

THE LOST HISTORY OF THE KOTOKO: TRANSLATING JEAN-PAUL LEBEUF'S *ETUDES KOTOKO*

BY GRACE TODD

REVIEWED BY DR. GYONGYI PISAK
EDITED BY D'ARTAGNAN ELLIOTT

The following text represents the first English translation of Jean-Paul Lebeuf's, *Etudes Kotoko* (1976), a seminal anthropological study of the Kotoko people of Africa. The particular selection, entitled "Several Sacred Stones of the Kotoko people," is introduced by translator Grace Todd and is part of her larger project to make Lebeuf's work accessible both to Anglophone scholars and the remaining descendants of the Kotoko people.

Introduction

The French archaeologist and anthropologist Jean-Paul Lebeuf was a primary source for descriptions of the Kotoko people located in central-western Africa in the early 20th century. Throughout his time spent with the Kotoko people, Lebeuf published multiple articles in anthropological journals not only concerning the culture, traditions, and rituals of the Kotoko peoples but also descriptions of various Kotoko artifacts which were excavated during his field work. In 1976 Lebeuf's articles were compiled and published into the corpus known as *Etudes Kotoko*, wherein Lebeuf records his findings of both the history and the contemporary cultural aspects of the Kotoko. However, *Etudes Kotoko* has remained untranslated into English within the modern era. In 2020, I began translating two pieces from Lebeuf's *Etudes Kotoko*, one article describes rituals surrounding

birth and infancy, “On Birth in General and on the Birth of Twins in Particular Among the Kotoko Peoples” and the other, “Several Sacred Stones of the Kotoko” detailing kingship rituals and the related sacred objects unearthed during Lebeuf’s excavations. The translations of these two documents from French into English are crucial to understanding the Kokoko peoples, a marginalized group often forgotten in African history. The English translation not only gives insight through the lens of Lebeuf’s experiences among the Kotoko peoples, but also provides a contextual history which makes reference to the Sao, an under-documented and incredibly influential ancient African civilization, which has not been given much attention in contemporary African studies. I begin by examining the contextual research which I was able to provide through my studies, as well as a description of the translation process and concluded by my translation “Several Sacred Stones of the Kotoko.”

This work is significant not only to the modern-day Kotoko peoples of Northern Cameroon but also to contemporary African Studies as it concerns the untold history, culture, and traditions of a marginalized group in African history. Translating the work of Jean Paul Lebeuf is significant in terms of understanding the history and cultural heritage of the Kotoko peoples

inhabiting the area currently known as Northern Cameroon, Chad, and Nigeria. With the Partition of Africa, the Kotoko peoples became geographically branded as belonging to one of these countries, although lands which the Kotoko people inhabited and continue to inhabit existed without borders long before the terra-splicing imposed by the colonial powers. That being said, the focus of this article is on the area of land known modernly as Cameroon, as the majority of Kotoko peoples live in the Northern region of this country.

Cameroon and the Kotoko

Jean-Paul Lebeuf’s ethnographies which constitute *Etudes Kotoko* were written in an era in which the colonial powers had a strong grip on most of Africa following the African Partition of 1885. Indeed, Cameroon did not gain its independence from the French and British colonial powers until January 1st, 1960, when Ahmadou Adihjo became the first president of what is now the Republic of Cameroon.

Cameroon lies in the liminal location classified as both Central and Western Africa. There are diverse physical environments and biomes within Cameroon, with its hot, dry Sahel climate located in the north. Modern Northern Cameroon is generally Muslim, with Christian and Traditional African Religious minorities. The

people of modern-day Cameroon primarily speak English and French. Thus, this English translation of French Anthropologist and Archaeologist J.P. Lebeuf creates a greater accessibility to anglophones, helping others understand and celebrate their cultural heritage as well as understand the history of their people.

