

CHAPTER ONE

Construction of Masculinities in The Suns of Independence

1.1 Introduction

The key aim of this study is to examine the construction of masculinities as portrayed by Ahmadou Kourouma in The Suns of Independence. The novel depicts how traditional power and rule of the Dumbuya was disrupted as their traditional power base, trade and war, were “ruined” and “stopped” respectively due to colonial rule and the coming of independence. The study examines how people in Horodugu, under the chieftaincy of the once powerful Dumbuya dynasty are compelled to adjust to challenges brought about by the coming of independence. It analyses how the author depicts post-independence politicians, who he also refers to as the ‘suns of independence’ even as ‘bastards’, and how this influences the construction of African masculinities. I argue that colonialism and later the attainment of independence brought about a degree of disruption to traditional institutions of power. Faced with drastic social, economic and political changes, people express masculinity in different ways. The attempt is to illustrate how construction and expression of masculinity was affected following the attainment of political independence, resulting in the formation and expression of different identities, power, new masculinities amongst men and women.

I further argue that Kourouma uses fiction to portray the greediness and lack of delivery of post-independence African leaders. Similar to other African leaders in independent African states, the politicians in Ivory Coast followed in the footsteps of the other leaders who failed to live up to their independence promises. This is seen in that the majority of the people continued to live in poverty while the politicians concentrated on accumulating wealth in what is referred to as ‘the get rich quickly scheme’.

In order to address the main aim of the study I ask the following questions: First, how do the people in the novel perform masculinities as a consequence of the coming of ‘the suns of independence’? Second, how are the male-dominated positions of praise singers, fetish priests, hunters and blacksmiths, which are strongly associated with traditional masculinities portrayed in the novel? Third, how does the disruption of trade lead to traders’ and merchants’ loss of status and subsequent ‘emasculatation’?

The study examines how characters in the novel adapt to change by way of assuming different forms of masculinities. It demonstrates how the coming of independence posed a challenge to people’s relationships with regard to household chores, trade, traditional roles, employment, as well as their political orientations. In this regard, it is believed that the study will hopefully shed light on the understanding of the construction of masculinity in response to colonialism and later the attainment of independence as this resulted in the disruption of the peoples’ livelihood.

1.2. Background

It is necessary to give a brief background of the author of the novel, the Ivorian (1927-2003) Kourouma as his life experiences in the Ivory Coast bears on novel and hence the research aim and objectives. The Suns of Independence was his first novel. It was published in 1968 and was later translated into English by Adrian Adams in 1981. The setting of the novel is Horodugu (Ivory Coast) a kingdom that was ruled by the Dumbuya dynasty.

Kourouma's personal history encompasses student radicalism. He was educated in Bamako, Mali, but was expelled because of participating in a student strike. As a young adult, he was drafted in the French army (France occupied Ivory Coast for almost a hundred years and was the colonial master). This was in the 1950's, a time when liberation movements were becoming strong and voices of dissent louder. As a soldier, Kourouma was ordered to participate in a crackdown on the emerging liberation movement in Ivory Coast. Kourouma, however, refused. He was transferred to Indo-China where he spent four years as punishment for 'subversive behaviour' during his military service. Personally, Kourouma initially resisted the idea of going to Indo-China but he changed his mind after Benard Didier, who was Ivory Coast's most famous writer of the time, persuaded him to go. Didier convinced him that military experience would prepare him for anti-colonial war in Ivory Coast which he strongly believed was inevitable. After his service in Indo-China, Kourouma studied Actuarial Sciences at Lyons and Paris in France in the late 1950's and returned to Ivory Coast in 1961, just

after the country's independence and worked as an Insurance Executive¹. He was not happy with the political situation that prevailed in Ivory Coast after independence as confirmed in his words, "I was impervious to the magic of the single party which claimed to be the only form of authority capable of developing the country". This made Kourouma leave the country. His second coming in 1970 was brief. When his play "The Truth Teller" was published in 1974, it was deemed "revolutionary" by the government. So Kourouma left the country and lived in Cameroon and Togo until 1993.

To address his dissatisfaction with the socio-economic and political system in his country Kourouma embarked on writing that denounced the dictatorship associated with single party rule which he refers to as "the Kingdom of lies" (Gray, 2001:122). Ouedraogo (1999) observes that the link between Kourouma and the crises in Ivory Coast was a principal force for his creation of the novel. In an interview with Ouedraogo (2004), Kourouma is reported as saying:

When we achieved independence, there was multi-partyism and then suddenly one party rule was introduced. I was the first one and I am very proud to say, I was the first one to fight the one party system.

This places Kourouma among the first generation of postcolonial writers and among the first to express their disappointment and disillusionment of postcolonial rule. This is further illustrated in an interview with Stephen Gray (2001) where Kourouma gives his reasons for being opposed to the Ivorian post-independence government: "[...] having

¹ [Hppt://www.holmesandmeier.com/titles/kourouma.html](http://www.holmesandmeier.com/titles/kourouma.html)

fought so hard for independence, when it came it brought nothing to us”. In this regard, Kourouma demonstrates how the post-independence politicians who took over power from the colonial French government, failed to deliver the fruits of independence or to live up to their promises. Kourouma’s criticism of the government came to the attention of the president. Ouedraogo informs us that it was essential for President Felix Houphouet Boigny to keep a physical distance between the writer and the seat of his power. The president deliberately gave Kourouma assignments that kept him away from Ivory Coast as a way of minimising criticism (Ouedraogo 2004:2). This enabled Kourouma to pick various experiences from different African independent countries such as Algeria, Cameroon and Togo. It is illuminating that the time the author spent outside his country gave him enough material to use to articulate the ‘evils’ of governance. Ironically, he used his experience, as stated by Ouedraogo (2004:2) to denounce the lies, to accuse the agitators, “to expose the buffoons”.

Living in ‘exile’ made Kourouma feel a sense of not belonging. By the time he returned to Ivory Coast in 1970, there were political changes he had to grapple with. Describing the situation Ouedraogo (2004: 2) comments:

Without status, Kourouma has no ties anywhere; he had to invent a status and class position for himself, even if only in his imagination, by nourishing the whole phantasmagoria of the figure of the pariah and the exile that runs through his oeuvre. Literature thus gives him the means for this reclassing: social degradation is thus seen to be compensatory by symbolic reclassifying.

The above quote helps to confirm Kourouma's words that The Sun's Independence is both fictional as well as documentary. Kourouma uses the impotence of Fama (the last Prince of the Dumbuya dynasty) to advance the devastating effects of the coming of independence and the non-performance of the One Party system. The manifestations of disillusionment are demonstrated in the socio-cultural (culture and religion), economic and political (chieftaincy and party system) structures that were disrupted rendering the traditional way of life impotent. It is during this time that the people experience 'dissatisfaction' with the coming of independence.

Thus, similar to the corpus of African writers, Kourouma's writing addresses the atrocities that came with independence. Prominent amongst these was the failure to deliver the promises of the fruits of independence by politicians. This view is supported in an interview with Rene Lefort and Mauro Rosi (1999:6) where Kourouma says:

The earliest opposition leaders turned out to be drunken, drug addicted looters, without principles and scruples...wanted first and foremost to take revenge and get rich.

This state of affairs, in my view, moved Kourouma to 'stand up and be counted' as a way of filling in the gap created by the lack of serious opposition to the government. The author has been acclaimed as one of the most critical writers of the post-independence era as reflected in this particular novel. Jean Ouedraogo (2004:1) notes that Ahmadou Kourouma is amongst "the first to sound discordant, dissonant notes in the literary concert where 'good' French was the currency". He was amongst the first to criticise African rulers with regard to their actions after independence. As a result of his critical

political stance on the government, he was twice forced into exile, first in Cameroon and later in Togo where he lived until 1993. The study is therefore, an attempt to investigate how the author addresses the themes of disillusionment and to link these themes to the notion of African masculinities in the novel.

1.2.1 The Suns of Independence

The Suns of Independence is considered by several literary critics as a master piece.

Commenting on the novel, Guy Ossito Midiohouan (1991: 232) notes: “Kourouma had created a masterpiece of his first attempt - a masterpiece not only because of the themes he explored [disillusionment in post-independent Africa], but also because of the originality of his writing style.”

Ouedraogo (2004:3) observes that the striking features of the novel draw from the writer’s ability to “use Malinke, ‘broken French’ and pidgin found in his writings which are an extension of the noble language and griotic speech of his characters and the reflection of the colonial experience”. As Kourouma puts it “the novel deals with the African cosmogony, the language is African” (Ouedraogo 2000:1339). As such, the book was originally written in “Malinkelised French”. This is seen in the creative use of the narrators ‘voices’ and skillful reference to hunters, griots, totems, fetish priests and the skillful use of proverbs which are all associated with African traditional societies. Islam and ancestral worship are at the centre of their religious lives.

In addition, the uniqueness of the novel emanates from its fictional and documentary aspects. This view is confirmed by Kourouma in an interview with Lefort and Rosi (1999:5) when he says:

I ended the fictional part of the book with a section I would describe as documentary. After telling the story of the protagonist, Fama, I described situations and events that took place in Ivory Coast.

Ouedraogo (2004: 1) observes that “people were surprised by the narrative form, the irregularity, the diversity and especially the density of his oeuvre”. Commenting on the novel, Rosemary G Schikora (1980: 811) says, “The Suns of Independence is considered by most critics as exceptional work of African fiction, based on the belief that the oral tradition and written African literature are linked in a very concrete way.” Eric Sellin (1971: 642) adds that “Kourouma takes material for The Suns of Independence from double tradition”. Sellin adds that:

The story violates such precepts of writing dear to the European heart as the classical unities, uniformity of point of view and an eclectic style, but it weaves its own spell in an imaginative fabric made up of proverbs, fabulistic paragraphs, and the stuff of ancient traditions and modern events (642).

Therefore, the incorporation of oral tradition in the novel adds to its uniqueness. The use of the griot and proverbs are remarkable. Schikora (1980: 815) observes that “each of the eleven chapters’ titles of the novel closely resembles a folk saying, cast in the oblique, economical phrasing of proverbial language”. Schikora adds: “Proverbs are an integral

part of the tone and texture of the work which appears to recapture with such poise an authenticity the voice of the African griot” (815). Kourouma himself, points out that among the Malinke, “one always illustrates the whole with proverbs to enrich meaning” (Ouedraogo, 2000:1339).

Furthermore, the voice in the novel, as Schikora (1980: 812) observes “is that of a Malinke narrator who reveals aspects of the engaging artistry of the griot-master story teller, trustee of lore, the genealogy, and the wisdom of traditional African society [...] the narrator is well informed as an insider could be, concerning the particular Malinke milieu depicted. He knew what he is talking about”. Notable also, are the various points of view in the novel. Commenting on the point of view in the novel, Schikora (1982: 814) observes:

Fama’s point of view is the naturally dominant one, yet much of the work’s power to sustain our interest; to entertain, and move us derives from the contrast of antagonistic points of view

The Suns of Independence has been described in different ways by different critics. Jean Ouedraogo (2004:4) comments that through the first novel, Kourouma was able to tell the “best story” by blending fiction and reality. Through the story he “sought to represent the experience of a large part of independent Africa”. Kwaku Gyasi (1997:203) says “it is the richest and most original novel judging by its theme of disillusionment and the style of writing”. Eric Sellin (1971:642) adds that “Kourouma takes material for The Suns of Independence from the native and colonial of his country; he emphasises the tragic

impact of militarism and bureaucracy on traditional African customs”. This firmly establishes that The Suns of Independence is about colonial and post colonial issues. As Kourouma says, it is about “dictatorship that he wanted to denounce” (Ouedraogo, 2000:1338).

Secondary scholarship on the novel has so far revealed that there has not been any work done that looks at masculinity. It is hoped that by using Kourouma’s novel, we can have a critical analysis of masculinity and masculinities. This will broaden the scholarly view of the subject and deepen our understanding of contextual and situational masculinity.

1.2.2 Synopsis of The Suns of Independence

The Suns of Independence is a novel of early post colonial Africa. The central character is Fama, the last prince of the once powerful Dumbuya dynasty that ruled over Horodugu - an area that has now been divided into two independent African states, Ebony Republic and the Socialist Republic of Nikinai.

Fama loses his right to become chief when his father dies. Frustrated, he leaves his homeland for the city, where he is a fairly poor city dweller now, far removed from his home-town, unable to find his place in this complex new world. People still show respect for who he is, and yet he is obviously part of a world that has largely been lost. He ekes out his living through begging at ceremonies and the efforts of his hard working wife.

Fama and his wife Salimata have not been able to have a child, meaning his lineage will die out with him. The beautiful but increasingly desperate Salimata also has a tragic history, as her initiation into womanhood is botched, and she is then taken advantage of by the fetish priest. She is now obsessed with becoming pregnant. Salimata visits marabouts, spends money and offers sacrifices, but all this does not assist her to conceive. She always tries to do good, but “goodness is rarely rewarded”. She certainly suffers for it. This situation robs the couple of happiness.

Fama, the “sole remaining legitimate descendant” of the Dumbuya, returns to his native land to assume his position after the death of the chief. The countryside is different from the city, but life has changed here as well. Fama does not fit well in this changed world: his personality clashes with the post independence expectations. People still make allowances for him, but it is clear that he is a relic from a bygone time.

Togobala is a place of “seething passivity”, the people worn out by the turmoil of the post independence adjustments. Traditions are upheld – the burial ceremony of his cousin, the previous chief, is celebrated as elaborately as possible, nearly as in the old days, thanks to the assistance and wisdom of the old fetish priest and the praise singer. But the world is not the same: “Truly the suns of independence are not suited to great things; they have not only unmanned, but also unmagicked Africa”.

Fama inherits a position of leader of this once powerful territory but “in a world turned upside down, Fama had inherited an honour without the means to uphold it, like a

headless snake”. Fama does the best he knows how, but he cannot adapt to the changed world. He is jailed as a political prisoner, and later he is freed: it all remains incomprehensible to him. He died tragically in a no-man’s land on his way back home.

1.2.3 Translation

French publishers were in the beginning reluctant to publish The Suns of Independence. The novel was therefore first published in Montreal (Canada). Soon after its publication in Canada, the novel received an award and it was only then that French publishers paid attention to the book. The argument that the publishers raised for their refusal to publish the novel was that Armadou Kourouma did not write the book in standard French. However, Killan and Rowe (2000:128) have disagreed with this point of view arguing that the ‘Africanising’ of the French language is actually one of the strengths and aspect of Kourouma’s creativity. Killan and Rowe (2000:128) add that the reason why the publishers refused to publish the book was that “it was critical of the new political leadership and the criticism of the new regimes had sounded reactionary at the time.” The novel was first published in France in 1970, two years after the Canadian publication.

