eyes of the other *sawalɛsɔgɔ*.

2) Bad *gyinn̰ṵ*.

One day Kuman's grandfather, himself a *sawalɛsɛ*, was out hunting in the savannah when he heard the sound of a woman crying. Following the sound, he found a group of *gyinn̰ṵ* trying to revive one of their young, who was visibly unwell. As soon as the creatures gathered there saw Kuman's grandfather they asked him to run to the village to fetch some of the water humans use to wash on their return from the fields and bring it immediately to the young *gyinn̰*, whose life was in the balance. Being very wise, the old man understood at once what would happen. He hurried back to the village, where he found one of his sisters[26] about to wash herself – before she could start he threw away her water. Then he went to the village chief and explained what he had seen, asking him to make sure that no-one washed that evening. The chief did as he was asked, and no-one washed. Kuman's grandfather then returned to the bush to see what was happening and found the young spirit lying dead. The *gyinn̰ṵ* wanted the water used by a human to make a medicine that would induce death to carry off the human rather than their youngster (see texts pp. 256-257).

This story, like others which tell of the killing of bad spirits, reveals an important facet of Kulango philosophy. Although *gyinn̰ṵ* are supernatural denizens of the *dn̰ṵkɔ*, like humans they have an earthly life which is finite and they will do anything to preserve it. It was seen in the previous chapter that bad *gyinn̰ṵ* can easily attack human beings and take possession of their bodies; they sense man's fear of them and like to exploit it. To defend themselves in this deadly game professionals of the *dn̰ṵkɔ* – hunters and healers – make use of magic amulets made with herbs and the relics of dead *gyinn̰ṵ*.

[26] She may not actually have been from Kuman's family. Sister can refer to any woman in the village who is about the same age as the user of the term.

Talking about hunting one day, Kuman told me that there was another way to ward off evil spirits. As a rule bad *gyinɑ̰ʋ̰* do not usually attack a man at their first encounter; they simply avoid any dialogue and try to frighten the intruder with their transformations (see pp. 41-42) and then prepare a more dangerous ambush for the next time. A man may consider himself lucky if that is the case, because he has the chance to drive away the *gyinɑ̰* simply by returning to the exact spot of the initial encounter bringing a generous dose of onions, a vegetable spirits cannot abide, or wearing a charm made from them.

THE HUNTER'S FETISHES

"…Bɔ̀ tú ṵŋo, vuŋo lɛ tú biiko, lɛ tú vɑ̰yɔ lɛ gyere-ti"
"... They took out a string, with something white, red and black, all together."

Life in the *dʋ̰ʋ̰kɔ* is punctuated by encounters with supernatural Presences for which it is always best to go prepared and protected by magic. The more time an individual spends outside the village, the greater his need for fetishes able to safeguard him in dangerous situations. Hunters know better than anyone else that their profession is fraught with risks, so they equip themselves with armour made of all kinds of fetish – personal, family and collective – to be sure to return home safe and sound.

Besides providing hunters with generic protection, their fetishes are expected to prevent the wearers from making mistakes, to act as a shield when danger threatens, to notify them of particularly beneficial opportunities or ominous circumstances, and even to assist them in their work.

Kuman was no exception. The many taboos he observed bore witness to the number of vows he had made in his long life to as many fetishes, whether they were involved in traditional medicine or in the *sawalɛgɛ*.

The heavy spur of rock he had found at his camp and managed to drag to his *ben* with the help of his family and friends became a shrine to which he would address requests and offer sacrifices – some of which were designed to help him in his work as a hunter. In the course of our conversations Kuman recounted several hunting episodes in which that fetish had played a decisive role. The day that set the seal on Kuman's alliance with his fetish-rock was related to me as follows.

One day Kuman, who had not eaten meat for some time, went to the fetish to offer some sacrifices and send up his prayers. Having placed his offerings, he went out into the bush confident of the support of the Presence living in his rock. He walked for a good distance and when he reached his regular hunting beat he heard a series of noises like animals approaching, or at least

moving around nearby, so he stopped to see what was happening. He realised that the noise was coming from a large array of game animals spontaneously coming towards him. Among them was a big gazelle, which suddenly raised its head and was about to bolt when an enormous vulture swooped down and killed it. The bird then looked straight into Kuman's eyes, dropped the dead gazelle at his feet and flew off. The rest of that hunt was a field day. Certain that the gazelle was a gift from his fetish, he slit its throat, cut out its heart and returned to camp, where he placed it beneath the rock. From that day the ritual became a habit and the rock a sacrifical altar; at the same time vulture meat was added to his food taboos.

When Kuman was still an apprentice healer under his uncle, the village was full of *warɪsɔgɔ*, with whom he often came into contact. After hunting one day he returned to the village with a big game animal, which he presented to them as a gift of thanks for their advice. While they were all skinning the animal before sharing out its meat in equal parts, in its belly they found a string with red and black things on it. Kuman picked it up and tried to throw it way, but it stuck to his fingers and he was unable to get rid of it. So he went to a fortune-teller, who told him it was a fetish that he should take with him every time he went into the *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ*; there, all he had to do was hold it under his nose and rub it and he would be able to summon the game he wanted, which would come to him without any further effort on his part. So Kuman did just that: he took the little fetish into the savannah and immediately heard the sound of a host of animals running towards him. Fearing for his life as they bore down on him, he fired three shots and killed three gazelles, and then stood back as the other animals dispersed. From that day on Kuman venerated that strange little object. He told me that anyone he had chosen to give it to would have been able to become a good hunter, but nowadays no-one would have abided by its instructions or the taboos that the fetish required, so he had decided to keep it for himself[27].

The old *sawalɛsɛ* never explained exactly what he meant by "its instructions", and as he was certainly referring to the performance of specific ritual acts I did not labour the point. But in telling the story of the fetish, the (thinly) veiled criticism of contemporary Kulango society that Kuman formulated was highly significant. Saying that no-one would have been able to follow the fetish's instructions, he probably meant that by that time there were very few people who practised the traditional religion, so it would have been pointless to give them a gift as precious as his hunting fetish.

Other fetishes typical of Kulango hunters are very similar to those used by the *Donzo*; magic charms specially charged by old hunters or powerful *warɪsɔgɔ*. Many of the magic remedies that Kuman prepared during his festi-

[27] In saying this Kuman was probably thinking of his sons, none of whom had joined the *sawalɛgɛ*.

val of medicines were bought by hunters to protect them against attacks from wild animals or to enhance their strength and magic powers. *Nibo*, which struck animals dead, *Gyara*, a good-luck charm and *Tiŋo*, which increased man's strength, were the most sought-after.

Then there is a whole range of other talismans and charms for a variety of purposes. Mention has already been made of rings, necklaces and bangles for protection against wounds caused by thorns in the bush. Talismans are tied to rifle barrels to bend game animals to the hunter's will and amulets are used to make a hunter invisible to dangerous animals.

Nonetheless, exactly as is the case for the *Donzo*, a Kulango hunter's most potent talisman is the magic shirt given to him on his initiation.

THE HUNTER'S SHIRT

> *"Hɔ zoloŋo mɪ-rɔ dugu pa; mìa yáa i̱sike'rɛ-nɪ sawalɛgɛ [...]. Hɛrɛ bía kā hafʊ̱."*
> *"I used to have a shirt I wore to hunt in the savannah [...]. They called it hafʊ̱."*

As official members of the traditional hunting brotherhood, Kulango *sawalɛsɔgɔ* are distinguished by a type of uniform which they wear whenever they are out hunting in the bush. Called *hafʊ̱*, it consists of a magic shirt, covered in all manner of protective amulets, which stands as the most significant common feature between its wearers and the *Donzo* of the Senoufo and Mande tradition. As T. J. Bassett[28] observes:

> *A hunter's clothes are an important sign and source of his knowledge and mystical powers.*

Unfortunately, despite the close relationship I had with Kuman I never managed to see his hunting shirt. But from the detailed description I did get from him it seemed very similar to the *Donzo* tunic, with the one difference that *Donzo* hunters usually wear a particular type of headgear, though Kuman never spoke of this.

In describing his *hafʊ̱*[29] to me the old *sawalɛsɛ* said that it was made from rough-stitched leather with a deep V-neck, adding that it was almost completely covered with amulets.

Besides its form, what constitutes a clear connection with *Donzo* custom is the fact that the *hafʊ̱* is consigned to a new member of the association in the

[28] T. J. Bassett 2003:5.

[29] *Hafʊ̱* is the Kulango name for the hunter's shirt.

course of a full-blown rite of initiation, of which Kuman told me very little – and even then without really wanting to.

He said that the *hafu* had to be washed in a protective medicine (probably *Nibo*) and that it was covered with fetish-amulets, exactly like the *Donzo* shirt:

> *Each amulet has its unique magical properties. Some protect a hunter from the* nyama *of a specific animal, while others might protect their wearer from knife wounds and even make them invulnerable to bullets*[30].

Kuman added that when the senior hunters made a candidate wear it (for the first time?) at his initiation, they covered him in mud and buried him in the savannah. That experience "is like dying", he told me (see texts, p. 233). The candidate had to get out of the hole unaided; only then could he begin his new life as a hunter, bearing in mind that the first son born to him after his initiation to the *sawalɛgɛ* would never be able to join the brotherhood.

Kuman's words on this subject are not easy to interpret – he was visibly uncomfortable in speaking on it and said as little as possible. He did not say when this ritual was supposed to take place, though I think it can reasonably be surmised to coincide with the apprentice's acceptance as a new independent hunter, which means just after (or just before?) the public feast held in the master-hunter's *ben* to celebrate the graduation.

The event seems to have all the hallmarks of a rite of passage. After proving his ability to hunt big game unassisted, the apprentice is deemed worthy of becoming a fully-fledged member of the *sawalɛgɛ*. At that point his old life ends and he is reborn as a true *sawalɛsɛ*, ready to commit himself completely to the new role in which he presents himself to the community. The master-hunter's ritual request that he abandon his work in the fields, though nowadays merely formal and bereft of practical effects (see pp. 81-82), takes on a definitive value. The initiate's absolute dedication to his new role is further emphasised by his formal undertaking to sacrifice the chance of the first son he has after his initiation to follow him into membership of the brotherhood.

Once he can wear his *hafu*, the *sawalɛsɛ* is required to observe a set of rules devised to preserve its magic powers. Briefly put, the hunter's *hafu* is his most powerful fetish: it protects him from attack by wild animals, and if someone happens to shoot at him the bullets are said to bounce off the shirt and fall to the ground without hurting him[31]. Kuman also said that if a hunter finds himself threatened by a predatory beast he can remove his *hafu* and throw it on the ground between himself and the animal, which is thus rendered incapable of passing over it and the *sawalɛsɛ* is safe.

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[30] T. J. Bassett; 2003:5.

[31] On this point see also F. Crevatin 2008.

A particularly interesting feature of the *hafu* is that the hunter's wife plays an active part in the conservation of its protective powers. Kuman told me that if his wife had ever been with another man, his *hafu* would have lost its powers and he would have been vulnerable to attack from animals and to gunfire. The same thing was observed by M. Leach[32] with regard to Mende hunters:

> [...] *hunting is not an independent masculine realm, but depends on proper relationships with women and on women's agency.* [...]. *More personally, hunters claim that improper sexual behaviour by their wives, such as infidelity, can cause them to fail.*

In the Kulango tradition if the wife of a *sawalɛsɛ* breaks this sexual rule the sole redress is the sacrifice of a chicken to her ancestors to atone for the sin of the woman and her lover. Only after this, and only after the woman's solemn promise before the whole community not to frequent any other men, does the *hafu* regain its magic properties (see texts, p. 234-235). According to Kuman this is why the best part of an animal – its back – goes to the hunter's wife: only by offering precious things to his wife can a man be sure that she will not seek attentions elsewhere. It is also why a hunter should be careful to give scrupulous study to a woman's behaviour before taking her as his wife. Kuman confessed to me that before marrying his wife he repeatedly asked her whether she would always be able to eat the back of the game he brought home, which meant whether she would be able to be faithful to him; never tiring of the question, she always said that she would, and eventually they married. From then on Kuman and his wife were always together; even at the end their relationship was one of palpable harmony, as if they had been two newly-weds.

By the same token, hunters are of course required to be faithful to their women. When I spoke to Kuman on this subject, he told me with a knowing look that as a young man he had had plenty of pre-marital adventures, but when he chose his wife he forswore all other women and had none but her. Then he stood up proudly and asked Thomas Kwame, our spokesman, to testify whether he had ever heard any village rumours alleging that he, Djedwa Yao Kuman, was involved with other women. Thomas Kwame stated without doubt that he had never heard anything of the kind.

Kuman and his wife were truly devoted to one another, in things both great and small. After many years of marriage they still lived together; apart from the nights he had to spend in his medicine hut to receive visits from his ancestor's *prumo*, Kuman always slept with her. The first time I went to see him with my camera, he asked me first of all to photograph the two of them together[33], and only later did he allow me to take pictures of him alone, his remedies, his fetishes and his *ben*.

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[32] M. Leach 2000:583.

[33] See plate 6. It is worthy of note that Kuman never asked me to take a photo of him

During our meetings Kuman told me how at the end of his reproductive life, when he finally managed to have a baby daughter (after eight sons), his *gyinąą̰* friends asked him to give up hunting, so he did what they wanted and took off his *hafṵ* for the last time. What then became of his hunter's shirt? Unfortunately this is a question that has remained unanswered. I have already related that I never had the chance to see Kuman's *hafṵ* and when I asked him to show it to me I had the distinct impression that he was trying to avoid telling me the truth. He told me I couldn't see it because it was torn, and when he had stopped hunting he left it in the hut at his camp, and I would not be able to reach the place on foot because the season was so rainy. I do not really know whether that was true, but I think the real objection was another: his shirt was a sacred object, something which I, as a white woman, could not look upon without causing ritual problems. The doubt remains, because it struck me as strange indeed that such an important object should be abandoned in such a way, far removed from its owner, though it has to be said that in Africa all fetishes for which there is no further use meet the same end.

SAWALƐGƐ

"ǒa nyḭ̄, bía kā-ga sawalɛgɛ."
"You see we call it sawalɛgɛ."

Today the Kulango brotherhood of hunters is a dying breed. At one time it must have stood as a major institution in their society. It is likely that when the need arose its members became warriors who defended their territory against external attack. Their dance, the *Asuŋɔ*, is defined as both the dance of the hunters and a war dance; the elders tell that it was performed by the warriors shortly before they went into battle. In Kulango the term *sawalɛgɛ* derives from the verb *sawalɛ*, "to hunt", also stands as the common noun "hunt" and is the proper noun indicating the traditional hunters' association. The verb *sawalɛ* is also the root of *sawalɛsɛ*, which is both the common noun for "hunter" and the term of address reserved for hunters initiated into the association. This overlapping of common words and specific terms may be the result of two factors: either the real names of the hunters' association are taboo and so cannot be uttered explicitly, or the real and common names are the same because traditionally there was no hunting other than that carried out by the association, unlike the present-day state of affairs. The second explanation strikes me as the more likely, above all because whenever Kuman

with any other members of his family – sons, daughter or grandchildren.

spoke of modern hunters, who like his sons had not been initiated, he never used the Kulango term *sawalɛsɔgɔ* but the French *chasseur*, one of the very few words he knew of that language.

The origin of the Kulango *sawalɛgɛ* is not easy to identify. It may have been a Voltaic cultural legacy of the Dagomba lineage of Bunkani, founder of the kingdom of Bouna[34], but it has to be said that family lines which came to Ivory Coast from the east after the fall of Begho also attributed the foundation of their villages to their mythical hunter ancestors[35]. What is beyond question, irrespective of the institution's geographical provenance, is the absolute pre-eminence of the hunter in all the traditional stories of the north, south and south-west of the region.

At the dawn of Kulango history membership of the *sawalɛgɛ* must have counted for a great deal. The social status enjoyed by hunter-warriors undoubtedly derived from their role as procurers of animal protein for the whole village and as guarantors of peace and security. With the spread of agriculture, the introduction of Islam and Christianity and contact with modern technology and new cultural movements, it is only in recent times that the association has lost its religious and political meaning and thus found itself in its present condition of almost complete marginalisation.

Since Mansunu Yao and Kuman died, there are probably no *sawalɛsɔgɔ* left in the village of Nassian. Perhaps a few old hunters are still alive in other villages in the area, because Kuman used to say that he hoped his funeral could be attended by at least one hunter from the brotherhood to perform the traditional rites, and that he himself had had to do the honours for his friend Yao shortly before my arrival in 2006. But unfortunately what is certain is that the *sawalɛgɛ*, with all its religious and cultural significance, is dying out.

In the long afternoons I spent with Kuman he told me a great many things about the *sawalɛgɛ* and his life as a *sawalɛsɛ*. He always spoke with pride and passion, but his eyes and his words betrayed an unmistakable nostalgia for what had been and was no more. My work with him had begun with the intent of gathering information on his profession as a healer, then the conversation gradually extended to hunting, and by the end I had the distinct impression that Kuman was much more interested in speaking of the hunt than traditional medicine. It was as though those stories had been bottled up inside him for too long and had finally found a way to burst out, like a river in full spate, for one last time. Perhaps he knew that after him nobody would be able to speak with any authority about the *sawalɛgɛ*, while traditional medicine was not yet in terminal decline, so he was anxious to leave a trace of what had once been so important for his his people's culture. Not only did he go into great detail for me about the association's workings, he sang many

[34] See Boutillier 1993.

[35] See Terray 1995:278-279 on the foundation of Bondoukou.

of their songs and chants of joy and incitement, even parts of ritual chants, so that I might conserve for future generations the memory of things they would probably never see or know. I was profoundly struck by Kuman's concern, and by the trust he showed in our work together; what is recounted below is my attempt to do justice to those feelings.

As stated above, entry to the *sawalɛgɛ* depended on two things: the successful completion of a practical test in which the prospective hunter had to demonstrate his ability to bring down a big game animal single-handed, and a rite of passage in which he had to declare his willingness to leave his old life and relinquish the possibility that the first son born to him after entry into the brotherhood might in turn become a *sawalɛsɛ*. During the rite of initiation the candidate received his *hafu̱* and with it its magic charge and the protection of the association's guiding spirits. Entry into the *sawalɛgɛ* was not reserved exclusively to the Kulango; foreigners wishing to embrace the tenets of the brotherhood and integrate into Kulango society were also allowed to join, exactly as was the case with the *Donzonton*.

The members' activities were partly practical, involving participation in collective hunting trips to gather food for the whole community and ending with great celebrations for the entire village, and defensive operations against any attacks by raiders from nearby villages or nomads.

Then there was the religious dimension, in the which the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* assembled for such events as initiation rites, the organisation of military operations or a member's funeral – ritual events which could not be held without them. It was said, for instance, that the body of a deceased *sawalɛsɛ* became so heavy that only after a specific chant and a series of rituals performed by a senior hunter could the burial party lift it from the ground and carry it to the place of interment.

As to the prospect of a member leaving the *sawalɛgɛ*, the picture is not very clear to me. It has already been observed that a *sawalɛsɛ* could be compelled to stop hunting because of a vow connected to his line of descent or the fulfilment of a particular desire, as was the case for Kuman. But although he had abandoned his *hafu̱* several years before we first met, Kuman continued to consider himself a *sawalɛsɛ* and to hope that at least one of his number would be left alive in the nearby villages to officiate at his funeral.

Taken together, I think these two factors mean that a *sawalɛsɛ* could decide to abandon the practice of hunting for a number of reasons in the course of his life but would always remain a *sawalɛsɛ*, a full – though inactive – member of the brotherhood and thus entitled to burial in accordance with its rules and special rituals.

Kuman never spoke to me of the expulsion of any member of the *sawalɛgɛ*, but since it was an association with its rites and vows of initiation, it seems likely that anyone who had offended or betrayed it would have been expelled.

"lɛ bì yáa mʊm trugo lɛ hɔ lɛ mì hɛ́ lɛ: "óa nūı faı, óa nūı faı, óa nūıfaı, óa nūı faı!"
"So we went into the forest and there I said: 'you stay there, you stay there, you stay there, you stay over there!'..."

When Kuman was a young *sawalɛsɛ* what distinguished members of the brotherhood from common people or uninitiated apprentices was the the fact of possessing, apart from the *hafʊ̃*, a personal rifle – a weapon considered traditional to the Kulango, given that the first firearms had come into West Africa no later than the 17th century. They found their way there through contact with the Ashanti, who traded their gold for European weapons on the coast of present-day Ghana, and with the Djula, Arab merchants who plied the traditional caravan routes to Djenne and Bouna as early as the late 11th century[36].

The Dagomba, forefathers of Bunkani, founder of the Kulango kingdom of Bouna, were renowned horsemen who rapidly established contact with the Ashanti kingdom of Ghana, setting up a circuit of exchanges of women between the two courts and concluding trade agreements which were profitable for both sides. Weapons must have featured prominently in these arrangements because the Ashanti would sometimes call for the assistance of the Dagomba cavalry to keep dangerous neighbours at bay, and the cavalry undoubtedly carried arms[37]. So although in Kuman's young days rifles probably did not come cheap, they had certainly been available in Nassian for at least three generations.

Besides rifles Kulango *sawalɛsɔgɔ* had hunting knives, which they used to slit the throats of snared or wounded animals and skin them. They would also use anything else that came in useful in the construction of all kinds of traps: metal snares, raffia ropes and strings, dry or fresh leaves and animal droppings to conceal spring mechanisms, and any type of succulent bait that could lure the most game.

But traditional traps, of various shapes and sizes, were the speciality of apprentice hunters – youths not yet initiated – or adults who had never been admitted to the *sawalɛsɛ*; the members of the brotherhood considered them child's play. Their purpose was to procure food for individual families, and the game caught in them was not distributed to the rest of the village. Every trap or snare was conceived and constructed for a particular type of animal. Small simple devices were used for palm rats and agouti, while much bigger ones were made for gazelles and antelopes; some were dug below ground level and covered with branches and leaves; others were cages ranging from

[36] See Micheli 2008, Terray 1995 and Boutillier 1993.

[37] See Boutillier 1993.

the simple to the highly complicated – each one scrupulously checked every morning and evening by the individual who had set it. Some people spent the entire day doing nothing else, eschewing any work in the fields, and often brought home enough game to be able to sell a good part of it in the market and live on the proceeds of that alone.

This form of hunting – trapping – was not considered worthy of a true *sawalɛsɛ*. Kuman had told me that he was highly proficient in the setting of traps, but when he spoke of it he always referred to the time before his initiation to the *sawalɛgɛ*. And he often remarked that it was only by allowing him to use his old musket that his maternal uncle set him on the path to the brotherhood and only on the day of his initiation did he receive the gift of his own rifle, a modern 12-bore.

The relationship between a *sawalɛsɛ* and his rifle was undoubtedly a special one. They were indissolubly bound together in the *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ* – just as the hunter entered the savannah covered in amulets, his rifle was adorned with magic charms, special talismans which prevented game escaping his sights. This is why it is not clear to me whether tradition would allow a true *sawalɛsɛ* to hunt with another man's weapon.

What is clear is that a traditional hunter would never go into the *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ* without his rifle on his shoulder – indeed a true *sawalɛsɛ* could always be recognised by a callus on the shoulder against which the stock would be braced. Kuman was very proud of his callus and showed me the slight bone deformity on his left shoulder to prove how much hunting he had done in his life (see texts, pp. 242-243).

The hunting expeditions undertaken by the *sawalɛsɛ* could be individual or collective. In the latter case the group had to have a field commander, who would decide the position of each hunter and the roles and tactics to adopt so that the maximum number of animals would be caught in the ambush. The group would be divided into two parts: one formed the ring of fire towards which the game would be driven, while the other, more numerous, had the task of surrounding the game herd and shouting, running and shooting so as to stampede it into the waiting ring. This type of hunt was typical of the dry season, when big game such as gazelle or buffalo roam close to villages in search of water and fresh grass – as soon as a hunter sighted a herd he would run to the village and summon his fellows, who quickly got organised and set off. On many such occasions Kuman had had the good fortune to command the operations (see texts, pp. 239-240).

In the event of a lone hunter killing one or more large animals in the bush the other members of the brotherhood would be called to assist him in carrying the carcasses to the village and skinning them. And after a group hunt or a particularly successful outing by a single *sawalɛsɛ* the whole community was involved, and the hunter's work concluded with a big celebration and a sumptuous feast.

“Mía gyī sawalɛsɛ lɛ mʊm mɪa,
hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ mía kōri mú pa̱-(hɛ)rɛ-í!”
“I know he’s a hunter like me,
that’s why I don’t like to shoot him!”

Kulango *sawalɛsɔgɔ* could be described as ecologists *ante litteram*. They had great respect for their quarry, which they would never go after just for the sake of it. More than once Kuman told me that his hunting trips would stop when he saw that he had bagged enough for his needs, often foregoing easy meat because he had done enough killing. Taking a life, even that of an animal, was a sensitive matter – there were special rituals to be performed, particularly on the carcasses of big game animals, to prevent their spirits somehow harming the hunter or anyone who came into contact with them.

Their respect was even greater for carnivores. As in many hunting societies (not least in the *Donzo* tradition), in Kulango culture true *sawalɛsɔgɔ* conceived their nature to be the same as that of predatory animals – they almost saw them as brothers, which their traditional code of ethics would not permit them to kill.

Occasionally, however, alone in the bush at dawn or dusk when the light was poor, a hunter might be startled by a pair of green eyes shining at him through the leaves – at which point all he could do was shoot, sometimes killing a predator without the intent to do so. Conversely, a frightened or famished predator might attack the hunter first, in which case he was justified in bringing it down to save his own life.

Be that as it may, after killing a predator no *sawalɛsɛ* was allowed to eat its flesh, which had to be left in the bush. What he could do was skin the animal and sell its hide, after which he had to perform the rites required to prevent its spirit from exacting revenge before he returned to his village.

Some *sawalɛsɔgɔ* are known to have formed particular relationships with certain predators. As we have seen (see pp. 86-87), after a vulture made Kuman the gift of a small gazelle he began to venerate the bird, sacrificing to it on his domestic altar the heart of every animal he brought home. It was said that many other hunters, when in particular danger, could even take on the appearance of the predator with which they had a special bond – and the same goes to this day for the *Donzo*.

THE ANIMALS' EVIL GAZE

"lɛ tūı-gɛ lɛ flō zɪna'nɪ bɔ nyɪŋmɔ-rɪ pɛɛ, a hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mu̱ı, á hṵ́ṵ gbē-kʊ daagɔ-í."
"…take some and spread it all over the animal's muzzle,
so that its spirit will bother you no more."

Taking the life of a living being, even an animal, is always something which has some influence on the universe's *kpa̱yɔ*, so when a hunter kills his game he risks dire consequences. It is no coincidence that in all West African cultures a hunter on the one hand always works under the protection of his amulets (in the case of the Kulango his *hafṵ*) and on the other must be able to neutralise the inevitable vendetta of the spirit or active force (*nyama* for the *Donzo* and *kpa̱yɔ* for the Kulango) unleashed by the animal's slaying.

Kulango tradition has it that only the spirits of particularly large animals – buffalo, certain species of antelope and gazelle, predators – are able to turn on their killers, and they do so by means of what is known as their evil gaze. This is a very simple mechanism which can strike any individual, or domestic village animal, who happens to look into the open eyes of a dead game animal; the eyes become the door which lets out its avenging spirit. Whenever a hunter kills one of these dangerous beasts he must ritually rub its muzzle with a magic remedy whose composition, known only to some traditional hunters, had been given to Kuman by one of his *gyina̱* friends.

The story he told me of this medicine ran as follows. After killing a buffalo one day, on his way back to the village he encountered a man (or rather a *gyina̱* in human form) who gave him a magic remedy he called *labʋlʋ* (without doubt a Kulango adaptation of the French *la boule*). The *gyina̱* said that it would provide protection against attacks from the spirits of the animals killed in a hunt; to obtain the desired effect Kuman should first eat a small piece of the remedy and then rub it on its muzzle. With that medicine on it the beast would no longer be able to harm anyone in the village – human or animal – who happened to catch its vengeful gaze. Then the *gyina̱* showed him a plant and said he could use it to make the *labʋlʋ* himself by crushing it with the foetus he would find in the belly of a female buffalo, whose brain he should then take out and add to the mixture (see texts, pp. 216-218).

According to Kuman, although all hunters were supposed to take the *labʋlʋ* into the bush with them, not all of them knew the recipe for it. This sounds less odd if it is considered that many *sawalɛsɔgɔ* were not even able to make their own protective amulets; for matters mystic they usually relied on the help of powerful *warɪsɔgɔ* or old and experienced hunters.

A concept similar to the evil gaze is also to be found in Mande tradition. Like their *Donzo* counterparts, Bambara hunters will not go into the bush without a small shrine-like device which they attach to a shoulder. It is sup-

posed to act as a catalyst for the dangerously vengeful *nyama* (life force) which comes from an animal's body when it is killed by hunters.

As T. J. Bassett observes[38]:

> [...] *hunters must also learn how to protect themselves from the vital forces (*nyama*) that inhabit all living and even some non-living things. When an animal is killed, its* nyama *is released and, if not controlled, can be very harmful to the hunter and, by extension, his family*.

HUNTERS, TRANSFORMATIONS AND THE INVISIBLE MAN

"Hɛrɛ hʋ̀ yí hʋ̀ yéleka tʋlɔ..."
"Quando uscì, si era trasformato in elefante..."

The attempt to achieve a proper understanding of what lies behind many of the statements made by our African interlocutors often leaves us feeling dizzy and disorientated. They tell of things that to a westerner, no matter how accustomed to encounters with the Other, seem inconceivable.

Two such things are a routine part of the everyday life of West African hunters. One is the ability to turn into predators when faced with danger in the bush; the other is knowledge of a magic medicine that bestows invisibility.

Seeking to explain this reality in scientific terms would be pointless. As Crevatin[39] makes clear, the basic question is rooted in our interlocutors' way of thinking, and

> *tackling it seriously amounts to asking what is counter-factual, what is 'real', effectively what reality is for a Bawlé traditionalist. The difficulty lies not only in the fact, obvious per se, that every culture knows reality differently because it uses it differently, but above all in the linguistic conditioning, peculiar to every community of speakers, which determines the practical expression and semantic organisation of what they say and believe they know of reality itself*.

In the final analysis the question always comes down to a vision of the world, to the certain knowledge of the existence of a supernatural world that is constantly intertwined with the natural one; of a place at once different from and identical to the real one, in which things unthinkable in the world of practical experience are the order of the day; of a *dʋ̰ʋ̰kɔ* or an *àùljá*[40] in which human beings are obviously able to disappear or turn into fast-moving ferocious animals when circumstances require.

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[38] T. J. Bassett 2003:3.

[39] F. Crevatin 2008:150.

[40] The word *àùljá* is the Bawlé term for the supernatural world.

As we have seen, Kuman told me that he had personally undergone both these experiences when he was an apprentice under Kwaku Wara, his last master healer, who turned himself into an elephant to test Kuman's courage before accepting him as his official pupil (see pp. 38-39), and made him invisible when they stopped by the trail to the fields to drink palm wine.

I am certain that in his world what he told me in recounting those episodes was true and real, even though in mine it could not be. Kuman was no braggart, nor was he in the habit of joking on such serious matters. His description of what happened corresponded to the logic of the culture to which he belonged, in which he had been trained and which he believed in to the full, whereas my comprehension of his point of view was limited by the confines of my rationality. This, at bottom, is the beauty of encountering the Other.

THE HUNTER'S TABOOS

"Mʊm ʊ́ʊ sāwalɛ dḭdḭ... siṵ lɛ sā ʊ gbɛɛ-rɩ!"
"If you're a real hunter... you wear amulets!"

In the case of a healer, observance of personal ritual taboos is important for earning the benevolence and assistance of ancestors and supernatural forces during the treatment process. For a hunter it is matter of life and death. He enters the *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ* for the specific purpose of killing, which means upsetting the natural balance of things. That is why he is more vulnerable to the vengeance of the supernatural creatures which reside in the *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ*.

It is also probably why the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* always go into action with their full regalia of protective amulets, while the *warɩsɛ* do not, or at least not to the same extent.

To be effective, every amulet or magic remedy requires the observance of a set of taboos and rules upon which the hunter's life is entirely dependent. I once asked Kuman whether the *sawalɛgɛ* imposed particular taboos on its members. He replied that it did not, and then proceeded to list all the personal prohibitions, dietary and otherwise, to which he was subject – but they had been imposed by his master-healers (though one of them, Yao Kra, was also his master-hunter).

Irrespective of the type of amulets worn by each *sawalɛsɛ* and the taboos associated with them, what is essential is that he should always go into the bush in a state of absolute ritual purity. Otherwise he might find himself devoid of magic protection in the face of particularly vengeful Presences provoked by his doings, which would put his life in danger.

RITUAL CELEBRATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL HUNT

"Eh! Dáa dɔ̄ʋ̰ bɩa-rɩ oh!"
"Eh! Today is a good day for us, oh!"

In every small community the success of one of its members implies success for everyone, while his failure is equivalent to collective defeat. The same goes for hunting in traditional societies and was also true of the Kulango *sawalɛgɛ*.

It has been seen that the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* often went out to hunt as a group, and in such cases the game they brought back would obviously be shared out equally among all the members of the brotherhood. But the group was so close-knit and its ethic so predominant that when a hunter bagged a particularly big animal (or animals) single-handed his haul would be shared with the entire community.

The first thing a hunter would do after making a big game killing was to cut off the animal's tail and take it back to the village to place it at the feet of the oldest hunter in the *sawalɛgɛ*. As soon as the old man saw the tail he would voice his congratulations to the hunter, summon the other members of the hunt and send them out to collect the carcass(es) from the bush. While a group of hunters organised the stretchers, their fastest runner would go to where the carcasses lay to get an idea of the number of men and stretchers needed to carry the meat. At the sight of the runner returning to the village everyone would shout "*Bomiaf!*", *Bravo!*, in praise of the hunter who had made the kill, following that with a joyful chant:

Daa eh! Daa eh!
Daa oh! Daa ooooh! Daa eh! Daa eh!
Daa eh! Daa eh!
Eh! Dáa dɔʋ̰̄ bɩa-rɩ oh! Daa oh! Daa oooooh!

Today eh!, Today eh!... eh! Today is a good day for us[41]! Today ooooh!.

The chant was a sign that the hunter's lone expedition had borne extraordinary fruit, so the whole community had to honour him and his exploits. At this point the hunter would pick up the tail of one of the animals and brandish it high above his head, while all his fellows would move towards him shouting "*Bomiaf! Bomiaf! Bomiaf!*" and other congratulations.

After these ritual congratulations a sufficient number of *sawalɛsɔgɔ* followed the feted hunter into the savannah to where he had left his kill. Now

[41] Literally: "today is sweet us-on, oh!".

observing a rigorous silence, they would load the meat onto the stretchers they had with them and carry it back to the oldest hunter's *ben*. There they cut up the meat – an operation which, in the event of a particularly rich haul, could last well into the night. Then the successful *sawalɛsɛ* would go to the oldest hunter with some of his fellows and present himself, beating out a rhythm with big animal horns, followed by his companions in a sort of procession. The old hunter ritually enquired what had happened when he found himself faced with the animals, and he would respond that they had not harmed him. Whereupon the other hunters would intone a chant and begin to dance; the party began in earnest when the senior hunter raised the arm of the hero of the day, presenting him to the assembled community as a man of great courage, with the chant:

"A mu̱ mīini a̱ŋɔ, eh, nyu̱ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini,
a mu̱ mīini a̱ŋɔ sawalɛ kyakya nyu̱ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini
A mu̱ mīini a̱ŋɔ oooh, nyu̱ lɛbɔ́ɔ mīini
a mu̱ mīini a̱ŋɔ, du̱u̱'nɪ kyakya nyu̱ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini!"

(so the village feels respect, eh, you are the man they respect / and so the village feels respect, the man they fear hunts fast / and so the village feels respect, oooh, this is the man they fear / and so the village feels respect, the man they fear moves fast in the *du̱u̱kɔ*).

At this point the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* would pick up the stretchers with the meat and carry them around the whole village to parade the prodigious kill. The hunter's wife followed them, beating the rhythm with a ladle on her *canari*, while he danced his way around in front of them. At the end of the tour the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* made him a ceremonial presentation of the meat he had brought home. He would tell them to take it to the oldest hunter and ask him what to do with it, after which he took a thigh from one of the animals and placed it at the old man's feet. After the meat had been shared out to all the members of the hunt it could be sold in the village market.

The day would conclude with many more chants and *Asɪŋɔ*[42] dances, rivers of beer and a feast hurriedly prepared by the hunters' wives with some of the meat from the kill.

The next day the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* would go to the hunter and tell him that he had to return to the savannah to kill a small gazelle and then rub its blood onto the muzzles of the previous day's game (see the section on the evil gaze, above). On completion of this ritual the vengeful spirits of the dead animals could be considered appeased and the hunter resumed his normal life.

[42] *Asɪŋɔ* is the name of the hunters' dances.

In Kulango tradition, even though the gazelle was required to placate the bush spirits and those of the animals killed in the hunt, who fed on its essence, after its ritual purification the hunter could eat its meat without fear of untoward consequences.

The expressions used by the hunters to congratulate their comrade, *bomiaf* and *kyekye wira*, are not Kulango – Kuman said they were Ashanti terms inherited from the ancients. This is a particularly thorny question. As already observed, any resemblances to neighbouring peoples are primarily to be found in the Mande-Voltaic region, whereas Kuman's assertion implies much more distant connections. These are not actually impossible, because Kulango culture has been exposed to Akan influences, but those words have no obvious equivalent in the Twi language.

THE HUNTER'S FUNERAL

"mʊm sáwalɛsɛ'nɪ lɛ pīı, mʊm báa nyī̱ mɪa-í báa mą̄ą̱ pū-ke-í…"
"If a hunter dies and they don't see me, they can't bury him..."

In traditional societies funerals serve the purpose of strengthening the bonds that tie all members of the community. In the case of exclusive associations such as the Kulango *sawalɛgɛ* and better-known hunting brotherhoods like the *Donzoton* and the *Kamajoisia*, this function is even more evident.

The funeral of a *sawalɛsɛ* is one of the most significant events in the life of the association. It is the occasion on which the magic bonds between hunters, nature and the supernatural forces are openly declared and renewed. After the chaos of death the natural balance of things must be restored[43].

The Kulango believe that there is a special incorruptible bond between hunters and the earth. When one of them dies his body becomes so heavy that without the observance of a specific ritual no-one in the world would be able to lift him from the mat where he lies and carry him out for burial. A specially trained *sawalɛsɛ* is required to come and release his companion's body from its earthly bonds and raise the magic funeral chant which announces that the *ɟpusɔgɔ*, the burial party, may now come to carry him away.

Kuman described the procedure to me as follows. When a *sawalɛsɛ* died the hunters' sacred celebrant came to the home of the deceased with all the medicines he needed for the first funerary rites, which were to be performed

[43] On the meaning of Yoruba funeral chants Ajuwon (1980:66) writes: "*The observance of the ritual is seen by* Ogun [the name of the supreme divinity in the Yoruba pantheon] *devotees as an act of worship, of propitiating their god, of communicating with the departed hunters, and of making a thorough appraisal of the successes and failures of deceased hunters in their professional careers on earth*". The same is true of the Kulango *sawalɛsɔgɔ*.

in private. One of the family would bring some palm wine and a chicken and the celebrant alone entered the house where the body lay, and there the ritual began. Kuman did not describe exactly what the celebrant did with the medicines, but he did say that some wine had to be poured on the lips of the deceased and some more poured on the ground as a gift to his ancestors, after which the celebrant had to take a sip for himself. Then he slaughtered a chicken and threw it behind the house, where a relative could go and pick it up so as to use its meat for the public funeral feast. All these offerings were made to the spirits of the deceased and the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* ancestors to gain their favour and protection and prevent the deceased from returning to this world. With the ritual chant the celebrant released the deceased's soul from its earthly life and, in Kuman's words, opened its face so that it might reach the hereafter without returning to disturb whoever took its place in this world. The libation of wine represented a sort of border which the celebrant drew at the exact point where the earthly and non-earthly worlds met; once it had been drawn the spirit of the deceased "ran away". So ended the most delicate and private phase of the funerary rite (for more details see texts pp. 253-255).

When all the acts of the private ritual were concluded the celebrant intoned the first notes of another funeral chant. All the other *sawalɛsɔgɔ* would respond with a chorus of the second part of the song, which was public. That was the signal that everything had been carried out in accordance with proper practice and that the burial party could come to take the body for interment. The ritual then took on the form of a celebration in which the women joined in the chanting, responding to the hunters' chorus.

I asked Kuman if he could sing the first ritual chant for me; after a moment's thought he decided not to give me a rendition of the private part of the song, but he did produce some of the choral responses, one of which went like this[44]:

Daa oh! Daa oh! Daa ooooh!
daa eh! Daa eh! Dáa gyā bıa-rı! Daa oh! Daa oh! Dáa gyā bıa-rı oh! Daa oh! Daa oooooh!
Bɔ náụ̱ sōo, bɔ núụ̱ sōo,
hṵ́ụ̱ dīɔ daa brıbra,
bɔ náụ̱ sōo, bɔ núụ̱ sōo,
hṵ́ụ̱ dīɔ daa brıbra.

Today oh! Today oh! Today oooh! /Today eh! Today eh! Today is bitter for us! / Today oh! Today oh! Today is bitter for us! / Today oh! Today ooooh! His legs are abandoned[45], his arms are abandoned / today he sleeps strangely / his legs are abandoned, his arms are abandoned / today he sleeps strangely.

[44] For other examples see texts pp. 253-255.

[45] The verb *soo* literally means to spill or be spilled. For specific lexical observations see the complete text on p. 255.

After the end of the chant the funeral proceeded according to the normal pattern. People came to the *ben* of the deceased from all the neighbouring villages and the feast, chanting and dancing went on until all the food and drink ran out, which was sometimes days later. The whole extended family had to contribute to paying for the funeral, and the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* would usually do their part by bringing some meat to the feast.

In the above chant the deceased is repeatedly called *Sikongo* by his fellow hunters, but in Kulango *Sikongo* has no meaning. Kuman reckoned it was a word secret to the *sawalɛgɛ*, probably of Ashanti origin – but in fact there is no trace of it there. It is true that many initiation-based societies have their own language codes, known only to their members, which may be the fruit of pure invention or a mixture of words from a range of known languages, but in this case the information available to me is insufficient to form a proper judgement.

In small communities funerals are generally an important occasion for the assertion of their identity; the public celebrations which follow the private rituals of the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* perform precisely that function. For a few days[46] the members of the community are close to each other, spending the time recalling their family histories and using their collective memory to piece together the formation of the ties which brought their lineages to their present state. Alongside the sharing of food and dancing there are always elders and women who like to sit around the fire telling children their traditional stories so that their common values will continue to be passed down to the young generations, just as they were hundreds of years ago[47].

THE *SAWALƐGƐ* AND THE COMMUNICATION OF KNOWLEDGE: AN OPEN SOCIETY

“Mʊm nyʊ̰ gū fʊ̱ lɛ hʊ́ʊ́ kpā̱ sawalɛgɛ’rɛ-nɩ...”
“If a man comes from afar and seeks the hunters’ association...”

Since the history of their society is one of continuous and repeated contacts with peoples of different cultures and origins, the Kulango have no difficulty in co-existing with elements of diverse provenance. Traditional Kulango society today may thus be considered open and well disposed towards foreigners.

[46] Funerals last a few days if the deceased is poor and belongs to an equally poor family. If the deceased is rich or noble they can go on for months.

[47] On this, on the role of hunters in foundation mythology and on the role of hunters’ funeral chants in the transmission of traditional lore in Mande-Voltaic and Yoruba societies, see C. Lenz (2000) and B. Ajuwon (1980) respectively.

It has already been observed (pp. 71-72) that Kulango healers have no trouble in accepting foreigners, people of different ethnic origin, as apprentices; the same goes for the *sawalɛgɛ*.

When we touched on this subject Kuman explained the Kulango thinking in the following terms. When a foreigner comes and asks you to teach him something the right thing to do is to agree to show him what you know, just as you would accept a peasant who asked to work with you. When two people join forces the result can only be a positive one: what one knows the other does not, and vice-versa. An open attitude to foreigners will always provide an opportunity for enrichment (see texts, p. 256).

The same openness is displayed by the Mande *Donzoton*, as T. J. Bassett[48] records:

> *A hunter begins to acquire his spiritual and practical knowledge during his initiation into the donzo ton. Initiation is open to individuals from all social and ethnic groups.*

There are other hunters' associations in the region which will have nothing to do with anyone from a different ethnic group. This is exemplified by many Senoufo brotherhoods modelled on the initiation-based societies of the Poro and the Mende *Kamajoi*, on which M. Leach (2000:589) observes:

> *A prerequisite for initiation into the Kamajoi is both to be Mende, and to have been initiated into one of the many versions of men's poro society.*

The position is less clear with regard to the possible admission of women in the association. In our meetings Kuman never spoke of female hunters, although it has been seen (pp. 89-91) that hunters' wives play an important role in their husbands' life and profession.

Considering the practice of the Mande *Donzoton* and that of the Mende *Kamajoi*, in those societies there appears to be the same ambiguity regarding full female membership of the associations. From a number of interviews with senior members of the *Donzoton* and the *Kamajoisia* there would not actually seem to be any formal impediment to the initiation of women into the hunters' brotherhoods, rather an underlying assumption that women are less controllable and have less self-control than men[49].

In this regard it should be remembered that in many recent West African guerilla movements in which the Donzo play a key role, such as in Liberia and Ivory Coast, male organisations have been regularly flanked by women fighters. One such case is the Combat Wives Unit, a branch of Foday Sankoh's

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[48] T. J Bassett 2003:5.

[49] In this regard a Mende informant said to M. Leach (2000: 593): "*Women given guns might turn round and shoot the men who displeased them.*"

Revolutionary United Front which fought in the Sierra Leone civil war in the 1990s[50].

In my view this recent development should be seen as a promotion of the female component of West African hunters' associations, which has moved from a private, protected and protective dimension to a public front-line profile. It represents not a complete abandonment of traditional rules, which in any case did not conceive women to be entirely alien to hunting, but a modern reinterpretation of the central role they have always played as the guarantors and custodians of the supernatural powers of their hunter husbands.

WOMEN AND SEXUALITY IN THE KULANGO *SAWALƐGƐ*

"mʊm ʊ yɛrɛ taa hɔ, hʊnɪ hɔ́ɔ lā..."
"If your wife is faithful, everything's fine..."

As seen in the section on the the *hafʊ̰*, the magic shirt worn by the Kulango *sawalɛsɛ* (pp. 88-91), it is not certain whether women could be offically initiated into the *sawalɛgɛ*, but there are a number of factors which lead to the conclusion that they were not completely excluded from it.

Since I find myself in basic agreement with M. Leach's position[51] I reproduce a passage from an interview she quotes in which a hunter named Mandji Diallo was speaking on Kankan Rural Radio (August 27th 1998):

> *The hunter kills in the village before leaving for the bush; that is, you must be correct to your family and to those you live with; if you are not correct with those in the village you will not kill in the bush.*

This statement can be interpreted in two ways. On one hand the interviewee may have been referring to the hunter's ethics in general, since it is true that if he fails to abide by the rules of tradition he automatically forfeits the protection of his ancestors. On the other, he may equally well have been talking about the hunter's relationship with his wife and their sex life – if a hunter, like any other man, fails to respect his wife she may easily decide to seek attention elsewhere.

The question is a complex one. In the first place it should not be forgotten that the magic powers of the hunter's shirt are closely linked, at least in the Kulango philosophy, to his wife's sexual behaviour. Secondly, not only

[50] On this point see M. Leach 2000.

[51] M. Leach 2000:583.

are hunters' wives allowed to attend the official celebrations of the *sawalɛgɛ*, they play percussion on their cooking utensils to mark a particularly fruitful hunt and may join in the hunters' choral responses to the celebrant during the funeral of a *sawalɛsɛ*.

I think that a plausible explanation for this unusual openness to women on the part of a male association is to be sought deep within the traditional culture. There is a way in which a harmonious relationship between a man and a woman reflects the balance of society and helps to maintain the stability of the wider equilibrium. In the traditional African scheme of things reality is made up of several levels, in which earthly space is divided into the social and the anti-social, and human activity pursued outside social spaces can bring people into contact with highly dangerous forces of chaos. This world needs guarantors able to maintain a balance between all the elements and, at least in West Africa, these guarantors are women – they have an undisputed connection with the earth and fertility and are able to give life and protect it.

One of the quickest ways of upsetting this delicate balance is to carry out social activities in anti-social spaces. And one example is to engage in sexual relations (performing a social act) outside the village, in the fields, in the bush or in any other uninhabited and solitary location (anti-social space).

M. Leach[52] expresses the idea in the following terms:

> *The bodily processes of women-in-general can disrupt hunting not by pollution, as some anthropologists have suggested, but through mistimings or placings within the social-ecological reproductive order.*

In many traditional Mande and Voltaic societies (and others) men in general, and hunters in particular, are mainly responsible for public life and the maintenance of good relations with the bush spirits which allow them to hunt and procure food for the whole community and with neighbouring populations, assuming the role of warriors when necessary. Women's work is usually subtler in nature – protecting the village and its inhabitants from the calamities caused by disruptions of the balance described above or by the intentional actions of witch-doctors or other supernatural creatures.

A highly significant example of this mystic and protective function came to light in tragic circumstances not long ago. In Bawlé culture the village women's association is considered able to ward off any type of imminent disaster, such as drought or war, by performing the *Adjanu* ritual dance. During the civil war in Ivory Coast a number of women in the village of Assandré, near Sakassou, were savagely killed by the rebel army on the very night when they were dancing the *Adjanu* in an attempt to prevent the conflict from

[52] *Ibidem.*

reaching their village[53]. In that case the women's ritual act was seen as the last card they could play in the hope of saving their village from the war. The men had not even tried to organise any defence, trusting completely in the power of their wives (as if to say, if even the women's bond with the earth cannot protect us, it's pointless trying to avoid the inevitable through some trivial human act), but the mystic power of the *Donzo* hunters recruited by the rebels proved too strong to resist.

A similar concept is to be found among the Mende in Guinea, about which M. Leach[54] observes:

> *In regional tradition, senior women have been important to defence through their control over spirits which protect villages at times of war. In Mendeland in the nineteenth century, trusted senior wives and female relatives frequently guarded the medicines of important war leaders.*

In traditional Kulango culture senior women seem to have played that same role. In my field research I worked extensively with descendants of the Komilla lineage in the village of Kakpin. Always considered as a strong warrior lineage, the Komilla traditionally provided the armed guard of the Kulango royal family which fled Ghana in the late 17th century to found the kingdom of Gyaman. One of the most renowned members of that line was Komilla Fatuma Bregniè, the only woman in the region to control a protective mask which would go out when called to villages in particular difficulty. In Nassian, 90 kilometres from Kakpin, people are still convinced that it was the power of the Komilla mask which in the 19th century prevented Samori Ture and his army from attacking the region, stopping his advance in the city of Bondoukou.

In modern-day Kulango culture, though, women's status is declining from that position; this is probably the result of some people's conversion to Islam (including the Komilla) and of mixed marriages with peoples of patrilineal descent. With regard to the case of Fatuma Bregnié (her name is evidence that when she was born Islam had already made inroads in the region) it should be added that since her death in the 1930s or '40s the mask she once guided has never been manifested. No woman has been able to take it over or, as her descendants like to think, no other woman has proved to have such great power.

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53 Personally recounted to me by F. Crevatin.

54 M. Leach 2000:590

"a ò kṵ̄ mʊm z̰ɪwalɔɔgɔ, bɔ̀ wéele kyɛrɛsɛɪ lɛ bɔ̀ kpá̰ siṵ'nɪ lɛ bɔ̀ nyá-ŋʊ, lɛ ò dá̰ ʊ gbɛɪ"
"And when you kill a big animal they do a long dance, then they go to get some medicines, they give them to you and your power is increased."

Like traditional healers, hunters are endowed with more *kpa̰yɔ* than normal individuals. On the strength of this gift, which may be enhanced through practice and the offering of particular sacrifices, they are able to enter into contact with the *prumo* of their ancestors, spirit guides and all other supernatural powers, good and bad alike.

All other living beings, including animals, are also possessed of modest amounts of *kpa̰yɔ* but do not know it – just as, according to the Bambara philosophy, normal people are not conscious of their *nyama*.

Thus stated, things seem simple and consistent with the belief system adhered to in the region in general. But on the basis of some of the stories Kuman told me it seems that in the Kulango scheme of things, unlike elsewhere, *kpa̰yɔ* is considered as a sentient and rational being, with its own will and capacity for independent action.

Here is a story which seems particularly significant in this regard. Many years ago an ancestor of the Kulango went hunting in a forest called *Begyi*. There he saw an antelope and opened fire. The animal fell as if dead, but as soon as the hunter started to approach, it sprang to its feet and disappeared into the undergrowth. The hunter went to fetch his comrades and they surrounded the area, but they could find no trace of the antelope. So they went into the undergrowth and squatted down to wait for it, but in vain; after a time they grew tired and sat down to wait for something to happen. At that point the senior member of the hunt gathered his men and gave each one a small amount of *labʋlʋ*, which they ate. Then they took a bit more and rubbed it on their faces. No sooner had they done so than they saw the antelope standing on an anthill. They fired seven shots and it fell, really dead this time. After that day the forest became famous and its name is recalled in an *Asɪŋɔ* song whose words tell that in the end the forest revealed itself, so enabling the hunters to find the animal they were seeking.

The story provides food for thought in at least two ways. On one hand both the antelope and the forest seem to have a degree of personal power which they can exert at their own discretion. After being hit the antelope jumps up and vanishes into the vegetation, and it seems as if the forest has decided to protect it. On the other only a magic substance like *labʋlʋ* proves able to enhance the hunters' *kpa̰yɔ* and finally enable them to see the wounded antelope on the anthill.

By contrast, the Donzo believe that they can strengthen their *nyama* by channelling to themselves the *nyama* of the game they kill, so they are convinced that the more animals a hunter kills the stronger his life force becomes[55].

Although the two traditions share the idea that a hunter can increase his mystic power, the ways in which this can be achieved are completely different. For the Donzo it comes about quite naturally, simply through the practice of hunting, whereas the Kulango believe that the action of a human specialist is required together with a magic ingredient.

HUNTERS' CHANTS

"Ah Ah! hʊ̰́ʊ̰ kōri lɔɔm mʊ̰ ŋa!"
" Aha! You like these songs then! Eeh!"

The life of the *sawalɛsɔgɔ* community is punctuated by celebrations – initiation rites, the public presentation of new members, funerals and occasions to mark particularly successful group or single-handed hunting expeditions – which are usually accompanied by specific chants, songs and dances.

As seen above, the characteristic hunters' dance is known as the *Asuŋɔ*; people commonly refer to it as the warriors' dance, which is hardly surprising since in all West African traditional societies the second role assigned to hunters was the military defence of their village[56]. The *Asuŋɔ* is a highly vigorous exercise. Moving barefoot, the dancers push their bodies to the limit, jumping as high as they can and then throwing themselves to the ground, or imitating the movements and stances of wild animals. During the dance they often brandish animal tails taken as hunting trophies. While some *sawalɛsɔgɔ* dance, others fire their rifles into the air or beat out the rhythm on big leather-clad calabashes[57].

The chants and songs have a variety of themes. Some chants have a ritual meaning, such as the one raised by the celebrant at the beginning of the funeral of a *sawalɛgɛ* member to send his spirit to the hereafter, or the chant intoned by the old hunter at the start of a party celebrating a successful hunt.

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[55] On this point McNaughton (1988: 17) writes: "*Powerful Mande hunters therefore kill them* [game animals] *as often as they can, to demonstrate their prowess as masters of the bush and masters of the energy of action. Indeed, each time they succeed their own power grows.*"

[56] See M. Leach (2000); T. J. Bassett (2003) and F. Crevatin (2008).

[57] The Kulango name for these instruments, which are drums made from large pumpkins, is *goko*.

Some tell of mythical events in history or the exploits of a hunter. Others are simpler in content, or even comical – sung when the celebrations reach their peak and the revellers' whistles have been wetted by litres of palm wine.

Sadly the *sawalɛgɛ*, at least in the village of Nassian, seems to have been completely ignored by the younger generation, so I could find no-one other than Kuman with any first-hand memory of such songs. All the words set out below have therefore been transcribed from recordings of Kuman's renditions. Truth to be told, whenever Kuman began to sing there was always someone able to join in a chorus or two, but no-one was able to come up with a line that the old hunter had not already produced himself.

The titles under which the words are set out are mine, and the order in which the songs and chants are presented is a result of their division according to subject matter.

RITUAL CHANTS

The first three texts are set out above on pages 100, 101 and 103 respectively.

The start of the celebrations for a prodigious hunt[58]

Daa eh! Daa eh!
Daa oh! Daa ooooh!
Daa eh! Daa eh!
Daa eh! Daa eh!
Eh! Dáa dɔ̰̄ bɪa-rɪ oh! Daa oh! Daa oooooh!

Today eh! Today eh!/ Today oh! Today oooh! / Today eh! Today eh! / Today is a lucky day for us oh[59]*! / Today oh! Today ooooh!*

The public presentation of the great hunter[60]

A mṵ mīini a̰ŋɔ, eh, nyṵ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini,
a mṵ mīini a̰ŋɔ sawalɛ kyakya nyṵ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini
A mṵ mīini a̰ŋɔ oooh, nyṵ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini
a mṵ mīini a̰ŋɔ, dṵṵ'nɪ kyakya nyṵ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini!

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[58] Chanted by the avant-garde sent to inspect the amount of meat brought home by the successful hunter.

[59] Literally: "today is sweet us-on oh!".

[60] Chanted by the senior hunter to start the celebrations for a successful hunt.

So the village feels respect, eh, you're the man they respect / and so the village feels respect, the man they fear hunts fast / and so the village feels respect, oooh, here's the man they fear / and so the village feels respect, the man they fear moves fast in the dʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ.

The way the dead hunter sleeps

Daa oh! Daa oh! Daa ooooh!
daa eh! Daa eh! Dáa gyā bıa-rı!
Daa oh! Daa oh! Dáa gyā bıa-rı oh!
Daa oh! Daa oooooh!
Bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ núu̱ sōo,
hʊ́ʊ̱ dīɔ daa brıbra,
bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ núu̱ sōo,
hʊ́ʊ̱ dīɔ daa brıbra.

Today oh! Today oh! Today oooh! / Today eh! Today eh! Today is bitter for us! / Today oh! Today oh! Today is bitter for us! / Today oh! Today ooooh! His legs are abandoned, his arms are abandoned / today he sleeps strangely / his legs are abandoned, his arms are abandoned / today he sleeps strangely.

Chant to call the deceased hunter to his new life[61]

"Sikoŋoo háa dā̱-ŋmɛ, sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa,
sikoŋooo, sikoŋooo hɔ́ɔ yāa ooooh!" BOMIAF!
"Sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa, sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa, Sikoŋo.
Dʊ̱ʊ̱nʊ̱ kyakya sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa
Sikoŋo bomiafo, sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa
a sikoŋooo, sikoŋooo hɔ́ɔ yāa oooh! BOMIAFO
Bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ núu̱ sōo
u̱dīɔ daa brıbra
bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ núu̱ sōo
dīɔ daa brıbra
mú yāa eeeeh! eh! hʊ́ʊ̱ hōo bɔ dene
sáwalɛ(sɛ) yāa eeeeh! nnabɛrɛ ʊ́ hōo bɔ dene ooooh!".

Then, as the funeral party lifts the body to carry it to the place of burial:

[61] This is the public part of the ritual chant raised by the funeral celebrant after his performance of the proper rites on the body of the deceased hunter.

oooh, hʊ̰̀ʊ̰ hōo bɔ dene, sáwalɛ(sɛ) yāa
dʊ̰̀ʊ̰nʊ̰ kyakya hʊ̰̀ʊ̰-ŋmɛ yāa dɛ!.

And they take it away.

Sikongo himself is coming, Sikongo is leaving oooh! / Sikongoooo, Sikongooooo is leaving, oooh! / BOMIAF! */ Sikongo is leaving, Sikongo is leaving ! Sikongo! / Fast in the* dʊ̰̀ʊ̰n̰, *Sikongo goes off / Sikongo bomiafo! Sikongo is leaving! / and Sikongooo, Sikongooo is leaving, oooh! /* BOMIAFO! */ His legs are upside-down, his arms are upside-down / ih! Today he sleeps strangely / His legs are upside-down, his arms are upside-down / today he sleeps strangely / I'm going away eeeh! eh ! She will eat her snails ! The hunter is leaving eeeh! Women you will eat your snails! / oooh! oooh! She will eat her snails, the hunter is leaving! / fast in the* dʊ̰̀ʊ̰n̰ *, and that's how he goes!*

The *labʊlʊ* song

taa zú oh, taa zú, ɑ̰́nɪ mɑ́ɑ̰ yáa mɪa?
taa zú ooh, taa zú, ɑ̰́nɪ mɑ́ɑ̰ yáa mɪa?
taa zú ooh, taa zú, ɑ̰́nɪ mɑ́ɑ̰ yáa mɪa?
taa zú, oooh!

One turn oh, one turn... who can attack me[62]*? / one turn oh, one turn... who can attack me? / one turn oh, one turn...who can attack me? One turn... ooooh!*

CHANTS WITH MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCES

The manifestation of the sacred forest

Oh Begyi[63] *oh! Begyi oooh!*
Eh Begyi eeeh! Eh Begyi; Today it showed itself to me
eh! Ahia Begyi oh! Ahia Begyi oooh!

Oh Begyi oh! Begyi oh! / Eh Begyi eeeeh! Today you showed yourself to me! Ah! Ahia Begyi oh! Ahia Begyi ooooh!

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62 Literally: "One turn oh, one turn... who can go-me?"

63 This recalls the story recounted on p. 109. See also texts, pp. 260-261.

The song of Danfoa and Banfoa[64]

dạfʊa, nna[65] ooh!
A yāa Dạfʊa nna bɔ yɔ̰
Banfʊa nna,
a yāa Banfʊa nna bɔ yɔ̰ eh!
dạfʊa daa!

The sauce is weak, oh mother! / Danfoa has gone home mother! Banfoa mother! Banfoa has gone home, mother eh! The sauce is weak today!

The song probably recounts the disappointment of a woman who had two lovers, each of whom left her at some point; left alone, she has no meat to cook a good sauce.

The song of Danfoa 2

eh! dạfʊa nna eeeeh!
eh! Dạfʊa nna bɔ yɔ̰[66] eh!
dạfʊa daa
A yāa Dạ́fʊa nna bɔ yɔ̰ eh!
A yāa Dạ́fʊa nna bɔ yɔ̰ eh!

Eh! The sauce is weak, mother eh! / Eh! Danfoa mother is at home! / Eh! Weak sauce today! / And Danfoa has gone home eh! / And Danfoa has gone home, eh!

HIGH-SPIRITED SONGS

The hunter goes hunting

Ka mú yāa eeeeh!
Ka mú yāa ooooh!
Ka mú yāa yɛbɔ báa yāa wɛ-rɪ-í! Ka mú yāa oooh!
Ka mú yāa yɛbɔ báa yāa bɔɔ wɛ-í! Ka mú yāa eeeh!
Ka mú yāa aaaah!

---

[64] This and the following song could also have been put into the third group, because Danfoa and Banfoa are probably nicknames of characters in familiar funny stories. Here Danfoa is clearly a pun on *daŋ̰ fɔ̰a*, Kulango for "the sauce is weak".

[65] *Nna*, literally "mother", is the respectful form of address used with all women in the village.

[66] Literally "houses", but I think the plural used here is just a form of poetic licence.

Because I'm going now eeeh! / Because I'm going now oooh! / Because I'm going now, women don't go away[67]*! / Because I'm going now oooh! / Because I'm going now, women don't go away / Because I'm going now eeeh! / Because I'm going now aaah!*

Eating snails[68]

Hą̱ą̱ hōo dene
eeeh! Hu̱ hɛ́ hu̱ yáa oh! Bíı hōo bı dene!
Dụ̱ụ̱nı kyakya mu̱ddie yáa eh!
Bíı hōo bı deneeee.
eeeh! Hu̱ hɛ́ hu̱ yáa oh! Bíı hōo bı dene!
Sáwalɛ kyakya, mʊm hu̱ hɛ́ yáa oh!
Bíı hōo bı deneee!
eeeeh! Hu̱ hɛ́ hu̱ yáa oh! Bíı hōo bı dene!
eeeeh! Hu̱ hɛ́ hu̱ yáa oh! Bíı hōo bı dene!
eeeeh! Hu̱ hɛ́ hu̱ yáa oh! Bíı hōo bı dene!

She's eating snails / eeeh! He's decided to go oh! We'll be eating our snails! / The hunter's gone fast in the dvu̱ṉ, eh! / We're eating our snaaaails! / eeh! He's gone away oh! We're eating our snails! / Just like that the hunter's gone oh! / We're eating our snaaaails! eeeh! He's gone away oh! We'll be eating our snails! / He's gone away oh! We'll be eating our snails! / He's gone away oh! We'll be eating our snails!

Tasty sauces

Hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱, hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱
sawalɛ(sɛ) hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱.
Bɔ náfą̱ụ̱ lılıŋʊ mą̱ą̱ tʊzʊ̱rʊ̱
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱ mıa-rı
ooooh! Dám dɔ̄ụ̱ oooh!
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱ oh, eeeh!
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱ụ̱ụ̱!
Dụ̱ụ̱nʊ̱ kyakya bɔ nafą̱ụ̱ lılıŋʊ, hą̱ą̱ kɔ̄rı dụ̱ụ̱nʊ̱
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱ mıa nʊʊ(ŋɔ)!
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱
sawalɛ(sɛ) hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱,
sawalɛ(sɛ) hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱
Bɔ nafą̱ụ̱ lılıŋʊ hą̱ą̱ kɔ̄rı dụ̱ụ̱nʊ̱,
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ụ̱ bıa-rı.

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[67] Literally, "women, may they not go anywhere".

[68] For many Kulango families in which there are no hunters snails are the major source of high-quality protein. This song plays with the idea.

He's coming back and the sauce will be tasty / the hunter's coming back and the sauce will be good / The sinews in his legs are thin, but they can beat the animals / he's coming back and the sauce will be tasty for me / oooh! The sauce will be good oooh! / He's coming back and the sauce will be good oh, eeeh! / He's coming back and the sauce will be tasty / In the dụ̱ụ̱nụ̱, fast sinews in his legs, he walks the dụ̱ụ̱nụ̱ / he's coming back and the sauce will be sweet on my mouth / he's coming back and the sauce will be good, / the hunter's coming back and the sauce will be good for us.

This song is typically sung by hunters' wives. The double meaning needs no explanation.

Tails

Nyą̱ŋarɪnyą̱[69] *ooh! Nyą̱ŋarɪnyą̱*
Háa dɛ̄-gɛ lɛ gbē-ke nyą̱ŋarɪnyą̱
gbaŋmaŋa hɪlɪgɔ lɛ ooooh!
Nyą̱ŋarɪnyą̱
háa dɛ̄-gɛ lɛ gbē-ke nyą̱ŋarɪnyą̱
gbaŋmą̱ hɪlɪgɔ lɛ ooooh!
Kyekye wɪra[70]
Sáwalɛgɛ dɔ̄ụ̱ gbaga-rɪ
Nyą̱ŋarɪnyą̱
háa dɛ̄-gɛ lɛ gbē-ke nyą̱ŋarɪnyą̱!

At this point the hunter picks up the animal's tail and waves it in the air:

Wɛbɔ hɪlɪgɔ lɔɔ ną̱ą̱ŋmɔ lɛ
tehɪlɪgɔ ną̱ą̱ŋmɔ lɛ-í!
Mmmmh!Lɛ tehɪlɪgɔ ną̱ą̱ŋmɔ lɛ oooh!
hą́ą̱ yāa la yī-í, oooh!
Há́ą̱ yāa la yī-í oooh! Dụ̱ụ̱n'nɪ kyakya
hą́ą̱ yāa la yī-í oooh!
Yaagɔ brɛbrɛbrɛbrɛ
hą́ą̱ yāa la yī-í oooh!
tɔzɪna bɔ hɪlɪgɔ lɔɔ-í!
eeeeh! Kyɪagara kyụ̱
Kyɪagara kyụ̱ ą́nɪ má́ą̱ lɛ yáa↓?
Kyɪagara kyụ̱ụ̱ụ̱
Kyɪagara kyụ̱ ą́nɪ má́ą̱ lɛ yáa↓?
Kyɪagara kyụ̱ụ̱ụ̱

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69 This word is an ideophone used to evoke the sound of quick steps.

70 Not a Kulango expression.

Kyɩagara kyṵ ắnɩ mắḁ lɛ yáa↓?
Kyɩagara kyṵ!”

Chakchakchak oh! Chakchakchakchak / he goes like this and picks it up chakchakchak / here’s the panther’s tail, oooh! /chakchakchakchak / he goes like this and picks it up chakchakchakchak! / here’s the panther’s tail oooh! / Kyekyewira! / Hunting’s better than farming / chakchakchakchak / he goes like this and picks it up chakchakchakchak // here’s a tail, here’s the meat / the goat’s tail isn’t meat / mmmh! The goat’s tail isn’t meat, ooh! / He’s going and he won’t come back oooh! He’s going and he won’t come back oooh! Fast in the dʋ̰ʋ̰n / he’s going and he won’t come back, ooh! / His absence is long / He’s going and he won’t come back oooh! / The animal’s tail has gone! // eeeh! The first man drunk / The first man drunk, now who can walk? / The first man drunk / The first man drunk, now who can walk? / The first man drunk / The first man drunk.

Conclusions

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

"Hɛrɛ míı dā-ti dɛ…"
"This is what I add…"

The descriptions here presented of the world of traditional medicine and hunting in Kulango culture derive from the words of a very old professional, a man who lived at least half his life at a time of far fewer contrasts between tradition and modernity. The first Christian missionaries did not come to Nassian until the late 1970s and the first paved road, still dozens of kilometres from the village, did not reach the town of Bondoukou until the 1990s.

Any interpretation of Kuman's words must take that into account, and it should also be borne in mind that in many respects there is a considerable difference between what he said and the world he lived in and what the Kulango experience, believe and do today. Kuman's very words betray traces of innovations which he had added to the practices of his teachers, which shows that tradition and modernity should never be seen as two separate worlds but as two extremes of a single continuum – the speed of transition from the former to the latter will always depend on practical and contextual circumstances.

In this final chapter I shall attempt to discuss this theme from various points of view.

"mì yáa a mì bárı mı sinyo a hɔ ɲɲo dá..."
"While I was walking I lost my amulet because its cord broke..."

In Kulango culture, giving a magic charge to protective amulets, rings and bangles is a service provided by every good traditional healer, every *warısɛ*. The wearing of such charms and amulets is by no means an exception in the region, as exemplified by the hunting jackets worn at work by the *Donzo*, which are often covered by so many *gris-gris* that there is no way of knowing what material they are made from.

It is true that these talismans were originally conceived for the protection of hunters, warriors and farmers from their enemies and any and all types of supernatural creature as they carried out their work outside the social space of the village, or to defend themselves against attacks by witchcraft, or to secure the affection of a man or woman by means of a spell. Today, however, they are in ever greater demand, so the market abounds with amulets for every purpose: winning a football match, getting a good mark at school, aquiring the ability to speak well, winning a court case.

Such an evolution may certainly be considered natural, since the most pressing concern of the average African has always been to protect himself from everyone and everything because he feels in constant danger, or, as F. Crevatin[1] observes of the Bawlé in Sakassou:

> *Bawlé village society is profoundly insecure; people can never be sure of the real attitude of mind of their neighbours or relatives, not even of their closest relative.*

My impression, however, is that this natural internal evolution has been accompanied by an increasing trend towards the use of talismans following the penetration of Islam and the consequent spread of karamokos[2] and marabouts[3] in the whole region. As Robert E. Handloff[4] wrote:

> *From their first penetration into West Africa, Muslim scholars or ulama were supposed to have access to mystical powers which could be employed to prevent misfortune, cure illness, heal wounds and forecast the future. The instruments by which they exercised this power were talismans in the forms of prayers, amulets and charms.*

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1 F. Crevatin 2010.

2 *Karamoko* is a Dyula word indicating Muslim scholars who have "*completed a prescribed course of study over a period of years for which they received an isnad or written certificate listing their chain of teachers from the most recent back to the Prophet*" (Handloff 1982:187).

3 In West Africa *marabout* is the name given to men of the Islamic faith, sometimes scholars, "*whose reputation rested mainly on the efficacy of their talismans*" (Handloff 1982:186).

4 Handloff 1982:186.

This alleged access to mystic powers is probably why Muslim scholars proved to be so successful in all West African societies. That was the sign which already distinguished the local professionals who dealt with the non-earthly world: healers, hunters and sacrificers. It was thus a superimposition of a set of ideas on an underlying traditional fabric which was not cancelled out but reinforced by the drive of the new religion.

Today it is quite common to see someone having a talisman charged by a traditional healer or hunter and at the same time buying an Islamic amulet at the market[5]. Amulets of this type even festoon the *Badjan* and *Dina*, local mini-buses which miraculously enable people, animals, goods and who knows what else to travel on the dusty tracks of the savannah. The drivers wear magic rings and bangles for protection against thieves, guards and accidents; to the rear-view mirror they tie leather pouches containing cards bearing the words of the prophet and on the vehicle's bodywork attach stickers proclaiming "Allah is great", "under the protection of Allah" and the like, in the belief that these will ward off any possible trouble[6].

Traditional charms and Islamic amulets alike are prepared specifically for an individual and for a precise purpose. Handloff[7] explains this in detail with a number of examples, such as the practice of the *Ashantehene* and *Gyamanhene* of tying "*one or more Muslim healers of tested reputation to their respective Nsumankwafo (physician's stool) to supplement the efforts of non-Muslim healers*". He goes on to say that the same expedient was used by the old Ivory Coast president Houphouet Boigny; every year, before travelling to Europe, he would visit the imam of Bondoukou to have his future told and hear advice on how he should behave so as to obtain the best result from his meetings with white politicians.

People's faith in the traditional healers and hunters who charge their amulets, and in the Islamic karamokos and marabouts, is not dented even when one of their talismans fails to work. For the medicine to function a series of specific instructions has to be followed, and if something goes wrong the cause is always to be found in the negligence of the individual in question, who obviously failed to obey the rules.

For all these reasons, because of the reputation they have made for themselves and because people are basically in awe of them – whoever is able to manipulate the Powers for good is certainly able to do so for ill – traditional hunters and healers, like the best-known karamokos and marabouts, are gen-

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[5] On this widespread practice see the famous story of Wangrin, in Hampaté-Ba (1999).

[6] The faithful of other confessions also follow this fashion. People may find themselves travelling on vehicles proclaiming the virtues of "Jesus Christ, my Lord and Son of God" or "Christ, Mighty Lord".

[7] See Handloff 1982:190.

erally held in great respect and can use their position to exert a great deal of social control, often acting as advisors to prominent political figures.

The same was true of Kuman, who in 2006 was one of the foremost advisors to the chief of the village of Nassian (see p. 22).

TRADITIONAL TREATMENT AND MODERN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE REGION

"Regardless of the context, traditional medical methods are not restricted to the field of medicine, disease and treatment; social, religious, moral and political order lie at their very basis..." (Beneduce 2008:114)

The fact that the area of Nassian is far from the country's towns and cities and arterial roads does not mean that its inhabitants have been isolated from the modern world and what it offers, above all in terms of western medicine. It has been recorded above that when Kuman was little more than a boy Lebanese traders sold 12-bore shotguns in their village shop; besides arms, they also stocked a whole range of goods that people would need – radios, torches, batteries and the like.

In the 1970s, when president Houphouet Boigny's government decided that Ivory Coast had to become a modern country, Nassian was made a subprefecture and the village was provided with a maternity clinic and professional midwife, a general hospital with a western-trained doctor, a primary school, and a secondary school located three kilometres from the village so as to serve the nearby settlement of Parhadi.

The first Catholic missionary arrived in the 1970s. Father Fuchs of the SMA (Societé des Missions Africaines) built a small chapel near a clearing where he had decided to live in a sort of hut. It was not until the 1990s that three younger friars (Fathers Dario Dozio, Luigi Frattini and Luigi Alberti) began the construction of a church and a mission provided with guest-rooms for friends and volunteer workers, complete with running water pumped from a well and proper toilets.

After them the village saw the arrival of a community of Sicilian nuns, the *Ancelle Riparatrici del Sacro Cuore di Gesù*, who opened a small pharmacy and launched a programme of cultural and health education to combat child malnutrition for the women in Nassian and the surrounding area. They also started up embroidery classes and other cottage industries to enable women to gain a measure of financial emancipation from their husbands and fathers.

Following Houphouet Boigny's death and the 1999 military coup which brought Robert Guei to power, the midwife and the doctor both left the vil-

lage. At the end of the 2002 civil war and the reconquest of the area by government troops and their allies, because of the loss of Bouna Nassian was officially made a prefecture (though in 2006 no Prefect had yet taken up office in the village). It was only then that a professional returned to Nassian for a time to work in what had been the emergency ward of the old general hospital.

Seasonal migration to the more developed agricultural regions in the south of the country had become a regular occurrence by the beginning of the 20th century following the establishment of the first big banana, cocoa and coffee plantations, so every year young migrant workers would return to the village with new knowledge and new technology. I still smile when I remember that in 2006, when Nassian still had no satellite signal repeater, the young plantation workers at home for their holidays would hang around the market square with their mobile phones sitting uselessly in their pockets while many traditional homes in the village were enjoying the benefits of electricity and television.

All this means that although their attitudes with regard to their culture are very conservative, the Kulango in Nassian have always had some contact with the modern world and, what is more important for this study, with western medical practice. Which begs the question: what are people's attitudes towards traditional healers like Kuman and their remedies and towards modern medicine? This is another matter on which Handloff[8] sheds useful light:

> *In Bondoukou as elsewhere in Africa western medicine might seem to pose a threat to non-scientific practices. Neither healers nor their clients share this opinion. Rather they consider western practitioners to treat symptoms while the* karamokos *eliminate causes. Dyula karamokos are instead desecularizing western medicine and incorporating it into their medical paradigm.*

If the term *traditional healers* were to replace *karamokos* in the above passage the statement would be no less accurate. The difference between Dyula karamokos and Kulango traditional healers is that the former, in addition to their talismans and magic remedies, sell western medicines (usually pills for malaria, fever and diarrhoea), while a traditional healer faced with an illness too serious for him to cure will administer a herbal remedy and also prescribe a series of food prohibitions and rituals to eliminate any supernatural causes; after which he will advise his patient to turn to the nuns or the nurse for modern medicines to treat his bodily symptoms.

Neither do traditional healers shun western medicines when it comes to treating themselves. I remember that the last time I was in Nassian Kuman was plagued by an intestinal parasite and began to treat himself with traditional remedies. Despite them he quickly grew too weak to go into the bush

[8] See Handloff 1982:192.

to collect the plants he needed to continue the treatment, so it occurred to me to offer him the antibiotics I had with me. Far from putting up any resistance, Kuman was happy to accept the offer, interpreting it as a sort of exchange of favours between colleagues.