Today, around 150,000 people consider themselves as Kotoko (Encyclopedia of Africa), but their history has been forgotten by many today. The Kotoko, among many other colonized peoples, dealt with the cultural and societal impact of colonial powers, first the Germans and later the British and the French. English-language histories and ethnographies of the Kotoko people are few and far between, with only mentions of the Kotoko people in The Encyclopedia of Africa, and mentions of ethnic warfare between the Kotoko people and the Shoa (or Choa) Arabs in Chad's Vicinity and Ethnic Warfare in Logone and Shari Division.

During the period in which Lebeuf composed his ethnography on the Kotoko people, colonial mindsets and eurocentrism were widespread ideologies, and this paper would be remiss not to mention these factors which doubtless influenced the text. The combination of colonial erasure of African identities and focus on white culture has resulted in the relative

loss of Kotoko history, especially in the non-French speaking world. That is why an English translation of *Etudes Kotoko* is so instrumental to the cultural heritage of the modern Kotoko people.

Etudes Kotoko describes the history of the Kotoko people beginning from their origins from the Sao civilization, as well as many rituals and traditions regarding sacred stones among the Kotoko people. According to the Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon, the Sao Civilization flourished in the northern portions of contemporary Cameroon between the 9th and 15th centuries A.D. The Sao Civilization flourished around the shores of Lake Chad and functioned as a monarchy. Eventually the Kanem Kingdom conquered the Sao, and by the 14th century the Sao were diminished into a small group, replaced eventually by the Kotoko state.

The ethnography *Several Sacred Stones* makes multiple references to the Sao civilization as the ancestors of the Kotoko; the text also claims that the original Kotoko language had many words inherited from the Sao civilization. The central sacred stone in the text is called "the father and mother of all the Sao". Author Jean-Paul Lebeuf has several other texts dedicated to reconstructing the history of the Sao civilization, specifically his work *La Civilisation Sao*:

Recherches Archéologiques en Pays Fali (Nord Cameroun). Several Sacred Stones references a Sao man known as “Otoman”, one of the earliest arrivals in the Kotoko city of Ngala. The text suggests that Otoman is perhaps one of the earliest founders of Ngala; the location of his house, bambaram, was excavated by Lebeuf, his findings described in Several Sacred Stone. Very little research has been conducted on the Sao civilization, thus its fundamental inclusion in Several Sacred Stones is instrumental to understanding this past civilization.

Translation Methods and Obstacles

As Cameroon is split between francophone and anglophone citizens, the English translations of Jean Paul Lebeuf are significant to understanding the history and cultural heritage of the Kotoko peoples of Northern Cameroon.

Without English translations, the history and heritage of the Kotoko people would be inaccessible, much less lost in the archives. Thus, I felt not only an academic obligation to translate these texts as a translator, but as an Anthropologist I felt a sense of duty to render these translations as faithfully and as accurately as possible for the sake of the Kotoko peoples. Because of the minimal amount of information available concerning the Kotoko people, my translation of Several Sacred Stones from Jean-Paul Lebeuf’s *Etudes Kotoko* is

incredibly important to understanding the missing history of this group of people, who have clearly been underrepresented in the history of African studies. References to the ancient Sao civilization which were the ancestors of the Kotoko peoples, the historical events and figures addressed in the text, as well as the rituals and traditions described in both documents compound the importance of this translation. As previously stated, Jean-Paul Lebeuf’s work has, until this point, remained untranslated into the English language. My translations and analyses will provide greater accessibility to researchers, scholars, and modern-day Kotoko peoples to understand the complex and rich history recorded by Jean-Paul Lebeuf.

Translation is a tricky business, one must not only grasp fully both the source language (in this case French) and the target language (English), but one must also be well-versed in the subject matter of the document to be translated. In this document, there were many instances of specific archaeological and anthropological terms which could not be readily found in a French dictionary, such as “broyeur sphérique” and “lieudit”, two terms which appeared continuously throughout the texts. Although fairly clear in terms of vocabulary other than the aforementioned terminology, several aspects of Several Sacred Stones made it at times difficult

to translate and made this undertaking a true challenge. It is worth sharing several important obstacles in translation which I encountered in translating the text “Several Sacred Stones”.