Readers have a choice of using either the English or French edition. Coming from an Anglophone country and having no knowledge of French, I used the English version. This also explains why I relied on Anglophone sources that are available on the author and the novel, which in comparative terms are fewer than the Francophone literature. It is highly likely that the translated edition may, to some extent, ‘lack’ the

flavour of the original owing to translation challenges. This could be true for many translations. However, for purposes of examining the construction of masculinities, the English version lacked nothing to hinder a smooth study.

1. 2. 4 Other Works by Kourouma

Ahmadou Kourouma wrote four novels. The Suns of Independence, Monnew, Waiting for the Vote of the Wild Beasts and Allah is Not Obligated, were written in this order. For our discussion in this section, we shall consider only the third and fourth novels. Danny Yee (2005)² notes that Waiting for the Vote of the Wild Beasts has also been published under slightly different titles such as Waiting for the Wild Beasts to Vote and Waiting for the Vote of the Wild Animals.

Waiting for the vote of the Wild Beasts is a satirical novel of post-colonial Africa. The narrative is framed within the traditional African framework of praise singers, Marabouts, Shape - shifters and their stories of the activities of the ancestors. The story that emerges is a clear portrayal of post-colonial African despotism.

Through the life story of Koyaga, the protagonist and President of the fictional Republic of the Gulf Coast, his thirty years in power and now facing the greatest challenge of his bloody career, we see the actions, mismanagement and brutality of a dictator. The narrative is told by Bingo, a West African storyteller. Over the course of five nights, he tells the story of the President and totalitarian ruler.

² <http://dannyreviews.com>

Yee (2005)³ observes that:

Koyaga's life story has mythical beginnings, leading to a distinguished career. Orphaned at the age of seven, Koyaga grows up to be a terrible hunter of men as well as animals. He serves his country's French rulers and fights in Indo-China (Vietnam) and Algeria. On his return to his newly independent country, he finds himself rejected as a symbol of the old regime. Determined, proud and ambitious, Koyaga soon takes power, first as a part of a four-man junta and then becomes the sole ruler and dictator, reasoning that ".in a herd there can only be one male hippopotamus." He emasculates his victims and places their penises in their mouths to prevent their spirits taking revenge on him. He fights mystical beasts and is a shape-shifter, capable of changing himself into beasts and birds.

Shortly after establishing his rule through the coup, Koyaga visits other African dictators, who compete to give him the most contemptuous advice typical of African dictatorial leadership: "every man is a dissembler...The most important institution in any one-party state is the prison...Africans are thieves from birth".

During the three decades of Koyaga's bloody rule, he survives repeated assassination attempts and still continues to exert his influence both at home and abroad, gaining support and investment from abroad. Koyaga's down fall comes when the 'First World' decide they no longer want to support dictatorships and call for democracy. Faced with this challenge, Koyaga needs another strategy to maintain himself in power.

³ <http://dannyreviews.com>

Ahmadou Kourouma's fourth novel is Allah is not Obliged. The novel, originally published in France in 2000, was Kourouma's last before his death in 2003. The narrator informs us that the full title of the novel is: "*Allah is not obliged to be fair about all the things he does here on Earth*", a title that is mentioned repeatedly in the story. While Kourouma's earlier works covered problems of post-colony Africa, Allah is not Obliged deals with the old and common issues and goes further to add the more recent and jarring phenomenon in the region; the widespread use of child soldiers which has led to bloodshed and a lot of suffering.

The narrative is about Birahima. When his mother died, he was only ten years old. He set off from his village in Ivory Coast to find his aunt in Liberia, hoping she would adopt him. But once across the border, he soon finds himself caught up in the tribal war raging there. Birahima is given an AK - 47, a supply of drugs (hashish) and orders to kill. This was the beginning of a long and dangerous journey across Liberia and Sierra Leone, lasting three years in which Birahima becomes a "small soldier with a Kalash", bouncing from conflict to conflict.

Allah is not Obliged abounds with characters who strictly define and divide themselves as Muslims or Christians. Most people, irrespective of their religion are affected by the civil war forcing 'everyone' to be equally corrupt, violent and power- hungry. The warlords that Birahima fights under profess to be men of great faith, but religion repeatedly proves to be a mere disguise of whatever murderous actions a given tribe wishes to commit.

The story is told in the first person by Birahima, a ten year old orphan, as he moves from conflict to conflict, frequently cursing and using foul language (note that the use of foul language is a technique that Kourouma used extensively in his first novel, The Suns of Independence). It is worth mentioning that Birahima's profane voice is one of the novel's great pleasures. It is told in a matter of fact way, however, from the perspective of a child who is still innocent despite the actions.

We can clearly see from the works of Kourouma that he was a consistent critic of African dictators. He exposed the leaders' brutality, corruption, lack of delivery and intolerance to opposing views as some of the factors that have led to the instability witnessed in most West African nations. Kourouma has made it abundantly clear that independence has not benefited the majority in Africa. The many military coups that have been witnessed and the civil wars all testify to the sad state of affairs. The common citizen is left with no choice but to make the most under the circumstances using their survivor instincts. Notable also is that the brutality and corruption of the leadership portrayed in Kourouma's works are perpetuated by men, who dominate the political arena, reminding us of the general sidelining of women in national issues, a state of affairs that is common in many African counties.

1.3 Gender and Masculinity

There is a direct relationship between gender and masculinity. Gender basically refers to the fact of being male or female and both men and women can express masculine attributes. Lindsay (2005:141) notes that:

Gender is a multi-dimensional concept, carrying descriptive and prescriptive elements. At its most basic, gender is a social category imposed on bodies, an understanding about what it means to be male or female. But it also signifies relationships between men and women and their relative positions in society

Julliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:16) defines gender as “the non-physiological attributes and/or behaviours, shaped by society and culture that are defined as appropriate for the male sex and the female sex”. Lindsay and Miescher (2005:4) define masculinity “as a cluster of norms, values and behavioural patterns expressing explicit and implicit expectations of how men should act and represent themselves to others.” Lindsay and Miescher add that “the ideologies of masculinity – like those of femininity – are culturally and historically constructed, their meanings continually contested and always in the process of being renegotiated in the context of existing power relations” (4).

It can therefore be seen that like masculinity, gender is a social construct. Morrell (1998:606), quoting Nancy Lindsfarne, confirms this assertion and add that “gender identities are socially constructed, their focus is specifically on the ceaseless contestation

of this process.” Victoria Bernal (2005:165) pushes the argument further and add that “gender is not given but is historically and socially constructed according to particular local realities.” Commenting on gender, Dorothy Hodgson (1999:230) says ‘there is theoretically no limit to the number of genders in a given society.’ Mills and Ssewakiryanga (2005:90) suggest that “we need to see gender in a more fluid way, as the performance of always changing, always contextualised ‘masculinities’ and ‘femininities’.”

It is noted from the above comments and observations that there is a direct relationship between gender and masculinity. They are both seen as patterns of behaviour that are historically and socially constructed; they are not fixed, are diverse and performed by both men and women. This has resulted in gender constructions being dialectic. How men and women see and represent themselves, and how gender relations are organised and promoted are shaped by larger socio-economic, cultural, political and religious transformations (Lindsay and Miescher, 2003:2).

1.4. Contextualising Masculinities

Recently there has been extensive work on masculinities as various scholars have written on its different aspects. As such, the diverse use of the term ‘masculinity’ has made an unequivocal definition elusive. As studies and knowledge on masculinity/masculinities increase, even areas of agreement and/or disagreement have also increased. This has posed challenges in defining masculinity. Whitehead and Barrett (2001:1) observe that

“today there are no areas of men’s activities that have not been subject to some research and debate by both women and men”. This has resulted in different views of what is and what is not masculinity. As a result, research now necessitates the differentiation of masculinities. It has therefore been established that there are diverse masculinities (Morrell: 1998). This observation is supported by Bujra (2002: 210) who argues that “masculinity is malleable”.

Connell (1995) has also shown that men do not share the hegemonic masculinity equally. While men oppressed women, some men were also dominated and subordinated by other men. Brittan (1989:14) supports this view and adds that masculinities can be divided into three concepts namely:

- Masculinity itself as “aspects of men’s behaviour which fluctuate with time” such as hair length.
- Masculinism as the dominant masculine ideology which includes what Brittan calls “hierarchical heterosexuality”
- Patriarchal; the system of male domination which may not be antecedent to and/or separate from class.

Brittan takes masculinity and identity further and argues that masculinity has no fixed form. Since masculinity is socially constructed, different societies will perceive what it means to be male or female differently.

The concept of masculinity used in this study follows Robert Morrell (1998: 607) definition that, “masculinity is a collective gender identity and not a natural attribute. It is socially constructed and fluid. There is not one universal masculinity, but masculinities”. Morrell’s definition is useful in analysing masculinities in the novel as their construction is influenced by diverse factors and situations mainly brought about by the coming of independence.

The study examines the way African masculinities are reflected in the post-colonial era using the novel The Suns of Independence as a case study. African society is male dominated; as such positions of leadership, religious practices as well as political functions are all male dominated. In the case of the novel under review, African masculinities are seen to be manifested in the roles of hunters, praise singers, fetish priests, traders, religious leaders, as well as politicians. While African societies are male dominated women still find space to negotiate their positions, enabling to them in some cases to subvert certain male roles, hence their ability to perform female masculinity (Miescher:2005). The women would, for example, engage in trade and this opened opportunities for them to provide for themselves and for their families. In this study I argue that masculinities in both men and women changed in the face of a clash between modernity and tradition and illustrate how the same masculinities (re)adjusted to economic and political challenges brought about by independence.

1.4.1. Hegemonic Masculinity

The concept hegemonic masculinity is used to refer to patriarchal power and how men use this power to subordinate women. It is understood on the basis of the common belief that men are superior to women (Connell, 1995). Lahoucine and Morrell (2005: 4) quoting Connell notes that hegemonic masculinity is the dominant masculinity that is performed from the awareness of what it means to be a man. In The Suns of Independence, Fama, the protagonist, prince and the last of the Dumbuya dynasty is someone who has lost his status due to the introduction of colonial rule and later the coming of independence. He then tries to re-assert his position in response to changes. This further suggests that masculinities are expressed when individuals chose to respond to a given situation in different ways. Fama finds himself living a life of begging at funeral ceremonies among his 'subjects,' hence the title of the first chapter: "The Mastiff and his Shameless way of Sitting".

Mike Donaldson (1993: 645) is of the view that "hegemonic masculinity is exclusive, anxiety provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal and violent. It is a key element of patriarchal authority". However, while individual men enjoy 'patriarchal dividend', that is, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women (Connell, 1995), it can be argued that not all men share this conferred power equally and not all men are individually exploitative. An example in the novel is Baffi. Despite the power that society conferred on him, Baffi fails to control his wife who ends up 'killing' him. As Morrell (2001:7) puts it, "masculinities are fluid and should not be considered belonging to a fixed way or any one group of men".

Furthermore, the expression of hegemonic masculinities is centred on stereotypes based on the belief that men are the leaders and decision makers. This belief is the basis for keeping women out of politics and decision making positions. In The Suns of Independence, women are under represented and yet “they play many roles” (Ouedraogo 2000:1340). Kourouma admits that women are under represented in the novel and gives a reason that is expected from someone coming from a patriarchal society. He is reported in an interview with Ouedraogo (2000: 1340) saying, “I feel that the problems dealt with in my novels are really male problems. Politics was absolutely considered the domain of men in Africa”.

1.4.2. Masculinity and Violence

Violence is also examined as a site for expression of masculinity (Hayward, 2005; Beinart, 1992; Dover, 2005). This is seen from the many instances in the novel where violence is used amongst men and between men and women. For instance, Fama states that “a man should never be without a weapon” (9). This was the belief among the people of Horodugu. Chemoko who had inherited Salimata after the death of his brother Baffi had ‘imprisoned’ her after she refused to have sex with him. His rage is seen during the night Salimata escaped. We are told:

He had spent the rest of the night searching the village, one hut after another, with a knife in his hand. The next day, his finger poised on the trigger of his gun, he had roamed the bush, the hills and streams. The

following days, without eating, drinking or sleeping, he had vented his rage and sorrow throughout the fields and villages of the province (30).

This confirms men's excessive use of violence against women as a way of imposing their power and subordinating them.

In the novel, Jakite's father expresses his disagreement and displeasure violently. He is affiliated to an opposition political party. Then "came independence, socialism and the one party system" (57). When Jakite's father's political party was defunct, he had to pay a lot of money for party subscriptions to the ruling party (ten years arrears for himself, his son, his ten wives, his sixty cattle and his three lorries). Later he is forced to release his lorries for community work [socialist belief of common ownership]. Jakite did not participate in bridge maintenance work because he was busy in the fields and tending cattle. He was severely punished by the youth league members (by attaching a rope to his genitals and tying him to one of the posts). This enraged Jakite's father who reacted violently, killing several party officials (57). In this way, Jakite's father proved to be a 'real man' who does not tolerate any nonsense.

When Fama was leaving for the funeral of his cousin Lasina, he is advised to board the lorry that is first in the queue. He refused "stood up, pulled out a knife, and in spite of Salimata's screams threatened the delegate and insulted everyone, the delegate and all the bastards in the union, their father and mother of independence"(55-56).

Sally Hayward (2005: 142) has written that “physical strength and sexual exploitation work interdependently to oppress both lower class men and women. Men enact masculinities and express them through physical strength and sex exploitation”. This is seen to be true when we consider the above examples of violent behaviour. Another example is Chekura’s raping of Salimata after her initiation and circumcision when she was still bleeding. While this incidence is inhuman, in the mind of Chekura, he was only expressing his masculinity. Paul Dover (2005: 178) adds that “males’ superiority and corresponding rights are maintained by ideology and by violence”. Beinart (1992: 473) adds that “men are the primary agents of violence in most societies”. The violence perpetrated by members of political parties needs special mention. Political parties are expected to be agents of change and promoters of peace. However, in the case of Youth League, they are the ones promoting violence. People lose confidence and trust in the party and its leadership. Thokozani Xaba (2001: 107) says “...the struggle male heroes of yesteryear have become villains and felons of today”. This definitely affects and influences the construction of masculinities.

1.5 African Masculinities

African masculinities have been constructed in various ways, by different societies and in different contexts. Morrell (1998:620) notes that “African masculinity was hegemonic in pre-colonial society.” With time, hegemonic masculinity was subjected to influences of religion, politics and the socio-economic factors, resulting in diversity.