Sharing information with traditional healers from other regions and training under the aegis of a range of different masters is a characteristic feature of traditional practice, and I suppose that openness to exchange, even with western medicine, may be seen in the same light. I imagine that if traditional medicine was a private matter confined to an exclusive society of initiates, the healers' attitude to modern medicine would be radically different.

KUMAN AND MODERNITY

"hɛrɛ nyą́ nyą̄ daa, aɪ lɛ nyą́ yī↓? faɪ!"
"Today when someone's very ill, where does he go? Here!"

I think Djedwa Yao Kuman was one of the most intelligent people I have ever met. Although he was considered the most senior of Nassian's elders, the one with the deepest knowledge of the legends and stories of his people's tradition, he was also one of the villagers most interested in current affairs and politics. At his home, under the roofing of one of the huts in his *ben*, he had an ancient freezer. When I asked him how he had got it he simply replied that when he was still a young man and went out hunting he managed to earn some money by selling the meat and hides of the game he brought home. With that money he was able to buy an old freezer and a generator so as to conserve the meat his family would need in the rainy season, when hunting was difficult and unproductive. I was struck by this observation because because the inhabitants of traditional villages do not usually think of the future in these terms or plan their time in such a way – they tend to live hand to mouth, immediately consuming what they manage to get day by day, quickly selling any surplus at the market or sharing it with their neighbours without bothering to save anything (apart from a bit of cereal) for a rainy day.

I think this is the best demonstration of Kuman's attitude to the modern world, or rather the benefits that modern technology can provide.

I have already pointed out that the old healer was one of the first to understand the potential value of my study for the future generations of the Kulango people; when we started working in earnest on his personal history it was he who asked me to record his every word, to put them in a book and to return to Nassian one day, after his death, to tell his children and grandchildren who their father really was.

While he was saying these things his demeanour was at once proud and sad. Kuman took pride in himself and his culture, but at the same time was sorrowful because he knew that his children were not interested in what he had to say. They treated him as a useless old man who talked about useless old things, and this was the aspect of the modern world he most disliked.

He was greatly saddened by his sons' decision to become Catholics, which meant that none of them would be able to join the *sawalɛgɛ*. He was firmly convinced that the traditional and the modern could happily co-exist if only people had the good sense to conserve the best of both. A highly intelligent idea – which unfortunately his contemporaries were unable to understand or share.

Kuman was always interested in what went on in his country outside the village, and was curious to know how things were going in the rest of the world. He knew that there was no going back to the time of his youth and was generally well disposed towards the future. But at the same time, following political developments in his own country he was dismayed at the looming prospect of traditional institutions being destroyed by the offices of modern administration, which he saw as a threat to the survival of his cultural heritage.

But he never attempted to resist this process – in fact he tried to carve out a place for himself in this new dimension by preparing amulets for the village students who attended the colleges in Bondoukou or the universities of Abidjan and Bouaké. He extended the same courtesies to the insolent government soldiers stationed near the village to protect the local population from the rebels as to the village chief who sought his advice whenever he had to make an important decision for the community.

I think Kuman was attracted by modern technology and at the same time frightened by the oblivion he saw Kulango culture sinking into as the frivolities of the modern world continued their inexorable advance.

KUMAN AND HIS FAMILY

"lɛ ùv là lɛ hɛ̀-gɛ…"
"So you've got to stop..."

In Kuman's relations with his family the contrast between tradition and modern life was particularly sharp, so much so that it had taken the form of a generational conflict.

Having abandoned their traditional religion, all his children had converted to Catholicism (one of them was even a catechist) and consequently begun to view the beliefs and customs of their forebears as false and pagan.

Since Kuman had never abandoned or repudiated his fetishes and ancestor worship, his children had effectively left him to his own devices, considering him a poor old man out of touch with the world. Perhaps they stayed with him only out of a sense of duty and because it is not done to leave ageing parents, but although Kuman was greatly respected in the village and considered one of its brightest elders, in his family and among his children his words were given little heed.

Despite this, and apart from their radically divergent views on the value of tradition, Kuman's family seemed a very united one – not a day passed without one of his children[9], when in the village, dropping by his *ben* to say hello. And the rules of mutual support underpinning the extended family were always observed.

The general attitude of Kuman's children towards him is well captured by the episode recounted on pages 66-67, when they got together with his wife to concoct a trick to make him stop pulling the villagers' teeth. They had decided that it was time for him to give up his practice because of the possible legal repercussions of any accident occurring during a particularly complicated extraction. If a patient lost too much blood and died, his relatives could have taken Kuman to court and his whole family would have had to pay a large sum in damages to prevent his imprisonment.

My impression is that this episode can be seen as a good example of filial affection, but it also highlights the radical difference of opinion between Kuman and his children with regard to traditional practices. For him they were unquestionable; his children saw them as potentially useful in themselves but entirely incompatible with the laws of the modern world.

One of the most interesting features of Kuman's family story is the fact that he only married once and lived with his wife until he died. This was fairly unusual; among the Kulango of the traditional religion there is a tendency towards polygamy, a practice that cannot have been introduced by Islam since officially only 9% of the present population professes the Muslim faith. Given that Kuman was comfortably off, the only explanation for his monogamy is to be found in his membership of the *sawalɛgɛ*, which required the strongest of bonds between a hunter and his wife (or perhaps wives), imposing mutual fidelity so as to prevent the loss of the magic powers of protection invested in the hunter's shirt.

From Kuman's own words (see texts pp. 256-258) we know that he stayed in the brotherhood until a relatively advanced age and was obliged to leave it by his guiding spirit when, after eight sons, he finally managed to father a baby girl. Considering that he must have married at about 20 and that his wife would have had a child every two years or so, when Kuman left the hunt

[9] In a matrilineal context such as this, "children" refers both to Kuman's biological offspring and his sister's children, for whom Kuman was the social father.

he must have been at least 40 – an age at which in rural Africa a man is no longer considered young and indeed is already likely to be the grandfather of his first son's child. So it may well be that, having reached that point, Kuman decided to continue his life as wise old healer with his faithful old companion by his side rather than pursue the illusion of a second youth.

Without wishing to over-romanticise, I like to think that the union between Kuman and his wife was a very special one – it could be seen in how they lived. In a traditional *ben* men normally sit with men and women with women. The men eat in their own group and the women and children eat what is left sitting around the fire; only men who are very old and infirm (which Kuman was certainly not) can sometimes be seen sitting round the hearth with their daughters-in-law. But when Kuman was at home he would spend hours in the *ben* chatting with his wife; when he asked me to take a photograph of the two of them, not for nothing did he insist that she should sit right by him. These things are indications of how broad-minded Kuman was – and he did all of them in full view of the whole community, without giving the slightest thought to wagging tongues.

My last observation on Kuman and his family concerns their attitude to dogs. Like many agricultural societies in West Africa, the Kulango have no love for dogs; when they find them in the village they drive them out with sticks, stones and kicks. Apart from a few Djimini fortune-tellers, no-one eats dog meat. Despite that, Kuman raised dogs in his *ben* and allowed his grandchildren to play with the puppies. When I asked him about his unusual attachment to dogs he replied flatly that he liked them and said no more on the subject, even though he could see perfectly well that I found his answer far from satisfactory. As far as we know, traditional hunting techniques did not involve the use of dogs, but they are depicted positively as supernatural creatures in the foundation myths of a number of villages in the area. I recorded one of these in Depingo, a village about 15 kilometres from Nassian[10]. It runs as follows.

> "After the Bèghò war which brought them to the Nassian territory, they chose a suitable place to live with a large number of people. They are brave hunters, some women are spinners and they are able to produce fine pottery, the men are weavers and farmers. It was a very haughty, wicked and selfish tribe.
> It was during a festival of yams that Yego punished them by sending a plague. The women had prepared food in abundance for the celebration. When the people gathered for the meal they saw two great dogs walking through the village, passing from yard to yard in search of food, but the villagers drove them away with blows. Finally the dogs came to a family

[10] Personal recording, printed in my PhD thesis; 2000:381-382.

which took them in and gave them much food and some meat. After eating, the dogs disappeared. That night the villagers heard a tremendous thundering noise. Then a great wind came upon them and from the sky fell a gigantic rock which buried the whole village. The family which had fed the dogs managed to save itself from the catastrophe, finding a gap to come out from under the rock in their courtyard. It was Yego who saved them. It is thanks to this family, which multiplied with a great number of descendants, that the Goromo[11] have survived to this day. Today the Goromo can be found everywhere. Their women marry men from all the other tribes. Even today, at the site of the rock where the old village was, on the rock there are still the handprints of the family which managed to escape from that bad business."

Since this story also mentions hunters I wonder whether the connection between Kuman, his family and their dogs could ultimately be read in this light. In other hunter societies in Ivory Coast it is common to have these animals as hunting companions since it is thought that "*forest spirits are afraid of dogs*" and the ambivalent consideration in which they are held may derive from the idea that dogs are witch-doctors, as is believed by the Beng[12].

KUMAN AND HIS VILLAGE

"ʊ́ʊ nyḭ̄, wɪ̰mɔ-ti bɛ́rɛ gyāba lɛ gʊ̰ gyagaʊ̰ mɩ́ɩ hɛ̄..."
"Some people think that I do bad things..."

The effects of the basic ambiguity implied by the words quoted above were clearly visible in the attitude of the people of Nassian towards Kuman. It should be said that for the collection of data, or rather the interpretation I present here, I did not use specific systematic questionnaires – I confined myself to wandering around the village striking up apparently random conversations with whomever I happened to meet. This was a deliberate choice, firstly because I did not consider a statistical survey suitable for the situation, secondly because I did not want my interlocutors to be worried by the idea that their words could be transcribed and read by Kuman himself. Such an eventuality would, I am certain, have invalidated many of those conversations precisely because virtually all the villagers were seriously in awe of him.

11 Goromo is the name of the Kulango lineage which founded the village of Depingo.

12 On this point see Gottlieb A. 1986:477-488.

As has been observed more than once, Kuman's figure as a healer and hunter was seen as highly ambiguous. In Kulango culture any professional with some connection to the world of the supernatural is considered to possess certain magic powers which may be used to do good or bring harm to ordinary people.

Kuman's social status in Nassian was high, since he was the primary and most trusted advisor to the *aŋɔ̰ɪsɛ*, the village chief. Many were the occasions on which I witnessed something particularly unusual for the area: the *aŋɔ̰ɪsɛ* himself would go to Kuman's *ben* to speak to him on important matters, while the traditional rule would dictate the exact opposite – that the chief should summon his trusted advisor(s) to his own *ben* when needed.

This practice may be interpreted as a simple question of respect towards an older man – the chief was about 50 years old, whereas in 2006 Kuman must have been at least 75 – but I think there was more to it than that. When I spoke to the *aŋɔ̰ɪsɛ* about Kuman, he said simply that the healer was a wise and very enlightened man, adding that on many occasions if he had not followed his advice he would have done the wrong thing for the village, and that in his opinion Kuman had a great "power".

During my sojourns in Nassian I was able to speak to a large number of people on many different occasions: old women and men and members of the village council, young farmers like Thomas Kwame, Dyula traders who sold talismans, girls busy with domestic chores and boys returning from the fields.

The answers to my questions about Kuman could not have been more varied: "*Kuman is a good healer*", "*Kuman is a dangerous witch-doctor*", "*Kuman is a man who can deal with diabolical forces", "Kuman is the best amulet charger", "Kuman is a charlatan", "Kuman is powerful and good", "Kuman is powerful and dangerous", "Kuman is too old to be a normal man*" is just a sample.

This is exactly what I had come to expect, but what did surprise me was that the very people who spoke of Kuman one day as an excellent medicine-man would the next day be prepared to state their certainty that if Kuman was still alive it was because he was a witch-doctor and ate people's souls. Conversely, those who described him as a supernatural monster would a couple of weeks later depict him as an angel descended from heaven.

In this respect I think the most significant case was Thomas Kwame, my ever-present informant.

Thomas Kwame lived in the same part of the village as Kuman and both belonged to the same lineage. When I first met Kuman and developed an interest in that unusual man it was Kwame who encouraged me to try to speak to him and hear his story. He always spoke of Kuman as a great healer (I saw with my own eyes how in just a few days Kuman's treatment healed a ghastly injury that Kwame had done himself working in the fields – the machete had cut him to bone and the edges of the wound were torn) and a man of peace, and was delighted when I finally contacted him and we began to work to-

gether. The two men seemed very close, but in September 2008 I received a furious letter from my friend Kwame telling me that if I ever went back to Nassian to work with Kuman again he would not be able to accompany me because he had finally understood the true nature of the man. He was sure that he was a witch-doctor, because he had cast spells which had plunged him into a terrible situation, but could add nothing more in case Kuman used his powers to read what he was writing to me.

Deeply struck by the letter, I immediately rang the nuns in the mission and asked them to find out what had actually happened. A few days later they told me that nothing out of the ordinary had occurred, and that year Kwame had suffered the same bad luck as everybody else: the country's political problems had caused a collapse in the price of cashew nuts which brought dire consequences for the whole population. One of the nuns had spoken to Kwame, who told her he was sure that one of Kuman's magic tricks was to blame – Kuman was envious because he thought that "the white woman" (me) had given more money to Kwame than to him, and this was his way of getting his own back.

This continual alternation of contrasting visions in the eyes of single individuals is a clear symptom of a deep-lying creeping fear, a fear with which every traditional African society is compelled to live because it is part of their culture, rooted in the basic idea that nothing happens by chance and there are Forces in the universe able to reward people for their good deeds and punish them for evil. There are also people with the ability to manipulate those forces and bend them to their own purposes, good or bad, and such people should be feared, respected and whenever possible avoided. All I can say is that Kuman was one of those people.

KUMAN AND ME

"...hą́ą̱ pāamı mı gʊ̱-í, nna, a mıa, á mú pāamı bɔ gʊ pa-í..."
"...you will not forget me, as I will not forget you..."

It is already on record that I met Djedwa Yao Kuman during my first stay in Nassian in 2000. At that time I saw him simply as one of the elders in the village council. He was always present at the meetings I arranged with the *aŋɔıʂɛ* to learn of the history of the village and its people; most of the time he just sat and listened to the others, looking curiously at me, my microphone and my notepad. On the rare occasions when he did speak it was to clarify an episode or add important details for the reconstruction of the events we were exploring. I remember that his words were always accepted by the gathering

and that after him hardly anyone ever dared to add anything else – a sure sign of the deep respect they all had for him.

If I think back to how we began to talk about his life, I believe that he was the one who chose me, not the other way round. My first objective was to study the Kulango language and all the features of their culture that took shape as I analysed the lexicon and the contextual use of individual words and terms – only when my passive understanding of the language had reached a decent level did I begin to collect local stories and myths.

During those first months I saw Kuman every time I arranged a meeting with the council elders and I think it was only after he had understood for himself how I worked and how much I loved his culture that he decided to add some of his own knowledge to my modest collection of cultural data.

In 2002 it was Thomas Kwame – as he himself admitted, at the suggestion of a *grand vieux* (Kuman?) – who persuaded me to go and talk directly to Nassian's oldest healer, who would certainly have many interesting things to tell me. My language research was almost complete, and I was happy at the chance to collect spontaneous texts against which to check the accuracy of my grammatical descriptions, so I willingly took on the challenge.

The circumstances of our first meeting and the arrangements we made have already been set out in the section on my methodology. Kuman never took me into the bush or the savannah to show me medicinal plants, nor did he allow me to see his hunter's *hafʊ̰*, but I did have the opportunity of entering his medicine hut, where I witnessed a practical manifestation of the old healer's *kpa̰yɔ* as he swallowed burning embers right in front of me. I was also finally able to see the medicines he had prepared in the form of compound packs of dried herbs kept in good order in rows of clay pots arranged around the walls. I am entirely certain that none of this would have been possible if we had not had real trust in each other.

The last time I saw him he told me he would never forget the months we had spent together and he was certain that I would always remember him too. He added that even if we never met again our spirits were bound together, because I had become like a daughter to him and he would always be my African father.

That day he asked me to return to Nassian after his death, bringing with me the notepad on which I had written all his words. He said that I should seek out his children and grandchildren and tell them who their father was and what it meant to be a Kulango in times gone by. That was his only hope of reawakening their pride in being a people of the savannah.

At the time I did not want to believe I would never see him again but time, alas, has proved him right.

I can only hope that this book will serve to make his last wish come true.

Collected Texts

INTRODUCTION TO THE TEXTS

The second part of the book contains many of the most significant passages from the interviews with Djedoua Yao Kuman recorded during my twelve months of field research – November 2000 to April 2001, June to September 2002 and June to August 2006. I have already specified that most of my meetings with Kuman were held in my second and (particularly) third stay in Nassian, but the ground for my exclusive work with the healer was prepared during my first meetings with the village elders in 2000.

Kuman was highly impressed with the way I spoke to the elders and busied myself with the collection of information on the Kulango language and oral tradition, which is why he was glad to welcome me whenever I went to see him, even just to say hello. Our work together officially began in April 2001, by which time our mutual trust had been established, a few weeks before my first return to Italy. The results of those initial meetings are set out in my doctorate thesis (Naples, June 2005).

The meetings intensified during my second and third sojourns in Nassian, when we would meet at least twice a week for official interviews and almost every day for an evening chat with all his family in their yard.

Although I was not always given permission to record our exchanges, in the end the material I had collected for this book proved to be more than sufficient. We would often come back several times to a particular subject, so in some cases the recordings are repetitive. I therefore decided to present here only the salient passages from our conversations, as a result of which some of the texts reproduced here may seem to end somewhat abruptly.

The order of the passages presented here follows that of the subjects explored in the descriptive chapters rather than any chronological sequence in the interviews. The exchanges are demarcated by a blank line and usually preceded by a title.

NOTES ON THE INTERVIEWS

In accordance with the traditional Kulango rules, on every official visit to Djedoua Yao Kuman I was accompanied by a spokesman of his lineage, Thomas Yao Kwame, who had acted as one of the first informants in my research on the Kulango language. This is why I did not ask questions directly myself – Thomas did so on my behalf, and Kuman would often reply referring to me with a third-person pronoun. This does not mean that I did not understand or speak the language (by the time my relationship with Kuman developed in earnest I had already written a Kulango grammar and dictionary), it was simply a mark of respect for the healer's position and his words. It is interesting to note in this respect that Kuman would not allow me to record our conversations unless Thomas Kwame was present. It was as if outside the official dimension of meetings mediated by a spokesman as tradition demanded, nothing was worth recording.

NOTES ON THE TEXTS

The Kulango transcripts appear first. Brief supplements are to be found in round parentheses – parts of incomplete sentences or the second syllable of a focus particle, such as mʊrʊ̰, which is often lost in spontaneous speech. Every question-answer pairing is immediately followed by the English translation of the Italian translation. The translations do not necessarily abide by the rules of good grammar, but are formulated to be stylistically acceptable and useful to non-linguists. Every feature of the Kulango language which is markedly distant from English structure or is worthy of specific comment is translated literally in the notes on the English texts. Footnotes on the Kulango texts contain morpho-syntactic observations and comments on the use of specific words which require an explanation to render them comprehensible. Round parentheses in the English texts contain annotations on the context of particular utterances (such as "Kuman laughs") or, again, elements to complete truncated sentences.

THE ORIGINS OF AN ILLNESS

Thomas: Hɛrɛ nyą́ŋʊ̰ kpʊ̰'nɪ la yī ɪgɔyɔ bɔ ʊ̰ŋo-nɪ, aɪ ʊ sá-ga[1]↓?

Thomas: *Those nasty illnesses that come to people's heads, where do they come from*[2]?

Kuman: Wá nyį́ nyą́ŋɛ[3-4]'rɛ háa po-í, Yegomɪlɪɛ[5] hɛrɛ, hą́ą̰ mą̄ą̰ hē-gɛ[6]-í… yoh! hɔ̀ nūɪ mʊm Yégomɪlɪa hɛrɛ sā-ga gʊ-rɪ lɛ hɔ lɛ hɔ̀ɔ hɛ̄ lɛ lā, la Mía mą̄ą̰ hɛrɛ-í dɛ[7]! Akyɛrɛ mʊm ɪgoyo bɔ sabu lɛ, lɛ hɛ̄ zɪna wɛ bɔ sabu, lɛ hɛ̄ baa gbɛgyʊ̰ŋɔ bɔ gʊ́, a ʊ́ʊ yī mɪ-rɪ, míɪ mą̄ą̰ lɛ hɛ̄ hɛrɛ, lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ. Mʊm míɪ lā lɛ míɪ hɛ̄-gɛ, mʊm mì hé-gɛ hɔ, mʊm Yegomɪlɪa lɛ a mì hé-gɛ, lɛ míɪ dālɪ Yegomɪlɪɛ'rɛ[8], mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ nyą̄-ŋa-mɪ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ kyɛ̄rɛ kyɔ.

Kuman: *You see, there aren't many diseases, the ones from Yegomilia, he can't make them (all) himself… Yoh! It's*[9] *as if Yegomilia puts it on you and so, so he's finished (with you)… and (in that case) I can't do anything*[10]*, eh! But if it's the destiny of a man, or the destiny of an animal and it's something that comes from inside them*[11] *and you come to me, I can do something*[12]*, and I do it. When I've finished the treatment, when I've done it, if Yegomilia is there and I've done it, I ask Yegomilia to give me the power*[13]*, and the patient recovers*[14].

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1 Note the use of a direct 3rd-person singular pronoun instead of the more correct plural *ʊ̰*; this is very common in unsupervised speech.

2 Lit.: "where do you put them?"

3 The last vowel should be *ɔ*, but in spontaneous speech it often becomes *ɛ* because of the attraction of the determinative (*hɛ*)*rɛ*.

4 Here Kuman uses the word *nyą̄ŋɔ* in the singular as if it were an uncountable collective noun.

5 The same substitution as described in note 3; in this case the last vowel should be "a".

6 This pronoun's agreement with the singular form of the noun is correct. It stands as confirmation that in this context the idea of "illness" is uncountable.

7 An ideophone marking a conclusion; in this context it has no appropriate translation.

8 Though a proper name, Yegomilia is often accompanied by a definite article.

9 Lit.: "it stands".

10 Lit.: "I can't do it".

11 Lit.: "and work their business (themselves their business)".

12 Lit.: "this".

13 Lit.: "He (animate pronoun) gives it (inanimate pronoun) to me".

14 Lit.: "He is well + emphatic particle".

Thomas: Dɛɛn'nɪ úa tūɪ lɛ lɔ̄ úa sʊ́-ŋa wɛ[15] lɛ sóo-ti yɔkɔ lɛ hɔ́ɔ gbɛ↓ ?

Thomas: *The herbs that you get for healing, do you plant some and then water them to make them grow*?

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mía hɛ̄-gɛ mu̱! Wɛ-ti dɛɛkɛ'rɛ ʊ́ʊ kā mʊ́ dɛ, wɛ-ti nna, hɛrɛ míɪ yāa yī hɔ-rɔ hɔ, nyʊ́ pɛɛ mą̄ą̄ tą̄-ti-í, mʊm ʊ dīɔ gya sɪkɛrɛ'rɛ á ʊ́ʊ tą̄-ti hɔ, lɛ ʊ zíŋɔ pūɪ, mhm! A mʊm hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ lɛ mʊm míɪ yāa i̱siko-nɪ lɛ nyɪ̱ka-ga nyʊ́ lɛ, Mía mą̄ą̄ dą̄ bɔɔgɔ lɛ laɪ-ti-í, lɛ míɪ tūɪ mɪ kprɔgɔ[16] lɛ fūa -kɛ lɛ dą̄, hɪnɪ bìa dú-kɛ wɔ-rɪ faɪ dugu eh! Lɛ míɪ fūa -kɛ lɛ dą̄, lɛ nyɪ̄-nyɛ lɛ gyī-ge. Mʊm hʊ́ʊ́ mą̄ą̄ tą̄-ti hɔ, lɔ[17] hʊ́ʊ́ tą̄-ti lɛ ū̱-kpe lɛ dɛ bíɪ yāa, a kyɛrɛ, mʊm ʊ́ʊ dīɔ gya, úa mą̄ą̄ tą̱-ti-í.

Kuman: *Yes! I do that*[18]*! For example, the herb you just talked about, for example madam, when I go to get it; not everyone can touch it; if you have (just) had sexual relations*[19] *for example, and you touch it, your thingy dies, mhm! And if it's like that when I go into the savannah to show it to someone*[20]*; I can go to it, but not point to it (with my finger), so I do it with my foot*[21]*; this is what we already said before, eh! I point to it (with my foot), so that (whoever is with me) can see it and recognise it. If you can*[22] *touch it, you touch it and take it and we go away, but if you have had sexual relations you can't touch it.*

Thomas: Dɛɛkɛ'rɛ úa ū̱ mʊm ʊ́ʊ sʊ̱-ga-gɛ, gʊ̱ wɛ bɔɔgɔ úa hɛ́ lɛ sá-ti ↓?

Thomas: *The herb that you take to transplant there, do you do anything in particular before putting it there*[23]*?*

Kuman: Mía dą̄ míɪ nyɪ̱ hɔ bi̱i̱ tʊ́ kyɔ-í a dą̄ hɔ̀ gú a míɪ tūɪ hɔ bi̱i̱-í, Mía ū̱ hɔ nagbragɛ'rɛ; mʊm míɪ yɪ̄-rɔ hɔ nagbragɛ'rɛ hɔ, lɛ míɪ tūɪ zɪŋɔ wɛ bɔɔgɔ, a míɪ dɛ̄ bɔ́ɔ yāa fu̱-í, lɛ míɪ trɪ̱-ŋɛ bɔɔgɔ bɪbɪ lɛ sī tɛɛ lɛ pū-kpe, ʊ́ʊ nyɪ̱ hɔ́ɔ fū̱!

Kuman: *I get there and don't look at its seeds; and (if I) arrive and it's come out, I don't take the seed, I dig up its root; when I take it away, the root, I get*

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[15] The presence of the indefinite *wɛ* forces Kuman to use a 3rd-person singular pronoun to refer to the herbs, whereas the English translation requires the plural.

[16] In this semi-comical narration Kuman uses the word *kprɔgɔ*, lit.: *paw/animal's foot*, instead of the formally correct *naŋa*, lit.: *human foot/leg.*

[17] To be read as *lɛ*.

[18] Lit.: "I do it like this".

[19] Lit.: "if you sleep bitter"; a taboo-avoiding expression for "have sexual relations".

[20] Lit.: "a man".

[21] Lit.: "I take my foot and throw-it and arrives".

[22] Here the third person (he) has been rendered with the more natural second person (you) in English.

[23] Lit.: "things certain there you do and put up?" The purpose of the question was to understand whether there was a codified ritual for the transplanting of medicinal herbs.

a special thing there[24] *and make sure that nobody goes there*[25]*, I clean up a bit around it, dig a hole and bury it; (then) you see it sprout.*

KUMAN'S EXPERIENCE: HOW TO RECOGNISE A MEDICINAL PLANT

Thomas: Hɔ́ɔ nūım dɛɛn'nıını wá sà; sinyo'nı wá hɛ̀, wá nyī̱ wá dà dɛɛn'nı̱ŗı̱(nı̱) wımɔ, lɛ úʊ mı̱rı-ŋɛ, mʊm úʊ dā dɛɛn'nıını pooko mʊ̱ a táa ʊ gʊ̱ nūı-rɔ, zı wá hé lɛ gyí-ge wɛ-ti mạ̱yɔ[26] hɔ-rɔ laa, zíŋɔ wɛ lɛɛ tūı laa, gʊ́ wɛ lɛ tūı lɛ ʊ dā, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ kpạ̱yɔ lɛ drɛ̄ka laa, zı wá hé lɛ nyí̱-ɛ lɛ gyere yáa laa dá hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ la, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ dɛɛkɔ wɛ kyakyı bıbı, mʊm úʊ dā wɛ bıbı wá gyábaga, wá gyábaga wɛ yì, ı̱nyı̱ úʊ yāa laa sī hɔ nạ̱gbragɔ, laa wɛrı hɔ gbɛı̱ wá sí↓?

Thomas: *That leaves the plants you take for the medicine you prepare; do you (already) know what plants you have to cut*[27] *or do you look for them? If you cut many herbs, but you only need some of them*[28]*, how do you know which one it is (and) if it has a healing property? If you take a thing, you take something, while you cut it, is it still full of* kpạ̱yɔ[29]*?And how do you know*[30] *before going to cut that plant, if it is like a normal plant? And then when you cut it (what is) the thought, the thought that comes, so that you go to take its root or its leaves*[31]*?*

Kuman: Mía pāam-í. Baba bɔ pııkɔ hɔ̀ kʊ́ hɔ wʊrʊkɔ na hʊ̀ lɔ́ hɔ̀ dɛ́ mʊm úʊ dū gʊ wɛ bıbı mía mạ̄ạ̱ pāam-í, hɔ̀ dɛ́ mʊm míı sā ı̱sı̱ko-nı bıbı, dɛɛkɛ'rɛ mía hɛ̀ míı gyī-gɛ, hɛrɛ míı lá lɛ sạ̄ ı̱sı̱ko-nı lɛ nyī̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ pooko, hɛrɛ míı tūı míı gyī-gɛ; ı̱nyı̱ hɔ́ɔ nūım hɛrɛ lɛ.

Kuman: *I don't forget. My father is dead*[32]*, (but) thanks to four years of his treatment*[33]*, if you say something, I can't forget it; that's why when I go into the savannah I know what plants I need*[34]*, when I go into the savannah and see many herbs, the one I take, I know; so that's how it is.*

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[24] Here Kuman seems to be referring simply to a piece of land behind his house.

[25] Lit.: "I make it so they don't go there".

[26] *Mạ̱yɔ* is literally soul life – the life force of every living being.

[27] Lit.: "you see you cut plants *def.* some and look at them".

[28] Lit.: "and one your business be-with".

[29] Lit.: "there is *kpạ̱yɔ* and surpasses". The word *kpạ̱yɔ* indicates an active force present in all supernatural beings, in medicinal plants and in some people endowed with special powers (*féticheurs*, healers, hunters, sacrificers, body-buriers, midwives and such). In the Kulango philosophy it seems that these powers derive directly from Yego.

[30] Lit.: "see".

[31] Lit.: "or perhaps its leaves you take?".

[32] Lit.: "Dad, his death, she kills".

[33] Lit.: "those years four he treated".

[34] Lit: "the plant I do I know her".

Thomas: Lɛ hɛrɛ úʊ dʊ̄, lɛ wá pāam-í, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ zɪŋɔ wɛ hą́ ką̄ hɔ naŋa-dɪ-í; wà nyį́ hɛrɛ-wɔ wà nɪ́ɪ ʊ nyu̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ, ú dą́ ʊ gbɛɛ nɪ́ɪ lɛ nɪ́ɪ kasayɔ-nɪ drunya-dɪ, zɪŋɔ pɛɛ úʊ dą́ ʊ̀ gyí-ge ʊ nyu̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ lɛ gyere ʊ̀ gú↓?…hɛrɛ gʊ̱ hʊ́ʊ̱ kōri úʊ dʊ̄ laa, gʊ̱ nąkɔ wɛ hɛ-ʊ a wá kàa paamɪnyɔ.

Thomas: *What you said, that you don't forget, is something she*[35] *doesn't understand the reason for*[36]*; did you know these things when you were in your mother's belly? Did it happen that you were there alone, closed in that world, and you knew everything in your mother's belly before you came out?… These things she would like you to explain*[37]*, or other things because of which you don't forget*[38]*.*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ mì gú hɔ, hɔ̀ dɛ́ mʊm úʊ nyɪ̄ka-m(ɪ) gʊ̱ wɛ lɛ dā mí gyī-ge pooko hɔ, mɪ gyabaga[39]'rɛ, mɪ gyabaga'rɛ hɔ, hɔ́ɔ dā(dɛ) míɪ mą̄ą̄ gyī-ge, hɔ́ɔ nūm hɛrɛ mì nɪ́ɪ mɪ nyu̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ, hɛrɛ mì nɪ́ɪ-nɪ kyɔ, hɛrɛ mì gú bɪbɪ eh! A mì gú lɛ hɛrɛ gyabaga'rɛ.

Kuman: *When I came out, for this reason when you show me something, I know it well; my mind, this head of mine, for this reason I am able to know, was there when I was in my mother's belly, when I lay there, so when I came out, eh! I came out with this head.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ wɔ ʊ̀ gbí ʊ nyu̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ, hɛrɛ dɛ wá kàa paamɪnyɔ laa, laa hɛrɛ bɔ̀ kʊ́-mʊ̱ a úʊ hɛ̀ fɪfɪɪ sinyɛ'rɛ bɔ̀ tíɪ lɛ bíla-ʊ, hɛrɛ dɛ wá kàa paamɪnyɔ, laa wɛ-rɪ laa dɛɛn'nu̱ru̱ bɔ̀ nyį́ka nyį́ka-ʊ, a ʊ̀ gyí-ʊ̱ la hɛrɛ dɛ wá káa paamɪnyɔ↓?

Thomas: *So you stayed a long time*[40] *in your mother's belly; is that why you don't forget, or because when you were born you were very small and they gave you a medicine to make you grow*[41] *and that's why you don't forget, or perhaps you don't forget because they showed you many plants and you know them?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ bɔ̀ kʊ́-mɪ hɔ a bɔ̀ bíla-mɪ hɔ, a mɪ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ háli, a bɔ̀ dą́ mɪ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ háli hɔ; a hɔ̀ gú bɔɔ a bɔ̀ hɛ́: "Kparigya ʊ̀ gú lɛ ʊ̀ nyį́ haligyo bą̄ą̄kɔ, mɪ̱ ʊ̀ nyį́ ʊ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ háli, mɪ̱ ʊ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ háli, a ʊ̀ gú lɛ ʊ̀ nyį́ haligyo bą̄ą̄kɛ'rɛ; hɔ̀ hɛ́ mɪ̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ bɔ̀ nyį́ka-ʊ, zɪŋɔ lɛ ʊ̀ káa hɔ paamɪnyɔ" lɛ mɪ̱ a hɛrɛ ǹna kʊ́-m(ɪ) hɔ, bɔ̀ kʊ́-mɪ lɛ hɛrɛ.

Kuman: *When I was born, they raised me like this, and I was intelligent*[42]*, and they saw that I was intelligent, and this comes from there*[43] *and they said: "Truly, you've come out and your head is strong, so you see, you're intelligent, so*

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35 Me, the researcher.

36 Lit.: "she doesn't understand her foot-in".

37 Lit: "say".

38 Lit: "you refuse to forget".

39 In Kulango *gyabaga* means mind, thought or character, or all three.

40 Lit.: "you lasted".

41 Lit.: "to raise you".

42 Lit.: "my face was open".

43 From the sky?

you're intelligent, and you've come out and your head is strong; and that's why it is that the plants[44] that they show you, (as other) things, you don't forget", and so my mother gave birth to me like that; that's how they had me.

Thomas: Lɛ ʊ̰ gyí-ge mʊm ʊ sira lɛ laa ʊ nɪaʊ̰, mʊm hí̱nɪ̰ nyɪ̀ka-ʊ sigʊ̰́nɪ, mʊm hɪ̱nɪ̰ daavɛ hʊ̰ gbí bɔ nyɪ̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ laa ʊ́ taa gbí ʊ nyɪ̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ↓?

Thomas: *And do you know (if) your father or your maternal uncle, if the one who showed you the remedies, if he had also[45] stayed a long time in his mother's belly, or if you're the only one who was a long time[46] in his[47] mother's belly?*

Kuman: Mía taa gbí-nɪ! hɔ̀ hé mɪ̰ dɛ, bɔ̀ fúi baba'nɪ há̱.

Kuman: *I'm the only one who was there so long! That's how it was, eh! Everyone[48] congratulated my father on his greatness.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ ʊ nyɪ̱ŋmɔ mɪ̰ a hɔ̀ dá̱ óa paām-í. Ʊ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ háli, ʊ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ háli dɪ̱dɪ̰, a ʊ̰ hé sɪ̱sɛ, hɛrɛ bɔɔ mɪ̱rɪ̰ tíı kaɪ̱ɪ̱, lɛ gyí lɛ ʊ sira lɛ ʊ nyɪ̱na a bɔ̀ gyí kaɪ̱ɪ̱ lɛ ʊ kpa̱yɔ ba̱a̱kɛ'rɛ, hɔ̀ núm nyɪ̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ ʊ̰ gú-ti laa… bɛ gʊ̰ kʊyʊ ɪ̱nyɪ̰ a bó nyí̱ka-bɛ wɛ↓?

Thomas: *So your head[49] was like that and this is why you can't forget. You're intelligent[50], and you're a healer, everything you see there[51], you learn[52] easily, and you know that your father and mother knew perfectly[53] that your* kpa̱yɔ *was great; it was in your mother's belly; you came from there… (for) what reason did they teach (you)[54]?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ bɔ̀ nyí̱ka-mɪ dɛ, a bà káa-mɪ dɛɛna̱gbragɔ bɔ bɪɪ̱… hɛrɛ mɪ nyɪ̀na tíı mɪ pɔɔgɔ a mì gbí mɪ nyɪ̱na bɔ naaŋu-nɪ, dɛɛkɛ'rɛ bɔ̀ tíı lɛ hɛ muuu… a mɪ nyɪ̀mɔ háli a bɔ̀ gyére kʊ́-mɪ, a bɔ̀ nyí̱ka-mɪ hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ, hɔ dɛ mʊm óʊ tūı pɔɔgɛ'rɛ wɛ daa a hɔ́ɔ gbī, ʊ́ʊ̰ yī mɪ kyɪ̱ŋɔ lɛ míı nyá̱-ʊ hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ wɛ lɛ óʊ kʊ̄ı.

Kuman: *When they presented me they called me "son of the root"…when my mother was expecting me[55], and I stayed a long time in my mother's belly, they got that root and did what they had to do[56]… so I became intelligent[57] and then I was born and they showed me that root; that's why today if you get pregnant*

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[44] Literally Kuman uses the singular.

[45] Lit.: "again".

[46] Lit.: "you one lasted".

[47] Lit.: "your".

[48] Lit.: "They".

[49] Lit.: "face/view".

[50] Lit.: "your face is open very".

[51] Lit.: "that thing there (you) see".

[52] Lit.: "get/take".

[53] Lit.: "easily *ideophone*".

[54] Rather an obscure phrase; lit.: "what things like therefore they show them special".

[55] Lit.: "my mother took my pregnancy".

[56] Lit.: "and they did *intensifying ideophone*".

[57] Lit.: "my face opened".

and your pregnancy lasts a long time, come to me and I give you that special root and you give birth.

Thomas: Lɛ mʊm yɛ́ɾɛ tʊ̄ı pɔɔgɔ a bɔ pɔ́ɔgɛ'ɾɛ gbī a hʊ́ʊ̰ yī ʊ kyi̱ŋɔ, a ʊ nyą̄ hɛɾɛ dɛɛnągbragɛ'ɾɛ, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ lá lɛ kʊ̄ hɛɾɛ bi̱i̱'nı, bɔ nyí̱ŋmɔ mą́ą̄ lɛ háli mʊm wa↓?

Thomas: *And if a woman gets pregnant and her pregnancy lasts a long time and she comes to you and you give (her) that root, when that child is born, can it be intelligent like you*[58]*?*

Kuman: Ah! Mía mą̄ą̄ lɛ gyī hɛɾɛ baaŋɔ-í. (Kuman laughs) mʊm ʊ tʊ̄ı pɔɔgɔ lɛ dą̄, há hą̄-í a ʊ́ʊ yī mı kyi̱ŋɔ lɛ lʊ̄pʌ[59] lɛ hɔ́ɔ hą̄, ʊ́ʊ kʊ̄ lɛ hą́ą̄ dą̄-í.

Kuman: *Ah! I cannot know that*[60]*! (laughs) If you're pregnant and it happens that (your belly) is not big, and you come to me and lie, (saying) that it should be big, you give birth (to a child) that is not well formed*[61]*.*

THE HEALER AND MEDICINAL PLANTS – PART 1

Thomas: Hʊ́ʊ̰ gōi bɔ zɪka pa: dɛɛn'nɪnɪ ʊ́ʊ yāa, hɛɾɛ wá yàa la nyì̱ dɛɛkɛ'ɾɛ, lɛ ʊ́ʊ gyá(baga) lɛ hʊ̱ɾʊ̱ hɔ-ɾɔ[62], nʊ̱ hɔ-ɾɔ, naʊ̰ hɔ-ɾɔ wɛɾɪ mʊ̰m ʊ́ʊ tʊ̄ı lɛ dā, ʊ̱ŋo hɔ-ɾɔ; ʊ̱nyi̱ mą̱yɔ-ti[63] lɛ la, ʊ̱sɛ-ti wɛ la, gʊ̰ nąkɔ-ti lɛ dā-ti… ʊ́a gyába wʊ̱nʊ̱ mʊ̰, lɛ ʊ dā, ʊ gū Yegolimia-dɪ lɛ nyą̄-ŋʊ; ʊ́a gyába lɛ ʊ́ gū Yegolimia-dɪ lɛ hʊ̱nʊ̱ nyą̄-ŋʊ↓?

Thomas: *She*[64] *goes back: the plants that you go, when you go to look for a plant, so you think they have horns, they have arms, they have legs or things like that when you cut them*[65]*? (That) they have a head, with a soul inside, or a certain spirit or something else*[66]*? Do you think that the ones you cut come from Yegolimia, who gives them to you? Do you think that they come from Yegolimia and (he) gives them to you?*

Kuman: Ɔɔ! Wɛ-ti nna, Mía yàa laa dà-ŋmɛ hɔ nągbragɔ mía sì, mía yàa lɛ pɛsɛ, mʊm míı dā-kɛ hɔ a míı lá, lɛ míı sā pɛsɛ'ɾɛ bɔɔ. Wɛ-ti hɛɾɛ míı yāa sī-gɛ lɛ dā-ŋmɛ lɛ míı sī-gɛ, mía pàrı[67] hɔ nągbragɔ, lɛ míı kpą̄ mʊm zumfeyo lɛ yāa-ɾɔ la sā bɔɔ; mʊm míı sī-gɛ lɛ míı sā-ga bɔɔ. Bɔ baaŋɔ lɛ.

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58 Lit.: "can his face open like yours?".

59 Traditional variation of the more common *lepa*, "to lie".

60 Lit.: "I cannot know that thing its side".

61 Lit.: "it doesn't arrive".

62 Alienable possession; see Micheli 2007: 88-89.

63 *-ti* literally means "on/over".

64 The researcher.

65 Lit.: "when you take and cut".

66 Lit.: "thing – other – on and add-on".

67 The verb *pari* is a traditional word used exclusively by healers to mean "to remove with caution" part of a medicinal plant.

Kuman: *Yes! For example, madam, when I go to cut it, I take its root, I go with a kola nut. As soon as I cut it*[68]*, I put a kola nut there. For example when I go to take it and I cut it, I carefully remove its root, then I look, for example, for an egg to put there*[69]*; when I take it, I put it*[70] *there. In its place.*

Thomas: Mʊm ʉ́ háwa lɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ úa yàa lɛ sì hɔ nạ̀gbragɔ, kpạ̀yɔ wɛ-ti lɛ la, kpạ̀yɛ'rɛ há gù bɔ wɛ lɛ nìı -ti lɛ↓?

Thomas: *(She asks) if you believe that the root of the plants you go to collect*[71]*, (may have) a certain* kpạ̀yɔ *and if this* kpạ̀yɔ *comes from somewhere (else) and places itself there?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ dɛ; wɛ-ti mʊm míı dā-ŋmɛ lɛ dā dɛɛkɔ gyıgagɔ, lɛ hɛrɛ míı dā-ŋmɛ hɔ, mʊm míı dā wɛ sinyɛ'rɛ bɔ̀ nyɪ́ka-mı, mʊm míı dā hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ… lɛ la[72], lɛ míı kpēle lɛ dā bɔɔ lɛ, ı̱nyı̱ hɔ́ɔ nīım hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ hɔ́ɔ kpā̱ıı̱; hɛrɛ mía sì hɛ́rɛ kpā̱ıı̱, hɛrɛ lɛ sinyo, hɔ naŋa lɛ.

Kuman: *Well you see, for example, that plant, if I take it, take a plant for no reason, then I've simply collected it*[73]*, (whereas) when I collect a certain medicine, that's been shown to me, as soon as I've picked that exact plant… then I pronounce the incantations*[74] *while I'm collecting (it) there, so that they make the plant potent*[75]*. When I collect the potent one, that's the medicine. This is the meaning*[76]*.*

Thomas: ʉ́ gyí lɛ dá lɛ dɛɛn'nı̱nı̱ úa sì mʉ̱, wɛ-ti zıŋɛ'rɛ úa hɛ̀ úʊ nyā̱ wɛ-ti ʊ kyɛ́ı-ɛ lɛ bɔ gyere nyā̱-ŋa-ʊ↓?

Thomas: *Do you know how to collect the plants you need*[77]*, (are there) for example things*[78] *you do; do you offer something, give it*[79] *a present before it gives you its* kpạ̀yɔ*?*

Kuman: Mí kyɛ́ı dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ bɔ gyere nyā̱-mı↓? Ɔɔ! Mía dà-ŋmɛ bɔɔ hɔ: mía nyà̱-ŋa kafıra, lɛ gyere míı sī-gɛ.

Kuman: *(you're asking me) if I give a present to the plant so that it will give me (its* kpạ̀yɔ*)? Yes! I pick it there and ask its forgiveness before I take it.*

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68 Lit.: "when I cut her *focus* and I finish".

69 Lit.: "take and place there".

70 The egg.

71 Lit.: "if you think that plant this you go and take, her root".

72 Concluding structure; see Micheli 2007: 91.

73 Lit.: "this I collect it *focus*".

74 Lit.: "I speak".

75 Lit.: "then it is that plant *def.* she is potent".

76 Lit.: "its foot *presentative*".

77 Lit.: "take".

78 Lit.: "a thing".

79 The plant.

Thomas: úa nyɩ̀ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ zʊ̰ŋɔ hɔ, bá nyɩ̀…

Thomas: *Do you think*[80] *that it's a thing that they see…*

Kuman: lɛ míı nya̰-ŋa kafıra. Mʊm míı nya̰-ŋɛ lɛ lá, lɛ mía dāavɛ lɛ míı gyere sī-gɛ, ɩ̰nyɩ̰ hāli bḭḭ lɛ…

Kuman: *And I ask its forgiveness. When I've finished making its offerings*[81]*, and before taking it… you see, it's an intelligent being*[82].

Thomas: A míı bī-kʊ gʊ̰ taa wɛ lɔ, naa… wɛ-ti hɛrɛ wá yàa-rɔ[83] zʊ̰rʊ̰ lɛ yàa la nya̰-ŋa dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ yàa la nya̰-ŋa fḭḭ dıgɔ; dɛɛkɛ'rɛ úa la baa[84] hɔ na̰gbragɔ, mʊm úa hɛ̄ hɛrɛ-í, dɛɛkɛ'rɛ hɔ́ɔ kpa̰ʊ̰-í laa si wɩ̰rɩ̰ úʊ yé sáa hɔ́ɔ kpa̰ʊ̰-í laa zı↓?

Thomas: *Let me ask you another question*[85]*, sir… for example, when you take something*[86]*, and go to offer it to the plant, and go to offer it some food there; the plant that you get*[87] *there, its root, if you don't do that, would the plant not be potent? Or the medicine you prepared would not be potent? Or what?*

Kuman: ɩ̰nyɩ̰ a hɔ́ɔ kpa̰ʊ̰-í. Hɛrɛ míı yāa, mʊm hɔ́ɔ kāı, míı ma̰a̰ mírɩ̰-ŋɛ pɛɛ lɛ bāı, lɛ míı dālı-gyɛ, lɛ gyere kpa̰-ŋɛ lɛ nyɩ̰̄-ɛ, mʊm míı dālı-gyɛ lɛ lá, lɛ míı dʊ̄ lɛ mʊm míı nyɩ̰̄-nyɛ míı nya̰-ʊ zʊ̰ŋɔ, lɛ hɔ́ɔ da̰ míı nyɩ̰̄-nyɛ, lɛ míı gyī-ɛ lɛ yī lɛ tūı bɔ zʊ̰rʊ̰ wɩ̰rɩ̰ la nya̰, míı ma̰a̰ yāa lɛ bāı-ɛ; lɛ dālı-gyɛ, lɛ dālı-gyɛ muuu… lɛ gyere míı nyɩ̰̄.

Kuman: *Then it would not be potent. When I go, if it refuses (to help the patient); I may look for it and not find it, so I ask it, then I look for it and I see it when I have finished asking it, I say that if I see it I will offer it something, so it happens that I see it and recognise it, so I come to get the things to offer it, I may go and not manage to see it, then I ask, I keep asking… and in the end I see it.*

Thomas: Lɛ ha̰, nna, a míı bī-kʊ lɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ wɛ-ti hérɛ kpa̰ʊ̰ mʊm mɩ̰ buruni sizıŋɛ'rɛ kpa̰ɩ̰ʊ̰, hɛrɛ dɛ úa yàa lɛ úʊ sī dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ úʊ bāı-ɛ; lɛ úʊ ūı-kɛ muuu… lɛ bāı-ɛ lɛ ʊ dʊ̄ lɛ: "mʊm míı nyɩ̰̄-ŋʊ lɛ sī ʊ na̰gbragɔ, lɛ míı nya̰-ŋʊ zʊŋɔ kʊyʊ"; lɛ úʊ gyere nyɩ̰̄, lɛ sī-ge lɛ gyere yáa nya̰ bɔ dızʊ̰ŋɔ↓? Hɔ́ɔ nūım mʊ̰nʊ̰bıɔ mʊm lɛ dā mʊm wɛ bɔ gʊ̰ ʊ-rɔ lɛ úa: "dɛɛkɔ mʊm míı nyɩ̰̄ -ŋʊ lɛ siṵ", lɛ yāa laa hɛ̄ mɩ̰ zʊ̰ŋɔ… yī-rı mʊ̰nʊ̰bıɔ: "mʊm míı nyɩ̰̄ -ŋʊ míı yé nya̰-ŋʊ zʊ̰ŋɔ lɛ kʊ̰̄ nyʊ̰"; dɛɛkɛ'rɛ, hɔ́ɔ nyíka bɔ gbɛɛ↓?

Thomas: *Well sir, I ask you for example if that plant is as potent as white man's medicine; if that's the reason that (when) you go to get a plant and you can't see it you say: "If I see you, and take your root, I'll give you that certain thing" and then you see it, so you collect it and then offer it food? For this reason now,*

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80 Lit.: "see".

81 Lit.: "give to her".

82 Lit.: "child".

83 Serial verb; see Micheli 2007: 97.

84 Should be read as "*bɔɔ*".

85 Lit.: "And I ask you things a certain *focus*".

86 Lit.: "things".

87 Lit: "to finish".

when you cut it and you've got something with you, and you say: "Plant, if I see you, (you'll be) a remedy" and you go and do this thing… now you arrive there: "If I see you, I'll give you something and you'll kill a man", does that plant show itself to you?

Kuman: Oo! Mʊm ʊ́ʊ yāa kʊ̄ nyʊ̰ lɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ a hɔ́ɔ nyɪ̰ka hɔ gbɛɛ-í, a mʊm míı yāa ɪ̰sɪ̰ko-nı lɛ míı kpa̰ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ, mʊm Yegolımıa kʊ̄-ɛ[88] lɛ lá-í dɛɛkɛ'rɛ mı núŋo ta̰ti pɛɛ, ɪ̰nyɪ̰ míı dā-kɛ lɛ sā hʊ̰-rı, hɔ́ɔ da̰ hʊ́ʊ̰ wārı.

Kuman: *No! If you go to kill a man with a plant, it doesn't show itself, and if I go into the bush to look for a plant, if Yegolimia doesn't want to kill the patient[89], my hands find the plant[90], so that I cut it to put (it) on him; it happens that he recovers.*

THE HEALER AND MEDICINAL PLANTS – PART 2

Thomas: Lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa la kpa̰ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ hɔ na̰gbragɔ, wɛ-ti dɛɛkɛ'rɛ wɛ há gàrı lɛ zʊ̰ wɛ, hɛrɛ úa yàa la nya̰ zʊ̰rʊ̰ wɛ-ti pɛsɛ lɛ zʊmfeyo, dɛɛkɛ'rɛ úa plɔ̄n hɔ kpa̰yɔ tri dɛ úa yáa la nyá-ŋa-bɛ laa, laa wɛ-ti hɛrɛ ʊ́ʊ dá úa yáa lɛ ʊ́ʊ lɔ́ɔ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ laa, lɛ ʊ̰́ lɔ́ɔ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ laa. Wá yáa kpéle bɔ-rɔ lɛ siépa-bɛ↓?

Thomas: *So you go to look for the root of the plant; for example of a potent plant[91] and (there are) some things, when you go to offer a kola nut or an egg, in your thoughts, are you going to offer them for the plant's* kpa̰yɔ[92] *or perhaps it's because when you cut (it), when you go and injure the plant, you injure the plant. Do you go and talk to them to ask their forgiveness?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ míı dā-kɛ úa nyɪ̰ hɔ́ɔ nūı bɔ dugu bá dā-kɛ[93]-í, míı siēpaga lɛ lɛ míı dā-kɛ úa nyɪ̰ hɔ́ɔ nya̰, lɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄(m) tɔnaaŋmɔ, lɛ míı tūı-gɛ lɛ siēpaga, lɛ dālı-gyɛ, lɛ míı gyēre dā-kɛ; úa nyɪ̄ hɔ́ɔ nya̰ bɔ tɔnaaŋmɔ-í, hɔ́ɔ nūbɔ dugu bá dā-í. Yoo, mía dā-kɛ.

Kuman: *When I cut it you see that it's not like it was before it was cut; I ask forgiveness and… I cut it; you see it suffers, it's like its flesh, and I take it and ask its forgiveness, I ask it and then I cut it; (so) you see it doesn't suffer in its flesh, even though it's not like it was before being cut. Yoo! I cut it.*

Thomas: ʊ̰́ há̰wa̰ dɛɛn'nı pɛɛ lɛ kpa̰yɔ ʊ̰-rɔ↓?

Thomas: *Do you think that all plants have* kpa̰yɔ*?*

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88 Him, the patient.

89 Lit.: "if Yegolimia has not finished/decided to kill him".

90 Lit.: "the plant my hands touch all".

91 Lit.: "for example the plant such is strong".

92 The phrase has something of a tangled structure; lit.: "the plant, you alone, its *kpa̰yɔ* reason makes (it) so that you go and give to her them".

93 Lit.: "they cut-her". An impersonal structure translatable with a passive voice; see Micheli 2007: 87-88.

Kuman: Mía kà mʊm míı lá lɛ dīɔ lɛ dāwa lɛ lá, hɔ lɛ lɛ óa[94] dà óʊ zɛ̄ı yāa óʊ hɔ, mʊm kpa̰yɔ hɔ-rɔ dɛ lɛ óʊ dʊ̄-kɛ mı-rɔ, lɛ míı yāa la dā-kɛ.

Kuman: *I know that when I go to bed and dream, it's as if… you cut, leave… you go there; if it's got* kpa̰yɔ *you tell me, so I'll go and cut it.*

Thomas: Lɛ wɛ-ti nna, óʊ dāwa óʊ ta̰ti mʊm lɛ tīı hɔ lɛ lɔ̄-í…

Thomas: *It's as if, for example sir, you dream that you touch (it); if you take it and don't treat…*

Kuman: oo!

Kuman: *No! (that cannot be).*

Thomas: hɛrɛ bì gyí wı̰rı̰ lɛ la, ı̰nyı̰ óʊ máa̰ dó lɛ fa̰ŋa̰ tīı-ɛ, kpa̰yɔ há wı̰rı̰ dì.

Thomas: *Now we understand these things, you can tell if the force possesses it, if the* kpa̰yɔ *possesses them*[95]*…*

Kuman: oo! kpa̰yɔ-ti -oo ! Mía lá mà̰a̰ gyì wı̰rı̰ mía ma̰a̰ gyī hɛrɛ gʊ̰-í.

Kuman: *No! That's nothing to do with* kpa̰yɔ*! This is my limit*[96]*; I cannot know those things.*

Thomas: Lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ kā gʊ-rɔ hɔ, dɛɛn nı̰rı̰ wá nyḭ̀ dɛɛn nı̰rı̰ wɛ-ti bá tīı-ʊ̰ lɛ lɔ̄-í…

Thomas: *But it lets you know, those plants that you see, for example those plants, they are taken*[97]*, but they don't treat…*

Kuman: oo!

Kuman: *No! (that cannot be!)*

Thomas: ı̰nyı̰ wá lá gyì kpa̰yɔ tìı-ɛ. Mʊm óʊ yʊ̄gʊ sʊ̄-kʊ taa mʊ̰rʊ̰, ı̰nyı̰ lɛ lɛ mı̰ dɛ bɔɔ: "míı tīı -gɛ lɛ lɔ̄ nya̰ŋɔ kʊyʊ", ı̰nyı̰ mʊ̰nʊ̰bıɔ óʊ gyī lɛ ha kpa̰yɔ-ti, hɔ̀ níı, hɔ̀ níı bɔɔ dugu, ò ma̰a̰ nyı̰̄ hɔ kpa̰yɔ-í, a mʊm hɔ́ɔ gū ḭsḭko lɛ la lɛ hɔ́ɔ kpa̰a̰.

Thomas: *So you know that it's got* kpa̰yɔ*. When you get up you think about it*[98]*, and then, this is what makes you (say) there on the spot: "I'll take it to treat (that) type of illness", so now you know that it's got* kpa̰yɔ*, it was, it was always there, but you couldn't see the* kpa̰yɔ*, but when it comes out of the bush, it's potent!*

Kuman: Ɔɔ!

Kuman: *Yes! (that's right).*

Thomas: Lɛ ha̰ nna… ı̰nyı̰ dɛɛn wı̰rı̰ óa yàa óʊ kpa̰ ḭsḭko-nı mʊ̰rʊ̰, lɛ óʊ tīı-ʊ̰, óʊ lɔ̄, wɛ-ti ó tíı dɛɛkɛ'rɛ hɔ hṵṵŋɔ lɛ lɔ̄ nyıa̰ŋɔ wɛ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ wārı, wɛ-ti lɛ óʊ tíı hɔ na̰gbragɔ, lɛ lɔ̄ nyı̰a̰ŋɔ wɛ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ wārı, wɛ-ti hɔ gbɛɛ hɔ gʊ̰'nı-rɔ lɛ óʊ tíı-gɛ lɛ lɔ̄ nyʊ̰-dı lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ wārı, wɛ-ti daa hɔ yɔkɔ óʊ kpá la, laa dɛɛkɛ'rɛ pɛɛ. Mʊm óʊ dá dɛɛkɛ'rɛ mṵṵ(m) bıbı lɛ óʊ dá-kɛ↓?

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[94] The 2nd-person singular pronoun is used with impersonal value.

[95] Lit.: "eats".

[96] Lit.: "I stop being able to know these (things)".

[97] Impersonal structure translatable with the passive voice; see Micheli 2007:87-88.

[98] Lit.: "when you get up, you take it one *stress*".

Thomas: *Then sir… then those plants you go to look for in the savannah and you take to treat; (she wants to know) if you, for example, take the bark of the plants to treat one illness, so that the patient*[99] *recovers, (or) if you for example take the roots to treat one illness so that this one recovers, or perhaps it's the leaves with other things; if you take it and treat a man to heal him, or perhaps if sometimes you look for the sap*[100]*, or (you use) the whole plant? (She asks) if you cut the plant just like that, without thinking*[101]*, when you cut it.*

Kuman: Mía mą̱ą̱ dā mu̱ mu̱-í. Mu̱ daavɛ, nna, lɛ dā hɔ́ɔ gū hɔ bi̱i̱, mía tù, mú tīı hɔ hu̱u̱ŋɔ taa, mía dàavɛ nna, lɛ dą̱ hɔ gbɛı̱ mía dà, lɛ mú tīı hɛrɛ, lɛ dą̱ hɔ nągbragɔ, mía tù lɛ mú tīı hɛrɛ.

Kuman: *I can't cut it without thinking. You see madam, it happens that it sprouts*[102]*, I take (it), first I take the bark, then, madam, it happens that I take the leaves, I take them, then come the roots, I take (them), this (is what) I take.*

Thomas: óa kpą́ hɔ yɔkɔ↓?

Thomas: *Do you look for the sap?*

Kuman: óa dàavɛ lɔɔ há kpì lɛ lɔ̀ɔ, yɔ́kɔ gù lɛ óʊ tīı-gɛ.

Kuman: *Because you wound it, it breaks and is wounded, the sap comes out and you take it.*

TAXONOMY: ARE THEY JUST PLANTS?

* I hasten to point out that throughout the following conversation (which is highly confused in parts) both Thomas and Kuman were dumbfounded by my insistence – they understood my point of view but found my questions ridiculous.

Thomas: Bı nıaʊ̱ lɛ nna, dɛɛn nu̱rı̱[103] óa yàa óʊ kprī i̱si̱ko-nı mʊ̱ nna, hɛrɛ hɔ́ɔ kpą́ıı̱; tri dɛ wá ká-ʊ̱ dɛɛkɔ-í ?

Thomas: *Maternal uncle, sir, the plants that you go to cut in the bush, those very ones*[104]*, sir, are they*[105] *potent, and (perhaps) for that reason you don't call them plants?*[106]

Kuman: ɔɔ! Dɛɛkɔ lɛ!

Kuman: *Yes! It's a plant!*

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99 Lit.: "he".

100 Lit.: "water".

101 Lit.: "you cut plant *def.* like this (focus) + *ideophone* meaning *a bit, insignificant, small*".

102 Lit.: "makes its child come out".

103 Regional variation of *nını/wını*.

104 This formulation expresses the meaning of the focus particle *mʊ̱* in this context.

105 Thomas uses a singular form: "this, she is potent".

106 The question was a taxonomic one.

Thomas: bɔ gʊ̰ ʊ́ʊ̰ dą̱ Yegolımıa sā-ti kpa̱yɔ, úa ká-ʊ̰ dɛɛkɔ↓?

Thomas: *As far as it is concerned*[107]*, Yegolimia has put in them (his)* kpa̱yɔ*, and despite that you call them plants?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mía kàa-ʊ̰ dɛɛkɔ pa. A úa nyi̱ wı̱nı wı̱nı wı̱, úa nyi̱ m'bɔ(ɔ) dɛɛkɔ, wá nyī̱ nyʊ̰-í, nyʊ̰ há̱ tùı-ɛ, a bɔ́ɔ lɛ Thomas-í, a bɔ́ɔ dʊ̄[108] lɛ Saliho, a bɔ́ɔ dʊ̄ lɛ Abɛna, lɛ dʊ̄ lɛ Akwa-í, a bíı kāa-ʊ̰ mʊm nyʊ̰, mʊm i̱goyo'nı pɛɛ ʊ̰ taa… mʊm nyá̱ŋɛ'rɛ wɛ yé gū vɛɛ dɛ a míı dā hɛrɛ bá kàa Saliho, mʊm hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ míı nyī̱ lɛ sī lɛ míı lɔ̄ hɔ-rɔ, lɛ míı lɔ̄ hɔ-rɔ, a mʊm hérɛ lɛ yī, lɛ dą̱ hɔ-rɔ nya̱ŋɔ wɛ lɛ, lɛ dą̱ hɔ-rɔ hɛrɛ bá kàa Abɛna hɔ, lɛ míı dɛ̄ bɔ yāa dā Abɛna bɔ dɛɛkɔ lɛ yī-rɔ, lɛ míı lɔ̄ hɔ-rɔ, nyá̱ŋɛ'rɛ gbē-ge vɛ mʊm mʊ̱ dą̱ hɛrɛ-rɔ Akwa lɛ míı dɛ̄ bɔ́ɔ yāa dā Akwa bɔ dɛɛkɔ lɛ míı nya̱ lɛ yāa; mʊm úʊ yāa lɛ úʊ dā Akwa bɔ dɛɛkɔ lɛ yī-rɔ… a úa nyi̱ bɔ pɛɛ nyʊ̰[109] lɛ.

Kuman: *Yes! Plants is what I call them. And you (too) can see many of them*[110]*; like over there, you see plant, not a man, man uses it*[111] *but there, there isn't a Thomas, it's not called Saliho, it's not called Abena and it's not called Akwa, but we call them with the name of the patient*[112]*… if one day an illness comes and I cut it (for someone called) Saliho, if I find that plant and take it to treat (him) with it, I treat with it, and if someone else comes, comes with another illness, that has happened to someone called Abena, I tell them to go and cut Abena's plant and bring it to me; and if an illness catches someone else, if it happens to Akwa, I tell them to go and cut Akwa's plant, then I give it (to him) and that's it*[113]*; so you go and cut Akwa's plant and bring it back… but you see, (those) are all human beings.*

Thomas: ɔɔ! Nyʊ̰ lɛ!

Thomas: *Yes! It's a human being!*

Thomas: Bı nıaʊ̰ há̱a̱ nnā… lɛ dɛɛn nı̱rı̱ wɛ-ti mʊm hɛrɛ úa yàa hà-m(ı̱), lɔ̀ɔ hɔ, yɔkɔ hɔ́ɔ gū(m) nna… hɛrɛ úa yì lɛ sà-ʊ̰ bɔɔ lɛ mı̱rı̱-ŋɛ… ʊ́ dá(wa) hɔ́ɔ kpá̱ı̱ı̱ mʊm nyʊ̰ bɔ tɔɔm↓?

Thomas: *Maternal uncle sir, these plants, for example, when you go to cut them with your machete*[114] *and you wound them, (their) sap comes out sir,*

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[107] Lit.: "Their business they arrive".

[108] Impersonal structure translatable with the passive voice; see Micheli 2007: 87-88.

[109] *Nyʊ̰* is a singular form of *human being* which is translated here with the plural because it is accompanied by the indefinite *pɛɛ*, which has a plural value with a countable noun.

[110] Lit.: "You see these these the(se)". The repetition of a word gives it a plural value.

[111] Lit.: "takes".

[112] Lit.: "we call them like man like men *def.* all them (inan.) one". Distributive value of the numeral.

[113] Lit.: "and goes".

[114] *Ha* literally means "to deforest" and implies the use of very robust blades. That is why I chose to translate it with "cut with your machete".

then you go there to collect it[115]*, to conserve it*[116]*… do you think it is as potent as human blood?*

Kuman: oo!

Kuman: *No!*

HOW TO GATHER MEDICINAL PLANTS

Thomas: Bɪ nɪaʋ̰ hą́ą̰ nnā… hɛrɛ úa yàa dɛɛkɛ'rɛ sì-ge, mʊm úa dú nʊʊgbɪʋ̰ wɪ̰mɔ, lɛ sóo dɛɛkɛ'rɛ-dɪ↓?

Thomas: *Maternal uncle sir, (she asks) if, when you go to collect a plant, you pronounce special words over it*[117]*…*

Kuman: ɔɔ!

Kuman: *Yes!*

Thomas: wɛ-ti hɛrɛ úa sì dɛɛkɛ'rɛ mʊ̰… lɛ dù hɛrɛ nʊʊgbɪʋ̰ wɪ̰rɪ̰ lɛ nyà[118] nyą̰ŋɛ'rɛ lɛ hʊ́ʋ̰ mą̄ą̰ wārɪ lɛ lá, úa dú nʊʊgbɪwɪ̰rɪ̰[119] lɛ nyą́ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ úʊ gyére búsi lɛ úʊ sí-ge↓?

Thomas: *For example when you take that plant… do you say those words for the illness, so that the patient can recover completely, or do you say those words for the plant, before bending to gather it?*

Kuman: mʊm míɪ yàa lɛ míɪ dā dɛɛkɛ'rɛ, mía kpèle[120]: "úa nyɪ̰ nyą́ŋɔ kʊyʊ gbè-kʊ, a úa nyɪ̰ úa dɛɛkɛ'rɛ, úa mą̀ą̰ sɪ̰. Ʊa[121] míɪ sī lɛ lɔ̄-rɔ lɛ hʊ́ʋ̰ wārɪ, hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄, ʊ dɛɛkɔ lɔ̄ míɪ yāa sɪʋ̰. Mʊm míɪ yāa hɛrɛ míɪ yāa sā-ʊ, lɛ hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ úʊ kpą̄ʋ̰ʋ̰".

Kuman: *When I go to collect the plant I say: "You know*[122] *that the illness has taken him and you know you are the plant that can treat (him). It's you I'm taking to treat, so that he recovers, for this reason (because) you are a medicinal plant*[123]*, I go (to prepare) some remedies; if I come*[124]*, when I come to take you, it's because you are potent!".*

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[115] Lit.: "collect" with a plural enclitic because *yɔkɔ*, *water*, is a collective noun which is often in agreement with plural forms.

[116] Lit.: "observe/supervise".

[117] Lit.: "and you pour (on it) plant *det.* -on".

[118] Benefactive structure; see Micheli 2007: 94.

[119] Composites such as this, a noun with its determinative adjective, are very common in popular speech.

[120] *Kpele* is a more specific verb than *dʊ*.

[121] Marked shift of the object to the beginning of the phrase.

[122] Lit.: "see".

[123] Lit.: "you plant treat".

[124] Lit.: "I go".

Thomas: ụguogɛ'rɛ ò tíı dugu, lɛ hɛrɛ ò níı ʊ bi̱i̱, gyiyo-nı; míı gyī wá mą̄ą̱ gyī-hɔ prɛʊ̱-í, a hɛrɛ lɛ ò níı lɛ ʊ sɪra lɛ ʊ nıaʊ̱, hɛrɛ prɛʊ̱ wá sí dɛɛnagbraʊ̱ ò lɔ́ɔ yʊgɔ↓? lɛ ʊ́ʊ wātʊ wɛ yɛʊ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ ką̄…

Thomas: *The life you had[125] before, when you were a boy[126], as far as you know, I know that you couldn't know everything[127] at that time… but when you were with your father and your maternal uncle, in those days, did you gather roots to treat people with? Please explain to her so that she can understand.*

Kuman: hɛrɛ bɔ̀ kʊ̱́-mɪ[128], baba a[129] hʊ̱̀ tíı-mı lɛ nyą́ bɪ nıaʊ̱bɛrɛ. Bì hé hɛɛmɔ na a bàba tíı są̱ą̱bɪ lɛ tíı taa-(mʊ̱)[130], hą́ą̱ tūı mıa lɛ nyą̄ bɪ nıaʊ̱bɛrɛ lɛ mıą̱ka hɛ̄ lɛ mí gbɛ̄ bɔ daga lɛ bíı yāa haı̱-dı. Mʊm mì dą́ fi̱i̱, mʊm bɔ̀ hé dıgɔ, mʊm bɔ wi̱alɛ dɔŋmɔ lɛ bɔ̀ dɛ́ mì yáa[131] gʊkʊ lɛ tíı lɛ káı yɔkɔ lɛ yí. Mʊm bɔ̀ dí dɔŋmɛ'rɛ lɛ la[132], hɛrɛ bɔ̀ tíı lɛ níi, mıa lɛ mì sʊ̱́ daga'rɛ, mıa lɛ mì sʊ̱́ daga'rɛ. Hɔ prɛʊ̱ dą́ hɛrɛ gberekɛ'rɛ hɔ̀ níı faı hɔ, mʊm kʊ̀ŋmɔ dą́ mıa lɛ bɔ̀ dɛ́ mì póo wɛ daga lɛ dí. Hɛrɛ hɔ̀ yí gyinaŋo hɔ, lɛ hını bɔ̀ pɛɛ bɔ̀ sóo dɔŋmɛ'rɛ daga pooko lɛ bɔ̀ dɛ́ mì yáa yɔkɔ lɛ yí lɛ bɔ̀ pɛɛ bɔ̀ níi. Hɛrɛ bàba'nı tíı-mı lɛ nyą́ bɪ nıaʊ̱bɛrɛ, ka hɛrɛ mía hɛ̄ bɪ nıaʊ̱bɛrɛ-dı.

Kuman: *When I was born, my father took me and gave me to my maternal lineage.[133] There were four boys, he kept three of us and took one, he took me and gave (me) to to the lineage of our maternal uncles, so this meant that I lit their[134] fire and went with them[135] into the fields. When I arrived there, when they prepared the meal[136], when they roasted the yams, they made me go to the well to fetch water. When they finished eating their yams they used it to drink, I was the one[137] who lit the fire, it was me who lit the fire. When it was time,*

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125 The verb *tıı* literally means "to take".

126 Lit.: "You sat, you boy".

127 Lit.: "it".

128 In Kulango there is no passive voice – an impersonal form is always used. The literal meaning of this syntagm is "when they generated me". See Micheli 2007: 87.

129 "*A*" is a coordinating particle whose correct position would be before the subject, which in this case is "*baba*", "father".

130 *mʊ̱* is a focus particle. Here it is in parentheses because Kuman pronounced it very faintly.

131 Causative construction, see Micheli 2007: 95-96.

132 Conclusive construction; see Micheli 2007: 91.

133 The idea of lineage is expressed by the plural morpheme *-bɛrɛ* (class 26; see Micheli 2007: 31), which is used only for humans and only to indicate specific groups.

134 Here the possessive definitely refers to Kuman's uncles.

135 Lit.: "we went".

136 Lit.: "made food".

137 Lit. : "me and I".

when it was about midday[138]*, if I was hungry*[139]*, they let me put some (yam) on the fire and eat. When midday came, they all put lots of yams on the fire and they made me go and fetch water and they all drank. When Dad took me and gave me to the lineage of my maternal uncle, this is what I usually did when I was with the lineage of my maternal uncle.*

Thomas: hɛrɛ ʊ sìra'nɪ hʊ̀ nyā-ŋʊ ʊ nɪaʊ̀'nɪ, lɛ ʊ́ nyī wʊrʊkɔ zɪ lɛ la↓?

Thomas: *When your father sent you*[140] *to your maternal uncle, how old were you*[141]*?*

Kuman: hɛrɛ mì dā̱ mʊ̀, lɛ[142] mì mā̱ā̱ ɹgya yɔkɔ *bɪdɔnɪ*[143]. Hɛrɛ haɹ̀' nɪ mì tíı lɛ nyā̱ nna Tɔgɔma a hā̱ā̱ hɛ̄ hɛʊ̀ lɛ gbā-nɪ bɔ dam. Hɛrɛ hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊ̀ʊ̀, hɛrɛ mì hā̱ mì yáa oh! A mì lá a bɪ nɪàʊ̀ dʊ́: "kyɛrɛ mʊnʊbɪɔ ù hā̱, ʊ haɹ̀ baɹ̄" a mì sí mɪ haɹ̀ baɹ̄. Hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊ̀ʊ̀, ʊ̀ póo yɛʊ, hɛrɛ mía tūı lɛ mì dí-ti, lɛ mɪ nyɹ̀na[144] wɛ faɪ[145] lɛ hɛ́ ɹgbragɔ; hìnɪ laa mɹ́nɪ haɹ̀-dɪ la kúra-kúra-nɪ dam. Wá nyɹ̀ mì lá lɛ hā̱ lɛ lá hɔ, wá nyɹ̀ bab(a)'nɪ hā̱ā̱ nyā̱-mɪ yɛrɛ-í, bɪ nɪáʊ̀bɛrɛ, wá nyɹ̀, mɪa taa mía kpā̱ mɪ baanɪ, lɛ nyɹ̄ mɪ yɛrɛ baanɪ, a mɪ nyɹ̀na'nɪ la[146] gbā dam'nɪ a hʊ́ yāa dālɪ-ɛ lɛ nyā̱-mɪ. A mì hɛ́ hɛʊ̀, hɛrɛ mì gbá mɪ taa hɔ, mía pēsi baba-í, a mía pēsi mɪ nɪaʊ̀'nɪ-í, a mía daagɔ mía hɛ̄ ɹbʊmɔ lɛ lá-í, a mía kpā̱ dɪgɔ a bérɛ bérɛ[147] dī, ɔhɔ! Hɛrɛ mì gyēre tíı mɪ yɛrɛ'nɪ hɔ, hɪnɪ hɛrɛ lɛ, úʊ dʊ̀ hɛrɛ lɛ, mì tíı yɛrɛ'nɪ dɛ a mì kʊ́ hɛɛmɔ nuunu, a taa píı a zèı trɔfrɪnā̱, bɔɔ yɛrɛ taa, úʊ dʊ́ kɛ↓? Hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊ̀ʊ̀, mɪ pɛɛ lɛ mɪ bugo bɛrɛ pɛɛ a bì lá sómɪ mɪ nɪaʊ̀'nɪ(-í)[148] lɛ bàba hìnɪ píı lɛ lá, a bì lá lá lá talakɔ, bì sóm bɪ nɪaʊ̀'nɪ. Hɛrɛ prɛʊ̀-nɪ hɔ; hɛrɛ prɛʊ̀-nɪ hɔ, hɛrɛ prɛʊ̀-nɪ hɔ bɪ nɪaʊ̀'nɪ ù hā̱ā̱ mā̱ā̱ yaa ɹsiko-nɪ daagɔ-í, a hʊ̀ brí lɛ kpā̱ tüi lɛ nyā̱-mɪ a mía yāa ɹsiko-nɪ, siʊ̀'nɪ úʊ nyɹ̀ mì gyí mʊ̀ʊ̀ dɛ, siʊ́'nɪ gù, ʊ́ʊ̀ pooko gù ɹsiko.

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[138] Lit.: "when the sun arrived there". Kuman said these words pointing his finger skywards to the position of the sun at midday.

[139] Lit.: "if hunger came".

[140] Lit.: "gave you…"

[141] Lit.: "How many dry seasons had you seen?"; you / had seen / harmattan / how many / and / finished.

[142] The particle *lɛ* has no translation here because it has a purely grammatical function, indicating the presence of two different propositions in the same sentence. The syntax of the sentence is subordinate proposition + principal proposition.

[143] A calque of the French *bidon*.

[144] "*nyɹna*" literally means *mother, female parent*, but is usually used to refer to all the women in the speaker's lineage or village.

[145] Lit.: "there"; on adverbs of place see Micheli 2007: 49

[146] In this case "*la*" is a variation of "*lɛ*".

[147] The repetition of the plural morpheme *-bɛrɛ* indicates a large number of people of the same group; in this case the group is Kuman's relatives.

[148] In rapid spontaneous speech it is possible not to pronounce the second part of the negative discontinuous structure (on negative constructions see Micheli 2007: 80 ff).