In order to have a successful translation, there must be above all accuracy and consistency to the original source text. This is difficult, however, when you face obstacles to translation which hampers the ability of the translator. Yet, however tempting it may be to add concepts to a translation which would better explain the author’s point, it is important to remember that the duty of a translator is to translate, not to revise or edit the original source text. This difficulty of accuracy and consistency arose within this text due to its nature as a specialized translation. Specialized translations are tricky as they demand to be accurate and consistent through the usage of terminology. Translating from French to English can be difficult as there are often many different synonyms or possible translations for a single word. Translating a text which applies to a specific field (in this case, anthropology) it is necessary, though sometimes difficult, to stay consistent with the terminology previously established. In my translation process of “Several Sacred Stones”, I had to return to the same previously-established morphological translations. I could not change the term “pierre” in French to “rock” as I had already

been utilizing that specific word in English as “stone.”

A successful translation captures the tone of the source text, going hand-in-hand with the duty of remaining accurate. This is why it is important for translators to have near (if not full) fluency in the source language so that they can fully comprehend not just the words on the page but the complete meaning and purpose behind the words. Sarcasm, wit, fear, sadness; every attitude present in the source document must be relayed in the translation. My first obstacle in translating this document regarded changing the standard verb tense used throughout the text. Keeping in mind the audience of the source text and its context as an ethnography rather than a history, it was necessary to change the verb tense. In English literature and particularly in anthropology, whenever a ritual or repeated action is described, we use the helping verb “would”. Without this change, the original French document could be translated into the present indicative. Thus, the description of a ritual or repeated action would change from something taking place in the present (e.g. The mother takes her sick child to the house) to a tone indicating something that would be customary or repeated (e.g. The mother would take her sick child to the house).

Another important factor in translation is

clarity. It is one thing to accurately and faithfully capture the author's meaning in a translation. It is another thing to have a translation which is accessible to the target audience. A robotic-sounding translation captures the attention of no one. This is why it is necessary to understand the morphemes and the smallest units of translation rather than translating word-for-word, which often results in a mistranslation.

When translating one must consider the style and idiomatic qualities of the translation. Does this translation function in the target language and sound as natural as possible? Idiomatic translations will follow the linguistic nuances of the target language as if it had been originally written in that target language. This proved difficult in my translation as many anthropological ethnographies from Jean-Paul Lebeuf's era were written in a very robotic manner. The flair and attraction of ethnographic texts from the 1930's were very lacking, thus, as I translated "Several Sacred Stones" I had to make sure I was translating the text in a way which would engage and interest readers, rather than cause them to fall asleep.

Another consideration in translation is style - does this translation sound like every other available translation? Is it unique or does it offer any new insights into the source text? This isn't

to say that a translator ought to over-embellish a translation for the sake of being original.

However, there exist so many different intricacies within language as it is ever-evolving that it should always be possible to translate a simple paragraph in a number of unique ways.

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Several Sacred Stones of the Kotoko Land

By Jean-Paul Lebeuf

In the villages of Kotoko, both on the surface and in the excavated layer¹, a large number of generally round stones were found of a size smaller than a fist that may have served as grindstones, as well as several large stones some of which have a concave surface and have been polished by use and could have served as bedders.

Their presence is surprising in a country where the sandy soil does not contain any rocks. Their origin is obscure; the native peoples only say that they are from the Sao civilization that is supposed to have brought them into the area upon their arrival.

The inhabitants of Makari recount that the stones of the city had most likely been brought by Mohammed-El-Hadj, one of the sultans who, following the raid of Kouris coming from Lake Chad to kidnap children, pursued them all the way to their country where he destroyed their houses. He brought back some stones; these are the one which we now find in the city.

We have seen on which occasions they are used: the small stones in the ceremonies which follow the birth of twins², the others during ceremonies appointing the chief. In the latter case, they are an important factor: they recall the role that they played in the myth of the city's foundation.