The construction of African masculinities hinged on the institutions of power. Individuals born in the family belonging to the ruling class, those having religious power such as fetish priests, traditional leaders such as praise singers, persons with special skills such as blacksmiths or hunters, the wealthy-like merchants and traders – all wielded power in one form or the other. There was also room for some individuals to have multiple identities, for example, a man can be a hunter, blacksmith, father, husband and even fetish priest at the same time. These identities allowed the individual to express different masculinities in different situations and contexts. Therefore, to understand the construction of African masculinities, it is essential to explore the institutions which promoted specific notions of masculinity, how this was done and in what contexts (Lindsay and Miescher, 2003:7). For example, the process of how boys became men through initiation/circumcision gives a sense of how masculine identities were formed through the institution of initiation (Morrell, 1998:620). At the centre of construction of African masculinities were ethnicity, clan, wealth, religion and politics.

An examination of the division of labour, the male-dominated social and political hierarchies, the organization of leisure time and gendered nature of space are important in establishing the nature of hegemonic masculinity, round which various other forms of masculinity emanate gives an understanding that African masculinities are constantly being protected and defended, are constantly breaking down and being recreated (Morrell, 1998:620). However, it is every society's desire to hold on to ideals that they consider define them as a people. Allison Thomas (1990:159) asserts that "our society is structured in such a way as to obstruct possibilities of change." Morrell (2001:7) add that

“the history of African masculinity is not made exclusively by men. Women opposed certain aspects of masculinity and supported others. They did so in ways that reflected the class...forces.” The result is, as Morrell and Lahoucine (2005:16) observes, “the processes whereby masculinities are constructed are always associated with contestation. It is not that a particular version of masculinity will become dominant.”

1.6. Methodology

In order to investigate the construction of masculinities, the study follows the close textual analysis approach. Following theories on masculinity/masculinities expounded by various scholars I proceed to identify and analyse themes running through the primary text that relate to the construction of African masculinities from the literary perspective. The main purpose is to identify various aspects that constitute an understanding of African masculinities from the primary text. This is achieved through a close examination of setting, plot, characterisation and themes in The Suns of Independence. The discussion and analysis of the events in the novel focus on the transformations brought about by political independence in Horogudu (a fictitious village in Ivory Coast). For instance, the role of praise singers, hunters and fetish priests is interrogated in an attempt to bring out aspects of African masculinities in their construction. This is done through a close look at the characters in the novel; their relationships, interaction, identity, and expression of power. An exploration of how the construction of masculinities change with time and place, especially in the context of the coming of independence is given much attention.

Secondary sources used include commentaries or critics on the novel, the author and interviews.

1.7. Scope and Limitations

While this study takes cognisance of the fact that there are numerous debates surrounding the concept of masculinity that also include issues of sexuality such as homosexuality and gay studies where on one hand women take on ‘physical’ characteristics of men and on the other women take those of men (Halberstam: 1998) its main focus is on African masculinities depicted in The Suns of Independence. This is because in the novel there is no evidence of lesbians or gay masculinity. Nakamura and Matsuo (2003) argue that gay and lesbian masculinities (‘male wives’ and ‘female husbands’) are debatable subjects as to whether they should be accepted as African behaviours although evidence of their existence has been reported and legalized in many African countries.

CHAPTER 1: Construction of Masculinities in The Suns of Independence.

This chapter states the aim and objectives of the study. It justifies the research and goes on to give background to the choice of Ahmadou Kourouma’s The Suns of Independence as the object of the study. The wide use of the concept masculinity is discussed. An attempt is made to situate masculinity in the context of the present study. The textual analysis approach is followed in the analysis of the construction of masculinities. By identifying major themes that address the research theme on the construction of

masculinities in the novel the thesis hopefully contributes to literary studies on masculinity.

CHAPTER 2: Power and Masculinities of Praise Singers, Fetish Priests and Hunters

The coming of independence in Horodugu impacted on the lives of praise singers, fetish priests and, hunters. The chapter discusses how their roles in the traditional society were disrupted affecting aspects of their masculinities.

CHAPTER 3: The Emasculation of Fama and Masculation Salimata

This chapter focuses on the character of Fama and his wife Salimata. It looks at how Fama ‘drops’ from the status of chief to that described as “an immense disgrace and shame, as great as that of the great panther caught fighting with hyenas over carrion, for Fama to be chasing after funerals in this way” (5). The character of his wife Salimata is also analysed as a contrast.

CHAPTER 4: The Influence of Religion and Politics in the Construction, [Re]construction and Deconstruction of Masculinities

The discussion deliberates on the impact of religion and politics. It is demonstrated that there was an observance of both ancestral worship and Islamic practices. While religion at times separated the people, it was at other times the uniting factor. It consolidates issues surrounding how the Malinke people had to adapt to political challenges brought about by the introduction of the one party system and the socialist policies which largely did not bring any benefits to the people but bred discontent and violence.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the discussion by highlighting how the aim and objectives of the study has been explored in the previous chapters. It also points out how African masculinities are under challenge in the face of independence and modernity.

CHAPTER TWO

POWER AND MASCULINITIES OF PRAISE SINGERS, FETISH PRIESTS AND HUNTERS

This chapter examines traditional power bestowed upon praise singers, fetish priests and hunters and the masculinities associated with such powers in Horodugu. The other people of importance are blacksmiths, marabouts, soothsayers and sorcerers. It is highlighted that all these are male dominated positions. It is argued that power is in the hands of men who preside over all serious matters and make decisions to the exclusion of women. Judicial decisions also rest with men. As a result, positions of praise singers, fetish priests, hunters, blacksmiths, marabouts, soothsayers and sorcerers are respected in the society. They are positions associated with male power. The chapter demonstrates that those who hold these positions of power have a special identity and they express their powers in different ways at different times. It is shown that some of them carry more than one identity enabling them to express different masculinities in different situations. They can function as fetish priests as well as hunters, for example, Balla. They are also able to combine skills of marabouts and soothsayers, like, Hadji Abdulahi. It is illustrated that while sorcerers are associated with magical powers and are believed to be helped by evil spirits, they are at times consulted as fetish priest, marabouts and soothsayers.

2.1 Praise Singers

Traditional African societies consider the positions of praise singer as important. In Horodugu, the praise singers are men of caste. Praise singing is not a position or status that one acquires easily because one must be born in the lineage of praise singers to be recognised as such. One notable praise singer in Togobala, a village in Horodugu is Jamuru. He is described as a descendant of the praise singers favoured by the Dumbuya family (75). This gave Jamuru an opportunity to learn the history of the Dumbuya from an early age and to be able to use it in older life in private and public gatherings.

Praise singers are mostly old men who know their own genealogy and the roots of the community. They are persons who know the history of the tribe and that history provides the reservoir from which they recall names and acts of notable persons in the clan or in the dynasty. They sing praises and tell stories of generations past. Traditional leaders pay attention to the sayings of praise singer for various reasons. The message may be a form of praise because of the leader's heroism. The leaders may be congratulated for what they have done well and even compared to past leaders who did similar things. They may be cited for their bravery or cowardice, for their kindness, cruelty, generosity, selfishness, and so on. It is no wonder that when Fama was being installed as chief of the Dumbuya after the death of cousin Lasina, Jamuru the praise singer sat by his side. By being close to the chief, Jamuru acquires an identity, status and power. During functions such as the installation of a chief, weddings or funerals the praise singers take central stage. They are

the equivalent of Master of Ceremony in modern times. They may also be the spokesperson of the chief.

The praise singer acts as a link between the subjects on the one hand and the chief on the other. He skillfully conveys the messages to the chief from the subjects and communicates to the subjects the will of the chief. For example, when Fama and Jamuru went to see the widows, Mariam (one of the widows) asked Jamuru: “Jamuru speak to your master, [...] Tell him that we rely on him alone, he is our father and mother” (89). While Fama was there, Mariam speaks through the praise singer. In this way she was assured of her message being received favourably. It could also mean that the widow was being respectful by not addressing the chief directly, as this would be seen to be disrespectful.

When something is seen to be going wrong, the praise singer will comment publicly for the benefit of both the chief and the subjects. The subjects obtain relief from the knowledge that their concerns, whatever they may be, have been brought to the attention of the chief. Similarly, the chief takes advantage of such opportunities to get to know the concerns of the people in the chiefdom. Should there be need for criticism, the praise singer does so publicly, not with a view to embarrass the chief but to correct. The criticism the chief may face in public is purely a corrective measure. Every section of African society had this privilege of commenting on the goings on in their locality through praise singers. Vail and White (1991:44) assert that:

Many writers have rooted the phenomenon that the various forms of oral poetry are licensed by a freedom of expression which violate normal conventions - that chiefs and headmen may be criticised by followers, husbands by their wives, fathers by their sons...

Vail (1991) calls this freedom of expression that praise singers enjoy as “poetic license” conferred on them by tradition to say uncomfortable things to their leaders. Their language is obscure to ordinary hearers.

It is noted that when Fama was going to attend the funeral of Ibrahima Kone, he was late. It was expected that as a prince of the Dumbuya, Fama should have been among the first to arrive as he was expected to honour Ibrahima in words. Fama was fully aware that he was not going to be spared by the praise singer. The narrator in The Suns of Independence notes:

That was unfortunate; it meant he was going to be flung in his face, and in public the kind of insulting reproof that’s like having a snake in the folds of your trousers; unbearable whether you are standing, sitting, walking or lying down (5-6)

Indeed Fama was not spared. His concerns were genuine. No sooner had he arrived than the praise singer acknowledged his presence by announcing that “The prince of Horodugu, the last of legitimate Dumbuya, has descended to join us... a bit late”. Soon after announcing the arrival of Fama, the praise singer proceeded to voice the people’s concerns about the conduct of Fama. He said: “It was a shame, a great shame for custom and religion that some old men in this city had to live off what was handed out at funeral

rites...in other words a lot of nonsense, quite uncalled for”(6). While Fama was not mentioned by name, he and the audience were fully aware that the praise singer was referring to him because it was earlier alluded to that “it was an immense disgrace and shame, as great as that of the great panther caught fighting with hyenas over carrion, for Fama to be chasing after funerals in this way”. It was then the duty of the praise singer to bring this to the attention of the prince in a clever way. The message reached Fama and he did not waste time in reacting. While Fama enjoyed the privilege of performing hegemonic masculinity, by virtue of being the last of the Dumbuya, confronted by the praise singer, he had to listen. In a situation like this, the praise singer takes central stage and the prince, if he has to win the respect of his people, has to show that he is a listening leader. In a sense, the power and masculinity of the praise singer in situations like this ‘become’ more important. He has an important function to perform after which he subjects himself to the authority of the chief. In this way, the expression of masculinity is confirmed to be situational (Morrell: 1998).

It is worth noting that there is a degree of competition in the way individuals enact masculinities. Note that Fama is criticised by the praise singers for eking a living through begging at funerals. This in a way injures Fama’s personality. Fama does not take this kindly. He feels he has to correct the situation by denouncing the praise singer. The result is Fama and the praise singer criticising each other. But it is Fama who feels more challenged. Fama responds by saying:

That son of a donkey of a praise singer [the one who presided at the funeral of Ibrahima Kone] was intermingling his praise of the dead with

venomous innuendos...There are no real praise singers left; the real ones died with the great masters of war, before the European conquest...The real praise singers, the last of the true caste of praise singers, were buried with Samory's great war captains (6)

Such confrontation puts the praise singer and the chief at loggerheads and yet they are supposed to be complimenting each other. When it suits the chief, the praise singers are good men but when not, they are "sons of donkeys". Both the praise singer and the chief want to express their identity and power. One wants to dominate the other. In this way, Connell's (1989) argument that men do not share hegemonic masculinity equally is confirmed. While men oppressed women, some men are dominated and subordinated by other men. Fama and the praise singer are struggling to dominate one another.

It is noted that while the praise singer at the funeral of Ibrahima Kone was critical of Fama for taking advantage of ceremonies to beg, the praise singers too were benefiting personally from such ceremonies. Wherever there was a gathering and traditional leaders were there, the praise singers were there too. We are told:

Since every funeral pays, one readily understands why Malinke praise singers and elderly Malinke, those whose trading activities were ruined by independence (and God knows how many old traders ruined by independence there are in the capital city) all 'work' the burials and funeral rites. Real professionals! Morning, noon and night they keep on the move from one neighbourhood to another, in order to attend all the ceremonies. The Malinke most unkindly refer to them as the 'vultures' or 'that pack of hyenas' (4)

While praise singers, elders and former traders are mentioned for moving from one funeral to another, Fama is the only one mentioned for begging at ceremonies. The elderly men and former traders are in desperate situations because of the effects of the coming of independence. The changes in political policies had direct effects on the people forcing them to lose their sources of income and ending up “chasing after funerals”. In this way, even their expression of masculinities also changed with the dictates of the economy and the political climate.

2.2 Fetish Priests

The position of fetish priest is hereditary. Chekura the fetish priest’s origin is described as follows:

He was the son and great grandson of a fetish priest, born and bred among sacrifices and ritual; rainy season and dry there hung over him the sent of slaughter and burnt offerings, silent mysteries and hidden suffering (25)

Such background provides Chekura with opportunities to learn skills of a fetish priest from an early age. One of the duties of fetish priests is to make sure that the village and the traditional leaders are safe. This is a heavy responsibility. In Horodugu, this responsibility is placed on Balla. It was the fetish priest Balla who “consulted and worshipped his fetishes - made several sacrificial offerings on Fama’s behalf, to make the ancestral home safe to dwell in and ward off bad luck and evil spells during his stay”. The fetish priests also have powers to preserve the village from drought, locusts, epidemics and famine. The fetish priest even strikes and kills at times (77). It was

believed in Horodugu that children were sometimes sacrificed to fetishes. The people, traditional leaders and the chief all feared and respected fetish priests because of their mysterious powers. They even had powers over natural forces. For example, we are told:

The fetish priest swore that the sun would not shine in the village so long as his fetishes were out of doors. He woke late in the morning, and he would take them all out to sacrifice a red cock to them; so the sun was held back for a long time, caught in a tangle of mist, smoke and clouds.

Once Balla's fetishes were put away, the sun would break free (84)

The magical and spiritual powers fetish priests possess gives them status, identity and a special position in the community, thereby allowing the community to construct masculinities as priest and magician for the fetish priest. At the same time, the fetish priest also performs masculinities befitting his status and what he perceives as the village's perspective. For example, Balla "believed himself to be immortal like a baobab tree, and swore that he would outlive independence. He had become so wealthy, feared and well fed above all others" (77). With this kind of thinking, Balla was able to construct masculinities as a powerful and immortal being. These traits were peculiar to Balla and befitting what he considered to be his position in Horodugu.