Kuman: *When I was this tall* (holding his hand about four feet from the ground) *I was able to carry a can of water. That field*[149] *I gave to Mamma* Togoma*, where she worked and grew her legumes*[150]*… anyway, that's how it was*[151]*… in that field I was growing*[152]*! I stopped (growing) and my maternal uncles said: "Right, now you're grown-up, here's your part of the field*[153]*", so I got my part of the field. That's how it went, but there were many of them*[154]*; I took it and it belonged to me*[155]*, and… my mother there, she was old… she was the one who looked after the field and grew (many) legumes. You see, I was grown, you see, my father – I mean my maternal uncle – hadn't given me a woman, so you see I looked for one myself*[156]*, and when I saw my wife, my mother, the one who tended the field, she was the one who went to ask*[157] *(the chief) to give me (my wife). So I was working, but even though I could farm by myself I didn't abandon my father, my maternal uncle; I still hadn't passed my youth*[158]*, and I procured food (for everyone) and everyone could eat, that's right! Then when I took my wife, that one (you see) there, tell her* (Kuman had asked Thomas to point his wife out to me)*, I took my wife and had ten sons, but one died and there were nine left, and then there is a girl… (Will you) tell (her)?* (Kuman asks Thomas to translate). *That's how it was, my children and I served our maternal uncles and when my father died we stayed, we stayed, we stayed together and served our maternal uncles. At that time, at that time, at that time our maternal uncle, since he was no longer able to go into the savannah, did everything to give me a rifle so I went into the savannah. The medicines you're looking for*[159]*, that's how I knew them, the medicines come, all of them, come from the savannah.*

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[149] "That field" refers to the parcel of land Kuman inherited from his maternal lineage and decided to place under the charge of this relative (who was not necessarily his own mother).

[150] The word *dam* strictly means "sauce", but by extension is also used to indicate "legumes for sauce", as in this case.

[151] Lit.: "This, it did like that…"

[152] Lit.: "Then I grew, I went, oh!"

[153] Lit.: "here your field different".

[154] "Them" clearly refers to Kuman's other matrilineal relatives. By saying that there were many of them he emphasises that despite their number he, and no-one else, was chosen to have his own piece of land.

[155] Lit.: "it I took and ate it-on".

[156] Lit.: "I one, I looked for (my) own".

[157] Lit.: "ask-him".

[158] Lit.: "I still hadn't finished doing my youth".

[159] At this point Kuman speaks directly to me, apparently not involving Thomas in the conversation.

Thomas: bɔ̀ sú tüi lɛ nya̰-ŋʊ gygalɛı wá nyı̰ dıgɔ kyɛrɛsɛı lɛ dí ʊ nıaʊ̰ lɛ ʊ yɛrɛ lɛ ʊ bugo[160]↓?

Thomas: *Did they buy you a rifle because (you had shown that) you could procure much food[161] that your maternal uncles, your wife and your children could eat?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mʊ̰ lɛ[162]!

Kuman: *Yes! That's why!*

Thomas: óʊ gyí ʊ siʊ̰'nı, gyıgalɛı ʊ síra sínıka-ʊ laa hɛrɛ hʊ́ lɔ́ ʊ nyʊ̰na a hʊ́ kʊ́-ŋʊ hɔ zıka hʊ́ nyá-ŋʊ hɛrɛ siʊ̰'nı↓?

Thomas: *Do you know your medicines because your father taught you (how to prepare and use them) or because (while your mother was pregnant) he treated your mother to make her give birth and as a consequence[163] she passed you those remedies?*

Kuman: a míı wàtʊ wɛ vɛı-ɛ; dɛɛkɛ'rɛ faı! Wɛ ti pɔɔgɔ a hɔ́ɔ pàta hɔ, hıtnı míı yàa dà dɛɛkɛ'rɛ wɛ lɛ nyą̀-ŋɛ. Hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ nìi-e lɛ hɔ́ɔ gyìna. Hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ faı mʊ̰; halı wɛmɔ a yī-ti kyɔ[164], lɛ míı hɛ̀-gɛ, míı nyą̀-ŋa-bɛ, a ʊ kʊ́prɛʊ̰ dą̀ lɛ dą̀ ʊ fʊ̰ŋmo há̰ą̰ nyą̄-ŋʊ bą̰ą̰kɔ, a óʊ dą̀ há̰ą̰ nyą̄-ŋʊ bą̰ą̰kɔ, bɔ́ɔ nyʊ́ka-mı hɔ dɛɛkɔ pa[165]! Mʊm ʊ fʊ́ŋme'rɛ hą̀ lɛ óʊ yì lɛ míı nyą̀-ŋʊ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ; mʊm ʊ kʊ́ŋmo há̰ą̰ dą̄-í, míı gyì hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ pa!

Kuman: *I'm not going to explain this any more; the plants (remedies) are here. If a pregnancy is in danger[166], I go to gather some plants and give them (to the woman). When she drinks it[167], the problem stops. That plant is here, if it[168] comes to someone[169] suddenly… then, I do it, I give it to her and when the time for the birth comes, and it happens that your belly hurts too much, you find that it hurts you too much, they told me about this exact plant. If your belly gets big and you come (here), I give you this plant, if the moment of birth does not come, I know the right remedy[170].*

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[160] The syntax of the second part of this proposition is rather unusual. In Kulango the natural order of the elements is subject-verb-object (see Micheli 2007: 99 ff.), so it should have been: *lɛ ʊ nıáʊ̰ lɛ ʊ yérɛ lɛ ʊ búgo* (subject) *dı̄* (verb). What Thomas used was probably an emphatic form.

[161] Lit.: "You saw food very well".

[162] Lit.: "Yes! Like that + *presentative*" (for this function of *lɛ* see Micheli 2007: 100).

[163] Lit.: "On its back".

[164] *Ideophone*.

[165] "*Pa*" is an emphatic marker.

[166] Lett.: "is ruined".

[167] The 3rd-person singular pronoun refers to the medicine obtained from the plants Kuman is talking about.

[168] The illness.

[169] Lit.: "comes over".

[170] Lit.: "plant".

Thomas: hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ taa'rɛ lɛ kyɔ↓?

Thomas: *Is it always the same plant[171]?*

Kuman: oo! Hɔ́ɔ bàḭ-bàḭ. Mʊm ʊ fʊ́ŋme'rɛ hɔ́ɔ pàta, hɛrɛ baaŋɔ lɛ hɔ́ɔ yì a mʊ̰ óʊ nyḭ̀-wɛ lɛ dą̀ bɔ kʊ́ŋmo hàa gárɪ lɛ bɔ́ɔ "ehee! ḭ́ yáa hʊ̰ faɪ, ḭ́ yáa hʊ̰ faɪ" hɔ… lɛ hɛrɛ míɪ nyḭ̀ka-í mʊ̰, lɛ míɪ yàa hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ hɛrɛ bɔɔ pa!

Kuman: *No! They're all different! If your belly is ruined, if this is the case and then you tell someone who had a difficult birth, they'll say: "Eeeeh! Go over there to him[172]! Go over there to him!" so… and then I'll show it to you, I'll go straight away to look for that plant over there[173].*

Thomas: hɛrɛ prɛʊ̰'nɪ ʊ sɪra'nɪ hʊ̰́ gyí yɛpɔɔsiʊ̰ dḭ̀dḭ̀↓?

Thomas: *At that time did your father know many medicines for women's pregnancy problems[174]?*

Kuman: ɔɔ!

Kuman: *Yes!*

Thomas: dɛɛn'nɪ ʊ sìra'nɪ nyḭ̀ka ʊ nyḭna a hʊ̰̀ kʊ́-ŋʊ lɛ, óa gyí-ʊ̰ dugu eh↓?

Thomas: *The plants that your father gave[175] to your mother to bring you into the world, did you know them at that time?*

Kuman: oo!

Kuman: *No!*

Thomas: lɛ hɔ́ hɛ́ bą̰ą̰kɔ lɛ ʊ̀ yáa ḭsiko-nɪ lɛ kpą́ hɛrɛ dɛɛn'nɪ lɛ hɛ́ hɛʊ̰↓?

Thomas: *But was that the reason why you (first) went into the savannah, to look for those plants to work with?*

Kuman: oo! Kʊ̰laayo! Kʊ̰laayo bą̰ą̰ŋe'rɛ… mʊm yɛrɛ bɔɔgɔ pa, hʊ̰̀ báɪ dagyɛ dugu a la lɛ dą̀ ʊ̀ gyína, lɛ dą̀ hą́ą́ nyḭ̀-ʊ̰ daagɔ vɛ hɔ-í, mʊm pɔɔgɔ lɛ-í, hɔ́ wą̀ lɛ hɛ̀ mʊm nyą̰ŋɔ, a mía nyḭ̀ka hɛrɛ baaŋɔ pa, mʊm míɪ sì-gɛ lɛ míɪ nyą̀-ŋɛ pa lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ sì gyɛ lɛ nìi, hɔ́ɔ dą̀ lɛ hɔ́ɔ gù lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ bàɪ dagyɛ.

Kuman: *No! only for birth! (Those plants are) only for birth… if there's a woman around here who hasn't had her period for a long time[176], and it happens that it has just stopped coming[177], and it happens that she doesn't see it (come) any more; if it's not a pregnancy, that means it's a kind of illness[178],*

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171 Lit.: "That plant one, *ideophone*".

172 Lit.: "You go him here!". For the imperatival construction (Pronoun + high tone + verb + high tone), see Micheli 2007: 78-79.

173 Lit.: "and I go (to) the plant there, her there + *ideophone*". For varyingly marked determinative constructions, see Micheli 2007: 52 -57.

174 Lit.: "Your father, he knew medicines for women (compound word) + *intensifying ideophone*?".

175 *nyḭka* literally means "show", but is used here with the extended meaning of "administer".

176 Lit.: "loses her menstruations".

177 Lit.: "She lost her menstruations time ago and they stopped coming".

178 Lit.: "it twists and makes as if it is an illness".

and I find something that works well for that; then I go to get it (the medicine) and I give it (to the woman) ; she boils (it) and drinks (it): it happens that (the illness) comes out and she has her period.

KUMAN AND HIS FATHER

Thomas: lɛ ʊ sɪra… Hʊ́ hé lɔsɛ mʊm ʊa dugu↓?

Thomas: *And your father?… Was he a healer like you at that time?*

Kuman: oo! Hàa̰ hɛ̄ lɔsɛ mɪ ba̰a̰kɔ-í, lɛ hʊ̀ lɔ́ laa… oo! Mʊm ʊ na̰a̰ŋu nyá̰-ŋʊ, lɛ hʊ̀ nyá̰-ŋʊ sinyo lɛ ʊ̀ níi a hɛrɛ hʊ̀ hé mɪ-rɪ garɪyɛgɔ hɔ; a̰ yáa mɪ nyɪ̰ŋmɔ dḭdḭ-ŋmɛ, hɔ lɛ hɛrɛ hʊ̀ nyɪ̰ka-mɪ zʊ̰̀lɛgɛ a mía zʊ̰̀lɛ gyataga. Ʊa nyɪ hʊ̀ nyá̰ mɪ bɪ nɪaʊ̰bɛrɛ dugu lɛ la(-ɪ); mɪ̰ hɔ̀ hé-mɪ bɔ fa̰ŋa̰ mɪ-rɪ ba̰a̰kɔ vɛ-í[179].

Kuman: *No! He wasn't a powerful healer like me… although he knew how to treat (people)… no! If you had stomach-ache, he gave you a medicine you had to drink, and that's what he did continually with me[180]; that's what opened my mind[181]… this, and another thing he taught me well was weaving[182]; so now I know how to weave loincloths. You see, he gave me to our maternal uncles very early, and this prevented me from inheriting his true essence.*

KUMAN AND HIS UNCLES

Thomas: lɛ ʊ nɪáʊ̰'nɪ hé lɔsɛ pa↓?

Thomas: *And your uncles? Were they healers too?*

Kuman: Taa-ka! Taa hìnɪ hé lɔsɛ!

Kuman: *Just one! One of them was a healer!*

Thomas: lɛ hɛrɛ prɛʊ̰ ó gyí dɛɛnagbraʊ̰'nɪ a ó gú ʊ nɪaʊ̰'nɪ-dɪ↓? Hʊ́ gúro-ka-ʊ…↓?

Thomas: *And was it then that you began to know roots? When you went out with your uncle? Did he initiate you?*

Kuman: Mɪ̰ hʊ̀ nyɪ́ka-ʊ̰-mɪ dɛ, hʊ̀ dó lɛ "a óʊ páamɪ-í[183]↓?" a mɪ lɛ "a míɪ pāmɪ-í!" "hɛrɛ ʊ fɛɛ háa hʊ̀ɪ, ʊ naŋa, ʊ gbakyɪlɪŋɔ hɔ, hɔ́ɔ nyà̰-ŋʊ lɛ hɔ́ɔ gbè[184] ʊ

[179] This is a complicated construction because it seems not to have its own verb. Its literal meaning would be "So it made me not (have) its own strength with me still".

[180] Kuman refers to the remedies his father gave to his mother during her pregnancy.

[181] Lit.: "this went in my face very much in it"; a metaphorical expression.

[182] In Kulango society weaving is a male occupation.

[183] In interrogative phrases the A tone in the second part of the negation disappears in end-phrase downdrift. See Micheli 2007: 85.

[184] In these last three verbs Kuman alternates the habitual present (first verb) with the punctual present (second and third); the tonal structure is always that of the habitual

fɛɛ… úa mą̱ą̱ hɛ̄ mʊ̱rʊ̱-í, hɛrɛ bía kàa hi̱i̱, a gbè-kʊ faɪ, a bía kàa hi̱i̱, taa-ŋɛ'rɛ lɛ"… a bɪ nɪaʊ̱'nɪ hʊ̀ nyɪ̱ka-mɪ hɛrɛ pɛɛ. Hɔ̀ níɪm hɛrɛ siʊ̱'nɪ mɪ-rɔ bɔɔ, a zíŋɔ hʊ̀ɪ-ʊ, hʊ̀ nyɪ́ka-mɪ hɔ zɪŋɔ lɛ mʊm úʊ dą̀ a hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄-í, lɛ úʊ wàrɪ-gyɛ lɛ sà-nɪ sinyo hɔ, a pɔ́ɔŋɔ kyèi gʊ-rɪ lɛ gbì lɛ a hɔ́ɔ gbɛ̄-í, ó dą̀-ŋmɛ lɛ fɪlɪʊ̱ fʊ̱ʊ̱-nɪ, hɛrɛ báa kàa kɔrɔtɪ, a hʊ̀ nyɪ́ka-mɪ hɛrɛ pa. Lɛ mʊm hɔ́ yé hɛ̄ a míɪ tʊ̀ɪ-gɛ lɛ sà-ti, míɪ lɔ̀ hɛrɛ nyą̱ŋɛ'rɛ hɛrɛ po, a mʊm míɪ nyą̀-ŋa-ŋʊ a úʊ dɪ̀-gɛ, a úʊ mą̀ą̱ sà-ga-ti lɛ la, hɪnɪ hɔ́ɔ gbè lɛ. A hɛrɛ hʊ̀ nyɪ̱ sinye'rɛ bɔɔ, mɪa hé-m dɛ… bɪ nìaʊ̱'nɪ nyɪ̱ka-ga-mɪ pa. Hʊ̀ hé lɛ hɛrɛ hą̀ą̱ dɛ́ mía kʊ̀ nąą̱m, mɪ nɪaʊ̱, hąą̱: "úʊ la lɛ nyɪ̀ zɪna wɛ i̱siko-nɪ lɛ dą̀ hʊ́ʊ̱[185] kpʊ̄, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ hɛ̀ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ gbè-kʊ…" a hʊ̀ nyą́-mɪ sinye'rɛ hɔ a mía yāa hɔ-rɔ i̱siko-nɪ, míɪ kʊ̀ nąą̱ŋmɛ'rɛ kyɛrɛsɛɪ, mía yàa… lɛ mì yáa-rɔ nyʊ̱ taa lɛ sá mɪ gbɛɛ-rɪ a mì yáa lɛ nyɪ̱ zɪna'nɪ lɛ pą́-'rɛ. Gyia yabrɪ lɛ, a hʊ̀[186] kyéi-nɪ lɛ hʊ̀ yé gbɛ̄[187]-mɪ a mì 'úra hʊ̱-rɪ a hʊ̀ kyéi a mì hé mɪ hąnaʊ̱[188]'nɪ mɪ zɪka hɔ: "lɛ dą̀ kràti[189]-e"… hɛrɛ hʊ̀ dą́ bɔɔgɔ lɛ hʊ̀ krá̱ti-e, hɛrɛ hʊ̀ bíi a hʊ̀ gɔ́ hąnaʊ̱'nɪ… a mɪa "eh! Kparɪgya! Yúgú[190] hʊ̱-rɪ!" a yúgʊ hʊ̱-rɪ a mì gyere sú bɔɔ faɪ, a hąnaʊ̱'nɪ gyere krą́ti-e… A tɪɪ-ɛ ka[191] hʊ́ʊ̱ gbè-ge! Ʊ̀ą̱ nyɪ̱ bɪ nɪaʊ̱ bɔ taa'nɪ hìnɪ kpą́ hɛrɛ sinye'rɛ lɛ nyą́-mɪ!

Kuman: *So he showed them[192] to me… he asked: "You won't forget?" and I: "I won't forget!" "When your shoulder swells, when a foot hurts, or your thigh[193], and if the pain takes your shoulder and you can't do this (*Kuman lifts his arm*), that's what we call rheumatism, and it takes you here (*Kuman points to his knees*), and that's what we call rheumatism, it's the same thing[194]…" and my maternal uncle showed me all this. It's thanks to this that those medicines are here with me; if you've got a swelling[195], you show me the (right) thing, so when it happens to you and you want to treat it, you put this remedy on it, and if it happens that you've got a persistent sore that won't dry out[196], if it happens that it's got lots of hairs, of the type we call* kɔrɔtɪ*, he showed me exactly this*

present (see Micheli 2007: 73 ff.).

185 When referring to wild animals Kuman uses an animate pronoun.

186 Kuman continues to use an animate pronoun for a panther.

187 Future verb construction (see Micheli 2007: 75); also used, as here, to express the future in the past.

188 *hąnaʊ̱* literally means elder brother/sister, but the word is generally used in polite forms refer to all the villagers of the same sex as the speaker who are older than him.

189 Injunctive structure; see Micheli 2007: 93.

190 Imperative structure; Micheli 2007: 85.

191 Narrative formula to indicate that the speaker is nearing the conclusion of the story.

192 Kuman uses an inanimate pronoun to refer to medicines (see Micheli 2007: 57).

193 Lit.: "your shoulder, it becomes swollen, your leg, your thigh here, it hurts you".

194 Lit.: "one-it this + *presentative*".

195 Lit.: "and thing swells you-on".

196 Lit.: "and a sore falls you-on, and (it) lasts, and doesn't dry".

(remedy). And if it's coming, and I take it[197] *and put it on, I treat that illness in a moment*[198]*, and if I give it to you, so you eat it, or you can put it on (the sore), it heals.*

And when she[199] *saw this medicine here… I'm the one who made it… our maternal uncle taught me how. He's the one who let me hunt*[200]*, my maternal uncle. He (said): "When you see one of those animals in the savannah, and it happens that it's bad and looks like it's going to attack you…" and he gave me this medicine I take into the savannah (*laughs*) and I kill lots of game*[201] *when I go… Once I went with another man, I took my (medicine) and I was the one who saw the animal and shot it.* Voilà *a panther, and it fell to the ground in front of me, intending to attack me, I shouted at her*[202] *and she fell to the ground and I said to my elder brother*[203] *who was behind me: "You've got to cut her throat!"… When he came there and made to cut her throat, she jumped up and went for my elder brother … and I: "Eh! Go on! Stand up to her!", and he stood up to her and I was there straight away, and then my elder brother slit her throat… and in the end he got her! You see? It was our maternal uncle*[204] *who looked for that medicine and gave it to me!*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ ʊ nɪ̰aʊ'nɪ hʊ̰ hé ɪ̰gbragɔ lɛ píı, lɛ ó nyɪ́ wʊrʊkɔ zɪ↓?

Thomas: *How old were you when your maternal uncle grew old and died?*

Kuman: eeah! hɪnɪ mì kʊ́ lɛ la; hɪnɪ mì kʊ́ bì lá… Bì lá, hɛrɛ zɪka, mì kʊ́ bì lá, hɛrɛ hʊ̰ píı lɛ la…, hɛrɛ hʊ̰ píı lɛ la mì kʊ́ Kwadyo… mì kʊ́ bɛɛ pɛɛ. Mìa kʊ́-wɛ vɛ-í. Wá nyɪ́ vɛɛlɔ *collège* bɔɔ ka(ɪ) hɛrɛ zɪ oh↓? Gʊ̰tugo *Innocent* hɪnɪ lɛ mɪ laɪtʊ… wá nyɪ̄ hɔ̀ dʊ́ mɪ nɪ̰aʊ píı hʊ̰ gyí-e, a Kwàdyo dʊ́ faɪ, hɪnɪ hʊ̰ dʊ́ bì níısɪ bɔɔgɔ mʊ, hɪnɪ lɛ hɪnɪ mì kyu lɛ kʊ́, ba[205]vɛɛlɔ lɛ.

Kuman: *Eh! When I'd already had*[206]*; when I'd had all of them*[207]*… We were*

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[197] The remedy

[198] Lit.: "I treat that illness there which + i*deophone* (quickly)". For determinative constructions in Kulango see Micheli 2007: 54 ff.

[199] The feminine pronoun refers to me.

[200] Lit.: "he caused I to kill meat".

[201] Lit.: "meat".

[202] Lit.: "I shouted her-on".

[203] It may not actually have been his brother. It could have been any man from the village who was slightly older than him.

[204] Lit.: "our maternal uncle his one"; in this formulaic structure indicating exclusivity, Kuman uses a possessive plural rather than the singular – an extremely common practice in casual speech (s. v. Micheli 2007: 62-63).

[205] This "*ba*" can only be a "rough" form of the possessive plural "*bɔ*". Here too it would be more correct to use the singular *hʊ̰*.

[206] Lit.: "I had generated"; the same verb is used by mothers and fathers alike and may be translated with "generate" and "give birth to".

[207] Lit: "When I'd had, we were finished".

all there, then that one[208] died when I'd had all of them… when he died I'd had Kwadyo… I'd had all of them. I didn't have any more children. You see that brother at the collège *in… what's its name? Bondoukou… that's Innocent, my last son… You see? When my maternal uncle died he had met him, and then Kwadyo, that one there (*Kuman points to his son*), when it happened we were all here, he was the first I had, his brother.*

OTHER MASTERS

Thomas: Hɛrɛ prɛʊ̰ ò níɩ ʊ sɩra bɔ kyṵŋɔ, sḭ́sɔgɔ nabɔ bíla-ʊ↓?

Thomas: *When you were with your father, were there other healers who taught you anything[209]?*

Kuman: Daavɛ pa, bɛrɛ po! Mía lā sawalɛgɛ'rɛ baaŋɛ'rɛ dugu-é[210]! Hɔ̀ níɩm tɔzʊbɔ bɛrɛ mì kʊ́ sɩkɛrɛ[211]mʊ̰. Wɩnɩ mì ká mʊ̰; hɛrɛ hɔ̀ hɛ́ mɩ̰. Wìnɩ gbɛɛyɔ si-ṵ'nɩ mì ká mʊ̰, oh! Hɛrɛ mì dʊ́ tɔzɩna'nɩ mì kʊ́ hɔ wɛ bɔɔgɔ a bɔ̀ fála-e. Hɛrɛ bɔ̀ lúru bɔ minyo a bɔ̀ dá̰ hɔ̀ dá̰ mʊ̰, sinyo hɔ̀ dá̰ mʊ̰. Bɔ̀ tíɩ ṵŋo, vuŋo lɛ tíɩ biiko, lɛ tíɩ va̰yɔ lɛ gyere-ti. A mɩ̰ bɔɔ, a mì gbé-kɛ lɛ mì pési-gyɛ a mára mɩ nṵ… eh! A mì hɛ́ mì pési-gyɛ a mára mɩ nṵ. A mì yáa bí-kpe, "a̰n lɛ↓?"… lɛ "sɩkɛrɛ ʊ́ʊ yāa ḭsiko-nɩ pɛ lɛ ʊ́ʊ tìɩ-gɛ na̰a̰, lɛ sà ʊ saŋa hɔ-nɩ, lɛ sà-ga hɔ-nɩ lɛ zʊ̰̀-ʊ̰[212]. Halɩ nyʊ̰̀ vʊ̄ga-ʊ̰, bɔɔgɔ tɔzɩna-ti pɛɛ, ʊ̰́ʊ̰ yī". Hɔ dɛ mʊm mɩ̰ hɛrɛ hɔ̀ níɩ-mɩ hɔ, mʊm mì hɛ́-gɛ, mʊm mì yáa ḭsiko-nɩ lɛ mì *essayer*-gɛ lɛ mḭ́nɩ, hɛrɛ mḭ́nɩ̰ hɛrɛ-m kutubu, ʊ̀[213]ká hɩbɩbɩbɩbɩ, deŋema̰ra̰ʊ̰ lɛ bɛzʊ̰ pɛɛ ʊ̰̀ í, a mìnyɔ kʊ́-mɩ, a mì pá̰ sa̰a̰bɩ lɛ kʊ́. A mɩ̰ a mì kʊ́-wɛ vɛɛ-í. Fɔɔkɛ'rɛ míɩ tīɩ lɛ míɩ yāa hɔ, a ʊ́ʊ kā lɛ ʊ̰́ʊ̰ sīo, ʊ̰́ʊ̰ dā̰-mɩ, mɩaka hɛrɛ míɩ kpā̰ zʊ̰ŋɔ lɛ gyere-kɛ, halɩ bugo bɛrɛ míɩ nyā̰-bɛ ʊ̰ pooko, bɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ sawalɛ mʊ̰. A wɛ há̰a̰ hɛ̄-gɛ hɔ nʊʊŋɔ-rɩ-ɩ, hɔ dɛ báa bāɩ hɔ nʊʊŋɔ-rɩ-ɩ. Hɔ dɛ mʊm na̰a̰ʊ̰ a̰ŋɛ'rɛ-nɩ a míɩ nīɩsɩ gyaga lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ, ʊ́a dā̰ na̰a̰ʊ̰'nɩ ʊ̰́ʊ̰ hɛ̄ kyɩkyɩkyɩ lɛ wɛ kyṵ lɛ, lɛ ʊ̰́ʊ̰ sīo sīo[214] ʊ̰́ʊ̰ yī pɛɛ.

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[208] Lit.: "this back/behind".

[209] Lit.: "healers other raised you?".

[210] Lit.: "I didn't finish the hunting its part first!". The *ɛ́* form instead of *ɩ́* as the second part of the discontinuous negative construction is very common in the spoken language (see Micheli 2007: 80 ff.). In this case it becomes *é* (+tense vowel) by virtue of the attraction of the u +tense vowel in the previous word (*dugu)*.

[211] Indicating an indefinite past, the word is often used in storytelling.

[212] With the exception of the first, all the verbs in the sentence have an injunctive tonal structure; see Micheli 2007: 79.

[213] In this case the 2nd-person pronoun should be taken as the mark of an impersonal form.

[214] The repetition of the verb acts as an intensifier; see Micheli 2007: 97.

Kuman: *To help (us), yes! There were a lot*[215]*! But first, I didn't finish telling (you) about hunting! Once it happened that I killed some animals. I already knew those medicines; that's how it was*[216]*. I knew those remedies made with leaves, oh*[217]*! When I told them the type of animal I'd killed out there, they (came to) skin it. when they cut into the body, well, they found something (in it)*[218]*, there was a remedy inside. They pulled out a string, something white, black and red, all together*[219]*. And it was there; I took it and (tried to) throw it away, but it stuck to my hand… eh! And I (tried to) throw it away and it stuck to my hand… so I went to the fortune-teller to get an answer*[220]*… "Who*[221] *is it?"… And he said: "Every time you go into the savannah you must take it with you, man, and you'll put a bit in your nose, you'll put it in there to block it! (With this) when a man calls you, all the animals will run towards you". That's why when I had it in my hands, I did that, when I went into the savannah to* esseyer *and see what would happen, I saw it at once; I heard* hibibibibi*, and saw gazelles and all sorts of animals coming towards me… but I was frightened of them, so I fired three shots and hit my targets. And then I didn't kill any more. And now, when I decide to go there, you can hear them running, they come towards me, it doesn't matter what I'm looking for, you'd see it… even if I gave a bit to a boy*[222]*, he would be a hunter. But if you don't follow its rules*[223]*… That's why you can't break its rules. That's why when there are some cows here in the village, and I'm sitting there doing nothing and I use it, you see all those cows go* kyikyikyi *with their flies, they run fast, and all come here.*

Thomas: sí̱ssɔgɔbɛrɛ nyí̱ka-ʊ, bérɛ vóga-ʊ laa wá kóri-gye laa nú bɔ kyu̱ŋɔ a bɔ̀ sí̱ra̱ka[224]-ʊ↓?

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[215] Lit.: "Help *-id.* + positive value -, people many".

[216] Lit.: "this, it did like that".

[217] The formulation of this phrase is somewhat obscure. It seems that the syntagm *gbɛɛyɔ siu̱* should be read as a compound and thus interpreted as *remedies made of leaves*; see Micheli 2007: 38-39 on compound words.

[218] Lit.: "they found there it inside".

[219] Lit.: "They took out a rope, white, and took out black, and took out red, and that's all".

[220] Lit.: "I went to ask it". *Bi* is the verb used for consulting a fortune-teller.

[221] It is worthy of note here that Kuman refers to the object found in the animal's innards with a personal interrogative pronoun "who?" rather than a neutral "what?".

[222] In this translation *boy* seems preferable to *boys* or *children*, even though Kuman uses a plural form.

[223] Lit.: "if you don't do it its mouth-on".

[224] The verbs *nyɪ̱ka* and *sɪ̱ra̱ka* indicate two different ways of teaching. The first is probably best translated by "to show" because it implies that the pupil learns simply by watching the master in his practical work, while the second is used mainly to refer to the professional practice of a teacher in local state or Koran schools.

Thomas: *(So) there were healers who taught you[225]; did they call you, or did you want it and stay with them so they would teach you?*

Kuman: oo! hɛrɛ mì nɩ́ɩ faɩ dɛ, mìa kɔ́rɔsʊ ɩ̰gbrabɔ ha̰! ɩ̰̀gbragɔ'nɩ bíla-mɩ hɔ, “há̰a̰ hā̰, mɩ́ɩ dʊ̄ hɔ: wá nyɩ̰́[226]!”, mì yʊ́gʊ, hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ ɩ̰gbragɔ, lɛ mì yáa ḭsiko-nɩ la kprí daga lɛ nyá̰-a, lɛ hʊ̰̀ sʊ̰́ yɔgɔ-nɩ lɛ dɩ́ɔ. Mʊm taŋa wɛ mì nyɩ̰̀ yɛʊ, mʊm hʊ̰̀ má̰a̰ níi taŋa lɛ mɩ́ɩ yé nyā̰-wɛ[227] lɛ hʊ̰̀ níi. Mʊm hɛrɛ prɛʊ̰ mì kʊ́ na̰a̰ŋmɛ'rɛ, mʊm mì nyɩ̰̀ na̰a̰ŋmɔ lɛ mì yáa nyá̰-ŋɛ pa lɛ hʊ̰̀ hóo, a hʊ̰̀ lá lɛ vʊ́ga-mɩ, a mì yáa, a hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ “eh! Mɩ̰ wá hɛ̄-m mʊ̰rʊ̰, hɔ́ɔ dɔ̄ʊ̰ mɩ-rɔ kyɛrɛsɛɩ, kyɛrɛ mí yé hɛ̄-ʊ[228], kyɛrɛ!”. Hà̰a̰ ká̰ bɔɔ mìa méli daga mʊ̰. Hà̰a̰ yí-rɔ: “ʊ deleŋmo!”, a mìnyɔ kʊ́-mɩ… Hà̰a̰ sá daɩ̰, hà̰a̰ sá daɩ̰, hà̰a̰ sá daɩ̰, daga daɩ̰yɛ'rɛ bɔ dafun-nɩ a kprí, hà̰a̰ sóo zʊŋɔ mɩ nʊʊ(ŋɔ) lɛ láɩ mɩ deleŋmo, a mì láɩ[229]. Hɛrɛ hʊ̰̀ táa-kɛ mì sío, a hà̰a̰ “wá sío-í, a láɩ-ɛ![230]”, a mì láɩ-ɛ. Hà̰a̰ mʊ́ʊ̰-kɛ-ti, lɛ mʊ́ʊ̰-kɛ-ti, lɛ dá̰ mɩ kyɩ̰ŋɔ, lɛ mʊ́ʊ̰-kɛ-ti mɩ ba̰a̰ŋɔ lɛ, taa lɛ hɛrɛ[231].

“Wá nyɩ̰̄ sḭdaminye'rɛ mìa hɛ́-gɛ bɔɔgɔ mʊ̰nʊ̰, a̰n lɛ↓? Sḭdaminyo lɛ mɩ́ɩ nyā̰-ŋʊ taa; hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mɩ ɩ̰̀gbrabɔ bɛrɛ zɩŋɛ'rɛ-nɩ”[232]. Yʊgʊbɛrɛ a̰ŋɛ'rɛ-nɩ pɛɛ dɛ[233] a “bɔɔ hɛɛn'nɩ dɛ, drɛsɛgɛ hʊ̰-rɔ, há̰a̰ kʊ̄” a mɩ̰ hɛ́… “mʊm drɛsɛgɛ hʊ̰-rɔ, hà̰a̰ kʊ́ mɩa-í”, yooh! Hɛɛn'nɩ, hɛrɛ hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ mɩa-rɩ, mɩ́ɩ gyī! Mʊm mɩ bḭḭ'nɩ wɛ nyá̰ hɔ, hʊ̰̀ yí lɛ lɔ́-gɛ[234], a mɩa sʊ̰́… hʊ̰̀ nyɩ̰́ka dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ mìa sí-gɛ lɛ hʊ̰̀ yí, lɛ hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ lɛ “wá nyɩ̰̄ hɔɔ lɛ hɔɔ lɛ hɔɔ”. A hɔ̀ hɛ́ “mʊm bɔ kpataʊ̰ ʊ́ʊ̰ yā̰-nɩ, mʊm bɔ́ɔ hā̰-rɩ, lɛ ʊ́ʊ dɛ̄ hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ, lɛ mía sī-ge lɛ nyā̰ lɛ ʊ́ʊ fɛ̄ lɛ nīi”, hɩnɩ hɛrɛ la. A̰n'nɩ lɛ hɛ́ pa↓? “kyɛrɛ wá nyɩ̰̀ sidaminye'rɛ mì nyá̰-ŋʊ mʊ̰ɩ↓? Mʊm nyʊ̰́ wɛ kā nyā̰ a ʊ́ʊ gyī, ʊ gyisɛ lɛ, mʊm hɛrɛ mɩ́ɩ nyā̰-ŋa-ŋʊ mʊ̰, lɛ ʊ́ʊ nyā̰-ŋɛ lɛ ʊ minyo-nɩ hɛ̄ mɩ yaasɛ. Lɛ ʊ́ʊ yāa dī tege, a mɩ́ɩ sū gʊ-rɔ tege, mʊm ʊ́ʊ nyɩ̰̄ zimyo lɛ ʊ́ʊ nyā̰-mɩ a mɩ́ɩ tūɩ hɛrɛ zɩŋɛ'rɛ. A mʊm ʊ́ʊ kʊ̰̄ bḭḭ, mʊm ʊ *famille* yé kʊ̰̄ bḭḭ, a hʊ́ʊ̰[235] hɛ̄ fɩfɩɩ

[225] Lit.: “showed to you”.

[226] The tonal structure of the last pronoun-verb couple is imperative; see Micheli 2007: 85.

[227] To indicate a consequent action in past time, Kuman uses a future form with the insertion of the particle *yé* in the appropriate tone.

[228] Future structure; see Micheli 2007: 75.

[229] The verb *laɩ* has a number of meanings. In the first case in this sentence it means “point to”, in the second case “lengthen/extend”.

[230] Negative-imperative and simple imperative structure.

[231] Concluding formula in storytelling.

[232] There appears to be a grammatical error in this sentence. The verb form *hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄* is active and should be translated with “is/does”, but the locative particle *-nɩ* which follows “old people's things” means that the syntagm *mɩ ɩ̰̀ b̰ rabɔ bɛrɛ zɩŋɛ'rɛ-nɩ* should be read as “with my old people's things in it”, so I think that the verb has to be taken as a passive.

[233] Emphatic marker.

[234] Kuman uses a 3rd-person inanimate pronoun to refer to his son. The animate form would be *ɛ*; see Micheli 2007: 60.

[235] In this case the subject pronoun used to refer to a baby has an animate form; see Micheli 2007: 57.

hɔ, lɛ úʊ kāɪ wɛ lɛ fɛ̄, mʊm mɩ̰ úʊ gbī mʊ̰, hʊ́ʊ̰ nyī-ɲ̰nyɛ” a mì hé lɛ “hą́ą̰ kpʊ̄ -í, ʊ gyasole”. Hą̀ą̰: “Mía lā gʊ-rɔ pa-ɪ̰” “ɔɔ!” “Zɪŋɔ koyo hą́ą̰ lɛ wɛ lɔ̄. Mʊm úʊ yāa bɔɔgɔ ʊ pégyo bą̄ą̰ pɛɛ, lɛ úʊ sā-ga ʊ nuŋo-rɪ, eh, míɪ gyī Yegomilia[236] lɛ kparɪgya, úʊ mą̄ą̰ tĩɪ-gɛ lɛ gū; mʊm úʊ kwɔ̄ɪ bɔ gbɛlɛgɔ hɔ hɛ wɛ-bɔɔ lɛ úʊ sā-ga ʊ nuŋo-rɪ. Mʊm úʊ sā motoka-̰nɪ a hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ *accident* wá ’ūra mʊm úʊ ‘ūra háa kyēi, hɔ́ɔ lɔɔ̄-ʊ-í, halɪ bɔɔ hɔ́ɔ kyēi -oh -hɔ́ɔ kyēi a hɔ́ɔ lɔɔ̄-wa-í”. Hʊ̀ʊ̰ nyɻ̰ka-mɪ gʊ̰ pooko. Hɔ̀ hé mɩ̰, míɪ nyą̄ bɔ gyasole. Wɪnɪ mɩ̰ ka mʊ̰, úʊ mą́ą̰ dʊ-ŋɛ pɛɛ↓? Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ mʊm wɛ́ yī lɛ nyą̄ sinyo hɔ. A míɪ mēli daga’rɛ bɔɔgɔ mʊ̰ lɛ fūa-gɛ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ hą̄ hʊ́ʊ̰ kyɛr̄ɛ krūa lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ nyḭ̄ daagɔ vɛ. Mʊm nyɩ̀ nyą̄ bɪbɪ, lɛ bɔ “ɻ́ɻ̰ yāa hʊ̰-mʊ̰”. A hɛrɛ ɩ̰̀ káɪ dugu: “nyą́[237] hé dugu↓?” lɛ mìa dą́-nɪ-í.

Kuman: *No! When I was an apprentice[238] I used to observe the grand old men! The elder who brought me up used to say: “I tell you this: watch!”. When I grew up he was very old; so when I went into the savannah to fetch[239] firewood I would give him some so he could have a fire in his hut[240] when he slept. If I got some palm wine, in the periods when I could drink it, I gave him some and he would drink it. In those days, when I killed my game, if I managed to get some meat I would go and give him some and he ate it and in the end (one day) he called me. I went (to his house) and he said: “Eh!… Look, what you do for me[241], I really appreciate it[242], so I’ll do something for you[243]. Thanks to him, today I can lick fire in that way[244]. He came (with that)[245]: “Your tongue!” and I was gripped by fear[246]. He took a p…, a p…, a p…, an ember from under the pot[247]… and it was glowing! He put something in my mouth[248] and pointed to my tongue… and I stuck it out. When he grabbed it, I escaped. “Don’t escape! Stick it out!”, so I stuck it out. He rubbed like this on the upper part[249] (of his tongue* – as he speaks, Kuman reproduces his master’s movements*), and he rubbed it on… then he came to me and rubbed it on my (tongue) and that was it.*

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236 Variation of *Yegolimia*.

237 Polite form of the 2nd-person plural pronoun; see Micheli 2007: 57.

238 Lit.: “When I sat there”.

239 Lit.: “cut”.

240 In Kulango there is no need to express the ownership of the hut with a possessive adjective. Literally the utterance reads: “he lit hut-inside”.

241 Lit.: “*Focus*, you do (habitual construction) to me, *focus*”.

242 Lit.: “this is sweet me-with really”.

243 Lit.: “I do you, really”.

244 Lit.: “He did here, (that) I licked fire *focus*”.

245 The verb *yi-rɔ* literally means *take something to someone*.

246 Lit.: “Fear took me”.

247 The word *daɻyɔ* literally means “iron”, and is sometimes used as a synonym of *daɻsɛ* “pot” (made of iron).

248 Lit.: “He poured a thing into my mouth”.

249 Lit.: “He in this way/here *focus* – rubbed-on”.

"You saw that canari *of medicines that I prepared just over there… What is it? It's one of the* canari *of medicines that I'll give you; it's made with my old people's things". Well, everyone*[250] *in the village (said): "There's a fellow there, he's got witchcraft, he kills", and I said to myself: "(Even) if he's got witchcraft, he hasn't killed me…" Yoooh! That fellow, what he did for me*[251]*, I alone know*[252]*! When one (of my children) got ill, he came to treat him; I sent (for him)… he told me a plant and I went to look for it, then he came and said: "Do*[253] *this, this and this" and said: "When your chest hurts, breathing in*[254]*, you must treat the illness*[255] *with this herb*[256] *and I'll look for it to give it to you and you wash (with it) and drink (some)" and that's it. Then what did he say? "Now you remember*[257] *the* canari *I gave you? If someone gets ill and you've got enough knowledge*[258]*, (if) you're a wise man, if you've got what I just gave you, give it to him: your heart is with me*[259]*. And you can get*[260] *a goat and I'll take the goat with you; if you take a chicken you give me a bit and I'll take that thing… so if you have a son, if your* famille *has a son, who is born too small, you'll take some (of this medicine) and wash the boy with it… and if he survives, he'll grow old*[261]*", so I said: "That's not bad! Thank you!" And him: "I haven't finished with you!", "Haven't you?", "That type of thing; it heals… if you go there (*Kuman points towards the bush*) when you're ill*[262] *and you hold it in your hand… eh! I know the Sky… truly! You can take it and it (your pain) goes away*[263]*. If you hit its leaves, there's some there too… take them in your hand… when you get on a vehicle and you have an accident, you must blow, that (car) falls on its side and you don't get hurt; if that falls on its side – oh – that falls and you don't get hurt". He taught me many things. This is how it went and for that I thank him*[264]*.*

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[250] Lit.: "Men (plural + class 26 for groups of people; see Micheli 2007: 33;34) in the village all".

[251] Lit.: "me-on".

[252] Lit.: "I know".

[253] Lit.: "You see".

[254] Lit.: "When you have pain in your ribs, when you relieve them (they grow)".

[255] Lit.: "answer".

[256] In Kulango there are no different words for "tree", "plant" or "herb", so the choice of term falls to the translator.

[257] Lit.: "you see".

[258] Lit.: "you know".

[259] Lit.: "your heart/inside is my friend".

[260] Lit.: "You go to obtain".

[261] Lit.: "will see ahead".

[262] Lit.: "your eyes are red".

[263] Lett.: "gets lost".

[264] Lit.: "I render him thanks".

*(*Kuman turns directly to my spokesman*) If I keep speaking*[265]*, can you tell her everything? (*Thomas says he can*). That's why if someone comes, I give him those medicines. And I lick fire as before, and I spit it out, and if a child has hope of recovery, he finds his remedy*[266]*. When a man is very ill they say to him: "Now go to him!" And there was someone who had refused to come before: "(What) did you do before?" In that case I don't follow him.*

Thomas: Lɛ wa kakaɪ sị̱sɔgɔbɛrɛ wɛmɔ-rɔ dugu, laa wɛmɔ báa yí ʊ kyụ̱ŋɔ[267]↓?

Thomas: *So in those days did you stay with other healers or did they come to you?*

Kuman: oo! lɛ mɪ kyɛrɛ bɔ baaŋɔ kyɔ lɛ nyą́-bɛ.

Kuman: *No! I had the pleasure of going to them first, taking them something!*[268]

Thomas: Wɛmɔ bɔɔ úʊ mą̄ą̄ yúgʊmɪ-rɔ vɛ↓?

Thomas: *Are there any of them you can still meet?*

Kuman: Bɛ̀rɛ nyą́-mɪ siụ̱'nɪ, bɛrɛ bɔ̀ púɪ pɛɛ, a bɛrɛ mʊ, mʊm míɪ gōi lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ dɛ! Mʊm mì nyą́-wɛ bɔ sinyo baaŋo lɛ hɔ̰̀ yáa lɛ hą̀ą̄ "hɔ́ɔ zɪ↓?" lɛ mì hé "oo! Mʊm úʊ yāa a hɔ́ɔ kyɛ̄rɛ lɛ úʊ… lɛ úʊ yī, mʊm hɛrɛ úʊ mą̄ą̄ pɛɛ lɛ úʊ nyą̄-mɪ." A dugu dɛ[269], wáa nyī̱, mɪ dugusɔgɔbɛ̀rɛ hé mɪ̱, wáa nyī̱, mì súm-bɛ mụ̱ụ̱, a bɔ̀ nyą́-mɪ, hɪnɪ lɛ[270] mɪ̱: "úʊ mą̄ą̄ pɛɛ, lɛ úʊ nyą̄-mɪ; hɛrɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa bɪbɪ a úʊ yī bɔɔgɔ vɛ!" Mɪą̱ka mʊm mì nyì̱ lɛ bí-be bɪbɪ, lɛ hɔ̰̀ lɛ: "zéɪ !". Hɛrɛ báa hɛ́[271] mɪ-rɪ. Hɛrɛ hɛɛn'nɪ dɛ, hìnɪ mɪ̱ hé lɛ hɔ̰̀ bíra[272]-mɪ ka… mì yáa lɛ kprí mɪ taŋa lɛ yí lɛ sá-ga bɔɔŋɔ lɛ dɛ́ bì yáa níi-e. Hɛrɛ bì dą́ bɔɔgɔ a mì hé lɛ "faɪ lɛ! hɛrɛ mì túɪ taŋa'rɛ lɛ yí-rɔ…" Hɛrɛ *vieux*'nɪ yí a bì nyī̱ yʊgɔ gú bɔɔŋɔ'nɪ fụ̱ lɛ bɔ̀ yí a wì̱mɔ gú faɪ lɛ bɔ̀ yáa, hɛrɛ bì níi-e a mì hé "eh! Kyɛrɛ yʊgɔ lɔɔ bɔ́ɔ yī" a hɔ̰̀ hé lɛ "eh! úa kárɪ!" a hɔ̰̀ tíɪ bɔ naŋa hɔ naŋadɪgɔ lɛ sú mɪ naŋadɪgɔ baaŋo a "bɔ́ɔ dą̄, báa nyī̱-bɪ-é(í)[273]", bɪ bɔɔŋɔminyo ką̱kɔ-rɪ bɪbɪ, halɪ nyʊ̱'nɪ Tatamtua hɔ̰̀ súu mɪ naŋa, a mì táa-kɛ, a ka(kaɪ) mì mmą́, a mì táa-kɛ, a Gyìne dą́ lɛ "mh! Faɪ wʊ̄ị̱ taŋa taŋa" a hìnɪ bɔɔgɔ-m lɛ mára kàramʊgʊsɛ'nɪ bɔ ben bɔɔgɔ lɛ, a mì káarɪ koụ̱n…

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[265] Lit.: "Those (things) I mean now".

[266] Lit.: "and he becomes big, hopes well, sees/finds help".

[267] Lit.: "So you near the group of healers with some of them in times gone by, or some of them, they came you near?"

[268] Lit.: "I be good/better (at) them (marked, themselves) first and give them.

[269] *Dɛ* is a focuser that has no translation in this context.

[270] In this case *lɛ* is a variation of *hɛ* and means "say".

[271] Construction of habitual action in past time; see Micheli 2007: 80.

[272] *bɪra* in Kulango means "to lie", but is used only to refer to harmless lies such as this, which was said as a joke. The language has another verb, *lepa*, which indicates real, malicious lying. This lexical distinction derives from the fact that lying, *lepaga*, is considered the worst crime a Kulango can commit, so it must be unequivocally distinguished from a remark made in jest – *bɪragɔ*.

[273] To avoid repeating the same sound, Kuman uses the *-ɛ́* form as the second part of the negation instead of the more common *-í*, a frequent occurrence in the spoken language; see Micheli 2007: 80.

Ah! Sinye’rɛ bɔɔgɔ gʊ̰ nyā̰-mɩ! hà̰a̰ ɩ̰nyɩ̰ lɛ nyá̰-ŋa-mɩ, lɛ gyere pɩ́ɩ!. Mɩ ma̰a̰yaagɛ’rɛ, hɛrɛ hʊ̰̀ nyá̰-mɩ hɛrɛ, hɔ́ɔ gʊ̰ nyā̰-mɩ dɛ! Hɔ̀ hɛ́ mɩ̰… a bì nɩ́i taŋa’rɛ a bɛr̀ɛ dá̰, a bì nyɩ̰̀ yɛbɔ wɩ̰mɔ lɔɔ bɔ̀ yí paa mì dʊ́ lɛ: “wɩ̰mɔ lɔɔ bɔ́ɔ yī!” a hʊ̰̀ dʊ́ lɛ “mɩaka bía lā-ɩ́, wɛ á hʊ̰́ʊ̰ nyɩ̰̄-bɩ-ɩ́”. Hɛrɛ bɔ naŋadɩgɔ há̰a̰ a hʊ̰̀ túɩ bɔ nuŋo lɛ há-ga mɩ-rɩ mʊ̰ a bì lá taŋa’rɛ niiyo. A bì kyéi-nɩ lɛ bì yí lɛ nɩ́ɩ wɩ̰mɔ kasayɔ-nɩ a bì yí lɛ sá̰ a̰ŋɔminyo-nɩ lɛ bàa nyɩ̰́-bɩ-ɩ́, krwaa-ɩ́! Hɛrɛ mì dʊ́ kɛɛ[274], lɛ, lɛ “wɩ̰mɔ bɔ́ɔ dɩ” a hʊ̰̀ dʊ́ “dɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ sūko bɩlaa, mʊm hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ sūko bɩlaa hɔ, mɩ́ɩ nyā̰-ŋa-ŋʊ”… hà̰a̰ gbí. … hà̰ pɩ́ɩ (lɛ) hɔ (hʊ̰) nyā̰-mɩ dɛ-ɩ́.
Hɛrɛ prɛʊ̰ bì kyú lɛ *commencer* bɔɔgɔ dɛ, a há̰a̰ hʊ̰ *essyer*-mɩ lɛ mɩ̰́nɩ̰, mʊm mɩ́ɩ mīi(ni) a hʊ̰ dʊ́ lɛ “nɩ́ɩ faɩ!” a mì nɩ́ɩ faɩ[275], a hʊ̰̀ yáa mʊm nyʊ̰’nɩ bɔ yɔgɔ’rɛ-dɩ fɩ̰ɩ̰. Hɛrɛ hʊ̰̀ yí hʊ̰̀ yéleka tʊlɔ, lɛ hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ bɔ gbɛɛm ʊ̰̀ yí, a mì káarɩ a hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ bɔ gbɛɛm ʊ̰̀ yí, lɛ hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ bɔ gbɛɛm ʊ̰̀ yí; hɛrɛ hɔ̀ lá a hʊ̰̀ gyína koʊ̰n, lɛ hɛ́ bɔ ten papapapapa, a hà̰a̰ nyɩ̰̀ mì sío-ɩ́, hà̰a̰ hɛ́-gɛ papapapapa a hà̰a̰ nyɩ̰̀ mì sío-ɩ́. A hà̰a̰ nɩ́ɩ lɛ yéleka lɛ Yao. A mì hɛ́ “a̰ha̰! a ʊ́ʊ kpā̰ɩ̰! ʊ́ʊ mā̰a̰ dī sinyo kparɩgya!”. Hʊ̰̀ nɩ́ɩ mʊ̰ hɔ hɛrɛ, hʊ̰̀ ká nyá̰-ŋa-mɩ lɛ gyere yáa, hɔ (hʊ̰̀) nyá̰-mɩ dɛ!
Hɛrɛ hʊ̰̀ págasʊ-gɛ hʊ̰̀ gyába mì sío!
Hìnɩ-ŋmɛ bíla-mɩ pooko, lɛ zʊ̰́ bɩ nɩaʊ̰ lɛ mɩ sɩrabɛrɛ-ŋmɛ! ʊ̰ pɛɛ lɛ gbreŋusiʊ̰ pɛɛ, hìnɩ nyá̰-ʊ̰-mɩ pɛɛ.

> Kuman: *Those who gave me the remedies are all dead… Those people! If I could go back and do (everything) again! If I give someone one of their medicines and they come (asking): “How much does it cost?”, I reply: “No!… When you go and get better, then you… you’ll come back and if… you’ll give me what you’re able to give me[276]”. And in the old days, you see, my ancestors did that; you see, I respect[277] them all… they gave me (the medicines). One said these words[278]: “You’ll give me what you’re able to give me, when things are a bit better you’ll come back”, but if I had something[279] and I asked how much it cost[280], he would say: “Never mind!”… That’s what they did for me.*
> *Then that chap[281], one of them did this: he played a nice trick on me[282]… I’d gone to get my wine and was going back to hide it somewhere along the path so that we could go and drink it together. When we got there, I said: “There it is!*

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[274] *kɛɛ* in this context is a variation of *lɛ*, probably derived from the French model *que*; see Micheli 2007: 124.

[275] *Faɩ* is an adverb indicating a place distant from the speaker and the listener alike. For adverbs of place see Micheli 2007: 49.

[276] Lit.: “what you can everything, then you give-me”.

[277] Lit.: “I am obedient”.

[278] Lit.: “That went like this”.

[279] Lit.: “I saw”.

[280] Lit.: “a bit”.

[281] Lit.: “boy”, but here it is certainly used in the extended meaning of “chap” or “fellow”.

[282] Lit.: “ was dishonest with me”.

Now I'll get the wine and come back[283]*"… That* vieux *came and we saw some men leaving that path over there (*Kuman points to a path on the edge of the village*) and coming (towards us), others came out from the other side and went on their way, that was while we were drinking, and I said: "Eh! Someone's coming from over there!" and he said: "Eh! Shut up!" and he squashed my little toe with his*[284] *and said: "Those who are coming can't see us!"… We were right by the side of the path*[285]*, then a man called Tatamtua almost trod on my foot… but I moved it out of the way and I started laughing*[286]*, but I moved it out of the way; then Gyine came and said: "Mmh! I can smell wine here!", but we were close*[287] *to the charlatan's house… so I kept silent and stayed calm… Ah! The story of that remedy pains me! He'd said that he would give it to me, but then he died… he was the one who made me a good walker*[288]*, but that story pains me, eh! That how it was… (*Kuman laughs*)… we drank wine and people went past, we (also) saw some women coming towards us and I said: "Look at these ones coming!", and he answered*[289]*: "Until we've finished, no-one will be able to see us!". When his toe got tired, he put a hand on me*[290] *and we finished drinking our wine*[291]*. On the way back we fell over, and sat on the pathway*[292]*, but we managed to get back and went into the village, and no-one saw us, really*[293]*. Then I said that, that, that: "We fooled them all right*[294]*" and he answered: "We'll do it again; when we do it a second time, I'll give it to you*[295]*" … it was so long ago… he died and never gave it to me.*

Those were the first times[296]*, when I* commencer *there, and he, he* esseyer *me, to see if I was afraid, so (one day) he said: "Sit here!" and I sat down there; then he went into his hut as a man. When he came out he had turned into an elephant, and as he came towards me he showed me what he could do*[297]*, and I remained silent; he came towards me, showing me what he could do, showing what he was able to do; when he finished, he stopped and stood there calmly,*

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283 Lit.: "come-with"; for phrasal verbs in Kulango see Micheli 2007: 96-97.

284 Lit.: "took his foot his little finger and squashed my little finger same".

285 Lit.: "exactly beside the centre of the path".

286 Lit.: "and then I laughed".

287 Lit.: "that there-*focus*, and near charlatan his house there".

288 Lit.: "my power in the march, that have me, that".

289 Lit.: "said".

290 Lit.: "took his hand and did like that me-on".

291 Lit.: "we finished the wine drink".

292 Lit.: "we sat among some others".

293 Lit.: "completely".

294 Lit.: "those eat (it)".

295 The medicine.

296 Lit.: "that time, we (were) first".

297 Lit.: "did his himself"

*then he started going papapapapa, with his ears (*Kuman imitates an elephant flapping its ears*), but he saw that I didn't run away; and he went papapapapa, but saw that I didn't run. So he sat down and turned into Yao*[298]*. And I said: "You're good*[299]*! I bet you know*[300] *some medicines!". That's why he decided to teach me, so I went to him and he taught me.*

When he moved his ears[301]*, he thought I would run! He was the one who taught me many things*[302]*, more than my maternal uncle and my father's ancestors. All those things, and the things for malaria… he gave me all of them*[303]*.*

Thomas: Hʊ́ʊ̯ dālɪ-ʊ lɛ úʊ nyā̱-bɛ bɔ yʊʊn…

Thomas: *She's asking (you) to give us*[304] *their names.*

Kuman: Hɛɛn hɪnɪ bàa ká[305] Kwaku.

Kuman: *That fellow was called Kwaku.*

Thomas: Kwaku zɪ↓?

Thomas: *Kwaku what?*

Kuman: Kwaku Wara

Thomas: Mʊm wɛ bɔɔgɔ pa, lɛ ù yí-rɔ, bɔ yʊʊn↓?

Thomas: *If there are others you spent time with, their names?*

Kuman: A bɪ nɪaʊ̯bɛrɛ dugu lɛ bɛrɛ. Bɪ nɪaʊ̯'nɪ lɛ Yao Kra, bɪ nɪaʊ̯'nɪ ka. Baba'nɪ daagɔ lɛ Kofi. Kofi Dyedwa. Hɪnɪ mʊ̯, hɛrɛ bɔ̀ kʊ́ hɔ, bɔ nyɪ̯na hʊ̀ʊ̯ pú lɛ kpré, mɪ pègyo bā́ā̱… mʊm hɛɛn'nɪ, hɛrɛ tɛsɛ'nɪ hā̀ā̱ nú-í, Kwaku Wara'nɪ[306], mʊm hā̀ā̱ tú-í, ka bɔ ʊ́ŋo tū.

Kuman: *In those days it was my maternal uncles*[307]*. My maternal uncle was called Yao Kra, he was our maternal uncle. Then there was Dad, Kofi. Kofi Dyedwa. This one (*Kuman pronounces these words pointing at himself, so *this one* is him*), then they had a son*[308]*, their*[309] *mother died and came back to life…*

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[298] Kuman slips here, saying Yao instead of Kwaku; both are very common names, derived from the traditional calendar.

[299] Lit.: "powerful".

[300] Lit.: "eat".

[301] Lit.: "trembled"; the word *pagasʊ* is used exclusively with reference to animals.

[302] Lit.: "he himself raised me a lot".

[303] Lit.: "that gave them to me all".

[304] Lit.: "them".

[305] Lit.: "they called".

[306] Highly unusually, here Kuman uses a definite article with a man's name. I have come across no other such case.

[307] Lit.: "Well, our maternal uncles that time here people".

[308] Lit.: "generated".

[309] The possessive plural is correct here because "mother" is meant not as a specific child's mother but the mother of a family, that is to say Kuman's wife.

I suffered so much[310]*… if that man, that gentleman, hadn't been there, Kwaku Wara, if he hadn't taken her, she would have been dead*[311].

Thomas: Lɛ úʊ mą́ą́ wátʊ bɔ kʊ̱ŋmɛ'rɛ hɔ̀ gárı lɛ dá↓?

Thomas: *Can you explain that difficult birth*[312]*?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ kʊ́ lɛ lá hɔ, bɔ fʊ̀ŋme'rɛ nyą́-nı gbereko sąąbı, lɛ mı ịsiko haı̯ kutuu lɛ faı, hʊ̀ níı ą̱ŋɔ a hɔ̀ nyą́-nı a bɔ̀ gyere yáa mı-rı; hɛrɛ mì yí lɛ dą́ faı a hʊ̀ yáa dá dɛɛkɔ wɛ lɛ: "ʊ́ lɛ nyą́-a" a mì sú-kɛ. Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ níi-e bıbı a hʊ̀ ʔó. Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ kʊ́ lɛ lá hɔ, a hʊ̀ píı a mì yáa dó-kɛ hʊ̱-rɔ, a hʊ̀ yáa nyĺka-mı dɛɛkɛ'rɛ wɛ pa, a mì tíı-gɛ lɛ yí… a mì dʊ́-ke bɔ taakɔ minyo-nı, a hą̀ą̱ "úʊ dʊ̄-ke ɛ lɛ úʊ kwɔ̄ı-ɛ", a mì hɛ́-gɛ a hʊ̀ yógʊ.

Kuman: *After giving birth she continued to have a pain in her belly*[313] *for three days, but I was in the field in the savannah. She was in the village and felt ill so they came to get me*[314]*; when I got there, he had (already) gone to get some herbs and (said): "Give her these", and I took them. She drank a little, then vomited straight away. (Once) after another birth*[315]*, (it seemed that) she was dead, so I went and told him, and he showed me some plants, which I took and went back… I crushed their juice on her head, because he had told me: "crush them and slap her"; I did that, and she got up.*

KUMAN AND THE SPIRIT GUIDES

Thomas: ʊ sıra lɛ ʊ nıaʊ̱bɛrɛ (bɔ)[316] gyinaʊ̱, ʊ̱ taa lɛ ó baanı'nı laa nyĺka-ʊ dɛɛn'nı↓?

Thomas: *Was it the spirit guides of your father and maternal uncle that showed you the medicinal plants, or did you have your own spirit guide?*[317]

Kuman: Mıa[318] gbɛgyʊ̱ŋɔ, mıa baanı lɛ. Hɛrɛ mì yáa hɔ, mì są́ ịsikɛ'rɛ-nı, mì kɔ́rı muu, a gbereko hɔ̀ yí kyèi, mìa nyì̱ bɔɔŋɔ-í, a mì yáa faı lɛ bái bɔɔŋɔ, lɛ yáa faı lɛ bái bɔɔŋɔ, a hʊ̀ níı fʊ̱ lɛ "ą̱n lɛ?" a mì hɛ́ lɛ "mıa lɛ!", a hą̀ą̱ "bɛ hɛ́

[310] Lit.: "my eyes were red".

[311] Lit.: "her head would have disappeared".

[312] Lit.: "her birth, it was hard and arrived".

[313] Lit.: "her belly was painful inside".

[314] Lit.: "came on me".

[315] Lit.: "when she had her birth and finished".

[316] In this passage Kuman probably forgot the possessive.

[317] Lit.: "Your father and your maternal uncles, (their) spirit guides, (were) they first, or (was it) your own that showed you the plants?".

[318] The possessive usually has the same form as the second-series subject pronoun, whereas here Kuman uses the first series. When I repeated his words using the second series, he accepted my version but added that the other form (the first series) had a stronger impact. See Micheli 2007: 62-63.

úʊ↓?" a mì hé "mì ván lɛ!" "Wá gyí bɔɔŋɔ-ɪ↓?" a mì hé lɛ "oo!" a hʊ̀ hé lɛ "yí, bíɪ yāa!" a bì yí muu, a bì dą́ mɪ kutuu yɛgbɛnaga-rɪ a hʊ̀ pési-mɪ. A mì yí bɪ kutuu-nɪ lɛ nyɪ̀ yʊgɔbɛrɛ[319].

Kuman: *They were mine[320], my personal ones. (One day) I was walking when I went into the savannah; I walked for a long time[321], until the sun was about to set and I couldn't see the path any more; I went one way and lost the path, I went the other way and lost the path… then (I saw) a fellow sitting there who said: "Who's that?" and I answered: "It's me!", and he: "What are you doing?" and I said: "I'm lost!"; "Don't you know the way?", and I replied: "No!", so he said: "Come with me!" and we walked a long way[322], until we ended up behind my field and he left me (there). So I got back to my field and saw my family (again).*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ gyinąʼnɪ mʊ̨, hą́ą́ nyɪ̨́ka-ʊ dɛɛnʼnɪ mʊ̨, hą́ą́ nyɪ̨́ka-ʊ̨ sɪ̨sɔgɔbɛrɛ pɛɛ↓?

Thomas: *That spirit guide who showed you the remedies, does he show them to all the other healers?*

Kuman: Mɪa taa baanɪ lɛ hɪnɪ!

Kuman: *That one is mine alone[323].*

Thomas: Gʊ̨ wɛ nąkɔ bɔɔgɔ wá hé lɛ gyere nyɪ̀ hɛrɛ gyinąʊ̨ ʼnɪ↓?

Thomas: *Do you do other things over there before you see the spirit guide?*

Kuman: Gʊ̨ wɛ nąkɔ bɔɔgɔ! Hɔ sinyo lɛ nna, lɛ úʊ sī-ge lɛ pēi-gye, lɛ úʊ gyere nyɪ̰̄-bɛ.

Kuman: *There are other things there! There's a remedy, madam, that you take, you use it to wash and then you see them.*

Thomas: lɛɛ… hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛʼrɛ gyínąʼnɪ nyɪ̨́ka-ga-ʊ↓?

Thomas: *Er… that plant, did the spirit guide show it to you?*

Kuman: Mɪa nìaʊ̨ nyɪ̨́ka-ga-mɪ faɪ, mɪ ɪ̨bragɔʼnɪ mì ká lɛ, hìnɪ nyɪ̨́ka-mɪ hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛʼrɛ.

Kuman: *That maternal uncle of mine showed it to me, my old man I mentioned before, he showed me that plant.*

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[319] *yʊgɔbɛrɛ* is a compound word; *yʊgɔ* is the plural form of *nyʊ̨* and means "people", which, together with a class 26 indicator, indicates a specific group of people such as a family, a brotherhood or a lineage.

[320] Lit.: "those of myself".

[321] Lit.: "I walked + intensifying *ideophone*".

[322] Lit.: "we came + intensifying *ideophone*".

[323] Lit.: "I one mine + presentative particle + that".

Kuman: Hɛrɛ zɪna'nɪ[324] hʊ̀ nyɪ́ka-mɪ bɔɔŋɔ a mì yí hɔ, hɔ ben halɪ a mì hɛ́ lɛ mì yáa kpɛrɛ-gɛ[325], hɛrɛ mì hɛ́ lɛ mì yáa kpɛrɛ-gɛ, a mì yáa lɛ dɪ́ bɔɔgɔ, mìa nyɪ́-ɛ-ɪ́[326], a mì mɪ́nɪ̀, mìa nyɪ́-ɛ-ɪ́, lɛ mɪ́nɪ̀, mìa nyɪ́-ɛ-ɪ́, a mì dɪ́ hɪwɔ bɔɔgɔ walɔɔgɔ, hʊ̀[327]sʊ́ʊ̀… walɔɔgɔ, hɛrɛ mì dɪ́ bɔɔgɔ.

Kuman: *That animal that showed me the way so I could get back… the next day I decided to go and say hello to it; so I did – I went to find it. I went, and when I got there I didn't see it, I looked around me but didn't see it, but there I found a big snake… it was looooong, and big… and I found it there.*

Thomas: hɪwalɔɔgɔ lɛ↓?

Thomas: *(Was it) a python?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! A mì dɪ́ m(ʊ) bɔɔgɔ lɛ gyína lɛɛ míı gōi. Hɪ̀ níı lɛ hɛ́ mʊm mɪ̀, mì nyɪ̀ a hʊ̀ nyɪ́ka-mɪ bɔɔŋɛ'rɛ lɛ, há waka-ga lɛ: "hɛrɛ úʊ yāa, zɪ úʊ hɛ́ lɛ gyí lɛ mɪ́ɪ́ mɪ nyɪ̀nyɔ lɛ gyí lɛ mɪa lɛ↓? Lɛ ɪ̀gbragɔ gʊ-rɔ ɪ̀ŋɔ-nɪ fɪ̀ɪ̀, lɛ bɔ daagɔ hʊ̀ brí hʊ̀ nyɪ́-ŋʊ zɪŋɔ, hɛrɛ hʊ̀ nyɪ́-ŋʊ a ɔ̀ péi lɛ gyere nyɪ́-mɪ, háa-tíı-í ka wà nyɪ́-mɪ-í!" a mì hɛ́: "ɔɔ!" hɪ̀ɪ̀ "a bɪ amanɪ↓?" a mì hɛ́ lɛ "mì yí ʊ kprɛkɔ, mɪ̀ ɔ̀ hɛ́-mɪ bɪkya hɔ, hɔ̀ dɔ́ʊ̀ mɪ-rɔ" a hɪ̀ɪ̀ "háa kpʊ̄-í!", a bì kpré-wɔ a hʊ̀ níı lɛ nyɪ́-mɪ usunɪ̀'rɛ wɛ, lɛ nyɪ́-mɪ sinyo pa lɛ mɪ̀ hɛ́ mʊm míı yāa dɪ̄ bɔɔ wɛ lɛ vānɪ vɛ lɛ míı tūı -gɛ lɛ pēi, lɛ fɪ̄tɪ̀ mɪ nyɪŋmɛ'rɛ.

Kuman: *Yes! So I got there, I stopped and was about to come back. He had stretched out and was moving like this (*Kuman makes snake movements with his hands*) … I realised that he was the one who had shown me the way and he had turned into that (animal) and: "When you got here, how did you understand[328], how could you know, seeing me, that it was me? That old man who's with you in the village, who once tried (to know things); he gave you something, and you washed yourself with it and so you saw me; if you hadn't done that[329] you wouldn't have seen me!" And I said: "Yes!" and him: "What news?", and I said: "I came to say hello, because what you did for me yesterday was very kind towards me[330]", and him: "That's not bad!", so we greeted each other and he stayed for a while, he gave me some incense and many medicines and then*

[324] *zɪna* would translate more comfortably into English as "thing", but its literal meaning is "beast/animal", and it is interesting that Kuman should use this term to refer to the spirit guide.

[325] In this and the following passage Kuman uses the 2nd-person inanimate pronoun to refer to the spirit guide.

[326] But here he uses an animate pronoun. See Micheli 2007: 60.

[327] In referring to the snake Kuman uses an animate pronoun.

[328] Lit.: "know".

[329] Lit.: "taken".

[330] Lit.: "how you did-to me yesterday *focus,* it was sweet me-with".

said[331] *that whenever I went anywhere and got lost, I should take some to wash and rub it on my face…*

Thomas: lɛ hɛrɛ usunạ̀ hɔ̀ nyạ́-ŋʊ, hɛrɛ wá tíı ʊ́ʊ lɔ̄ bɛrɛ gyínạ̀ʊ̀ kyēi-ti↓?

Thomas: *And is the incense he gave you the one you use to treat people possessed by* jinn[332]*?*

Kuman: ɔɔ!

Kuman: *Yes!*

KUMAN AND THE SNAKE SPIRIT

Kuman: Hɛrɛ mì dạ́ hıwɔ-nı hɛrɛ hɔ̀[333] lá dɛ, hɛrɛ gyinạ̀'nı hɔ̀ lá hɔ, a hạ́ạ̀: "mʊm ʊ́ʊ yāa, lɛ ʊ́ʊ kpạ̄ zimfee, zimyo bɔ feeyo sạ̀ạ̀bı lɛ yī lɛ nyạ̄ bɔɔgɔ ù dạ́ hıwɔ'nı lɛ ʊ́ʊ sā-ʊ̀ bɔɔgɔ"; hɔ̀ hé mı̀, a mì yáa lɛ kpạ́-nı a mì yí a: "mì kpạ́ zimfeʊ̀'nı lɛ yáa-rɔ" a hàà̰: "Bon! Kyɛrɛ, míı yāa" a mì níı lɛ nyḭ̀ hıwɔ'nı lɔɔ, a hàạ̀: "yooh! Míı yāa, ʊ́ʊ yé nyḭ̄ sıkɛwɛ, kyɛrɛ mı ɻgbragɔ lɛ hını hɔ̀ kpéle gʊ-rɔ mʊ̀, kyɛrɛ míı yāa…", a hıwɔ'nı lɛ hɔ̀ dú-kɛ: "kyɛrɛ ʊ́ʊ yé nyḭ̄-mı sıkɛwɛ, asıra hɔ́ɔ-trʊ̄a-ʊ-í, wá hɛ̄ míı kpʊ̄-í" (a hɔ̀ hé mı̀ hɛrɛ mì yí-rɔ zimfei'nı hɔ), a hɔ̀ yáa, mía nyḭ̄-ɛ-í, hɔ̀ gbí yɛı. A mì yí lɛ mì gbá[334] hɛrɛ mı há taŋma'rɛ a hɔ̀ sí zına, hɔ̀[335] dạ̄-m(ʊ̀), hɔ̀ dạ́ mʊ̀, bɔ sʊ̀ʊkɔ dạ́ mʊ̀; hɔ̀ yílı pılıpılıpılıpılı a mì hé "eh! eh! eh!" lɛ gbá lɛ pú-kpe[336], a mì hé lɛ: "mì dạ́ kyɻŋɔ fɻ̰ a mì dạ́ hʊ̀ lɔɔ, a mì pú-e[337], lɛ mì hé vɛ lɛ dạ́ hʊ̀ lɔɔ, a mì tíı yɔkɔ lɛ sóo hʊ̀-rı, mì tíı yɔkɔ lɛ sóo hʊ̀-rı lɛ lá, lɛ mì yáa dʊ̀ʊ̀kɔ-rı. Hɛrɛ mì sá truge'rɛ-nı a dɛ̀ɛkɔ só-mı faı lɛ gú faı, a mì yí a hɔ̀ hé: "Kyʊa! Kyɛrɛ mía lɛ, bɛ dɛ ó sóo mı-rı yɔkɛ'rɛ↓? Tíı -mı lɛ yáa-rɔ!" a mì tíı lɛ yí lɛ kpạ́ fwagyo… lɛ kpạ́ fwagyo lɛ sá-nı, lɛ kpạ́ zıvʊ̰ŋɔ, hérɛ vʊ̄ı pruprupruprupru, a hàạ̀: "dúga-mı!" a mì dúga-ɛ, a: "zimfei'nı" a hɔ̀ hé lɛ: "yáa kpạ́ wɻ̰ na lɛ nyạ́-mı", a mì yí-rɔ na lɛ sóo-nı, mì sá-nı mía dạ̄-nı yɔkɔ-í, a hɔ̀ yáa pɛɛ, hɔ̀ yáa pɛɛ lɛ zimfei'nı pɛɛ, halı bī, a hɔ̀ hé lɛ "míı yī, míı yī" a hàạ̀ yí tʊ̀-í. Mìa bíwe fuu lɛ hàạ̀: "Míı yī, míı yī!", a hàạ̀ yí-tʊ̀-í.

Kuman: *When I came to the snake, when he had finished (showing himself), that* jinn *had finished, he said: "When you go back (to the village) find some*

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331 Lit.: "did".

332 Lit.: "people *jinn* fall on"

333 In this case Kuman uses an animate personal pronoun to refer to the *jinn*, while in other contexts the same *jinn* agrees with inanimate personal pronouns.

334 *Gba* is the verb used for the cultivation of yams.

335 Kuman uses an animate pronoun to refer to the snake.

336 Unlike the previous one, the pronoun used here is inanimate, which betrays a certain inconsistency between the concepts of animate and inanimate with reference to animals.

337 Animate pronoun.

eggs, three chicken's eggs, bring them here, and sacrifice them[338] *where you found the snake and put them there"; he said this, and I went to find them, then I brought them back and (said): "I've found the eggs and brought them to you" and he said: "Bon! Right… I'm off!" I sat down there and saw the snake, who-*[339]*said: "Really, you'll see me again, and my old man, the one who said* I'm off *a little while ago", then the snake said that: "You really will see me again: even if I surprise you, you'll know that I'm not wicked" (he did that when I took him the eggs…). Then he went away and for a long time I didn't see him*[340]*. Then I came do my* butte*, and as soon as I dug the hoe in, it found*[341] *a beast which*[342] *was this long… (*Kuman shows the length of the snake with his hands*); it was this long and shone pilipilipilipili, and it said: "Eh! eh! eh!", and I carried on with my* butte*, but I found it there (again), so I said to myself: "I'm going to the other side", and I found it there, so I buried it, I did it again and he came there…so I got some water and poured it on him; I got some water and poured it on him and when I'd finished*[343]*, I went to the bush*[344]*. When I went into the forest, a thorn*[345] *went in here and came out here (*Kuman points to two places on his foot*), so I went back and when I got there*[346] *he said: "Pssst! It's me! Why did you throw water over me? Pick me up and carry me…" so I took him and went to look for a* cuvette*… (When) I found the* cuvette *I put him in it, then I looked for a white cloth, one of those really white ones*[347]*, and he said: "Cover me!" and I covered him, and: "Eggs", he said: "Go and find four and give them to me", so I went back with four eggs and offered them to him*[348]*; I put them there, but I couldn't find any water… everything was right*[349]*, everything was right, the eggs, everything… and if I ask the fetish, he answers: "I'm coming, I'm coming", but so far he's never come*[350]*. I've asked the fetish many times, he says: "I'm coming, I'm coming", but he hasn't come yet.*

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[338] Lit.: "give them".

[339] Lit.: "and he".

[340] Lit.: "and he went, I didn't see him, and it lasted a bit".

[341] Lit.: "took out".

[342] Lit.: "he – *animate pronoun*".

[343] Lit.: "I took the water and poured it on him and finished" – concluding verb structure; see Micheli 2007: 91.

[344] The translation of the word *dʊ̯ʊ̯kɔ* with "bush" or "savannah" is far from complete. The term identifies any anti-social space outside the village, a space inhabited by supernatural forces.

[345] Lit.: "plant".

[346] Lit.: "I went back and came".

[347] Lit.: "white *prupruprupru -ideophone*".

[348] Lit.: "I poured".

[349] Lit.: "everything went".

[350] Lit.: "it hasn't come *-focus*".

Thomas: Bɔɔ wɛ fu̱[351] úa yáa sí kpalıgu̱ lɛ gyere sí ʊ dɛɛn'nı↓?

Thomas: *Here, in this place, do you perform any sacrifices before you collect your plants?*

Kuman: Gyiga↓? oo! Gbɔ̀kɛ'rɛ laa nyi̱ka-mı hɔ gbɛɛ. Mʊm úʊ yāa-ŋmɛ lɛ úʊ sī-ti kpalıgu̱, mʊm háa dɛ̄-gɛ-í, úʊ yāa kpa̱-ŋɛ pɛɛ lɛ bāı, a úʊ nyī-nyɛ-í. Hɛrɛ fu̱ mı ha̱ı-dı. Míı trī hɔ naga a kyɛrɛ, kyɛrɛsɛı. A mʊm úʊ yāa lɛ úʊ sī hɛ kpalıgu̱, mʊm háa dɛ̄-í, a úʊ nyī -nyɛ-í. Hɔ gbou̱ŋo pɛɛ mı̱ lɛ hɔ̀ hɛ́, a bì tíı-kɛ i̱gobo trɔfrı̱nyu̱ lɛ déri-gye lɛ prá. ɔɔ! Hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm lɛɛkɔ, a mì hɛ́ lɛ bì déri-gye lɛ sa̱ a̱ŋɔ lɛ hɔ kakaı. Mı̱ mu̱ hɔ́ɔ nīı mu̱ a bíı hɛ̄ yʊgɔ trɔtaa.