In Afadé, for example, we know that there is a large flat stone which gives the new chief the right and the power to be in command over the city. "It is the bearer of power," the Kotoko peoples say, "it speaks in spite of not having a mouth: it is the true chief. No one can steal it, it is too heavy and if, by misfortune, a villager touches it, he falls sick and dies shortly unless he offers a calabash of wild rice and a red rooster. If the stone so wishes, the man will be healed."

The sultan himself must also make offerings to the stone. Every third Friday of the month, he slits the throat of a red rooster, saying "Custom requires that I sacrifice and make an offering."

Ndaw	legowayo	lasadaga ³
Custom	To kill	Sacrifice

¹ This lithic material will be the object of another publication.

² See: *Sur la naissance en general et sur celle des jumeaux en particulier chez les kotoko* by JP Lebeuf in the Bulletin du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle.

See: *La fondation de la ville et le sacre du chef*, by Marcel Griaule and JP Lebeuf, to be published.

³ According to certain informants, lasadaga means "favor" in the Kotoko dialect of Afadé, sadaga being the Arabic word with the same meaning.

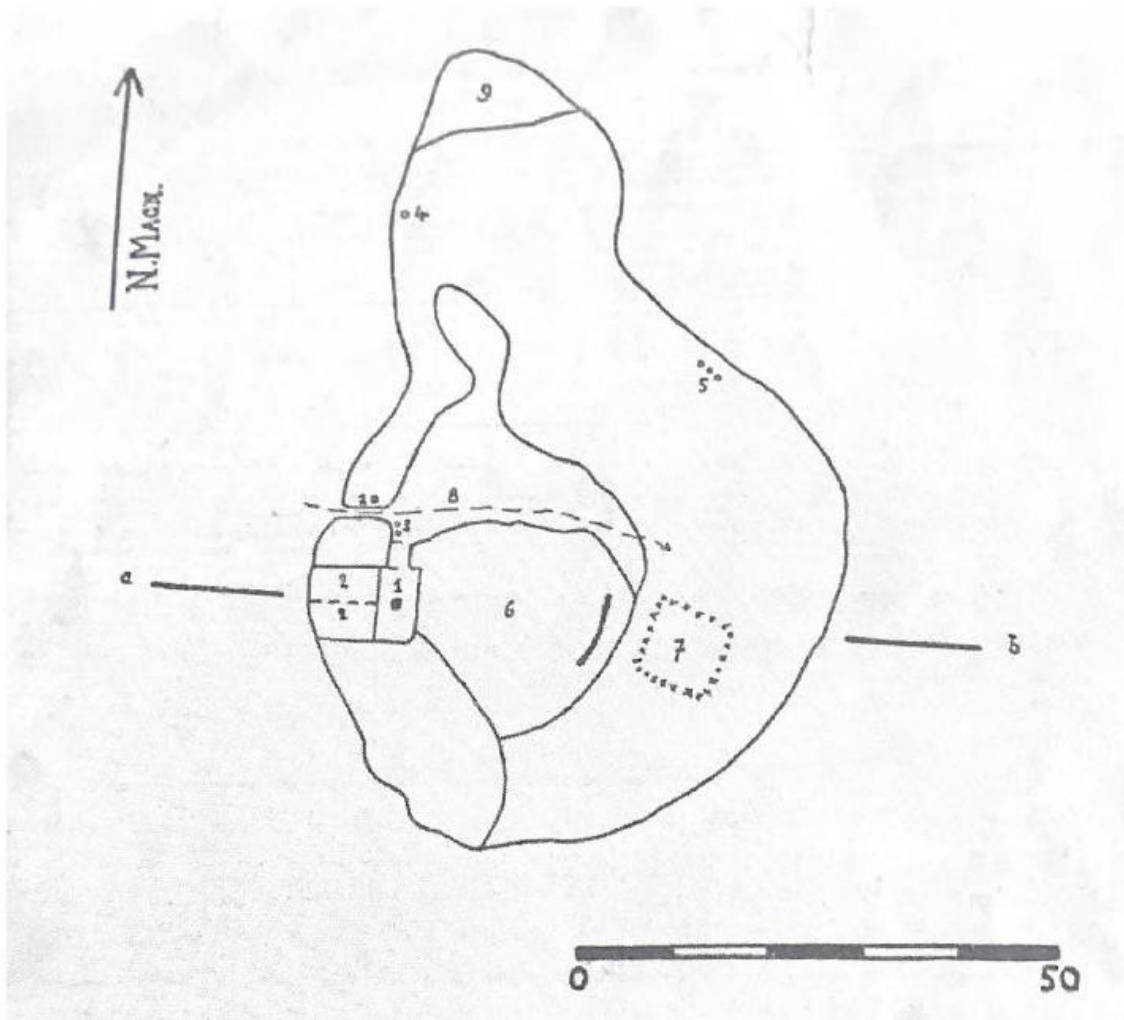


Fig. 1. Sketch at 1/1,000 scale of the palace hill of ancient Sao chiefs.

1. Sacred tree around which numerous offering potteries are buried.