Fetish priests are believed to communicate with ancestral spirits. This privileges them and they assume status of being infallible. Even when they have done something wrong, no one would dare point out the wrong for fear the fetish priest may cast evil on the person. It is noticed that when fetish priest Chekura raped Salimata after her initiation

and circumcision, it was said “that it was a spirit in human form that tried to rape her in the blood of the wound” (24). The matron who was taking care of Salimata and Salimata herself feared to point an accusing finger at Chekura although Salimata was very convinced that it was the fetish priest who had raped her. The fetish priest had his own story (probably in defense). It was said that “Salimata was born so beautiful, so as to inspire the love of and provoke the jealousy of spirits” (24). On the basis of this information, Chekura got away with the case because it was settled that it was a spirit, using the fetish priest that raped Salimata. Note also that when Hadji Abdulahi, the marabout, tried to force Salimata into having sex with him, he was knifed and in apology Abdulahi claimed “it was God’s doing”.

In Horodugu, female circumcision was a common practice. However, some girls who underwent the practice died in the process. Those girls who died were buried secretly and it was probably only the matron (the women who performed the circumcision) and the fetish priest who knew where those victims were buried. “Salimata had looked in vain for the graves of those who had not returned and had not been mourned because it was believed that they had died as a sacrifice to ensure the village’s future happiness” (22). It is therefore not surprising that when Salimata lost consciousness after the circumcision operation, “she had been carried back in secret on a matron’s back, by a disused path through a hidden gate, to the secluded hut of fetish priest Chekura, there to lie under the protection of Chekura’s fetish”. It was this arrangement that exposed Salimata to Chekura. It can be argued at this point that hegemonic sexuality and hegemonic

masculinity go side by side. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:4) notes that sexuality is a site of abuse, exploitation and domination of women by the predominant patriarchal society.

While the fetish priests have all the powers to protect the village, to offer sacrifices to avoid famine and to communicate with the ancestral spirits, their powers and functions are limited to traditional functions where Islam does not come in. When there is an activity and Muslims are present, the fetish priest is not allowed to come any nearer because he is considered heathen. For example, during the fortieth day funeral rites of Lasina, “Balla had been relegated to the rear, just in front of the brats and dogs, because he was a heathen” (97). And yet this is the reliable fetish priest who was assigned to cleanse the ancestral home for the chief. When the fetish priest is relegated in such a manner to a position of nothing, even his identity and how he expresses his masculinity changes. He no longer exerts his influence. No wonder he sits “in front of brats and dogs”.

In such circumstances, a marabout takes the place of a fetish priest. A fetish priest and a marabout perform similar functions and they are believed to have similar powers. The only major difference is that a fetish priest is a full traditionalist and is not a Muslim while a marabout combines both tradition and Islam by reciting the Koran. The notable marabout in The Suns of Independence is Hadji Abdulahi. Abdulahi’s origin and powers are believed to be as follows:

Born in Timbuctoo, beyond the river at the desert’s edge, among endless stretches of yellow sand and the harsh desert harmattan, where even the

wind instills knowledge in men just as storms in our region carry typhoid fever, Abdulahi could enter the invisible world as easily as his mother's room, and converse with spirits as if they were childhood friends...He need only point at a silk-cotton tree for its trunk and the branches to wither (43)

From the origins of Abdulahi we can conclude that only men can be marabouts because "the winds instill knowledge in men" and there is no mention of women. Like other traditional forms of power, the institution of marabouts is also a preserve of men. The marabouts, like the fetish priests, are believed to have so much power that they can "point at the silk-cotton tree for its trunk and the branches to wither". There is every sense in which the marabout is compared to the powers that Jesus Christ had over natural forces. Jesus Christ is reported in Mathews 21:18-22 that on one of his journeys, he felt hungry and saw a fig tree, but upon getting nearer he noticed that the tree had no fruits. Jesus cursed the tree and it withered instantly.

As a marabout, Abdulahi practiced three divining spells: "tracing signs in fine sand (to raise the dead), casting cowrie-shells (to invoke spirits), and reading the Koran while gazing into a calabash full of water (to implore God)" (44). Through these practices, Abdulahi was able to raise his profile and to assume an identity of importance above all other marabouts and fetish priests in the city. It was necessary for Abdulahi to establish himself because his status and identity depended on performance. The moment it is noticed that the marabout has lost some of his powers, attention is likely to shift to another marabout or fetish priest. In a male dominated society, there are a lot of competing interests which eventually influence the construction of masculinities.

The origin of the Dumbuya dynasty was prophesised to start with the coming of a marabout. It was said:

A marabout; a great marabout will come from the north at the hour of *urebi*, keep him. Don't let him go! Offer him land and a house. The power of the whole province will go wherever he and his descendants dwell (66)

Since marabouts, like fetish priests, are male, it can be argued that from its establishment, the dynasty of the Dumbuya that was to be set up when the marabout had arrived was going to be male dominated.

The people of Horodugu accepted and respected both fetish priests and marabouts who, in almost all respects are the same. Numerous attempts were made for Balla the fetish priest to convert to Islam. But Balla brushed such suggestions aside and argued that: "don't you think it is because I've no dealings with God that God has forgotten about me?" Balla was suggesting that God had forgotten about him, that is why he had lived longer. Balla was the oldest man alive in the province of Horodugu. Although Balla had refused to convert to Islam, he still managed to negotiate his way and to make himself useful in a Muslim dominated village. What enabled Balla to find space among Muslims was that the Malinke seriously combined both religion and tradition. We are told:

The Malinke are full of duplicity because deep down inside they are blacker than their skins, while the words they speak are whiter than their teeth. Are they fetish worshippers or Muslims? A Muslim heeds the Koran, a fetish worshipper follows the *Koma*, but in Togobala, everyone

publicly proclaims himself a devout Muslim, but everyone privately fears the fetish (72)

It is this duplicity, in my view, that equates the fetish priest and the marabout. And the two are likely to express similar masculinities.

2.3 Hunters

Lefort and Rosi (1999:8) observe that, “In West Africa, hunters belong to a brotherhood which is at the top of the traditional social hierarchy.” Hunters are associated with power and magic. Kourouma (2004:7) observes that “power and magic are inseparable in the minds of most Africans. The dictator not only has power and money, but also has the best fetishes and sorcerers”.

Lefort’s observation that hunters belong to a “brotherhood” clearly indicates that hunting is a male activity. Unlike praise singers and fetish priest that belong to people of a particular caste, their skills being handed down to those that belong to those families, hunting is learnt and magic is acquired. While hunting can be hereditary, it does not belong to a particular caste although some families or communities may distinguish themselves as good hunters. During important communal functions or ceremonies such as funerals, hunters of Horodugu attend. It is an opportunity for them to show their skills and to prove their bravery, especially “those who had seven tigers to their name”. Ability to kill a lion, leopard or tiger, animals that are dangerous, is proof of bravery and strength of a hunters magic. At the bottom of this display of the hunting skills is each hunter’s

desire to establish an identity in society that will go with recognition. The hunters even have their own praise singers, who sing hunting songs in praise of the hunters (Vail: 1991)

Balla (who is a hunter and fetish priest) is said to have had a fight with a spirit buffalo (86). Although Balla outwitted the spirit buffalo, he was not free to go into the bush for fear the spirit may take revenge. So “for three years Balla consulted marabouts, fetishes, sorcerers and killed sacrifices upon sacrifices to discover the *kala* of this spirit of the hunt” so that he could kill it once and for all. By going all out to hunt the spirit, Balla was trying to maintain his status quo and to prove that he had strong magic and spiritual powers. In this way, Balla would continue to have clients coming to consult him and his position in the village would be guaranteed. Note that while Balla is a senior fetish priest and hunter, faced with a challenging situation, he goes to consult marabouts, sorcerers and other fetishes. One can argue here that while the hunters and fetish priests all had power and magic, they were in most cases dependent on each other. They did not operate in isolation. They recognised each others strengths, no wonder Balla offered sacrifices and consulted extensively for him to manage to kill the hunting spirit.

Compared to all other hunters of Horodugu, Balla was the greatest hunter because he had special hunting skills and he was assisted by the spirits. Balla had entered into an agreement with a spirit that helped to bring animals to his disposal for easy kill. The bottom line of the agreement was that one day (the period was not specified) Balla would have to offer to the spirit his own blood. It all started when:

Balla met a spirit, spirit of the hunt – all Malinke have heard tell of such spirits, that live off warm blood and especially fond of human blood, that lead wild animals as shepherds lead their flock (84)

It can be argued that Balla's ability to kill animals was not dependent on his skills but the spirit that shepherded the animals. "Every time the hunter came out, the spirit would lead him far into the bush, there the spirit would gather the animals as the shepherd does his flock and Balla would shoot as many as he liked" (85). We can therefore agree with Kourouma that power and magic are inseparable. Balla uses magic to express an identity and consequently, even his expression of masculinity is influenced by external forces.

Balla's ability to kill many animals makes him assume the title of provider to the village and this gives him multiple identities. As a fetish priest, he was consulted by the chief and other villagers on many issues, some communal and others personal. As a hunter, he is a provider. He was also a magician bringing himself closer to a sorcerer. A sorcerer is a 'man' with magic powers, who is helped by evil spirits. Hunters, fetish priests, marabouts and sorcerers are like peers who play together while at the time maintaining their personal identities. They have their recognisable similarities as well as differences.

The hunters are also associated with physical violence. It is another way of expression of manhood. It is believed that a good hunter is brave and in times of conflict, hunters, who may also be warriors or have a family background of belonging to a family of former warriors, physical violence becomes a way of maintaining their hegemony. The violence

affects both men and women. While some men are in some way physically affected, women are in most cases the victims. Jalna Hannier (1990:33) observes that “women are much more likely than men to be assaulted sexually and physically by men they know, the closer the relationship, the more likely the assault is”. Chemoko’s physical and sexual assault on Salimata when he inherited her as a wife is a good example. As a renowned hunter, Chemoko felt he could not be challenged by a woman and so he had to use physical violence to impose his will on Salimata.

The dominance of men in position of power in Horodugu all testify to the understanding that Horodugu is a highly patriarchal society. John Remy (1990:44) notes that “patriarchy traditionally meant the primacy of the father in kinship, and by extension an authoritarian and often antiquated yet paternalistic form of government as well as ‘the rule of the elders’, the ‘wise men’”. The term is used here to embrace all these meanings and their spiritual, biological, social and political ramifications, as well as to cover the whole familial mode of androcratic domination. Remy (1990:44) defines androcracy as “rule by men”. This system, according to Remy, takes two forms – patriarchy (rule by the fathers) and fratriarchy (rule by brotherhood), both of which are predicated on the institution known as ‘the men hut’.

All these institutions of male power were affected, first by the colonial era, later by independence and finally, the one party system and socialism. Praise singers, fetish priests and hunters lost their influence after the introduction of single party rule. The one party system bestowed more power in the politicians. This resulted in local party leaders

assuming more power than did traditional leaders in their different forms. The decisions of politicians tended to carry more authority. This resulted in conflicts between the traditional leaders and 'the sons of independence'. The politicians carried the day and they imposed their will on the people, who accepted the changes reluctantly and with reservations. The politicians had a way of imposing their decisions, sometimes violently. To avoid conflicts, traditional leaders (chiefs, praise singers, fetish priests, and hunters) withdrew from taking an active part in Horodugu's politics at traditional and party level, and with time completely lost their influence. In the process, politicians gained more room and power, and consequently, were able to perform their masculinities in different ways while the praises singers, fetish priests and hunters had to negotiate their positions in the new arrangement.

In conclusion, the chapter has examined the powers and masculinities of praise singer, fetish priest and hunters. It has been demonstrated that all these are male dominated positions and those privileged to hold them have a special identity enabling them to express their powers and masculinities in different ways according to their positions. The chapter has shown that praise singers are close to the chief. They know the genealogy of the ruling class and are privileged to have the 'licence' to criticize the chief when it is seen that something is wrong or will be wrong. The fetish priests are the link between the living and the dead. They offer sacrifices on behalf of the villagers to appease the spirits. However, because fetish priests are non-Muslims, their duties only go as far as traditional functions are concerned. They are not allowed to preside over functions where Muslims require citing the Koran. During such gatherings fetish priest are treated as ordinary

villagers. Hunters are respected for their brevity, especially those who have a record of having killed dangerous animals like lions or leopards. Their powers are spiritual and magical. Some hunters also assume other identities as blacksmiths, just as fetish priests are also seen to be hunters. Those individuals capable of assuming different identities are able to perform different masculinities as they assume different statuses in different situations. However, all these positions of traditional power were severely affected by the coming of independence because politicians did not give these positions the respect due to them. Eventually, these positions became powerless and almost useless.

2.4 Narrative Technique

The narrative uses orality tools such as proverbs, idioms, wise sayings and praises. The careful narration and reference to oral traditions helps us to situate the story to a particular African society, in this case, the Malinke society of West Africa. The activities of praise singers, fetish priests and hunters are narrated in the form of stories. The former statuses of these traditional leaders and their institutions of power are discussed and compared to the present, making it easier to understand the reasons why political changes that were taking place did not seem to help the ordinary citizens.

We have observed from what the traditional leaders say and what is said about them that praise singers, fetish priests and hunters, and their institutions of power are the custodians of traditions and customs. As such, no traditional function is complete without these leaders. From the language the people use when addressing their leaders and the way

those in traditional institutions of power relate to ordinary members of society, we can see that the Malinke respect their traditions. The narrator tells stories using Malinke expressions. The effective use of Malinke expressions, the reference to traditional beliefs such as animal totems, the cursing and repetitions for emphasis, all work together to make the story come alive and believable. It is also noted from the narrative that elders use foul language. The use of foul language when referring to a particular matter is indicative of the fact that the matter is disliked. For example, referring to the politicians as “the bastard sons of independence”, shows that the people are disappointed and disillusioned with their political leadership. This technique is effectively used throughout the narrative. The stronger the language, the higher the degree of disgust. In many instances, we see the tactful subversion of language to achieve maximum effect.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EMASCULATION OF FAMA AND THE MASCULATION OF SALIMATA

This chapter examines the various ways in which Fama assumes different identities, sometimes by choice and at other times circumstances forced him to shift from one personality to another. As a result, Fama's enactment or not of African masculinities change with his status. The chapter demonstrates that Fama manifests masculinities by virtue of him being a prince in a patriarchal community. The chapter argues that faced with colonialism, independence and one party system, with its socialistic policies, Fama lost traditional power associated with patriarch and chieftaincy. The political changes and the influences such changes brought about greatly impacted on the people of Horodugu in general and Fama in particular, because he ended up losing his inheritance, forcing him to redefine his status and masculinities related to the new circumstances. The chapter further demonstrates that Fama's loss of the opportunity to succeed his father as chief of the Dumbuya, unemployment and impotence, reduced his power and influence among his people. His economic dependence on his wife Salimata, translated to abrogation of his responsibilities of a husband as a provider, protector and breadwinner of the family to Salimata, factors that are important in the expression of African masculinities, leading to his emasculation. It is argued that Fama's emasculation is by consequence the masculination of his wife in that Salimata took up some of the major roles that society perceives to be predominantly male roles in African societies and upon which African masculinities are based.