Kuman: *For no reason? No! It's the fetish that shows itself to me[352]. If you go to… to offer it sacrifices, if it won't accept them[353], you go to look for it, but you can't find it[354], you don't see it. It's there in my field. I keep its base clean[355], and that's fine, that's just fine, but if you go (there) to offer it sacrifices, if it doesn't accept them, you can't see it. It's this high[356] (*Kuman spreads his arms slightly and indicates a point about a foot above the ground*), but there were seven of us trying to lift it and shift it and we had problems, big problems! It's like a rock, and I managed to arrange it so that we could lift it and we got to the village and now it's near here. So now it's here and we had six sons.*

Thomas: Bɛ tɛm koyo[357] úa yáa sí ʊ kpalıgu̱ fu̱↓?

Thomas: *In what period do you go and offer it sacrifices?*

Kuman: Mʊm úʊ yūgʊ dikyɛgɛ, lɛ úʊ yāa.

Kuman: *As soon as you get up in the morning, you go (there).*

Thomas: A bɛ gbigo'nı lɛ pa↓?

Thomas: *What day?*

Kuman: Tı̱nı̱[358]. Mʊm úʊ yāa úʊ da̱ tɔzu̱bɔ lɛ i̱sikosɔgɔbɛrɛ, úʊ da̱ bɔ́ɔ yī bɔɔgɔ lɔ[359] kɔ̄rı-gyɛ.

Kuman: *Monday. When you go, you find the people and animals of the bush, you see that they've come there and they walk around there.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ gbɔkɛ'rɛ mu̱ lɔkɔ ba̱a̱ŋɔ lɛ, laa hɔ́ɔ núı lɛ nya̱ i̱siko ↓?

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[351] Lit.: "here about near here".

[352] Lit.: "the fetish shows me its itself".

[353] Lit.: "doesn't answer".

[354] Lit.: "you lose it".

[355] Lit.: "I clean its foot".

[356] Lit.: "its size all like this".

[357] Lit.: "what time like".

[358] *Tʊ̱ʊ̱ı*, the word meaning Monday, is used exclusively in the Nassian area instead of the more common *gyoda*, borrowed from Abron.

[359] To be read as *lɛ*.

Thomas: *Is the fetish concerned with the treatment of disease or with the bush*[360]*?*
Kuman: hɔ́ɔ sū-bɪ lɛ, a mʊm gʊ̰ kpʊ̰kɔ ʊ́ʊ̰ yī hɔ, hɔ́ɔ dū-kɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa bī-kpe lɛ hɔ: “yāa nyą̄-mɪ zʊŋɔ hɔ!”, mʊm haɪ̯ úʊ gbā daagɔ, lɛ úʊ nyą̄-ŋɛ lɛ kpą̄ dɔŋmɔ lɛ nyą̄-ŋa, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mɪ̯ lɛ ʊ dɔŋmɛ’rɛ pɛɛ hɔ́ɔ mą̄ą̄ lɛ kyɛrɛ, mʊm sɪkɛwɛ dą̄, ah! úa nyɪ̄ Yegomɪlɪa lɛ, lɛ míɪ sāalɛ-gɛ; lɛ yɔkɔ á hɔ́ɔ yī-í lɛ míɪ dālɪ-ɛ[361], hɔ́ɔ mą̄ą̄ dɛ̄ yɔkɛ’rɛ yī.
Hɛrɛ zɪ̰ŋɛ’rɛ hɔ… vɪ̰̄ŋo[362] dą́ hɔ̀ kú-mɪ, mía nyɪ̄ nąą̄ŋmɔ mì hóo[363]-í a mì yáa la dú-kɛ hɔ-rɔ lɛ sáalɛ-gɛ lɛ, lɛ: “nyą̄-mɪ wɛ lɛ míɪ hōo daa!”. Hɛrɛ mì tíɪ lɛ trugo bɔɔgɔ kakaɪ hɔ, hɛrɛ mì dą́ bɔɔgɔ lɛ níɪ sɪ bɪbɪ, ʊ̀a ką́ mì hé faɪ lɛ mía vʊ́ɡ a-ʊ̰ lɛ ʊ̀ yí-e, hɛrɛ mì níɪ bɔɔgɔ lɛ gbúla a mì ką́ vʊ̰ʊ̰ʊ̰ʊ̰, hɛrɛ hɔ̀ yáa a bùuro yúgʊ a zìna’nɪ kyéi hʊ̰[364]-rɪ lɛ kú-ɛ, hɪnɪ lɛ govʊ̰ lɛ sá mɪ nyɪ̰-dɪ a mì tíɪ-ɛ lɛ yí-rɔ, hɔ̀ hé mɪ̯ mìa pą́-’rɛ daagɔ-í, a mì yáa ą̰ŋɔ-nɪ. Hɛrɛ mì dą́ bɔɔgɔ a mì sí bɔ boyo lɛ pó gbɔkɛ’rɛ-dɪ bɪbɪ.

Kuman: *It protects us, and if bad things happen he tells us and we go to consult it and it says: “Go and fetch me that thing!”… If for example you’re working in your field and you give it something and then you look for a yam and offer it to the fetish, it’ll be like this, that all your yams, he can make them good, when they’re ready*[365]*, ah! You see, it’s Yegolimia and I worship him; and (when) it doesn’t rain and I pray to him, he can make the rain come.*

About that thing… (once) I was very hungry for meat[366] *(and) I couldn’t find anything to eat, so I went to tell the fetish*[367] *and I worshipped it and said that, that: “Give me something, so today I can eat!”. When I went into the bush near that place, when I got there and sat down, they knew that I was there, so I called them and they came… while I was sitting there shouting, I heard a vuuuuuun, and when it stopped a gazelle got up, but a beast swooped down and killed it; it was a vulture, and it put it down in front of me and I took it home*[368]*; that’s how it was, I didn’t fire a shot*[369]*, and I went to the village. When I got*

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[360] Lit.: “Does that fetish-*def focus* treat for its part + *presentative*, or stay and give (to the) bush?”.

[361] This is the only instance in which a pronoun referring to a fetish is animate, perhaps because here it is described as being similar to Yegolimia. In all the other passages it is inanimate.

[362] Kulango distinguishes two types of hunger. One is the general *kɔɔŋmɔ* and the other is hunger for meat, as in this case, *vɪ̰̄ŋo*.

[363] Kulango has two distinct verbs for “to eat”: *hoo*, used for things requiring an effort of chewing, such as meat, and *dɪ*, used with soft food such as boiled yams.

[364] In this passage the animal pronouns are inanimate, whereas in subsequent references to the gazelle they are animate. The same inconsistency is observed with regard to the *jinn*.

[365] Lit.: “if now or later (they) arrive”.

[366] Lit.: “hunger for meat had come and it was killing me”.

[367] Lit.: “it-with”.

[368] Lit.: “I took and came-with”. For serial verbs such as this, see Micheli 2007: 96-97.

[369] Lit.: “I didn’t shoot another time”.

there, I took out its heart and placed it at the feet of the fetish.

Thomas: lɛ háa hɛ́ walawala mʊm ʊ́ʊ yāa sawalɛgɛ lɛ kʊ̄ zɪna wɛ lɛ ʊ́ʊ sī bɔ[370] boyo lɛ sā gbɔkɛ’rɛ-dɪ ↓?

Thomas: *And does it regularly happen (that) when you go hunting and kill an animal you take its heart and place it at the feet of the fetish?*

Kuman: ɔɔ!

Kuman: *Yes!*

REMEDIES AND WOMEN

Thomas: lɛ mʊnʊbɪɔ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ kɔrɪ́ mʊm bí, mʊm hɔ́ɔ dā̰ yɛrɛ’nɪ wɛ hʊ̰̀ báɪ dagye, a mʊm yɛrɛ’nɪ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ nyā̰, nna, lɛ dā̰ hʊ̰̀ báɪ dagye…

Thomas: *And now she[371] wants to ask if it happens that there’s a woman with her period and this woman is ill, sir, and she’s menstruating…*

Kuman: lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ zɛ̄ɪ bɔ tɔɔm, lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ sā siʊ̰, mʊ̰ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ sā siʊ̰ dɛ, pɛrɛm (prɛm) hʊ̰́ʊ̰ lá pɛɛ, lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ tʊ̄ɪ-ʊ̰ lɛ fɛ̄(ʊ̰-rɔ).

Kuman: *And losing blood[372], then she leaves the remedies, so she leaves the remedies until her period has finished, then she takes them and washes.*

Thomas: hɛrɛ wɔ lɛ a mʊm yɛrɛ’nɪ báɪ dagye há̰ má̰a̰ tá̰ti-e↓?

Thomas: *So you (say) that if a woman has her period she can’t touch the* canari[373]*?*

Kuman: eh! Mʊnʊbɪɔ nna, a lɛ há̰ bāɪ dagye-í, lɛ há̰ nʊ̄ɪ, lɛ há dī-gɛ-í[374].

Kuman: *Right! Now, madam, until she’s finished her period, and it is there and not finished.*

Thomas: bɪ nɪaʊ̰ ha̰ nna, mɪ̰nɪ̰bɪɔ mʊm hɔ́ɔ dā̰ hʊ̰̀ báɪ dagye a bɔ nya̰ŋɛ’rɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa nyɪ̰-dɪ, há̰a̰ sà kyɛrɛ-í, hɔ́ɔ zɛ̄ɪ mʊm gbereko bɪlaa[375] wɪ̰mɔ lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ pɪ̀ɪ, a lɛ á̰kɔ lɛ hɔ́ɔ yáa[376] hʊ̰́ʊ̰ hɛ́↓? A ɪ̰nyɪ̰ há̰ má̰a̰ tá̰ti daminye’rɛ-dɪ-í↓?

Thomas: *Maternal uncle, now if it happens that she’s got her period and her illness goes on, she’s not well, and could die in a couple of days[377], what should she do[378]? Not touch the* canari *in any case?*

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[370] The possessive referred to the animal is plural instead of singular, which is not uncommon. What is interesting here is that it is animate. See Micheli 2007: 62.

[371] Here again the 3rd-person singular pronoun refers to me.

[372] Lit.: “she leaves her blood”.

[373] Lit.: animate “it”.

[374] Lit.: “it hasn’t eaten/won”.

[375] When a noun is accompanied by a numeral it often does not take the plural form, though in formal language there is usually agreement; see Micheli 2007: 68-70.

[376] Injunctive construction, see Micheli 2007: 93.

[377] Lit.: “it leaves like days two and she dies”.

[378] Lit.: “and *presentative particle* what and it goes?”.

Kuman: oo! Mʊm úa tɔnaa̱aŋmɔ hɔ́ɔ nya̱-wa di̱di̱, úʊ máa̱ bái dagye? Kyɔ? A lɛ nyʊ̱ na̱kɔ dɛ[379] hʊ́ʊ̱ nya̱!

Kuman: *No! When your body is really ill, can it have a period? Aha! If it has, it's the work of a witch-doctor*[380]*!*

Thomas: hɛrɛ ka!

Thomas: *Right*[381]*!*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Nyʊ́ na̱kɔ dɛ̄ hʊ́ʊ̱ nya̱, a nīi-e mʊm ʊ tɔnaa̱aŋmɔ hɔ́ɔ nya̱-wa, úʊ ma̱a̱ bāi dagye…

Kuman. *Yes! It's the work of a witch-doctor and so*[382] *even if your body is ill, you can have your period…*

KUMAN AND HIS TABOOS

Thomas: ʊ kyizʊ̱rʊ̱ wi̱nɪ ʊ sìrabɛrɛ nyí̱ka-ʊ-nɪ, wi̱nɪ bɔ̀ kyí dugu…

Thomas: *(Can you tell us something about) your taboos, the ones your ancestors showed you; the ones they observed in the old days…*

Kuman: Mɪ kyízʊ̱rʊ̱ wi̱nɪ lɛ da̱a̱, ʊ̱ mɪ-rɔ pa ka!

Kuman: *The taboos they imposed on me*[383]*, I still observe all of them*[384]*.*

Thomas: lɛ úʊ ma̱a̱ wātʊ ʊ sɪra bɔ kyizʊ̱rʊ̱ baanɪ lɛ ʊ niaʊ̱ bɔ baanɪ pa…

Thomas: *And can you explain the ones of your father and those of your maternal uncle?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ[385] mɪ kyizʊ̱rʊ̱ wi̱nɪ wi̱ dɛ[386], hɛrɛ míɪ kyī… mʊm míɪ dī hɔ a úʊ ī̱sya lɛ *etchì*; hɪnɪ míɪ kyī hɛrɛ, halɪ da̱ mʊ̱rʊ̱, mía hɛ̄-gɛ pa-í!

Kuman: *Well, my personal taboos, the ones I observe… When I'm eating and you sneeze, going* atchoo*, this is one of my taboos*[387]*; if this happens, I stop eating*[388]*.*

Thomas: Mʊm úʊ dī lɛ úʊ ī̱sya, lɛ úʊ yúgʊ↓?

Thomas: *And if when you're eating, if you're the one who sneezes*[389]*, do you get up?*

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379 Causative construction, see Micheli 2007: 95.

380 Lit.: "and *presentative particle* man another makes you suffer!".

381 Lit.: "this then!".

382 Lit.: "man another causes you be ill".

383 Lit.: "My taboos, those that came (to me)".

384 Lit.: "they are all me-with + *emphatic particle*".

385 In this case the demonstrative *hɛrɛ* is used as a stylistic introductory element.

386 The use of more than one demonstrative in the same syntagm is common in the language, serving to emphasise the element being referred to; see Micheli 2007: 55.

387 Lit.: "this I observe".

388 Lit.: "I don't do it + *ideophone* (suddenly)".

389 Lit.: "if you're eating and you sneeze".

Kuman: oo! Mʊm nyʊ̰ nạ̰kɔ ɪ̰sya lɛ, á míı dī-í, mʊm mı fwạ́kɔ[390] mı nʊʊ(ŋɔ-nı) lɛ míı ʔāga-kɛ, a mʊm hɔ mı nu lɛ míı pēsi-gye.

Kuman: *No! (Only) if someone else sneezes… I don't eat. If I've got some* futu *in my mouth*[391]*, I spit it out and if it's in my hand*[392] *I throw it away.*

Thomas: ʊ síra nyɪ́ka-ʊ hɛrɛ laa ʊ nıaʊ̰↓?

Thomas: *Was it your father who taught you this, or your maternal uncle?*

Kuman: Hɛɛn ɪgbragɔ[393]'nı mì hé lɛ hʊ̰ nyɪ́ka-mı; nda[394] Kwaku hɔ. Hìnı nyɪ́ka-mı hɛrɛ sinye're lɛ nyɪ́ka-mı hɛrɛ mʊ̰. A mʊm míı dī, halı mʊm míı nīısı wá mą̄ą dē daga lɛ gū mı zıka-í. Míı kyī hɛrɛ pa lɛ dą̄-m(ʊ̰) daa, a míı dī a úʊ dē daga're, míı pēsi mı fwakɛ're.

Kuman: *That wise man I told you about, he taught me; that* nda *Kwaku. That man taught me that medicine*[395] *and showed me this thing. And when I'm eating, when I'm sitting down, you can't light the fire and pass behind me. I observe this too, and if today that happens, that I'm eating and you light the fire, I throw away my ball of* futu.

Thomas: Wɪ̰nı pɛɛ ndágbolo[396] Kwaku nyɪ́ka-ʊ-nı↓?

Thomas: *Ndagbolo Kwaku taught you all this?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! hìnı nyɪ́ka-mı wɪ̰nı.

Kuman: *Yes! He taught me these.*

Thomas: A ʊ nıaʊ̰ bɔ kyizʊ̰rʊ̰ baanı hʊ̰ nyɪ́ka-ʊ ạ̰kɔ↓?

Thomas: *And the taboos of your maternal uncle, what did he teach you?*

Kuman: Nyạ̰ŋɔ nyạ̰ŋɔ[397] wɪ̰nı mía lɔ̄ hɔ, ʊ̰ kyizʊ̰rʊ̰ kyizʊ̰rʊ̰ wɪ̰nı hʊ̰ ká mʊ̰rʊ̰. Hɛrɛ míı hɛ̄ lɛ… mʊm úʊ hʊ̄ı, a ʊ naʊ̰ ʊ́ʊ̰ hɛ̄ mʊ̰rʊ̰, ʊ kyizʊ̰ŋɔ, á úʊ hōo tege-í, á úʊ hōo zimyo-í, á úʊ dī nie wɛ faı-í, á úʊ dī-gɛ-í; mʊm úʊ gbāŋma pɛɛ lɛ lā, mʊm úʊ hɛ̄ siʊ̰'nı lɛ gbāŋma lɛ lā hɔ, lɛ úʊ yī lɛ kpą̄ zimyo lɛ yé nyą̄-mı[398], lɛ sʊga pɔɔnıplo (bı nıà ʊ̰ nyɪ́ka-mı wɪ̰nı).

Kuman: *Many taboos for many of the illnesses I treat, they come from him*[399].

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[390] *fwakɔ* is the name of the area's most common yam dish. It is a kind of fist-sized dumpling made from boiled mashed yams, which can be flavoured with any kind of sauce. The word for raw yam is *dɔŋmɔ*.

[391] Lit.: "if my ball of *futu* (is) my mouth(-in)".

[392] Lit.: "if it (in) my hand".

[393] *ɪ̰gbragɔ* means "old man", but in the political sphere it is an honorific with the meaning of "wise man".

[394] *Nda* is both "father" and the polite appellative used for males.

[395] Kuman here refers to a remedy we spoke of earlier.

[396] *Ndagbolo* means "elder", but the word is used by politicians as a polite form of *Nda.*

[397] The repetition of a noun, sometimes more than once, serves to give a sense of plurality. It is most commonly encountered in storytelling.

[398] Benefactive structure, see Micheli 2007: 94.

[399] Lit.: "Illness illness those I treat *focus*, their taboos, taboos, these he did *focus*".

When I'm working and… when you have a swollen part, your leg swells[400]*, your taboo (is that) you don't eat goat and don't eat chicken; if there's oil on your plate, you don't eat it*[401]*. When you're well and you've recovered*[402]*, if you've taken the medicines and now you're well, then you come back with a chicken and 500CFA for me*[403] *(our maternal uncle showed me these).*

Thomas: ʊ gbɛgyɻŋɔ ʊ kyizʊ̱rʊ̱, wɻnɪ úʊ kyí dɻ̱dɻ̱[404] lɛ ą̱kɔ↓?

Thomas: *Your personal taboos, which are the ones you are really careful about?*

Kuman: Tɔzʊ̱bɔ dɛ…míı sā-nɪ tɔzɪna'nɪ, bía kā wɛ faɪ, hʊ́ʊ̱ yēʊ, bía kā nąbaɪ, míı kyī hɪnɪ, nna, lɛ kyī daga'rɛ mì ká faɪ dugu nna, lɛ kyī hɛrɛ úʊ ɻ̄sya, lɛ kyī hɛrɛ míı hɛ̄ lɛ úʊ ɻ̄sya'rɛ nna, mía kōri-gye-í dɛ. Lɛ kyī zʊŋɔ, dɛɛkɔ wɛ míı kyī haa faɪ-ɛ, báa kā kyɪɔmpɪa, á hʊ́ʊ̱ gyī hɛrɛ-í↓? Lɛ kyī, mʊm míı dī, hɛrɛ gārɪ dɻ̱dɻ̱ hɔ, mʊm míı dī lɛ a bɔ́ɔ pą̄, tüi paɪ… ! Hɪnɪ á míı dī sɪkɛrɛ lɛ-í!

Kuman: *Animals. In (this group) I put an animal that here we call… it's small, we call (it)* nąbaɪ[405]*… I observe this, madam, and I observe (the taboo of) fire I spoke of earlier, madam, and I observe the one when you sneeze, and I observe the one that when you sneeze, madam, I really don't like it. And I respect a thing, a (type of) plant I respect, that grows*[406] *here; we call it* Kyɪɔmpɪa*, don't you know it*[407]*? And I observe… this is important*[408]*; when I'm eating and someone shoots*[409]*; the noise of the rifle…! That time I don't eat any more.*

Thomas: Kyizʊ̱rʊ̱ wɻnɪ ù dú ʊ̱ gʊ̱, ʊ sɪra'nɪ hɻ́nɻ̱ nyɻ́ka-ʊ-nɪ laa ʊ nɪaʊ̱, hɻ́nɻ̱ bíla-ʊ↓?

Thomas: *The taboos you told us about*[410]*, did your father show you some of them*[411] *or was it your maternal uncle, the one who brought you up?*

Kuman: baba'nɪ hìnɪ nyɻ́ka-mɪ nąbaɪ'nɪ, hìnɪ nyɻ́ka-mɪ hɛrɛ, a wʊ́. Wɻnɪ míı kā lɛ hɛɛn'nɪ mì ká lɛ kyɔ, hìnɪ nyɻ́ka-ʊ̱-mɪ.

Kuman: *(My) father, he*[412] *imposed the* nąbaɪ*, he imposed this on me and*

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[400] Lit.: "this it does".

[401] Lit.: "you don't eat oil a bit there".

[402] Lit.: "when you're well all + *concluding structure*".

[403] Lit.: "you look for a chicken and give it to me (future construction) and money 500CFA".

[404] Highly emphatic *ideophone*.

[405] The scientific name of the animal is not known to me, but in *pétit français* it is the *biche rouge* (perhaps the *cervus elaphus*).

[406] Lit.: "there is".

[407] Here Kuman speaks to my spokesman referring to me.

[408] Lit.: "this is very hard".

[409] Lit.: "they shoot".

[410] Lit.: "you said their things".

[411] Lit.: "showed inside".

[412] Lit.: "that".

that's all. The ones I mentioned, he was the man I mentioned first[413]*, that one taught them to me.*

Thomas: A ʊ nıaʊ̯ baanı kyizʊ̯rʊ̯ hʊ̯-rɔ[414]↓?

Thomas: *And did your maternal uncle have any taboos?*

Kuman: wá kā mì hé lɛ hìnı nyi̯ka-mı hʊı hʊı[415] siu̯'nı, lɛ zimyo'nı mì hé lɛ kyí-le lɛ wá kā mì hé lɛ nie, nie ha̯yɔ. Mía dī-gɛ-í, lɛ sʊmara míı kā(ı), mía dī-gɛ pa-í, mía dī-gɛ pa-í.

Kuman: *You heard that I said that he*[416] *showed me the remedies for swellings, and the chicken to be avoided which you heard me tell (of), and oil, uncooked oil, I don't eat it, and I refuse* sʊmara[417]*, I don't eat it at all, I don't eat it at all.*

BAD *JINN* AND THE HEALER'S HUT

* (We were talking about the conservation of remedies when Kuman was interrupted by Thomas K.)

Thomas: bɛ tri dɛ gyínau̯'nı prá sa̯ŋɔ ʊ yɔgɔ'rɛ-nı↓?

Thomas: *Why can't* jinn *go into your hut*[418]*?*

Kuman: siu̯'nı mı yɔgɔ'rɛ-nı lɛ! Mʊm hʊ́ʊ̯[419] yī lɛ da̰ siu̯'nı yɔgɔ'rɛ-nı, ʊ́á da̰ nyʊ̯ kyɛrɛsɛ lɛ-í, lɛ ʊ́ʊ̯ kūu-re lɛ.

Kuman: *(There are) medicines in my hut. If he comes and finds the medicines in the hut, they feel that he's not a good man and they throw him out.*

Thomas: lɛ hɛrɛ kpa̰yɛ[420]'rɛ hɔ drunya'rɛ-dı dugu, a Yégo gyere nyá-ŋa siu̯'nı↓?

Thomas: *And that power which was once in the world, did Yego put it*[421] *in plants?*

Kuman: Mʊm nyʊ̯ lɛ, a hʊ́ʊ̯ hē nyʊ̯ kpʊ̯rɔ, a hʊ́ʊ̯ da̰a̰ fu̯ nyī̯-ge bɔɔgɔ mʊ̯, oo! ʊ́ʊ nyı hʊ́ʊ̯ gōi. Hɛrɛ Mía tūı lɛ gyī lɛ hʊ́ʊ̯ kpʊ̯̄.

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[413] The man Kuman first mentioned was Kwaku Wara.

[414] Lit.: "And your maternal uncle, in turn, taboos him-with?".

[415] The repetition of a noun corresponds to a plural.

[416] Lit.: "that".

[417] *Sʊmara* is a highly bitter oil obtained from the fruit of a type of acacia.

[418] Lit.: "What reason causes, *jinn* those refuse to enter your hut *def.*-in?"

[419] In this passage Kuman again alternates between the use of animate and inanimate pronouns to refer to *jinn*.

[420] *kpa̰yɔ* is the supernatural power of the Supreme Being; it resides in all living beings and supernatural elements. Particular individuals – fortune-tellers, healers, hunters, body-buriers, midwives, etc. – are endowed with superior *kpa̰yɔ* compared to other humans and so in some circumstances are able to manipulate events and nature.

[421] Lit.: "give it".

Kuman: *If there's a man, who's a bad man, and he comes to look inside us*[422]*, no! You see him run away. That's how I know*[423] *that he's bad.*

MAGIC REMEDIES

Thomas: Siu̱'nɪ ù dú u̱ gu̱ sɪkɛrɛ lɛ ù wátʊ-nɪ lɛ ù ká, hɔ́ɔ zɛ̄ɪ sa̱a̱bɪ…

Thomas: *The remedies you told us about last time, the ones you explained to us and called by their names; we missed three*[424]*…*

Kuman: Taa taa bɔɔgɔ nna, mʊm hɔ́ɔ da̱ mʊm hɛrɛ bi̱i̱ wɛ-ti lɛ hú̱u̱ yāa mʊm sukru sukru'rɛ mu̱, mʊm hɔ́ɔ da̱ hɔ́ɔ ū̱a̱ lɛ bāɪ-wɔ hɔ, hú̱u̱ ma̱a̱ yī lɛ míɪ hɛ̄ hɛrɛ zɪŋɛ'rɛ hɪnɪ lɛ hú̱u̱ yāa nyɪ̱u̱dɪ; úa nyɪ̱ XXX[425] yí faɪ, mìa hɛ́ a hù̱ lá lɛ nyɪ̀ bɔ ku̱ma̱da̱'rɛ-í[426], lɛ nyɪ̀ bɔ ku̱ma̱da̱'rɛ-í; hɛrɛ úʊ yī lɛ míɪ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ nya̱-ŋʊ[427] lɛ úʊ nīi lɛ fɛ̄ lɛ lā dɛ, zɪŋɛ'rɛ bɔ́ɔ nyɪ̄ka-ʊ[428] pɛɛ, hɪnɪ úʊ gyī-ge lɛ wɛ-ti lɛ úʊ yāa bɔɔŋɔ taa bɔɔgɔ lɛ úʊ yāa, úʊ yāa bɔɔŋɔ lɛ da̱ úʊ mɪ̄a, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm bɔ gyabau̱ lɛ gu̱ wɛ, lɛ kpelego wɛ, mʊm ɪ́ɪ̱ yāa bʊŋʊnɪŋɔ, mɪ̱ úʊ hɛ̄ lɛ ʊ gu̱ dɔū̱, mʊm úʊ yāa a míɪ nya̱-ŋʊ zɪŋɔ wɛ a úʊ sā-ga ʊ nʊʊ(ŋɔ) lɛ sūgʊ-yɛ, hɛrɛ úʊ yāa ʊ kpelege'rɛ úʊ tūɪ pɛɛ, úʊ da̱ hɔ́ɔ kyɛr̄ɛ, úa nyɪ̄ mɪ̱, ú̱u̱[429] nūɪ nūɪ lɛ yāa, taaŋɔ vɛ hɛrɛ há̱a̱ ma̱a̱ hɛ̄-ɪ́.

Kuman: *There are many of them there*[430]*, madam, if it happens for example that a certain boy goes, let's say, to school, to the school, and it happens that he doesn't do well*[431]*; he can come (here) and I do this thing, and he'll make progress; you see, XXX came here and I got him appointed sub-prefect*[432]*, that one became sub-prefect; when you come, I prepare it for you, then you drink (it) and wash (with it) and that's all; all the things that are shown to you, you learn them*[433] *and if for example you go alone on a road, and you're walking and you go on the road and it happens that you end up in a dirty trap, it's as*

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422 Lit.: "arrives here (to) see-it *focus*".

423 Lit.: "this I take to know".

424 Lit.: "The remedies *def.* you said their things last time and you explained-in, and you mentioned, misses it three".

425 Kuman asked me not to divulge the name of the individual in question since he was the regional sub-prefect at the time.

426 In this case the morpheme -ɪ is not a component of the negation but has an emphatic function.

427 Benefactive structure; see Micheli 2007: 94.

428 This impersonal construction may be rendered in translation with a passive voice; see Micheli 2007: 87-88.

429 Inanimate pronoun; here I think Kuman was referring to the remedies.

430 Lit.: "one one there, madam".

431 Lit.: "he craps and they lose each other" – a metaphorical expression.

432 Lit.: "I made that he ended up and saw his sub-prefect *def.*".

433 Lit.: "it".

if your thoughts, your business, your language, if you're called before justice, you behave[434] *so well that you manage to win the case*[435]*; if you go and I give you a thing to put on your lips*[436] *and then you clean them*[437]*, when you go, all the words you find will go well, you see (it's) like that; they last a long time*[438]*; there may be one that doesn't work.*

Thomas: a̱kɔ baaŋɔ ó wátʊ di̱ mʊ̱, mʊm bi̱i̱'nɪ hʊ́ʊ̱ yáa sukru↓?

Thomas: *Which remedy are you talking about, the one for the boy who goes to school*[439]*?*

Kuman: Tiniŋoro nna, hɛrɛ baaŋɛ lɛ hɛrɛ; Nibo, Gyara, hɛrɛ lɛ hɛrɛ kpelego baaŋɛ'rɛ lɛ hɛrɛ, i̱hi̱! Hɛrɛ zɪka pa, mʊm hɛrɛ báa yī *ballon ballon* kwɔ̄ɪ-ɛ faɪ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī lɛ dʊ̄-kɛ mɪ-rɔ, mʊm mú gyī a̱ŋɛ'rɛ lɛ a̱ŋɛ'rɛ sɔgɔ lɛ kā lɛ lā, lɛ mú hɛ̄-gɛ la sa̱ yɔgɔ-nɪ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa lɛ bɔ́ɔ fɛ̄ɛ pɛɛ lɛ yāa, hɪnɪ báa ma̱a̱ dī-bɛ-í. Lɛ mú tū sinyo lɛ sā sā[440] bɔ faɪ, lɛ sā sā bɔ naʊ̱-rɪ: Gyara bɔ baaŋɔ lɛ.

Tiniŋoro baaŋɛ'rɛ dɛ, hɛrɛ ù ká mì hɛ́ lɛ bɔ sukru baaŋɛ'rɛ mʊ̱ hɔ. Ʊa nyi̱ wi̱mɔ-ti hɛrɛ báa nūɪ bɔ klasɛ'rɛ wɔ-rɪ mʊ̱rʊ̱, wɛ́ kyīi wɛ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱, hʊ́ʊ̱ pāta, lɛ míɪ kpa̱ hɔ sirigyo lɛ nya̱-a[441] lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ sā bɔ nuŋo-rɪ: hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mi̱ sɛwɛkɛ hɔ́ɔ wālawala hʊ̱-rɔ, hʊ́ʊ̱ sɛw̄ɛ-kɛ pɛɛ ʊ́ʊ dа̱ hɔ́ɔ kyēi-nɪ, hɪnɪ hɪnɪ fi̱i̱, háa̱ ma̱a̱ pāta bɔ baaŋɛ'rɛ daagɔ-í.

A Kotiŋe'rɛ dɛ, mʊm míɪ dīɔ yɔgɔ-nɪ hɔ, mʊm míɪ ka̱ hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ kpʊkpʊkpʊkpʊ, hɪnɪ hɔ́ɔ fʊ̄gʊ, hɔ́ɔ fʊ̄gʊ daminye'rɛ-nɪ lɛ hɔ́ɔ fʊ̄gʊ hɔ́ɔ kprī, mʊm i̱kpʊ̱rɔ hʊ́ʊ̱ hɛ̄ hʊ́ʊ̱ sa̱, hɪnɪ Gyobri hɛrɛ dɛ, mʊm ʊ́ʊ ka̱ hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ kpu! Hɪnɪ háa̱ ma̱a̱ sa̱ bɔɔgɔ vɛ-í, mʊm ʊ́ʊ hɛ̄ lɛ tūɪ ʊ drɛsɛgɛ gʊ̱ lɛ sa̱-nɪ, hɪnɪ á hɔ́ɔ zɛ̄ɪ-ʊ-é(í) dɛ, hɛrɛ dɛ ù ká mì hɛ́ lɛ a mì dʊ́-kɛ lɛ-í!

Kotiŋo hɔ́ɔ fʊ̄gʊ kpʊkpʊkpʊ, hɪnɪ míɪ gyī i̱kpʊ̱rɔ hʊ́ʊ̱ da̱. Hɪnɪ i̱kpʊ̱rɔ hʊ́ʊ̱ da̱.

Kuman: Tiniŋoro *madam, this was the one with him*[442]*;* Nibo, Gyara*, this and that are for language*[443]*, ehe! Going back to the last one*[444]*; if when they come here to play a game of* ballon ballon[445]*, and they come and tell me, if I know the people in this or that village, then I make it and go in the hut, and they all*

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434 Lit.: "you do it".

435 Lit.: "your things (are) sweet".

436 Lit.: "mouth".

437 Lit.: "it"; in agreement with the singular "mouth".

438 Lit.: "they stay they stay" – the repetition of the verb acts as an intensifier.

439 Lit.: "what its part did you explain *focus* if the boy goes to school?".

440 The repetition of the verb has a reiterative and intensifying function.

441 Benefactive structure, see Micheli 2007: 94.

442 Lit.: "this, its part *presentative*, this".

443 Lit.: "this and that language its part *presentative* this".

444 Lit.: "this behind *focus*".

445 Lit.: "if when they come *ballon ballon* they hit it (animate – I think this is an error) here".

go to wash, so they can't be beaten[446]*. So I take a medicine and put a lot of it here on them, I put a lot on their feet: this is* Gyara.

On Tiniŋoro*, which you heard me saying about school. Sometimes, you see, when they're sitting together in class, there's one who hates the other*[447]*, and he, he makes mistakes… so I make a ring for him, and he wears (it) on his hand. It's as if writing becomes an easy thing for him; he writes everything and you see that everything is all right; that, that can't let him make mistakes any more*[448]*.*

And then Kotiŋo*. When I'm sleeping in the hut, if I hear it going* kpokpokpokpo*, boiling, boiling in the* canari*, and it's boiling and it's hot, that means that a bad man wants to come in*[449]*; that* Gyobri *then, when I hear it go* kpu*! that one can't come in any more; if you try to get your magic things to go in, that one won't let you in; that's why you heard me say that I don't want to talk about it*[450]*.*

The Kotiŋo *boils* kpokpokpo*, so I know a bad man is coming… that bad man is coming.*

Thomas: Lɛ Gyobri a̰kɔ baaŋɔ lɛ hɛrɛ ↓?

Thomas: *What about the properties of* Gyobri[451]?

Kuman: Bíı zɛ̄ı Gyobri bɔ gʊ̰!

Kuman: *Never mind the properties of* Gyobri[452].

KUMAN AND THE FESTIVAL OF REMEDIES; KUMAN'S RETICENCE

Thomas: Hɛrɛ úa dī ʊ siʊ̰'nı hɔ gbigo[453], úa díɔ ḭsiko-nı laa úa yí a̰ŋɔ-nı↓?

Thomas: *When you hold your festival of remedies*[454]*, do you sleep in the bush or come back to the village?*

Kuman: úa nyɪ̰ mʊm hɛrɛ bía hɛ̄ hɛʊ̰ hɔ, lɛ míı yāa kutuu-nı; hɛrɛ míı yāa kutuu-nı, mʊm míı da̰ hɔ gbige'rɛ wɛ da̰ hɔ, lɛ míı yī a̰ŋɔ lɛ míı sī faı hɔ kpalıgʊ̰'rɛ pɛɛ, mʊm hɔ́ɔ lā sī-gyo, lɛ míı gyere gōi kutuu-nı, a míı sa̰ kutuu-nı fʊ̰. A míı nūı faı a̰ŋɔ lɛ gbī, lɛ da̰ hɛrɛ fʊ̰ hɔ tém da̰, lɛ míı yāa la sī hɔ kpalıgʊ̰'rɛ pa ḭhɪ̰! Ka mɪ̰ lɛ hɔ-ti! Wɛ bɔɔgɔ, sinye'rɛ wɛ bɔɔgɔ lɛ da̰ arigyima̰[455] hɔ, hɔ́ yàa

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[446] Lit.: "this (animate?) they can't beat them".

[447] Lit.: "a certain one hates a certain one".

[448] Lit.: "he can't ruin his part again".

[449] Lit.: "when the bad man he does he comes in".

[450] Because at this point it is clear that Kuman also practises magic.

[451] Lit.: "and *Gyobri* what is its part *presentative* this?".

[452] Lit.: "Leave *Gyobri* his (animate) business".

[453] The word *gbigo* means "day", but is used by extension to indicate any major festivity.

[454] Lit.: "When you eat your remedies their day".

[455] *arigyima̰* is a regional (perhaps Djula) word meaning Friday, while the more common word is *fieda*, from Abron. Friday is an important day because it is given over to

mía nyą̄[456]-ŋa hɔ saalɛ bą̱ą̱ŋɔ-ti, lɛ míı sāalɛ hɛrɛ, mʊm arigyimą̱ lɛ, ka lɛ míı sāalɛ dį̱dį̱ a sʊpɛ[457]'rɛ ʊ́ʊ nyī̱… Hʊ́ʊ̱ gyí hɛrɛ↓?

Kuman: *Well… when I do that job, I go to my field. When I go to the field, if I find that it's having its festival[458], then I come to the village and here I offer all the proper sacrifices[459]; as soon as I've made all the offerings[460] I go back to the field and go into the bush. When I'm a long time at the village[461] and it happens that here the time comes, then I go and offer all the proper sacrifices, eh, eh! That's how it is[462]! If there's a certain, if there's a certain medicine and it's Friday, I have to give him what he deserves[463], and I worship him, if it's Friday, I offer many sacrifices, and (when) it's* sʊpɛ*, well… does she know it?*

Thomas: ɔɔ!

Thomas: *Yes!*

Kuman: bɔ́ɔ gyī-ge-ɪ́!

Kuman: *They[464] don't know it!*

Thomas: ɔɔ! Hʊ́ʊ̱ gyī-ge.

Thomas: *But she does.*

Kuman: Mʊm sʊpɛ'rɛ daagɔ, mʊm hɔ́ɔ dą̄ wɛ bɔɔgɔ, lɛ míı sī hɛrɛ nʊʊŋɔ, hɔ dɛ mʊm míı nūı kutuu-nı lɛ dą̄ hɔ kpą̱ yigyo lɛ míı yī ą̱ŋɔ. Mʊm míı nūı kutuu-nı daagɔ vɛ, a nyʊ̱ wɛ bɔɔ bɔɔ wɛ, hʊ́ʊ̱ nyą̄-nı faı ą̱ŋɔ, báa yāa mı-rı lɛ gyere míı gōi, a wɛ́mɔ gū bɔɔ-wɛ lɛ yī mı kutuu-nı bɔɔgɔ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī lɛ tūı-mı lɛ míı yāa la sī hɛrɛ nyʊ̱ŋmɔ pa lɛ gōi.

Kuman: *If it's* sʊpɛ *again, if it comes there, I do what's needed[465]; that's why if I'm in the field and its time comes[466], I come to the village. Also, if I'm at the field and here there's a man from somewhere who feels ill in the village, they come to me and I go back, and if someone comes[467] from somewhere else and comes to my camp, they take me with them[468] and then I go to look for the sick*

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the earth. Now it falls once every seven days, whereas in the traditional Kulango calendar it was celebrated every sixth day.

[456] Injunctive construction; see Micheli 2007: 93.

[457] *sʊpɛ* was Earth Day in the traditional calendar. Now it is marked by eleborate celebrations only when it coincides with Friday, the Islamic day of rest.

[458] Lit.: "if I find its festival *det.*, it comes *focus*".

[459] Lit.: "I raise here its sacrifices *def.* all".

[460] Lit.: "it".

[461] Lit.: "I sit (in the) village and it lasts (a long time)".

[462] Lit.: "then like this/in this way *presentative* it-on". Concluding formula in storytelling.

[463] Lit.: "its worship its part-on".

[464] Whites.

[465] Lit.: "I take that mouth".

[466] Lit.: "it happens that it looks for (its) arrival".

[467] Lit.: "someone comes out from".

[468] Serial verb, see Micheli 2007: 96-97.

person[469] *and then I go back.*

Thomas: A zɪ úa dí hɛrɛ gbigɛ'rɛ↓?

Thomas: *And how do you celebrate that day?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ mú yī lɛ lɔ̄-bɛ hɔ, hɛrɛ mú yī lɛ lɔ̄-bɛ, mʊm mú yī sɛkɛgɛ'rɛ-nɪ lɛ dą̄ hɔ faɪ lɛ la… sɪkɛgɛ mú kōri pɛɛ, lɛ mú yāa la sī dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ, lɛ yī lɛ lɔ̄-bɛ.

Kuman: *When I come to treat them, if I come to treat them, if I come on a feast day and I arrive there… I observe all feast days… I go to gather the plants, then I go back and treat them.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ úa dī hɔ gbige'rɛ, úa yáa núɪ i̱siko-nɪ lɛ gyina̱ʊ̱ 'nɪ↓?

Thomas: *When you celebrate that festivity, do you go the bush to be with the* jinn*?*

Kuman: Mʊm nyʊ́ nyą̄ a̱ŋɔ, a bɔ́ɔ yāa la dʊ̄-kɛ mɪ-rɔ fu̱, a míɪ hɛ̄: "bɔɔ aɪ lɛ↓?", a hʊ́ʊ̱ sī bɔɔgɔ lɛ lɛ lā, mʊ̱rʊ̱ mú yāa i̱siko-nɪ lɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ mʊm dą̄ bɔɔgɔ lɛ nyī̱-nyɛ lɛ la a mú sī-gɛ-í, lɛ mú hɛ̄ lɛ: "nyà̱ŋɔ koyo gbé zɪ̱, a bɔ̀ (hɛ̀) mú yāa la sī-gɛ", mú lā lɛ mú yāa, mú dą̄ bɔ̀ kpí hɔ gbɛ̱ la, lɛ sá bɔɔgɔ lɛ mī̱nɪ hɛrɛ lɛ sī dɛɛkɛ'rɛ lɛ tūɪ-gɛ lɛ yī-rɔ.

Kuman: *If there's a man suffering in the village and they come to tell me*[470]*, I say: "Where does it hurt*[471]*?", and he touches here and that's all. I go straight into the bush to look for the herb there, and when I see it I don't take it but I say: "A certain type of illness has attacked him, and they said that I (must) take it away". As soon as I've finished I go away; (after a while) I find that the right leaves*[472] *have been cut and they have put them there, then I look around me, take the herbs and go back with them.*

Thomas: Gyina̱'nɪ hą́a̱ hé-gɛ walawala laa hą́a̱ bé ʊ gbige'rɛ lɛ gyere sóo gbɛ̱ī̱'nɪ bɔɔŋɛ'rɛ-dɪ↓?

Thomas: *Does the* jinn *always do that or does he know the day of your festival and so put*[473] *leaves on your path?*

Kuman: Mʊm mú gyāba sinyo hɔ koyo lɛ, mú mą̄a̱ nūsɪ gyigalɛ mú yāa i̱siko-nɪ laa nyī̱ zɪ̱ŋɔ wɛ kyakyɪ lɛ mú hɛ̄ lɛ: "mú tūɪ-gɛ!". Hɛrɛ mú tūɪ-gɛ lɛ yī lɛ są̄ lɛ gyāba koʊ̱ʊ̱n, lɛ mú gōi laa sā-ga fu̱ lɛ nūɪ lɛ yāa yɛɪ lɛ gōi lɛ nyī̱-nyɛ pa, úa nyī̱-lɛ mú bī-kpe lɛ bɔɔgɔ lɛ lɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa mú tūɪ-gɛ.

Mʊm háa nyī̱-wɔ-í lɛ mú dīɔ, mʊm mú dīɔ dɪrɛyɔ, lɛ mú nyī̱ nyʊ̱ wɛ lɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm bɔ́ɔ yī lɛ kprēka-mɪ lɛ nyī̱ka-mɪ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ wɛ, hɛrɛ mú tūɪ-gɛ lɛ sā nyaṣɛ'nɪ-dɪ bɪbɪ, úʊ dą̄ hʊ́ʊ̱ yʊ̄gʊ. A hʊ́ʊ̱ yʊ̄gʊ a ú nyī̱ nyʊ̱'nɪ-í, a hʊ́ʊ̱ kpēle… mú ką̄-ŋɛ.

Kuman: *When I'm thinking what type of medicine (I need), I can sit around doing nothing*[474]*, or go into the bush and notice something for no (apparent)*

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[469] Lit.: "and I do/take that face".

[470] Lit.: "they tell me-with there".

[471] Lit.: "here where *presentative*".

[472] Lit.: "its leaves".

[473] Lit.: "pour".

[474] Lit.: "free of charge/for no reason".

reason and say: "I'll have that!". When I've taken it, I go back[475] *and reflect in complete silence… Then I turn round, put it there and sit down, then I walk a bit further, then I go back and see it's still there*[476]*, you see… I go to consult the fetish*[477] *and… there… if everything's all right, I take it.*
If he[478] *doesn't see it, I sleep, and while I'm asleep at night I (can) see a man, and it's as if he's come to greet me, and he shows me a certain plant, which I take and use on the patient*[479]*, you see that he gets up. So he gets up and you understand that you hadn't seen a man… and he speaks… I understand him.*

KUMAN AND THE NINE MAGIC REMEDIES

Thomas: ʊ gbige'rɛ lɛ gyere úʊ dī-gɛ, úa dáa ʊ gbɛɛ lɛ níı lɛ gyinạ̰ʊ̰ 'nı ḭsike'rɛ-nı ↓?

Thomas: *When you have your festival, do you prepare it alone*[480]*, or go to the savannah with the* jinn*?*

Kuman: oo! A míı dāa mı gbɛɛ kyɔ-í! úa nyḭ̄… mʊm sékɛgɛ dā̰ lɛ lā hɔ, mʊm sèkɛgɛ dā̰ hɔ, mʊm míı yāa ḭsiko-nı bıbı eh! Mʊm hɛrɛ gbiʊ̰(gbigo)'nı, mʊm hɔ sékɛge'rɛ dā̰ bıbı, hɛrɛ bía gyere yōgomi lɛ bíı dō hɛrɛ paraʊ̰'nı.
A úa nyḭ̄ , siʊ̰'nı mʊ̰ dɛ, úa nyḭ̄ ʊ̰ kpelelɔm, kpelelɔm, úa nyḭ̄ ʊ̰ poi. Hɔ hɛrɛ lɛ Gyara, hɔ hɛrɛ, úa nyḭ̄ hɛrɛ gʊ̰ hɛlɔm bā̰ı̰ lɛ hɛrɛ siʊ̰[481] úa hɛ̄, hɔ hɛrɛ lɛ Nibo, hɛrɛ silɔm bɔɔgɔ, hɛrɛ háa hɛ̄, hɛrɛ háa hɛ̄-ŋmɛ mʊm siʊ̰walɔɔʊ̰'nı bazɛrɛ'nı wını taa. Tiŋo, Drunya, Tiniŋoro, Koteŋo.

Kuman: *No! I don't prepare anything (alone). You see… when the day of the festival approaches, when the day of the festival comes, if I go into the savannah… eh! If that's the day, if its sacred day is coming, then we meet*[482] *and we say our things*[483]*.*
And those remedies, you see, their names[484]*, their names are many. Look at* Gyara*, this, you see, makes business go well*[485]*, and this (other) medicine, you know*[486]*, this is Nibo, its way of healing here, what it does, what it does… (is like)*

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475 Lit.: "I come and enter".

476 Lit.: "I still see it". Because it has not disappeared.

477 Lit.: "consult it".

478 The fetish.

479 Lit.: "and I put it a bit on the patient".

480 Lit.: "do you help yourself".

481 To be read in the singular, *sinyo*.

482 Kuman and the *jinn*.

483 Lit.: "we say those decisions".

484 Lit.: "way of speaking".

485 Lit.: "this business, way of doing, be equal".

486 Lit.: "you do".

the big medicines, the ones in the bangles[487]. Tiŋo, Drunya, Tiniŋoro, Koteŋo.
Thomas: úʊ kā Drunya!

Thomas: *You know* Drunya!

Kuman: Míı kā hɪnɪ… Zu̱ŋɛ'rɛ pɛɛ saakɛ'rɛ-dɪ pɛɛ, mʊm úʊ yāa hɛrɛ-dɪ lɛ la, hɪnɪ Drunya pɛɛ lɛ, háa hɛ̄ mʊm bɔɔ wɛ-ti, wɛ hɔ́ɔ kyɛr̄ɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ hɔ́ɔ kā(ɪ) hɔ́ɔ dą̄ŋmɔ-í. Hɔ́ɔ zɛ̄ɪ taa bɔɔgɔ mu̱.

Mą̄rą̄miriŋo, Kɔrɔtɪ… hérɛ laa lɔ̄ pɔɔŋɛ'rɛ, mʊm úʊ nyą̄ lɛ gbī, hérɛ laa lɔ̄-kɛ. Wi̱nɪ laa lɔ̄-ŋɛ, wu̱nɪ lɛ mɪ-rɔ a̱ŋɔ faɪ. A úa nyī̱ wu̱nɪ pɛɛ u̱ kpelelɔm nʊʊŋɔ nʊʊŋɔ nʊʊŋɔ nʊʊŋɔ; wu̱nu̱ a hɛ̄.

Kyɛrɛ míı są̄ mɪ yɔgɔ'rɛ-nɪ pɛɛ úʊ dą̄ míı gyī ʊ nu̱u̱ pɛɛ. Dɛ bíı hɛ̄ hɛu̱ bíı yāa mu̱. Míı lɪgɪ-kɛ kyɔ!

Kuman: *I know it… Everything, everything on this earth, if you know that*[488]*, that* Drunya *and everything, it's as if anywhere (you are) everything's all right, it makes sure that it can't go wrong*[489] *. There's still one missing here.* Mą̄rą̄miriŋo, Kɔrɔtɪ… *This treats sores*[490]*… the ones that last*[491]*, this treats them*[492]*. Those (remedies) treat them, the ones I've got at the village*[493]*. And you see, each one (has) its way of speaking, (its) incantation*[494]*, incantation, incantation, incantation; this is what they do*[495]*. Really, if you came into the house you'd see that I remember all their names… let's carry on… I'm sure it'll come to mind* (as would any elderly individual, Kuman is trying to remember the name of the last magic remedy, which for the moment escapes him).

Thomas: Wu̱nɪ ù krá mu̱ru̱ pɛɛ, bɛ nyą́-nɪ lɛ↓?

Thomas: *The ones you have just mentioned, what do they do*[496]*?*

Kuman: Mʊm nyą̄ŋɔ wɛ-ti, lɛ hɔ́ɔ gbē-kʊ, hɔ siu̱ siu̱ siu̱ hɔ lɛ hɛrɛ gyi hɔ; mʊm nyą́ŋɔ wɛ gbē-kʊ a míı dą̄ hɔ hérɛ laa lɔ̄-kɛ, hɪnɪ hɛrɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ míı yāa dā, lɛ dą̄ hɔ, hérɛ laa lɔ̄-kɛ, hɪnɪ hɔ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ míı yāa dā, u̱ nyą̄lɔm u̱ lɔlɔm u̱ lɔlɔm u̱ lɔlɔm.

Kuman: *When there's an illness that attacks you there are many remedies*[497]*, and this*[498] *it knows; when an illness attacks you and I get the right one and I*

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[487] Kuman refers to common African bangles, charged with magic powers that protect the wearer from misfortune and witchcraft.

[488] Lit.: "if you go towards it and finish". Concluding structure, see Micheli 2007:91.

[489] Lit.: "it refuses its arrival (meaning *end*)".

[490] Kuman uses the singular form.

[491] Lit.: "if you suffer and it lasts".

[492] The pronoun used for sores is in perfect agreement with the singular used by Kuman.

[493] Lit.: "those *presentative* me-with village here".

[494] Lit.: "mouth".

[495] Lit.: "those they do".

[496] Lit.: "what do they give-in *presentative*".

[497] Lit.: "its remedies, remedies, remedies"; repetition of the noun gives it a plural value.

[498] The illness?

treat it[499]*; I go and cut that specific herb, and I find it, and that cures it, that specific plant that I go to cut can treat the illnesses that belong to it*[500].

Thomas: yʊʊn'nɪ ù krá pooko, úa̱ lɔ́ lɛ laa siu̱'nɪ lɛ↓?

Thomas: *The many names you mentioned, have they got (in themselves) the power to heal or is it the remedies that heal?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mʊm hɔ́ɔ má̱a̱ lɔ̄ ka, mʊm ú͘ʊ yāa bɔɔ wɛ a gu̱ wɛ bʌlɪ-ɛ ba̱a̱kɔ, a ú͘ʊ vʊ̄ga hɔ yʊʊkɔ a mì hɛ́ hɔ hɛlɔm pɛɛ, ú͘ʊ da̱ mɪ̱ gū. A háa hɛ̄ mʊm yʊʊkɔ taa'rɛ háa hɛ̄.

Gyara'rɛ hɛrɛ, úa kə̱ míɪ hɛ̄ lɛ hɔ zɪ̱ŋɔ bɔɔgɔ, báa sā lɛ hɔ siriu̱ pa. Mʊm ú͘ʊ sə̱ i̱siko-nɪ a zína kpu̱rɔ wɛ hɛ̄ lɛ hʊ́u̱[501] yī ʊ kyɪ̱ŋɔ, a ú͘ʊ ūra lɛ kā hɔ yʊʊkɔ hɔ la! ú͘ʊ da̱ hɔ́ɔ gū gʊ-rɪ. Ʊa, ú͘ʊ da̱ hʊ́u̱ yī bɔɔgɔ-í.

Hɔ taa lɛ Nibo. Nibo'rɛ, hɔ lɛ zɪ̱ŋɛ'rɛ báa sā faɪ, nufɛɛ-rɪ. *Voilà*! Hɔ sinyo lɛ, hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ tūɪ mʊm bɔ́ɔ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ kyī-kɛ. Mʊm ʊ gu̱ lɛ hɔ-rɔ lɛ bɔ̀ kyí-kɛ lɛ nyá̱-ŋʊ lɛ, lɛ ú͘ʊ yāa hɔ-rɔ i̱siko. Mʊm zína da̱ fu̱ lɛ hʊ́u̱ hɛ̄-ʊ, hʊ́u̱ gbɛ̄-kʊ la, ú͘ʊ ma̱a̱ zɛ̄ɪ lɛ ūra, lɛ hʊ́u̱ kyēi.

A Kɔrɔtɪ'rɛ. Hɛrɛ, mʊm nyu̱ bɔ fu̱ŋmo, mʊm nyá̱ŋɔ kyēi gʊ-rɪ, a bɔɔ kɔrɔtɪ, a bɔɔ pɔɔŋɔ lɛ a gbīgʊ-rɪ kyɛrɛsɛɪ, hɛ́rɛ dɛ̄ hɛrɛ dɛɛn'nɪ míɪ yāa dā, lɛ míɪ dɛ̄ bɔ hɛu̱ lɛ míɪ sā ʊ-rɪ, lɛ sā pɔɔŋɛ'rɛ-dɪ, hɔ́ɔ gbɛ̄, a zɪ̱ŋɔ wɛ sō ʊ naŋa lɛ gbī kyɛrɛsɛɪ, halɪ hɔ nʊ́ʊŋɔ tuʌ krʊa, a míɪ tūɪ *lame* lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ mu̱ yɛɪ lɛ da̱ hɔ́ɔ nūɪ fu̱, a míɪ hɛ̄-gɛ mu̱ yɛɪ lɛ tūɪ hɔ sinyo lɛ sā-ti, ú͘ʊ da̱ hɔɔ̀ gū ʊ-rɔ.

Kuman: *Yes… (you're asking) if it can heal like this, when for example you go somewhere and something's worrying you a lot, so you pronounce its name and (if) I've done what I was supposed to do*[502] *you see that (it) leaves (you) easily*[503]*, and it's as if the name alone works…*

This is Gyara*, you heard that I said that its power is bound to the rings people wear*[504]*. When you go into the bush and a dangerous animal comes near you, you shout and let its name finish it. You'll see that it leaves you alone*[505]*. So you see that it doesn't come there.*

Another one is Nibo. Nibo *is for the things you wear here* (Kuman points to his upper left arm) *on your shoulder.* Voilà! *It's the medicine they use; to do that they boil it. If you're in harmony with it*[506] *and it's been charged with power*[507]*, you go with it into the savannah. If there's an animal there that tries to*

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499 Lit.: "I find it this *def.* and I treat it".

500 Lit.: "that-it plant *def* I go to cut, their way of suffering, their way of treating, their way of treating, their way of treating".

501 Referring to wild animals Kuman uses an animate pronoun.

502 Lit.: "I have done everything its way of doing".

503 Lit.: "you find *ideophone* it goes out".

504 Lit.: "its thing there, they wear *presentative* its ring *concluding particle*.

505 Lit.: "comes out you-on".

506 Lit.: "if your business is with it"; that is to say, when you observe its taboos.

507 Lit.: "they have boiled and given it to you".

attack you, you, you needn't even shout[508]*, and it will drop dead.*

And now Kɔrɔtɪ… *This, when a man's belly, when the illness descends on you and causes a* kɔrɔtɪ*, a (big) sore that lasts a long time on you, really, this really, I go and cut those plants and do what I have to*[509]*, and I put (them) on you*[510]*, I put them on the sore and it heals. And (if) a thorn*[511] *stings your foot and it gets infected*[512]*, even if it's already healed up*[513]*, I take a blade and work on it a bit, if there's something there (inside), I work on it a bit, I take its medicine and put it on, you'll see that the infection is cured*[514]*.*

Thomas: lɛ kɔrɔtɪ siu̱'nɪ, ʊ́ʊ̱ mą́ą̱ lɛ lɔ́ pɔɔŋɛ'rɛ hèrɛ ká gbigo↓?

Thomas: *And can remedies for* Kɔrɔtɪ *also treat new sores*[515]*?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mʊm pɔ́ɔŋɛ'rɛ gbī gʊ-rɪ lɛ á hɔ́ɔ yāa-í, ka, ɔɔ! Lɛ hɔ́ɔ wārɪ! ɔɔ! ʊ́ʊ mą̄ą̄ tūɪ -gɛ lɛ lɔ̄-kɛ a mía kōri míɪ tūɪ hɛrɛ-í, mʊm hɔ́ɔ gbī gʊ-rɪ dɛ! A lɛ ʊ́ʊ yī mɪ-rɪ, ʊ́ʊ yī mɪ-rɪ lɛ bɪbɪ[516], lɛ míɪ bī-we lɛ: "hɔ́ɔ gbī↓?" mʊm ʊ́ʊ hɛ̄: "ɔɔ!" míɪ hɛ̄ hɔ sinyo lɛ sā-ti lɛ. Hɔ́ɔ lɔ̄ wu̱mɔ ą̱ŋɛ'rɛ-nɪ pooko. úa nyī̱ bɪ faɪ bɪ kpʊ̱̄. Wɛ-ti hʊ́ʊ̱ mą̄ą̄ pōo ʊ-rɪ zu̱ŋɔ wɛ, mʊm ʊ́ʊ nūɪ a hʊ́ʊ̱ mą̄ą̄ sā-ga-ti hɔ, zu̱ŋɛ'rɛ-nɪ hɔ́ɔ gū, ʊ́ʊ dą̄ mu̱ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm zuhum lɛ ʊ́ʊ dą̄ hɔ́ɔ gū, mʊm hɔ́ɔ gū lɛ lā lɛ hɔ́ɔ pɔɔŋɛ'rɛ gbɛ̄ lɛ!

Kuman: *Yes! If (they can also treat) a sore which has lasted a long time and doesn't heal, then of course! And that one heals! Yes! You can use it to treat it… I don't like treating*[517] *that (type of sore), but if it's lasted a long time*[518]*, well! So you come to me and I ask: "Has it lasted long?"; if you say: "Yes", I prepare its medicine and I put it on the sore*[519]*. It's cured many here in the village. You see, here we're bad. One day someone can throw something on you*[520-521]*; while you're there, someone can throw it on you like that; that thing (you've got) inside, it comes out you see, it's like a little bone and you see it come out; when it's out, the sore heals.*

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[508] Lit.: "you can leave (out) shouting".

[509] Lit.: "I cause their work".

[510] On your sores.

[511] Lit.: "a certain thing".

[512] Lit.: "lasts".

[513] Lit.: "its mouth is completely shut".

[514] Lit.: "you see (that) it comes out you-with".

[515] Lit.: "a sore, this caused (that) day".

[516] In this case the *ideophone* has a merely emphatic value and cannot be translated.

[517] Lit.: "taking".

[518] Lit.: "if she lasts on you".

[519] Lit.: "I put-on *presentative*."

[520] Lit.: "he can pour you-on a certain thing".

[521] Kuman is obviously talking about witchcraft. The idea of sorcery made manifest by means of incurable sores is common to many Akan and Kwa peoples.

Thomas: ʊ gbige'rɛ úa dī, bɛ úa hɛ́ lɛ gyinạ̰ʊ̰'nɪ i̱siko-nɪ ↓?

Thomas: *On the day of your celebration what do you do in the bush with the* jinn?

Kuman: Ahi! Mʊm míı gū fu̱ lɛ yī lɛ yī mɪ haɹ̰-dɪ faɪ, mʊm míı yī lɛ dā̰ faɪ mʊm báa kā la mɪ-rɪ lɛ, a míı yī a bɔ́ɔ: "hɔ sɛ́kɛgɛ'rɛ dā̰ lɛ la", lɛ mía daagɔ lɛ míı kpā̰ taŋa yɛɪ lɛ sōo-sōo-ti pɛɛ; wɛ-ti lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ lɛ lɛ: "hɛrɛ úʊ yāa hɔ! Mʊm úʊ dā̰ fu̱ lɛ úʊ kpā̰ zimyo lɛ nyā̰ zimyo hɔ, wɛ-ti, mʊm úʊ yāa lɛ úʊ kpā̰ pɛsɛ lɛ nya̰ hɔ; wɛ-ti mʊm úʊ yāa lɛ úʊ kpā̰ yɔkɔ lɛ nyā̰ hɔ, wɛ-ti lɛ úʊ yāa lɛ úʊ kpa̰ mʊlɪgyɔ lɛ nyā̰-mɪ", ehe! Ka míı lɛ wu̱nɪ tū lɛ yāa.

Kuman: Ayi! When I go out of it[522] to go, to go there to my camp, when I come and I get there, if they invite me, I go there and they say: "That festival has come!" and so I look for some palm wine and offer it all to him[523]; then he says: "Now go! When you get there, look for a chicken to offer; when you go, look for a kola nut and offer it; then perhaps, when you go, look for some water to offer, when you go, perhaps you can look for some flour and offer it to me" ehe!, So I get those things and go back.

Thomas: Hɛrɛ saalɛʊ̰'nɪ ʊ́a sī, ʊ́a bʊ́ka ʊ gbigo'rɛ-rɔ laa úʊ máạ̰ tíı gbigo nạkɔ↓?

Thomas: *Those sacrifices you offer[524], are they tied to the festival, or can you make them on another day?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ gbige'rɛ, mʊm hɔ gbígo dā̰ hɔ, a bɔ́ɔ: "hɔ gbíge'rɛ dā̰, bɔ́ɔ dū-kɛ mɪ-rɔ… ɔɔ! Mʊm árigima̰'rɛ dā̰ lɛ la bɪbɪ a míı yāa i̱siko-nɪ, hɪnɪ hʊ̰ʊ̰ pɛɛ[525]: "ʊ̰ dɪben, ʊ̰ dɪben, ʊ̰ dɪben", hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ, dū-kɛ pɛɛ wɛrɪ a míı dīɔ. Hɪnɪ hɔ, hʊ́ʊ̰ yī lɛ dū-kɛ mɪ-rɔ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ yī lɛ dū-kɛ mɪ-rɔ, lɛ dū-kɛ mɪ-rɔ, mu̱ há̰ạ̰ hɛ̄.

Kuman: That day, when that day approaches, they say: "That day's coming!", they tell me… they do! When that Friday is close[526], I go to the savannah; and he himself[527] says: "Your festival, your festival, your festival", and continues to repeat it[528] even while I'm asleep. That one comes and says it to me, then he comes and says it, and says it… That's what he does.

Thomas: Háa dā̰ tɛm wɛ wʊrʊkɔ taa prɛʊ̰, lɛ úʊ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ nyā̰ hɛrɛ siu̱'nɪ laa gbigo fu̱ʊ̱ lɛ↓?

Thomas: *What time of year do you celebrate the festival of remedies[529]?*

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522 The bush.

523 Lit.: "pour, pour-on all".

524 Lit.: "those sacrifices you lift up".

525 Here Kuman uses an animate pronoun to refer to the *jinn*. Lit.: "that he everything".

526 Lit.: "comes and finishes a bit"; concluding structure; see Micheli 2007:91.

527 The guiding spirit.

528 Lit.: "says it, says it everything"; the repetition of the verb has a reiterative function.

529 Lit.: "a certain moment comes, a year, time, that you do it and give those remedies and the day everything *presentative*."

Kuman: Gbíge'rɛ hɔ kyēi-nɪ lɛ lā bɪbɪ. Hɪnɪ bíɪ bī mʊ̱ pɛɛ. Mʊm gbige'rɛ háa nūu-í, á hɔ́ɔ nyɪ̄ka hɔ gbɛɛ-í. Á hɔ́ɔ nyɪ̄ka a gʊ̱ wɛ-í.

Kuman: *That day comes*[530] *and it's everything. There are many consultations. If it's not the right time*[531]*, it doesn't appear, and it shows nothing else.*

Thomas: ʊ gbige'rɛ úʊ mą́ą̄ wátʊ gʊ̱'nɪ úa hɛ̄-nɪ↓?

Thomas: *Can you explain what*[532] *you do on that day?*

Kuman: Mʊ̱ mía dī mɪ gbige'rɛ hɔ, lɛ hɛrɛ míɪ nyą̄ bɔ dɪzʊ̱rʊ̱ wɪ̱nɪ pɛɛ lɛ lā, mʊm míɪ yī dɛ, hɛrɛ míɪ kā Tiŋo mʊ̱ dɛ. Mʊm bi̱i̱ hą́ą̄ kyɛ̄nɛ-í a bɔɔ, mʊm míɪ yī lɛ dą̄ bi̱i̱ hą́ą̄ kyɛ̄nɛ-í, a arigimą̄'rɛ dą̄, lɛ hḭ́nɪ̱ fɛ̄, lɛ hʊ̱́ʊ̱ fɛ̄-gɛ. Hɔ lɛ daminye'rɛ yɔgɛ'rɛ-nɪ bɔɔgɔ mʊ̱, hʊ̱́ʊ̱ fɛ̄. A úʊ kʊ̄ bi̱i̱'nɪ a úʊ gyī hʊ̱́ʊ̱ gū; mʊm hʊ̱́ʊ̱ gū yɔgɔ lɛ lā lɛ hɛ̄ mʊm hʊ̱́ʊ̱ hɛ̄ nyʊ̱ lɛ lā hɔ, mʊm ʊ́ʊ kōri hɔ kparigya, lɛ úʊ yī lɛ fɛ̄, lɛ á hʊ̱́ʊ̱ kprī gyiga-gyiga daagɔ-í, a hʊ̱́ʊ̱ nyą̄ gyiga-gyiga-í, hɛrɛ lɛ hɛrɛ.

Hɛrɛ dugu lɛ Gyobri. A hɔ hɛrɛ daagɔ dɛ, drunya'rɛ. Ʊa nyɪ̄ bɪa faɪ bía kōri sɛgɛdɛgɛ, bʊgʊnɪŋɔ, bʊgʊnɪŋɔ, mʊm hɔ́ɔ yé dą̄ bɔɔgɔ, a úʊ dą̄ úʊ yāa bɔɔ-wɛ lɛ, lɛ dą̄ paraʊ̱, bɔ́ɔ tūu-ʊ lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāagʊ-rɔ bɔɔ-wɛ, úʊ yī lɛ úʊ kāɪ wɛ yɛʊ lɛ kpēle mɪ̱ dɔʊ̱ gʊ-rɔ, lɛ nīi-e, lɛ fɛ̄ ʊ tɔgɔ pɛɛ, hɛrɛ úʊ yāa ʊ baaŋɔ, hɔ́ɔ kyɛ̄rɛ gʊ̱.

Tiniŋe'rɛ. Míɪ gōi zɪka pa, a Gyara'rɛ ʊ̀ ką́ mì dó gʊ̱; a Gyara'rɛ mʊ̱ pa dɛ… míɪ gōi zɪka lɛ mʊ̱. Mʊm hɛrɛ báa yī *ballon*'rɛ faɪ hɔ, mʊm bɔ́ɔ yé dʊ̄-kɛ[533] mɪ-rɔ hɔ, lɔ (to be read as *lɛ hɔ*) míɪ hɛ̄-gɛ pɛɛ, mʊm míɪ hɛ̄ hɔ hɛlɔm pɛɛ, a bɔ́ɔ fɛ̄-gɛ pɛɛ, lɛ míɪ są̄ yɔgɔ-nɪ lɛ bīra-kɛ a míɪ mḭ̄nɪ̱ bɛ-í, mɪ̱ hɔ-ti pɛɛ, bɔ́ɔ dī-bɛ lɛ míɪ gyere mą̄ą̄ gū beleŋo-rɪ; mʊm bɔ́ɔ dī-bɛ lɛ lā, lɛ míɪ gyere gū beleŋo-rɪ.

Mą̄rą̄miriŋe'rɛ dɛ… mʊm hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ lɛ dą̄ úʊ nyą̄, ʊ nyɪ̱ŋmɔ hɔ, úa lɛ hɛ̄ saga-saga, ʊ nyɪ̱ŋmɔ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ hele-hele, bɔ (ʊ) nyɪ̱ŋmɔ háa-ti-é(í) lɛ míɪ yāa lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī mḭ̄nɪ̱-mɪ lɛ míɪ yāa laa sī hɔ dɛɛn'nɪ lɛ nyą̄ lɛ úʊ sīgye-ʊ̱, lɛ ūla-ʊ̱ lɛ fɛ̄, úʊ dą̄ bɔ nyɪ̱ŋmɛ'rɛ hɔ́ɔ tʊ̱̄, hɔ́ɔ yī.

Kuman: *This is how I celebrate*[534] *my festival: when I've finished offering all the sacrifices, when I come, I call the* Tiŋo*. If there's child who's not well, and there, when I get there I find a child who's not well and that Friday is approaching, then that child must be washed, she*[535] *washes him. There's a* canari *there in the hut, with which she washes (the child). When you're going to have a child, and you know it's coming, when it leaves its house and it's a boy, if you really love him, then you come to wash him and he won't have frequent fevers, he won't be ill often*[536]*. That's all.*

The one I was forgetting[537] *is* Gyobri.

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[530] Lit.: "falls-on + concluding structure + *ideophone*"

[531] Lit.: "if that day is not sitting".

[532] Lit.: "your day *def.* you can explain the things *def.*".

[533] Future construction; see Micheli 2007: 75.

[534] Lit.: "eat".

[535] The 3rd-person pronoun probably refers to the child's mother.

[536] Lit.: "he won't be hot for no reason; he won't be ill for no reason".

[537] Lit.: "that before *Gyobri presentative*."

Now, going back[538] *to…* Drunya. *You know. Us here, we like disputes, legal questions, legal questions… when it happens, it happens that you go somewhere and you end up in a dispute*[539] *and you're brought before some court*[540]*, you come here, you take some (of it) and their words on you on you become sweeter*[541] *; you drink it and wash all your body and then wherever you go things will be all right for you*[542].

Tiniŋo… *I'll go back to* Gyara*, which you heard me mention before. That* Gyara… *I'll go back there. When they come (to play)* ballon *here, if they come and tell me, I do everything I have to*[543]*; if I do everything right*[544]*, and they all wash in it and I make the* Gyara*, and I do it well and then go into the (medicine) hut, I lock myself in and I don't watch them, this is what happens: they win*[545] *and then I can come out; when they've won, then I come out.* Mą̱rą̱miriŋo… *When the problem is that*[546] *you're ill; you've got a mental illness*[547]*, you go mad*[548]*; you lose your mind*[549]*, I go and they come to see me and I go and gather the right plants for you; you have to boil them, inhale the vapour and wash in it… you'll see that you calm down, you recover*[550].

Thomas: Hɛrɛ taa lɛ ulage'rɛ↓? Hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ úla nyʊ̱↓?

Thomas: *Is it the same one that we talked about? The one used against spirit possession*[551]*?*

Kuman: oo! úa nyī̱, bɔ́ɔ sigye-í, úa nyī̱ siʊ̱ lɛ bɔ́ɔ sigye. Míı yāa sī dɛɛnagbragɛ'rɛ a sıkɛwɛ dą̱̄ mʊm mʊ̱̄ hɛ, mʊm hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄, mʊm hɛ́rɛ hɔ kāı lɛ, a míı yāa la sī-ge lɛ fūla-ge lɛ nyī̱ bɔ naŋa'rɛ a míı hɛ̄ lɛ míı hā-kpɛ brɔfıą̱-rɔ, hą́ą̱ mą̄ą̱ są̄-ti-í, lɛ míı gyī hɔ́ɔ kāı sıkɛrɛ'rɛ lɛ míı gōi, lɛ bī-kpe pa.

Kuman: *No! You see, they don't boil; you see (those) remedies aren't boiled. I go and cut the roots and sometimes it happens like this; if it… refuses*[552]*, when I go to cut it and uproot it, I see its root and I try to cut it with my machete,*

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538 Lit.: "it this again *focus*".

539 Lit.: "you go somewhere and discussions arrive".

540 Lit.: "they take you and go with you somewhere".

541 Lit.: "you extract water a certain bit, and (they) speak so sweet with you".

542 Lit.: "when you go for your part, this will go well business".

543 Lit.: "I do it all".

544 Lit.: "if I do its way of doing all".

545 Lit.: "they eat them".

546 Lit.: "it does and comes".

547 Lit.: "your face, that, you're *sagasaga* (ideophone)".

548 Lit.: "your face goes *helehele* (ideophone)".

549 Lit.: "your face isn't there".

550 Lit.: "your face calms down, comes back".

551 Lit.: "That one *presentative* the fumigation? The one that smokes the man?". This refers to a discussion we had a few days earlier about spirit possession.

552 To treat the patient.

but I can't make a mark on it[553]*, that way I know that it refuses (to treat) and I come straight back and consult.*

Thomas: Mʊm ʊ yī lɛ bī-kpe, lɛ nyɪ̄ hɔ bɔɔŋɔ lɛ la a̱kɔ úʊ hé↓?

Thomas: *When you come back and consult and understand what the problem is*[554]*, what do you do?*

Kuman: lɛ míı yāa la sī-ge lɛ, halı úʊ hā-kpɛ bıbı, hɔ́ɔ sā̱-ti lɛ!

Kuman: *Then I go to get it and as I cut it a bit, it works*[555].

Thomas: A Tiŋe'rɛ ù dó hɔ gʊ̱ lɛ, báa tūı-gɛ bɔ́ɔ fɛ̄ bugobɛrɛ, a̱kɔ háa hɛ́ pa↓?

Thomas: *And the* Tiŋo *you spoke about*[556]*, the one they use to wash children; what does it do?*

Kuman: Háa dɛ̄ bɔ́ɔ kyēnɛ, mʊm, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊ̱ dɛ, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̱-ŋmɛ nyā̱ dɛ lɛ úʊ yāa laa fɛ̄, a mʊm háa̱ nyā̱-í, a ù kʊ́-m a hʊ́ʊ̱ hɛ̄ bɪ̱nɪ̱ŋɔ hɔ, lɛ úʊ yāa fʊ̱ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ hɛ̄ mʊm hʊ́ʊ̱ hā̱ yɛʊ, lɛ ʊ yāa fɛ̄, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊ̱ á hʊ́ʊ̱ nyā̱ gyiga-gyiga-í, lɛ nya̱ŋɔ háa bɔɔ-í. A hɛrɛ bɔɔgɔ yɔgɔ-nı, bɔɔgɔ mʊ̱.

Kuman: *It gets them into shape; if… it works like this, if (the child) is not well, you have to wash him, and if he's fine but you've just had him and he's premature, then you must go there, and it's as if he (immediately) grows a bit, you go and wash (him) and it makes it so that he doesn't get ill for no reason*[557]*; and the illness is gone. And this happens here in the hut, right there.*

Kuman's celebration day

Thomas: Zı úa dí hɛrɛ gbige'rɛ mʊ̱ ↓?

Thomas: *How do you celebrate*[558] *that day?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ gbige'rɛ mʊ̱ mía dī-gɛ… a̱kɔ baaŋɔ↓? A míı dī hɔ ɹakɔ, nna! Míı gyī hɔ bɔɔgɔ lɛ la. Mía kā hɔ sıkɛwɛ da̱, a hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ lɛ nyā̱-mı hɔ lɛ míı dī; hɛrɛ háa-ti-í, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̱ yé wārı lɛ la hɔ, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̱ kyēnɛ, mʊm hʊ̀ nyá lɛ yáa lɛ a mì hé-gɛ a hʊ̀ wárı lɛ la hɔ, hʊ́ʊ̱ yī lɛ hɛ̄ lɛ: "eh! ʊ gyasole pooko!" lɛ "a hɔ zı ↓?" lɛ míı hɛ̄ lɛ "mɪ̱ úʊ mā̱a̱ lɛ ʊ́ʊ̱ nyā̱-mı, mʊm óa mā̱a̱ wɛ vɛ-í, lɛ Yegomılıa mì hé-gɛ lɛ nyá[559], a hé gyina̱ wɛ!".

Kuman: *That day, how do I celebrate it… what do you mean? I celebrate it with joy*[560]*, madam! I know it's come and that's it. I can feel the festival coming, and it's (a day when) I receive offerings, that I celebrate. When (someone) isn't*

[553] Lit.: "get into it".

[554] Lit.: "you see its way".

[555] Lit.: "gets into it".

[556] Lit.: "you said its business".

[557] Lit.: "he doesn't suffer gratis gratis".

[558] Lit.: "eat".

[559] Benefactive structure, see Micheli 2007: 94.

[560] Lit.: "I eat its joy".

up, when he recovers, when he's well, if he was ill and then (the illness) has left him[561]*, and I was the one who treated him*[562] *so that he was cured, he comes and says: "Eh! Many thanks!" and "How much is it?", so I answer: "Give me what you can, if you can't do that*[563]*, then I do it for* Yegolimia*, I do it for some* jinn*"*[564].

Thomas: ʊ gbige'rɛ úa mēli daga'rɛ, zɪ úa dí-gɛ lɛ dą́ a bɛ gbigo úa sí lɛ dí-gɛ ↓?