2. Rooms where Faki Mohammed El Amin El Kanemi, the Fezzan son in law of the Prince of Ngala, stayed for 40 days before leaving for Ngourno where he again spent many days in prayer.
After the destruction of Birni-Ngazargamou by the Foulbé (in 1808, according to Sir Richmond Palmer in Sudanese Memoirs, vol. 2), he took the command of the country (Founding the Kanemin dynasty, according to Barth, vol. 2, p3, translated by Ithier). He constructed the new capital of Bornu, Koukawa ("The city of koaka" Andanson Digitala, because his remains were adorned with the trees of this species, according to Barth, work cited) These two covered rooms are the only ones that remained intact, together with the courtin front of them and the lateral walls (with a height of 4 m 50 of the entrance of the ancient palace, 10). The rest is nothing but a shapeless mound.
3. Two bottoms of large potteries. (funerary?)
4. A large pottery. (funerary?)
5. Three large potteries. (funerary?)
6. Location of the stones (see fig p. 16), bambaram hamlet.
7. Straw habitation of the wife of the current chief of Ngala, May Tchiroma
8. Path of the latter to the habitation. For this he continues to use the door of the ancient palace (10), imitating the ways of the Sao, his ancestors, even while his habitation is directly accessible from the foothill.
9. Mosque constructed against the hill outdoors.
10. Entrance to the palace.

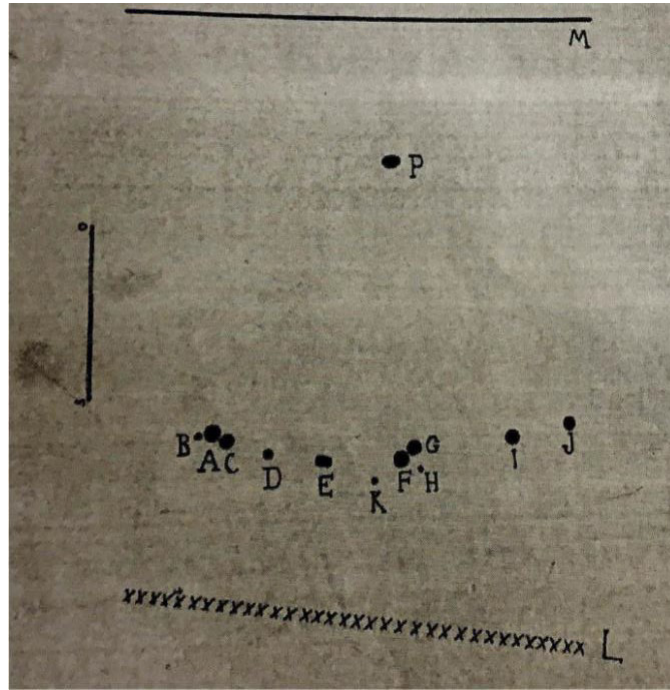


Fig. 2. – Sketch of the bambaram hamlet.