Traditional African societies hold the institution of chieftaincy in high esteem. As such, those who are close to the royal family and especially those that belong to the royal family have a special status and identity and this privileges them to enjoy a degree of power associated with royalty in several ways. Fama was lucky to be born a prince in the ruling dynasty of the Dumbuya in Horodugu. Commenting on Fama's background, we are told:

Fama Dumbuya! A true Dumbuya of Dumbuya father and Dumbuya mother, the last legitimate descendent of the Dumbuya, prince of Horodugu, whose totem was the panther...He, Fama, born of gold, food in plenty, honour and women! Bred to prefer one gold to another, to choose between dishes, to bed his favourite of a hundred wives (4-5)

Such a background gives Fama a privileged status in a patriarchal village where totems mean a lot. The totem one belongs to determines one's status as well. In this sense, Fama had it all. His totem is a panther, a large wild animal of the cat family. It is also called puma. It is a vicious hunter. By having a panther as his totem; Fama is expected to express the strength, power and agility of his totem. From childhood, Fama is informed of the strong characteristics of his totem and grows to portray such traits. Fama's expression of masculinities is in several ways associated with the totem – power and strength. These qualities are associated with manliness (Holland, 2005:128). For this reason 'real men' (according to the people of Horodugu) such as the Malinke could not be buried in the same place as those belonging to totems that were considered inferior, for

example, the hyena. The two (people of panther and hyena totem) belonged to different castes of master and slave respectively. These totem barriers were strictly observed in Horodugu: marriages across totems and by consequence, castes were seen as an abomination. This simply means that by virtue of belonging to higher totem, one is privileged and society constructs how one is expected to behave. It is this social construction that influences Fama's performance of masculinities.

3.1 Fama the Prince

It is observed that Fama's expression of masculinities is largely influenced by his status – a prince. He was made to believe that he was “born of gold” and that as the last legitimate descendant of the Dumbuya dynasty, everything – animate and inanimate - in Horodugu belonged to the Dumbuya and by consequence, to him. That explains why he could “choose dishes” and “bed his favourite women” because they ‘belonged’ to him.

However, the establishment of colonial rule by the French greatly affected traditional rule and power in Horodugu. The French now had the powers to decide who should be chief of the Dumbuya. A young French administrator was appointed to be in charge of Horodugu. These changes caused serious disturbances and chiefs lost jurisdictional control of their areas because decisions were being made by the colonial administrator. The loss of power of traditional leaders meant loss of privileges associated with such power and this eventually affected the construction of masculinities of the ruling class and the members of their families.

Fama's loss of status as prince and heir to the Dumbuya throne was gradual. When his father died, he was expected to succeed him as chief of Horodugu. However, the young French administrator who was in charge of Horodugu preferred Fama's distant cousin, Lasina to him. The administrator's choice of cousin Lasina was not accidental. Lasina did all he could to block Fama from succeeding his father. We are informed: "Cousin Lasina was the man who by intrigue, magic spells and sacrificial offerings had usurped Fama's place as chief of Horodugu" (55). This confirms Kourouma's (2004:7) words that "power and magic are inseparable in the minds of most Africans". It can be argued that Fama's loss of the opportunity to succeed his father as chief was one of the major steps in his emasculation. While still being recognised as the last legitimate prince in the Dumbuya dynasty, Fama's failure to be chief meant that he was going to be subordinate to Lasina, the new chief. This meant that Fama lost the chance to be at the top and the privileges upon which he would have based his expression of manliness and upon which the subjects would have defined his identity. In frustration, Fama left Horodugu for the capital city, hoping to start a new life but still holding on firmly to his title of prince and the last legitimate descendant of the Dumbuya.

3.2 Fama the trader

In the capital city, Fama had to fend for himself. He had to adjust to a capitalist cash economy which was different from the subsistence economy of Horodugu. Fama turned to trade as a source of his livelihood. The French, as a colonial power had provided an

enabling environment for trade, although they were disliked for other atrocious activities.

We are told:

Fama had seen the colonial era, had known the French administrators who meant many things and many troubles: forced labour in the wood-cutting camps, on the roads and bridges; taxes and more taxes, and fifty other levies such as every conqueror demands, not to forget the lash of a whip and other torments...But what matters most to a Malinke is freedom of trade. And the French, also and above all, stood for the freedom of trade that enabled the Jula, the big Malinke traders to prosper. It was through trade and war together that the Malinke race, like one man heard, saw, walked and breathed; these two things were at once its eyes, its ears, its feet, its loins. The colonial period killed war, but favoured trade (13)

Fama liked the French's liberal economic policies and the freedom of trade they provided, but he did not want them as colonisers. Trade gave Fama an opportunity to reassert himself as a man (as a prince and trader). Having lost his opportunity to be chief in the village, trade was the next best thing Fama could do because the Malinke held trade and traders in high esteem (Lindsay, 2005:141). The freedom of trade the French provided made the big Malinke traders (including Fama) overlook the many troubles associated with French rule – forced labour, taxes, levies, physical abuse, etc. Great African markets in Dakar, Bamako, Bobo and Bouake boomed as a result. Through trade, Fama became a 'big man' and 'big men' were considered to be the powerful (economically and politically). Traders were seen as the 'real men' because they had money to spend lavishly and they could also afford to be polygamous. The 'big men' were the people who went into politics as well, hence, it was easy for them to construct

African masculinities as family heads, businessmen and as politicians (Mills and Ssewakiryanga, 2005:91; Holland, 2005: 122).

Fama and other big traders did not realize the extent of French influence on trade. When nationalism started he joined the freedom fighters and he came to hate the French and opposed their presence. He wanted the French to leave but he did not realize that that would lead to collapse of trade. Fama is compared to “the blade of grass that complained because the tall tree was taking all the sunlight; once the tree was felled, it had its share of the sun, but also of the wind which crushed it” (12-13). So independence came and the French left. The result of the departure of the French was that trade, on which Fama and other Malinke traders so much depended declined. The coming of independence and its new policies virtually “ruined” trade, making Fama lose his livelihood. Left without any reliable source of income, Fama once again lost his status as ‘a real man’ and his influence as a trader diminished. The change in economic power translated to change in Fama’s ways of expression of masculinity.

Fama was not the only one affected by the collapse of trade. The traders, like Fama, depended on merchants to supply them with goods. When trade was “ruined”, the merchants suffered great losses. Consequently, their livelihood was greatly disturbed as they could no longer afford to import luxury goods and to marry many wives as a sign of wealth. Marrying several wives gave the traders/merchants special status and influence, but now they could not afford it. Describing the lifestyles of traders prior to independence, Holland (2005: 122) quoting Akyeampong says “the lifestyles of the ‘big

men' were peppered with imported drinks, rich clothes, gold ornaments, and a large number of wives, children and dependents". The collapse of trade meant poverty for the 'big men' and their inability to marry because they did not have money to pay for the wives and to support their large families. As a result, the 'big men' could no longer enact the masculinities they did when trade was booming.

Consequently, the traders had to look to other means of earning their living and hence, adjustment in their construction of masculinity. For example, when Abjawdi "dropped out of trade, found nothing better to do, he set up as a money lender" (15). Those who failed to adjust dropped on the social ladder and could therefore not be seen as 'real men' any more, hence their emasculation. Robert Morrell (1998: 607) notes that "masculinity takes different forms". Therefore, those traders who managed to adjust to economic changes were able to express masculinities in different ways, according to their new statuses. This confirms that in any society, "there are many masculinities, each with a characteristic, shape and set of features. The contours of these masculinities change over time, being affected by changes elsewhere in society and at the same time, themselves affecting society itself" (Ibid: 607). Morrell, further notes that "it is not the case that all masculinities are equally powerful social forces - subordinate and subversive masculinities exist among marginal or dominated groups and these may be oppositional to the dominant masculinity", (quoted in Connell, 1995: 73).

3.3 Fama and Politics

When Fama was a big trader, he earned a lot of money and he went into politics. In the initial stages of the struggle, he combined trade and politics, but later he concentrated all his efforts in the struggle for freedom. It was hoped that the coming of independence would improve the situation for the people. That hope motivated Fama to devote his time and resources to the struggle. We read:

Fama dropped everything to throw himself into politics, with much eloquence and bravery. A legitimate son of the chiefs must devote himself wholly to the task of expelling the French. In politics there was room for manliness and revenge, and there were nearly fifty years of occupation by the infidels to denounce, challenge, and undo (36)

We are further informed that:

At the first gusts of wind, Fama had shed everything; trade, friends, women, to use up his nights and days, his money and anger in riling against France, the father and mother of France. He wanted revenge for fifty years of domination, and for the loss of his birthright (14)

It can be noted that Fama changed his identity from that of a prince and trader to one of prince and politician thereby confirming Mills and Ssewakiryanga's (2005:93) view that "masculinities are not fixed, they are fluid". It is my argument that Fama was motivated to sacrifice his time and money, to "shed everything" because he was convinced that his sacrifices would be recognised at independence. Fama was also sure that, as a prince of a once powerful dynasty, that gave him a privileged position and he hoped that would be

the basis on which he would be considered for a position in the independent Ebony Republic. Unfortunately for Fama, the opposite was the result. When independence came, Fama could not be considered for a position as minister, deputy, or ambassador because “he remained as illiterate as a donkey’s tail” (14).

Independence was followed by the introduction of a one party system. The single party rule introduced socialism and cooperatives which finally “ruined trade”. The coming of cooperatives once again gave Fama hope for consideration. It appeared Fama would get his chance now because:

There were fifty opportunities to do Fama a favour by making him secretary-general of a party subsection or director of a cooperative. What had he not done to be co-opted? Prayers night and day, all kinds of sacrificial offerings, even a black cat down a well (14)

All of Fama’s hopes were dashed. He was not appointed or co-opted into the system. “Fama had been like the little swamp rat who digs a hole for the rat catcher snake; his efforts had brought about his ruin, for like a leaf that’s just been used to wipe somebody’s arse, once independence had been won Fama was thrown to the flies and forgotten” (14). Since Fama had earlier “shed everything” – trade, money, women, friends – things that gave him recognition in society and a basis for proving his masculinity, independence and the one party system worsened his situation. By not being considered for any position, Fama became poorer than he was during the colonial era which gave him an opportunity to engage in lucrative trade. “Independence did not bring anything to Fama, only the national identity card and the party membership card” (14). Left with no money,

Fama could not afford to get women anymore, a factor that gave the Malinke recognition. It is my argument that the failure by a prince to marry more than one wife because he could not afford it, reduced his status and influence and Fama could no longer be held in high esteem by his society. In that state, Fama could not influence any decisions. He had become so broke that he could not even support his wife, a duty that patriarchy confers on every Malinke husband (Remy: 1990). He was no longer a 'real man', hence his emasculation.

Faced with this deplorable situation, Fama was living a life of despair. It is noted:

Misfortune was now Fama's constant companion misfortune took part in everything he undertook, guided his every gesture as he went about his business. Bargains, purchases, sales, journeys all ended in failure. Only despair remained. Pride, warmth, kindness vanished. Fama was a changed man (36)

Indeed Fama was a changed man. With everything lost, he resorted to eking his living through begging and chasing after ceremonies (funeral, birthday, marriage), a thing which disturbed elderly Malinke men in the city because they felt their last legitimate prince of the Dumbuya had "become a scavenger...a hyena in a hurry... a beggar at ceremonies" (5). Fama had become emasculated, although some of his tribesmen (Malinke) still recognised his royal birth and it was these people that made donations to him. As a people, the Malinke still constructed an identity for Fama, and Fama was deconstructing this identity through begging, confirming Morrell's (1998:607) argument "that masculinities can be constructed and deconstructed".

It was when Fama's life was at its lowest ebb in the city that cousin Lasina, "the man who had usurped Fama's place as chief of Horodugu" died. Everyone looked to Fama as the obvious successor, since he was the last legitimate prince of the Dumbuya. Fama went to his home village to take up his inheritance. But first the funeral rites had to be performed.

Among the Malinke, men are not supposed to express their emotions in public. So, during funerals, it is the women who cry openly. It is noted that when Fama arrived in Togobala for the funeral of cousin Lasina:

... A piercing cry rung out: the signal for weeping and wailing in honour of the dead man. Howling as if possessed, all the women flung themselves on the ground and rolled about in the dust. The noise drew other women to join in the keening and spread throughout the village (71)

The Malinke men's insistence not to cry in public is a clear expression of African masculinity. It is an indication of the thinking that the men are stronger and do not cry in public. It also suggests that the weaker gender, in this case the women, should cry to honour the deceased. The subordinate gender mourns as a duty. In this sense, women are subordinated (Connell: 1989).

3.4 Fama as chief of the Dumbuya

Fama had been living on charity in the city. Therefore his enthronement as chief seemed to be an upward movement on the social ladder and an opportunity to end his miseries. The position gave Fama an opportunity to regain his respect, status and power that androcracy, patriarchy and fratriarchy provide. This is noted from his actions and behaviour after he assumed office. “Fama sat there, enthroned, haughty. He scarcely looked at the callers. His eyelids would close, as befitted a true panther totem” (76).

Prior to Fama’s predecessor’s death, “independence had suppressed the chiefdom, dethroned Fama’s cousin and set up a committee in the village with a president” (78). Fearing a similar thing might happen to him, Fama turned to other traditional forms of power which were in the hands of fetish priests and praise singers. It is noted: “...in the quest to regain power, Fama could rely on a fetish priest, a praise singer, money and political support; in other words, the ultimate devotion of two old men on their old legs” (78). Fama’s dependence on the fetish priest and the praise singer, who both had power in their own right, but which was subordinate to the power of the chief, demonstrates that there is no single dominant masculinity arising from status, but that there are masculinities which manifest in different situations and contexts (Morrell: 1998).