Thomas: *Your day, when you lick the fire, how do you celebrate it and what day do you choose*[565] *to celebrate it?*

Kuman: Fʊ̰̄'nɪ úa nyḭ̄ , hɔ fɪnyɛ tūɪ-ɛ, fɪnyɛ'rɛ wɛ faɪ báa kā Gyɛmɛnɛ. Mʊm hɔ́ɔ dą̄ hɔ, a bɔ́ɔ : "gyɛmɛnɛ dą̄!", hɪnɪ bɪ pɛɛ, siʊ̰'nɪ pɛɛ ʊ́ʊ̰ hē hɛʊ̰, mʊm bíɪ dī Gyɛmɛnɛ'rɛ lɛ míɪ sīgye siʊ̰'nɪ pooko daminyo walɔɔgɔ, nyʊ̰ pɛɛ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ fē-gɛ, a hɔ́ɔ dą̄ hɔ tɛm'rɛ hɔ, a míɪ są̄ i̱siko-nɪ, dɛɛkɛ'rɛ mɪ núŋo tą̄-ti pɛɛ lɛ sinyo lɛ, lɛ mɪ núŋo tą̄-ti pɛɛ lɛ sinyo lɛ, lɛ bíɪ dī hɔ ɪ̰yakɔ, mʊm úʊ kū̄ zimyo lɛ kū̄ zimʊ̰, lɛ míɪ kyḭ̄ bazɛrɛʊ̰ wɪ̰nɪ mʊ̰ lɛ siriʊ̰ lɛ míɪ hē̄-ʊ̰ hē̄-ʊ̰[566] *voilà*! Lɛ míɪ hē̄-ʊ̰, lɛ míɪ fīa siʊ̰biinu, mʊm ʊ nąą̰ŋu ʊ́ʊ̰ nyą̄-ŋʊ, hɔ ɪ̰yakɔ lɛ hɛrɛ, lɛ bíɪ kū̄ zimʊ̰ lɛ hōo. Hɛrɛ ɪ̰yakɛ'rɛ, mʊm fɪnyɛ'rɛ hérɛ gū lɛ la a bɔɔ hó hē̄ gbereko nuunu, hɔ nuunu pɛpɛpɛ, hɪnɪ míɪ yāa kutuu. Fʊ̰̱ míɪ yāa dī-gɛ. Míɪ yāa kutuu la hē̄-ʊ̰ fʊ̰̱ lɛ fīa-ʊ̰ fʊ̰̱ pɛɛ lɛ gyere yī ą̱ŋɔ.

Kuman: *The months, you see… take that month, the month that we here call* Gyɛmɛnɛ[567]*. When it approaches and people say: "*Gyɛmɛnɛ *is coming", all of us, (with) all our remedies, we do our job. When we celebrate*[568] Gyɛmɛnɛ *I boil lots of remedies in a big* canari*, so that everyone can wash and when the time comes*[569]*, I go into the bush where all the plants I take in my hand become medicines*[570]*, every plant I touch with my hand becomes a remedy… and we celebrate it with joy; while a chicken is being killed, or many chickens*[571]*, I fry*[572] *those bangles and rings and I work hard,* voilà*! I work and burn the black rem-*

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561 Lit.: "is gone".

562 Lit.: "I did it".

563 Lit.: "if you can't yet".

564 If the patient is not even able to pay for the offerings made for him, Kuman offers up the required sacrifices without expecting anything in exchange.

565 Lit.: "extract".

566 The repetition of the verb has a reiterative function; see Micheli 2007: 97.

567 This month follows the Muslim Id el Kebir. Marking the end of the dry season, it is generally considered to be a "bad" month because it is believed that this is when Yegolimia takes stock of the year's births and deaths – if the numbers do not match up, he takes the surplus lives.

568 Lit.: "eat".

569 Lit.: "when its moment arrives".

570 Lit.: "the plant I touch-on *presentative* medicine *presentative*".

571 Lit.: "you kill chickens".

572 Meaning: "I charge with magic powers".

edy, (the one that's used) when you've got belly-ache[573]; … this is its joy; that we kill chickens and eat them. That festival, when the moon has just risen and ten days have passed, in those ten days, I go to my camp. I go to the camp and work there, burning[574] all of them and then I come to the village.

Thomas: a a̱ŋɔ úa yé dí-gɛ kyɔ ↓?

Thomas: *Is it in the village that you celebrate?*

Kuman: oo! Fu̱ míı dī-gɛ. Fu̱ bɔ́ɔ fɛ̄ siu̱'nı; wɛmɔ bɔ́ɔ nya̱-mı zıŋɔ, wɛḿɔ tīı bɔ́ɔ kpa̱ zıŋɔ lɛ bɔ́ɔ sōo-u̱-nı, lɛ bɔ́ɔ nya̱-bɛ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ fɛ̄-u̱. Ka[575] daa hɛrɛ hɔ-ti mu̱; mʊm hɔ lɛ mi̱ bɔ́ɔ dī-gɛ daa, ka daa hɛrɛ gbereke'rɛ mi̱ faı dugu, ka míı kpa̱ hɔ i̱siko dɛɛn'nı míı yī-rɔ, míı yāa míı kpa̱ mu̱, míı yī-rɔ.

Kuman: *No! I celebrate down there[576]. Down there they wash with the remedies; somebody gives me something, somebody brings something else and leaves it there for everyone, then they[577] purify themselves[578]. Now it's gone[579]. If, if we were celebrating it today, if it was the right day[580], then I'd go into the bush and look for the plants and bring them back, I'd go, look for them and bring (them) back.*

Thomas: úʊ lá úa hɛ́ dıgɔ ↓?

Thomas: *Do you finish it with a feast?*

Kuman: Mʊm bɔ̀ kú zimu̱'nı lɛ la pɛɛ, míı dɛ̄ bɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ dıgɔ. Lɛ bɔ́ɔ dī pɛɛ, hí̱nu̱ yāa fu̱ pɛɛ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ dī, lɛ dī hɔ, lɛ nīi hɔ yɔkɛ'rɛ pɛɛ. A hɔ zimyo'nı dɛ, mʊm míı kū-ti zimyo hɛrɛ, a míı kra̱ti-ɛ lɛ-í; míı gbē-ge mu̱ru̱ lɛ kpēle, lɛ míı kpēle, lɛ míı kpēle lɛ míı kpēle, mʊm hɛ́rɛ hɔ sū lɛ bıbı hú̱u̱ pīı.

Kuman: *When they've killed the chickens, I see to it that they prepare[581] the food, then everybody eats, everybody who goes there, they eat and eat and drink water and everything. Then there's a chicken I kill myself[582]… I don't slit its throat… I take it in my hands and talk, and talk, and talk, and talk, until it agrees[583] and dies.*

Thomas: A mu̱ hɔ́ɔ gú hɛrɛ-dı↓?

Thomas: *Where does it come from?*

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573 Lit.: "when your intestines, they make you suffer".

574 The remedies, to charge them with magic powers.

575 According to my informants this free morpheme indicates a completely concluded past action, though I have no knowledge of any similar instance.

576 Lit.: "Down there I eat it", which means at his camp.

577 The offerings?

578 Lit.: "wash".

579 Lit.: "*ka* (?) today it-on *focus*".

580 Lit.: "if that sun *def.* like that here (like) then, then…"

581 The women.

582 Lit.: "and it the chicken *focus*, if I kill-on chicken that".

583 To sacrifice itself.

Kuman: Hɛrɛ prɛu̱ míı hɛ̄ wu̱nı mu̱ru̱ dɛ. Bɔɔ hɛ̄ a̱ŋɔsɔgɔbɛrɛ, wémɔ dū lɛ gu̱ kpu̱kɔ míı hɛ̄, lɛ: “hú̱u̱ kpa̱ sinyo lɛ kū nyu̱” lɛ, lɛ sikpu̱kɔ lɛ mì hé… mʊnʊbɪɔ dɛ! Tugo bɔ̀ lá mʊnʊbɪɔ bɔ́ɔ gyī lɛ sinyo kyɛrɛsɛgɛ míı hɛ̄ sɪkɛrɛ, hɛrɛ nyá̱ nya̱ daa, aɪ lɛ nyá̱ yí↓? faɪ! lɛ i̱ yī, hìnɪ bíla mɪa, hìnɪ há̱a̱ bɔɔgɔ vɛ-í, a ù lá-mɪa sɪkɛrɛ a úʊ hɛ̄ lɛ míı nya̱-ŋa-ʊ, á míı nya̱-ŋa-ŋʊ-é(í) dɛ!

Kuman: *This is what I do that period. There are people here in the village who say I do bad things, that: “He makes a medicine which kills people” and that I make bad medicines… now, eh! Now they’ve stopped, they know I always make good medicines, today when someone’s ill, where does he go? Here! They come; that man who brought me up is no longer here; one day you insulted me and (now) you want me to give it*[584] *to you… but I’m not going to!*

Thomas: Mʊm ù dí lɛ la, lɛ hé bɔ zu̱ru̱ pɛɛ, a̱kɔ bɔ́ɔ hé vɛ↓?

Thomas: *When you’ve eaten and done all the things you were supposed to do, what else happens*[585]*?*

Kuman: Bɔ́ɔ yāa yāa bɔ a̱n lɛ!

Kuman: *They go away, they go to their villages!*

Thomas: ùa méli daga dugu-e, úa hé-gɛ vɛ-ɪ↓?

Thomas: *You used to lick fire; and now, don’t you do that?*

Kuman: Pɛɛ! Míı hɛ̄-gɛ pɛɛ, lɛ zu̱ru̱ wu̱nı pɛɛ, míı hɛ̄-u̱!

Kuman: *Always! I still do it, and all the other things, I still do them!*

Thomas: Hìnɪ sí̱raka-ʊ dugu, hìnɪ nyí̱ka-ʊ hɛrɛ gbigɛ’rɛ lɛ úʊ dī-gɛ laa gyina̱u̱ bɛrɛ i̱sike’rɛ lɛ↓?

Thomas: *That man who used to teach you, was he the one who told you about the festival, so you would celebrate it, or was it the* jinn *in the bush?*

Kuman: Bɔ gbɛgyu̱ŋɔ hɪnɪ ha̱a̱ dī-gɛ pa! Hìnɪ nyá̱-mɪ siu̱’nɪ, mʊm hɔ̀ dá̱ hɔ, bìa lɛ hìnɪ-ŋmɛ bɪbɪ laa, bìa laa hé bɪ baaŋɔ bɪbɪ laa yɔgɔ-nɪ. Mʊm bì hé bɪ baaŋɛ’rɛ bɪ bɪlaa yɔgɔ-nɪ lɛ bì gyere la lɛ gú beleŋo baaŋɛ’rɛ.

Kuman: *He already celebrated it! The one who gave me the remedies, when the time*[586] *came, he and I, the two of us, did it alone in the hut. When we had done our things, us two in the hut, we came out for the public part*[587]*.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ hɛ̀ɛn’nɪ píı lɛ la, hɛrɛ ó gyere lá hé-gɛ↓?

Thomas: *After that man died, did you continue to do it?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! ah! Hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mu̱u̱, ha̱a̱ mɪa-rɔ dugu! hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mu̱u̱ mìa gyí lɛ la. Mʊm míı yī lɛ míı dī-gɛ Gyɛmɛnɛ’rɛ kyɔ, mía tīı zimyo lɛ nya̱ bɔ punuŋe’rɛ lɛ: “míı hɛ̄ hɛu̱ daa!”, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mu̱u̱ hú̱u̱ ma̱a̱ dā mɪ-rɪ pa! Mía dīɔ sɪkɛwɛ nna, mʊm míı

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584 The medicine.

585 Lit.: “They”, used with an impersonal function to act as a kind of passive voice. See Micheli 2007: 87-88.

586 Lit.: “it”.

587 Lit.: “When we had done our part *def.* we two in the hut, and we then finished and came out (for the) public part *def.*”

dĩɔ sɪkɛwɛ lɛ hʊ̰̀ʊ̰̀ yī lɛ hɛ̄ lɛ: “Kasʊ úa dɛ̄ nyʊ̰̀ wɛ[588] dĩɔ ʊ yɔgɔ-nɪ faɪ daa-í, úʊ dĩɔ ʊ taa!”, lɛ míɪ dĩɔ mɪ taa lɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm dawakɔ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰̀ yī lɛ míɪ pāmɪ sinyo wɛ gʊ̰̀, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰̀ dʊ̄-kɛ mɪ-rɔ a hɛ̄ mɪ-rɪ kʊraa mʊ̰̀ lɛ hą́ą̀: “hɔ lɛ hɔ lɛ hɔ… mʊm nyḭ̀ hɛ̄ lɛ úʊ hɛ̄ lɛ hɔ lɛ hɔ lɛ hɔ…” hʊ́ʊ̰̀ dʊ̄-kɛ, hɛrɛ hą́ą̀ hɛ̄ kʊraa. Mʊm hɔ gbíge’rɛ dą̄, tɪ̰̀nɪ̰̀ gbigo, hą́ą̀ hɛ̄ mʊ̰̀.

Kuman: *Yes! Ah! It’s like it used to be when he was with me! It’s as if I had known. When I come to celebrate* Gyɛmɛnɛ*, I take a chicken and sacrifice it*[589] *on his grave, and I say: “Today I’ve got work to do*[590]*”, it’s as if he could still help me!*

Sometimes when I’m sleeping, madam, at times when I’m asleep, he comes and says to me: “Tomorrow don’t let anyone sleep in your hut, you must sleep alone[591]*”. So I sleep alone and it’s like a dream; he comes and if I’ve forgotten something about a remedy, he tells me, and he does this regularly with me, then he says: “This and this and this… if it’s a man, you do this and this and this…” he says it, he always does that. When the festival*[592] *is coming, on Monday, he does that.*

Thomas: Bɛ dɛ nyą́ dí hɛrɛ Gyɛmɛnɛ’rɛ lɛ kprɛ́ gyinąʊ̰̀ bɔ gyasole ↓?

Thomas: *Why do you celebrate this* Gyɛmɛnɛ*? To thank the* jinn[593]*?*

Kuman: ʊ̰̀ gyasole! A hɔ prɛʊ̰̀’nɪ lɛ gyinąʊ̰̀’nɪ daagɔ ʊ́ʊ̰̀ yʊ̄gʊ pa, mʊm ʊ́ʊ̰̀ yʊ̄gʊ fʊ̰̀ʊ̰̀, bía yʊ̄gʊ faɪ, úa nyḭ̄ hɪnɪ bíɪ dī-gɛ wɔ-rɪ. Bɔ paraʊ̰̀ bɔɔgɔ bɔ́ɔ bɔ́ɔ yāa la hɛ̄-gɛ mʊ̰̀.

Kuman: *To thank them! And in that period, when the* jinn *are getting up, when they’re getting up there, we get up here, you see, we celebrate it together… Their words, they, they go and they do it like that.*

PROBLEMS THAT KUMAN CAN TREAT – PART I

Thomas: zuhʊ̰̀m’nɪ, wɪ̰́nɪ kpī mʊ̰̀, lɛ úʊ mą́ą̀ lɛ sám-nɪ↓?

Thomas: *Bones, broken ones, do you know how to set them?*[594]

Kuman: oo! Hą̀ nyɪ̰́ka-mɪ hɛrɛ-í! Akyɛrɛ ʊ leminyo hɔ́ɔ nyą̄-ŋʊ fʊ̰̀ʊ̰̀, míɪ mą̄ą̀ nyą̄-ŋʊ zɪŋɔ lɛ úʊ ūla-ge lɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa. Hɛ̀ɛn’nɪ nyɪ̰̄ka-ga-mɪ kyɔ!

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[588] Although *nyʊ̰̀* means “man” in Kulango, in this morphological structure *nyʊ̰̀ wɛ* has the value of the indefinite pronoun “someone” and loses its masculine connotation. The words of the spirit of the departed here mean that Kuman must abstain from sexual relations prior to receiving further instructions from him.

[589] Lett.: “give”.

[590] Lit.: “I do work today”.

[591] Lit.: “you sleep you one”.

[592] Lett.: “its day *def.*”

[593] Lit.: “greet the *jinn* them thanks?”

[594] Lit.: “put in order-inside”.

Kuman: *No! He didn't teach me! But (if) you've got a sore throat*[595] *I can give you something to inhale and you feel better*[596]*. The man taught me that all right!*

PROBLEMS THAT KUMAN CAN TREAT – PART II

Thomas: lɛ mʊm nyą́ŋɔ kyēi nyʊ̱ bɔ tɔgɔ-rɪ, úʊ mą́ą lɛ wárɪ-ɛ ↓?

Thomas: *And if an illness falls on a man's body, can you cure him?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mí mą̄ą wārɪ hɛrɛ-í[597]! mí mą̄ą sī hɛrɛ-í! Asira, mʊm ʊ nyi̱ikɔ hɔ́ nyą̄-ŋʊ, míı mą̄ą wārɪ-gyɛ. Míı vɛ̄-gɛ lɛ hɔ yɔ́kɛ'rɛ gū, lɛ míı tū sinye'rɛ lɛ sā-ti, hɪnɪ hɔ́ɔ lā! Halɪ mʊm úʊ faɪ hʊ̄ɪ, úʊ bɔɔ-wɛ hʊ̄ɪ gyɪga, míı wārɪ-gyɛ. Mʊm míı nyi̱ka mɪ bą̱ą̄ŋɛ'rɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ nyī-nyɛ kyɔ!

Kuman: *Yes! I can certainly treat that! I can certainly treat that! Or rather, if you've got back-ache, I can treat it. I make a cut there so that the serum comes out, then I take a remedy and put it in (the cut) and that's it. Then, for example, if you've got this part swollen for no reason* (points to his leg)*, or other parts of your body, I can treat it. If I showed you what I do to myself, you'd see!*

Thomas: úʊ mą́ą vé nyʊ̱'nɪ bɔ bɔɔ-wɛ hʊ̄ɪ ↓?

Thomas: *Can you cut any part of the human body (that) swells?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! ɔɔ! Mʊm wɛ bɔ gɔgɔ hɔ́ɔ nyą̄-nɪ, míı vɛ̄-gɛ lɛ sā-ti sinyo. Halɪ mʊm ʊ faɪ mʊ̱ pɛɛ… mʊm ʊ pegye'rɛ hɔ́ɔ nyą̄-ŋʊ, hɛrɛ báa hɛ̄ hɔ́ɔ nyą̄-ŋʊ, míı dū-k̲e lɛ sā-ga-ti. Hɪnɪ hérɛ lā. A mʊm hɔ́ɔ fʊ̄[598] lɛ úʊ wī̱-ti gyatagyɛ'rɛ wɛ lɛ lū-ye lɛ háa sī-e, hɔ hɛrɛ daagɔ-í. Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ ʊ faɪ, ʊ nyi̱ikɛ'rɛ hɔ lɛ hɛrɛ mʊ̱.

Kuman: *Yes! Yes! If for example you've got a pain in your chest, I cut it and put a remedy in. If (you hurt) here, all around*[599] (touches his chest)… *if your eyes hurt, make you suffer, I extract the juice (from the plant) and put it on (your eyes). That's finished. And if it's infected, I wet it with a cloth and add a drop (of remedy); at the end you take it off and (the pain) won't come back. For these reasons you come here*[600]*, for your back and other things.*

Thomas: lablo walɔɔgɛ'rɛ ù nyí̱ka-bɪ mʊnobɪɔ, hɔ lɛ a̱kɔ↓?

Thomas: *That big ball*[601] *you just showed us, what is it?*[602]

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595 Lit.: "if your neck gives you pain".

596 Lit.: "and goes".

597 In this case the morpheme *-í* has an emphatic function and is not a negation.

598 *Fʊ̱* literally means "to sprout"; though generally used with reference to plants, in medicine it is used by specialists to indicate the onset of an infection.

599 Lit.: "here *focus* all".

600 Lit.: "This causes you here".

601 The big ball is a mixture of various herbs – the usual form taken by Kuman's remedies.

602 Lit.: "That *presentative* which?".

Kuman: lablo lɛ↓? walɔɔgɛ'rɛ… a hɛrɛ míı hɛ̄ lɛ nyi̱i̱ke'rɛ lɛ. Úa nyī hɔ̀ bo̱ mʊnʊbı(ɔ)… wɛ bɔ ba̱a̱ŋɔ mì vɛ ì bıbı. Buruni[603], bɔ nyi̱i̱kɔ háa nyá̱-nı↓?

Kuman: *The ball? That big one… that's the one I use for back problems. You see that a short while ago it was wet… I'd just cut a man's back. Has the* buruni *got back problems by any chance?*

THE HEALER AND THE PATIENT, PAYMENT AND SACRIFICES

Thomas: Lɛ ha̱ nna… wɛ-ti mʊm úʊ nūı nya̱ tɔgɔ-dı lɛ nūı si̱sɛ bɔ nuŋo-nı lɛ yī lɛ sa̱ faı, úa sū zı(ŋɔ)-í; mʊm nyʊ̱'nı ho̱ʊ̱ pīı, mʊm úa yāa-rɔ pɛsɛ'rɛ-í lɛ zʊmfei̱ ú má̱a̱ yáa la hé hɛrɛ dɛɛn'nı-rı lɛ sá hʊ̱-rı↓?

Thomas: *Well sir, if for example you*[604] *are there feeling pains, and you're in the hands of a healer, you come here and receive nothing in exchange; if the man was about to die if you didn't bring a kola nut and some eggs, can you still go and do that thing on the plants and put them on him?*

Kuman: Ɔɔ! Mʊm míı lɔ̄ hʊ̱-rı pɛɛ a ho̱ʊ̱ wārı lɛ lá[605], a ho̱ʊ̱ yī lɛ ho̱ʊ̱ dʊ̄ lɛ: "baba siwi̱rı̱ zı↓?" mʊm hɔ́ɔ dɔ̄ʊ̱ mı-rɔ lɛ míı nya̱-ŋɛ gyiga, hɔ́ɔ dɔ̄ʊ̱ mı-rɔ-í lɛ: "má̱a̱ yāa yī-rɔ pɛsɛ wa la baa zʊmfeyo, yāa yī-rɔ pɔn-taa".

Kuman: *Yes! When I've treated all his illnesses*[606] *and he's recovered, he'll come and say: "Father, how much do you want for your remedies?"; I can give them free, if I want*[607]*, and if I don't: "You can go and get (me) a kola nut or maybe a chicken's egg, go and get 200CFA!".*

Thomas: A hɛrɛ zʊ̱rʊ̱ wi̱rı̱[608] pɛɛ, i̱nyı̱ hɛrɛ zʊ̱rʊ̱ wi̱rı̱ úʊ yáa ʊ̱-rɔ la nyá̱ (mı̱[609]) dɛɛkɛ'rɛ↓?

Thomas: *So all those things, precisely those things, do you go and offer them to the plants?*

Kuman: Oo! Hɛrɛ zʊ̱rʊ̱ wi̱rı̱ mía sù ʊ̱-rɔ pɛɛ lɛ la, i̱nyı̱ mıa-tɔ[610] mi̱rı̱. Míı nya̱-ʊ̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ vɛ-í. Mì sú-kɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ-rɔ dugu lɛ la.

Kuman: *No! All those things, I keep them*[611]*, because they're mine, look… I don't give them to the plant any more. I've already given them to the plant*[612]*.*

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[603] *Buruni* means "white", in this case obviously referring to me.

[604] "You" in this case has the generic meaning of "someone".

[605] Concluding structure; see Micheli 2007: 91.

[606] Lit.: "I treat him-on everything".

[607] Lit.: "if it is sweet me-with".

[608] Geographical variation of *wını*.

[609] *Focus*.

[610] Inalienable possession; see Micheli 2007: 88-89 and Micheli 2005: 193-197.

[611] Lit.: "I take them all-with + *concluding structure*".

[612] Lit.: "I take it the plant-with then + *concluding structure*".

Thomas: A u̱nyu̱ wá laa yaá nya̱ zu̱ru̱ wu̱ru̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ↓?
Thomas: *So you'll already have gone to give those things to the plant?*
Kuman: Dɛɛkɛ'rɛ!
Kuman: *To the plant!*
Thomas: a hɔ m(u̱nu̱)bɪɔ úʊ hɛ̄ a úʊ tíɪ zu̱ru̱ wu̱ru̱ lɛ úʊ yáa la nya̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ↓?
Thomas: *So you do it straight away, then; you get those things and go to offer them to the plant?*
Kuman: zu̱ru̱ wu̱ru̱, oo! Mʊm mú dā fi̱i̱ lɛ dū-kɛ hɔ u̱nyu̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ mú dā-kɛ lɛ, mʊm mú dā-kɛ lɛ yī-rɔ lɛ la a hù̱u̱ yé nya̱-m zu̱ru̱ wu̱ru̱ dɛ, lɛ mú gōi wɔ-rɔ la sōo fi̱i̱.
Kuman: *Not those things! When I get there and I say it, so consequently the the plant, I cut it, when I cut it and take it home, the patient gives me*[613] *those things, and I go back with them and offer them up*[614] *(as sacrifices) there.*

PREPARATION OF THE *CANARI*

Thomas: bɪ nɪau̱… a úʊ dú nʊʊgbɪu̱ wɛ pa, hɛrɛ úa lɛ ú sá-u̱ daminyo-nɪ pa↓?
Thomas: *Maternal uncle… do you pronounce specific words*[615] *when, when you put them*[616] *in the* canari?
Kuman: ɔɔ!
Kuman: *Yes!*
Thomas: bɪ nɪau̱ ha̱a̱ nna… hɛrɛ úa yì lɛ sà̱ a̱ŋɔ-nɪ nna, lɛ ù sá dɛɛna̱gbrawu̱ru̱ nna, nʊʊgbɪwu̱ru̱ úa dú úa dálɪ Yego lɛ hɛrɛ dɛɛn nu̱rɪ ú̱u̱ ma̱a̱ lɛ wārɪ nya̱ŋɛ'rɛ nyū̱-dɪ lɛ, laa úa dú-kɛ lɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ úʊ yī(-rɔ) lɛ úʊ sā daminyo-nɪ, hɔ́ káfira gu̱ lɛ↓?
Thomas: *Maternal uncle, sir… when you come back*[617] *to the village, sir, and you've brought those roots, sir, the words you say, do you pray to Yego, so that those plants can make the patient better*[618]*, or do you say them*[619] *for the plant you've brought and put in the* canari*, in a kind of request for forgiveness?*
Kuman: míɪ ma̱a̱ dū lɛ kparigya lɛ úa nyù̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ míɪ yāa dā-í, há gù faɪ-lɛ nna, hɛrɛ míɪ kyū̱ lɛ kpēle faɪ, lɛ nyu̱ hú̱u̱ nya̱ gyāne, hɛrɛ míɪ dā dɛɛkɛ'rɛ: "úa nyù̱ sinyo'rɛ lɛ úʊ hɛ̄ hɛrɛ míɪ sā wɛ Yegolɪmɪasɛ dāti taa", lɛ míɪ sā dɛɛkɔ, dɛ hú̱u̱ wārɪ. Wɛ-ti hɔ nyu̱'nɪ gyāba lɛ kpu̱kɔ, yʊʊkɔ gbou̱, nyu̱'nɪ gyabau̱ lɛ kpu̱kɔ lɛ hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ hɔ̀ gbé-ge. Mʊm hɛɛn'nɪ lɛ, míɪ dɛ̄ bɔ́ɔ dā-kɛ sa̱a̱bɪ nudɪɔgɔ pa, a mʊm yɛrɛ lɛ, lɛ míɪ dɛ̄ bɔ́ɔ dā-kɛ nna, lɛ dālɪ lɛ lɛ…: "úa dɛɛkɔ, míɪ yāa dā-kʊ lɛ yī, úa

[613] Lit.: "him" + future; see Micheli 2007: 81.
[614] Lit.: "pour".
[615] Lit.: "certain words *focus*".
[616] Herbs.
[617] Lit.: "come and enter".
[618] Lit.: "man".
[619] Lit.: "it"; perhaps the singular refers to the words as a single discourse act.

lá lɔ̀ nyą̱ŋɔ-rɪ. Míı dālɪ úʊ, lɛ úʊ dɛ̄ hʊ́ʊ̱ hɛ̄ kyɛnɛ kyɛnɛ; Yegolɪmɪasɛ, hʊ́ʊ̱ dāti pa, lɛ nyą̱sɛ'nɪ hʊ́ʊ̱ wārɪ. Gʊ̱ wɛ hą́ą̱ yòro Yegolɪmɪa bɔ zɪka". Mʊm úa nyʊ̱'nɪ ʊ gyaba kpʊ̱kɔ, a la sira úʊ pīı, a lɛ mía kʊ̄-ɛ-í, ɻnyɻ́ úa ʊ gbɛɛ gyɻ́(kyɻ́)ŋɔ lɛ.

Kuman: *I really have to*[620] *say that you don't know the plant I cut; it sprouts there*[621]*, madam, so it's there that I speak first, (saying) that there's a man who's suffering and praying, when I cut the plant (I say): "You know the remedy and make it, to what I prepare* Yegolimiasè *will add something of his own"; then I cut the plant and he gets better. If for example that man is wicked*[622]*, selfish*[623]*, his thoughts are bad, and this is why the illness*[624] *has taken him… If it's a man, I cut it with three movements of my right hand, while if it's a woman I cut it in four moves and pray that, that…: "You, plant, I'm going to cut you and then I'll return, you'll cure an illness. I ask you to make him better;* Yegolimiasè *will add something of his and the patient will recover. For everything else may he take shelter behind* Yegolimia*". If you're a man whose thoughts are bad, you'll die anyway, but I won't be the one who kills you because you'll be to blame for that.*

Thomas: mara[625]… ʊ̀a kyʊ́ʊ̱ lɛ dʊ́, ʊ nu bɪlaa'rɛ úa tɪ̀ı lɛ hɛ sinyɛ'rɛ, ą̱kɔ úa kyʊ́ʊ̱ la tíı lɛ sá-ti↓? Nudɪɔgɔ↓?

Thomas: *Now… first you said that you use both hands to prepare the medicine*[626]*; which one do you use first*[627]*? The right?*

Kuman: nudɪɔgɔ!

Kuman: *The right!*

Thomas: bɪ nɪaʊ̱ hą nna, mʊnʊbɪɔ hą́ą̱ yɻ̀ nyą̱ŋɛ'rɛ[628] úa lɔ̄-ti, hɔ́ɔ hɛ́ sinyo saą̱bɪ gʊ-rɔ laa, wɛrɪ ʊ̱ poo gʊ-rɔ↓? Wɛ-ti hɔ́ɔ dą̄ mɻ́, úʊ kā ʊ sinyɛ'rɛ hɔ, nyą̱ŋɛ'rɛ wɛ-ti hɔ́ɔ dą̄ hɔ́ɔ gū drɛsɛgɛ-nɪ, a hɛrɛ nyą̱ŋɛ'rɛ kyēi hʊ̱̄-rɪ laa, hɛrɛ dɛ úa kpéle fuu lɛ úʊ kára[629] prumo bɛrɛ lɛ dʊ́ lɛ bɔ́ɔ dáa-ʊ↓? Wɛ-ti bɔ gbɛɻ́gyɻ́ŋɔ hɔ̀ gú-rɔ a hʊ́ʊ̱ nyą̄, mʊm bɔ mínyo kpʊ̄ mʊ̱rʊ̱ a nyą̱ŋɛ'rɛ gbē-ge, úʊ gyába: "mía mɻ́ lɔ̀ hʊ̱-rɪ hʊ́ʊ̱ wārɪ" ↓ ?

Thomas: *Maternal uncle, she, sir, she now comes to the illnesses you can treat; have you only got two (or three) remedies, or do you know many*[630]*? When it happens that you prepare a remedy, but the illness comes from witchcraft, and*

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620 Lit.: "can".

621 Lit.: "comes out down there"; in the bush, that is.

622 Lit.: "that man thinks bad".

623 Lit.: "(his) navel is big".

624 Lit.: "it".

625 Perhaps an unusual variation of *mʊ̱rʊ̱*.

626 Lit.: "your two hand you take and make remedy *def.*"

627 Lit.: "which do you first and take and put-on?".

628 Kuman uses the singular, but the sentence definitely requires a plural.

629 *Kara* literally means "to count"; its meaning here is "invoke the ancestors' names one by one".

630 Lit.: "is there remedy three you-with or perhaps they many you-with?".

that illness falls on the patient[631]*, is that why you speak a lot and call on the ancestors' spirits, so that they can help you? If the illness was due to the patient himself*[632]*, if the patient*[633] *is wicked, now, and an illness takes him, do you think: "Now I'll treat him and he'll recover"?*

Kuman: oo!

Kuman: *No!*

Thomas: ɻnyɻ a hɛ̄ bɪlaa-í, ha sa̱a̱bɪ kʊsɛgɛ. Nya̱ŋɛ'rɛ wɛ-ti mʊm Yego nya̱ŋɔ lɛ. Wɛ-ti mʊm bɪbɪ hʊ́ʊ̰ kpa̱ lɛ lɔ̄ lɛ wārɪ, hɔ bɪɔ mʊ̰[634], ʊ́a máa̱ hɛ́ lɛ zʊ̰rɔ sa̱a̱bɪ lɛ la, wɛ-rɪ hɔ́ dá na, wɛ-rɪ zɪ baaŋɔ lɛ.

Thomas: *So this isn't the second, but the third (question you're answering). The illness, if it's an illness that comes from* Yego*. If the patient really tries to recover and get better; now, can you do anything? What can you do in this case*[635]*?*

Kuman: mʊm míɪ hɛ̄-gɛ dɛ, mʊm bɔ[636] mínyo kpʊ̄, hɛrɛ mía dʊ̀ kɛ, mʊm bɔ mínyo kpʊ̄, a ʊ́ʊ yī lɛ míɪ sā ʊ sinyɛ'rɛ hɔ, lɛ da̱ bɔ minyo kpʊ̄, ʊ́a kpà̱-ŋɛ, ʊ́a kpà̱-ŋɛ hɔ, a míɪ sā ʊ sinyɛ'rɛ, sinyɛ'rɛ míɪ nya̱-ŋʊ hɔ, hɔ́ ma̱a̱ dāa-kʊ̄. A mʊm nyʊ̰ lɛ gʊ̰-rɪ, ʊ́a nyɻ̀ mía sà (nudɪɔgɔ) hɔ́ɔ ma̱a̱ ʊ́ʊ kʊ̄ nyʊ̰ kpʊ̄ rɔ-nɪ, lɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa nuŋoko, ɻnyɻ mɻ hɔ́ɔ nūı(m) bɔɔ. A mʊm Yegolimia nya̱ŋɔ lɛ lɛ míɪ sā-ga nudɪɔgɔ pa, lɛ dʊ̄ lɛ: "Yegolimia lɛ ʊ́ʊ dāa mɻrɻ̱-'nɻ̱, ʊ́a nyī̱ mɪ nudɪɔgɔ sā-ʊ̰-í; lɔ dāa mɪ baaŋɛ'rɛ-dɪ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ wārɪ". Sinyɛ'rɛ pa lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dāa-ti.

Kuman: *When I do it, then, if you're wicked*[637]*, this is what I say, if you're wicked, and you come to have me prepare a medicine for you*[638]*, and you happen to be wicked, but you need it, you really need it, I'll prepare your medicine, I'll give you the medicine that can help you. And if it's a matter of witchcraft*[639]*, you see, I take (my right hand); it can make the bad man die for you, then it*[640] *passes to my left hand, so it will stay there. And if it's a disease that comes from* Yego*, I put it in my right hand and say: "*Yegolimia*, please cure him, can't you see my right hand is not enough? Heal, help me make him better". The medicine becomes more powerful*[641]*.*

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631 Lit.: "him-on".

632 Lit.: "if from him himself, it comes out-with".

633 Lit.: "he".

634 Little-used variation of *mʊnʊbɪɔ/mʊ̰rɻ̰bɪɔ*.

635 The whole sentence is particularly garbled; lit.: "if as a bit he tries to heal and get better, now, you can do with things three + *concluding structure*, maybe happens four, maybe for his part *presentative*".

636 In this sentence Kuman makes frequent use of the animate possessive *bɔ* "their", instead of *ʊ* "your". It should be remembered that the third person possessive plural is very often used instead of the correct singular form *hʊ̰*.

637 Lit.: "if your heart is bad".

638 Lit.: "I prepare your medicine *focus*".

639 Lit.: "if man *presentative* business-on", meaning: "if it's a human matter".

640 The *canari*.

641 Lit.: "grows".

Thomas: lɛ bɪ nɪaʊ̰ hą̰ nna, hɛrɛ úa hɛ̀ ʊ sinyɛ'rɛ mʊ̰ nna, úa nyą̀[642] nyʊ̰-nɪ, wɛ-ti ú mą́ą̰ hé lɛ hɔ́ɔ yáa hʊ́ʊ̰ lɔ́ bɔ sukpo, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ wārɪ, wɛ-ti ú yáa lɔ́-ʊ sɪ́-gɛ-yɛ lɛ níi↓? wɛ-ti ú yáa lɔ́-ʊ lɛ úʊ hé-gɛ mʊ̰ lɛ mʊ̰ laa, úa gbɛɛ gyḭŋɔ(kyḭŋɔ) laa sá-ga lɛ dú lɛ: "hé-gɛ mʊ̰ lɛ mʊ̰", laa ú nyḭ́ka-gɛ lɛ sá-gɛ hʊ̰-rɪ, lɛ mʊ̰ hɔ́ɔ yáa úʊ hé-gɛ↓?

Thomas: *And maternal uncle, sir, she (asks) sir… when you prepare one of your remedies, sir, for a man… can you for example let him go to treat himself for a trivial illness and he gets better or do you go and treat him, boil his remedy[643] and (give it to him to) drink? If you go to treat him, do you personally do what has to be done[644], or do you prepare the remedy[645] and say: "Do this and that", or do you teach him and let him do it alone[646], is that what you do?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Míı nyḭ̄ka-ŋɛ mʊm úʊ yī-rɔ daminye'rɛ a míı sā-ga lɛ la, mʊm bá nìi-e lɛ mą̀ą̰ yàa lɛ ʊ fɛ̄-wɛ mʊ̰ lɛ nīi-wɛ, wɛ-ti úa nyḭ̄-í, mʊm ʊ kpą̄ gū-go-rɪ lɛ ḭnyɪ̰ hɔ baaŋɔ lɛ, lɛ nyḭ̄ka-nyḭ̄ka[647]-ŋɛ pɛɛ lɛ gyere sā sinyɛ'rɛ.

Kuman: *Yes! I explain[648] when you bring your[649]* canari *and I prepare it, whether it has to be drunk or if you have to use it to wash and then drink a bit; if you don't understand[650] and try to do it by yourself[651], since it has its own method I will explain it again in detail and then prepare the medicine.*

Thomas: a bɪ nɪaʊ̰, gʊ̰ dɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ bī-kʊ; hɛrɛ mara'rɛ dɛ, úa sà kyɛrɛɪ̰ úʊ mą̄ą̰ dāa nyʊ̰ wɛ nyą̄, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ yī mʊrʊ̰ lɛ wɔ a mɪ̰ sā sinyɛ'rɛ mʊ̰ úa dú nʊʊgbɪʊ̰↓? Mɪ̰ mą́ą̰ hē nʊʊgbɪwḭrɪ̰ úa dù mʊrʊ̰, lɛ sà daminye'rɛ, nna, úʊ dú hɛrɛ nʊʊgbɪwḭrɪ̰ lɛ gyere úʊ sá-ʊ̰, nąkɔ laa, hɛrɛ pɛɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ mḭ̄nɪ̰ lɛ mʊ̰ hɛrɛ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ bī-kʊ hɛrɛ mara'rɛ. Wɛ-ti mʊm úʊ sá siwḭrɪ̰ lɛ la, lɛ ʊ dú lɛ mʊrʊ̰ bá héʊ̰↓?

Thomas: *Maternal uncle, there's something she is asking you[652]; the question is: you prepare good things, you can help people who suffer[653] and come here to you, so you prepare the medicine… do you pronounce (special) words? Can you repeat those words now, the words you pronounce while you prepare the* canari*, sir? Do you pronounce those words before preparing them, once again,*

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642 Benefactive structure; see Micheli 2007: 94.

643 Lit.: "it".

644 Lit.: "you do this and this and you yourself".

645 Lit.: "it".

646 Lit.: "put it him-on".

647 The repetition of the verb has a reinforcing function.

648 Lit.: "show".

649 Lit.: "canari *def.*".

650 Lit.: "see".

651 Lit.: "try to come out it-on".

652 Lit.: "things *focus* she asks you".

653 Lit.: "you can help man certain (who) suffers".

she would like to know all this[654]*, she asks you this. If you prepare those medicines and then pronounce (the words) or if you do it while you work.*

Kuman: oo! Mʊm míı hɛ̄ siwɻ̱rɻ̱ lɛ la hɔ, lɛ mɻ̱a: "mʊm ʊ yāa hɔ, lɛ sa-ga daganı, bá tą̄ti daga-í, hɛrɛ míı dʊ̄ gʊ-rɔ, úa tą̄ti daga-í, úa dɛ̀ gbɛɻ̱sɛ, há̱ tą̄ti-í" .

Kuman: *No! When I've finished preparing those medicines, (I say) this: "When you go home and put it on the fire, make sure that no-one touches the fire, this I tell you, don't touch the fire, don't let a woman who's having her period touch it".*

KUMAN THE MASTER AND HIS APPRENTICES

Thomas: Nyʊ̱́'nı gū bɔɔ wɛ zɔʊ lɛ yī, úʊ ma̱á̱ nyɻ̱́ka ʊ siɻ̱'nı wɻ̱↓?

Thomas: *A man comes from afar… can you show him your remedies?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mʊm hʊ̱́ʊ̱ gū fɻ̱ lɛ yī lɛ: "Míı yé nīı ʊ kyɻ̱ŋɔ lɛ úʊ sīra̱ka-mı, lɛ sīra̱ka-mı hɔ", hını ha̱á̱ mı kyɻ̱ŋɔ-rı lɛ bíı hɛ̄ wɔ-rı hɛʊ̱ lɛ míı yāa míı nyɻ̱́ka-ʊ̱, lɛ: "úa nyɻ̱́ dɛɛkɔ hɔ, nya̱ŋɔ hɔ lɛ hɔ lɛ hɔ lɛ hɔ, hɛrɛ háa lɔ̄, úa nyɻ̱́ hɔ hɛrɛ; úʊ yō-ke lɛ úʊ hɛ̄ mʊ̱, hɛrɛ laa hɛ̄ ɻ̱…" lɛ bíı kyī. Mʊm hʊ̱́ʊ̱ gyī wɻ̱nı lɛ la hɔ, lɛ hʊ̱́ʊ̱ yī, mʊm hʊ̱́ʊ̱ lā mɻ̱ɻ̱, mʊm hʊ̱́ʊ̱ lā lɛ gbī, lɛ míı hɛ̄: "*Bon*! Kyɛrɛ wɻ̱nı mì nyɻ̱́ka-ʊ lɔɔ; mʊm úʊ dá̱ úa̱ lā-í, a úʊ yāa vɛ pa, lɛ úʊ gōi, mʊm hɔ́ɔ dá̱ wɻ̱nı daagɔ vɛ, úʊ ma̱á̱ nyɻ̱́ka-mı wı, lɛ míı nyīk̲a-(wı)nı pa", míı ma̱á̱ sīra̱ka wɻ̱nı míı gyī mʊ̱ mı bugobɛrɛ pooko, míı nyɻ̱́ka-bɛ wɻ̱ mʊ̱.

Kuman: *Yes! If someone comes from elsewhere*[655] *and arrives here saying: "I'll stay with you and you'll teach me you'll teach it to me", that one stays with me and we work together; I show him the plants*[656]*, and say: "You see this tree? (It's for) this illness, and this, and this, and this; this heals. You see that? You crush it and do this, this is for massage…" and we work together. When he's learned something, if he's finished, if he's stayed a long time, I say: "*Bon! *I've really taught you a lot here; when you go, if you see that it's not enough, then you'll come back. If you find something more elsewhere, then you can teach it to me, and I'll show you some other things". I can teach what I know to my many children, I teach some of them*[657]*.*

Thomas: Lɛ ɻ́ dá̱ lɛ ɻ́ sıra̱ka kyılıɔ[658]'nı hìnı gú zɔʊ↓?

Thomas: *And have you ever taught a foreigner who came from somewhere else?*

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654 Lit.: "this-all she looks at + *focus* + *presentative*".

655 Lit.: "there".

656 Lit.: "them".

657 Lit.: "I show them a bit *focus*".

658 *Kyılıɔ* in Kulango means both "foreigner" and "guest".

Kuman: eh! ɔɔ! A wɛ hə̀ə́ yí mɪa-rɪ faɪ kyɔ, lɛ mì sírə́ka lɛ nyə́ sinyo lɛ hə̀ yáa, a úa nyɪ̄ hèrɛ baa[659] gói lɛ bí-mɪ lɛ: “oh! úa gyī tɔgɔ-í yooh!, zɪŋɔ po pooke[660]’rɛ mʊ̀, zɪ hɔ́ɔ nɪ́ɪ a úʊ káɪ paamɪnyɔ-gɛ[661]↓?”; úa nyɪ̄, hɔ mɪ ʊ̱ŋo-nɪ lɛ háa nūɪ mɪ ʊ̱ŋo-nɪ lɛ, halɪ mʊm úʊ yī-rɔ mʊ̀, halɪ hɔ́ɔ də̄ i̱pugonyʊ̱, hɛrɛ úʊ sā-ga bɔɔgɔ mʊ̀, míɪ sī hɔ nʊʊŋɔ, nʊʊŋɔ, nʊʊŋɔ, nʊʊŋɔ pɛɛ lɛ yāā. Báa hɛ̄ lɛ bɔ́ɔ bī-mɪ: “ɔɔ! zɪ lɛ úʊ hé-gɛ lɛ gyí-ge pɛɛ mʊ̱↓?”. A míɪ hɛ̄ lɛ: “Yégomɪlɪa sā-ga mɪ ʊ̱ŋo-nɪ, hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ sinye[662]’rɛ bɔɔgɔ mʊ̀ pɛɛ, zɪŋɛ’rɛ úʊ yī-rɔ pɛɛ, mʊm úʊ nyɪ̄ka-ga-mɪ daa, hɪnɪ a míɪ pāamɪ-nyɛ fuu eh dɛ!”; báa bī-mɪ fuu mʊ̀ lɛ: “zɪ lɛ úa hé lɛ káɪ hɔ paamɪnyɔ↓?” lɛ míɪ hɛ̄ lɛ: “hɔ̀ gú Yegomɪlɪa-rɪ lɛ sə́ mɪ ʊ̱ŋo-nɪ!”.

Kuman: *Eh! Yes! One came right here to me, and I taught him and gave him the medicine, then he left and, you see, that man came back and asked me: “Hey! You don’t know books, yoh! There are many things, so many things; how can you not forget them[663]?”. You see, it’s in my head, and it’s in my head; if you bring something, even if there are forty things[664], when you put them there, like that, I take all of them in[665] and that’s it[666]. Then they ask me[667]: “Yes! How can you know them all[668]?”, so I say: “*Yegolimia *has put it in my head, that’s why all the remedies are there; if you teach me something today, I’ll never forget it, eh!”. They always ask me: “How can you not forget them[669]?” and I say: “It comes from* Yegomilia *and it’s gone into my head”.*

Thomas: Yʊgɔbɛrɛ ù sírə́ka ha, aɪ bɔ́ gú↓?

Thomas: *The people you’ve taught, where did they come from?*

Kuman: eh! Wɛ-ti hə̀ gú, a míɪ gyī bɔ ə̱nə̱n’nɪ-í! Wɛ hə̀ gú mʊm Bʊga saakɔ-rɪ fʊ̱ lɛ yí, lɛ wɛ̀ gú mʊm Gbroŋmo kyʊ̱ŋɔ faɪ lɛ yí, lɛ wɛ̀ gú mʊm faɪ. Wɛ mía gyī bɔ ə̱ŋɔ lɛ-í, mʊm hə̀ yí: “Kyɛrɛ mɪ faɪ, háa nyə̱̄-mɪ!”, mʊm mì hé-gɛ lɛ nyə́ lɛ la a hə̀ kyɛ́ɛ bɪbɪ, lɛ hə̀ hé lɛ: “Míɪ kōri míɪ nūɪ ʊ kyʊ̱ŋɔ, lɛ úʊ nyə̱̄-mɪ wɛ!”. Wʊ̱mɔ hə̀ə́ gú Gbona saakɔ-rɪ pa.

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659 To be read as *bɔɔ*.

660 *Po* is the qualifying verb “to be many”, while *pooko* is the adjective “much/many”. Here the final vowel is assimilated to the -ɛ of the determining particle (demonstrative adjective), though maintaining the +tense vowel feature of the word’s root.

661 Lit.: “it”; the singular pronoun is in perfect agreement with the singular noun; *zɪŋɔ* (pl. *zʊ̱rʊ̱*).

662 Kuman uses the singular *sinyo* “remedy”. The final vowel *-o* becomes *-e* through assimilation to the determining particle *(hɛ)rɛ*.

663 Lit.: “you refuse to forget this”.

664 Lit.: “even if it comes (to) forty”.

665 Lit.: “I extract its mouth, mouth, mouth, mouth”.

666 Lit.: “and it goes”.

667 Lit.: “they do and they ask me”.

668 Lit.: “how do you do it and know it all *focus*?”.

669 Lit.: “how can you refuse its forgetting?”.

Kuman: *Eh! If he was from… I can't remember their villages! One came from the Abron region and one from Gbrongmo near here, and one was from here. I don't know the village one of them came from; when he came: "Really, I'm here, I'm suffering!", as I treated him and he stopped suffering and recovered completely he said: "I'd like to stay with you, you'll give me something!". (Then) someone came from the Bouna region.*

Thomas: Mʊm wɪ́mɔ yī, mʊm báa kā̰ kulaŋo-í, bɛ kpelego nyā́ dú↓?

Thomas: *If someone comes who doesn't understand Kulango*[670]*, what language do you speak in?*

Kuman: Mʊm hṵ̰ kā̰ *franci*[671] lɛ, lɛ míı vūga mı bi̱i̱'nı wɛ lɛ bíı dū-kɛ, mʊm sɔgɔgɔ hṵ̰ kā̰, lɛ míı vūga mı bi̱i̱'nı wɛ, lɛ hṵ̰ yī lɛ dū mı nʊʊŋɔ, úa nyɪ̄, mía kā̰ sɔgɔgɔ'rɛ di̱-í nna, a Mía kā̰ *franci*-í, u̱u̱, a hṵ̰ gū Bʌʊlɛ, bugobɛrɛ úa nyɪ̄, bɔ́ɔ kā̰ bʌʊlɛgɛ'rɛ; wɪ́mɔ kā̰ bʌʊlɛgɔ. ɔɔ! Bɛrɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ dū dū mı nʊʊŋɔ. Mʊm hṵ̰ dū-kɛ lɛ lā hɔ, lɛ dā̰ hṵ̰ gū bɔɔ wɛ lɛ, a hṵ̰ yī lɛ dū mı nʊʊŋɔ hɔ. Mʊm hṵ̰ lā, mıa, mía hɛ̄: "Nyā́-mı sʊga!", mʊm hṵ̰ lā lɛ nyā̰-mı sʊga hɔ, lɛ míı dā-ti wɛ lɛ nyā̰ hìnı dú mı nʊʊŋɛ'rɛ.

Kuman: *If he understands* franci*, I call one of my sons and we speak like that, if he understands Djula, I call one of my sons and he comes to say my words*[672]*; you see, I don't understand Djula, madam, and I don't understand* franci*,* ih*! And if he comes from Bawlé country, my sons, you see, they understand Bawlé; some people understand Bawlé. Yes! And those people repeat my words*[673]*. When he finishes saying it and it happens that he comes from outside, so he comes and says my words. When he finishes I say: "Give me a bit of money" and if he gives me some money, I share it and give it to the one who said my words.*

KUMAN THE DENTIST

Thomas: hɛrɛ ù nyḭ̀ wʊrʊkɔ trɔfrısa̰, hɛrɛ ó yérele lɛ ʊ sıra dɛɛnagbraʊ̰ sigyo-rı laa ʊ gyábaga nyɪ́ka-ʊ hɛrɛ[674] dɛɛnagbraʊ̰'nı hɛrɛ ù há lɛ lá↓?

Thomas: *When you were eight years old*[675]*, did you learn from your father about medicines made from roots*[676]*, or was it just your intelligence*[677] *which indicated the roots to you when you grew up?*

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670 Lit.: "if they don't understand Kulango".

671 French.

672 Lit.: "my mouth".

673 Lit.: "people *presentative*, they say say my mouth".

674 Here Kuman uses the inanimate demonstrative singular *hɛrɛ* instead of the correct plural form *wını*.

675 Lit.: "When you saw eight dry seasons".

676 Lit.: "so you learned from your father medicines of roots-on (compound word: plant + foot + old)".

677 Lit.: "thought".

Kuman: hɛrɛ bàba'nɪ nyɪ́ka-mɪ wɪnɪ mì ká mʊ̰ lɛ la; hɔ̀ hé mɪ̱ a hɔ gyàbaga yí mɪ-rɪ… ɔɔ!… wà nyɪ́, mì kʊ́ bugo bɔɔ mʊ̰ lɛ lá; bɔɔgɔ hɔ̀ gú a mɪ dí wɪ̰ lɛ dáa-ti. Hɔ̀ nɪ́ɪ mʊ̰; mɪ gyàbaga hé-ʊ̰. Hɛrɛ mía yāa ɪ̰siko-nɪ lɛ wɪ̀ nyɪ́ka-mɪ wɛ… wá nyɪ̀ mí sí mɪ kagam wɪ̰nɪ̰ mʊ̰-ɪ↓? mì yáa ɪ̰siko-nɪ lɛ a mɪ kàgaŋmɔ yógʊ mɪ-rɔ lɛ hɪ́ɪ kpɪ̰kɛ'rɛ…eh! Hɔ̀ hé mɪ̱ mía mā̰ā̰ yūgʊ-í a mì tú ɪ̰sikɛ'rɛ-nɪ, mía mā̰ā̰ yī-í; a bɔ̀ nyɪ́ka-mɪ sinye'rɛ; nyɪ̀ wɛ nyɪ́ka-ga-mɪ lɛ sá-ga bɔ nuŋo-rɪ, lɛ sá-ga mɪ kagaŋmɛ'rɛ-dɪ a hɔ̀ pói. Mʊm ù bí-mɪ dugu ka, mì gyába a̰ŋɔnyʊ̰ lɛ, a hʊ́ʊ̰ yí lɛ hʊ̰ hé-mɪ: "ah! Lɛ hɛrɛ mì hé dugu, hɔ́ɔ hé-mbɛ↓?", a mì: "hɔ́ɔ kyɛ̀nɛ[678]!"; a hā́ā̰ hɛ̄-mɪ: "mì nyā́-ŋa-ʊ pɛɛ! mí sà-ga ʊ nuŋo-nɪ" lɛ a hʊ̰ vé mɪ nuŋodɪgɔ hɔ lɛ hɔ, lɛ sá-nɪ sinye'rɛ: "lɛ ú yàa ú gòi faɪ pa kyɔ[679]". Hɛrɛ mì yí a mɪ kàgaŋmɔ taa hɪ́ɪ pa, hɔ̀ hé mɪ̱ a mì sí-ʊ̰ pɛɛ *tous* mʊm mì tā́ti bɪbɪ lɛ ʊ̰ pói lɛ, ʊ̰ pói lɛ. Mɪ̱ hɔ̀ nɪ́ɪ a mì sí mɪ baan'nɪ. Hɔ́ɔ nìɪ-m[680], súga bàɪ-mɪ a mí ɪ kàɪ ʊ̰ sa-ga-nɪ tʊ̰; aɪ mí ɪ sá-nɪ vɛ↓? A mɪ bugo bɛrɛ, nyʊ̰ pɛɛ, hʊ́ʊ̰ la lɛ gyì-gɛ mɪ-rɔ, mʊm bɔ baaŋɔ hɔ́ɔ nyà-nɪ. Lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ yì mɪ kyɪ̰ŋɔ, mʊm tā̰ti bɪbɪ lɛ hɔ́ɔ sì. Bugo bɛrɛ faɪ mʊ̰, a bɔ̀ dó: "ehm! Baba lɔgɔtɔrɪ lɛ wɛ, yoo[681]! A prɛʊ̰ pɛɛ lɛ gʊ̰ hā́ā̰ hɛ̀-í! lɛ ú là lɛ hɛ̀-gɛ lɛ hɔ́ɔ là lɛ gù tɔɔm lɛ aɪ bɔ́ɔ yáa gʊ-rɔ↓?"

Kuman: *When my father taught me some of them[682], I understood them straight away. So his understanding[683] came to me by itself, yes. You see, I had all those children there, from there[684] it came out and I obtained even more[685]. It was there; my mind had made them (the remedies). When I go into the bush and someone shows me something… (You see) … Can't you see I've taken all my teeth out[686]?… I'd gone into the bush and a tooth was hurting me[687] and suddenly it swelled up… eh! It was as if I couldn't get up and I was in the bush, I couldn't go back and they showed me[688] a remedy, a man showed it to me; he put it in his hands and put it on my tooth and that one fell out[689]. If you ask me… that time I thought it was a man from the village… and he came and said: "Ah! So what I did last time, how was it[690]?"… And I: "Fine, now I'm*

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678 *hɔ́ɔ kyɛ̀n ɛ* means "it's fine", used exclusively with reference to health.

679 The sentence structure is injunctive; see Micheli 2007: 79.

680 This utterance is a variation of *hɔ́ɔ nùɪ-mɪ̱*, lit.: "it's this way", which for the purposes of this translation is superfluous.

681 *Yoo* adds force to an assertion.

682 The remedies.

683 Lit.: "his thought", of medicine.

684 That power.

685 Lit.: "I ate some/obtained a bit more, and added (it)".

686 Lit.: "I've taken out my teeth those there".

687 Lit.: "my tooth got up me-with".

688 Lit.: "someone showed it to me"; for a complete inventory of indefinite pronouns see Micheli 2007: 63 ff.

689 Lit.: "undressed".

690 Lit.: "it was – *focus* – how?".

fine" and he said to me: "I'll give you everything, I'll put it in your hands". And he made a mark on these fingers, on this one and this one[691] (shows me the thumb and index finger of his right hand) *and put the medicine on. "Now go straight back!". When I came back another tooth swelled up, that's how it was, and I took them all out,* tous*! As soon as I touched (them), they fell, and that's how they fell. That's how it went and I took them all out. And now I've got no money and I can't put them back*[692]*; in the future will I be able to buy a set of false teeth*[693]*? And my children, and everyone, they all knew this about me, if they had a pain in one of theirs (teeth). So he*[694] *comes to me and all I do is touch it, and it's healed. My children here, once they said: "Ehm! Papà… now there's a professional nurse, isn't there? And he doesn't do things like in the old days*[695]*, so you've got to stop making (people's) blood come out, otherwise where will they take you?*[696]*"*

Thomas: lɛ bɔ́ɔ yàa gʊ-rɔ mą̀ą̀ben!

Thomas: *They'd take you to court!*

Kuman: A mía gōi la sū sʊga pooko-í pɔntrɔfrɪsą̀ mía sū. Lɛ: "ú͘ʊ yàa ú͘ʊ zèɪ-ɛ!". A mɪa: "a mí zɛ̄ɪ-ɛ-í", a bɔ: "ú͘ʊ zèɪ! Nyʊ̰̀ wɛ-ti, mʊm bɔ gʊ̰̀ a bí dʊ̄-wɪ̰́-í. A bía krʊ̄ bɪ yʊgɔ!". Die'rɛ, hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ gbà lɛ dam'nɪ bɪbɪ… a bɔ̀ sá-nɪ die'rɛ… a hɛrɛ hɛ̀ɛn'nɪ nyɪ̰́ka-mɪ lɛ mì dí-gɛ bɪbɪ lɛ hɔ̀ páta, a mì dí die'rɛ. A mì dí-gɛ a mɪa: "ehm! ɪ̰̀ páta mɪ sinye'rɛ". Bɛ zéɪ wɛ↓? Hɔ́ɔ là dɛɛn'nɪ, hɔ́ɔ nìɪ-m dɛɛn'nɪ, dɛɛn'nɪ mía tìɪ, hɔ́ɔ hè-gɛ lɔ̀ɔ̀; sʊ̀gʊ-yɛ hɔ, wínɪ zèɪ mɪ-rɔ… wínɪ zèɪ mɪ-rɔ mʊ̰̀… Mʊm hɔ́ nyą̀-ŋʊ daa a míɪ hè dɛɛn'nɪ lɛ sʊ̀gʊ-yɛ bɪbɪ, a ú͘ʊ sʊ̀gʊ-yɛ bɪbɪ hɔ́ɔ mą̀ą̀ gyìna mʊm ʊ Yego dʊ̄ʊ̰̀ bɪbɪ lɛ hɔ́ɔ sì. Úa nyɪ̰̀ hɛrɛ mì yí hɔ-rɔ mɪ gbɛɛgyɪŋ̰̀ɔ mì kyʊ̰́ lɛ *esseyer* yège-ti. ʊ̀ą̀ nyą̰́-mɪ kyɛrɛsɛɪ bɪbɪ. Úa nyɪ̰̀ mɪa gbɛɛgyɪŋ̰̀ɔ bą̀ą̀ŋɔ, hɛrɛ mì yáa ɪ̰siko-nɪ hɛrɛ hʊ̰̀ nyą̰́-mɪ hɛrɛ.

Kuman: *I didn't want much money back! I asked 200CFA. And they: "You'd better let it go*[697]*!" And I: "I'm not letting it go!", and they: "Leave it! There are men whose business we don't want to get into! We know our people!". (Do you know)* die[698]*? That thing they use a bit of to prepare sauces… well they put some* die *in my sauce… That man had told me*[699] *that if I ate just a bit of it, it (the remedy) would be ruined for ever… and I ate this* die*. I ate it and:*

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691 Lit.: "he marked my finger, this and this."

692 Kuman means he can't afford a set of false teeth.

693 Lit.: "where will I put-in (them)?"; for an inventory of interrogative pronouns and adverbs see Micheli 2007: 66 ff.

694 "He" is indefinite, referring generically to someone with toothache.

695 Lit.: "And times all and things he doesn't do".

696 Lit.: "where will they go with you?".

697 Lit.: "And you go and you leave it".

698 Here again Kuman addresses me directly to make sure I am able to follow what he is saying.

699 Lit.: "had shown me".

"Hey! You've ruined my remedy!" What's left? Some plants are left, yes, there are some plants, I take those plants, and they do it… they heal. They have to be rubbed like this, this is what's left… this is what has stayed with me. If today you've got that ache and I prepare the plants and rub a bit on, and you rub a bit on, it can stop, if Yego *is a bit good with you*[700]*, then it falls out. You see. When I came back with that (the remedy) in me, I was the first to* esseyer *to pull them out. I really had toothache. You see; it was really in me, and when I went into the bush he gave it to me!*

KUMAN AND MADNESS

Thomas: Lɛ úʊ mą́ą lɔ́ nyʊ̰'nɪ bɔ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ báɪ-ti↓?

Thomas: *And… are you able to treat mad people*[701]*?*

Kuman: mʊm gyínąʊ̰ kyēi gʊ-rɪ hɔ, usunąʊ̰ mɪ-rɔ bɔɔgɔ, lɛ míɪ tūɪ-gɛ lɛ sā-ti daga, lɛ dūga bɔ ʊ̰ŋo, lɛ ūla-e lɛ hɛrɛ úʊ dą̄ hɔ́ɔ yāa, wɛti hɔ́ɔ dą̄ bɔ nyɪ̰ŋmɔ hɔ́ɔ hē sagasaga hɔ, siʊ̰ bɔɔ lɛ míɪ yāa sī-ʊ̰ lɛ yī-rɔ lɛ sīgye-ʊ̰ lɛ hʊ̀ʊ̰ ūla-ʊ̰ lɛ fē-ʊ̰. Úʊ dą̄ hɔ́ɔ yāa pa!

Kuman: *If a* jinn *captures you*[702]*, I've got an incense*[703]*, which I take, put on the fire, then I cover his*[704] *head and capture the smoke*[705]*; you see that he feels better*[706]*. If it happens that someone goes mad*[707]*, here there are some remedies that I gather*[708] *and prepare, then he inhales their smoke and uses them to wash. You see that (afterwards) be feels fine*[709]*!*

Thomas: Nyʊ̰'nɪ gyínąʊ̰ kyēi-ti hɔ, bɔ nyɪ̰ŋmɔ háa gārɪ kyɛrɛsɛɪ, zɪ wá lɔ́-gɛ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ wārɪ↓?

Thomas: *If the* jinn *that captures a man is particularly strong*[710]*; how do you treat him so he will recover?*

Kuman: Mʊm hɛrɛ míɪ hɛ̄-gɛ, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ (to be read as *míɪ*) hɛ̄-gɛ bɔ zɪŋɛ'rɛ dɪ̰dɪ̰, lɛ dą̄ fuu, hʊ́ʊ̰ hē sinye'rɛ lɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa-(í), míɪ gōi zɪka pa.

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[700] Lit.: "if your *Yego* is sweet a bit".

[701] Lit.: "man *def.*, his face is lost-on".

[702] Lit.: "falls you-on".

[703] Lit.: "incense, me-with there"; see Micheli 2007: 88-89 and Micheli 2005 193-197 regarding expression of alienable and inalienable possession.

[704] The patient's.

[705] Lit.: "capture the smoke it".

[706] Lit.: "it (the illness) goes".

[707] Lit.: "that his face it is strange + *ideophone*".

[708] Lit.: "I go to gather and come-with".

[709] Lit.: "it goes definitively! (here the *ideophone pa* has a concluding function)".

[710] Lit.: "man *def.*, *jinn* falls him-on *focus*, his face it is hard really a lot".

Kuman: *If when I do it, when he does it, the appropriate things properly, and it happens again*[711]*, he follows the treatment but it doesn't pass*[712]*, I do it all all again from the beginning*[713].

SPIRIT POSSESSION

Thomas: lɛ nɪnɪ gyína̰ʊ̰ kyēi-ti, ʊ́ʊ má̰a̰ sá-ga taa lɛ hɪ̰́nɪ̰ sɪ̰́ɪ̰lɛ↓?

Thomas: *And those who are possessed by the* jinn[714]*; can you put them together with the mad people*[715]*?*

Kuman: oo! Mía mā̰a̰ sā-ga taa-í; ʊ̰́ʊ̰ bā̰ɪ̰ bā̰ɪ̰! Nyʊ̰'nɪ gyínaʊ̰ kyēi-ti a hʊ̰́ʊ̰[716] kyēi ɪ̰siko-nɪ, mʊm há̰a̰ nyɪ̰̄-ɛ-í, a mɪ́ɪ yāa lɛ dā̰ bɔɔgɔ lɛ nyɪ̰̄ bɔɔgɔ, hʊ̰́ʊ̰ tūɪ lɛ yāa, lɛ nyɪ̰̄ bɔ kpʊm'nɪ, a mɪ́ɪ sā daga bɔɔgɔ lɛ sōo-ti zʊ̰ŋɔ a hɔ́ɔ ūla hɔ́ɔ yāa fɪ̰ɪ̰, mɪ̰ hɔ-ti pɛɛ, mɪ́ɪ yāa mɪ́ɪ nyɪ̰̄-ɛ.

Kuman: *No! I can't put them together, they're different*[717]*! The man possessed by the* jinn[718]*; it falls on him in the savannah; if he can't see it, I go there and look around me; he goes away, I see his tracks and light*[719] *a fire there and pour something on it so that it makes smoke which goes in that direction* (Kuman points in a direction that I am unable to interpret on the compass, but I think he just meant it as an example)*; whatever it is, I go and I see him*[720].

Thomas: lɛ gyína̰ʊ̰bɛrɛ laa kyēi yʊgɔbɛrɛ-dɪ, bɔ́ɔ gú ndagbolobɛrɛ-dɪ dugudu-gu laa bɔ́ɔ gú bɔɔ wɛ kyakyɪ↓?

Thomas: *And those* jinn *that fall on humans, do they come from the village of the ancestors*[721]*, or from some other place*[722]*?*

Kuman: báa gū ɪ̰siko-nɪ lɛ… hɔ́ɔ hē mʊm nya̰ŋɔ, hɔ́ɔ hē mʊm nya̰ŋɔ lɛ, lɛ hɔ́ɔ gū ɪ̰siko-nɪ hɔ, lɛ sā̰ bɔ-rɪ. Wɛ-ti lɛ nyʊ̰ lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ pɪī, mʊm hʊ̰́ʊ̰ pɪī, a hɔ́ɔ hē mʊm hɔ́ɔ sā̰ gʊ-rɪ gya, wá nyɪ̰̄, hɔ́ɔ hē mʊm hɔ́ɔ sā̰ gʊ-rɪ lɛ. Lɛ hɔ́ɔ hē mʊm ʊ nyɪ̰ŋmɔ haa-ti-í, mʊm ʊ nyɪ̰̄ nyɪ̰ŋmɔ wɛ lɛ ʊ́ʊ gyāba: "nyʊ̰ lɛ!", ʊ́ʊ nyɪ̰̄-ɛ bɪbɪ lɛ ʊ́ʊ gyāba "nyʊ̰'nɪ lɛ", hɛrɛ lɛ gyina̰'nɪ, mʊm hʊ̰́ʊ̰ dā̰-ŋʊ lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ vērɛlɛ bɪbɪ lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ vērɛlɛ, hɔ́ɔ hē mɪ̰ "hʊ̰́ʊ̰ bɔɔ", lɛ hɔ́ɔ hē mɪ̰ lɛ "ɪpɪɪrɛgɔ'nɪ bɔɔ!". Mʊm hɛrɛ mɪ-ti

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711 Lit.: "and it comes + *emphatic marker*".

712 Lit.: "he does the remedy and it doesn't go".

713 Lit.: "I go (to the) back + *emphatic marker*".

714 Lit.: "and those, *jinn* fall on".

715 Lit.: "you can put him one with the one who is mentally ill?"

716 In this passage Kuman refers to the *jinn* using animate personal pronouns.

717 Kuman's repetition of the adjective acts as an intensifier.

718 Lit.: "The man *jinn* have fallen on".

719 Lit.: "put".

720 Following the smoke.

721 Lit.: "come out of the ancestors (of the) old times".

722 Lit.: "there certainly by chance".

mʊ̱ bɪbɪ, hɛrɛ bì kpéle faɪ, mʊm míɪ kyēi mʊ̱rʊ̱, úʊ[723] dą́ a hɔ́ɔ są̄ hʊ̱-rɪ↓? hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm bɪbɪ lɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm hʧ̱ʊ̱ nyī̱-mɪ.

Kuman: *They come from the* savana *and… it's like an illness, it's like an illness that comes from the savannah and enters in*[724] *them. If for example a man dies, if he dies and for you it's like something which is (too) bitter, you see it's as if it enters in you, it's as if you're lost*[725] *and every time you catch someone's eye you think: "That's him*[726]*!"; you see him for a second and you think: "There's that man!", whereas it's the* jinn*. When this happens to you, he shouts a lot, he shouts and he says: "He's there!", and says again: "The dead man's there!". If this happened to me*[727] *now, what we were talking about just now*[728]*, if I dropped dead this instant, wouldn't you see him entering into you? It would be like that, it would be as if you saw me.*

Thomas: A bɛ dɛ gyinąʊ̱'nɪ úą̱ gū i̱siko-nɪ lɛ kyēi yʊgɔbɛrɛ-dɪ laa[729] bɔ nyʃ̱ŋmʊ̱ gárɪ↓?

Thomas: *And why do the* jinn *come out of the* savana *and enter into people… are they bad*[730]*?*

Kuman: Bɔ nyʃ̱ŋmʊ̱ gārɪ, bɔ nyʃ̱ŋmʊ̱ gārɪ!

Kuman: *They're bad, they're bad!*

Thomas: Mʊm nyʊ̱̀ píɪ faɪ dugu, zɪ nyą́ hɛ́ lɛ gyí bɔ pɪkɔnaga[731]↓?

Thomas: *If a man here died a long time ago, what do you do to find out the cause of his death?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ faɪ baaŋɛ'rɛ hɔ, bá kpālɪ lɛ, mʊm baaŋɛ'rɛ mʊ̱ kyɔ hɔ taa, úʊ yāa lɛ dą̄ bɔɔgɔ hą́ą̄ kpālɪ, lɛ úʊ yāa fʊ̱̱ hʊ̱-ti laa bī-kpe gʊ̀ kú-ɛ lɛ, hʧ̱ʊ̱ dū-kɛ. A gyinąʊ̱ wɪ̱nɪ hʊ̀[732] dú ʊ̱ gʊ̱ dɛ, mʊm wɪ̀ są̄ ą̱ŋɔ-nɪ, hą́ą̄ mą̄ą̄ są̄ mɪ yɔgɔ'rɛ-nɪ mʊ̱-í, hą́ą̄ mą̄ą̄ są̄-nɪ-í. Halɪ bɔ́ɔ kōrɪ mʊ̱ʊ̱, bɔɔ vɪ̱-ke, bá mą̄ą̄ są̄-nɪ-í, a wá nyī̱ hɔ, hɛrɛ mɪ̱ ʊ̱ hą̱ lɛ mì lá-ga dugu… a hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ bɪ̱ɪ̱'nɪ, mʊm hʊ̀ píɪ hɔ, a bɔ pɪ̀kɛ'rɛ są́-bɪ-rɪ, lɛ dą́ bà gyí pɪkɛ'rɛ kú-ɛ-í, bìa lá bí bɔɔ wɛ. Mʊm úʊ yāa laa bī-kpe pɪkɛ'rɛ kú-ɛ, mʊm Yegomɪlɪa lɛ, laa mʊm nyɪ̱̀ hɔ gú-ti, laa mʊm yɔgɔminyo-nɪ lɛ, laa hʧ̱ʊ̱ dū-kɛ gʊ-rɔ, hɛrɛ faɪ!

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[723] Kuman is speaking directly to my spokesman and refers to me with a 3rd-person pronoun.

[724] Lit.: "on".

[725] Lit.: "his face isn't (any longer) inside/on".

[726] Lit.: "man + *presentative*".

[727] Lit.: "if this me-on".

[728] Lit.: "here".

[729] *Laa* here is a simple variation of the coordinating conjunction *lɛ*.

[730] Lit.: "their faces are hard".

[731] Compound word: his death-foot.

[732] The 3rd-person pronoun refers to me; Kuman was talking directly to my spokesman.

Kuman: *Here we usually consult*[733]*, if you're referring to our customs*[734]*, you go there*[735] *and he*[736] *consults; then you go near there, to him*[737] *and you ask the reason for his death*[738] *and he tells you. And those* jinn *you were talking about*[739]*; if one of them enters the village, it certainly can't get into my hut. Even if they keep going around it, and they surround it, they can't go in, you can see how tired they get!… Between me and them it was over a long time ago*[740]*… and for example think of a child, if he dies, and his death hits us*[741]*, and it happens that we don't know the reason for his death*[742]*, (even) after we've consulted everywhere… When you go to consult on the type of death that killed him*[743]*, if the cause is* Yegolimia*, if it comes from a man or from his house*[744]*; he*[745] *will tell you, that's what happens here.*

THE CURE FOR SPIRIT POSSESSION

Thomas: Mʊm gyínaʊ̰ kyēi nyʊ̰-rɪ, hą́ą̰ mą́ą̰ są́ yɔgɔ'rɛ-nɪ-í[746]↓?

Thomas: *If a* jinn[747] *falls on a man, he can't enter the hut, can he?*

Kuman: oo! Hą́ą̰ mą̄ą̰ są̄-nɪ-í! wɛ lɔɔ, nnąa̰… eh… Hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū̄ zɪŋɛ'rɛ gʊ̰ faɪ, bugobɛrɛ pɪkɛ'rɛ…

Wɛ̀ píɪ Gbuduyo nnąa̰, … ɪbʊm lɛ. Gya… Hʊ̀ʊ̰ tíɪ bɔ sʊga lɛ sá bɔ gbaagyo[748] faɪ. Gya hʊ̀ʊ̰ tíɪ bɔ sʊga lɛ fḭ́ bɔ gbaagyo. Hɛrɛ bɔ̀ níɪ sɪ gbereke'rɛ bɪ(bɪ), ɪbʊm lɛ, a hʊ̀ʊ̰ lɛ: "nna, mɪ nąa̰ąa̰ŋu ʊ́ʊ̰[749] nyā-mɪ!"… hʊ̀ʊ̰ píɪ oh! A bɔ̀ vérɛlɛ pɛɛ mʊ̀ʊ̰ lɛ bɔ̀ yáa

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733 Lit.: "this here, its *def.* focus, they consult *presentative*".

734 Lit.: "if its own *focus* its first its one".

735 Lit.: "you go and arrive".

736 The *féticheur*.

737 Another hypothetical *féticheur*.

738 Lit.: "things *def.* killed him".

739 Lit.: "she said their business *focus*".

740 Lit.: "and I finished it time ago".

741 Lit.: "enters us-on".

742 Lit.: "the death that killed him".

743 Lit.: "ask it, the death killed him".

744 Lit.: "if *Yegolimia presentative,* or if man, it comes from (him), or if (from) inside the house *presentative*".

745 The *féticheur*.

746 The tonal structure with an M tone on the second morpheme of the negation -ɪ is compulsory in a negative interrogative. See Micheli 2007: 85.

747 Kuman uses the plural form of *jinn*.

748 *gbaagyo* cannot be translated with a single word. It refers to a joint between the main branches which form the frame of a traditional thatched roof.