- A. Bottom of the large broken pottery lying on the ground with the opening on top; the opening has a height of 25 cm., the maximum diameter: 25 cm., partly filled with soil as the majority of the other jars in this hamlet. Found among the excavation: a stone with sinewave (fig. 4) a polishing tool with grooves such as to be found on the previous object but barely indicated, two misshapen shards, eight spherical grinding stones (fig. 6), a small rock with traces of polishing, a broken polished stone, tapered, and a stone in the shape of a broken shotgun, splintered on one side, and traces of polishing on its pointed end.
- B. Pottery with a flared spout, with a smooth surface, of the type that serves for heating up food, height of a grinding stone: 21 cm., diameter of the spout: 18cm. in the interior, partially buried.
- C. Smooth surface pottery, diameter at the spout: 32 cm., partially buried and jutting out of the earth by 13 cm., full of soil.
- D. Pottery, diameter at the spout: 20 cm., partially buried and jutting out of the earth by 8 cm., the interior has a spherical grinder under a layer of earth.
- E. Flat stone, 35 cm. on 25 cm., partially sunk into the soil, utilized for sacrifices.
- F. Large pottery, 30 cm above ground., interior diameter of the spout: 50 cm., spout thickness of 3.5 cm. Inside, 32 spherical grinders, two shards of a tapered stone, all exposed; grindstone partially submerged in the earth which fills the bottom of the jar.
- G. Large pottery similar to F. interior diameter of 45 cm., 10 cm. above ground, diameter of spout: 3cm. In the interior, two spherical crushers, a misshapen shard, a polished stone broken in a tapered form.
- H. Spouted pottery that contained an offering; only the spout juttet out from the soil.
- I. Semi-circular pottery fragment containing two grinders with an oval section (21x9x7 and 19.5x6.5x7.5), two spherical grinding stones and three misshapen shards
- J. Bottom of pottery with 6 misshapen shards, 15 spherical grinding stones, an oval stone, a grinding stone (15cm long, center diameter of 6 cm.) a lithic core, exposed on a layer of earth
- K. Decorated pottery (fig. 5) that appears to be recent, maximum diameter of around 18cm, height of about 23 cm., 8 cm above ground., diameter of the spout 11 cm, may have served for offerings.
- L. Fence surrounding the home of the wife of the current village chief.
- M. Mound boundary facing the court and jutting over the latter.
- N. Polished stone about the size of an ostrich egg, “the father and mother of all the Sao”

In summary:

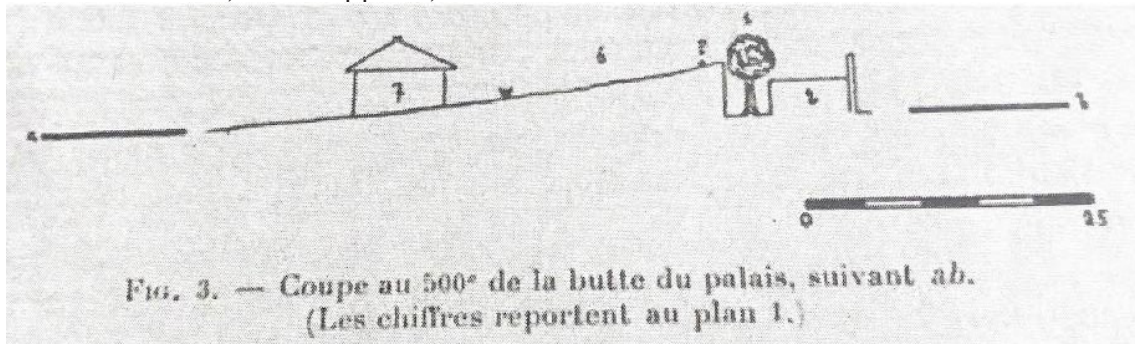
A stone for sacrifices: E; 2 potteries for offerings, H, K; (?) ; 2 potteries containing a single stone: B, D; 5 potteries containing several stones: A, F, G, I, J; 1 empty pottery: C.