After becoming chief and inheriting whatever was left of Horodugu, Fama for a moment felt the problems and worries that had degraded him were now going to be over. Little

did he realise that he was taking over a chieftaincy that was almost dying and village that was poor. We read:

Togobala, need it be repeated, was poorer than an orphan's one pair of drawers, as dry as the river Tuko in the middle of the harmattan, tormented by hunger and thirst...In Togobala, poverty could neither be healed or hidden (87-88)

The reality about the poverty levels in Horodugu dawned on Fama just a few weeks after he became chief. "In a world turned upside down, Fama had inherited an honour without the means to uphold it, like a headless snake. To be chief of a starving tribe means only famine and a gourdful of worries" (61). Almost all the subjects were surviving on a subsistence economy, with little or nothing to spare. It was only Balla the fetish priest and Jamuru the praise singer who were well off and Fama became dependent on them. With the title of chief of the Dumbuya, Fama had power and glory but "was a parasite". It can be argued at this point that Fama manifested two conflicting identities (as chief and 'parasite') and consequently different masculinities. He was enjoying the status of chief with all the respect and honour associated with the position, save for the poverty of the people. But his lack of economic power made him look to his elders for support, thereby compromising his position. Once again Fama, with a good title of chief, could not conduct himself as expected. He, in a way, had regressed to his old ways in the city. It is noted:

In broad daylight, right in the middle of Togobala, the last of the Dumbuya had become his servant's parasite. It was pitiful, disgraceful,

unbelievable. But when Fama lay alone throughout the long sleepless nights, he found it shamefully soothing. He had no money worries (88)

It was earlier mentioned that while living in the city, Fama, as a prince, survived on handouts and begging at ceremonies. In Horodugu, as chief, he was a 'parasite', depending on his subjects. It therefore can be argued that, Fama had become a perpetual beggar, incapable of taking care of himself and living an independent life. In this sense, he failed to maintain his status quo and failed to construct masculinities commensurate with his position. Fama can be said to be emasculated because he could not manifest the expected characteristics and masculinities befitting an African chief.

While Fama was struggling to support himself, tradition and duty demanded that he looks after the widows. When Fama's father died, he left behind two wives who were inherited by Lasina when he became chief. Upon Lasina's death, Fama was faced with four widows to inherit, but he only offered to take two because the other two were too old to marry again after being widowed twice. Inheritance of widows, in my view, objectifies women. The women are considered as 'property' belonging to the deceased. The point being made here in relation to African masculinity is that, the man who takes over the woman/women will 'own' them and this is a responsibility that society puts on men even on those who are not responsible and may not have the means to support the women. And since polygamy among the Malinke of Horodugu is a sign of manliness, even those that have no capacity to support their wives still will want to have more women for recognition purposes. That was the rationale for Fama taking Mariam as his wife.

3.5 Fama the husband

Fama and his wife Salimata had been married for twenty years. Their biggest problem as a couple was that their marriage was childless. Typical of many African families, Fama's relatives, both in the city and in Horodugu, blamed Salimata and argued that she was barren. Fama too, blamed his wife for their inability to have a child. The ability to make his wife conceive is one way in which Fama would have proved his manhood to his wife but more so to the community which believes that if a man cannot make a woman pregnant, he is not a real man. Salomane (2005:83) observes the following about the Hausa:

Only when a woman has a child is she fully an adult, and only when she has a grown son is she fully secure and protected. Thus, the pressure on a man to perform sexually is great. And becomes even greater when he realises that there are younger men and old rich men who may entice his wife

Fama was facing this kind of pressure. "Fama's heart and mind will never have peace, so long as Salimata remains dry and sterile, so long as no child springs up" (16). In this sense, it can be said that the Malinke put a direct relationship between masculinity and procreation. Realising that time was running out for the last prince of Horodugu to have a child, the elders of Horodugu gave Fama Mariam, a young woman who was "very fertile". But Fama declined the offer for two reasons: Firstly, because "he'd neither the loins nor the money" (62). Secondly, because Salimata objected to Fama's taking a second wife. She reasoned:

Fama...just think, take a look at yourself. Do you think you can mount two of us? With me, it's much a job as drawing water from the top of a hill. And those aches and pains in your back and sides after every night (62)

Mariam was later given to Lasina. It can be concluded from the above that Fama had problems in performing his conjugal duties, but that did not deter him from trying to prove his manhood. He was determined to exonerate himself because impotence was a hard fact to face as society would render him a 'boy'. Salomane (2005:83) notes:

There is tremendous pressure on males [Hausa] to play a difficult masculine role, one that puts a great deal of pressure on them to provide quite, calm leadership while proving their sexual prowess daily. Their failures are "taken to the public" by their wives who harangue them in the loudest possible manner, throwing their sexual shortcoming in their face for public amusement. Similarly, failure to provide a wife with a child can lead to further insults and public humiliation. It is a pressure from which Hausa males seek to escape in various ways

Faced with similar pressure, from both his wife and family, Fama and Salimata had no peace in their home. We read:

Afterwards, their household knew neither the repose of peace or the remote sweetness of happiness. Fama became resigned to the idea that Salimata was incurably sterile. He sought out fruitful women, even tried (Oh! The shame) some of the capital city's women of every virtue. First one, then a second, then a third. Nothing came of it (36)

By failing to produce a child, both in and out of wedlock, Fama proved himself impotent, therefore, according to social construction, 'not a real man'. Sally Hayward (2005:142)

argues that “physical strength and sexual exploitation work interdependently to oppress women”. However, in the case of Fama, he failed to use either his strength or sex to exploit or dominate his wife, aspects on which hegemonic masculinity heavily relies (Connell: 1987; 1995). Fama’s impotence made his wife consider him to be useless. He was seen to be “useless and empty at night, useless and empty in the day, a weary-worn-out thing like a chipped calabash!” (35). In my view, by being considered “useless and empty”, Fama was in every sense of the word emasculated. We can therefore see a direct relationship between the emasculation of Fama and the masculation of Salimata. As Fama was getting emasculated, Salimata was becoming masculated especially through devoting her energies to business.

3.6 Salimata and Female masculinity

Lindsay and Miescher (2003:5) say “‘female masculinity’ mean women’s attainment of positions or characteristics usually regarded as the preserve of men”. Judith Halberstam (1989) makes a compelling argument for a more flexible taxonomy of masculinity, including not only men, who have historically held power in society, but also women who embody qualities that are usually associated with maleness such as authority and independence. Commenting on the Yoruba of Nigeria, Holland (2005: 132) quoting Karin Barber explains that “socially prominent women, even big women gained status by building and show of wealth often through successful weaving, pottery making and other crafts work” (Cornwall; Lindsay; 2005). In this way, Yoruba women and men “could make themselves big”.

Writing on the significance of women's work in Zimbabwe, Chengarai Shire (1994: 153) asserts that "[...] women constructed masculinities right through the lives of men from birth to adulthood". In these instances, women's industriousness helps them to construct female masculinities. Cornwall (2005:6) notes that the "Yoruba markets provide women with strategies and opportunities for getting on and getting by, in which men are often barely relevant". Lisa Lindsay (2005:141), commenting on Yoruba women traders says:

Women traded because to do so was part of being a woman, a wife and a mother. Trade allowed them to help provide for the children, contribute to their lineage, and maintain some financial independence from their husbands

The women's involvement in trade reduced their dependence on men. It also provided them with a degree of financial independence, a crucial factor in decision making.

The above information and arguments by different scholars (Cornwall, Lindsay, Shire) provides the basis for my argument that Salimata constructed female masculinity. As a wife, Salimata is hard working. She gets up early each weekday to go and sell porridge to construction workers. In the afternoon, she goes to sell rice at lunch hour. Through this small business, Salimata manages to earn enough money to support herself and Fama. She works to earn money "to feed Fama, to clothe Fama, to house Fama, to pay the marabouts and the sorcerers who made her magic charms" (32). This made her assume the role of breadwinner in the family. As the 'breadwinner', Salimata manages the finances of the home. This economic independence gave Salimata authority over Fama

who was unemployed and spent his time sleeping while the wife was busy working. Subsequently, Salimata assumed characteristics of headship. She could easily scold Fama over his laziness and impotence. It is argued that Salimata's economic independence and the authority she assumed in controlling the affairs of the family translates to her performance of female masculinities.

It is noted that while Salimata enjoyed a degree of authority and economic independence, she still felt duty bound to her husband. She concluded:

Whatever the man's behaviour, whatever he might be worth, a husband is still a sovereign ruler, to whom a wife owed all her care. God has ordained that a woman be submissive in her husband's service, his commandments must be obeyed, for they signify strength, valour, grace and quality for the child of such a wife (28)

It would appear from the above statement that Salimata was contradicting herself, bearing in mind the bad names she had heaped on her husband. But my view is that, although Salimata was able to provide for Fama, to disagree, quarrel and even fight him, she still was mindful of society's definition of a good woman. In whatever she did, Salimata did not want to break away from the societal and religious constructs. This definitely influenced her expression of masculinity because she had to try as much as possible to follow the descriptive and prescriptive elements of society.

Salimata does not only portray 'male' characteristics within the confines of the home. She demonstrates her powerful abilities to the community as well. At the market,

Salimata “was offering porridge and rice on credit” making people like Musa Wedrago to “owe six and ten helpings of porridge, and he’d been out of work for two weeks” (31). While it can be argued that this gesture was purely a business one, it is however the heart condition in which the credit was given that makes a difference. “Were you supposed to let a human being suffer because he hadn’t been signed on that day?” Salimata would ask herself. The other women at the market were against Salimata’s view and of giving porridge and/or rice on credit. For those vulnerable people such as beggars, Salimata gave them left over food on charity. She reasoned:

Mad men, beggars, and the unemployed don’t have fifteen francs; they have poverty, suffering and bitterness, but also an open heart and God’s love. Salimata should let the unemployed have rice on credit. Righteousness is more than wealth, and charity is one of God’s laws (39)

In a male dominated society like the Ebony Republic, the care for the underprivileged was in the hands of men. The men either neglected this responsibility or they simply were selfish and ignored the suffering of the poor. “All the rich people, the big Europeans and Syrians, the presidents and secretary-generals should have fed the beggars and the unemployed”, (40) Salimata thought to herself. Since they did not, Salimata took it upon herself, though in a very small way but according to her means and:

Distributed plentiful of rice to the starving and the unemployed, until she had scrapped the basin clean – other starvelings, and beggars came crowding round her, stretching out their hands, displaying their infirmities and sores (40)

What makes Salimata's actions noted is that it was the rich men who were expected to support the poor. By filling in the gap, Salimata was playing the role of 'men'. In that sense, she constructs masculinities associated with playing such roles in society.

Salimata also constructs 'negative' masculinities through the use of violence. She is seen to resort to violence from time to time, both within and out of the family. For example:

Annoyed, she took aim and with her open right hand slapped once, the buttock of a husband who did not perform his duties, twice, the right buttock of a ne'er-do-well who knew only how to sleep, and once more, hard, the right buttock of a big eater who brought nothing home (26)

This is definitely domestic violence which men have used in patriarchal societies to dominate and subordinate women. Salimata is using violence to put her grievances across to her husband. When Salimata had a difference with her co-wife Mariam, she became violent. "Salimata ran outside and rushed back brandishing a large knife, howling...And when the night was Mariam's, there was the same creaking, that sent her howling to fetch the knife, that made her to want to kill" (106). When Abdulahi wanted to have sex with Salimata, she used a large knife to assault Abdulahi, leaving him with a serious cut on his shoulder. These incidences demonstrate that Salimata expressed male violent traits, especially the use of a weapon. If it is agreed that violence is used by men to express masculinities, then it goes without saying that Salimata is performing female masculinity through violence. Many scholars have confirmed that violence is a site of oppression. Hayward (2005:142) says "physical strength is used to oppress both lower class men and women". Paul Dover (2005:178) adds that "'male' superiority and corresponding rights

are maintained by ideology and by violence”, and this, according to Connell (1987, 1995) is what constitutes hegemonic masculinity. Beinart (1992:473) adds that “men are the primary agents of violence in most societies”. It is noted from the above that violence is used to oppress, maintain ideology and construct hegemonic masculinity. The theories used above refer mainly to men as the agents of violence. However, Salimata seems to subvert the common notion and she constructs masculinities that are rare in women in African communities. It is ironic for Salimata to be violent because that was one of the reasons why she ran away from Chekura. The man was violent, almost always carrying a weapon.

Salimata is not the only woman who constructs female masculinity in The Suns of Independence. By applying Lindsay’s (2005) view that trade and financial independence are some of the aspects that influence and determine the expression of female masculinity, then Matali, like Salimata, manifest these attributes. Matali is the daughter of the chief’s praise singer Jamuru. She manages to outdo men in several ways, including ownership of fixed assets such as shops, which were a preserve of men in Horodugu. Matali is a breadwinner and she “builds herself a compound and some shops; she also grew rich” (75). If the men who grew rich through business are called the ‘big men’ (Lindsay and Miescher: 2003; Holland: 2005; Cornwall: 2005) and they expressed masculinities befitting their status, authority and power, then Matali could be called a ‘big woman’. “She grew rich and built herself a compound and shops”. In a patriarchal society such as Horodugu, it is the men who build and own compounds. Women belong to men as wives, daughters or nieces. It can be argued that it was Matali’s riches that

enabled her to break the ranks and started doing things that were a preserve of men. That also led to her construction of masculinities.

In conclusion, the chapter has demonstrated the various ways in which Fama manifested masculinities and how the manifestation of such masculinities were affected by several factors such as political and economic changes, leading to his emasculation. To start with, Fama lost his birthright to the Dumbuya throne. This made him leave the village for the city where he became a big trader. However, his involvement in politics and the collapse of trade after the attainment of independence, led to Fama's drop on the social ladder. Being unemployed and dependent on his wife, not to mention his impotence, added to Fama's miseries and subsequent emasculation. The chapter further established that Salimata's industriousness was the determining factor in her assuming male roles in the family. It has been illustrated how Salimata took care of her family, her concern for the vulnerable at the market and her violent behaviour as ways in which she performed female masculinity.