749 The pronoun for the belly, *nąa̰ŋu*, is plural because the noun is plural – an equivalent

pú-e. A nyí̱-wɛ gú Talahini lɛ hʊ̀ yí, hɛrɛ hʊ̀ mí̱nɪ̱ a hʊ̀ nyɪ̀ hʊ̱ lɔɔ, lɛ bɔ nạ̀ŋạ̀, lɔ bɔɔ zɪvʊ̱ŋo bɔ̀ tíɪ lɛ pú-e, a hʊ̀ kpré-gɛ[750], a hʊ̀ dé. A hà̱ạ̀: “aɪ lɛ↓?”, a hʊ̀ lɛ: “míɪ yāa Bagarɪbɔ”, a hà̱ạ̀: “aɪ lɛ↓?”, a hà̱ạ̀: “Mìa daagɔ yáa Talahini dugu, lɛ míɪ gōi”, a hà̱ạ̀: “Eh! mì páam! kyɛrɛ óʊ yāa lɔɔ hɛ̄ nna, nna. Kyɛrɛ hɛrɛ mì yí mì zéɪ sʊga gbaagyo bɔɔgɔ. Míɪ yāa, mía gyī prɛʊ̱ míɪ yī-í. Kyɛrɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ sī-ge[751] lɛ sāsi, kotokutrɔfrɪ̱nyʊ̱”. A hà̱ạ̀: “Yoo! Kyɛrɛ, a bɛ gɛ óʊ yí↓?”, a hà̱ạ̀: “Mía gyī tɛm’rɛ míɪ yī-tʊ̱-í!”, a hà̱ạ̀: “Yoo! Háa kpʊ̄-í!”. Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ yí lɛ sá̱ a hʊ̀ dá̱ bɔ̀ lɔɔ pú-e bɔɔŋɛ’rɛ-nɪ, a hʊ̀ ká̱ bɔ̀ vérɛlɛ pɛɛ: “bɛ lɛ faɪ↓?” a bɔ̀ ká bɔ yʊʊkɔ lɛ hìnɪ píɪ. “Bàa ká Kwadyo, hà̱ạ̀ hìnɪ píɪ!”, a hà̱ạ̀ lɛ: “hʊ̀ hé… hi!↓?”, a bɔ̀: “Hɪnɪ píɪ!”, a hà̱ạ̀: “Kyɛrɛ, ɪ́ʊ̱ lépa! Kyɛrɛ mì yógomi hʊ̄-rɔ bɔɔŋɛ’rɛ-nɪ. Kyɛrɛ mʊm míɪ yī lɛ hʊ̀ hé, bɔ nyɪ̱na lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ mɪ̄nɪ̱ gbaagyo lɛ sī bɔ sʊga bɔɔgɔ lɛ sāsi, lɛ hʊ̀ hé lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ dɛɛrɪ[752]!”. A bɔ̀: “hʊ̀ píɪ kparigya!”, a hà̱ạ̀: “há̱ạ̀ píɪ-í dɛ! lɛ mìa nyʊ̄-ɛ!”, a bɔ nyɪ̱na mạ̀ŋogo lɛ hʊ̀ mɪ̄nɪ̱ gbaagyo a hʊ̀ dá̱-nɪ sʊga’rɛ, a hʊ̀ sí sʊga’rɛ bɔɔgɔ, hʊ̀ góɪ lɛ hʊ̀ wíɪ nạ̀kɔ…

Kuman: *No! He can’t go in!… Now listen to this, madam[753]… ehm!… When you speak of our things[754]… of the death of children…*

A chap died in Gbuduyo, madam… he was a young boy. Sad… He had put[755] his money here in the straw of his roof. One day[756] when they were sitting in the sun, the boy said[757]: “Mama, my belly hurts!”… He died, oh! And they mourned his death, everything, for a long time and then they went to bury him. In the meantime[758] a man had left Talahini to return to Gbuduyo[759]; he was looking around and suddenly saw him there, with his mat and the white sheet they had used to bury him. He greeted him and he returned the greeting. Then he said: “Where are you going[760]?”, and he (the dead man): “I’m going to Bagaribo”, then adding: “And where are you going?”, and the other one replied[761]: “Some time ago I went to Talahini and now I’m coming back”, and the dead man[762]:

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of “intestines”.

750 The pronoun referring to the dead man is inanimate.

751 Injunctive structure; see Micheli 2007: 93.

752 Although the word *dɛɛrɪ* is normally translated by “the day after tomorrow”, native speakers use it to indicate an unspecified day in the future.

753 Lit.: “certainly *presentative*, madam”.

754 Lit.: “When you said thing *def*., business, here”.

755 Lit.: “taken and put”.

756 Lit.: “When”.

757 Lit.: “young man *presentative*, he said”.

758 Lit.: “And”; the coordinating conjunction *a* is used very often in narration when there is a long sequence of consecutive actions. See Micheli 2007: 122-123.

759 Lit.: “a man certain came out Talahini and he came”.

760 Lit.: “where *presentative*?”.

761 Lit.: “and he”.

762 Lit.: “and he”.

*"Eh! I've forgotten (something)! Please sir, when you get there, look for my mother[763]… Really, when I went away, I left some money in the straw under the roof. I'm going and I don't know when I'll be back[764]; really, she has to go, get it and keep it, it's 7,000CFA". And he said: "All right! But when[765] are you coming back?" and the dead man: "I really don't know when I'll be back[766]", and the other one: "*Yoh*! That's not bad!". When he got to the village[767], he found that they were burying someone near the path and he heard them all crying. "What's happened here?" and they said his name, of the one who was dead: "His name was Kwadyo[768], he's the one who died[769]" and he said: "But it's… hee!" and they: "He's dead!" and he: "Really, you're lying! Really, I met him[770] on my way here. Really, when I got to his house, he told me, his mother would have to look in the straw under the roof and take his money and keep it, then he said that one day he would be back". And they: "It's true, he's dead!" and he: "He's not dead at all and I saw him!", so his mother actually went to look in the straw under the roof; she found the money and took it out from there, turned round and started crying again.*

Thomas: lɛ ǰgowo laa vúga-bɛ laa báa yí bɔ gbɛgyɻ̰ɛʊ̰↓?

Thomas: *And do people call them[771], or do they come by themselves?*

Kuman: oo! bɛ́rɛ laa yī bɔ gbɛgyɻ̰ɛʊ̰.

Kuman: *No! They come by themselves!*

Thomas: Puni'nɪ hą́ą̰ kyēi nyʊ̰'nɪ-wɛ-rɪ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dú bɔ nʊʊŋɔ↓?

Thomas: *The dead one who falls onto a man, does he speak with his own voice[772]?*

Kuman: Hérɛ laa hɛ̄ mʊm hɔ, kyēi nyʊ̰-dɪ hɔ, bɔ kpalɪgʊ̰ pɛɛ lɛ mɻ̰ hɔ̀ hé pɛɛ, bɔɔgɔ pìɪkɛ'rɛ gú pɛɛ, a hʊ̰̀ píı lɛ pɛɛ, hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ, hą́ą̰ dū faɪ. Hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ lɛ nyɻ̰̄ka bɔ kpalɪgʊ̰. Mʊm hɔ́ɔ dą̰ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ asɪ, mʊm hɔ́ɔ dą̰ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-ŋɛ asɪ pooko, mʊm hɔ́ɔ dą̰ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-ŋɛ asɪ, hɛrɛ báa dū-kɛ mɪ-rɔ, mʊm hɔ sinyo bɔɔgɔ mɪ-rɔ lɛ úʊ tūɪ-gɛ, lɛ ūla-ɛ bɪbɪ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ lā á hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ vɛ-í. J̌kpʊ̰rɔ'nɪ laa hɛ̄-gɛ!

Kuman: *That one does this; he falls onto a man… all the sacrifices are made and everything so that all that death will go from there, when (someone) is dead and it's everything, he says so, he speaks here. He says so and points out*

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763 Lit.: "Good, you go then do/say (to my) mother, sir".

764 Lit.: "I don't know the time (when) I come".

765 Lit.: "for what".

766 Lit.: "I don't know the time (that) I come absolutely".

767 Lit.: "came and entered".

768 Lit.: "they called (him) Kwadyo".

769 Lit.: "him, that one is dead".

770 Lit.: "I met him-with".

771 The spirits of the dead.

772 Lit.: "he says his mouth?".

the sacrifices he needs[773]*. If it happens that he asks too much*[774]*, if it happens that he really asks too much, they tell me*[775]*, (and ask) if I've got a remedy here*[776]*; they take it, inhale some and he stops, asks for nothing more*[777]*. Bad men, (when they die) do that.*

Thomas: Nyʊ̰'nɪ pīɪ, bɔ gyínạ̰[778]'nɪ laa kyēi nyʊ̰-dɪ, báa sí hɔ kpalɪgʊ̰ lɛ yɔ́gɔ'rɛ nyḭ̀ hɔ gbɛɛ laa nyḭ̀'nɪ nyḭ̀ bɔɔ wɛ↓?

Thomas: *A man dies and his* jinn *then falls on another man; are the proper sacrifices offered up so that the whole house can find peace again*[779] *or so that only that man can find his (peace)?*

Kuman: oo! Lɛ yɔ́gɔ'rɛ nyḭ̄ hɔ gbɛɛ!

Kuman: *No! So that all the house finds peace.*

Thomas: Mʊm hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mɪ̰, hɔ sínyo gʊ-rɔ[780] lɛ mạ́ạ̰ lɛ dɛ́ nyʊ̰'nɪ kyei-ti hʊ́ʊ̰ nyḭ̀ hɔ gbɛɛ[781]↓?

Thomas: *When this happens, have you got a remedy that can bring peace back to the man the spirit fell on?*

Kuman: Ts! mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ nyḭ̄ka bɔ kpalɪgʊ̰'rɛ hɔ, lɛ yɔgɔ'rɛ, lɛ hɔ́ɔ nūɪ mʊm hɪ́nɪ̰ yāa lɛ lā, mɪ̰ hʊ́ʊ̰ hɛ̄ lɛ bɔ pɪukɔ bạ̰ạ̰ŋɔ; hɔ kóyo kā(ɪ) yigyo yɔgɛ'rɛ-nɪ daagɔ-vɛ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ bɔ-rɔ. Mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ bɔ-rɔ hɔ, lɛ dạ́ zɪŋ̰ɔ wɛ lɛ báa hɛ̄, lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ dạ̄ hɔ sinyo mɪ-rɔ, lɛ míɪ nyạ̄-ŋa-bɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ tūɪ -gɛ lɛ sā yɔgɔ'rɛ-nɪ. Wɛ-ti mʊm hʊ̀ hé gʊ̰ kpʊ̰'nɪ lɛ, gʊ̰gyagaʊ̰, a pìɪkɛ'rɛ tíɪ -ɛ, hʊ́ʊ̰ mạ̄ạ̰ kpēle lɛ hɛ̄ lɛ bɔɔ hɛ̄ lɛ gyínạ̰'nɪ kyēi nyʊ̰-rɪ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ lɛ: "hɔɔ lɛ hɔ̀ hé; … hʊ́ʊ̰ dālɪ-ɪ̰ lɛ, lɛ ɪ́ɪ̰ kpạ̄, lɛ ɪ́ɪ̰ dālɪ-ɪ̰ yʊgɔbɛrɛ bikya", nyʊ̰'nɪ, hʊ̀ hé mɪ̰ lɛ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dālɪ-bɪ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ nyḭ̄ bɔɔŋɔ lɛ yāa. Hɪnɪ gʊ̰gyagaʊ̰ hʊ̀ hé lɛ gyere hʊ̀ yáa… lɛ bɔɔgɔ hɔ-ti: "Mía nyḭ̄ bɔɔ wɛ míɪ yāa-í".

Kuman: *Tsk! When he points out the sacrifices he needs*[782] *to his family*[783]*, it's as if in the end he goes away*[784]*, but he has to make sure that his death, his way of dying, doesn't return to that house*[785]*, so he says so to his family. If*

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[773] Lit.: "his sacrifices".

[774] Lit.: "he says it too much".

[775] Lit.: "they say it me-with".

[776] Lit.: "if its remedy is here me-with".

[777] Lit.: "he stops and says it no more".

[778] A man's spirit is *ʊ̰sɛ*; here Thomas Kwame uses the word meaning *jinn*, perhaps because an unusually restless spirit is more readily likened to the presences living outside the village than to ancestors.

[779] Lit.: "so that house *def.* may see itself".

[780] Lit.: "its remedy you-with".

[781] Lit.: "man *def.* fallen on, he sees himself".

[782] Lit.: "shows his sacrifices *def.*".

[783] Lit.: "the house".

[784] Lit.: "it's like that one goes and finishes".

[785] Lit.: "so he does his death in turn, his species refuses the return home *def.*-in another

he's said that to his family and they have something to do[786]*, they do it, then I've got a remedy*[787] *which I give them; they take it and put it in their house. If he had done something bad, something really evil, and death took him, he can speak and do it there, and a* jinn *falls onto a man and says that: "That's how it went… he asks you that you seek the sacrifices, that you beseech your ancestors*[788]*"; that man did that and asks us that he may find his way and go. Because of those bad things he did, he then died… and now, there he is*[789]*: "I can't see where I must go".*

Thomas: lɛ bέrɛ pūı, lɛ bɛrɛ gyinạ̰ʊ̰ úạ[790] kyēi-ti, gʊ̰ wɛ bɔɔgɔ úʊ dáa-ti hɔ gʊ̰-rı↓?

Thomas: *And when someone dies, the people possessed by* jinn*, have you got remedies for that*[791]*?*

Kuman: úa nyḭ̄, mʊm míı dīɔ hɔ… Mía kpālı-í, mʊm míı dīɔ hɔ, mʊm gyinạ̰ hını kyɛrɛ lɛ, hʊ́ʊ̰[792] yé sạ̄[793] yɔgɔ'rɛ-nı, hḭ̄n̰ kpēle lɛ hɔ́ɔ hḛ̄ mʊm míı dāwa, a mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ lā kpelego pɛɛ, ɓenhalı míı mạ̄ạ̰ tūı-gɛ lɛ hɛ̄ hɛʊ̰.

Kuman: *You see, when I sleep… I don't do fortune-telling, but when I'm asleep, if there's a good* jinn*, it comes into the hut; it speaks and it's as if I'm dreaming and when it finishes its speech, at dawn, I can go and do my work.*

Thomas: Lɛ úʊ máạ̰ wárı nyʊ̰ lɛ sí hʊ̰-rı nyạ̰ŋɔ↓?

Thomas: *So you can treat the patient*[794] *and take the illness out of him?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mía mạ̄ạ̰ lɛ wārı nyạ̰ŋɔ lɛ sā-ti sinyo lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ gbɛ̄, lɛ hɔ́ɔ yāa.

Kuman: *Yes! I can treat an illness and put a medicine on it, so that he recovers and it*[795] *goes away.*

MORE ON SPIRIT POSSESSION

Thomas: gyinạ̰ʊ̰ 'nı úạ̰ kyéi hɛɛmɔ-rı pooko lɛ zʊ̰́ yɛbɔ↓?

Thomas: *Do* jinn *prefer to attack men or women*[796]*?*

Kuman: Úạ̰ kyēi yɛbɔ-rı pooko lɛ zʊ̰̄ hɛɛmɔ!

Kuman: *They prefer women to men!*

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time".

786 Lit.: "arrives a thing certain and they do".

787 Lit.: "arrives its remedy me-with".

788 Lit.: "your people of yesterday".

789 Lit.: "and there it-on".

790 Referring to the *jinn* Thomas uses an inanimate pronoun.

791 Lit.: "things certain there you add-on its things-on?".

792 Here Kuman uses animate pronouns to refer to the good *jinn*.

793 Future construction used to indicate consequentiality; see Micheli 2007: 75.

794 Lit.: "man".

795 The illness.

796 Lit.: "fall on men much and surpass women?".

Thomas: Bɛ tri lɛ↓?

Thomas: *Why's that?*

Kuman: úa nyɪ̄, bɔ tɔ́gɔ hɛ̄ yɛgɛyɛgɛ, hɛɛn'nɪ dɛ, hʊ́ʊ̲ sā sinyo dɪ̨dɪ̨, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̲ hɛ̄ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̲ kyēi hʊ̲-rɪ, há̱a̱ mā̱a̱ nyɪ̄ bɔɔŋɔ-í, nyʊ̲ pɛɛ hʊ́ʊ̲ mā̱a̱ gbē, a yɛrɛ'nɪ dɛ, hʊ́ʊ̲ hɛ̄ pɛɛ yɛgɛyɛgɛ, hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̲ dā̱-bɪ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̲ kyēi hʊ̲-rɪ lɛ há̱a̱ mīini-í.

Bɔɔgɔ mɪ-ti, mʊ̲, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̲ hɛ̄ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̲ kyēi mɪa-rɪ daa, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̲ kyēi nyʊ̲-rɪ, a míɪ yāa, mía mā̱a̱ hɛ̄ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̲ sīo lɛ gū hʊ̲-rɪ, a hɔ́ɔ dā̱ hʊ́ʊ̲ mā̱a̱ gū hɔ, zɪ hʊ́ʊ̲ hɛ́ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̲ má̱a̱ yí mɪa-rɪ↓? mhm!

Kuman: *You see, their skin is softer, while a man, he wears many amulets; if he*[797] *tries to possess him*[798]*, he can't find the way, but a woman is all soft and when he goes there to possess her he's not afraid.*

So here where I am, if he tries to possess me today, or if he possesses a man and I go, I can make him run away and come out of him, and it happens that he can come out; and how could he possess me[799]*? Mhm!*

[797] The *jinn*.

[798] Lit.: "he makes that he falls him-on".

[799] Lit.: "how does he do so that he can come me-on?".

Thomas: úʊ gyí yʊgɔbɛrɛ bía kā dozobɛrɛ↓?
Thomas: *Do you know the men called Donzo?*
Kuman: ɔɔ! Míı gyī-be, mì nyí-bɛ Bʊakɛ faı.
Kuman: *Yes I know them. I met them over in Bouaké.*
Thomas: Hɛrɛ Dozobɛrɛ ɻ hɛ́ʊ̰ táa lɛ bɛrɛ↓?
Thomas: *Those Donzo… is your work the same*[800]*?*
Kuman: oo!
Kuman: *No!*
Thomas: Lɛ bɔ́ táa lɛ Kulaŋo sawalɛsɔgɔ bɛrɛ↓?
Thomas: *But is it the same as the work of the Kulango hunters?*
Kuman: Sawalɛsɔgɔ lɛ dɻ̰dɻ̰dɻ̰dɻ̰, bɔ tuloʊ̰[801]'nı mʊ̰; ʊ̰ lɛ bı-rɔ faı dugu, ʊ̰ koyo lɛ bı-rɔ. Dozobɛrɛ tüi kpakakpaka, kpʊkpʊgɔ mʊ̰, hɔ nʊʊŋɔ totogo; ʊ̰ wɛ wɛ dɻ̰ mı baaŋɛ'rɛ faı dugu hɔ, hɔ sʊ̀ʊ̰kɔ dą̰ mʊ̰. Hɔ sʊ̀kɔ dą̰ mʊ̰. Hɔ lɛɛkɔ mʊ̰, hɔ lɛ̀ɛkɔ dą̰ mʊ̰. Úa nyī anyeresi[802] bía pą̄ tusigyo[803]'rɛ, hɛrɛ úʊ sōo-ke-nı, hɛrɛ hɔ́ɔ dē mʊ̰ "pum!"; úʊ nyḭ̄ hɔ́ɔ hē ʊ fɛ́ mʊ̰ hą̄! Ʊ̰ taa lɛ Dozobɛrɛ baan'nı, bı baan'nı bìa pą́ faı dugu ka, ʊ̰ taa lɛ Dozobɛrɛ.
Kuman: *They are very good hunters, their rifles are like this, the same ones as we used to have here, the same type as ours. The Donzo's rifle is very long, really long, its barrel*[804] *is long*[805]*. They're very big, like mine, the one I used to have here, it was this long*[806] (Kuman extends his left arm to show the length of the barrel). *It was this long, its bullet, its bullet was like this* (draws a bullet about 10 cm long in the sand)*, its bullet was like that. You see, the gunpowder, we used to shoot with gunpowder that you had to put in and it went "boom!", you should have seen it, it made your arm go back like this!* (mimes the effect of the recoil). *These things are the same as the Donzo's, ours that we used to shoot here, they were the same as the Donzo's.*
Thomas: ɻ hɛlɔm úą̰ táa-í↓?
Thomas: *Your way of working isn't the same*[807]*?*
Kuman: ɻ̰hɻ̰! Bı hɛ́lɔm bāı taa! Háa nūı bı túloʊ̰'nı táa!

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800 Lit.: "your work (is) one with them?".

801 Regional variation of the more common plural *tuyʊ̰*.

802 *Anyeresi* is definitely not a Kulango word; according to Kuman it is probably Ashanti.

803 The Kulango word for gunpowder.

804 Lit.: "mouth".

805 The three *ideophones* have been translated with the single adjective "long" because all three evoke the idea of length.

806 Lit.: "its length arrived like this".

807 Lit.: "your ways of working, they not one?".

Kuman: *Ahi! Our way of working isn't the same*[808]*! Anyhow our rifles are the same*[809]*!*

Thomas: Dozobɛrɛ sáwalɛgɛ drɔ́ka nyạ̰ laa bɛrɛ báaŋɛ'rɛ drɔ́ka-ɩ̰↓?

Thomas: *Is the Donzo brotherhood better than yours, or are (their) people better than you*[810]*?*

Kuman: eh! Ʊa nyḭ̄ bɪa baaŋɛ'rɛ faɪ nna, úa nyḭ̄ tɔzʊ̰bɔ bía kū-ɛ; úa nyḭ̄ bɛrɛ fʊ̰̄, a yʊgɔ lɛ báa pạ̰̄ laa mía gyī-í. Hɔ naŋa-dɪ bía la kū tɔzɪna, bía kā lɛ lɛ bɪa baaŋɛ'rɛ faɪ! A Dozobɛrɛ, eh! Míı lā gyī hɛrɛ báa hɛ̄-í[811].

Kuman: *Eh! You see, our custom here is this, madam, you see, we kill animals. You see, those people there, maybe they kill men too, I don't know. That's why we (only) kill animals*[812]*, we know that this is our tradition*[813]*! But the Donzo, eh! I don't know what they do!*

MASTERS OF HUNTING

Thomas: úʊ mą́ạ̰ wátʊ sawalɛgɛ bɔɔŋɔ lɛ nyą́-bɪ↓?

Thomas: *Can you tell us something about hunting*[814]*?*

Kuman: bɪ nìaʊ̰'nɪ nyī́ka-mɪ sawalɛgɛ; hìnɪ nyī́ka-mɪ sawalɛgɛ'rɛ hɛrɛ, hɔ̀ níı mʊm Kwaku Wara, hìnɪ nyą́-mɪ siʊ̰ lɛ.

Kuman: *My*[815] *maternal uncle taught me hunting; that one taught me to hunt; it was when Kwaku Wara gave me the medicines.*

Thomas: Lɛ Kwaku Wara hī́nɪ̰ nyī́ka-ʊ mʊ̰̄ báa kyí sirɪʊ̰'nɪ lɛ yáa sawalɛgɛ↓?

Thomas: *And did Kwaku Wara teach you how to charge*[816] *the rings (with magic powers) to go hunting?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! *Voilà*! Lɛ ḭsiko yʊgɔ bɛrɛ, bɛ̀rɛ[817] nyī́ka-mɪ wɪ̰̄nɪ.

Kuman: *Yes!* Voilà! *And the people who live in the savannah; they showed them to me.*

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808 Lit.: "our way of working loses one".

809 Lit.: "it stays (that) our rifles *def.* one".

810 Lit.: "Does the Donzo brotherhood surpass you, or people, they themselves, surpass you?".

811 Here the morpheme *-í* has an emphatic function.

812 Lit.: "animal".

813 Lit.: "and us, we ourselves here".

814 Lit.: "Can you explain the path of the hunt and give to us?". Benefactive construction; see Micheli 2007: 94.

815 Lit.: "Our".

816 Lit.: "fry".

817 Class 26; group plural; see Micheli 2007: 34.

Thomas: ʊ níaʊ̰'nɪ nyɪ́ka-ʊ sawalɛgɛ wʊrʊkɔ zɪ↓?

Thomas: *How many years did it take your maternal uncle to teach you hunting*[818]*?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ hé siʊ̰'nɪ lɛ lá lɛ mì hé wʊrʊkɔ a hàa̰ gyere nyɪ́ka-mɪ sawalɛgɛ, a mɪ nìaʊ̰bɛrɛ dɛ́ hɪnɪ bɔ bɪlaa, a taa Ka̰mɪ, hɛrɛ hɔ̀ zɛ́ɪ bɪbɪ laa dɛ, a hɔ̀ lá bìa má̰a̰ nyɪ̀ na̰a̰ŋmɔ daagɔ-í, hɛrɛ hʊ̀ nyɪ́ka-mɪ sawalɛgɛ'rɛ.

Kuman: *When he finished doing medicines, a year went by before he showed me hunting; I had two maternal uncles, and one went to* Basse Côte[819]*, which left two of us*[820]*, and in the end we ran out of meat*[821]*, so he taught me to hunt.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ ɔ̀ sáwalɛ lɛ gyí, hɔ́ dá̰ʊ̰ wʊrʊkɔ sa̰a̰bɪ↓?

Thomas: *How many years did it take you to learn to hunt*[822]*?*

Kuman: A bɛ gyere hɛ↓?

Kuman: *What do you mean*[823]*?*

Thomas: A ɔ̀ gyere gyí sawalɛgɛ'rɛ!

Thomas: *Before you knew hunting!*

Kuman: a haa kakaɪ hɔ-rɔ fɪfɪɪ, ɛh! A hàa dá̰ʊ̰ wʊrʊkɔ taa-ŋmɛ-í. Hɛrɛ hɔ̀ hɛ́ fɪnyɔ taa-ŋmɛ, hɛrɛ mì *passer* krʊa, hɛrɛ mì kú walɔɔgɔ'nɪ, bɔ ṵnʊ̰ʊ̰ walɔɔʊ̰ walɔɔʊ̰. A mì yáa mì kú bɪlaa gbereko taa.

Beresʊ̰ma̰ lɛ báa kā wɛ dagba, beresʊ̰ma̰, bɔ ṵnʊ̰ŋɔ dá̰ʊ̰ mʊ̰rʊ̰, mʊm ʊ dā̰ bɔ ʊ́nʊ̰ʊ̰ mʊ̰rʊ̰.

A dugu, mʊm ɔ̀a kú-ɛ dɛ, mʊm ɔ̀ kú-ɛ, mʊm bàa píra-ɛ hɔ-í, a hʊ̀ nyɪ̀ mʊm a̰ŋɔzɪna lɛ bɪbɪ, lɛ ɔ̀ gyába lɛ tɔzɪna wɛ lɛ… hɛrɛ mì yáa kú wɪ̰nɪ mʊ̰ lɛ mì yí hɔ, a nyɪ̀ 'nɪ wɛ dú-kɛ mɪ-rɔ kyɔ: "Kyɛrɛ wɛ lɔɔ, hʊ̰! Sinyo lɔɔ! Hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ labʊlʊ", lɛ nyɪ́ka-mɪ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ: "mʊm ʊ́ʊ kʊ̄-ɛ hɔ, zɪna'nɪ ʊ kʊ̄ fʊ̰ʊ̰, mʊm ʊ yāa fāla-yɛ lɛ dā̰ bɪ̰ɪ̰ bɔ mi(nyo), lɛ ʊ́ʊ sī bɔ ṵdɪɔʊ̰, lɛ sī bɪ́ɪ̰ fɪ̄fɪɪ'nɪ bɔ mi(nyo), lɛ yō-kɛ lɛ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ. Mʊm ʊ yāa la kʊ̄ zɪna'nɪ lɛ lā, lɛ ʊ yé lō-ke, mʊm ʊ sī-ge labʊlʊ ka, lɛ ʊ yé lō-ke lɛ dɛ̄mɪ-nyɛ lɛ tʊ̄ɪ -gɛ lɛ flʊ̄ zɪna'nɪ bɔ nyʊ̰ŋmɔ-rɪ pɛɛ, a hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊ̰ʊ̰, á hʊ́ʊ̰ gbɛ̄-kʊ daagɔ-í. Hɪnɪ mʊ̰ʊ̰ ʊ́ʊ nyɪ̰ zɪna vɛ pɛɛ lɛ ʊ́ʊ gyī-e, hɪnɪ ʊ́ʊ nyɪ̰, ha̰a̰ ʊ nyʊ̰ŋmɔ-rɪ daagɔ-í, mʊm ʊ yāa hɔ a ʊ yāa lɛ f(ā) la-ɛ pɛɛ lɛ lā, ʊ yɛrɛ-tɔ[824] bɔ faɪ, bɔ nyɪ̰ɪ̰ko, ʊ bugo-tɔ bɔ lɛŋmɔ lɛ bɔ ṵŋo.

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[818] Lit.: "your maternal uncle *def*. showed you hunting years how many?".

[819] This is the term used in *Petit Français* to refer to the forested areas in the south of the country where many immigrants from the north work as seasonal labourers on the banana, pineapple, coffee and cocoa plantations.

[820] Lit.: "this left us two *focus*".

[821] Lit.: "it finished (that) we couldn't see meat (any) more".

[822] Lit.: "When you hunted and learned, it arrived year three?"

[823] Lit.: "And what then *presentative*?".

[824] Inalienable possession. See Micheli 2005: 193-197 and Micheli 2007:88-89.

Zɪŋɔ wɛ fu̱ báa kā bɔ bɔyo, ʊ bi̱i̱-tɔ… ʊ́ʊ̱ zɛ̄ɪ, bɔ na̱a̱ŋu, bɔ ku̱mzʊ́rʊ̱'nɪ fu̱, ʊ́ʊ mā̱a̱ hōo-nɪ, a sɪra! Yɛrɛ há̱a̱ hōo-ge-í!".

Hɛrɛ zìna'nɪ (*Kuman calls the jinn a beast*) nyí̱ka-mɪ hɛrɛ mʊ̱ pa dɛ, hɛrɛ hʊ̱̀ hé lɛ: "mʊm kasʊ ʊ́ʊ yī, ʊ́ʊ dā̱ zɪŋɔ wɛ faɪ". Hɛrɛ mì yáa lɛ dá̱ drigobugo lɛ kyɛkyɛ, mʊm mì sà-ga mɪ naŋa-rɪ hɔ, halɪ mì kɔ́rɪ dɪryɛ lɛ, u̱kpo háa mā̱a̱ sō-mɪ-í. Drigyo, hɔ̀ hé mʊm bɔ̀ zʊ̱́-ye. Hɔ̀ hé mʊm dʊ̱fa̱ŋo, mʊm gyese, a bɔɔ, mì dá̱ hʊ̱̀ pó-ke bɔɔgɔ. Mʊm míɪ tū-kpe mɪ naŋa-rɪ faɪ, wɛ mía yāa dʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ-rɪ dugu la yāa-rɔ na̱a̱tɔʊ̱-í dɛ, mʊm mì sá̱ i̱siko-nɪ halɪ dɪryɛ lɛ á mì sá na̱a̱tɔgɔ-í, u̱kpo hàa mā̱a̱ sō mɪ naŋa-í. Hɛrɛ zìna taa'nɪ nyá̱-ŋa-mɪ kyɔ. A bɔ tüi'rɛ hʊ̱̀ kyʊ̱́ lɛ nyá̱-mɪ hɔ (hɛ)rɛ dɛ, mʊm mì nyì̱ zɪna'nɪ hɔ, a mì lá-ɛ, mʊm hà dɛ́-í zɪna'nɪ hà̱a̱ mā̱a̱ sɪo-í, hʊ̱̀ sí̱ zɪŋɔ lɛ sá hɔ nʊʊŋɔ-rɪ, mʊm mì á-ɛ bɪbɪ á hʊ̱̀ gyí-í, bɔ̀ sá zɪŋɔ hɔ nʊʊŋɔ-rɪ faɪ á haa, ʊ̱̀ sío-í. Mʊm mì nyì̱ zɪna lɛ lá-ɛ mʊm hàa dɛ́-í, zɪna'nɪ á hʊ̱̀ sío-í dɛ! A mʊm hɔ̀ dɛ́ vɛ, a mì kú-ɛ vɛ lɛ hà lá. Bɔ tüi *premier*'rɛ hʊ̱̀ sú lɛ nyá̱-mɪ lɛ.

Kuman: *It didn't take long*[825]*! It didn't take a year! After a month*[826] *I already knew how to kill big animals*[827] *with very long horns. I went and killed two in a single day; an African buffalo, which here we call* dagba*… the buffalo; (just) one of its horns was this long* (opens his arms wide)*… And once, when you killed an animal like that*[828]*, when you killed it and it wasn't killed properly*[829] *and for example it looked at an animal in the village and you thought it was just an animal… (once) when I had killed some and I was taking them home*[830]*, a man said to me, that is, a* jinn *said this: "Right! Here's something for you! It's a medicine! It's* labʊlʊ[831]*!" and pointed to a plant: "When you kill it, an animal like the one you've got there*[832] *and when you skin it you find it's got a little one in its belly, you have to take its brain, take the little one from the belly and grind them together with this herb. When you go hunting and you kill an animal you must rub this on it, take* labʊlʊ *and rub it, lick it, take a bit and spread it all over the animal's face so that its spirit won't bother you any more*[833]*. That way you'll see it for what it is, an animal*[834]*; you'll look at it but*

[825] Lit.: "and it, near it-with small, eh!"

[826] Lit.: "when it had done month one it".

[827] Lit.: "then I *passer* completely, when I killed big ones *def.*".

[828] Lett.: "when you killed it". Kuman uses animate pronouns here with reference to animals.

[829] Lit.: "if they didn't clean it like this"; see Micheli 2007: 87-88 on the passive voice in Kulango.

[830] Lit.: "I was coming *focus*".

[831] From the French *la boule*. The medicine in question takes the form of a compact ball made of herbs and other ingredients.

[832] Lit.: "When you kill it *focus*, that animal that you killed there".

[833] Lit.: "it does like this, he attacks you no more".

[834] Lit.: "it so you see an animal still everything and you know it".

it won't capture you[835]*. And when you skin it, this part will be for your wife, the back, and the neck and head will go to your children. The thing that here we call* boyo[836]*, the heart, goes to one of your children. What's left, the intestines, the belly where the little ones grow*[837]*, you can eat those parts, but be careful! A woman mustn't eat them!".*

That jinn[838] *told me*[839] *all this and then said: "If you come tomorrow, you'll find something here". So I went and I found some pearls and some* cauris*… When I wear them on my leg, even if I'm walking at night, thorns can't hurt me. The pearls, it's like a string of pearls*[840]*. It's like a raffia rope, a small string, it's there, you'll find that they've put it there. If I used to wear it when I went into the* dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ[841]*, and I had no shoes on*[842]*, the thorns couldn't hurt my feet. And it was precisely that* jinn *who gave it to me. And the first rifle that he gave me*[843]*, that one, when I saw an animal and aimed at it, until I fired*[844] *the animal couldn't run away. He had cut something which he had put on the rifle barrel*[845]*… If I aimed at him a bit, but he*[846] *didn't know, a thing had been put on the barrel, he couldn't escape. When I saw an animal, until I shot the animal couldn't escape, eh! It's his rifle, the* premier *that he bought for me.*

THE HUNTER'S APPRENTICESHIP – PART 2

Thomas: Nyḭ̀ wɛ mą́ą̰ gbé tüi wʊrʊkɔ zɪ↓?

Thomas: *How old has a man got to be to have a rifle*[847]?

Kuman: Mh! Hḭ́nɪ̰ mą̄ą̰ gbē tüi lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ sāwalɛ lɛ gyī hɔ pa↓? eh! úa nyḭ̄ bɔɔ ɪ̰gyaga bɔ́ɔ pō! Wɛ-ti lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ hē fɪfɪu lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ sāwalɛ, wɛ-ti hʊ́ʊ̰ hą̄ lɛ kūrʊ sāwalɛ mʊ̰… úa nyḭ̄ mɪ̰ lɛ hɔ-ti. Hɛrɛ bì níı faı dugu mʊ̰, ɪ̰gbrabɔ, ɪ̰gbrabɔ bɛrɛ hɛrɛ mì

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835 Lit.: "that you see and he not your face-on more".

836 The heart.

837 Lit.: "its things to generate here".

838 Kuman comes up with a sort of pun: he calls the jinn, *gyiṋa*, *zʊna*, which means "animal".

839 Lit.: "showed".

840 Lit.: "as if they had strung them".

841 *dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ* is usually translated with "desert", but it is a much more complex word. It refers to every anti-social space outside the village: the desert, the savannah, the bush the forest and the fields (the latter at night, when they are not the site of social activity).

842 Lit.: "and I didn't go with shoes".

843 Lit.: "and his rifle (that) he first gave to me *presentative*".

844 Lit.: "if it didn't resound".

845 Lit.: "on its mouth".

846 The animal.

847 Lit.: "a man certain can catch rifle years how many?".

lá lɛ yúgʊ hɔ, mìa gyí pa̱ lɛ zʊ̱-bɔ pooko. Wɛ hʊ̀ yáa pa̱ zʊŋɔ mʊ̱, a hʊ̀ kú-ɛ-í, lɛ hʊ̀ yé vúga-mɪ, lɛ mì yáa pa̱-(hɛ)rɛ, mì kú-ɛ lɛ nya̱[848]. Bɔ pooko, mì gyí bɔ pooko lɛ *président* bɛrɛ mʊ̱ pɛɛ, mì lá lɛ drɔ́ka-bɛ pɛɛ[849], hɛrɛ bɔ̀ nɪ́ faɪ dugu bɔɔ ahi! Mì lá lɛ drɔ́ka pooko dɛ!

Kuman: *Mhmm! To be able to take a rifle, hunt and know (how to do it)? Eh! You see, here there are many stupid men*[850]*. Some people, even if they're young, are able to hunt, some others can get old and not be able to… you see, that's how it is. A long time ago, the group of elders, when I grew up I was better than many of them at shooting with a rifle*[851]*. If someone went to shoot an animal and couldn't kill it, he would come to call me and I went to shoot it, I killed it for him. There were lots of them, I knew there were, and the* président *of the group, all of them, I surpassed them all, this was a long time ago, here, ahi! I was better*[852] *than many, eh!*

TRAINING KUMAN THE HUNTER

Thomas: ʊ sɪra lɛ ʊ nɪaʊ̱, bɔ́ hɛ́ sawalɛsɔgɔ↓?

Thomas: *Were your father and your maternal uncle hunters?*

Kuman: bɪ nɪaʊ̱! ɔɔ! bɪ nɪ̀aʊ̱'nɪ hɛ́ sawalɛsɛ!

Kuman: *Our maternal uncle! Yes! Our maternal uncle was a hunter!*

Thomas: ʊ nɪaʊ̱'nɪ ha̱a̱ sawalɛgɛ gʊ̱-nɪ↓?

Thomas: *And was your maternal uncle a member of the hunters' association*[853]*?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Hɔ̀ hɛ́ mɪ̱, siɪ̱'nɪ mìa lá lɛ dí hɔ, ʊ́ lá lɛ drɔ́ka bɪ nɪaʊ̱ bɔ baan'nɪ. Mhm! Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄, halɪ míı yāa i̱siko-nɪ lɛ, a míı pā̱ zɪna wɛ a hʊ́ʊ̱[854] yī lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ yé gbɛ̄-mɪ, mía mā̱a̱ hɛ̄ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ gōi zɪka, wɛ-rɪ mía mā̱a̱ ʔūra hʊ̱-rɪ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ kyēi.

Kuman: *Yes! It was like this, it ended up that I knew more medicines than my maternal uncle did*[855]*. Mhm! That's why if I go into the savannah and aim at an animal that's coming to attack me, I can make it go back and perhaps I can shout at it and make it fall (dead).*

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848 Benefactive structure. See Micheli 2007: 94.

849 Concluding structure. See Micheli 2007: 91.

850 Lit.: "here stupid, they (are) many".

851 Lit.: "when we sat here time ago *focus*, the elders, group of the elders, when I stopped growing, I could shoot and surpassed them much".

852 Lit.: "I surpassed".

853 Lit.: "your maternal uncle *def.* he brotherhood of hunters business-in?".

854 Pronouns referring to game animals are always animate.

855 Lit.: "medicines *def.* I finished eating *focus*, they ended up surpassing our maternal uncle his parts".

Thomas: Hɛrɛ gyìna̰’ nɪ la nyḭ́ka-ʊ dɛɛn’nɪ, hʊ̰̀ táa lɛ sawalɛ baan’nɪ↓?

Thomas: *That* jinn *who had shown you the plants, was it the same one who helped you in hunting*[856]*?*

Kuman: Mʊm wὲ nyḭ́ka-mɪ wɛ, wɛ-ti hɪnɪ hà̰ kyɛɛ́ɛ-ɪ́, oh! Wɛ-tɪ bì yáa yógomi bɔɔ-wɛ-ŋmɛ bìa dɔ́ʊ̰-ɪ́, lɛ hʊ̰̀: “a bì dɔ́ʊ̰ wɔ-rɪ-ɪ́!” lɛ bì zá̰ŋanɪ. Zɪŋɛ’rɛ hʊ̰̀ kyíi hɔ, mʊm mɪ́ɪ yé sā[857] a̰ŋɔ-nɪ a mì yáa fṵ pa; zɪŋɛ’rɛ hʊ̰̀ kyíi hɔ a bɔ mìnyo káɪ-ɛ, lɛ mì tɪ́ɪ-gɛ lɛ yáa-rɔ fṵ. Mʊm mì yáa hɔ-rɔ fṵ, á hʊ̰̀ kákaɪ mɪ kyṵŋɔ vɛ krʊa-ɪ́, hɪnɪ á hʊ̰̀ kákaɪ mɪ kyṵŋɔ-ɪ́. Hɪnɪ hʊ̰̀ yáa bɔ baḭ, mì daagɔ yáa mɪ baḭ. Hìnɪ kyɛ́rɛ lɛ hɔ, hɪnɪ bìa yáa yógomi wɔ-rɪ, lɛ hʊ̰̀ nyḭ́ka-mɪ zɪŋɔ kyɛrɛsɛŋɔ.

Kuman: *When someone showed me something, if he wasn’t a good person, oh! If we met*[858] *somewhere and didn’t understand each other*[859]*, he would say: “We don’t understand each other!” and we separated. When I got back to the village, I took the thing he hated most, that his heart refused, and took it there into the savannah*[860]*. When I took it there, he didn’t approach me again, that one didn’t come near me. That one went on his way, and for my part I went on mine. Whereas the good one, when we met*[861]*, taught me good things*[862].

Thomas: á hɪnɪ gyìna̰ táa lɛ-ɪ́↓?

Thomas: *So it wasn’t just one* jinn[863]*?*

Kuman: oo! oo! Gyìna̰ táa lɛ-ɪ́ dɛ!

Kuman: *No! No! It wasn’t just one* jinn*, eh!*

Thomas: ʊ́a yógomi lɛ gyina̰ʊ̰ bɛrɛ (bɔ) nyḭ́m gárɪ lɛ bɔ̀ kwá̰ gʊ-rɔ↓?

Thomas: *Have you met bad* jinn[864] *who fought against you?*

Kuman: ɔɔ!

Kuman: *Yes!*

Thomas: gyina̰ʊ̰ bɛrɛ (bɔ) hɛʊ̰ lɛ a̰kɔ sawalɛgɛ’rɛ-nɪ↓?

Thomas: *What is the role of the* jinn *in hunting*[865]*?*

Kuman: Wɛ-ti mʊ̰rʊ̰ ʊ́ʊ yāa-ŋmɛ wɛ, bɔ yɛrɛ bɔ mínyo dɔ̄ʊ̰, lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ nyḭ̄-ŋʊ lɛ dā̰ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ kōri-ʊ ah! Lɛ há̰a̰: “zɪ(na)-wɛ lɔɔ, nyʊ̰ wɛ lɔɔ ʊ́ʊ dā̰ fṵ”. Mʊm ʊ dā̰ fṵ, hʊ̰̀: “ahi!”, a há̰a̰ lɛ: “á mía nyḭ̄-ɛ-ɪ́!”.

[856] Lit.: “he one and hunting parts *def.”*.

[857] Future construction. See Micheli 2007: 75.

[858] Lit.: “we went to meet”.

[859] Lit.: “we weren’t sweet”.

[860] A rather confused utterance. Lit: “Thing *def* he hated it, when I would enter village-in and went there *focus*, thing *def.* he hated it, and his heart refused it, I took it and went-with there”.

[861] Lit.: “we met one another-on”.

[862] Lit.: “a good thing”.

[863] Lit.: “and that *jinn* one *presentative* not?”.

[864] Lit.: “Have you met *jinn (*their) faces were hard?”.

[865] Lit.: “*jinn* work and what hunting *def*.-in?”.

Hɪnɪ mìa nyɪ́-ɛ-í, oh! lɛ hʊ̀ hé zɪŋɔ wɛ lɛ mì nyɪ́-ɛ, lɛ hʊ̀ vúga-mɪ lɛ: “Yí faɪ!”. Mʊm hʊ̀ hé lɛ: “Yí fai!” lɛ hʊ̀ hé mʊm ʊa lɛ! Hɛrɛ mì dą́ bɔɔgɔ, bɔ pɪ̀kpe’rɛ hɔ, hèrɛ la dɛ́ mì gyí-ge[866], lɛ hʊ̀ hé: “aɪ úʊ yáa↓?” lɛ mì hé lɛ: “Mía kpą̄ nąą̄ŋmɔ lɛ!”; “Mhm! úa nyɪ̀ wɛ-í↓?” a mì hɛ́: “mìa nyɪ̀ wɛ-í!” a hʊ̀ hé lɛ: “yáa faɪ!” lɛ mì yáa. Mʊm mì yáa fafʊ̀ hɔ, mì mą́ą nyɪ̀ zɪna’nɪ wɛ… “úʊ mą̄ą dą̄ bɔɔ wɛ lɛ úʊ nūsɪ faɪ, mʊm bɔɔgɔ gbereke’rɛ lɛ úʊ nūsɪ faɪ, úʊ nyɪ̄ zɪna’nɪ wɛ hʊ̄ʊ̀ bārɪ hʊ̄ʊ̀ dą̄” … lɛ mì kú-ɛ. Hɛrɛ hàa hɛ́.

Kuman: *If you’re going around somewhere, for example, and his wife[867], who has a sweet heart, sees you and happens to like you, ah! He says: “You’ll find an animal there, a man there[868]…!”. When you get there, a man[869] says: “Ahi!” and then: “I can’t see him”.*

That one, I hadn’t seen him, oh! Then he did something[870] and I saw him and he called me: “Come here!”. When he said “Come here!” it was just like a normal man[871]. When I got there, his smell, that made me realise that he was a jinn[872]*, and he said: “Where are you going?” and I said: “I’m looking for meat!”, “Mhm! Haven’t you found any[873]?” and I said: “I haven’t found any!” and he said: “Go over there!” and I went, and when I got there I saw[874] an animal… “You’ve got to go there and sit down, about midday you sit down and you’ll see an animal that’s crossing[875] (the river?)…” and I killed it[876]. That’s how it went.*

Thomas: Háa dą́ tɛm wɛ a úʊ yōgomi lɛ gyina’nɪ ɪ̀ lem(ʊ̀) úą̀ fɪ̄ɪ̄wɔ-rɪ↓?

Thomas: *Have there been any times when you and the* jinn *have met and then fought[877]*?

Kuman: lɛ mì hé lɛ mì pą́-(hɛ)rɛ-ŋmɛ. Mì yógom(ɪ) wɛ-rɔ mì yáa, mìa dó haarɔ’nɪ[878] bɔ gʊ̀ faɪ; hɛrɛ mìa yáa bé-bɛ lɛ bɔ̀ hé a mì yáa sɪ̀halɪgyɔ. Da, hʊ̀ dɛɛkɔ walɔɔgɛ’rɛ lɛ níɪ dɛɛkɛ’rɛ-dɪ mɪ̀mʊ̀, a hʊ̀ yúgʊka haan’nɪ a ʊ̀ yáa, a mì ką́ hʊ̀ hwɔ́ɪ-ɛ gbogbogbogbo hɔ tɛɛ’rɛ-nɪ, lɛ níɪ lɛ kwɔ́ɪ-ɛ gbogbogbogbo, lɛ mmą́, lɛ mmą́ lɛ mmą́ “Hua! Hua! Hua!” a mì hé lɛ: “míɪ gyī mɪ hàan’nɪ yáa

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866 Referring to the *jinn* Kuman again uses an inanimate pronoun, but the subsequent *hʊ̀* reverts to being animate.

867 Lit.: “his wife, her heart sweet and she sees you”.

868 Lit.: “Animal certain there, man certain there, you find there!”.

869 Lit.: “he”; this story is rather obscure.

870 Lit.: “(a) thing certain”.

871 Lit.: “and it was like you *presentative*”.

872 Lit.: “know it”.

873 Lit.: “Haven’t you seen a bit?”.

874 Lit.: “I could see”.

875 Lit.: “you see an animal *def.* certain, he crosses, he arrives”.

876 The animal.

877 Lit.: “your necks they inflame”.

878 The demonstrative adjective indicates that the chimpanzee is considered an animate being.

lɛ lá!". Hɛrɛ zɪŋɛ'rɛ hɔ̀ hé paii̱, a hʊ̀ lá. Truge'rɛ lɛ mara bɪ kutuu a̱naŋa-rɪ lɛ oh! Hɪnɪ bɪa lɛ Sʊmʊa bɔ Kofi lɛ bɔ bugo bɛrɛ: "ahi!". Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ láɪ bɔ gbɛɛ lɛ gú hɔ taakɛ'rɛ-dɪ, a mì sóo-ke hʊ̄-rɔ. Hɔ̀ gbí; hɛrɛ hʊ̀ gú vuuuuu, ʊ̀ ka̱ truge'rɛ hɔ̀ dɛ́ hɪbɪbɪbɪbɪbɪ, hʊ̀ kú faʊ̱'nɪ, hʊ̀ yáa, a mì sí mɪ nyʊ̱ŋmɔ lɛ góɪ, hɔ̀ lá mìa ka̱ bɔ pɪ̱(kpo) bɔɔgɔ vɛ-í.

Kuman: *That's how I shot at that one*[879]*. I met one while I was going… I've already told the story of the chimpanzees… when I went to wait for them, for them to move, I went (there) early in the morning. Now there was a big tree and he was sitting there in the tree, then he woke the chimps, which ran away and I heard him knocking (the tree)* gbogbogbogbo *in his hole, he was sitting there and knocking it* gbogbogbogbo *and laughing, and laughing, and laughing:* "Hua! Hua! Hua!" *and I said (to myself): "I know my chimps have run off!". When the sun was high in the sky*[880]*, he stopped. Nearby was the forest, towards our camp and, oh! It was (me,) the one called Samoa, his Kofi and his family: "Ahi!". When he stretched*[881] *to put his head out, I let him have it*[882-883]*. Some time passed*[884] *then he jumped out* vuuuuu*, you could hear the forest resounding* hibibibibibi *(while) he bent the lianas, he went off, I turned round*[885] *and went off.*

Thomas: ó pá̱-(hɛ)rɛ↓?

Thomas: *So you shot him?*

Kuman: ah! Hà̱a̱ gyá! hà̱a̱ ká̱-ŋɛ-í! Bɔ kpʊkpɛ'rɛ mʊ̱ pɛɛ, ʊ̱ mʊ̱ faʊ̱'nɪ pɛɛ lɛ yáa. Hɛrɛ bàa hé lɛ mì kó dʊ̱nyʊ̱[886]; mì kó dʊ̱nyʊ̱ wɛ! Lɛ hʊ̀ péleka yʊgɔ bɪbɪ!

Kuman: *Ah! He was bad! He didn't understand! His marks were all over the lianas*[887]*. When they say I killed a supernatural creature… (it's true). I killed a supernatural creature. But he had frightened many people!*

Thomas: ó yáa fʊ̱̱ lɛ ó kó-ɛ↓?

Thomas: *Did you go there to kill him?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mìa yáa fʊ̱̱. Mʊm hʊ̀ nyɪ̀ nyʊ̱'nɪ wɛ lɛ kóri hʊ̀ péleka hɔ, mɪa̱ka bɪa sɪʊ̱'nɪ, sɪʊ̱'nɪ-rɔ[888], mʊm hʊ̀ nyɪ̀ wɛ lɛ kóri hʊ̀ péleka hɔ, bɔ nʊʊŋɛ'rɛ hɛ̀rɛ wárɪ

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879 Lit.: "and so I did and shot that it".

880 Lit.: "that thing *def.* did *paii* (*ideophone* which normally indicates verticality)".

881 Lit.: "when he spread himself".

882 The rifle.

883 Lit.: "with him".

884 Lit.: "it lasted".

885 Lit.: "took away my face".

886 *dʊ̱nyʊ̱* is a compound word made from *dʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ* and *nyʊ̱*. *Dʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ* is the anti-social space outside the village, *nyʊ̱* is the generic term for humankind. The compound means "creature of the supernatural world".

887 Lit.: "his traces *focus* all, they *focus* lianas *def* all and went".

888 *sinyo*, "remedy" or "medicine", is translated here with "amulet" because Kuman is talking about protective bangles and the like. The repetition of the plural acts as a redoubling intensifier.

hɔ mu̱; mʊm lɛ hà wárɪ, lɛ bɔ kàgam fú̱, lɛ hù̱ kóri hù̱ péleka-ʊ. A mʊm hù̱ nyí-ŋʊ mu̱ lɛ gyí bɔ gu̱'nɪ wɛ, lɛ bɔ nʊ̀ʊŋɔ wárɪ mu̱rʊ̱, mʊm mɪ̱ nyu̱ bɔ baaŋɛ'rɛ-ti.

Kuman: *Yes! I went there! Whenever he saw a man and wanted to frighten him*[889]*, if he wasn't wearing many of our amulets, when he saw someone and really wanted to frighten him, his mouth opened like this* (Kuman uses his hand to imitate a vertical cut in his face) *and when he opened it his his teeth grew… and he wanted to frighten you. And if he saw that you knew those things*[890]*, then his mouth opened this way* (puts his hand to his face horizontally)*, like that of a (normal) man.*

Thomas: Mʊm úa yōgomi gyina̱ wɛ-rɔ, miinyo háa kú-ʊ↓?

Thomas: *When you meet a* jinn*, are you afraid*[891]*?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ mì gyí-ɛ lɛ la hɔ, bɪa mʊm siu̱ gʊ-rɔ lɛ la, úa nyɪ̄ sinye'rɛ wɛ-ti bɔ zɪŋɔ, zɪŋɔ-nɪ, ʊ sinyo baaŋɛ'rɛ-nɪ, hɛrɛ há̱a̱ kōri hú̱u̱ sū-ke gʊ-rɔ. A úa nyɪ̄ úʊ nūŋʊlɛ nya̱ hɪnɪ, há̱a̱ mā̱a̱ kwɔ̄s-ʊ fuu eh! Halɪ mɪ̱ hú̱u̱ drɔ̄ka-ʊ pɛɛ, há̱a̱ mā̱a̱ kwɔ̄s-ʊ-é(í), mʊm hú̱u̱ kwɔ̄s-ʊ, hú̱u̱ pɪī, a mʊm úʊ kwɔ̄s-ɛ, hú̱u̱ pɪī. Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ há̱a̱ mā̱a̱ kwɔ̄s-ʊ-í, úa lā kwɔ̄sɪ hɪnɪ. Bía tūɪ wɛ bɔ u̱hɪ̱, bɔ u̱hɪ̱'nɪ mu̱ lɛ tūɪ wɛ bɔ nuŋodɪhu̱u̱u̱, lɛ tū-ɪ̱ lɛ bíɪ kyī siriu̱'nɪ, wɪ̱nɪ há̱a̱ nyɪ̄ gʊ-rɔ lɛ hú̱u̱ hɛ̄ lɛ lɛ a hú̱u̱ gū ʊ zɪka lɛ-í lɛ há̱a̱ hɛ̄ lɛ hú̱u̱ sū gʊ-rɔ siriu̱'nɪ, a hɛrɛ ʊa gʊ-rɔ faɪ a̱ŋɔ lɛ sā-nɪ lɛ dɛ! Há̱a̱ gyī hɛrɛ lʊʊka-í, hɛrɛ dɛ úa kwɔ̄ɪ lɛ, lɛ hú̱u̱ kyēi.

Kuman: *When I know him like that*[892]*… We, if you've got an amulet, you see, there's an amulet that's got a thing, a thing inside, an amulet that you've got and he wants to steal. And you see, if you fight him he can always put you down, eh! Even if he's stronger than you (and) everything*[893]*, he can't put you down, because if he put you down he would die, and if you put him down he would die. That's why he can't put you down; in the end you would put him down. We take some of his hairs, that's right some of his hairs and we take a few nails and his little fingers, we take them and charge up*[894] *some rings. When he sees that you're wearing them, he says he won't leave you alone*[895]*, he says he'll take your rings*[896]*, but when you've got them here in the village and you wear them*[897]*, everything's all right… he doesn't know the antidote and that's why you hit him and he falls to the ground.*

Thomas: ó dá̱ ó yógomi wɪ̱mɔ-rɔ lɛ núŋɔlɛ lɛ bɛrɛ[898]↓?

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[889] Lit.: "and wanted (that) he was afraid *focus*".

[890] Lit.: "and if he saw you *focus* and knew their rings *def.*".

[891] Lit.: "when you meet *jinn* certain-with, fear it kills you?".

[892] Lit.: "When I know him and it finishes".

[893] Lit.: "if like that he surpasses you everything".

[894] Lit.: "fry/cook".

[895] Lit.: "won't come out your back *presentative*".

[896] Lit.: "he takes you-with rings *def.*".

[897] Lit.: "put-in".

[898] Lit.: "You arrived, you met someone-with and fought with group?".

Thomas: *Have you ever met some of them and fought them?*

Kuman: Bɔɔgɔ, mʊm mì yógomi lɛ bɛrɛ mʊ̰, bɔɔgɔ mìa gyína mʊ̰ ka, mʊm bì yógomi bɪa lɛ bɛrɛ hàa̰ kyérɪ mɪ zɔʊ.

Kuman: *Down there, when I met them, I sort of stopped there, he kept away from me.*

Thomas: ʊ ɪ̰bʊŋmɔ-nɪ, ó dá̰ ó yógomi wɛ-rɔ↓?

Thomas: *When you were young[899], did you ever meet any of them?*

Kuman: oo! Hɛrɛ mɪ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ hálɪ a mì sáwalɛ, hɛrɛ bìa bíɪ̰ka.

Kuman: *No! When I grew up[900] and went hunting, then we met[901].*

Thomas: úʊ má̰a̰ wátʊ hɛrɛ nyā̰ bḭ́ɪ̰ka wɔ-rɪ lɛ gyina̰ʊ̰↓?

Thomas: *Can you explain about when you met[902] the* jinn*?*

Kuman: eh! Mʊm bɪa lɛ hɪnɪ bìa kpéle wɔ-rɪ-é[903], mʊm a̰ŋɔgʊ̰ hʊ̀ má̰a̰ dú mɪ-rɔ a̰ŋɔgʊ̰ wɪ̰, lɛ gʊ̰ wɪ̰nɪ̰ yí a̰ŋɔ, gʊ̰ wɛ hɔ́ɔ yé hɛ̄ a̰ŋɔ, hʊ̀ má̰a̰ dú-kɛ gʊ-rɔ: “zɪŋɔ koyo hɔ lɛ hɔ lɛ hɔ, hɛrɛ lɛ hɔ́ɔ yī a̰ŋɔ-nɪ. Mʊm ʊ́ʊ̰ yāa lɛ úʊ sī zɪŋɔ wɛ, mʊm mɪ̰ dìgɔ lá, dìgɔ lɛ lá, gʊ̀ wɛ lɛ lá, lɛ nyā̰ mʊm saakɛ’rɛ, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mɪ̰ lɛ gʊ̰́ wɛ kāɪ yigyo a̰ŋɛ’rɛ-nɪ!”; hàa̰ dú hɛrɛ.

Mhm! Lɛ hʊ̀ wátʊ hɛrɛ, lɛ nyɪ̰́ka-mɪ, lɛ mì yí lɛ mì dú-kɛ. Mʊm gbɔ̀kɔ lɛ lá, mʊm ù yáa lɛ hɔ̀ dɛ́ bɔ̀ kpá̰ dɪgɔ, lɛ nyá̰ gbɔkɔ, wɛ-rɪ zimyo, lɛ nyá̰ gbɔkɔ, mʊm bì yógomi, mʊm kyɛrɛsɛ’nɪ lɛ hɔ, mʊ̰ lɛ hʊ̀ ká-mɪ; a mʊm ù nyɪ̰́-ɛ dɛ, a ù gyába lɛ lɛ lɛ ḭsikonyʊ̰ lɛ-í, ehe… hɔ̀ nɪ́ʊm bɔ pɪ̰kpo lɛ bɔ ʊ̰ŋo lɛ bɔ tüi baaŋɛ’rɛ hʊ̀ bárɪ, ʊa̰ taa lɛ mɪ baaŋɛ’rɛ-í, lɛ mɪ nyɪ̀ŋmɔ gyere hálɪ hʊ̄-rɪ lɛ gyí wɛ-lɛ, lɛ hʊ̀ dú-ŋɛ mɪ-rɔ, hɛrɛ mì yí lɛ mì hé lɛ lɛ mì yáa dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ-rɪ, hɔɔ zɪna hʊ̰ bɔ koyo hɔ̀ dó mɪ-rɔ lɛ ḭ sí saraga, lɛ bɔ̀ tú -ʊ̰ lɛ sí saraga.

Kuman: *Eh! When we and that one spoke to each other, he could tell me something about the village[904], something that would happen at the village[905], something that would happen at the village, he could tell you: “That type of thing, that and that, they’ll come to the village. If you go and take something, when there’s no food[906], there’s no food, or something else is lacking, and you offer it as a sacrifice to the Earth, it will make sure no more bad things happen to the village[907]”, that’s what he said.*

Mhm! And he explained this and taught me and I came back and said it (to the village). Once you did what you had to do with the fetish[908], when you went

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899 Lit.: “Your youth-in”.

900 Lit.: “my face opened”.

901 Lit.: “we confronted one another”.

902 Lit.: “you confronted one another”.

903 In this case the morpheme *-é* acts as an emphatic marker.

904 Lit.: “like things of the village he could tell me-with things of the village some”.

905 Lit.: “and things some they came village”.

906 Lit.: “the food is finished”.

907 Lit.: “that does like this and things certain refuse the coming village *def.*-in”.

908 Lit.: “When the fetish *presentative* finished”.

out because he[909] *had made you look for a bit of food to sacrifice to the fetish, maybe a chicken, you sacrificed it to the fetish. When we met, if he was good, he called me and if you had seen him you would never have thought he was a supernatural creature… ehe! But there was*[910] *his smell, his head and his rifle, which he carried on his shoulder… those things were not like mine*[911]*, so I understood who he was*[912]*, and he told me, when I came and said that I would be going into the* dʊʊ̰kɔ̰*… there the* jinn *himself revealed his nature*[913] *and you*[914] *offered sacrifices, they took them and offered sacrifices.*

Thomas: A mʊm gyínạ̰ kpʊ̄rɔ wɛ lɛ↓?

Thomas: *And if it was a bad* jinn*?*

Kuman: A hʊ̰ dú gʊ-rɔ gʊ̰ wɛ-í dɛ! Hɛrɛ hʊ̰ kʌ́ʌrɪ, mʊm ì́ yógomi-bɛ lɛ hʊ̰ yáa lɛ a hʊ̰ kpré-kɔ-í, hìnɪ hʊ̰ dá̰!

Kuman: *Well, he wouldn't say anything! That one did nothing, when you met he went off without saying goodbye*[915]*… that one went on his way*[916]*!*

HUNTERS AND *JINN*

Thomas: Gyìna̰ʊ̰ bɛrɛ laa nyá̰-ŋʊ zɪŋɔ pooko, báa gói lɛ dálɪ[917]-ʊ gʊ̰ wɛ↓?

Thomas: *The* jinn *have given you many things; didn't they turn round and ask you for anything?*

Kuman: Lɛ dālɪ-mɪ gʊ̰ wɛ laa… wɛ-ti hʊ́ʊ̰ nyā̰-mɪ[918] sinye'rɛ lɛ mʊm ʊ́ʊ yāa hɔ, lɛ ʊ́ʊ kpā̰ mʊm zimyo bɔ fee lɛ, lɛ ʊ́ʊ yī-rɔ faɪ, ʊ́ʊ yī ʊ́ʊ dā̰ dɛɛkɔ hɔ koyo faɪ, a háa hɛ̄ mʊm báa su mɪ-rɔ sʊga-í, báa sū mɪ-rɔ gʊ̰ wɛ-í.

Kuman: *To ask me for something or… for example if he gives you a medicine, then you go to look for a chicken's egg and you take it there, you go back to his tree*[919]*… that's how it goes and they don't ask me for money, they don't ask me for*[920] *anything.*

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[909] The fetish.

[910] Lit.: "there were/sat".

[911] Lit.: "they one with my same no".

[912] Lit.: "and my face then opened him-on and knew certain *-presentative*".

[913] Lit.: "it animal him (animate) his species it (inanimate) said me-with". Here again Kuman calls the *jinn* "beast" and is uncertain whether to use animate or inanimate pronouns in referring to him (or it).

[914] Clearly an impersonal "you".

[915] Lit.: "he went and didn't salute you".

[916] Lit.: "arrived".

[917] The verb *dalɪ* literally means to ask (pray) someone (in order) to have something.

[918] To be read as *-ʊ*. In the subsequent passages Kuman continues to use the second person with an impersonal meaning.

[919] Lit.: "you come you arrive tree his species there".

[920] Lit.: "take".

Thomas: lɛ sawalɛ(gɛ) baaŋɔ lɛ báa dālɪ-ʊ gʊ̱ wɛ↓?

Thomas: *And the ones involved in hunting, do they ask you for anything[921]?*

Kuman: lɛ ɪ́sikosɔgɔ bɛrɛ dālɪ-mɪ gʊ̱ wɛ a̱ŋɔ baaŋɔ, ɪ̱sikosɔgɔ bɛrɛ ka! ɔɔ! "ʊ́ʊ yāa lɛ sa̱ a̱ŋɔ-nɪ zɪŋɔ koyo, míı dālɪ-ʊ lɛ ʊ́ʊ kpa̱ wɛ lɛ nya̱-mɪ[922]"; mʊm zimyo lɛ la, zɪna zɪna fɪfɪʊ, mʊm dɪzɪŋɔ, zíŋɔ wɛ lɛ la lɛ da̱ wɛ háa ɪ̱siko-nɪ fu̱-í. Hʊ́ʊ̱ ma̱a̱ yé dālɪ-mɪ lɛ lɛ: "ʊ́ʊ yāa, mʊm ʊ́ʊ yī kasʊ lɛ ʊ́ʊ yī-rɔ zimyo (lɛ) nya̱-mɪ", lɛ míı yāa-rɔ wɛ lɛ nya̱. Wɛ-ti lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ hɛ̄ lɛ: "ʊ́ʊ yāa lɛ ʊ́ʊ yī-rɔ zimyo bɔ fee", lɛ míı yī-rɔ wɛ lɛ nya̱, hɛrɛ háa̱ hɛ̄ pooko.

Kuman: *The people of the savannah ask me for things from the village[923], the savannah people! Yes! "Go[924] to the village, that certain thing I ask you to bring me[925]". It may be a chicken, some small animal, food or other things they don't find there in the savannah[926]. He may ask me: "Go, tomorrow, when you come back, bring me a chicken" and I take it to him. For example, he may say: "Go and bring a chicken's egg" and I take it to him… that's what he does often[927].*

Thomas: ʊ́ʊ da̱ ʊ́ʊ kʊ̄ zɪna wɛ pa kyɔ, a bɔ́ɔ dálɪ-ʊ↓?

Thomas: *So you often manage to kill animals; do they ask you for any?*

Kuman: Hiiiiii! Hɛrɛ po! Mʊm mì yáa sɪkɛwɛ dá lɛ kʊ́ zɪna'nɪ wɛ mʊ̱, hʊ̀ yáa bɔɔgɔ-ŋmɛ mʊ̱, hʊ̀ dá hɛrɛ mì kʊ́-ɛ hɔ, mʊm hʊ̀ gbʊ́ʊ̱, mʊm yɛrɛ lɛ hʊ̀ dá mì sá wɛ faɪ, lɛ sá wɛ faɪ, lɛ sá wɛ faɪ, lɛ sá wɛ faɪ, mì sá-ti na̱a̱ŋmɔ pɛɛ, lɛ kpri-kpri na̱a̱ŋmɔ lɛ sá-ti, kpɪ̱ko na lɛ sá bɔɔgɔ. Mʊm mì kʊ́-ɛ lɛ la bɪbɪ, hɛrɛ mì kʊ́-ɛ lɛ sá-ʊ̱ bɔɔgɔ lɛ la pɛɛ, yʊgɔ bɛrɛ bìa lɛ bɛ̀rɛ yáa wɔ-rɪ, mʊm hʊ̀ gbʊ́ʊ̱, lɛ a bì yáa bɔ ɪ̱gyagɔ, lɛ mì dé bɔ̀ yí pɛɛ lɛ zɛ́ɪ-mɪ mɪ taa. Mʊm bɔ̀ zɛ́ɪ-mɪ (mɪ) taa, mɪ taa na̱a̱m wɪ̱nɪ̱ lɛ mì déri-ʊ̱ laa sá dɛɛkɔnaŋa-rɪ. Benhalɪ hɛrɛ mì yí mì dá bɔ̀ tíı-ʊ̱ fuu. Bàa dálɪ-mɪ fuu, wɛ-ti mì pá-(hɛ)rɛ-ŋmɛ, mì pá-(hɛ)rɛ mʊ̱ lɛ mì dʊ́-ɛ, lɛ hɔ̀ dá bɔɔ wɛ, lɛ hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊm á mì nyɪ́ bɔ gʊ̱ wɛ krʊa-í lɛ hʊ̀ fáı lɛ, lɛ mì yáa fu̱ laa nyɪ́-ɛ, mʊm mì máa̱-ɛ lɛ kʊ́-ɛ hɔ, ù dá mì dá wɛ pa lɛ pó bɔɔgɔ, lɛ tíı bɔ kuko lɛ góı.

Kuman: *Heeee! This happens often[928]! Once when I used to go and managed to kill an animal, he went right there, he came just when I'd killed it, if it[929] was big, if it was a female, I put some stones[930] there, and some others there, and some there and some there* (Kuman draws a square in the sand and points

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921 Lit.: "And hunting, its own ones, and they asked of you things certain?".

922 Benefactive structure; see Micheli 2007: 94.

923 Lit.: "things certain village its own".

924 Lit.: "You go and enter".

925 Lit.: "I ask you that you look for a bit and give to me". Benefactive structure; see Micheli 2007: 94.

926 Lit.: "it (is) not savannah-in there".

927 Lit.: "this he does much".

928 Lit.: "this much".

929 The game animal.

930 Lit.: "something".

to the four corners, meaning that he put the stones and the meat at those points), *then I put a lot of meat there, I cut the meat very thin and put it on there, on the four corners and I put it there. When I killed an animal*[931]*, when I killed it and put the meat there and everything, (I and) other people, I and they went together, if it was (a) big (animal), we went to load it*[932]*, then I made it so that they went back and left me alone*[933]*. When they had left me alone I took (those pieces of) meat and put them at the foot of the tree. The next morning, when I came, I found that they had taken all of it. They always asked me, if for example I shot an animal*[934]*, I shot it and followed its tracks and arrived somewhere and it happened that I couldn't see anything at all and he*[935] *was there, I went there and managed to see it and when I managed to get it and have it and I killed it, you could see that I cut it up and left a lot of it there, then I took what was left and came back (to the village).*

Thomas: Zɪ hɔ́ɔ nɪ́ɪ a ʊ́a hɛ́ saalɛbɛn na[936]↓?

Thomas: *Why did you make four altars for the sacrifices?*

Kuman: Hʊ̱ hɪnɪ na (taa)[937], bɔ yɛrɛ, bɔ bugo bɪlaa! Hìnɪ mɪ̱ ká mʊ̱rʊ̱ dɛ: mì yáa a mì bárɪ mɪ sinyo a hɔ ʊ́ŋo dá, a hɔ̀ dá, a mɪ sìnye'rɛ kyéi, a mì kpá̱-ŋɛ pɛɛ, mìa nyɪ́-ɛ-í. A zɪna mì kú, a zɪna'nɪ mì pá̱ lɛ pési, lɛ nɪ́ɪ pa lɛ mì yáa la hɛ́; hɛrɛ mì dá̱ bɔɔgɔ a mì kprí zɪŋɛ'rɛ lɛ sá zɪŋɛ'rɛ-nɪ lɛ la, hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊ̱ a mì kpá̱ mɪ sinye'rɛ pɛɛ, mìa nyɪ́-ɛ-í, hɛrɛ mì nyá̱ na̱a̱ŋmɛ'rɛ mʊ̱ lɛ la.

Benhalɪ a mì yáa, a mì dá̱ bɔ̀ yí-rɔ sinye'rɛ, bɔɔ mì sá na̱a̱ŋmɛ'rɛ kyɔ, lɛ sá-ga bɔɔgɔ, a mì tíɪ sinye'rɛ, a mì hɛ́: "ah! A hɪnɪ faɪ sìnyo nɪ́ɪ bɪkya a mì kpá̱-ŋmɛ lɛ báɪ…" a mì yógʊ a mì tíɪ-gɛ lɛ yí a̱ŋɔ laa bí, laa kpálɪ lɛ bí-kpe. A hà̱a̱: "Hɛɛn'nɪ ʊ̀ nyá̱ na̱a̱ŋmɛ'rɛ bɪkya lɛ, hɪ́ṉɪ̱ nyɪ́-nyɛ lɛ hà̱a̱ hɛ́ mʊm hɪ́ṉɪ̱ tíɪ-gɛ-í dɛ, hʊ̱̀ mɪ́ṉɪ̱-ŋɛ bɔɔ lɛ bɔ bugo bɛrɛ, a bɔ̀ nyɪ̱́-nyɛ lɛ tíɪ -gɛ lɛ sá bɔɔgɔ". Hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊ̱ hɔ sʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊ̱!

Kuman: *He is one, his wife and their two children* (counts them off on his fingers)*! This is what he did*[938]*: while I was walking I lost my amulet because its string broke, it broke and my amulet dropped to the ground, so I looked for it for a long time, but I couldn't see it. Then I killed an animal, I shot it and left it, then I went to do (my work); when I got there, I cut the meat*[939] *and put it in*

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931 Lit.: "When I killed it".

932 Lit.: "we went its load".

933 Lit.: "left me me one".

934 Lit.: "I shot this it".

935 The animal.

936 Lit.: "how is it that you made sacrifice-places four?".

937 *Na* is four, the number of the *jinn*'s family; in this utterance Kuman should have said *taa*, *one*, because he was listing the family's members one by one, starting with the father.

938 Lit.: "that one, so he caused like this, eh!".

939 Lit.: "the thing".

the thingy[940]*, that's how it was, then I looked everywhere for my amulet but I couldn't see it, then I made a sacrifice*[941] *of the meat and that was all.*
The next day I went and found that they had brought my amulet there where I put the meat, they'd put it there, so I picked it up and said: "Ah! Here it is, this is where the amulet was yesterday… and I was looking for it but I missed it…"
So I stood up, took it and came to the village to ask, to consult the fetish and ask about this thing. So he said: "The man you gave the meat to yesterday, he saw it and made sure that no-one[942] *took it; he looked for it down there with his children and they saw it, they took it and put it there". It was this long, its length was like this* (points to his little fingernail).

MEETING *JINN*: ALONE OR IN A GROUP?

Thomas: úa bíɪ̰ka gyinạ̰ʊ̰ lɛ yʊgɔ naḇɔ↓?
Thomas: *Have you ever met*[943] jinn *with other people?*

Kuman: Mɪ taa háạ̰ bíɪ̰ka-rɔ, lá bíɪ yāa tạ̰kʊ lɛ yʊgɔ-í[944] dɛ! Mʊm hɔ́ɔ dạ̰ mɪ taa lɛ, hɛrɛ bíɪ nyɪ̰-wɔ. Kyɛrɛ hɔ́ɔ dạ̰ mʊm bíɪ pō yɛʊ. oo! Hʊ́ʊ̰ mạ̰ạ̰ kyɛrɪ-mɪ lɛ bíɪ bāɪ lɛ, lɛ dạ̰ mʊm sɪkɛwɛ lɛ dạ̰ bɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ bɪlaa, hʊ́ʊ̰ mạ̰ạ̰ hɛ̄-mɪ sɪkɛwɛ, lɛ: "yáa lɛ íɪ̰ yī yʊgɔ bɪlaa", hɪnɪ míɪ kōri hɔ lɛ bíɪ yāa wɔ-rɪ.
Kuman: *He meets me alone*[945]*, so we don't go with (other) people! When it happens that I'm alone, then we meet. Really it happens when there aren't many of us*[946]*. No! He could approach me and we would miss each other, and if it happens that they are two, then he may say: "Go and come back with another man*[947]*", exactly what I want, and we can go together.*

JINN AND HUNTING

Thomas: lɛ úa yógomi lɛ gyinạ̰ʊ̰ 'nɪ hɛrɛ prɛʊ̰ ùa yáa sawalɛgɛ walawala↓?
Thomas: *And did you meet* jinn *when you used to go hunting regularly?*

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940 Kuman means his hunting bag.
941 Lit.: "gave".
942 Lit.: "that one".
943 Lit.: "measured".
944 Negation introduced by *la*.
945 Lit.: "Me one him he measures-with".
946 Lit.: "if we are many little".
947 Lit.: "Go and you come back two men".

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mʊm bì yáa lɛ bì yógomi lɛ fu̱ sawalɛsɔgɔ laa. úa nyi̱ siu̱'nɪ baan'nɪ, mʊm nyʊ́ wɛ nya̱, a míɪ yāa, zɪ lɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ́ lɛ mía gba̱ bɔ nyu̱nyɔ-í↓?

Kuman: *Yes! When we went and we met, we were hunters! You see, something about medicines: if someone's suffering and I go, how can it be that I don't care for him*[948]*?*

HUNTERS' REMEDIES

Kuman: Míɪ gōi sawalɛgɛ'rɛ-rɪ pa, eh, mɪ sinyo wɛ bɔɔgɔ dugu nna, hɛrɛ prɛʊ̱ mìa sáwalɛ hɔ, mʊm mì gyí mì yáa sawalɛgɛ mʊ̱ ka, lɛ mì yáa dá dɛɛkɔ wɛ, lɛ fáta-ga lɛ dʊ́-ke-ti. Mʊm mì dʊ́-ke-ti benhalɪ lɛ dó gʊ-yɛ lɛ mínu̱ zɪna'nɪ mì yáa sɪkɛrɛ'rɛ lɛ mì kú hɔ, mì dá-ti bɔ fɪlʊ̱. Mʊm mì dá hʊ̀ fífɪ lɛ a mì yáa i̱siko-í.

Kuman: *Going back to hunting, eh! A certain remedy of mine here, a long time ago madam, those days when I used to go hunting, if I knew that I would be going on a hunt, I went to cut a herb, ground it and poured out the sap*[949]*. When I poured it, the next day at dawn I opened it*[950] *and saw the animal that I would be sure to kill*[951]*; I found its fur there. If I found that it was a small animal I didn't go into the savannah.*

HUNTERS AND REMEDIES

Thomas: Lɛ hɪnɪ hʊ́ʊ̱ sāwalɛ dɪdɪ̱, hɔ́ɔ yáa hʊ́ʊ̱ kpá siu̱ lɛ sá bɔ gbɛɛ-rɪ↓?

Thomas: *And a real hunter*[952]*, has he got to have amulets to wear*[953]*?*

Kuman: Mʊm úʊ sāwalɛ dɪdɪ̱… siu̱ lɛ sā ʊ gbɛɛ-rɪ!

Kuman: *If you're a real hunter… you wear amulets!*

Thomas: lɛ siu̱'nɪ ʊ́ táa lɛ sawalɛgɛ bɔɔŋɔ-rɪ↓?