Notwithstanding some stones or other objects which could be entirely buried in the assemblage.

Meat is then distributed to the inhabitants. In the absence of the chief, his substitute officiates this ceremony. Should anything be omitted, the stone itself demands that which was due to it; during the night, it goes to the sultan's domicile and asks him the reason for this omission. This warning is sufficient: the next day, the traditional sacrifice takes place. Several supernatural beings live under this stone; their names are unknown: a man, a woman, their children (who can be heard crying) and a black sheep⁴.

When leaving the palace, during the night, but not when reentering, one can see the sheep and the man who is dressed in a black tunic. If you throw a stone at them, they disappear. They do not cause any diseases.

It is not the same with the woman (*meyram kurago* Ar., *gerno lsegal* Kot., lit. large woman) who can be seen occasionally. She is dressed in a striped tunic; the left side of her body is hairy; the right side is smooth. When she sees a man, she calls to him. If he decides to come to her, he desires to be with her because she is beautiful, although very evil. He brings her to his dwelling and then lies down on his mat beside her. But if he touches her, she disappears, "even if the door is locked shut."



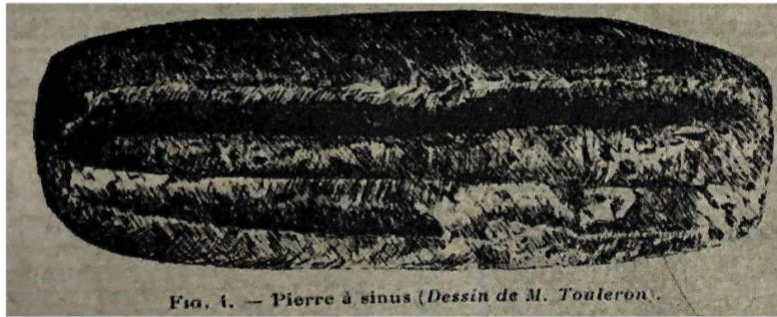
If the man refuses her invitation, he becomes possessed by a genie, a *tsi*, who makes him lose his strength and he becomes unable to work. He continues to eat and drink but stays all day without being able to move. To cure him, all the women of the village come together before his door while he dances alone to the sound of a tambourine. Then, in the same house where he usually sleeps, he sacrifices a red rooster that he then grills. Without keeping anything for himself, he then distributes the meat to the people of the village: men, women and children, who sit around him to eat it. The cure would thus be complete.

In Kouda, the healing process is different. A verse of the Qur'an is written many times on a board. The board is washed with water which is then given to the sick person to drink.⁵ A red sheep is cooked after circling the sheep three times around the head of the possessed person. The meat is then distributed to the villagers. As in Afadé, the sick person does not partake in the meal.

According to our informants, the Kanouri people would not sacrifice animals and rather preferred to drink the water which was used to erase the tablets. This means that only the Kotoko people sacrifice a sheep, the absorption of the liquid permeated by virtues of the sacred text does not seem to be sufficient to them.

4 This and the following are seen in Kouda

5 This method is well known. See among others: F. Doutté *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord*, Algeria, 1909. Starting on p. 109

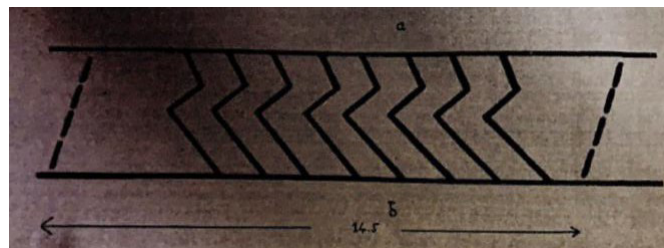


In Afade under a tree (*tsem*) there is a stone (*kao*) which is inhabited by genies (*tsi⁶*); this stone is similar to the previously discussed one. No one is allowed to touch it, not even the chief who, when he sacrifices a sheep to it, must remove his headdress and take off his shoes. When slitting the throat of this sheep (of any color), he would say:

tsem	ulegowayo	ukano	sadaga
tree	To kill	To make	sacrifice

“Oh tree, for you I make a sacrifice and present an offering.”