3.7 Narrative Technique

Fama and Salimata have had a share of good and bad times in their lives in general and their marriage in particular. Fama's downfall can be traced back to the time he lost his chance to inherit the chieftaincy of the Dumbuya. However, his switch from trade to politics can be said to be the last straw that broke his back. It is also noted that Fama and Salimata met when they were both young. Later, they got married and have stayed

together for twenty years. It is obvious that between the time Fama and Salimata met to the present, there are many experiences that they have gone through. The narrator takes us through some of these experiences not one at a time but the stories are told simultaneously. Story of Fama, that of Salimata and theirs as a couple, are told side by side. We are able to follow the life histories of Fama and Salimata through a careful narration spiced with flashbacks. The narrator takes us back into their past, narrate what happened and link that to the present in a manner that helps to understand the causes and effects of their actions. The technique of using flashbacks makes the narration of the The Suns of Independence to seem to have a story and 'stories within a story'. These 'stories' are told in a matter of fact way which helps us to understand where Fama and Salimata, and for that matter, other characters in the novel, are coming from, where they are and the reasons why they are lamenting about the coming of independence.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGION AND POLITICS IN CONSTRUCTION, [RE] CONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITIES

As we have already indicated, the interaction of tradition and modernity played a vital role in shaping of masculinities. This chapter examines two sites – religion and politics. The chapter discusses the influence of religion and politics on masculinities. It is shown that religion exerts tremendous influence on the people to the extent that how individuals or groups of people define their maleness or femaleness is tied up with their religious beliefs and political affiliation. The chapter demonstrates that the Malinke's pervasiveness in religion, they embraced both ancestral worship and Islamic practices, a situation which caused problems in determining which form of worship was more acceptable than the other – was it the fetish or the Koran or both? It is demonstrated that there was a very thin line between ancestral and Koranic worship because the people of Horodugu were involved in both practices. It is argued that religious teachings influenced men to conduct themselves in a particular way and also defined marital perimeters of the worshippers, thereby determining the status of men and women in the community. The chapter further illustrates that the introduction of one party system brought about difficulties to people, leading to some losing wealth and property. The decisions and actions of the political leadership contributed to violence. It is shown that politics was used by the political leadership to exercise their powers, resulting in physical conflicts. These conflicts shaped the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of African masculinities as people

tried to adapt and/or adopt the changes and to maintain their positions in the community, thereby defining or redefining their masculinity.

4.1 Influence of Religion

There was a pervasiveness of religion among the Malinke, both in the city and in the rural areas. Those people, who were not Muslims, were still religious in that they subscribed to traditional forms of worship such as ancestral worship. But it is clearly observable that the majority were Muslims. Islam dictated how men and women should conduct themselves especially in relation to marriage. It is noted that men enjoyed better status than women. It is common practice among Muslims that men and women do not attend prayers in the same rooms in the mosque. This religious differentiation between men and women spilled into everyday life away from the place of worship and influenced how maleness and femaleness was defined. It became a basis for construction of masculinities and the sidelining of women. Those who held positions of responsibility associated with worship were even more privileged than the average person. They exerted more influence in society. However, occupation, wealth, clan and family equally determined a person's status in the community. Those men who were privileged to hold religious positions and were wealthy came mostly from a ruling clan or influential family. Salomane (2005:77) observes that "among the Hausa [this is applicable to the Malinke] occupation, wealth and patron – client relationship plays a part in the social and religious system but birth is at its root". Salomane (78) further points out that "the Hausa believe that Islam is the proper religion for men". Islam, they teach, "is compatible to the nature of men". This

belief is the basis for subordination of women. The question to ask is: if Islam is compatible to the nature men, what does this mean for women believers? This belief also distances the men who are not Muslims. It suggests that men who are not Muslims are not 'real men' because they do not belong to the religion that is compatible with the nature of men. These beliefs and arguments, in my view, are ways of individuals using religion to assume or ascribe status, power and influence to themselves, resulting in Muslim men looking down on those who are non-Islam converts. Religion becomes the determining factor for definition of maleness.

It is my argument that because the Muslim men believe that Islam is the proper religion for men, the women by consequence become Muslims by belonging to men as wives, daughters or nieces. This belief, in a sense, explains why Muslim men may marry several wives. Polygamy, among the Malinke of Horodugu gives them status. According to Salomane (2005:82) the "Hausa believe that men by nature are concupiscent. Instead of condemning this concupiscence, Islamic teachers among the Hausa have stressed the wisdom of allowing marrying up to four wives and as many concubines as one can afford". In this sense, Islam is at the centre of encouraging polygamy, which is a site for construction of masculinity among the Malinke. Those who can afford to marry several wives and have concubines are seen to be economically and sexually powerful because they can afford to maintain their women and satisfy them sexually. This reasoning stems from religious beliefs. Religion becomes the basis for the objectification of women and the expression of masculinity. It was on the basis of religion and tradition that Fama felt duty bound to inherit the widows of his late cousin Lasina, because performing such

religious obligations was a sign of responsibility and respect for the deceased. That was viewed both as a religious and traditional duty. At the same time, it was an act that gave recognition to Fama and it elevated his status as a man who can handle more women.

It is noted that although Islam was the dominant religion amongst the Malinke, there was a combination of both Islam and traditional worship of ancestral spirits. There were observances that both the heathen (those who are not Muslims) and Muslims practiced together and there were occasions when the Muslims and non-Muslims could not mix. For example, during burial ceremonies of Muslims, non-Muslims (and women) were not allowed to come near. Even men of status and influence such as fetish priests who were not converts could not participate. This explains why Balla the fetish priest of Horodugu, who was instrumental in performing sacrifices in warding-off misfortune in the village, was not allowed to attend the burial prayers for the chief. The isolation of Balla deconstructs his masculinity which he constructs as a fetish priest, magician, and hunter. However, Balla manages to reconstruct masculinities when he is called upon as the only person who can pray for rains in time of drought, offering sacrifices when there is an epidemic or famine. During such prayers, both Muslims and non-Muslims come together. They all depend and trust the power and wisdom of the fetish.

It was understood that the Koran and the fetish could be used for different purposes. The general understanding was that:

A village could ward-off misfortune by offering sacrifices. People sought to foretell, to unveil the future. It is not true that the future remains hidden,

like a wild beast crouched in a thicket. Nothing happens without being announced: the rain warns the earth by wind, clouds and lightening that it is about to strike; as death by dreams the man whose end is near. The Malinke of Horodugu knew this well; they practiced divination, and not only by the methods God prescribes. As Muslims at heart and at prayer, they should have outlawed the *koma* fetish. But the fetish saw further into the future than did the Koran; so they transgressed God's law, and every dry season the *koma* danced at the village meeting-place, to reveal the future and to prescribe the appropriate sacrifices. And what Malinke village did not have its own oracle? Togobala, capital of all Horodugu, had two: a hyena and python (107-108)

The understanding that the Koran cannot foretell the future is what motivates the Muslims to turn to the fetish. This is ironic because the fetish priest is at times looked down upon as a heathen and yet he is consulted when there is need for divination. This privileges the fetish priest and he is able to reconstruct the masculinities that are deconstructed when the Muslims treat him as a heathen. Further evidence of deconstruction of Balla's status and power is seen at his death. When Balla died, with all his power and influence "he was buried without prayers, and on the west side of Togobala, rather than the east where Muslims are buried" because he was heathen. It is again ironic that "there were splendid ceremonies for the seventh-day and fortieth-day funeral rites in honour of the heathen" (125). It is my argument that by burying Balla in the west, he was stripped of the dignity befitting an oldest fetish priest who was so important in Horodugu, just because he was not a Muslim. However, by preparing splendid ceremonies for the seventh-day and fortieth-day funeral rites, the Malinke were reconstructing Balla's status, though post-humously. The Muslims in the village who

buried Balla in the west are the same ones who prepared and participated in his ceremonies. It can be argued that there was a very thin line between the worship of the fetish and the Koran. Most people appear to be devoted Muslims but they argued that the Koran did not foretell the future, thereby turning to the fetish and yet the fetish priest is treated with contempt. What the people of Horodugu did not realise was that they were deeply involved in the worship of both the fetish and the Koran, although they could not admit to this reality because religion influenced the people's lives and was used to determine several things. Religion (traditional and Islam), is seen in several ways as the site for the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of masculinities.

Further evidence of the Muslim adherence to ancestral worship is noted in the belief that when a man dies, his shade hovers around the village. The purpose for the fortieth-day funeral ceremony is to please the ancestors and to request them to receive the dead man's spirit into their realm. It is reasoned:

Why do the Malinke hold funeral rites forty days after a burial? Because exactly forty days after burial, the dead receive the newcomer into their company, but they will only make him welcome and give him room if they have drunk on blood. Nothing therefore can be more beneficial to the departed than to kill many beasts on the fortieth day (96)

This explains why during the funerals of Lasina (chief) and Balla (fetish priest) four herds of cattle were slaughtered in each case (97, 125). The fortieth-day funeral rites are also an opportunity for villagers to exchange gifts. It is believed that the more one gives during the funeral, the more pleased the dead will be. As such, there is giving and

receiving of gifts in form of food, money and other items. That is why it is said that “every Malinke funeral pays” (4). Almost all those present get something especially the meat from slaughtered beasts. In this way, funeral ceremonies provide an opportunity to individuals to prove their ability to give. Men try to out do one another in giving and this is one way by which masculinities are manifested. Note that during Lasina’s funeral, Balla donated a young bull. Only the wealthy could do that. A son-in-law of the deceased also donated a cow. He too was proving to his in-laws that he is a dependable son-in-law.

However, the coming of independence disturbed the way in which funeral ceremonies were conducted. Since the people of Horodugu had become poor (there was no trade which supported the livelihood of the people), it meant that people’s ability to exchange gifts was limited. The levels of poverty reduced the splendor that funerals of important persons used to have. It is noted:

But now, what with the single party, independence, poverty, famines and epidemics, at the funeral rites of greatest men, will be killed at most a ram. And what kind of a ram? Most likely a half-starved ram, oozing less blood than a carp. And what kind of blood? Blood as thin as the menstrual fluid of a dried-up old maid (96)

It can be argued then that while wealth was used before independence and the single party system to construct masculinities, conversely, poverty associated with the coming of independence was a factor in deconstructing such masculinities. It also meant that people could not sacrifice to and/or worship their ancestors in the manner their tradition demanded because they did not have beasts to sacrifice.

4.2 Influence of Politics

Before the colonial era and independence, political power was vested in traditional leaders. Major decisions in the village/s were made by the chief or his appointed officials. The first step towards the disruption of traditional rule in Horodugu was the establishment of colonial rule by the French. The French began to appoint chiefs, leading to frictions in the ruling dynasty. The coming of independence, especially the introduction of one party system and socialism, worsened the situation because the traditional institution of the chief was weakened and looked down upon. In the case of Chief Lasina, “truly, he had a hard time of it with independence” (75). A committee with a president was put in place and the decisions of the committee became more important than the chief’s, who became a ceremonial figure with little or no powers to influence his people without attracting criticism from the committee. The loss of power of the chief trickled down to all his appointed officials. In this way, independence disrupted the traditional power institutions. And since those who had positions in the traditional setting were respected and consulted for various reasons, they settled disputes, and presided over ceremonies, these functions were taken over by the party committee. We can say that as the traditional leaders were losing their power and influence on the people, the ‘sons of independence’ were gaining power. The traditional leaders’ loss of control over the subjects, translated to loss of the basis on which they could manifest their authority and on which expression of their masculinities was based.

The loss of power of the traditional leaders, created a sense of nostalgia in them and the subjects. They began to look back to the days when life was 'good and easy' for them. It should be mentioned that the Malinke were great warriors, and through war, they subjugated the neighboring tribes. "It was through war and trade that the Malinke prospered" (13). When war was outlawed by the colonial master, the Malinke kingdom began to decline with their leaders losing influence on surrounding tribes. The introduction of committees in villages after independence, took away the little influence that the traditional leaders were exercising, with the resultant effect of leaders being unable to manifest masculinities in the manner they used to.. Tensions between the committee members and traditional leaders ensued. For example, when it was reported to the committee that Fama (chief) was a counter-revolutionary, it led to exchange of bad words between the president of the committee and the chief, a thing that would not have happened before the 'suns of independence'. "Jamuru [praise singer] and Balla [fetish priest] were beside themselves, swearing and abusing the 'committee bastards'". The committee members were also saying the following about the chief: "Fama! He weighs less than the down round a hen's arse-hole. A good-for-nothing parasite, an empty shell, a sterile carcass, a reactionary, counter-revolutionary" (92).

In the eyes of the committee, the chief was nothing, an 'empty shell'. They were reducing the chief to nothing. As such, the chief could not perform masculinities commensurate with his position. The image he was presenting to the political leadership was being deconstructed. This may explain why Fama was using very strong language against the 'suns of independence' ("sons of donkeys", "bastard suns of independence", "son of

cockroaches”, “sons of thieves”, “sons of dogs”, “sons of slaves”, “desperate bastards”) because of the way he was emasculated by the political changes introduced by the ruling party.

The political changes in Horodugu were gradual, Fama was not aware of what was taking place in the kingdom because he was away in the city. “He spent twenty stupid years in the city” (66). When Fama left Horodugu in frustration, the kingdom was much better than when he came to take over under the ‘sons of independence’. That is why Fama could not understand why a president of the village committee could summon him for whatever reason because he felt he was over and above him. Fama wondered: “The president of the committee: the son of a slave. Whoever saw the son of a slave giving orders?” (92). In this way, Fama was trying to reclaim his authority while the president and the committee members were also trying to assert their power. In the process of these conflicts, there was construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of masculinities. The competition and fight for power was only resolved when the chief and the committee president agreed to meet at a meeting. The chief and the president treated each other with respect. “Fama, the president Babu and the *sous-prefet*’s delegate were given deck-chairs. The two praise singers, Jamuru and the committee’s man, stood in the middle of the assembly” (92). The reconciliation that followed was important because the committee president spoke respectfully of the chief. Jamuru the praise singer was a given chance to speak in praise of the chief and most importantly, the chief was co-opted into the committee. These steps were crucial for Fama and Jamuru to reclaim their statuses. Once

again they were able to reconstruct the manliness and power associated with their positions.

4.3 Politics and Violence

Politics bred violence. It became a way of expressing power and authority. The socialist policies that came with the one party system led to the young and the old politicians using violence as a way of imposing their will on the people. Political violence was expressed verbally and physically. Violence was seen as a vehicle through which manliness could be manifested.

Jakite's father was a prominent person in Horodugu. "He had been a wealthy and respected man (sixty head of cattle, three lorries, ten wives and only one son, Jakite)". (37) The coming of independence, socialism and the one party system made him lose substantial wealth. Since Jakite's father belonged to the opposition, he was summoned and informed that his party was now defunct, and that he would have to join the existing party, the NDL (the full name not given). The old man had no choice:

He joined, and paid dues for himself, his family, his cattle and his three lorries. The next day the party officials called him again, he would have to pay party dues for every year elapsed since the NDL was created: ten years' dues for himself, his son, his ten wives and his three lorries. He paid up (57)

It is important to mention that the old man had worked so hard to be a 'big man' and Horodugu respected rich people. The rich enjoyed special standing in the community. The mistreatment of the old man by the politicians was counter productive and frustrating. It was a recipe for violence. As if that was not enough, "months later, the single party system introduced self-help and forced Jakite's father to handover his lorries for use in building the bridge for the village" (37). Noble as the project may seem, forcing the old man to hand-over his lorries was not the best way to get the lorries. Moreover, the organisers did not have the means to run and maintain the vehicles. All the same, Jakite's father "placed his lorries at the party's disposal, but since there was no petrol, the NDL youths set fire to them. The indignant old man resigned himself to his loss" (57).