Thomas: *Are those amulets part of the hunters' way*[954]*?*

Kuman: Hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊm úʊ sāwalɛ hɔ, a úʊ gyī úʊ sāwalɛ hɔ, hɪnɪ ʊ ɪgbragɔ'nɪ úʊ yāa-ti, mʊm hɛrɛ mɪ-ti mʊ̱. A hʊ̀ gyí a hʊ̀ níɪ bɔɔgɔ lɛ gyí hʊ̀ sáwalɛ lɛ, a hʊ̀ yáa, hʊ̀ yí, hʊ̀ máa̱ sá mɪ-rɪ, hʊ̀ máa̱ yáa lɛ pá zɪna wɛ, zɪna, mʊm bɔɔ yɔkɔ, á

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[948] Lit.: "I don't massage his face". An obscure utterance. Kuman may be referring to the custom of rubbing the face with a particular medicine that enables the healer/hunter to meet his spirit guide when he wants to, in which case the translation might be "if I don't massage my face for him".

[949] Lit.: "I beat that on".

[950] The container in which he had kept the liquid.

[951] Lit.: "to put himself-on".

[952] Lit.: "the one who truly hunts".

[953] Lit.: "to put himself-on".

[954] Lit.: "and medicines *def.*, they one *presentative* hunting road-on?"

hɔ́ gú-í, lɛ hʊ̀ báı lɛ, wɛ-ti lɛ hʊ̀ yáa nyɪ̀ zına'nı, lɛ hʊ̀ sío, wɛ-ti lɛ hʊ̀ sa̰ lɛ gú i̱siko-nı lɛ kpa̰ zına lɛ báı, lɛ bɔ nyɪ̱ŋmɔ biire, lɛ hʊ̀ yí lɛ mı lɛ: "háa[955] hɛ̄ mɪ̱ lɛ da̰". Hɔ siɪ̱ bɔɔgɔ, lɛ mì tíı siɪ̱'nı lɛ nya̰ lɛ hé: "Hɔ́ɔ yāa lɛ úʊ pēi-ʊ̱. Hɛrɛ úʊ yāa bɔɔgɔ, zına'nı-ti pɛɛ, mʊm hʊ̀ yóro dugu, lɛ úʊ nyɪ̰̄-ɛ, a úʊ pā̰; mʊm tüi'rɛ hɔ nʊʊŋɔ háa hɛ̄-í, lɛ míı nyɪ̰̄ka siɪ̱ wɪ̱, lɛ úʊ yāa lɛ úʊ sā ʊ tusigo nʊʊŋɔ-rı, lɛ zūmka-ga-nı, lɛ hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ gbereko sa̰a̰bı, hɛrɛ úʊ yāa, hɛrɛ úʊ nyɪ̰̄-ɛ, hɛrɛ úʊ pā̰-(hɛ)rɛ, mʊm léɛkɛ'rɛ kyēi hʊ̰̄-rı lɛ lá, hʊ́ʊ̱ pīı lɛ, lɛ úʊ kʊ̄-ɛ!". Wá nyɪ̰̄ hını a mì nyḭ́ka nyḭ́ka lɛ! Mʊm hʊ̀ yáa hɛrɛ vɛ lɛ yí, a hʊ̀ yáa lɛ yí lɛ: "eh! Mì pá̰ zına daa, a hʊ̀ nʊ́ŋɔlɛ mı-rɔ, hʊ̀ kóri mı gbeko, kyɛrɛ, a mì sío!" lɛ mì: "Bon!" lɛ mì tíu sinyo lɛ nyá̰: "Mʊm úʊ yāa a hʊ́ʊ̱ gbē-kʊ vɛ, lɛ úʊ hɛ̄-gɛ mʊ̰rʊ̱ lɛ mʊ̰rʊ̱ lɛ mʊ̰rʊ̱. …". Hɛrɛ bàa hé lɛ mì bíla-ɛ.

Kuman: *It's like this, if you hunt, if you learn to hunt, you go to your old man, just like I did[956]. (A chap) knew that here there was someone who was able to hunt, he left his village and came (here), so he could stay with me[957]. He could go and hunt some animals, but the creature, even if there was water there, wouldn't come out and he lost it and even when he could see the animal, it ran away. Every time he went into the bush and came out to look for an animal, he lost it and his face got sad and he came to me and I said: "Do this and they'll come!" There were some medicines there, I took them for him and said: "You've got to wash with these. When you go down there, the animal, if it's hiding, you see it and shoot at it; if your rifle barrel doesn't do it, I'll show you some remedies: go and put them on your gunpowder and then turn it upside-down and leave it there for three days[958]… then when you go, you'll see them, and when you shoot, as soon as the bullets hit them they'll die and you'll have killed them!". You see, that one I taught him a lot[959]. Then he went away, came back and said to me: "Eh! Today I fired at an animal and he attacked me; he wanted to get me[960]… really, I ran!" and I said: "*Bon*!" I took an amulet and gave it to him: "If you go and that animal wants to get you, do this, this and this…" This we did and I taught him.*

Thomas: Hını ʊ̀ sá siɪ̱ lɛ nyá̰; bɔ gyabaga lɛ hɔ́ lá-ga wɪ̱nı zéı, laa ʊa lɛ ú nyḭ́ka-ʊ̱↓?

Thomas: *The one you prepared the medicines for, did his mind tell him about others, or were you… (the only one) to show them to him[961]?*

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[955] To be read as *ʊa*.

[956] Lit.: "as when I-on like that".

[957] Lit.: "could come in me-on".

[958] Lit.: "and that makes days three".

[959] Lit.: "that and I taught taught *presentative*". The repetition of the verb acts as an intensifier.

[960] Lit.: "he wanted my taking".

[961] Lit.: "his thought *presentative* it finished that the missing ones, or you *presentative* you showed them?".

Kuman: Baa taa la… oo! Mʊm hʊ̀ kóri-gye lɛ lɛ hʊ̀ yí lɛ mì nyá-ŋɛ lɛ hɔ naŋa!

Kuman: *Them on their own…. No, if he wanted, he came back and I gave it to him with its explanation[962]!*

Thomas: Bɛrɛ'nɪ sawalɛgɛ'rɛ-nɪ… báa hé siʊ̀'nɪ bɔ taa, laa báa yáa kpá wɪ̀ bɔɔ wɛ↓?

Thomas: *The people who are in the hunters' brotherhood… do they prepare their own remedies[963] or look for them elsewhere?*

Kuman: Nyì̀ mā̀ā̀ kō bɔ gbɛɛ bɔ taa-í dɛ! úa nyī̀, ʊà ká̀ mì hé, hɛrɛ mì hé mʊ̀, hɛrɛ zɪka, yùgɔ hé mʊ̀ faɪ, a úa nyī̀ wɪ̀, hà gú mɪ-rɔ i̇siko, ehe! wɛ i̇siko-nɪ lɛ kóri-mɪ lɛ nyá-mɪ wɪ̀, mɪ̀ lɛ hà hé hɔ̀ yáa, mɪ siʊ̀'nɪ ʊ́ʊ̀ pō! Mʊm wɛ fufuu ʊa taa lɛ úa *démander* hɪnɪ, zɪŋɛ'rɛ a sinyo ɛ í! Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ nyʊ̀ lɛ bɛrɛ dugu dugu dugu hɔ, bɛrɛ baanɪ, bú tūɪ-ti lɛ bú yī mʊ̀. Mʊm ʊa mʊnʊbɪɔ, mʊm ʊ́ʊ kyēi-nɪ lɛ yāa i̇siko-nɪ lɛ ʊ́ʊ nyī̀ wɛ i̇siko-nɪ fʊ̀ʊ̀, lɛ ʊ́ʊ nyī̀ sinye'rɛ wɛ, lɛ dā-ʊ, hʊ́ʊ̀ mī̀nɪ̀ ʊ midɔʊ̀wɔ-rɪ, lɛ ʊ́ʊ yāa laa kō zɪna wɛ, lɛ wɛ dālɪ-gyɛ fʊ̀ʊ̀ lɛ ʊ́ʊ nyā̀-ŋɛ.

Kuman: *A man can't train himself, eh! You see, you heard me saying, what I just said now, before[964], people did this here, and you see someone, (the one) who came out of the savannah with me, eh! From somewhere in the savannah… and he was fond of me, and he had given me some (remedies), that's how it went, I've got may remedies! But if it's always you, you* démander*, this one will only give you something, but it's not a remedy! That's why we stay close to our ancestors and go to them[965]. If now I ended up inside and went into the savannah and there in the savannah I saw something, if I saw a remedy that can help you, he[966] would notice your sweetness, so you would have to go and kill an animal, pray there, and sacrifice it.*

HUNTING AND FETISHES

Thomas: Mʊm ʊ́ʊ kō zɪna, zɪ úa píra-yɛ, a bɛ trɪ dɛ[967] úa kʊ́ zɪna wɛ lɛ ʊ́ʊ nyá bɔ boyo ʊ gbɔkɛ'rɛ dɛɛnaŋa-rɪ↓?

Thomas: *When you kill an animal, how do you purify it, and why, when you kill an animal, do you offer its heart at the feet of your fetish?*

Kuman: Á bɔ́ɔ kwā̀ mɪ-rɔ lɛ-í! mʊm mɪ̀, úa nyī̀, hi̇́nɪ̀ dɛ́ mì nyí-nyɛ. Hɛrɛ mì yáa lɛ mì sáalɛ-gɛ lɛ dá̀ lɛ mía hóo nā̀ā̀ŋmɔ-í hɔ̀ gbí, lɛ mì yáa i̇siko-nɪ.

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962 Lit.: "its foot".

963 Lit.: "they make remedies *def* their one".

964 Lit.: "this back/behind".

965 Lit.: "this makes that man *presentative* group of people once, once, once (= ancestors) this, group of people (= ancestors) their side, we take-near and we come *focus*".

966 The *jinn*.

967 Lit.: "what reason causes".

Bɔɔgɔ mì gú laa núısı-ɛ[968], lɛ mì vúga tɔzʊ̰bɔ bɛrɛ bıbı, hɛrɛ hını mʊ̰, mì ká hıbıbıbıbı, hɛrɛ hʊ̀ yí, lɛ mì ká vuvuvuvu a mì ká bı-vau! A zìna'nı vérɛlɛ, a hʊ̀ tú kyırıkyırıkyırı, a mì yáa bıbı, lɛ dá hʊ̀ gbé tootege, a hʊ̀ yúgʊ lɛ yáa lɛ zéı lɛ. Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ yúgʊ lɛ yáa lɛ zéı lɛ, lɛ hʊ̀ mı́nʊ̰ mı nyʊ̰ŋmɔ, a mʊ̰ yúgʊ lɛ yáa, a mì gyere yáa. Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ mía pa̰ toole mʊ̰rʊ̰-í. úa nyī zına'nı wɛ lɛ, mʊm úa da̰ úʊ kʊ̄ zına, háa̰ hōo-we lɛ a míu pa̰ (hɛ)-rɛ í!

úa nyī, hɔ̀ hɛ́ mʊ̰ gbɔ̀kɛ'rɛ nyá-mı zına'nı; hɛrɛ dɛ míu sī bɔ boye'rɛ lɛ nya̰-ŋa.

Kuman: *So that they don't fight me! That's why. You see, he made sure that I saw it. When I went to offer the sacrifice to him I hadn't eaten meat for a long time and I went into the savannah. When I got*[969] *there I sat down and called the animals, and it went like this*[970]*: I heard* hibibibibi*, he was coming, then I heard* vuvuvuvu *and then* bi-vau*! And that animal was afraid, then it went quiet* kyirikyirikyiri*, so I moved*[971] *a bit and found that he*[972] *had taken a gazelle and was taking flight, leaving it (there). While he was taking off, leaving it there, he looked at me*[973]*… so he took flight and went off and then I went off too. That's why I don't shoot at vultures. An animal, you see, if it happens that you kill and animal, he doesn't eat it… and I don't shoot at him*[974]*. You see, that's how it was that the fetish gave me that animal; that's why I take out their hearts and sacrifice them*[975]*.*

HAFʊ̰ AND HUNTERS' WOMEN

Thomas: Lɛ ú máa̰ péleka tɔzına wɛ mʊm hɔ́ kprí↓?

Thomas: *And could you frighten the animal if things went badly*[976]*?*

Kuman: A mì tíu sinye'rɛ a mì sá-ga mı zıka faı mʊ̰, a mì gyína pilim, a hʊ́ʊ̰ dá bɔɔgɔ á hʊ̀ nyı́-mı-é(í), hını zına'nı á hʊ̀ nyı́-mı-é(í), hʊ̀ dá lɛ. A ʊa i̱goyo'nı hɛrɛ, ʊ gyina̰ fʊ̰ mʊ̰, hʊ̀ nyı́-m(ı), á tɔ̀zına'nı ha̰a̰ nyı́-mı-é(í).

Hɔ zoloŋo mı-rɔ dugu pa, mìa yáa i̱sike'rɛ-nı sawalɛgɛ; hɔ zoloŋe'rɛ mì wı̀-kɛ, bìa hɛ́-gɛ lɛ sá-ga sinyo-nı; mʊm ò yáa i̱siko-nı lɛ ò sá-ga, mʊm ò sá-ga lɛ la a ò dá fʊ̰, zına'nı, halı mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰, hʊ̀ hɛ́-ʊ, hàa máa̰ sá gʊ-rı-í, halı ì nóŋɔlɛ, ì nóŋɔlɛ lɛ, a ò pói-e lɛ pési bɔɔgɔ, ha̰a̰ máa̰ háapaga lɛ yí gʊ-rı-í. Hɛrɛ bía kā Hafʊ̰.

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968 In this case *-ɛ* cannot be a pronoun because the verb is not transitive. It must therefore be considered an emphatic particle.

969 Lit.: "went out".

970 Lit.: "this (inan.) this (an.) *focus*".

971 Lit.: "went".

972 Here Kuman refers to a vulture, which came up several times in our conversations.

973 Lit.: "looked at my face".

974 Lit.: "at that one".

975 Lit.: "give it".

976 Lit.: "if it got hot".

Kuman: *I took the amulet and put it back here, then I stayed quite still, he*[977] *came there and didn't see me, that animal didn't see me, that's what happened… And your man, your* jinn *there, he saw me, but the animal didn't.*
I used to have a shirt for the savannah… I would go into the savannah to hunt; that shirt, I soaked it, we did that and we put it in a medicine, so when you went into the savannah and you were wearing it, if you had it on and you got there, the animal, even if it went for you[978] *it couldn't beat you*[979]*, even if you fought, and fought, you took it off and threw it there, he couldn't jump over it and come at you. They called it* Hafʊ̰.

Thomas: Zoloŋe'rɛ, zɪ hɔ́-ti lɛ dá̰↓?

Thomas: *What's that shirt like*[980]*?*

Kuman: Bìa bá̰-kɛ gboʊ̰ŋo mʊ̰ walɔɔgɔ. Hɔ gɔ̀gɔ súsʊ̰-dɪ, ù dá̰ siʊ̰-ti pɛɛ. Mʊm hɔ koyo gʊ-rɔ hɔ sɪkɛrɛ ù píɪ pɛɛ, bàa sá-ga-ʊ lɛ tíɪ prɛkɔ lɛ pú-ku, lɛ ù yáa. Mʊm bḭḭ há̰a̰ gʊ-rɔ bɔɔgɔ lɛ, ù sáwalɛ vɛ-í ka.

Kuman: *We sewed it with bits of string this thick (*Kuman indicates about 2mm*). It had a deep neck*[981]*, you found it with lots of amulets on it. When its essence was on you, it was as if you were dead, everything, they put it on you, they got some mud and buried you; then you went away. Then when you had a son*[982]*, that one couldn't be a hunter.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ zoloŋe'rɛ wɛ gʊ-rɔ↓?

Thomas: *Have you still got the shirt*[983]*?*

Kuman: Wɛ mɪ-rɔ dugu. Hɛrɛ mì zéɪ sawalɛgɛ'rɛ hɔ, mɪ bḭḭ wɛ a hʊ̀ sáwalɛ(-í) , a mì zéɪ kutuu-nɪ; hɔ́-ŋmɛ hāla. Mʊm hɔ gʊ-rɔ hɔ, a ʊ yɛrɛ, a hʊ́ʊ̰ yāa hɛɛn'nɪ-rɪ, mʊm há̰a̰ dʊ̄-kɛ-í, a ʊ́ʊ yāa ḭsiko-nɪ lɛ pā̰ zɪna, hʊ́ʊ̰ nʊ̄ŋɔlɛ gʊ-rɔ, hɛrɛ ʊ́a tʊ̄ɪ lɛ gyī-ge lɛ dɛ̄ bɔ́ɔ bī-kpe[984], lɛ bī-we, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ yāa hɛɛn-dɪ, ʊ́ʊ sū hʊ̰̄-rɔ zimyo, lɛ bɔ́ɔ kʊ̄-ɛ-ti[985], mʊm ʊ́ʊ yāa ḭsiko-nɪ lɛ yāa dʊ̰ʊ̰kɔ-rɪ ka, la pā̰ zɪna a ʊ́ʊ nyḭ̄ hʊ́ʊ̰ nʊ̄ŋɔlɛ gʊ-rɔ, lɛ ʊ yɛrɛ'nɪ faɪ, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ yāa hɛɛn'nɪ-rɪ, bɔ́ɔ sū hʊ̰̄-rɔ zimyo, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ yāa hɛɛn'nɪ-rɪ, hḭ́nɪ̰ hʊ pāta-ga. Hɛ́rɛ dɛ̄ báa nyā̰ bɔ nyḭḭke'rɛ faɪ're, hḭ́nɪ̰ hʊ́ʊ̰ pāta-ga, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊ̰ mʊm ʊ yɛrɛ taa hɔ, hɪnɪ hɔ́ɔ lā, asɪra sɪkɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ yāa hɛɛn-dɪ pɛɛ, a ʊ́ʊ yāa ḭsiko-nɪ lɛ pā̰ zɪna, hʊ́ʊ̰ nʊ̄ŋɔlɛ gʊ-rɔ, ʊ́ʊ yī bɪbɪ lɛ ʊ́ʊ bī-we, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰: "Kparɪgya míɪ yāa hɛɛn'nɪ-rɪ!", lɛ bɔ́ɔ sū hʊ̰̄-rɔ zimyo lɛ kʊ̄-ɛ-ti.

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977 The animal.

978 Lit.: "you (plural) did".

979 Lit.: "get into you".

980 Lit.: "shirt *def.,* how it on and arrives?".

981 Lit.: "its chest was long-on".

982 The first to be born after the initiation rite.

983 Lit.: "That shirt *def.* certain you-with?".

984 Causative construction; see Micheli 2007: 95-96.

985 Here and in some subsequent passages the 3rd-person plural functions as an impersonal/passive form. See Micheli 2007:87-88.

Kuman: *I used to have it. When I left the brotherhood*[986]*, none of my sons entered it*[987]*, and I left it at my camp; it's torn. If you've got it and your wife goes with another man, if she doesn't tell you, you go into the savannah and when you shoot at an animal, if it attacks you… when you find out*[988]*, then you consult the fetish*[989] *and ask about this; if she goes with another man, another man, you buy a chicken for her and have it sacrificed*[990]*; when you go into the savannah or elsewhere in the* dʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ *to shoot an animal that's attacking you, it's your wife's fault here, when she goes with another man, so a chicken is bought for her, if she goes with another man, that one, she ruins it*[991]*. That's why here we give her this part of the back; she ruins it, this is what happens, if your wife is faithful*[992]*, everything's all right, but if she happens to go with other men and you go into the savannah to shoot an animal, that one attacks you, so you come home fast and you ask (her) and she says: "It's true, I'm seeing a man!", so a chicken is bought for her and sacrificed.*

Thomas: Yɛrɛ'nɪ ɪ́ zéɪ lɛ laa hʊ̱ gʊ-rɔ↓?

Thomas: *Your wife, are you separated or is she still with you*[993]*?*

Kuman: Hérɛ dɛ̄, mʊm úʊ yī lɛ úʊ tū yɛrɛ'nɪ hɔ, lɛ dą̄ sawalɛsɛ lɛ ʊ, úa nyɪ̄ hɛrɛ mɪ-ti bɔɔgɔ mʊ̱. úa dą̄ sawalɛsɛ lɛ mɪ, lɛ mɪ, lɛ mì bí-we lɛ: "úʊ mą́ą hóo-ge↓?", bɔ nyɪ̱ɪ̱ke'rɛ; mʊm hʊ̀ hé: "ɔɔ!" lɛ a hʊ̀ yáa hɛɛn-dɪ vɛ-ɪ́, mɪ̱ lɛ mì dú-kɛ hʊ̱-rɔ: "Kyɛrɛ, úʊ mą́ą hóo-ge↓?" a hʊ̀: "Míɪ mą̄ą hóo-ge!" "úʊ mą́ą hō-ge↓?", a hą̀: "Míɪ mą̄ą hōo-ge!" hɔ̀ hé mɪ̱ɪ̱, halɪ mɪa baaŋɔ sinąą̱ŋmɔ[994] hɔ, bɔ nąą̱ŋmɔ hɔ. Bì mą́ą hóo-nɪ wɔ-rɪ, mɪ̱ɪ̱ lɛ bì tíɪ wɔ-rɪ, bɪa[995] lɛ hɪnɪ.

Kuman: *That's why, when you come to take a wife, and you're a hunter*[996]*, you see what I am here now*[997]*. You find that I'm a hunter, and I, I asked: "Can you eat it?"; the (animals') back; when she said: "Yes!" that meant she didn't go with other men, so I said this to her: "Can you really eat it?" and she: "I can*

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[986] Here *sawalɛgɛ* is translated with "brotherhood" (*confraternita*), because the term indicates hunting as a general practice and is the specific title given by the Kulango to their hunting fraternity.

[987] Lit.: "hunted".

[988] Lit.: "you take and you know it".

[989] Lit.: "it".

[990] Lit.: "you buy she-with chicken, and they kill him-on".

[991] The shirt.

[992] Lit.: "if your wife one it".

[993] Lit.: "Wife *def.*, you (plural) left *presentative* or she you-with?".

[994] A compound term made from *sinyo* "medicine" and *nąą̱ŋmɔ* "meat"; lit. "medicine meat", it indicates the ritual importance of the proper division of game animals into prescribed parts.

[995] To be read in the singular *mɪa*.

[996] Lit.: "and it happens hunter you *presentative*".

[997] Lit.: "you see that me-on here like this".

eat it!"; "Can you eat it?" and she: "I can eat it!", it went like that, then, so (I had) my ritual part of the meat, and that was hers[998]*. We could eat it together, that's how we chose each other, me and her*[999].

Thomas: lɛ úa mą́ą́ úu vḭ́ḭ́le úu kpą́ yɛbɔ daavɛ-ɪ[1000]↓?

Thomas: *And can you look for other women?*

Kuman: oo! Hɛrɛ úu nīɪ ą́ŋɛ'rɛ-nɪ, úu dą́ úu ką́-nɪ mɪ yereyo ohe[1001]↓?

Kuman: *No! You live in the village, have you ever heard (stories) of me with a girl, eh?*

Thomas: oo!

Thomas: *No!*

Kuman: úa nyī hɔ prɛʊ̱ lɛ mìa lé-ge[1002] tʊ-ɪ, lɛ yerewo bą́ą́ mɪ-rɔ dugu eh! Mhm! Hérɛ pḭ́ḭ́, lɛ hɛrɛ bì lá lɛ nίɪ wɔ-rɪ.

Kuman: *You see, when I married her, many girls were with me, eh! Mhm! They were many, but then we stopped being together.*

THE HUNTER'S SHIRT

Thomas: Lɛ ʊ Hafʊ̱'rɛ; mʊm ù sá-ga a bɔ̀ pą́-kʊ, háa mą́ą́ są́↓?

Thomas: *And your* hafʊ̱*, when you wore it, if they shot you, could the bullet hurt you*[1003]*?*

Kuman: oo! Hɛrɛ prɛʊ̱ lɛ hɔ mɪ-rɔ ka, mʊm mì sá-ga ka, oo! Wɛ-ŋmɛ hʊ̀ pą́-kɛ a hɔ̀ dɛ́-ί! Mʊm hʊ̀ dą́ mì nίɪsɪ pa, mʊm hɔ mɪ-rɔ a mì sá-ga lɛ nίɪsɪ, a hʊ̀ gú mɪ zɪka lɛpą́-mɪ hɔ, ù dą́ mɪ nʊ̀ʊ̱ hé mɪ̱ bɪbɪ, ù dą́ lɛɛn'nɪ faɪ, ù dą́ lɛ̀ɛn'nɪ sóo mɪ nʊ̱ʊ̱(-dɪ).

Kuman: *No! When I had it*[1004]*, if I was wearing it, no! Even if someone shot it didn't hurt me*[1005]*! If he found me sitting there, if I had it and was wearing it as I sat, even if he came up behind me and shot me, you would see that my hands went like this, you found the bullets there, you found the bullets unloaded in my hands.*

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998 Lit.: "then my own medicine-meat it; her meat it".

999 Lit.: "that one".

1000 Here the morpheme *ί* is not negative; it has an emphatic, reinforcing function.

1001 Lit.: "you it happens you feel-near me girl *ohe*".

1002 Inanimate pronoun *sic.*

1003 Lit.: "could it enter?"

1004 Lit.: "That time and it me-with *focus".*

1005 Lit.: "didn't resound".

SAWALƐGƐ: THE KULANGO HUNTERS' ASSOCIATION

Thomas: ɪ̰ sawalɛgɛ'rɛ hɔ yʊʊkɔ báa ká zɪ↓?

Thomas: *What's the name of your hunters' association*[1006]*?*

Kuman: úa nyɪ̄, bía kā-ga sawalɛgɛ. úa nyɪ̄, bɛ́rɛ laa kā-ga *lachassi*, bía lā kā-ga sawalɛgɛ. Mʊm úʊ yʊ̄gʊ lɛ úʊ sāwalɛ, sawalɛgɛ!

Kuman: *You see, we call it* sawalɛgɛ[1007]*. You see, some people call it* lachassi[1008]*, we call it* sawalɛgɛ*, "hunt". If you grow up as a hunter, it's "the hunt".*

THE HUNTERS' BROTHERHOOD – PART 1

Thomas: Gbigo ɪ̰-rɔ nyą́ dí ɪ̰ sawalɛgɛ hɔ ɪ̰yako↓?

Thomas: *Is there a special day on which you celebrate the hunters' association*[1009]*?*

Kuman: Mʊm wórʊkɔ kyɪ̰̄ hɔ, bíı mą̄ą̄ tą̄kʊ pɛɛ lɛ sī kpalıgʊ̰̄ bı sıʊ̰̄'nı-dı pɛɛ, hını wórʊkɔ kyɪ̰̄, úa nyɪ̰̄ hını bíı kpą̄ nąą̄ŋmɛ'rɛ pɛpɛ, hını zíŋɛ'rɛ hɛ̄ zalamı lɛ bíı

kpą̄ nąą̄ŋmɛ'rɛ lɛ kpą̄ zımʊ̰̄ lɛ kʊ̄ bı sıʊ̰̄'nı-dı pɛɛ, ɪ̰hɪ̰! Mɪ̰ lɛ bía hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ bíı kpą̄ nąą̄ŋmɔ lɛ.

Kuman: *In the dry season, we may all meet to offer sacrifices*[1010] *to all our amulets; in the dry season; you see, it's the period when we go to look for meat everywhere, it's the right time*[1011]*, so we look for meat, we take some chickens and kill them*[1012] *on all our amulets, ehe! That's what we do and then we go hunting*[1013]*.*

Thomas: wɪ̰ bɔɔgɔ daagɔ nyą́ dı[1014] wɪ̰nı gbigo↓?

Thomas: *Are there other festivities you celebrate?*

Kuman: oo! Bía bɛrɛ lā, mıą̄ka zıwalɔɔgɔ wɛ bíı kʊ̄ lɛ bíı weele.

Kuman: *No! We're fine as we are*[1015]*, except when we kill big animals and dance.*

[1006] Lit.: "Your hunt *def.* its name they call how?".

[1007] *Sawalɛgɛ* in Kulango literally means "hunt".

[1008] From the French *la chasse*.

[1009] Lit.: "Day you-with you eat your hunters' association its joy?".

[1010] Lit.: "things for consultation"; a compound word.

[1011] Lit.: "that thing is a good period".

[1012] As sacrifices. Lit.: "we look for chickens to kill".

[1013] Lit.: "look for meat *focus*".

[1014] Lit.: "you eat".

[1015] Lit.: "we, group of people, finish".

Thomas: lɛ bɔ́ góroka-ʊ a ɪ́ dí hɔ gbiwalɔɔgɔ↓?

Thomas: *Did they initiate you and did you celebrate that with a feast*[1016]*?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Mɪ lɛ bàa hɛ́-gɛ kyɔ! Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ lá, hɛrɛ hʊ̀ sú tüi'rɛ hɔ, a hà: "ah! Kyɛrɛ úʊ gyī tüi'rɛ pa mʊnʊbɪɔ! a hɔ́ɔ yāa a hʊ́ʊ̀ pā̀ wɛ daagɔ wɛ-í; kyɛrɛ míı zɛ̄ı-gɛ gʊ-rɔ!" a hʊ̀ hɛ́-mɪ-ŋmɛ: "Kyɛrɛ úa gbā-í!", a mì hɛ́ lɛ: "eh! eh! Kyɛrɛ hā̀ā̀ mā̀ā̀ dɛ̄ míı kā(ɪ)[1017] gbā-ga-í!" Lɛ: "míı mā̀ā̀ gbā kyɔ, lɛ yūgʊ lɛ yāa laa kʊ̄ wɛ", kyɛrɛ hā́ā̀ mā̀ā̀ dɛ̄ míı kā gbā-ga-í! Hɔ̀ hé mɪ̩, hɛrɛ hʊ̀ sú tüi'rɛ lɛ nyā́-mɪ hɔ lɛ lá lɛ: "ʊ tüi lɔɔ!". A bì kpérɛ-wɔ pɛpɛ, a bɔ̀ hé dɪgɔ a bì hé lɛ dí, lɛ hóo nā̀ā̀ŋmɛ'rɛ kyɛrɛsɛɪ, a hà̀ā̀: "*Bon!* ʊ tüi lɔɔ! Míı sā-ga ʊ nʊ̩ʊ̩!".

Hɛrɛ hʊ̀ gyí mɪ minyo lɛ la hɔ, mʊm mìa yāa kʊ̄-ɛ lɛ yī hɔ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̀ dɛ̄ mì nyā̀-a bɔ hʊ̩ko taa lɛ bɔ gɔgɔ, hʊ̀ zéı pɛɛ lɛ hʊ̀: "tūı -gɛ lɛ dɔ̄ɔlɛ lɛ sū ʊ lɛɛkɔ!".

Kuman: *Yes! That's exactly what they did! When (my maternal uncle) decided to buy that rifle, he said: "Ah! Now you really know the rifle! And he*[1018] *can't shoot any more, actually I'll give it*[1019] *to you!"; and he said this: "You won't be able to farm any more!" And I thought: "Eh! Eh! He can't make me stop farming*[1020]*!". So (I said): "I can continue farming and get up early in the morning to go hunting*[1021]*"; he really couldn't make me stop farming! That's how it went, when he bought me the rifle he said: "Here's your rifle!" and we embraced*[1022]*-*[1023]*, then we prepared the food and ate, and we ate a lot of meat, and he said: "*Bon*! Here's your rifle! I put it in your hands!".*

When he was sure about me[1024]*, once when I went hunting and came back, since before that he had arranged things so that I gave him one of the animal's thighs and its chest, he left everything and said: "Keep them and sell them to buy ammunition".*

Thomas: Mʊm hɔ̀ dā̀ ùa nyā̀-a bɔ hʊ̩ko lɛ bɔ gɔgɔ dugu-í, ka bɛ lɛ hɔ́ yí↓?

Thomas: *In those days if you hadn't given him*[1025] *the thigh and chest what would have happened?*

[1016] Lit.: "eat its great feast?".

[1017] Causative construction; see Micheli 2007: 96.

[1018] Perhaps Kuman's uncle's rifle.

[1019] Lit.: "leave".

[1020] Lit.: "and that I refuse to grow it".

[1021] Lit.: "go to kill some".

[1022] Lit.: "we greeted each other *emphatic marker*".

[1023] In Kulango culture the embrace is far from common; it is reserved for occasions of great ritual or political importance. To all intents and purposes it represents the seal on an agreement.

[1024] Lit.: "When he had recognised my inside" – concluding structure; see Micheli 2007: 91.

[1025] Lit.: "it happened that you didn't give him".

Kuman: ka kpalɪsaga lɛ hɔ̀ yī!

Kuman: *Unpleasant things would have happened*[1026]*!*

THE HUNTERS' BROTHERHOOD – PART 2

Thomas: zɪ báa sá-ɻ sawalɛgɛ-nɪ ↓?

Thomas: *How can people enter the brotherhood*[1027]*?*

Kuman: Dabɪla… hɪnɪ-í! Bía lō bɔ lɔɔŋmɔ kyɔ!

Kuman: *Dabila*[1028] *(for instance)… that one's no hunter! We've got a song for people like him*[1029]*!*

Thomas: Nyą́ hɛ̄ sawalɛsɔgɔ dɪ̨dɪ̨ bɔɔ, zɪ bá sá-ɻ-nɪ ↓?

Thomas: *Here you're the true hunters; how did you get in?*

Kuman: Mʊ̨ bà sá-bɪ-nɪ. Mʊm ù lá lɛ dą́, mʊm hɛrɛ mì sáwalɛ mʊ̨, hɛrɛ sinye'rɛ ù yáa dí pɛɛ, ù yí sá-ga lɛ ù nyą̄-ŋɛ lɛ ù sá-ga bɔ tugo-rɪ a ù kú mʊm zɻwalɔɔgɔ, bɔ̀ wéele kyɛrɛsɛɪ lɛ bɔ̀ kpą́ siʊ̨'nɪ lɛ bɔ̀ nyą́-ŋʊ, lɛ ù dą́ ʊ gbɛɪ, mʊm ù yáa są́ ɻ̨siko-nɪ, lɛ pą́ zɪna a zìna'nɪ hé lɛ hʊ̀[1030] yí gʊ-rɪ, lɛ ù ʔúra. Ʊà ką́ mìa hɛ̄ faɪ lɛ Nibo… eh! Mʊm míɪ pą̄ zɪna a hʊ́ʊ̨ yī mɪ-rɪ hɔ, hɛrɛ míɪ ʔūra bɪbɪ Hɪ́nɻ̨ hʊ̨ kyēi lɛ… lɛ bɔ̀ kpą́ siʊ̨'nɪ bɔ̀ nyą́-mɪ[1031]. Mʊm hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mʊ̨ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̨ lā lɛ hɛ̄ sāwalɛ walɔɔgɔ; mɪ bɻ̨ɻ̨ Kwadyo ù nyɻ̀ bɔɔgɔ mʊ̨, hʊ̀ kó tɔzɪna a ʊ̀ pó, ʊ̨nʊ̨ʊ̨ walɔɔʊ̨, (tɔ)zʊ̨rʊ̨ wɻ̨nɪ mì ká mʊ̨ ʊ̨ walɔɔʊ̨, ʊ̀ pó asɪ, ʊ̀ dą́ ipogonyʊ̨… ehe! A úa nyɻ̄, hą́ą̄ sá-nɪ bɔ gbɛɛ sawalɛsɛ-í, a mì hé lɛ mì bíla-yɛ mʊ̨ a hą́ą̄ dé-gɛ-í, hʊ̀ káɪ mʊ̨! Mʊ̨ hɔ́ɔ nūɪ bɪ-rɔ. Hɔ náŋa nūɪ-(n)ɪ, hʊ̀ gyí mɪ siʊ̨ siʊ̨'nɪ mʊ̨, a á hʊ̀ hé-í, á hʊ̀ hé-ʊ̨-í…

Kuman: *This is how we got in. If it happened, when I went hunting, that amulet you got*[1032]*, you came to wear it, you offered him*[1033] *(a sacrifice), you put it around him, then you killed a big animal, they danced a lot, then they looked for medicines to give you and you gained power*[1034]*, when you were about to go into the bush to shoot an animal and the animal went for you*[1035]*, you*

[1026] Lit.: "Then (thing) put by the fetish would have come".

[1027] Lit.: "How did they take you into the hunters' association?".

[1028] *Dabila* is the name of a mutual friend of ours. He is considered an excellent hunter but is not a member of the *sawalɛgɛ* because of his Catholic faith.

[1029] Lit.: "We sing their song *emphatic marker*".

[1030] Throughout this passage the pronouns referring to wild animals have an animate form.

[1031] Benefactive construction; see Micheli 2007: 94.

[1032] Lit.: "That remedy *def* you went (to) eat everything"; the impression here is that Kuman is referring to his *hafʊ̨*, the hunting shirt.

[1033] Lit.: "gave".

[1034] Lit.: "found yourself".

[1035] Lit.: "came you-on".

shouted… You've heard me talk about Nibɔ*…eh! If I shoot at an animal and it comes towards me, as soon as I give a shout*[1036]*, that one drops to the ground… They looked for medicines for me. It's like that when someone proves he can hunt something big*[1037]*. My son Kwadyo who you've just seen here, he's killed many animals, with big long horns, the animals I've seen here were very big and there were a lot of them, maybe forty… ehe! And you know something? He didn't enter the brotherhood*[1038]*, even though I brought him up to, he didn't follow me, he just refused… That's what's happening to us*[1039]*. The reason is that*[1040] *he knows I've got many medicines but he doesn't do these things*[1041]*, he doesn't know how to prepare them…*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ nyą́ kú tɔzʊ̰bɔ walɔɔʊ̰ bɛrɛ, bɛ weelege nyą́ wéele↓?

Thomas: *When you killed those big animals, what dance did you do?*

Kuman: bɔ̀ págalɛ kyɔ! lɛ bí ló hɔ lɔɔŋmɔ!

Kuman: *They beat the drums! And we sang the right song*[1042]*!*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ weelege'rɛ ą́kɔ↓?

Thomas: *What type of dance was it?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ báa kā Asɪŋɔ. Lɛ bì gbé bɪ tuloʊ̰ pɛɛ, mʊm bì gbé-ʊ̰ lɛ bì wéele hɔ, mʊm ù dą́ bɔɔgɔ lɛ ù pą́-kɛ pʊʊ, mʊm ù dą́ bɔɔgɔ lɛ ù pą́-kɛ pʊʊ, lɛ bì wéele.

Kuman: *The one we*[1043] *call* Asɪŋɔ*. All of us, we took our rifles, and when we had got them we did that dance; when you got there, you fired your rifle,* poom*, when you got there you fired your rifle,* poom*, and we danced.*

HUNTING STRATEGIES, ALONE OR IN A GROUP

Thomas: ó yáa sawalɛgɛ lɛ sawalɛsɔgɔ bɛrɛ wɪ̰mɔ↓?

Thomas: *Did you go out with other hunters*[1044]*?*

Kuman: Krʊa-í[1045]! Mʊm mì yáa mɪ taa, hɛrɛ baaŋɔ pí, a mʊm hɔ̀ dą́ tɛm wɛ lɛ mì vúga bɛrɛ laa sáwalɛ, bɛrɛ níɪ bɔɔgɔ laa sáwalɛ yɛɪ yɛɪ hɔ, mʊm nąa̰ŋmɛ'rɛ gʊ̰ gárɪ[1046] lɛ bì yáa, lɛ bì yáa mʊm trugo lɛ hɔ lɛ mì hé lɛ: "óa nūɪ faɪ, óa nūɪ faɪ,

[1036] Lit.: "shout a bit".

[1037] Lit.: "he finishes and does big hunt".

[1038] Lit.: "he didn't enter-in himself hunter".

[1039] Lit.: "so it sits us-with".

[1040] Lit.: "its foot sits/is-in".

[1041] Lit.: "he doesn't do it".

[1042] Lit.: "its song".

[1043] Lit.: "they".

[1044] Lit.: "Did you go hunting with hunters group others?".

[1045] Here the morpheme *-í* is not negative, it has an emphatic function.

[1046] Lit.: "when meat *def.* business was hard".

úa nīı faı, úa nīı faı!". Bèrɛ tuloʊ̱[1047] bárı lɛ, lɛ bèrɛ yáa níı fafʊ̱, lɛ bɔ̀ gbúla: *"huhuhuhuhuhu!"*; hɛrɛ ʊ̀ yí lɛ bì pra̱-bɛ. Mı taa laa la, lɛ mì yáa-í. Sıkɛwɛ da̱ a mì yáa kɔrıgyɔ, lɛ da̱ mì yáa kú zʊ̱rʊ̱ wı̱ a mì ma̱a̱-nyī-bɛ-í, lɛ mì hé: "(ı) Dé bíı yāa[1048] wɔ-rı!" Mʊm bì yáa wɔ-rı lɛ mì dé ʊ̀ níı fʊ̱ı̱ mʊ̱, lɛ mì yáa lɛ mì pra̱-ʊ̱, mʊm mì pa̱-(hɛ)rɛ lɛ la lɛ kú-ʊ̱ lɛ la lɛ mì hé lɛ: "da̱ lɛ tíı-ʊ̱ lɛ bíı yāa."

Kuman: *All the time! When I went out alone it was different[1049], but when the season came when I called the others to go out, people were there and didn't hunt much because it was hard to find meat; so we went into the bush and there I said: "You go there, you go there and you stay there!" The people loaded their rifles and stood there and shouted:* "Huhuhuhuhuhu!"*, then the animals[1050] came and we got them. If I was alone I wouldn't go. Sometimes it happened that I went for a walk, or I went out to kill some animals, but I couldn't see them, so I said: "Let's go together!" When we went together, I made them wait there like that, then I went to tire them out[1051], so when I fired my rifle I killed them and said: "Take them and let's go!".*

HUNTING TECHNIQUES

Thomas: zı úa sáwalɛ lɛ da̱ ↓?

Thomas: *How do you hunt[1052]?*

Kuman: Tüi lɛ, mía tīı , tüi mì tíı hɛrɛ prɛʊ̱ lɛ mía gyī sawalɛgɛ hɔ gʊ̱ krʊa-í. A bı nıaʊ̱'nı a hʊ̀ hé lɛ lɛ: "hʊ̀ nyī̱ka-ga-mı lɛ míı nyī̱ka-ga-ŋʊ daa!", a hını bı faı tüi'rɛ dɛ, bía hɛ̄-gɛ mʊ̱rʊ̱ lɛ. A hını mìa ma̱a̱ hé-gɛ mʊ̱ı̱-í, a hʊ̀ hé-gɛ mʊ̱ı̱ lɛ nya̱-mı a mì yí sıkɛrɛ faı bɔɔgɔ. Hɛrɛ mì pa̱-kɛ, hɛrɛ mì nyì̱ zına'nı zʊlɔʊ̱, hɛrɛ mì pa̱-kɛ taa mʊ̱, hını hɛrɛ mì kyʊ̱ lɛ pa̱ lɛ, hɛrɛ mì pa̱-kɛ taa mʊ̱ *GBAM!* A mì kú trɔtaa.

Kuman: *The rifle, (that's what) I take; I had a rifle when I still didn't know anything about hunting[1053]. And my maternal uncle said to me: "He[1054] taught me about it and today I'll teach you!"; and it was that (type of) rifle that we had here[1055];*

[1047] Regional variation of the more common plural *tuyu*.

[1048] Inclusive analytical form of the 1st-person plural pronoun; see Micheli 2007; note 94, p. 85.

[1049] Lit.: "When I went I one, this its was different".

[1050] Lit.: "they".

[1051] The animals. In this passage Kuman uses inanimate pronouns when referring to game animals.

[1052] Lit.: "hunt and arrive".

[1053] Lit.: "Rifle I took that time when I didn't know hunting and its business absolutely".

[1054] Meaning "someone".

[1055] Lit.: "and that we here rifle *def. focus*".

we used it like this[1056] *(*Kuman makes the movements of someone loading an old musket*). But I wasn't able to load it*[1057]*, so he loaded it for me*[1058] *and I went round there. When I fired, I hit*[1059] *the target, a partridge, when I fired another shot, the first time I went shooting, I fired another shot and* GBAM! *I killed six!*

Thomas: óa bérɛrɛ fraʉ̰ dugu↓?

Thomas: *Did you use to set traps?*

Kuman: Mìa bérɛrɛ wɪ̰ pa!

Kuman: *I set lots of them!*

Thomas: Bɛ fraʉ̰ koyo óa bérɛrɛ dugu↓?

Thomas: *What type of trap did you use to set?*

Kuman: Dạ̰yɔ! Dạ̰ɪfragɔ. Dugu lɛ mì frá ụ̰ŋo lɛ bérɛrɛ-gɛ lɛ hɔ̀ gbé mʉ̰, lɛ mì hé-gɛ hɪrɪhɪrɪgɔ lɛ sá-nɪ agba, lɛ hɔ̀ gbé deŋemạ̰ra̰ bɔ leminyo, lɛ mì kú-ɛ. Ụ̰ŋowalɔɔgɔ mì bɪ́-ke lɛ. Lɛ hɛrɛ prɛʉ̰ dạ̰ɪfragɔ hàa yí-í lɛ; mì níı lɛ frá ụ̰ŋo fɪfɪı mʉ̰, hɔ̀ hé fɪfɪı pa, lɛ mì hé-gɛ lɛ hé mʉ̰ lɛ sá-ga-nɪ lɛ baa[1060] bá dɛɛn, lɛ sá-ti ụ̰ŋo fɪfɪıgyɔ, ɔɔ! Hɔ̀ hé mʊm hɛ, lɛ mì bérɛrɛ-gɛ lɛ sá-ga-ti, lɛ tíı kyeŋo, kyeŋobḭḭ, lɛ pó hɛ mi(nyo-nɪ). Hɛrɛ zʊlɔ'nɪ hʊ̀ yí, lɛ só-ke mʊm bɪ, gbereko taa mì mạ́ạ̰ gbé nuunu. Hɪnɪ burunibo bɔ dạ̰ɪyɔ hàa níı-í lɛ buruni bɔ gʉ̰ wɛ hàa hɛrɛ níı mʉ̰rʉ̰-í dɛ!

A hɛrɛ mì kú zʊlɔ'nɪ hɛrɛ lɛ la, benhalɪ a mì yáa lɛ dạ́ dɛɛkɔ wɛ hɔ̀ bí a mì núsɪ bɔɔgɔ, a bùuro yí a mì pạ́-'rɛ pa lɛ kú-ɛ, lɛ kú nạ̰bạ̰ɪ̰ taa pa; bʊlaa! a mì yí a bɪ nɪaʉ̰ hʊ̀ hé: "eh! Kyɛrɛ mʊnʊbɪɔ dɛ! ù *gagné*!" a hʊ̀ yáa la sú dɔbrʊ, burunivaɪ̰[1061] bɔ dɔbrʉ̰'rɛ wɛ lɛ nyạ́-mɪ[1062], hɛrɛ mì bárɪ-gyɛ-ŋmɛ mʉ̰ʉ̰ʉ̰, hɛrɛ mìa kú tɔzʉ̰rʉ̰ walɔɔʉ̰ walɔɔʉ̰[1063], ụ̰nʉ̰ʉ̰ walɔɔ walɔɔʉ̰ hɔ, hɛrɛ mì bárɪ-gyɛ mʉ̰ʉ̰ʉ̰, mìa kórɪ bạ̰ạ̰kɔ, mḭ́ faɪ mʉ̰!, a tüi'rɛ la lɛ húɪ mʉ̰ lɛ hé mʉ̰, hɛrɛ mìa kórɪ-gyɛ hɔ-rɔ asɪ!

Kuman: *Iron! Traps made of iron! I used to intertwine some string, place it and it took, I placed it in the form of a ring and inside I put some cassava and that took the neck of the* deŋemạ̰ra̰[1064] *and I would kill them. I tied up thick ropes too, because in those days we still didn't have iron traps; then I'd sit and tie strings together, they were this small* (Kuman indicates a width equal to

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[1056] Lit.: "we did that like this *presentative*."

[1057] Lit.: "I couldn't do it in that way".

[1058] Benefactive construction; see Micheli 2007: 94.

[1059] Lit.: "saw".

[1060] To be read as *bɔɔ*.

[1061] *Burunivaɪ̰* is the generic term used by the Kulango to refer to Arabs and north Africans. It is a compound of *buruni* "white man" and *vaɪ̰* "to be red".

[1062] Benefactive construction; see Micheli 2007: 94.

[1063] The repetition of the adjective acts as an intensifier.

[1064] *Deŋemạ̰ra̰* is an antelope which is taboo for twins. Its horns are longer than those of a gazelle.

half that of his – very slender – little finger)*, I made them and placed them like this* (draws a ring in the sand) *and put them inside and there I covered*[1065] *(it) with leaves, I used*[1066] *a very thin rope… yes! It was like this* (points to my microphone wire, with a diameter of about a millimetre)*, I put it there and I put it inside, or I took a palm, palm grains and put them in the middle. When the partridges came to eat them, well… I could get ten of them in a day. We still didn't have that white man's iron*[1067]*… just like all the other white man's things; we didn't have them then.*

When I killed[1068] *the partridges, the next day I was walking and I found a mature tree*[1069]*, so I sat down and saw a gazelle coming; I shot it and killed it, then I killed a* biche*, no, two* biches*! Then I went home and my*[1070] *maternal uncle said: "Eh! Really… now eh! You've* gagné*!" and he went to buy a 12-bore rifle for me, one of those Arab ones. I carried it on my shoulder for a long time; with that I killed very big animals, with very long horns; when I carried it on my shoulder I walked a lot*[1071]*; look here* (Kuman shows me a prominent callus on his shoulder) … *with that rifle it swelled up*[1072] *and got like this* (Kuman gestures to show me how swollen his shoulder was with that rifle)*; I did too much walking with that one.*

Thomas: zɪ úa hɛ̄ lɛ gyī úʊ nyḭ̄ zɪna lɛ kʊ̄-hɔ[1073] sawalɛgɛ-nɪ↓?

Thomas: *How do you know that you'll see an animal and kill it when you're on a hunt*[1074]*?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ míı yʊ̄gʊ, mʊm míı yʊ̄gʊ dɪkyɛgɛ're hɔ, hɪnɪ míı gyāba lɛ míı yāa kpā̰ sɪkɛrɛ: hɪnɪ, hɪnɪ míı yāa tʊ̄ı, mʊm walɔɔgɔ míı gyāba lɛ mʊ̰̄, bɛrɛ, míı yāa la kpā̰, hɪnɪ bɛrɛ míı yāa tʊ̄ı , halɪ míı nyḭ̄ fɪfɪʊgyɔ bɔɔŋɔ, a míı pā̰-kɛ-í, hɪnɪ walɔɔʊ̰ bɛrɛ míı yāa tʊ̄ı.

A mʊm míı nʊ̄ısɪ a vı́ŋ̰o kʊ̄-mɪ hɛ, hɛrɛ míı yʊ̄gʊ lɛ fɪfɪʊ̰'nɪ míı yāa tʊ̄ı.

A mʊm wɛmɔ bɔ́ɔ yāa haɪ̰-dɪ, lɛ dā̰ walɔɔbɔ bɛrɛ[1075] dā̰ hɔ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yé dʊ̄-kɛ[1076] mɪ-rɔ lɛ: "bíı dā̰ zʊ̰bɔ bɛrɛ dā̰". Hɛrɛ míı yāa bɪbɪ, hɪnɪ bɛrɛ míı dā̰, bɛrɛ míı dàwalɛ, míı yāa.

[1065] The string.

[1066] Lit.: "put-on".

[1067] Lit.: "that white men their iron, it didn't sit (here)".

[1068] Concluding construction; see Micheli 2007: 91.

[1069] Lit.: "I went and found a tree certain, it was mature".

[1070] Lit.: "our".

[1071] Lit.: "strongly".

[1072] Lit.: "and rifle *def. focus* and became swollen *focus*".

[1073] The pronoun referring to the game animal is inanimate.

[1074] Lit.: "hunt-in".

[1075] It is interesting to note that in referring to a group of animals Kuman uses the class 26 plural morpheme, which should only be used for people; see Micheli 2007: 34.

[1076] Future structure; s. v. Micheli 2007: 75.

Halı míı nyɪ̱ fıfıɪgyɔ bɔɔgɔ, a míı pa̱-kɛ-í dɛ! Hʊ́ʊ̱ lā lɛ sīo[1077], lɛ míı gyere lā lɛ nyɪ̱-bɛ lɛ pa̱- bɛ.

A haanı'nı, Mía kʊ̄ lɛ dɛ! Mʊm míı yāa, mʊm bɔɔgɔ gbereke'rɛ-ti mʊ̱, a míı nyɪ̱-bɛ; hını, a míı pa̱-bɛ-í, lɛ míı da̱-bɛ, lɛ míı da̱-bɛ, lɛ míı da̱-bɛ, lɛ míı da̱-bɛ, hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa mʊ̱ʊ̱ʊ̱ la nīı dɛɛkɛ'rɛ-dı lɛ kyɪ̱[1078], a míı gyī dırɛyɔ bri lɛ la, hını míı gōi lɛ míı gōi dıkyɛgɛ pupu, *cinq heures du matin*, lɛ nyá ká-ga zı oh↓? Lɛ míı yʊ̄gʊ, la nʊ̄ʊ̱ dɛɛkɛ'rɛ naʊ̱-nı. Hɛrɛ bɔɔ bɔ́ɔ tīı lɛ prɛʊ̱ ben hʊ́ʊ̱ halı lɛ bɔɔ(gɔ) bɔ́ɔ[1079] wīrı, hını míı kʊ̄, ʊ́ʊ̱ da̱ trɔtaa, hɛrɛ míı pa̱-kɛ, hını míı kʊ̄, ʊ́ʊ̱ da̱ trɔtaa, hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ wīrı lɛ míı pa̱-ʊ̱, hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ wīrı lɛ míı pa̱-kɛ. Hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̱, hʊ́ʊ̱ wīrı bıbı, lɛ míı pa̱-(hɛ)rɛ.

> Kuman: *When I get up, when I get up in the morning, the thing I'm thinking of going to look for – that, that's what I go out to hunt[1080]; if I think of the big one, people, I go to hunt it[1081], those are the ones I go to hunt[1082] and if I see any small ones on my way I don't shoot… I'm looking for big ones[1083].*
>
> *And if I'm there and I'm dying for some meat[1084], when I get up I go and hunt for small ones. And when someone going to the field comes across a group of big animals[1085], he comes to tell me: "We've seen some animals coming"… as soon as they call me, I find them and follow their tracks (and) go.*
>
> *Out there if I see a small animal, you can be sure I won't shoot it[1086]! It runs off and I then I see them and shoot.*
>
> *And chimpanzees… I kill them, eh! If I go when the sun gets to there* (Kuman points to where the sun rises)*, I see them; I don't shoot them, I follow them[1087] follow them, follow them for all the time they're walking, until they sit in a tree to sleep, and I know night is coming. So I go to the village and come back early the next morning,* cinq heures du matin*, or how do you say? So I get up and hide at the foot of the tree. They're all quiet and at dawn, when they come down, I kill them[1088]; I can kill six of them, the ones I killed were about six, when they came down I shot them. Every time one of them came down[1089], I shot him.*

[1077] A free variation of the concluding structure; s. v. Micheli 2007: 91.

[1078] *kyɪ̱* literally means "spend the night".

[1079] Referring to chimpanzees Kuman alternates animate and inanimate pronouns.

[1080] Lit.: "to take".

[1081] Lit.: "look for them".

[1082] Lit.: "get".

[1083] Lit.: "go to get".

[1084] Lit.: "if I'm there and hunger for meat kills me".

[1085] Lit.: "finds a group of big ones that comes".

[1086] Lit.: "if I see small one there, I don't shoot at him".

[1087] Lit.: "I find them".

[1088] Lit.: "that one I kill".

[1089] Lit.: "when he, he came down".

Thomas: Kwaku Wara sawalɛsɛ lɛ dugu↓?

Thomas: *Did Kwaku Wara use to be a hunter?*

Kuman: oo! Hi̱nu̱ ha̱a̱ sáwalɛ-í! Hi̱nu̱ gyí sinyo dɛ! Bı nıàu̱'nı nyi̱ka-mı; hi̱nu̱ kú zına walɔɔgɔ'nı wɛ; gyara! Gyara walɔɔgɔ'nı, hi̱nu̱ laa gbé lɛ!

Kuman: *No! That one didn't hunt! That one knew traditional medicine, eh! Our maternal uncle taught me; that one killed big game; a lion! A big lion, that one had attacked him, yes!*

Thomas: Tɔzına walɔɔgɔ a̱kɔ ú kú lɛ da̱ ha̱a̱ gbē↓?

Thomas: *What big predators*[1090] *have you killed?*

Kuman: Gyara, Yabri, bɛ́rɛ laa gbē ka háa nū; wi̱nı zēı mu̱… Mía kā a̱u̱ wi̱nı mu̱, a úa nyī̱, wi̱nı u̱a kwa̱ u̱nu̱u̱-rɔ lɛ u̱ u̱nu̱u̱ u̱a kwa̱, kyɛrɛ hi̱nu̱ gbé-ku lɛ hù̱ hóo-ʊ walawala hɔ, hu̱ lɛ gyara'nı mu̱ lɛ yabri.

Kuman: *A lion, a panther, the ones that attack, it's like that; now what else… I'd mention buffalo too, you see, the ones that attack with their horns, that fight with their horns, really, they attack you… and he eats you every time, the lion or the panther.*

Thomas: lɛ zınagbesɔgɔ bɛrɛ báa hóo-be↓?

Thomas: *And do people eat predators?*

Kuman: oo! Báa hōo-be-í!

Kuman: *No! People don't eat them!*

Thomas: lɛ hú̱u̱ tū lɛ hú̱u̱ yī-gʊ-rı, úa ma̱a̱ pá̱-(hɛ)rɛ-í↓?

Thomas: *And if he threatens to attack you*[1091]*, can't you shoot him?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! úʊ ma̱a̱ pā̱-(hɛ)rɛ! wɛ-ti lɛ úʊ yāa dıryɛ lɛ nyī̱ bɔ peu̱ u̱a, úʊ gyī hu̱ lɛ-í, lɛ úʊ pā̱-(hɛ)rɛ! A mía gyī sawalɛsɛ lɛ mʊm mıa, hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ mía kōri míı pā̱-(hɛ)rɛ-í!

Kuman: *Yes! You can shoot him! If for example you're walking at night and you see his eyes, but you don't know it's him, then you shoot him! But I know he's a hunter*[1092] *like me, and that's why I don't like to shoot him!*

Thomas: Mʊm úʊ kō zınagbesɛ, úa hé kpalıgu̱↓?

Thomas: *When you kill a predator do you make sacrifices to the fetish*[1093]*?*

Kuman: oo! Mi̱ (lɛ) waı… Hɔ lɛ labʊlʊ'rɛ mì hé lɛ zìna[1094]'nı nyá̱-mı sıkɛrɛ, úʊ lō-ke lɛ dī-gɛ lɛ la bıbı, kyɛrɛ hını hɔ́ɔ lā lɛ.

Kuman: *No! Or rather*[1095]*… It's* labʊlʊ *that I use, the one that the* jinn *gave me*

[1090] Lit.: "(that) it happens he attacks".

[1091] Lit.: "And he takes and he comes you-on".

[1092] Lit.: "I know hunter *presentative*".

[1093] Lit.: "you do fetish-things?".

[1094] Here too Kuman calls the *jinn* beast (or creature).

[1095] Lit.: "like this *presentative* where".

that time; you rub it and eat a bit of it, really, everything's all right[1096].

Thomas: Hɩnɩ há̰a̰ má̰a̰ hɛ́-ʊ gʊ̰ wɛ vɛ-ɩ↓?

Thomas: *Then that one can't do anything to you*[1097]*?*

Kuman: oo! Hɛrɛ prɛʊ̰ bìa kʊ́-ʊ̰, hɩnɩ wɛ̀mɔ tɩ́ɩ bɔ̀ dɔ́ɔlɛ bɔ tɔgɔ'rɛ, hʊ̰̀ la sú ehe! lɛ mì fála-ɛ lɛ yáa la dɔ́ɔ lɛ-gɛ.

Kuman: *No! That time when we used to kill them, some people took their hides to sell them*[1098] *to the whites*[1099]*, ehe! And I skinned them and went to sell it.*

THE HUNTER'S TABOOS

Thomas: wɩ̰nɩ bɪ́ dʊ́ sawalɛgɛ'rɛ gʊ̰'nɩ, ʊ́ʊ má̰a̰ dáa-ti wɛ↓?

Thomas: *Can you add anything to what we've said about hunting*[1100]*?*

Kuman: Sawalɛgɛ gʊ̰'rɛ[1101], mʊm hʊ̰́ʊ̰ dā̰ wɛ́ zɛ̄ɩ, hɔ́ yàa mɩ́ɩ sā-ga-ti[1102], lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ bī-kpe-mɩ kyɔ!

Kuman: *Things about hunting, if you find that something's missing, I must add it and you (must) ask me!*

Thomas: Lɛ kyɪzʊ̰rʊ̰ gʊ-rɔ lɛ nyá̰ sawalɛgɛ[1103]↓?

Thomas: *Do you observe taboos connected to hunting*[1104]*?*

Kuman: Mhm! Sawalɛgɛ baaŋɛ'rɛ hɔ kyɪzɩŋɔ, mìa dʊ́-kɛ; mʊm mɩ́ɩ dī, sinye'rɛ wɛ ka, mʊm mía dī á ʊ́ʊ dēri daga, ʊ́a mā̰a̰ dēri-gye lɛ gū mɩ zɩka-í, hɩnɩ mɩ́ɩ yōgʊ lɛ! A mɩ́ɩ dī a ʊ́ʊ dē daga'rɛ, a mɩ́ɩ hɛ̄: "Pési-gye!", lɛ ʊ́ʊ pēsi-gye, ehe! A mɩ́ɩ dī a ʊ́ʊ hɛ ḭ̄sya! Hɛrɛ mɩ́ɩ ʔāga mɩ fʊa̰kɛ'rɛ, mʊm ʊ́ʊ tū bɔɔgɔ a mɩ́ɩ hā-kʊ ʊ-rɔ, a ʊ́ʊ ḭ̄sya *etchì* a ʊ́ʊ gyīna bɔɔgɔ a mɩ́ɩ hā-kɛ-ʊ a kyēi gʊ-rɩ; háa kyērɛ-í! Sawalɛ(gɛ) baan lɛ!

Kuman: *Mhm! The taboos connected to hunting, I've said what they are: when I'm eating, for a remedy, when I'm eating and you lift a burning ember, you can lift it and come behind me, then I get up! And (if) I'm eating and you take the fire I say: "Leave it!" and (you can be sure that) you leave it! And (if) while I'm eating you sneeze! Then I spit out my mouthful, if you're there then I throw it at*

1096 Lit.: "that finishes *presentative*".

1097 Lit.: "that him can't do to you things certain again?".

1098 Lit.: "some people took, they sold their skin *def.*".

1099 Kuman speaks directly to my spokesman: "she ended up buying".

1100 Lit.: "those we said hunting *def.* things *def.*, you can add-on certain?"

1101 To be read as '*nɩ*. Here Kuman uses a singular form instead of the correct plural of the demonstrative adjective.

1102 Injunctive construction; see 2007: 93.

1103 The second part of the sentence may be interpreted as a benefactive structure even though it lacks a first verb, which could be *ʊ́a nyá̰*.

1104 Lit.: "and taboos you-with and you give hunting?".

you, and (if) you sneeze etchì *and stay there, then I throw it at you and that falls on you; and it's not good (for you)! These things are connected with hunting*[1105].

A GOOD HUNT

Thomas: Mʊm úʊ kʊ̄ zɪna, bɔɔ aɪ úa nyą́ ʊ ɻgbragɔ-nɪ↓? Zoloŋe'rɛ úa yāa-rɔ sawalɛgɛ, hɔ hɛʊ̯ lɛ ą̱kɔ↓?

Thomas: *When you kill an animal, which part do you give to your old man*[1106]*? And the shirt you wear*[1107] *for the hunt, what is its role*[1108]*?*

Kuman: Mʊm ʊ-tɔ[1109] zoloŋe'rɛ, a bɔ̀ wɻ́-kɛ hɔ[1110], zoloŋe'rɛ mʊm ù wɻ́- kɛ hɔ, lɛ sā-ga lɛ la[1111], ʊ siʊ̯'nɪ úʊ dī hɔ, lɛ ù sá-ti sá-ti (lɛ) wɻ́(-kɛ), mʊm nyʊ́ nyɻ̄-nyɛ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̯ gyī sawalɛsɛ lɛ ʊ. A mʊm bíɪ yāa ɻsiko-nɪ, a míɪ yāa kʊ̄ zɪna walɔɔgɔ, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̯ gbōʊ̯ lɛ, lɛ míɪ dā bɔ hɪlɪgɔ, hɪnɪ bɪ ɻgbragɔ'nɪ, hɪnɪ hʊ̯ ą̱ŋɔ-nɪ faɪ, yʊgɔbɛrɛ ą̱ŋɔ faɪ, lɛ ʊ dā bɔ hɪlɪgɔ, lɛ yī lɛ pō-ke bɔ naʊ̯-nɪ. Hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̯ nyɻ̄-nyɛ lɛ hʊ́: "ah! Kyɛrɛ hʊ̀ kú zɪwalɔɔgɔ, kyɛrɛ bugobɛrɛ ɻ́ yáa!". Mʊm ɻ́ɻ̱ yāa ɻ̄gya-yɛ lɛ ɻ́ɻ̱ yī, lɔ bɔ́ɔ hɛ̄, nna, hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ nyɻ̄-ɻ lɛ bɔ́ɔ hɛ̄: "Bomiaf[1112]!" lɛ bɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ nna:

"Daa eh! Daa eh!
Daa oh! Daa ooooh! Daa eh! Daa eh!
Daa eh! Daa eh!
Eh! Dáa dɔ̄ʊ̯ bɪa-rɪ oh! Daa oh! Daa oooooh!"

Bɔ́ɔ: "BOMIAF! BOMIAF! BOMIAF! BOMIAF!", lɛ úʊ hɛ̄ bɔ hɪlɪgɛ'rɛ mʊ̯, lɛ úʊ hɛ̄-gɛ mʊ̯. úʊ yāa hɔ-rɔ nudɪɔgɔ lɔ[1113] úʊ gōi-rɔ nuŋoko, lɛ gōi nudɪɔgɔ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ: "BOMIAF!", lɛ bɔ́ɔ lāɪ bɔ nɻ̱ʊ̯ pɛɛ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ bɛ̄-kʊ, lɛ bɔɔ: "Kyekyewɪra[1114]!", lɛ bɔ́ɔ: "Sáwalɛgɛ dɔ̄ʊ̯ gbaga-rɪ. Hɪnɪ ʊ daagɔ, hɪnɪ ʊ nyɻ́ŋmɔ yāa bɪ-ti si…"

[1105] Lit.: "side of hunting *presentative*".

[1106] Lit.: "there where you give to your old man *def.*?".

[1107] Lit.: "you go with".

[1108] Lit.: "its job is which?".

[1109] Inalienable possession; see Micheli 2005:193-197 and Micheli 2007: 88-89.

[1110] The use of the 3rd-person plural here has a passive/impersonal function; see Micheli 2007:87-88.

[1111] Concluding construction; see Micheli 2007: 91.

[1112] According to Kuman *BOMIAF* is an Ashanti expression of joy – something for which I personally have found no evidence. In Ashanti *obomfo* is the word meaning "hunter", and although the aphaeresis of the initial *o* may be plausible, the phonetic distance between the diphthong *ia* and the tense mid-back vowel *o* seems to me too great to support this explanation. What is true is that the word is not Kulango, and the same goes for other words used in the hunters' songs set out below.

[1113] To be read as *lɛ*.

[1114] Here again Kuman uses an expression he defines as Ashanti.

(hɪnɪ?) bɔ yī gʊ-rɔ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī gʊ-rɔ bɛrɛ bɛrɛ bɛrɛ bɛrɛ, lɛ ɪ̰gya nạ̰ạ̰ŋmɛ'rɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī hɔ-rɔ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī hɔ-rɔ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yī hɔ-rɔ ʊ ɪ̰gbragɔ ʊ ben-dɪ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa sōo-ke bɔ yɔgɔ-nɪ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ gyere dāgatʊ-gɛ. Hɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ dāgatʊ lɛ lā, díryɛ brī hɔ, lɛ bíɪ yī-rɔ zɪna'nɪ walɔɔgɔ bɔ ɪ̰nuŋo lɛ bíɪ kwɔ̄ɪ-ɛ, lɛ bíɪ kwɔ̄ɪ-ɛ, lɛ bíɪ kwɔ̄ɪ-ɛ…

"Oh! Begyi[1115] oh! Begyi oooh!
eh! Begyi eeeeh! Eh Bègyi sí mɪ kɔrɔ daa!
eh! Ahia Begyi oh! Ahia Begyi ooooh!

mɪ̰ hɛrɛ lɔɔŋmɔ-ti.

"Ka míɪ yāa eeeeh!
Ka míɪ yāa ooooh!
Ka míɪ yāa yɛbɔ báa yāa wɛ-rɪ-í!
Ka míɪ yāa oooh!
Ka míɪ yāa yɛbɔ báa yāa bɔɔ wɛ-í!
Ka míɪ yāa eeeh!
Ka míɪ yāa aaaah!"

Hɛ́rɛ tū bɔɔgɔ.

"A mɪ̰ mīini ạ́ŋɔ, eh, nyʊ̰ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini,
a mɪ̰ mīini ạ́ŋɔ sawalɛ kyakya nyʊ̰ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini"
lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ hɛ̄ mɪ nuŋo mʊ̰

"A mɪ̰ mīini ạ́ŋɔ oooh, nyʊ̰ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini
a mɪ̰ mīini ạ́ŋɔ, dʊ̰ʊ̰'nɪ kyakya nyʊ̰ lɛ bɔ́ɔ mīini!"

lɛ bɔ́ɔ lāɪ bɔ nuŋo mʊ̰ lɛ: "BOMIAF!". Hɪnɪ bɔngra'rɛ bàa tūɪ, bɔ́ɔ yāa bɔ́ɔ ɪ̰gya-gɛ pɛɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ lāɪ lāɪ, lɛ ʊ yɛ́rɛ tūɪ datugo, lɛ tūɪ daminyo lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ hɛ̄-gɛ klowia-klowia-klowia, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dạ̄-ŋʊ, lɛ úʊ nī, lɛ bɔ́ɔ: "BOMIAF!", lɛ bɔ́ɔ lāɪ bɔ nu̱u̱ pɛɛ.

"Hạ́ạ̰ hōo dene
eeeh! Hʊ̀ʊ̰ hɛ́ hʊ̀ʊ̰ yáa oh! Bíɪ hōo bɪ dene!
Dʊ̰ʊ̰nɪ kyakya mʊ̰die yáa eh!
Bíɪ hōo bɪ deneeee.
eeeh! Hʊ̀ʊ̰ ɛ́ hʊ̀ʊ̰ yáa oh! Bíɪ hōo bɪ dene!
Sáwalɛ kyakya, mʊm hʊ̀ʊ̰ hɛ́ yáa oh!
Bíɪ hōo bɪ deneee!
eeeeh! Hʊ̀ʊ̰ hɛ́ hʊ̀ʊ̰ yáa oh! Bíɪ hōo bɪ dene!
eeeeh! Hʊ̀ʊ̰ hɛ́ hʊ̀ʊ̰ yáa oh! Bíɪ hōo bɪ dene!"

[1115] *Begyi* is the name of a sacred forest.

lɛ ʊ́ʊ nɪ̄:

"eeeeh! Hʊ̰̀ hɛ́ hʊ̰̀ yáa oh! Búɩ hōo bɩ dene!"

Lɛ nɪ̄ lɛ hɛ̄ pa, nna:
Mʊm mía pɪ̄ lɛ lā, a bɔ́ɔ hóo bɔ deneṵ-ɩ↓? Mʊm báa nyɪ̰̀ na̰a̰ŋmɔ vɛ-í↓?
Hɛrɛ la!
Lɛ ʊ́ʊ nɪ̄ lɛ hɛ̄ pa. Sawalɛ(sɔgɔ?), hɩnɩ báa lāɩ bɔ nṵṵ pɛɛ lɛ sōo gʊ-rɩ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ lɛ: "Kyɛrɛ sawalɛ ná̰a̰ŋmɛ'rɛ lɔ̄ɔ", lɛ ʊ́ʊ hɛ̄ lɛ: "ɪ̰́ɪ̰ hɛ̄-gɛ mɩ̰, ɪ̰́ɪ̰ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ ɩ̰gbragɔ'nɩ", lɛ ʊ́ʊ dā bɔ hṵko hɔ, lɛ nyā̰ ɩ̰gbragɔ-nɩ, hɔ́ɔ zɛ̄ɩ lɛ bɔ́ɔ dɔ̄ɔlɛ-gɛ, lɛ hɛrɛ nʊ́ʊŋɔ kyēi bɔɔgɔ.
Benhalɩ dɛ, lɛ bɔ́ɔ: "Kparɩgya lɛ! Zɩna'nɩ ʊ̀ kʊ́ bɩkya hɔ, yáa la píra-ɛ[1116]!". Mʊm ʊ́ʊ yāa, a ʊ́ʊ mā̰a̰ kō mʊm brɔmsɔɔ[1117], hɩnɩ a hʊ̰́ʊ̰ hɛ̄ ʊ nyɩ̰ŋmɔ-rɩ mʊm daagɔ vɛ-í, lɛ sínye'rɛ taa nūɩ, nna, hɔ lɔɔŋmɔ bɔ́ lō ka, lɛ hʊ̰́ʊ̰ hɛ̄ lɛ, kyɛrɛ, eh!:

"taa zú oh, taa zú, á̰nɩ má̰a̰ yáa mɩa?
taa zú ooh, taa zú, á̰nɩ má̰a̰ yáa mɩa?
taa zú ooh, taa zú, á̰nɩ má̰a̰ yáa mɩa?
taa zú, oooh!"

Hɩnɩ nyʊ̰ há̰a̰ mā̰a̰ hɛ̄ gʊ̰-wɛ-í lɛ á̰nɩ[1118] má̰a̰ hɛ́-mɩ gʊ̰ wɛ↓?

Kuman: *If you've got a shirt and it's been ritually washed[1119]; the shirt, if you've washed it properly and you wear it[1120], the amulets you've obtained[1121], you put them on it, you put them on while you wash it; when a man sees it, he knows straight away that you're a hunter[1122].*
And when we go into the savannah, and I go to kill a big animal; if it's very big I cut its tail off; that elder of ours[1123], the one that's here in the village… you cut off the tail and come and place it at his feet. Then he says: "Ah! You've really killed some big game[1124]; truly (my) sons[1125], go!". When they go to load it up and come back, they say, madam, when they see you, they say: "BOMIAF!" and then, madam, they go:

"Today eh! Today eh!

[1116] Ritual expression.

[1117] *brɔmsɔɔ* is a species of small gazelle whose scientific name is unknown to me.

[1118] The *ɩ* is an epenthetic vowel inserted to prevent direct contact between *n* and *m*.

[1119] Lit.: "and they've washed it *focus*".

[1120] Lit.: "put it".

[1121] Lit.: "your medicines *def.* you have eaten *focus*".

[1122] Lit.: "then he knows hunter *presentative* you".

[1123] Lit.: "that our elder *def.*".

[1124] Compound word comprising *zɩna* "animal" and *walɔɔgɔ* "big".

[1125] Lit.: "children".

Today oh! Today ooooh!
Today eh! Today eh!
Today eh! Today eh!
Eh! Today is a good day for us, oh!
Today oh! Today oooooh!"

And they go: "BOMIAF! BOMIAF! BOMIAF! BOMIAF!" and you do this with the tail, and then you do this (Kuman imitates someone waving the tail in the air). *You move it*[1126] *to the right and then back to the left and then to the right again; and they go "BOMIAF!" and all raise their arms, they wait for you and say: "Kyekye wira!", and they go: "Hunting is better than farming*[1127]*, so you've got it again and we're so happy*[1128]*!", and they come to you*[1129]*, many people*[1130]*, they load the meat and come back, come back with it, come back with it, come back with it*[1131] *to your old man's courtyard and go to place it at his house, then they cut it up. When they've finished cutting it up it's almost night*[1132] *and we*[1133] *come with big animals' horns and we beat them, beat them, beat them…*

"Oh Begyi oh! Begyi oooh!
Eh Begyi eeeh! Eh Begyi; today it showed itself to me[1134]
Eh! ahia Begyi oh! Ahia Begyi oooh!".

That's its song[1135]*.*
When we've done that, he says: "When you went, what did he[1136] *do to you?" and you say: "He did nothing to me*[1137]*!", and then you dance, you dance there, and:*

"let me go[1138]*, eeeeh!*
let me go, ooooh!

[1126] Lit.: "you go her-with".

[1127] Lit.: "the hunt (is) sweet grow-on".

[1128] Lit.: "that again, that your face goes us-on build".

[1129] Lit.: "with you".

[1130] Lit.: "people, people, people, people". The repetition of a word gives it a plural value.

[1131] The repetition of a phrase acts as an intensifier, in this case meaning that there was an enormous amount of meat.

[1132] Lit.: " the night comes *focus*".

[1133] Lit.: "with the hunters".

[1134] Lit.: "it has taken my manifestation today".

[1135] Lit.: "So this song-on".

[1136] The animal.

[1137] Lit.: "it didn't do to me things certain".

[1138] … hunting.

let me go, sisters, don't you move[1139]
let me go, oooh!
let me go, sisters, don't you move!
let me go, eeeeh!
let me go, aaaah!"

This finishes[1140] *here.*

"So the village is afraid, here's the man they fear, here's the man they fear[1141]*, so the village is afraid; the man they fear hunts fast".*

and he does this with my arm (Kuman holds his right elbow in his left hand, imitating the elder raising his – Kumans' – arm)*;*

"and so the village is afraid, oooh! Here's the man they fear
and so the village is afraid, the man they fear is fast in the bush".

And they raise their arms (Kuman repeats the movement) *and:* "BOMIAF!". *They get the stretcher and go to load it all up*[1142] *trying to open it as much as they can*[1143] *and your wife gets her spoon and* canari *and makes them go* klowia-klowia-klowia (Kuman makes the movement of beating the spoon on the *canari*) …. *and she follows you as you dance, and they go:* "BOMIAF!" *and they all raise their hands. And they dance and sing, madam:*

"*She eats snails*[1144]
eeeh! He's decided to go[1145] *oh! We'll be eating our snails!*
The hunter's gone fast in the dʊ̯ʊ̯nɪ *eh!*
We'll be eating our snaaaails!
Eeh! He's gone away oh! We'll be eating our snails!
Hunting fast he's gone away, oh!
We'll be eating our snaaaails! Eeeh!
Eeeh! He's gone away oh! We'll be eating our snails!
Eeeh! He's gone away oh! We'll be eating our snails!"

And you dance:

[1139] Lit.: "women, they don't go anywhere".

[1140] Lit.: "shuts up".

[1141] Lit.: "man *presentative* they fear".

[1142] The meat.

[1143] Lit.: "they stretch, stretch".

[1144] Although snails are not considered a delicacy, when it rains the village streets are full of them and people collect them for food.

[1145] Lit.: "He's done he's gone".

"Eeeh! He's gone away oh! We'll be eating our snails!"