By burning the old man's three lorries, the party youths were making him poor, considering that he had already paid so much money in party dues. In a community where wealth is used to determine a man's status, the youths were reducing Jakite's father's status and deconstructing the masculinities he had manifested through his wealth over the years. In this way, policies and the conduct of the 'sons of independence' impacted negatively on the people, as seen in the case of the old man. Later:

The party officials turned up again another day: the bridge was being built by self-help, and neither Jakite nor his father was taking part. The old man reminded them that it was harvest time, that his son could not leave his fields and cattle. They left but that evening when Jakite, returning home with his herd, crossed the bridge, the NDL youths were lying in wait for him; they leapt out and attacked him, pinioned him, pulled off his trousers,

attached a rope to his genitals and tied him to one of the posts of the bridge, like a dog (57)

It is noted that the NDL youths were using violence to express their power, authority and to impose their will on the people. It was their way of proving that they were in control. It is said that violence begets violence. Jakite's father pleaded with the secretary-general to have his son released but the secretary-general did not listen or even pay any serious attention to the pleas. The secretary-general's attitude seemed to suggest that he was in full support of the violent actions of the youths on Jakite. He simply said: "[...] since socialism was to bring to an end the exploitation of man by man, nobody should set foot on a bridge, he had not helped build...socialism was socialism" (57).

A response like that was provocative considering that the old man had already sacrificed so much to the party. The secretary-general had the power to order the release of Jakite but he was too obsessed with power. Even when the old man begged for mercy, he would not listen. The only option for the old man was to try and have his son released by force. He had to prove that he was a true Malinke. He had to show his manliness in a way that would send a powerful message to the party officials. Unfortunately, that led to loss of lives.

Jakite's father went home, then returned and ordered him [the secretary-general] to go and release the victim; the secretary-general burst out laughing. The old man went mad, raised his shot-gun and fired full in the chest, the secretary-general collapsed. Other villagers came running. Jakite's father fired again, and panic spread. It was night time. The demented old man went from compound to compound, and gunned down

one after the other assistant secretary general, the treasurer and other party members. The whole village took refuge in the bush (57-58)

It is my argument that the NDL youths, the secretary-general and Jakite's father were all in one way or the other expressing their power and manifesting masculinities associated with their statuses. But the cause of all this was the political inclinations of the party members and the power of belonging to the ruling party. The party members were using violence (burning of lorries, tethering of Jakite, abusive language) to make people to do what they wanted. The men like Jakite's father who were wealthy would not stand losing property and torturing of his only son in the name of socialism. He had to prove that he was a 'real and brave man' by fighting to have his son released. The old man succeeded in releasing his son, who immediately went into 'exile'. But the party officials would not take such a challenge hands down. They took decisive action with excessive expression of power. The old man was tried and shot.

The violent behaviour of Jakite's father is similar to Fama's. "Fama still clung to the good old ways: a man should never be without a weapon. As such, he carried a knife" (9). Bamba behaved in the same way, reaching the point of challenging Fama (prince) to a fight at the funeral of Ibrahima Kone, which resulted in Fama's robe being ripped. Fama's death can also be attributed to his pride and violent behaviour. He did not take lawful instructions at the border. Fama always thought, as a prince and later chief, he was the one to give orders and not anyone else. He did not even realise that after the partitioning of the country, each person crossing the border had to carry identification documents. This did not seem to make sense to Fama. He associated carrying an identity

card to asking for permission to enter his homeland. Fama asked: “Did a Dumbuya, a real one, father Dumbuya, a Dumbuya mother, need permission from the bastard sons of dogs and slaves to go to Togobala?” (132). When Fama realised that the guards would not let him pass, he manifested his typical panther behaviour:

Fama felt anger well up in him, burning his armpits, his neck, his back. The sun was already high. The mist had vanished. The Dumbuya prince looked about for a stone, a stick, a gun, a bomb, something he could use to kill Vassoko, his superiors, independence, the world (132)

Fama’s arrogance and violent expression of masculinity led him to death. He was shot by the guards at the border. Fama died a painful death in a no-man’s land. While as chief Fama had status, the manner in which he died was not fitting a Dumbuya chief. If Fama had listened to Bakary in the city just after he was released as a political detainee, he would have had a chance to re-organise his life again. But his arrogance, pride, lack of reasoning ability and foolishness drove him to his death. As far as Fama was concerned, that was the proper behaviour of a strong man and there is a sense in which we can say the Malinke endorsed such behaviour. It was a social construction of the Malinke, confirming Morrell s’ (1998) view that masculinities are socially constructed.

4.4 Language and Masculinities

Language is a powerful tool in construction and/or deconstruction of African masculinities. It is noted that it is not just what one does in society that make a society have a particular view about him/her, but also how that person uses language – not just

what is said but how it is said, especially in public. Bearing in mind, traditional leaders and politicians use language to persuade, influence, and show respect or demean someone depending on circumstances, audience and the reasons why someone is speaking.

The use of wise sayings and proverbs is an important aspect in serious conversations. A person who uses proverbs in speech is said to be wise and any person who has a position of influence wants to be seen to be wise. This motivates both traditional and political leaders to use both familiar and unfamiliar proverbs as they speak to people.

We can see clearly from Fama's language that he was very disrespectful to the political leadership in Horodugu. It is noted that Fama refers to politicians using demeaning terms such as "sons of slaves", "sons of donkeys", "bastard sons of independence", "sons of liars", "sons of thieves", and so on. By addressing the political leadership in such a manner, Fama was expressing his disapproval of the political leaders and whatever masculinities that the political leaders expressed by virtue of their positions were being deconstructed by Fama. We can infer that by referring to politicians as "bastard sons of independence", Fama was insinuating that the political leaders in office were illegitimate, and consequently, nothing. For Fama to manage to deconstruct the status of the political leadership, he needed strong language such as the examples given above. Similarly, for one to present his/her positive image to the public, one has to use good and persuasive language.

The village committee, with their president, were of the view that they were the rightful leaders under the one party system and that the chief had no authority in the current political dispensation. It was this understanding that allowed the committee president to summon the chief so that he could answer to allegations leveled against him. But of much interest is the disrespectful language that the president and the committee members use when talking about the chief. As much as the chief thought the village committee was illegitimate and nothing and he referred to them using language that suggested so, similarly, the village committee members equally felt the institution of the chief was no longer in control of village affairs and the chief was subordinate to the village committee president. This kind of reasoning is clearly noted in the way the committee members describe the chief (sterile, empty, reactionary, counter-revolutionary). While the chief was busy re-establishing his status at 'great cost', the village committee members were equally busy redefining the institution of chieftaincy through what they said about it and the office bearer. This state of affairs posed a challenge to the chief and had a serious bearing on the way he viewed himself, how society viewed him and how he exercised his power. Consequently, this affected how he expressed masculinities.

We can also note that during the address of the Head of State when he was pardoning political detainees, the President used reconciliatory language. He referred to political detainees as comrades, friends and brothers. The use of such language in public was meant to portray a forgiving attitude to the people. The President was trying to re-establish his reputation that was damaged because of the numerous people who were disappearing and those who were detained. It can be argued that the act of pardoning

political detainees, giving them large sums of money in envelopes and organising a festival to celebrate the reconciliation was commendable. But what the President said and how he said it during the public address, is what helped much in improving his image. The village committee president also used reconciliatory language at the meeting where it was decided that the chief should be co-opted into the village committee. The language the committee president used suggested that the chief and the village committee president could now work together as equal partners. This gesture enabled both the chief and the president to re-assert their positions in Horodugu and hence, to reconstruct masculinities associated with their respective positions. Here again, the power of language is demonstrated.

In all these cases, we can conclude that language is used by individuals to elevate themselves, to demean others or to portray themselves as decent, kind, respectful, responsible, wealthy, powerful, and so on. Through careful use of language, a group of people or society can construct and/or deconstruct masculinities. This is achieved through tactful use of language – what is said and how it is said has a bearing on how society views the speaker.

4.5 Other Innovations

The political space of the ‘suns of independence’ brought about not only one party system and socialism. The political atmosphere was open to innovations. For example, it was tolerant to women and allowed them space to participate in politics which previously

was a male dominated space. Some women became praise singers to high ranking officials, including the Head of state. The women sang praises at political rallies. Traditionally, only men from selected families that had such a history and knew the lineage of the leaders would become praise singers. The position of praise singers was held in high esteem and closely associated with the ruling clans. In a similar way, the women who became praise singers to the political leadership were allowed to be close to the ruling party officials and they sang praises publicly. Notable is the occasion when political detainees were being pardoned. It is reported that: “the metallic tones of the women praise singers rang out, followed by the cries of men” (120). One would expect the men to sing the praises while the women cried out, but the opposite was happening. There was subversion of roles in a male dominated society. This clearly was a new feature in the country that allowed women to assume new roles and to express their femaleness in another way, thereby breaking the male ranks.

In conclusion, the chapter has discussed the influence that religion played in the lives of the people. Religion defined the position of men and women. Religion determined how ceremonies were observed and who attended or presided at such functions. It has also been shown that the Malinke, while claiming to be Muslims, were also deeply involved in ancestral worship. The chapter further demonstrated that funeral ceremonies were used as an opportunity to express masculinities through giving of gifts. It has also been shown that the one party system, especially the introduction of socialism and the village committees brought about frictions between traditional power institutions and the party officials. The party leaders imposed their policies on the people, and those who did not

seem to follow were physically punished. It has also been illustrated that under the ‘suns of independence’, women began to participate in the politics of the country and that language is used as a site for construction and/or deconstruction of masculinities.

4.6 Narrative Technique

Religion and politics both are sites for unity as well as for division among the Malinke people. The narrator highlights the importance of religion among the Malinke and tactfully presents an indirect proportionate situation of the shift of power from the traditional and religious institutions to the ‘new’ political structures. As we are taken through the events, the narrator implicitly introduces the noted generation gap and how this gap slowly widens. The narrative technique employed is that of involving the reader in predicting the course of events as not every detail is given all the time. As the story unfolds, the narrator shows the interaction of religion and politics and goes on to expose the ironies and hypocrisies embedded in both religion and politics. The narration unfolds with several suspenses.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

My overall aim of the study was to examine the construction of masculinities as portrayed by Ahmadou Kourouma in The Suns of Independence. The thesis analysed how colonialism, the coming of independence and later the introduction of one party system disrupted traditional institutions of power in Horodugu. This disruption shaped and defined power relations between the old and the new order of running the affairs of the people. Those who held positions of power had status, authority and were respected, enabling them to manifest masculinities commensurate with their positions and according to society's view of what those positions entailed.

The study followed a thematic approach in the analysis of masculinities. In order to identify and investigate the expression of African masculinities, we did a careful examination of the primary text. This provided an avenue to critically identify messages and themes that related to the aim. The objective was to examine various elements that would constitute an understanding of African masculinities in the novel.

My literary inquiry was motivated by the understanding that although much scholarly work has been done on Kourouma's novels, there is no evidence of any work done that dealt with construction of African masculinities. It was hoped that research on construction of African masculinities shaped by the interaction of tradition and modernity

would be another way of re-reading Kourouma's work and providing a different perspective to the studies that have been done on Kourouma's work in particular and the study on African masculinities in general.

The study has demonstrated that socio-economic and political changes associated with the coming of independence influenced how people began to understand and express their maleness or femaleness. The deep rooted factors that shaped the construction of African masculinities in view of the coming of independence have been discussed and those factors resulted in construction, reconstruction and/or deconstruction of masculinities. The thesis has argued that the policies of the 'sons of independence' greatly affected people's livelihood. Trade which was one major source of income for the Malinke was disrupted. The situation became more desperate after the introduction of socialism because individuals who owned property were forced to surrender their property such as lorries for public use, especially on self help projects. While the people seemed to have accepted these changes, it was only they had no choice. The disagreements and violence that ensued as a consequence of such policies testifies to the people's dissatisfaction and disillusionment. The resultant effect of all this on the people was loss status, power and consequently, their construction of masculinities.

The research established that traditional institutions of power such as those of praise singers, fetish priests, hunters, blacksmiths, among others were held in high esteem and were all male dominated. However, the powers that the holders of these positions held were not absolute. The study has shown that religion gave a different perspective to the

definition of power. Fetish priest, for example, with all their power and magic were treated as nothing at times and consulted at other times. The result of such behaviour was mixing of ancestral worship and Islam, although the Malinke would not admit to this reality. The study argued that having separate burial sites for Muslims and non-Muslims translated to social division, but by observing fortieth day funeral ceremonies together, the Muslims and non-Muslims were demonstrating that they were united. In this sense, religion was a uniting as well as divisive factor depending on the situation. The situational coming together and separation of the people meant that even their manifesting of masculinities changed accordingly.

Like religion, politics influenced and affected people's lives. The research revealed that there were frictions and name calling between traditional and political leaders as they tried to re-assert their powers and impose their will respectively on each other. From what each group said about the other, we can conclude that the traditional leaders did not welcome the rule of 'the sons of independence' and the politicians were just too eager to impose their will and have everything under their control. While reconciliatory meetings were held to improve relations, the damage had already been done.

The following research questions were asked in the introduction: How do the people express masculinities as a consequence of the coming of 'the sons of independence'?, How are the male dominated positions of praise singers, fetish priests, hunters and blacksmiths which are strongly associated with African masculinities represented in the novel? And, how does the disruption of trade lead to traders' and merchants' loss of

status and subsequent emasculation? Chapters two, three and four answered the first question. These chapters discussed the various ways in which different people acted or reacted to changes and these changes shaped their construction of masculinities. Chapter two dealt in detail with the power and masculinities of traditional leaders and in the process answered the second research question. Chapter four elaborated on the interaction of religion and politics. The chapter demonstrated that religion was the pivot of everyday life and that political decisions impacted on the religious life of the people making them fail to offer sacrifices as they would because the people had become poor.

The study has also revealed that under 'the suns of independence', the political space was opened to accommodate women. The traditional institutions of power sidelined women. The coming of independence allowed women to participate in political affairs of their country to the point of becoming praise singers at political rallies.

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