If I died, wouldn't they be eating their snails? If they didn't get any more meat? That's all[1146]*.*
And you dance and do whatever you want[1147]*. All the hunters raise their arms and say*[1148]*: "All right, here's the meat from the hunt!" And you say: "Do with it what the elder says*[1149]*!", then they cut the thigh off and give it to the elder, what's left is sold and that's the end of it all*[1150]*. At dawn the next day they say: "Truly, the game*[1151] *you killed yesterday; go and wash its face!". When you go and you manage to kill a* brɔmsɔɔ *it's that you use to wash it (ritually), that one*[1152] *can't bother you any more; there's a medicine, madam*[1153]*, with a song about it*[1154]*, that goes just like this:*

"Mix one well, oh, mix one well, who can face me?
Mix one well, oh, mix one well, who can face me?
Mix one well, oh, mix one well, who can face me?
Mix one well, oh!".

That man[1155] *can't do me any more harm… can anyone do anything to me?*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ zına fıfııyɔ'nı úʊ kʊ̄, wa-(t)ɔ[1156] laa gyina̰ʊ̰ bɛrɛ(-tɔ)↓?
Thomas: *That small animal you kill, is it for you or for the* jinn*?*
Kuman: Mʊm míı kʊ̄-ɛ bɔ́ɔ[1157] yī hʊ̰-rɔ.
Kuman: *When they kill him, they come onto him.*
Thomas: A a̰n bɔ lɛ bɔ́ɔ hóo-e↓?
Thomas: *And who eats him?*
Kuman: Hını hʊ̰́ʊ̰ hōo-we, hını hʊ̰́ʊ̰ hōo fıfııʊ mʊm brɔmsɔɔbɛrɛ, míı ma̰a̰ hōo-baa wɛ. Mʊm míı pīra-ye lɛ lā, míı ma̰a̰ hōo-baa wɛ. Lɛ míı nī lɛ hɛ̄, nna:

[1146] Lit.: "This finishes".

[1147] Lit.: "and you do *pa* (ideophone marking a conclusion)".

[1148] Lit.: "Those, they stretch their hands all and pour you-on and say".

[1149] Lit.: "you do it like this, you do it with the elder *def.*".

[1150] Lit.: "it remains that they sell it, and that mouth falls there".

[1151] Lit.: "animal".

[1152] The spirit of the dead big game animal.

[1153] Lit.: "and medicine *def.* one sits, madam".

[1154] Lit.: "its song they sing *focus*".

[1155] Meaning *spirit.*

[1156] Inalienable possession; see Micheli 2005: 193-19 and Micheli 2007: 88.

[1157] Here and in the subsequent passages, Kuman consistently uses animate pronouns when referring to animals and *jinn* alike.

“Hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ, hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ
sawalɛ(sɛ) hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ.
Bɔ náfą̱ṵ lılıŋʊ mą̄ą̱ tʊzṵrṵ
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ mıa-rı
ooooh! Dám dɔ̄ṵ oooh!
Hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ oh, eeeh!
Hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵṵṵṵ!
Dṵṵnṵ kyakya bɔ nafą̱ṵ lılıŋʊ, hą̱ą̱ kɔ̄rı dṵṵnṵ
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ mıa nʊʊ(ŋɔ)!
Hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ
sawalɛ(sɛ) hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ,
sawalɛ(sɛ) hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ
Bɔ nafą̱ṵ lılıŋʊ hą̱ą̱ kɔ̄rı dṵṵnṵ,
hą̱ą̱ yī lɛ dám dɔ̄ṵ bıa-rı”.

Mı lɔɔŋmɛ’rɛ taa lɛ pa.

Kuman: *That one eats a bit, eats small (animals) like the* brɔmsɔɔ*, (then) I can have a bit. When I’ve finished its ritual washing, I can eat a bit of it. Then I dance and sing, madam:*

“He’s coming back and the sauce will be tasty[1158]*,*
the hunter’s coming back and the sauce will be good.
The sinews in his legs are thin, but they can beat[1159] *the animals,*
he’s coming back and the sauce will be tasty for me[1160]*!*
Oooh! The sauce will be good, oooh!
He’s coming back and the sauce will be good oh, eeeh!
He’s coming back and the sauce will be tasty!
In the dṵṵnṵ *the sinews in his legs are fast, he walks through the* dṵṵnṵ*,*
he’s coming back and the sauce will be good on my mouth!
He’s coming back and the sauce will be good,
the hunter’s coming back and the sauce will be tasty,
the hunter’s coming back and the sauce will be tasty.
The sinews in his legs are thin, he walks through the dṵṵnṵ*,*
the hunter’s coming back and the sauce will be tasty for us!”

This is another song of mine[1161].

[1158] Lit.: “sweet”.

[1159] Lit.: “they can”.

[1160] Lit.: “sauce sweet me-on”.

[1161] Lit.: “my song *def. presentative; concluding ideophone*”.

THE HUNTER'S FUNERAL – PART 1

Kuman: Hɛrɛ bɪ-ti a̱ŋɛ'rɛ-nɪ daa mu̱u̱, mʊm sáwalɛsɛ'nɪ lɛ pīɪ, mʊm báa nyī mɪa-í báa ma̱a̱ pū-ke-í[1162], báa ma̱a̱ hɛ̄-gɛ-í; míɪ yāa hɛ̄ hɛʊ̱'nɪ pɛɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ gyere pū-e. Yao Bɔfwɔ, mìa pú hɪnɪ oh! Mìa yáa búgyi Yao Bɔfwɔ!

Kuman: *And today, while we're in the village, if a hunter dies and they can't see me, they can't bury him… I go and do all my work and then they bury him. Yao Bofwo… I was the one who buried him! I was the one who went and did the* bugyi[1163] *for Yao Bofwo.*

Thomas: Mʊm úʊ pīɪ, a̱n lɛ hʊ́u̱ yé héʊ baaŋɔ↓?

Thomas: *When you die, who will do it for you?*

Kuman: Mʊm wé bɔɔgɔ lɛ hɛ̄ mʊm hʊ́u̱ dāwalɛ mɪa yɛʊ, hʊ́u̱ ma̱a̱ hɛ̄-gɛ. Bɔ́ɔ ma̱a̱ gū Gbogolaye lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ ma̱a̱ lɛ gū Dɛkpɪŋɛ lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ lɛ gū a̱nu-a̱nu[1164]. A mʊm wé faɪ vɛ lɛ hɛ̄ mʊm hʊ́u̱ dāwalɛ-mɪ sawalɛgɛ pa, hʊ́u̱ ma̱a̱ hɛ̄-gɛ.

Kuman: *If there was someone here to follow me, he could do it. Someone could come from Bogolaye to do it, or come from Depingo to do it, or come from another village in the area[1165]. And if there was someone who followed me on the hunter's path, he could do it.*

THE HUNTER'S FUNERAL – PART 2

Kuman: Dugu hɛrɛ prɛu̱ bàa hɛ̄ lɛ bɔɔ, mʊm bɔɔgɔ sàwalɛsɛ ɪgbragɔ píɪ, bɔ̀ wéele-gɛ, prɛu̱ bìa hé-gɛ mu̱u̱ dugu hɔ, u̱ dá̱ bɔɔgɔ-ŋmɛ lɛ ù kóri sawalɛgɛ, lɛ ù kóri-gye… A mʊm sáwalɛ(sɛ) walɔɔgɔ wɛ pīɪ hɔ, ùa ká̱ mì hé lɛ mʊm mía bɔɔgɔ lɛ mɪa dɛɛkɔ, bɔ́ɔ yī-rɔ taŋa lɛ míɪ sa̱ yɔgɛ'rɛ-nɪ, mʊm bɔ́ɔ yī-rɔ taŋa'rɛ hɔ lɛ zimyo, lɛ míɪ prī taŋa'rɛ wɛ lɛ sā bɔ nʊʊŋɔ-nɪ lɛ prī wɛ lɛ nīi, lɛ kwɔ̄ɪ zimyo'nɪ lɛ kū-ɛ[1166] lɛ hārɪ yɔgɔ'rɛ zɪka. Mʊm sawalɛsɛ bi̱i̱ wɛ fu̱u̱, lɛ hʊ́u̱ gū fu̱u̱ laa tūɪ-ɛ. Hɛrɛ hɔ la, mʊm mía sī lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ-í, hɪnɪ úa ma̱a̱ deri-e saakɔ-í dɛ! Mʊm bɔ́ɔ ka̱ mì sí lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ lɛ la bɪbɪ, hɪnɪ bɔ́ɔ gyī úʊ ma̱a̱ tūɪ[1167], lɛ bɔ́ɔ gyere bɔ́ɔ dūgʊ yɔgɛ'rɛ bɪbɪ, hɛrɛ úʊ dēri-e bɪbɪ, lɛ hʊ́u̱ dɛ̄ derigyo. Kyɛrɛ mía sī lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ-í, lɛ há̱a̱ ma̱a̱ dēri-e-í. úʊ da̱ hʊ́u̱ dūgu bɪbɪ, há̱a̱ ma̱a̱ dēri-e-í!

[1162] In this utterance Kuman uses an inanimate pronoun when referring to the deceased; in the next one he corrects it with an animate form.

[1163] My impression is that *Bugyi* is the name given to the secret funeral rites used by the hunters' association.

[1164] The regular plural of *a̱ŋɔ "village"* is *a̱n*. Here Kuman uses an unusual form with the morpheme *-u* of the richer class. See Micheli 2007:29 foll.

[1165] Lit.: "come from villages villages".

[1166] The pronoun referring to the chicken is animate.

[1167] The syntactic structure of this phrase is unusual, with the object at the beginning; lit.: "that one they know you can take".

Kuman: *In those old days they used to do this here: when an old hunter died they used to dance for him; in the days when we did that, you got there and you loved hunting, you loved it… and today when a great hunter dies, you heard that I said that I (must) be there with my herbs; they get some wine and I go into my hut. When they bring some wine and a chicken, I pour some wine on his mouth, then I pour a bit more and I drink some, then I hit the chicken, I kill it and throw it behind the hut. If one of the hunter's sons is there he goes out and picks it up. Once that's done, if I don't sing the song you can't lift him from the ground. When they hear me raising the song, they know that you can pick him up, then they open the hut and and as soon as you try to lift him a bit, he moves*[1168]*. Really, if I don't raise the song, you*[1169] *can't lift him. You see he's too heavy, you*[1170] *can't lift him.*

Thomas: ʊ́ʊ gyí Asɪŋɔ lɔɔŋmɔ pooko↓?

Thomas: *Do you know many* Asɪŋɔ *songs?*

Kuman: Taa lɛ míı lō lɛ bɔ́ɔ gyere dēri-e. Hɔ́ɔ zɛ̄ı lɛ míı lō-ŋmɛ, míı yāa lɛ mí kpa̰ lɔɔŋmɔ na̰kɔ pa lɛ lō lɛ hɛ̄ bɛrɛ bɔɔgɔ kyɔ. Úa nyı̰, bɔ́ɔ gyī lɔɔm wɪ̰nɪ, mʊm mía lō lɛ prā, míı ma̰a̰ hɛ̄-bɛ lɛ: "ı́ ló[1171]!", lɛ míı nya̰-bɛ bɔɔŋɔ lɛ bɔ́ɔ lō wɪ̰.

Kuman: *One that I sing before they lift him up. They let me sing it, (then) I try to find another song, which I sing with the people who are there*[1172]*. You see, they know some songs, when I'm fed up with singing I can say to them: "Sing!", and I make them sing*[1173]*.*

Thomas: Hɛrɛ lɔɔm'nɪ kulaŋo-nɪ báa ló wɪ̰nɪ[1174]↓?

Thomas: *Are the songs that they sing in Kulango?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Hʊ́ʊ̰ kóri míı ló wɛ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ ka̰↓? Hɔ *première* dɛ! Ʊʊ ma̰a̰ dú-kɛ mɪ̰↓?

Kuman: *Yes! Do you want me to sing something so you can hear it? This one is* première*! Can you tell (her) that*[1175]*?*

Thomas: ɔɔ!

Thomas: *Yes!*

Kuman:

"Daa oh! Daa oh! Daa ooooh!
daa eh! Daa eh! Dáa gyā bɪa-rɪ!
Daa oh! Daa oh! Dáa gyā bɪa-rɪ oh!
Daa oh! Daa oooooh!"

[1168] Litt.: "he responds (to the) lifting".

[1169] Lit.: "he".

[1170] Lit.: "he".

[1171] Imperative tonal structure; see Micheli 2007: 85.

[1172] Lit.: "and I sing and I do people there *emphatic marker*".

[1173] Lit.: "I start them off and they sing a bit".

[1174] Lit.: "Those songs *def.* they sing Kulango-in sing a bit?".

[1175] The 3rd-person singular pronoun refers to me.

ʊ́ʊ dą́ daa dɔ́ʊ̱ bıa-rı mʊ̱↓? Dáa gyā bı-rı… mʊm hɔ́ɔ lā hɔ lɛ ʊ́ʊ hɛ̄:

“Bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ nʊ́ʊ̱ sōo,
hʊ́ʊ̱ dīɔ daa brıbra,
bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ nʊ́ʊ̱ sōo,
hʊ́ʊ̱ dīɔ daa brıbra.”

ɔɔ! Hʊ́ʊ̱ đīɔ daa brıbra, bɔ náʊ̱ sōo pɛɛ, bɔɔgɔ hʊ́ʊ̱ đīɔ, hą́ą̱ mą̄ą̱ tīŋini-ı́, bɔ nʊ́ʊ̱, hą́ą̱ mą̄ą̱ tīŋini-ı́.

Kuman:

“Today oh! Today oh! Today oooh!
Today eh! Today eh! Today is bitter for us[1176]*!*
Today oh! Today oh! Today is bitter for us!
Today oh! Today ooooh!”

You think that today is a good day for us like this? Today is bitter for us… when this is finished, then you sing[1177]*:*
“His legs are abandoned[1178]*, his arms are abandoned,*
today he sleeps strangely,
his legs are abandoned, his legs are abandoned,
today he sleeps strangely.”

Yes! Today he’s sleeping all wrong, his legs are abandoned, everything, there he sleeps and he can’t move, his hands, he can’t move them…
Thomas: áŋ̱ nyı́ka-ʊ hɛrɛ lɔɔm’nı↓?
Thomas: *Who taught you these songs?*
Kuman: ì̱gbrabɔ bɛrɛ mì kyʊ̱ lɛ lɛ dą́ faı dugu dugu dugu dugu, a bàa sáwalɛ hɔ! Bɛ̀rɛ nyı́ka-ga-mı mʊm míı sı̱̄ra̱ka bıbı lɛ mía nyīka-ŋɛ, mʊm daa, mʊm óa sāwalɛ kyɔ hını, míı nyı̱̄ka-ʊ-’nı, lɛ ʊ́ʊ yāa.
Kuman: *The elders who were here many many many years ago, who were true hunters*[1179]*. They taught me them, as I teach it and show it… even today, if you (want) truly to hunt in that way, I teach you to and that’s all*[1180]*.*

[1176] Lit.: “us-on”.

[1177] Lit.: “do”.

[1178] Lit.: “in disorder”.

[1179] Lit.: “The elders that I first and I found here once once once once, and they hunted *focus*!”.

[1180] Lit.: “and you go”.

ENTRY TO THE HUNTERS' ASSOCIATION

Thomas: Mʊm nyì̱ gū fu̱ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ kpa̱ sawalɛgɛ'rɛ-nɪ lɛ da̱ ɪ̱ kpelego háa tāa-í, ɪ́u̱ máa̱ dé-gɛ↓?

Thomas: *If a man comes from far away looking for the hunters' association, and finds that your language is different*[1181]*, can you accept him*[1182]*?*

Kuman: A hʊ́ʊ̱ gú fu̱ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ kpá sawalɛgɛ laa…↓? ɹ̱hɪ̱! Lɛ bíɪ lā sāwalɛ wɔ-rɪ lɛ. Mʊm gbásɛ yī lɛ da̱ úʊ gbā, háa̱: "Míɪ nūɪ ʊ kyɪ̱ŋɔ lɛ gbā!", Hɪ́ṉɪ a ɪ́u̱ gbā lɛ, ɹ̱hɪ̱! úʊ krʊ̄ hɛ̄-í; hɛrɛ hɪ́ṉɪ gyī, mía gyī hɛrɛ-í! Yooh! Hʊ́ʊ̱ ma̱a̱ fɛ̄ɛ-mɪ lɛ míɪ nyɪ̱ka-a wɛ, a úa krʊ̄ hɛ̄-í, hɪ́ṉɪ gū-rɔ wɛ fu̱ lɛ yɪ̱, ɹ̱hɪ̱! Lɛ hɪ́ṉɪ hɛ̄: "eh! Hɔ hɛrɛ bíɪ lā hɛ̄ hɛrɛ fu̱ pa!". Hɪnɪ bɪ pɛɛ, hɪnɪ bíɪ hɛ̄-í, hɪnɪ bía hé taa-ɪ↓? Hɪnɪ bíɪ hɛ̄ taa!

Kuman: *And he comes from far away looking for the brotherhood of hunters, or…? Ihi! Then we go hunting together! If a farmer comes and finds you growing things, he says: "I'll grow things with you!". So that one and you grow things, ihi! (Perhaps what) you don't know, he knows, maybe that's it!* Yoooh*! He can stay under my protection and I can show him something that you don't know: that one brings something from where he comes from, ehe! And that one says: "Eh! This is what we do there!" that one and all of us, what we can't do, can't we do it together? Of course we do it together!*

HUNTERS AND PATERNITY

Kuman: Ndagbolo wɛ faɪ dugu, bɪ nɪaʊ̱'nɪ ba(bɔ) sɪra, hʊ́ʊ̱ yáa, sawalɛsɛ'nɪ wɛ lɛ, a hʊ̀ʊ̱ yáa ɪ̱siko-nɪ, lɛ yáa lɛ hʊ̀ʊ̱ yí, hʊ̀ʊ̱ yí dɪrɛyɔ, a hʊ̀ʊ̱ ká bɔ̀ vérɛlɛ ɪ̱sike'rɛ-nɪ fu̱, a hʊ̀ʊ̱ lɛ: "eeeh!", lɛ dá ɹ̱bʊm lɛ ɪ̱sike'rɛ-nɪ, ɪ̱sikosɔgɔ bɛrɛ, lɛ hʊ̀ʊ̱ píɪ, a hʊ̀ʊ̱ dá yɛrɛ a hʊ̀ʊ̱ píɪ, bɔ yɛrɛ… a ha̱ lɛ: "sío, lɛ yáa a̱ŋɔ-nɪ, mʊm mu̱ Nassian-ti faɪ mʊ̱!", ha̱: "sío lɛ yáa a̱ŋɔ-nɪ, nyʊ̱'nɪ ɪ́u̱ da̱ hʊ́ʊ̱ fɛ̄ dɪrɛyɔ pɛɛ, lɛ ɪ́u̱ kāɪ bɔ yɔkɛ'rɛ wɛ lɛ yī lɛ pēi-é; hʊ́ʊ̱ kprɛ̄!" Hɔ̀ hé mu̱ sawalɛsɛ'nɪ, a̱ŋɔɪ̱sɛ'nɪ kā, a hʊ̀ʊ̱ ká bɪ nɪaʊ̱bɛrɛ sɪragbolo'nɪ, a hʊ̀ʊ̱ ká hʊ̱ siogo lɛ sá a̱ŋɔ-nɪ lɛ dá bɔ yɛkɔ hʊ̀ʊ̱ fɛ́, a hʊ̀ʊ̱ bílika bɔ yɔkɛ'rɛ lɛ pési a: "ʊ! hanaʊ̱, ò pési mɪ yɔkɛ'rɛ!". "Ha̱ gú bɔɔgɔ! Hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ yé sa̱ bɪ(bɪ), háa̱ nyɪ̄ yɔkɛ'rɛ wɛ-í!"; ha̱ yáa a hʊ̀ʊ̱ ká bɔ̀ vérɛlɛ fu̱: hʊ̀ʊ̱ píɪ. Hɔ-ti mʊ̱, mʊm hʊ̀ʊ̱ yé káɪ dugu, ka hɪnɪ lɛ hʊ̀ʊ̱ píɪ.

Hé(rɛ) dɛ̄; hɛ́rɛ dɛ̄ bía dū-kɛ lɛ sàwalɛgɛ'rɛ dɔ́ʊ̱ dugu sɪkɛwɛ, hɛ́rɛ dɛ̄ wɪ̱mɔ háa̱ tū-ti lɛ bɔ́ɔ sāwalɛ, hɪnɪ bá nyɪ̄ hɔ gʊ̱ wɛ, wɛ-ti hʊ́ʊ̱ yāa lɛ bɪ́u̱ka nyʊ̱-rɔ, hʊ́ʊ̱ nya̱, hʊ́ʊ̱ ma̱a̱ nya̱ sʊga[1183]. Hɛrɛ po. Wɛ-ti lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ yāa wɛ, kʊ̱ŋmo háa bɔ̄ɔgɔ-í, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ yāa fu̱ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ nyɪ̄ka mʊm zɪŋɔ hɔ, úʊ sī lɛ úʊ nyɪ̄ bɔɔ wɛ. úa nyɪ̄ lɛ ɪ̱siko-nɪ hɔ́ɔ gū, hɛ́rɛ dɛ̄ úʊ nyɪ̄ sawalɛsɔgɔ bɛrɛ, bía sāwalɛ(sɔgɔ) lɛ úʊ ka̱ bɔ́ lɛ:

[1181] Lit.: "your language it isn't one".

[1182] Lit.: "you can respond it?".

[1183] *Sʊga* literally means "gold"; these days it is also used to mean "money".

“Mʊnʊbɪɔ sawalɛsɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ kyɛ̄rɛ!”, a ʊ́ʊ nyɪ̰ hʊ́ʊ̰ lā lɛ zɛ̄ɪ sawalɛgɛ’rɛ, mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ kʊ̰ lɛ lā hɔ, hʊ́ʊ̰ mą̄ą̰ zɛ̄ɪ sawalɛgɛ’rɛ, lɛ hą́ą̰ sāwalɛ daagɔ-í.
Hɛrɛ lɛ mɪ baaŋɛ’rɛ mʊ̰rʊ̰. Hɛrɛ mì kʊ́, mìa kʊ́ yɛrɛ-í, hɛrɛ mì lá lɛ kʊ́ yɛrɛ’nɪ hɔ lɛ lá a bɔ̀: “ʊ́a sāwalɛ daagɔ-í”. A mì zɛ́ɪ.
Ʊa nyɪ̰ hɛɛn’nɪ trɔfrɪnạ. Hɔ̀ dɛ́ mɪa sawalɛgɛ baaŋɛ’rɛ, ʊ́a dą́ hɔ́ɔ hɛ́ mía kyɛ́rɛ↓?

Kuman: *Once here there was an old man, our maternal uncle’s father, and one day went out (into the savannah); he was a hunter, he went to the savannah, he went and was coming back; he was coming back at night, when he heard someone*[1184] *shouting there in the savannah and called out*[1185]*: “Eeeh!” And he found a young man in the savannah, one of the savannah people*[1186]*, who was dying, and up came a woman, but he was dying, his woman… and she said: “Run and go to the village, go there, maybe to Nassian” and she said: “Run and go to the village; all the people you find there who’ll be washing for the night, take their water and come back to wash him, he’ll be better!”. The hunter wanted to warn*[1187] *the village chief, wanted to warn my ancestors*[1188]*, he wanted to warn them, so he started running, he went off quickly and came*[1189] *to the village, where he found his sister who was having a wash. He spilled her water and threw it away: “You! Elder Brother, you’ve thrown my water away!”; “He’s coming*[1190]*! When he comes to the village, he won’t find any water!”; he went off, and when he got there he heard him cry out – he was dead. That’s how it was, if she*[1191] *had refused*[1192]*, she would have died.*

That’s why we say that hunting is a good thing in a way… that’s why there’s always someone who hunts; they see this type of thing[1193]*; if he goes and meets a man, the* jinn *gives, may give some money. A lot of money.*

For example if there’s a hunter[1194] *who can’t have children*[1195]*, and he goes there, the* jinn *gives him something, something you take and find somewhere*[1196]*. You see, it comes from the savannah! That’s why you see hunters, hunters like us, and you hear them say: “Now the hunter’s all right!”… and you see that he*

[1184] Lit.: “them”.

[1185] Lit.: “and he *presentative*”.

[1186] A *jinn*.

[1187] Lit.: “call”.

[1188] Lit.: “the group of our maternal uncle father *def.*”.

[1189] Lit.: “entered”.

[1190] Lit.: “He comes out of there”.

[1191] The sister.

[1192] To let her brother throw the water away.

[1193] Lit.: “that, they see its things certain”.

[1194] Lit.: “him”.

[1195] Lit.: “if he goes a bit, birth it there no”.

[1196] I think Kuman meant that the *jinn* explains to the hunter where to find medicines.

leaves the hunt as soon as he's got children… he has to[1197] *give up hunting and he hunts no more.*

Exactly as happened to me[1198]*… When I had sons, I couldn't have a daughter*[1199]*; as soon as I had a daughter the* jinn *said to me: "You will hunt no more!" And I left. You see, I've got nine children. This is what hunting was for me*[1200]*, don't you think it was a good thing for me?*

Thomas: ɔɔ!

Thomas: *Yes!*

Kuman: ɔɔ! hɔ̀ nyą́-mı bi̱i̱.

Kuman: *Yes! It gave me a daughter.*

HUNTERS' SONGS – PART 1

Thomas: Lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ óa lō lɛ hɛ̄ sàwalɛsɛ'nı píı bɔ gʊ̱; hɛrɛ lɔɔŋmɔ taa'rɛ la pú-e↓?

Thomas: *The song you sing to celebrate the hunter's funeral*[1201]*; is that the only one for that purpose*[1202]*?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! Báa lō-ŋmɛ pa.

Kuman: *Yes! They sing it and that's all*[1203]*!*

Thomas: úʊ mą́ą̱ ló hɛrɛ lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ↓?

Thomas: *Can you sing that song?*

Kuman: oo! Míı mą̄ą̱ sāsi hɛrɛ mı mi(nyo).

Dɛ míı dʊ̄ hɔ pa, míı hɛ̄ hɔ pa, hɛrɛ ha míı zɛ̄ı mı minyo-nı, míı hɛ̄ wɛ yɛı lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ ką̄. Hɛrɛ míı kyʊ̱ lɛ są̄ hɔ, míı dą̄ hʊ́ʊ̱ dīɔ hɔ, lɛ míı sā mı nʊ̱ʊ̱ hʊ̱-rı, lɛ míı hɛ̄: "SIKOŊO[1204]" lɛ bɔ́ɔ: "hɔ́ɔ yāa!"; "SIKOŊO!"; "hɔ́ɔ yāa!"; "SIKOŊO!"; "hɔ́ɔ yāa!", lɛ míı hɛ̄ lɛ:

"Sikoŋoo háa dą̄-ŋmɛ, sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa,
sikoŋooo, sikoŋooo hɔ́ɔ yāa ooooh!"
BOMIAF!
"Sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa, sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa,
Sikoŋo.

[1197] Lit.: "can".

[1198] Lit.: "this *presentative* mine same *def.* like this".

[1199] As Kulango society is matrilineal, daughters are of great value.

[1200] Lit.: "It caused to me hunting it *def.*".

[1201] Lit.: "and you do hunter *def.* dead his things".

[1202] Lit.: "that song one *def.* to bury him?".

[1203] Lit.: "they sing it *concluding ideophone*".

[1204] Another word that is not Kulango. Kuman refused to translate it, saying vaguely that it was Ashanti. Seen in its context it would appear to be a sort of mythical name, perhaps a hunter-hero or the secret name of death.

Dʊ̱ʊ̱nʊ̱ kyakya sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa
Sikoŋo bomiafo, sikoŋo hɔ́ɔ yāa
a sikoŋooo, sikoŋooo hɔ́ɔ yāa oooh!
BOMIAFO
Bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ nʊ́ʊ̱ sōo
ʊ́ʊ̱ dīɔ daa brɪbra
bɔ náʊ̱ sōo, bɔ nʊ́ʊ̱ sōo
dīɔ daa brɪbra
míɪ yāa eeeeh! eh! Hʊ́ʊ̱ hōo bɔ dene
sáwalɛ(sɛ) yāa eeeeh! nnabɛrɛ ʊ́ hōo bɔ dene
ooooh!".

Hɪnɪ bɔ́ɔ yāa hʊ̱-rɔ:

"oooh, hʊ́ʊ̱ hōo bɔ dene, sáwalɛ(sɛ) yāa
dʊ̱ʊ̱nʊ̱ kyakya hʊ́ʊ̱-ŋmɛ yāa dɛ!".

Hɪnɪ bɔ́ɔ yāa hʊ̱-rɔ.

Kuman: *No! I must keep it in my heart!*
But I will say this, I mean I do this, so that thing I keep in my heart, but I'll sing a little bit so she can hear it[1205]*. As soon as I go in (the hut) and I find him sleeping like that, I put my hands on him and say: "Sikongo!", and they go: "He is gone!; "Sikongo!"; "He's gone!"; "Sikongo!"; "He's gone!" And then I sing:*

"Sikongo happens, Sikongo is leaving,
Sikongoooo, Sikongooooo is leaving, oooh!"
BOMIAF
"Sikongo is leaving, Sikongo is leaving!
Sikongo
fast in the dʊ̱ʊ̱nʊ̱ *Sikongo goes away,*
Sikongo bomiafo*! Sikongo is leaving!*
Sikongooo, Sikongooo is leaving, oooh!"
BOMIAFO
"His legs are upside-down, his arms are upside-down,
ih! Today he sleeps strangely,
His legs are upside-down, his arms are upside-down,
today he sleeps so very strangely,
I'm going away eeeh! eh! She will eat her snails!
The hunter is leaving eeeh! Women you will eat your snails!
oooh!"

[1205] What Kuman sings here is the public part of the song, the part sung when the body is being carried from the house to the place of burial.

And then everybody goes with him:

"Oooh! She will be eating her snails, the hunter is leaving!
Fast in the dụ̱ụ̱nụ̱ *that's how he goes away!".*

And then they go with him[1206].

Thomas: lɔɔm'nɪ báa tū lɛ pū-e, ɪ́ɪ̱ pɛɛ gyí-ụ̱ laa nyɪ̀ táa lɛ↓?
Thomas: *The songs they use*[1207] *when they bury him, do you all know them or only some of you*[1208]*?*
Kuman: úa nyɪ̄; bɔ lɔsɛ-ti eh! Ua nyɪ̄ búgo bɛrɛ pɛɛ gyī sawalɛgɛ'rɛ hɔ gụ̱-í, bɔ́ɔ pɛɛ gyī ụ̱ lɔɔm'nɪ-í, a hɛrɛ úu hɛ̄: "Hą̀ą́ pú lɛ hṵ̀ yáa!", hɛrɛ lɔɔm'nɪ lɛ wɪ̱nɪ mú lō, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mɪ̱, a hṵ́ụ̱ gōi vɛ lɛ tūa bɪ nyɪ̱ŋmɔ-í. Lɛ úu dūgu bɔ nyɪ̱ŋmɔ, hɪnɪ hṵ́ụ̱ mą̄ą́ yāa, halɪ bɔ́ɔ ɪ̄gya-ɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa lɛ, mum úa sī-gye-ía úu ɪ̄gya-ɛ lɛ úu yāa mụ̱, a hṵ́ụ̱ yāa-í. Mum úu sī tą̱ŋɛ'rɛ mụ̱ bɪbɪ, lɛ hṵ́ụ̱ sīo lɛ, mum hṵ́ụ̱ sīo lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa hụ̱-rɔ brɛbrɛbrɛbrɛ lɛ bɔ́ɔ yāa.
Kuman: *You see, there's their singer for this, eh*[1209]*! You see, not all the youngsters know the things about the hunt, not all of them know their songs, so when you say: "He's dead and he's gone away!", I sing these and other songs. That way, he won't come back and bother us*[1210]*. And you free him*[1211]*, he can leave, when they pick him up and go; if you don't sing them*[1212] *and you pick him up and go, he won't go. If you pour a bit of wine, then he runs; when he has run away, they lift him quietly*[1213] *and then they go.*
Thomas: Nyụ̱'nɪ hṵ́ụ̱ sī lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ, hṵ́ụ̱ píi lɛ bɛrɛ bɔ́ɔ dɛ̄-gɛ↓?
Thomas: *Is the man who intones the song different from the responders?*

Kuman: ɔɔ! bɛ́rɛ pīi pīi, bɔ́ɔ bą̄ɪ̱ bą̄ɪ̱! Yɛ́bɔbɛrɛ mą̄ą́ dɛ̄-gɛ!
A hɛrɛ ù ką́ mì hé dugu lɛ lɛ: "Begyi oh! Begyi! Lɛ Bègyi sí mɪ kɔrɔ daa!", lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ mì hé lɛ:

"Oh! Begyi oh! Begyi oooh!
Begyi eeeeh! Bègyi eh sí mɪ kɔrɔ daa!

[1206] To the place of burial.
[1207] Lit.: "take".
[1208] Lit.: "or man one *presentative*".
[1209] Lit.: "their singer-on".
[1210] Lit.: "to close our face".
[1211] Lit.: "you open his view".
[1212] Lit.: "build them".
[1213] Lit.: "they go with *ideophone* and they go (to the burial ground).

trugo wɛ lɛ, nna, a bɪ ɻgbragɔ wɛ a hʊ̀ yáa la pa̰ zɪna'nɪ, a hʊ̀[1214] kyéi lɛ níı lɛ yúgʊ, lɛ níı lɛ sa̰ truge'rɛ-nɪ; halɪ hɛrɛ truge'rɛ fu̱ mɪ kutuu mʊ̱, báa kā Begyi, a hʊ̀ sa̰-nɪ, a bɔ̀ kpa̰ mɻ pɛɛ lɛ báɪ lɛ vḯ truge'rɛ, bà nyḭ̀ bɔ naŋa-í, lɛ níı lɛ sa̰-nɪ, bà nyḯ-ɛ-í, lɛ sa̰-nɪ, bà nyḯ-ɛ-í, bɪ nɪɯɲɔ-rɪ, a hʊ̀ yé vūga-bɪ, a bì yáa, a hʊ̀ ló lablʊ lɛ nya̰-bɪ, a bì dí lɛ sá wɛ bɪ nyɻŋmɔ-rɪ, lɛ bì mḭ́nɻ lɛ da̰ hɔ lɔɔ titiŋe'rɛ taakɔ-rɪ koo lɛ, a hʊ̀ díɔ titiŋe'rɛ taakɔ-rɪ. Lɛ da̰ hɛrɛ prɛʊ̱ bía kyʊ̱ lɛ nyḯ-ɛ a bì hé: "eh! Kyɛrɛ Begyi, ù sí bɪ kɔrɔ daa!", bìa pa̰ zɪna hʊ̱ bɔ koyo, a hʊ̀ sa̰ truge'rɛ-nɪ a bì mḭ́nɻ-ɛ lɛ báɪ; kyɛrɛ *bon*! Hɛrɛ bɔ̀ hé lablʊ'rɛ a bì dí-gɛ mu̱ lɛ la a bì hé lɛ bì mḭ́nɻ a bì nyḯ-ɛ titiŋe'rɛ taakɔ-rɪ. Bì pa̰-(hɛ)rɛ trɔfrɪnyʊ̱ a hʊ̀ gyere kyéi. Hé(rɛ) dɛ̄ ù ka̰ mì hé lɛ hɔ̀ sí bɪ kɔrɔ: hɔ̀ wáa, lɛ sí brɪ kyeu.

Kuman: *Yes! They're completely different[1215]; they're very different! Women can respond too! The thing you heard that I was saying earlier, that: "Begyi oh! Begyi oh! Begyi you showed yourself to me today!"; the song I did that goes:*
"Begyi oh! Begyi oooh!
Eh Begyi eeeh! Begyi eh; today you showed yourself"
… is about a forest madam. And one of our elders went, shot an animal which fell to the ground and lay still, but then got to its feet, it stopped for a second and then went into the forest… that same forest that's there, near my camp, that's called Begyi. *And that one[1216] went in there; they looked for it everywhere but they lost it, so they surrounded the forest but couldn't find any trace of it[1217]; they stayed there and then went in, but they couldn't see it, they went in again, but they didn't see it. We were sitting when the elder called us. So we went, he rubbed* labʊlʊ*, gave it to us, we ate a bit and then rubbed it on our faces, then we looked around and saw there, on top of an anthill, an antelope that was asleep. And it was then that we saw it for the first time and said: "Eh! Truly* Begyi *today you have shown yourself to us!". We fired at the animal which duly[1218] went into the forest; we saw it and lost it; Really!* Bon! *When we did* labʊlʊ *and ate it, we looked around and saw it on the anthill. We shot it seven times and in the end that one fell to the ground. That's why you heard me say that the forest had shown itself to us, it had grown lots of vegetation and was making us look big fools[1219]!*

[1214] As usual the pronoun referring to the animal is animate.

[1215] Lit.: "people different different".

[1216] The animal.

[1217] Lit.: "they didn't see its foot".

[1218] Lit.: "he his type".

[1219] Lit.: "it had grown vigorous and built a bit shame".

Thomas: ú páamı lɔɔŋmɛ'rɛ wɛ henyugo[1220] lɛ ù ló-ŋme↓?
Thomas: *Do you remember the songs you sang the day before yesterday[1221]?*

Kuman: Ah Ah! hʊ́ʊ̰ kōri lɔɔm mʊ̰ ŋa̰! Ehh! Wɛbɔ[1222]! Hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ kóri míı kwɔ́ı-ɛ mʊrʊ̰↓? Yɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ kōri lɔɔŋmɔ dɛ! Mʊm bíı yāa kū zına'nı fṵ lɛ bíı yī hɔ, hɛrɛ bíı gbē bɔ hılıgɛ'rɛ mʊ̰ lɛ bɔ́ɔ:

"Nya̰ŋarınya̰[1223] ooh! Nya̰ŋarınya̰
Háa dɛ̄-gɛ lɛ gbē-ke nya̰ŋarınya̰
gbaŋmaŋa hılıgɔ lɛ ooooh!
Nya̰ŋarınya̰
háa dɛ̄-gɛ lɛ gbē-ke nya̰ŋarınya̰
gbaŋma̰ hılıgɔ lɛ ooooh!

Kyekye wıra[1224]
Sáwalɛgɛ dɔ̄ʊ̰ gbaga-rı
Nya̰ŋarınya̰
háa dɛ̄-gɛ lɛ gbē-ke nya̰ŋarınya̰!"

hını ɻgbragɔ hʊ́ʊ̰ gbē zına'nı bɔ hılıgɛ'rɛ mʊrʊ̰, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ hɛ̄-gɛ mʊ̰ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ yāa-kɛ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ yāa-kɛ:

"Wɛbɔ hılıgɔ lɔɔ na̰a̰ŋmɔ lɛ
tehılıgɔ na̰a̰ŋmɔ lɛ-í!
Mmmmh! Lɛ tehılıgɔ na̰a̰ŋmɔ lɛ oooh!
há̰a̰ yāa la yī-í, oooh!
Há̰a̰ yāa la yī-í oooh! Dʊ̰ʊ̰n'nı kyakya
há̰a̰ yāa la yī-í oooh!
Yaagɔ brɛbrɛbrɛbrɛ
há̰a̰ yāa la yī-í oooh!
tɔzına bɔ hılıgɔ lɔɔ-í!"

[1220] *Henyugo* is not exactly "the day before yesterday", but may be any time in the past which is highly vivid in the memories of the speakers.

[1221] Lit.: "You have forgotten song *def.* certain the day before yesterday and you sang it?"

[1222] I read this word as an irregular form of *wımɔ*.

[1223] According to Kuman this ideophone is a rendition of the sound of rapid steps in the savannah.

[1224] According to Kuman, who wouldn't translate them for me, these words are Ashanti.

“eeeeh! Kyɪagara kyu̱
Kyɪagara kyu̱ a̱nɪ máa̱ lɛ yáa↓?
Kyɪagara kyu̱u̱u̱
Kyɪagara kyu̱ a̱nɪ máa̱ lɛ yáa↓?
Kyɪagara kyu̱u̱u̱
Kyɪagara kyu̱ a̱nɪ máa̱ lɛ yáa↓?
Kyɪagara kyu̱!”

Taa lɛ hɛrɛ pa!

“da̱fʊa, nna ooh!
A yāa Da̱fʊa nna bɔ yɔu̱
Banfʊa nna,
a yāa Banfʊa nna bɔ yɔu̱ eh!
da̱fʊa daa!”

Mʊm hɛrɛ hɪnɪ húu̱ yāa húu̱ kū zɪwalɔɔgɔ’nɪ, hɪnɪ bɔ dam’nɪ pɛɛ úu̱ hé-í sɪkɛrɛ↓?

Kuman: *Ha ha! You like these songs don’t you! Eeh! Some others! When do you want me to start, now? The lady likes the songs, eh! When we go there to kill game and we come back, when we take its tail, they (sing):*

*“*Chakchakchak *oh!* Chakchakchakchak
he goes and takes it chakchakchak
here’s the panther’s tail, oooh!
chakchakchakchak*,*
he goes and takes it chakchakchakchak*!*
Here’s the panther’s tail oooh!
Kyekyewira
Hunting’s better than farming[1225]
chakchakchakchak
he goes and he takes it chakchakchakchak*”*

That elder takes the animal’s tail like that and does this, goes on this side and then on the other side (Kuman waves his arms in the air):

“Here’s the tail of something, here’s the meat
the goat’s tail isn’t meat
mmmh! The goat’s tail isn’t meat, ooh!
He goes away and doesn’t come back!
He goes away and doesn’t come back, oooh! Fast in the du̱u̱n
he goes away and doesn’t come back, ooh!

[1225] Lit.: “hunting is sweet farming-on”.

His absence is long[1226]*,*
He's gone away and won't come back oooh!
The animals' tail isn't here!"

"Eeeh! First man drunk[1227]*,*
First man drunk, who can walk?
First man drunk
First man drunk, who can walk?
First man drunk
The first man drunk"

Another one[1228]*:*

"The sauce is weak, mother, oh!
And Danfoa, mother, he's gone home!
Banfoa mother,
Banfoa's gone home, eh!
The sauce is weak today!"

If this one, that one goes to kill some big game, the sauce won't be weak any more, will it[1229]*?…*

Thomas: ʊ́ʊ̱ dɔ̄ʊ̱ sɪkɛrɛ!
Thomas: *It's good all right*[1230]*!*

Kuman: ʊ́ʊ̱ dɛ̄ fʊ̄a hɪnɪ tɔɔŋɛ'rɛ pɛɛ, háa nʊ̄ɪ-í! A yāa Dą̱fʊa daa bɔ yɔʊ̱; dą̱fʊa hɔ naŋa lɛ hɛrɛ a yāa Dą̱fʊa daa bɔ yɔʊ̱, Dą̱fʊa nna, a yāa Banfʊa nna… lɛ bíɪ sōo bɪ kyitiʊ̱ pɛɛ lɛ bíɪ sā sā bɪ siriʊ̱ lɛ gbē bɪ tuloʊ̱[1231]:

"eh! dą̱fʊa nna eeeeh!
eh! Dą̱fʊa nna bɔ yɔʊ̱[1232]
eh! dą̱fʊa daa
A yāa Dą́fʊa nna bɔ yɔʊ̱ eh!
A yāa Dą́fʊa nna bɔ yɔʊ̱ eh!"

[1226] Lit.: "the going is very slow".

[1227] *Kyɪagara* is an ideophone used to indicate the gait of someone who is drunk.

[1228] Lit.: "one *presentative* this *focus*".

[1229] Lit.: "that its sauce *def.* all it (the Kulango word for sauce is plural so Kuman uses the plural pronoun) isn't then?".

[1230] Lit.: "sweet".

[1231] Regional variation for the more common form *tuyii*.

[1232] Lit.: "homes", but here I think the plural is simply a form of poetic licence.

Kuman: *That's why the mouthful is all liquid, there's (nothing) in it. And Danfoa's going home today, the reason the sauce is weak is that Danfoa has gone home today, Danfoa, woman, and Banfoa has gone, woman… then we take off*[1233] *all our bangles, get our rings and grab our rifles:*

"*Eh! The sauce is weak, mother, eh!*
Eh! Danfoa mother is at home!
Eh! Weak sauce today!
And Danfoa's gone to his home, eh!
And Danfoa's gone to his home, eh!".

KUMAN AND OUR WORK

Kuman: úa nyɪ̰̄, hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰̄ hɛ̄-gɛ mʊ̰̄ dɛ, a hɔ́ɔ dɔ̄ʊ̰̄ mɪ-rɔ. Sɪkɛwɛ úʊ yī faɪ, nna, hɪnɪ mɪa faɪ-ɛ(í) eh! Hɪnɪ mɪ bugobɛrɛ bɔɔgɔ, a báa gyī-ge-í; úʊ mą̄ą̰̄ dēri ʊ tɔgɔ'rɛ mʊ̰̄ lɛ: "ɪ̰̄ ɪgbragɔ'nɪ faɪ dugu hɔ, sawalɛgɛ'rɛ; hą̀ą̰̄ hé lɛ hɔ lɔɔm lɔɔ!", úa nyɪ̰̀̄ hɪnɪ bɛrɛ faɪ bɔ hɛʊ̰̄ zɪ↓?

Kuman: *You see, what you're doing here is a good thing for me*[1234]*-*[1235]*. If you come back one day, madam, and I'm gone, eh! My children will be here and they won't know these things; you must bring your book and say: "Your old father was here a long time ago, he was a hunter; he did this and these are his songs*[1236]*! You see what people did here (in his day)*[1237]*?"*

Thomas: lɛ bɔ́ɔ gyī-ʊ̰̄…

Thomas: *That way they'll know…*

Kuman: Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ bɔ zɪŋɛ'rɛ hʊ́ʊ̰̄ hɛ̄ mʊ̰̄, hą́ą̰̄ dɔ̄ʊ̰̄ nyʊ̰̄ wɛ-rɔ mʊm mɪa, mɪ yedibugo bɔ̀ lá lɛ yúgʊ mʊ̰̄ kyɔ, lɛ hɛ̄-gɛ hɔ naŋa-nɪ-í, ɪgbrabɔ bɛrɛ dugu'rɛ, hɛrɛ bɛ̀rɛ gú dugu lɛ bɔ̀ sáwalɛ lɛ bɔ lɔɔm lɛ, hɛrɛ bɔ̀ bíla-bɪ hɔ, a bɔ̀ nyɪ́ka-bɪ lɔɔm'nɪ, a bì gyí-ge.

Kuman: *That's why what you're doing here is a good thing for a man like me; my grandchildren are already grown up*[1238]*, and they don't behave in accordance with tradition*[1239]*; the elders from before, the ones who founded our people so long ago*[1240]*, they were hunters and their songs, when they were bringing us up, they taught us the songs and we knew them.*

[1233] Lit.: "pour".

[1234] Lit.: "it is sweet me-with".

[1235] In this passage Kuman speaks directly to my spokesman, commenting on the work we have done together.

[1236] Hunting songs. At this point Kuman addresses me directly.

[1237] Lit.: "you see those people here, their work how?".

[1238] Lit.: "they have finished growing like this *focus*".

[1239] Lit.: "and they don't do it its foot".

[1240] Lit.: "those people came out time ago".

Thomas: Hɛrɛ ù dú mʊ̰ pɛɛ, úʊ mą́ą́ dá-ti wɛ lɛ úʊ sá-ga-ti↓?

Thomas: *To what you've said here, can you add anything*[1241]*?*

Kuman: Hɛrɛ míı dā-ti dɛ. úa nyḭ̄, hą̀ą́ nyḭ́-mı lɛ gyí-mı, mıa lɛ Yao Kuman. Halı sıkɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ yī lɛ dą̄, míı hɛ̄ ɪgbragɔ lɛ pīı hɔ, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ bī lɛ lɛ: "míı dą̄ míı yī faı, ɪgbragɔ wɛ faı bàa ká Yao Kuman, lɛ bɔ bugo faı!", mʊm bɔ́ɔ nyḭ̄ka-bɛ lɛ lā, ɪ̰hı̰! lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ kpɛ̄rɛ-bɛ lɛ hɛ̄-bɛ lɛ: "Zıŋɔ koyo sıkɛrɛ hʊ̀ʊ̰ nyḭ́ka-ga-mı, lɛ hʊ̀ʊ̰ nyḭ́ka-ga-ɪ̰↓?" úa kūrʊ hɛ̄-í; úʊ mą̄ą́ dą̄ mì nyḭ́ka-ga-bɛ, lɛ bɔ̀ tíı-gɛ lɔ bɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ hɛʊ̰. Mía kōri hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ lā lɛ yāa mʊ̰ dɛ, míı lā lɛ gyī nąkɔ pa, míı lā lɛ nyḭ̄ gʊ̰ wɪ̰ nąkɔ, úa nyḭ̄, a hʊ́ʊ̰ bī-be, bɔ́ɔ mą̄ą́ nyḭ̄ka-ŋɛ pa.

Kuman: *This is what I add. You see, you have met me and got to know me, I am Yao Kuman. If one day you come back here, I'm old and I'll be dead and you'll ask that, that: "I've come back, there was an old man here, who they called Yao Kuman, and his children are here!". When they point them out to you, ihi!, then you will greet them and say to them: "These things, he showed them to me, didn't he show them to you too?"… You don't know them, you may find that I taught them and they learned these things*[1242] *and do my work. When you have finished here and gone, I would like to continue learning something, to end up learning other things; you see, for you to ask them and for them to be able to teach you.*

Thomas: úʊ mą́ą́ wátʊ gʊ̰ wɛ, hɛ́rɛ hɛ̄ wąwą̄, hɛrɛ ù nyḭ́ dugu lɛ nyą́-bɪ[1243]↓?

Thomas: *Do you want to tell us something else, something extraordinary, that you saw long ago?*

Kuman: Ahi! A lɔkɛ'rɛ, hɛrɛ nna, wɛ-ti hʊ́ʊ̰ nyą̄ lɛ dą̄ bɔ bɔɔ-wɛ, mʊm bɔ bɔɔ-wɛ hɔ́ɔ nyą̄-nı hɔ, lɛ míı lɔ̄-kɛ lɛ zıŋɔ wɛ koyo, la sā-ti sinyo lɛ zíŋɔ wɛ koyo gū-nı, lɛ hɔ́ɔ gū-nı, hɔ́ɔ gū-nı lɛ míı tūı-gɛ, lɛ sāsi-ge, ɪ̰hı̰, wɛ-ti lɛ zıŋɔ wɛ lɛ nyą́ŋɔ wɛ kyēi hʊ̰-rı lɛ míı hɛ̄ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ 'o-ke, lɛ míı-tūı-gɛ lɛ sāsi, hını zıŋɛ'rɛ wɛ, úa nyḭ̄ míı gyī wɪ̰nı pɛɛ, wɪ̰nı koyo háa hɛ̄, yooh!

A gʊ̰'nı hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄, lɛ hɔ́ɔ dɔ̄ʊ̰ mı-rɔ ası, lɛ bíı dākyına wɔ-rı dɛ. Mʊm hą́ą́ pāamı mıa gʊ̰ lɛ lā-í, gyane, hą́ą́ pāamı mı gʊ̰-í, nna, a mıa, á míı pāamı bɔ gʊ̰ pa-í. úʊ nyḭ̄, wɪ̰mɔ-ti bére gyāba lɛ gʊ̰gyagaʊ̰ míı hɛ̄, á gyagaʊ̰ lɛ-í! ; a hą́ą́ pāamı mıa gʊ̰ á míı pāamı bɔ gʊ̰(-í) ; mʊm hʊ́ʊ̰ dą̄ fɪ̰ı̰, a hą́ą́ pāamı mı gʊ̰-í, lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ bɔ kpıɔ-rɔ, nna, lɛ míı kpɛ̄rɛ-gɛ kyɛrɛsɛ̰ı̰; lɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ dū-kɛ bɔ kpıɔ-rɔ lɛ: "hɛʊ̰'nı mì yáa hé fɪ̰ı̰ lɛ ndagbolo'nı hɔ, kyɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̰ lɔ̄, ɪ̰hı̰, hını bı pɛɛ, bíı hą̄wa wɔ-rı". úa nyḭ̄, wɪ́mɔ gyāba lɛ gʊ̰gyagaʊ̰ míı hɛ̄…

Kuman: *Ahi! The treatment, madam, if for example someone*[1244] *is hurting*

[1241] Lit.: "you can add-on certain and put it-on?".

[1242] Lit.: "took".

[1243] Benefactive construction; see Micheli 2007: 94.

[1244] Lit.: "he".

somewhere[1245]*, if he's hurting somewhere*[1246]*, and I treat him with a certain type of thing, and I put on it a medicine and a certain type of thing comes out, comes out from inside, comes out, then I take it and I keep it, ihi! If for example something falls on him like an illness, and I make him vomit that certain thing. You see, I know all those (things), all the types of thing which that*[1247] *does, yooh! And what you're doing is a very good thing for me*[1248]*; we believe in each other, right…! If you don't forget me*[1249]*, sorry, you won't forget me, and I, I won't forget you*[1250]*. You see, someone, some people think that I do bad things, but they aren't bad things; and you won't forget me, just as I won't forget you; and when you arrive there, you won't have forgotten me; you'll tell your husband, madam, to whom I send my warmest regards*[1251]*; and you'll say to your husband: "The work I went to do there with the old man… really the old man, he really knows how to heal, ehe! He and all of us, we believe in each other*[1252]*"… You see, some people think that I do bad things…*

KUMAN SHOWS ME HIS FETISHES AND AMULETS

Kuman: Ndagbolo bɔ zʊ̱rʊ̱ lɛ mʊ̱; bàa ká Mansunu Yao. Hɛrɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ níı bɔɔgɔ dugu, úa nyī̱ bɔ zʊ̱rʊ̱ wɛ, bɔɔgɔ mía sāalɛ bɔ gbɔkɛ'rɛ hɔ, bɔɔgɔ lɛ úa nyī̱, bɔɔgɔ hını̱ hà̱a̱ sáalɛ, úa nyī̱ mìa gyí bɔɔgɔ-í yooh! A mì lá lɛ bí-kpe mu̱u̱ lɛ nyī̱-nyɛ, suko taa bıbı mì yáa bıbı lɛ dá̱-ʊ̱ lɔɔ, a mì súla[1253]-ʊ̱ bıbı lɛ sóo bɔɔgɔ, a mì tíı-ʊ̱ lɛ yí-rɔ[1254]. Hɔ̀ hé mu̱, mʊm míı yāa hɔ saalɛgɛ bıbı, armą̱ háa dī, mʊm míı yāa hɔ saalɛgɛ lɛ míı ɩgya-ʊ̱ lɛ yāa-rɔ. Mʊm gʊ̱ wɛ bɔɔgɔ, bɔ́ɔ yāa dī hɔ fɛtı hɔ[1255], mʊm báa sī hɔ kpalıgʊ̱, báa kū armą̱ lɛ hʊ́ʊ̱ gū ʊ̱-rɔ: tɛɛ'nı sʊ̱ʊ̱kɔ dugu lɛ yáa lɛ sá̱ kɔlʊgɔ[1256] minye'rɛ-nı, ù dá̱ púʊ n'nı gú-nı; mʊnʊbıɔ háa hɛ̄-gɛ daagɔ-í, pʊʊn'nı ù dá̱, ʊ̱ gú, hɔ̀ hé mu̱, a mì yáa la nyī̱-ɛ[1257] lɛ lá, a mì tíı-ʊ̱ lɛ sási mı gbɛɛ-rı; mʊnʊbı sɔgɔbɛrɛ, mʊm bɔ́ɔ nyí-ʊ̱, bɔ́ɔ mą̄a̱ tīı-ʊ̄ laa dɔ̄ɔlɛ-ʊ̱; hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ mı̱,

[1245] Lit.: "and arrives his somewhere".

[1246] Lit.: "if his somewhere it makes suffer-on *focus*".

[1247] Probably the illness.

[1248] Lit.: "is sweet me-with too much".

[1249] Lit.: "my things".

[1250] Lit.: "your things".

[1251] Lit.: "greet very well".

[1252] Lit.: "we have trust one in the other".

[1253] The verb *sula* literally means "to choose among many things".

[1254] For serial verbs such as this, see Micheli 2007: 96-97.

[1255] Impersonal passive construction; see Micheli 2007: 87.

[1256] *Kɔlʊgɔ* means "stream", but the term is also the proper name of the river fetish and the people bound to that fetish.

[1257] Referring to the fetish Kuman uses animate pronouns.

a mìa tíı -ụ̄ lɛ sá mı gbɛɛ-rı, úʊ nyī mía gū wɔ-rɔ beleŋo-rı gyiga-gyiga lɛ-í!

Kuman: *These are the things of my ancestor* (Kuman shows me some very old magic iron bangles)*; his name was Mansunu Yao. When he was here, a long time ago… you see, some of his things, there I make a sacrifice to his fetish, there, and you see, there he made sacrifices; you see, I didn't know that place,* yooh[1258]*! And I ended up making many consultations*[1259] *and then I found it; once by chance I was walking and I found them there, I chose them and I offered up sacrifices*[1260]*, then I got them and took them (home). That's how it went; when I go especially to make sacrifices, it wants*[1261] *a ram; when I go to offer up sacrifices, I get them and take them there. If there's something there, his feast-day must be celebrated; when his sacrifices*[1262] *are offered up, a ram is killed and he shows himself. Once there was a long lair; then it went away and moved*[1263] *to the middle of the river; that's how it went; I went there and I found*[1264] *it, then I took the bangles*[1265]*, which I kept for myself; and now the* Djula*, if they see them, they want to buy them; it's like that; but I took them and brought them home*[1266]*; you see, I don't take them out without a reason*[1267]*…*

Thomas: Bɛ hɛʊ̄ ʊ́ʊ̄ hé dị̄↓?

Thomas: *What do they do*[1268]*?*

Kuman: Dugu hɛrɛ ndàgbolo nú-ti dɛ, hɔ̀ nú mʊm bɔ gbɔkɛ'rɛ lɛ, gbɔkɛ'rɛ zʊ̄rʊ̄ lɛ, hɛrɛ-tɔ[1269]-ʊ̄; mʊm hɛrɛ hɔ-ti mʊ̄, mʊm sıkɛwɛ dá, mʊm gʊ̄ wɛ hɔ̀ mą́ą́ gróka nyʊ̄ mʊm mı, bɔ̀ kʊ́ bi̱i̱ wɛ lɛ hɔ̀ hé lɛ: "Mía yī-ye!", hɔ̀ nú mʊm bɔ gbɔkɔ lɛ mʊ̄, halı hɛrɛ hą̀ą́ hé mʊm lɛ lɛ: "Kyɛrɛ, bɔ́ɔ yé kʊ̄ bi̱i̱ wɛ; hını hʊ̄ lɛ hʊ̄ saalɛgɛ, lɛ hɛrɛ mú pūı" a mı̱ yé kʊ̄ bi̱i̱'nı wɛ, hı́nı̱ hı́nı̱ lɛ ká(ı) saalɛgɛ, hɛrɛ lɛ mıa, hɛrɛ lɛ mıa, hɔ́ɔ nūı mʊm mía lā hɛ̄ hɔ hɛʊ̄ daa, hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ mʊm mú yāa hɔ saalɛgɛ hɔ, hɔ́ɔ nūı mʊm kɔlʊgɔ'rɛ gbɛgy̱ŋɔ di̱di̱ dɛ, hɔ́ɔ hɛ̄ Nyą̱ŋalayo, hɔ lɛ gbɔkɛ'rɛ hɛrɛ báa kā Nyą̱ŋalayo, y̱hı̱! A úa nyī mía lā saalɛgɛ, a úa nyī ndagbolo'nı dugu dɛ, hʊ̄ lɛ Mansunu Yao, hɛrɛ bía hɛ̄ kɔlʊgɔ'rɛ Mansunu Yao. Hɔ́ɔ nūı mʊm mıa lɛ-ti daa lɛ tɔgɔ.

[1258] Lit.: "I didn't know there".

[1259] Lit.: "I asked it always".

[1260] Lit.: "I poured there".

[1261] Lit.: "eats".

[1262] Lit.: "things for the consultation".

[1263] Lit. "arrived".

[1264] Lit.: "saw".

[1265] Lit.: "them".

[1266] Lit.: "put on myself".

[1267] Lit.: "free free".

[1268] Lit.: "what work they do really?".

[1269] Inalienable possession. See Micheli 2005:193-197 and Micheli 2007:88.

Kuman: *Once that ancestor was there, he was like his fetish, his fetish's things, they were his*[1270]*; when it was like that, one day it happened, because he had the power to do certain things, like adopting a man, they had a son and he*[1271] *said: "Come to me!*[1272]*"; he stayed as their fetish, so when he said: "Truly, you will have a son, that will be what the sacrifice does when I'm dead", so they had a son, that one, that one refused to sacrifice, so here I am, here I am, it's as if I finished his work today; that's why if I go to make a sacrifice to him, he's like a real river, he's* Nyaŋalayo*, he's like the fetish that they call* Nyaŋalayo*, ihi! And you see that I make sacrifices, and you see that that ancestor from so long ago, he was Mansunu Yao, that's why we call the stream Mansunu Yao. It's as if today he was in me, in my body*[1273].

Thomas: Mansunu Yao ʊ sɪra lɛ↓?

Thomas: *Was Mansunu Yao your father?*

Kuman: Mɪ sɪragbolo lɛ dugu! Hi̱ni̱ kú baba; hɔ́ɔ nūɪ mʊm mía ūlɛ daa.

Kuman: *My ancestor from long ago! That one gave life to my father; it's as if I inherited today.*

Thomas: zʊ̱rʊ̱ wɪ̱nɪ bɔɔgɔ mʊ̱, sawalɛ baan'nɪ lɛ↓?

Thomas: *Are these things (that you've shown me) useful for hunting*[1274]*?*

Kuman: Sawalɛ baan'nɪ lɛ-í! ʊ̀ gú dugu dugu dugu dugu. Hɛrɛ kɔlʊgɔ'rɛ fʊ̱nyonɪ, hèrɛ gróka-ʊ̱, hɛrɛ-tɔ[1275]-ʊ̱. Mì ma̱a̱ yáa sɪkɛwɛ hɛrɛ prɛʊ̱ níɪ fʊ̱ hɔ, ʊ̀ ma̱a̱ yáa sɪkɛwɛ lɛ báɪ-ʊ̱, mʊm ʊ̀ yáa sí kpalɪgʊ̱'nɪ mʊm ʊ́ sú-í, á ʊ̀̃ nyɪ̄-wɪ̱-í, a mʊm hɔ̀ sú hɔ, ʊ̀ nyɪ̄ ʊ̀ gú pɛɛ. Wɛ ʊ̱ pɛɛ lɛ wɪ̱nɪ bɔɔgɔ mʊ̱, yooh! Pooko fʊ̱!

Kuman: *They're not for hunting! They showed themselves*[1276] *a long long time ago. Near that river; he adopted them, they are his. In those days I could go near to them, once you could have gone and missed them; when you went to offer up sacrifices for the consultation, if they didn't accept, you couldn't see them; and if they were accepted*[1277]*, you could see them all come out. These are some of the ones that were there,* yooh*! There were lots of them!*

Thomas: Gbɔkɛ'rɛ baan'nɪ lɛ laa sawalɛ baan'nɪ↓?

Thomas: *For the fetish or for hunting?*

Kuman: Mhm! Gbɔkɛ'rɛ baan'nɪ!

Kuman: *For the fetish!*

Thomas: Lɛ gbɔkɛ'rɛ haa bɔɔgɔ vɛ-í↓?

Thomas: *And that fetish isn't there any more?*

[1270] They belonged to the fetish.

[1271] The fetish? This utterance is far from clear.

[1272] Lit.: "Me come-it".

[1273] Lit.: "It stays like me *presentative*-on today with body".

[1274] Lit.: "hunting its own *def. presentative?*".

[1275] Inalienable possession; see Micheli 2005:193-197 and Micheli 2007: 88.

[1276] Lit.: "they came out".

[1277] Lit.: "if it accepted it".

Kuman: Hɔ fu̱! hɛrɛ mía yāa, hɛrɛ mía ī̱gya-u̱ lɛ yāa-rɔ.

Kuman: *He's there! When I go there, I charge them and I take them (there).*

Thomas: Gbɔkɛ'rɛ úa sáalɛ hɔ hɛu̱ lɛ a̱kɔ↓?

Thomas: *What's the role of the fetish you make sacrifices to?*

Kuman: Háa yī-ye bugo, nna, a mʊm ʊ́u̱ tūı zıŋɔ a bɔ́ɔ kprā lɛ sā-ti, híwɔ la dū̱-ŋʊ. Hıwɔ bɔɔgɔ dugu, bɔɔgɔ mía yāa saalɛ-gɛ, hù̱[1278] gbóu̱ kyɛrɛsɛ̱, bɔ̀ pó, a bɔ walɔɔgɔ'nı, mʊm benhalı (úʊ yāa) lɛ úʊ da̱ ʊ́u̱ gū lɛ dīɔ. Dòŋosi yí faı sıkɛrɛ, lɛ da̱ hù̱ dío, a bɔ bi̱i̱'nı bàa ká Bɛma̱ hɔ. Mì dó-kɛ bɔ-rɔ lɛ: "sıkɛrɛ í̱ı̱ yī lɛ da̱ hʊ́u̱ dīɔ faı, lɛ í̱ı̱ zēı lɛ, hʊ́u̱ lā hʊ́u̱ sa̱ faı bɔ yɔgɔ lɛ dīɔ!". Hɛrɛ hù̱ lá bı, a hù̱ pá̱-(hɛ)rɛ lɛ kú-ɛ; hɛrɛ hù̱ tíı lɛ hù̱ yáa Gutugo, a mòtoka̱ fá̱-m lɛ kú-ɛ, hèrɛ kú-ɛ sıkɛrɛ. Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ úʊ da̱ híwɔ dīɔ bɔɔgɔ bıbı; hını úʊ da̱ lɛ. Hɔ́ɔ dɛ̄ bía da̱-bɛ bɔɔgɔ mu̱; ʊ́u̱ da̱ bɔ́ɔ dīɔ mu̱ bıbı lɛ ʊ́u̱ kāarı lɛ.

Kuman: *It gives children, madam, and if you steal something and they[1279] have trust in him[1280], you get bitten by a snake[1281]. Once there was a snake where I go to make sacrifices; it was really big; there were lots of them and they were big… if (you go there) tomorrow morning, you'll find them coming out to sleep. One time Dongosi went there and found them asleep, (he was) with his son, who was called Bèma. I had told them: "If you happen to come here and find him sleeping there, leave him alone; in the end he'll go to sleep in his lair!" When we split up[1282], he shot him and killed him; then when he was on his way to Bondoukou, a car ran him over and he died; it was certainly that one[1283] who killed him. That's why we find them there like that; you find them sleeping a bit and they stay quiet.*

Thomas: Fu̱ı̱ ù dá̱ hıwɔ'nı ù sóo gyataga'rɛ hu̱-rı sıkɛrɛ↓?

Thomas: *Was it there that you found the snake you put the loincloth[1284] on that time?*

Kuman: Fu̱ı̱ mì dá̱ mi̱-í! Bɔ ba̱i̱-ba̱i̱! Hu̱ bɔɔ a̱ŋɔ fafu̱ı̱; hu̱ a̱ŋɔ faı!

Kuman: *I didn't find it there like that! They're two different things[1285]! One was a long way from the village, the other one is near the village.*

[1278] Kuman uses an animate pronoun when referring to the snake.

[1279] Its owners.

[1280] Lit.: "they swear and put on".

[1281] Lit.: "snake then bites you".

[1282] Lit.: "when he had finished us".

[1283] The snake.

[1284] Lit.: "you poured the *pagne def.* him (animate)-on".

[1285] Lett.: "they (are) different different".

Thomas: lɛ úʊ mą̱a̱ dó gʊ̲ wɛ lɛɛwɪralɛʊ̲'nɪ-dɪ↓?

Thomas: *Can you say something about the carved rocks*[1286]*?*

Kuman: eh! Dugu! Hɛrɛ bì yúgʊ bì dą̱-ŋmɛ bɔɔgɔ, lɛɛwɪralɛʊ̲'nɪ ka! hʊ́ʊ̲ gyí-ʊ̲ dɛ↓?

Kuman: *Eh! They're very old! When our people was born*[1287] *we found them there*[1288]*. Does she know them*[1289]*?*

Thomas: ɔɔ! Hɛrɛ ì̱ yúgʊ dugu, ì̱ ką̱ bɔɔ nyʊ̲ wɛ hɛʊ̲, wɛrɪ yʊgɔ bàa nɪ́ɪ fɪ̱ɪ̱ dugu↓?

Thomas: *Yes! When your people was born… have you ever heard (it said that it was) the work of a man, perhaps from the peoples that were here in ancient times?*

Kuman: oo!

Kuman: *No!*

[1286] In the savannah about 15 kilometres from Nassian lies an area covered in big slabs of flat rock, some of which bear carvings of various designs – stars, circles, animals and what might be a sort of calendar. The site seems to be visited regularly by nomadic peoples (possibly Peul), and on a trip there in 2002 I noticed the nearby ruins of an ancient village.

[1287] Lit.: "when we got up"; the same verb *yʊgʊ* also means "to lift (a child or patient) from the ground" and may be used when referring to the birth of a people or nation.

[1288] On the basis of the information available on the cities of Bouna and Bondoukou, and according to the Kulango oral tradition, the Nassian area may reasonably be supposed to have been settled by the Kulango in the 16th or 17th centuries, even though it was already populated by indigenous Gur peoples, probably the Lohron.

[1289] Lit.: "She knows them *focus*?"; here again, the 3rd-person singular pronoun refers to me.

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Appendix

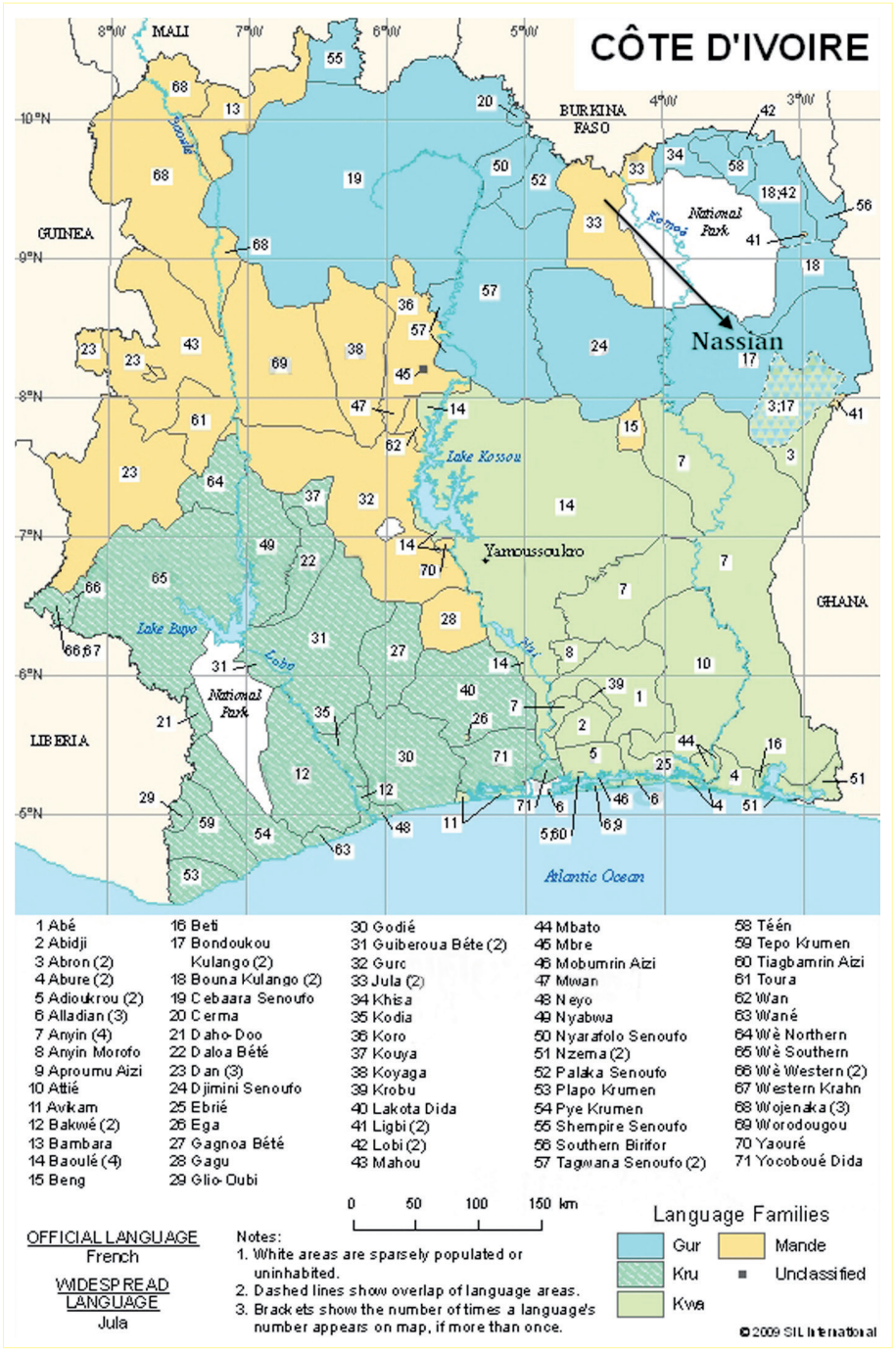

PLATE 1 – Ethno-linguistic map of Ivory Coast (by kind permission of SIL international -www. ethnologue.com). As indicated by the arrow (top right), the village of Nassian is close to the Comoé national park

PLATE 2 – Photograph of Yao Kuman taken in the 1960s

3

PLATE 3 – Track leading from Nassian to its cultivated fields

PLATE 4 – A view of the Comoé river

PLATE 5 – Buffalo near the track leading to Nassian

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PLATE 6 – Kuman and his wife. In the background are some of the huts in his *ben*. The overturned bottle in the bottom right corner is a sign for his neighbours that the encounter was not open to the public

PLATE 7 – Kuman in a photograph taken in 2002

7

8

PLATE 8 – Kuman the healer in 2006

PLATE 9 – The medicine *canari*

PLATE 10 – Herbal remedies. Unlike the medicines prepared in the *canari*, which are ritually bound to a single patient, remedies for less serious and more common disorders (malaria, intestinal worms and the like) can be conserved, in the dried form seen here, and used for any number of patients

9

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PLATE 11 – Kuman eats a burning ember in a demonstration of his *kpa̱yɔ*

PLATE 12 – A typical Kulango *kutuu*. It is an encampment used as a refuge by hunters and farmers forced to spend a night away from the village. Like every human space, the *kutuu* must be ritually freed of supernatural Presences by an earth priest before it can be used

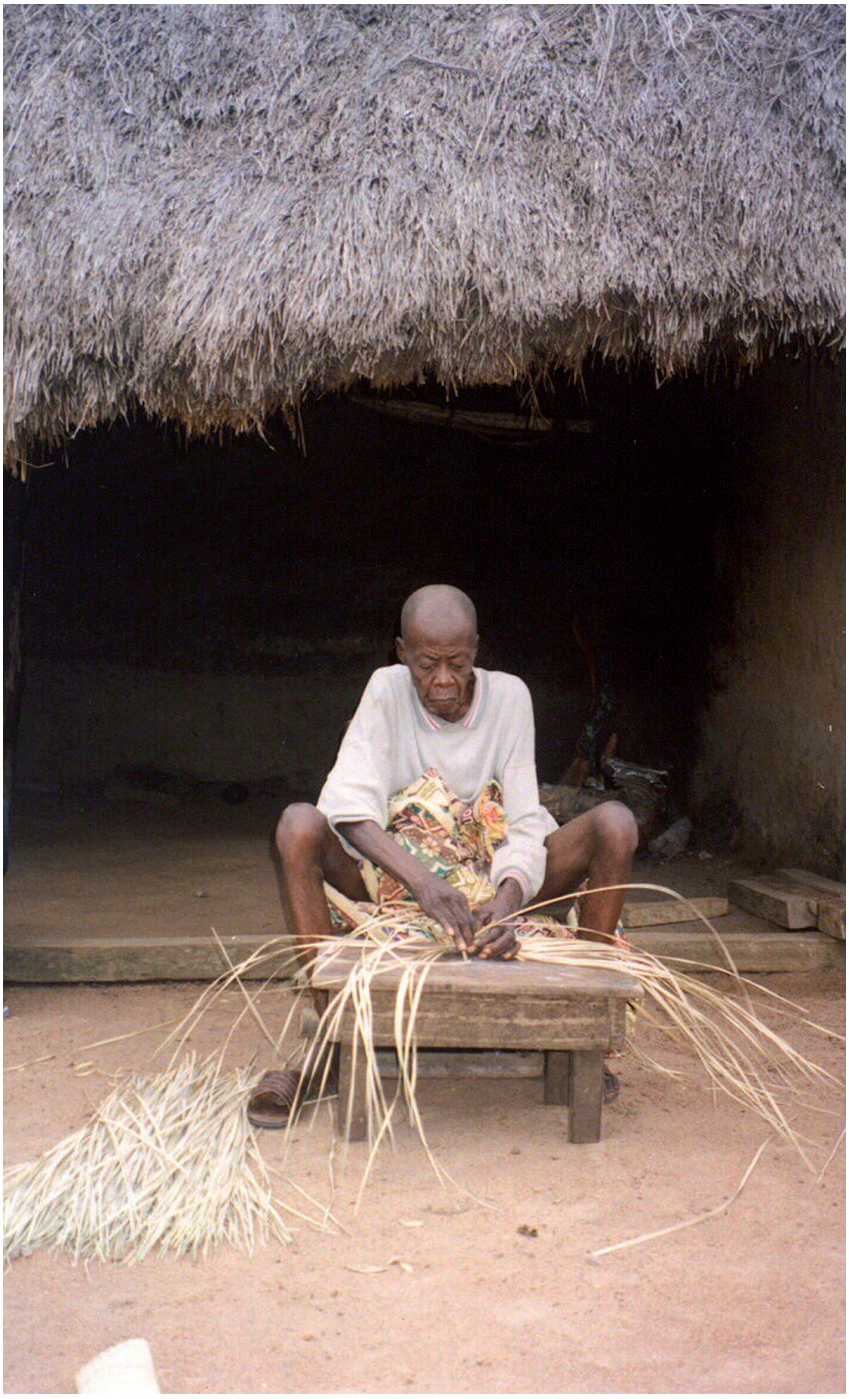

PLATE 13 – Yao Bofwo, the last hunter in Nassian to die before Djedwa Yao Kuman

14

PLATES 14 and 15 – Protective amulets and fetishes
inherited by Kuman from his ancestor Mansunu Yao

15

16

PLATE 16 – Kuman's youngest grandson in 2006. He was often playing at our feet

PLATE 17 – The track into the village

17

18

PLATE 18 – The modern quarter of Nassian, near the market

PLATE 19 – A termites' nest along the track leading to the fields

19

PLATE 20 – For the Kulango weaving is a male occupation. Shown here is a traditional loom

PLATE 21 – Group photo taken on the steps of the nuns' veranda during my farewell party with the Nassian village elders in September 2006. On my right is Djedwa Yao Kuman and the sacrificer to the *Truyego*, the village's collective fetish. On my left, Thomas Kwame and the nuns' security guard. The man at top left wearing glasses and headgear is the village chief

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