Within the royal palace a third stone is found; when leaving for a trip outside of Afadé, the chief sacrifices a red hen to the stone. He grills the meat and distributes it among the children without consuming any himself. In addition, by the edge of the stone he buries a pottery containing a verse of the Qur’an written by a witchdoctor, the bottom of the pottery facing up⁷. Through this ritual sacrifice, his trip would be favorable, he would stay in good health and avoid altercations.



According to our Kotokan informants, similar sacrifices had been previously performed by the ancient inhabitants of the country; the Qur’anic verses had only been added much later. Here again we have traditions and rites which claim to follow different religions, one much older, the other much more recent, a constant

6 See: *Sur la naissance en general et sur celle des jumeaux en particulier chez les kotoko*. Author cited

7 Some similar potteries had been used to protect the villages against invaders. They would bury them on the side from which they could arrive. In Goulfey, they would bury the potteries at the four cardinal points around the village. To the east, against the Bagmiri and others, to the west, in the place known as wulum dumbi (of wulum, hole, and of dumbi, black earth) against the Kanuri, to the south against the Fula, the Madara, the Kotoko of Afadé, Logone-Birni and Kousseri, at the place called yerar uya (of yerar, sand, et dee uya, name of an old Kotoko who lived on this edge of the village), to the north at the place called yulod (e), haywa (of yulod(e)) crest, et haywa (name of location). They would be buried two-by-two facing at the spout; verses of the Qur’an would be written in ink on the interior of the larger [or top] pottery; and other ones would be written on small boards which would be placed in the smaller [or bottom] pottery. Other potteries would also be buried at various places around the village to protect the village from famine and epidemics. A pottery found in Woulki in the course of our excavations interestingly had an Arabic inscription. It may have served a similar purpose. See object no. 13,335, collection of the Sahara-Cameroon Mission, Musée de l’Homme. However, the excavations which took place north of Goulfey, in the area known as aiwz, brought about no inscriptions. This important material will be described in an upcoming publication.

fact in the ancient country of the Sao⁸.

On the Dag(e)me hill, in the Midigué province, among others, we have noted a considerable number of stones (gurr burr, large stones) with a polished and concave surface, about forty by thirty centimeters. One of the stones is the stone of men. If one of the inhabitants of the neighboring village⁹ intends to travel, he makes an offering of crushed millet to the stone and asks it to be merciful:

<i>Walwud</i>	<i>hibe</i>	<i>nawdumalgbwe</i>
I want	To leave	for Goulfey

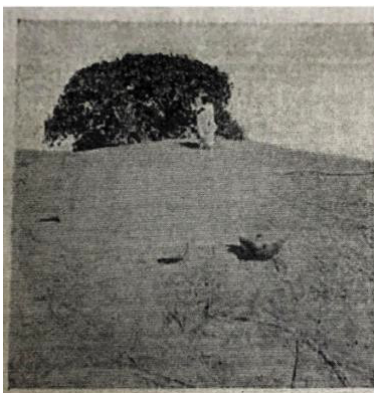
The name of the village changes with the desired destination. If someone manages to lift the stone, they can pursue their desire. Otherwise, it would be necessary to give up on it. Another stone is reserved for women who, if they wish for a husband or a child, will try to lift it up. If they are able to lift up the stone, they would be granted what they desire¹⁰.



Ngala, bottom of Sao funeral pottery.



A Sao funeral jar from Ngala



Ngala. The location of the stones (bam-baram) with one of the jars and the stone which is the "father and mother of the Sao" at the feet of an indigenous person, at the foot of the sacred tree.



Ngala. Side view of the location of the sacred stones.

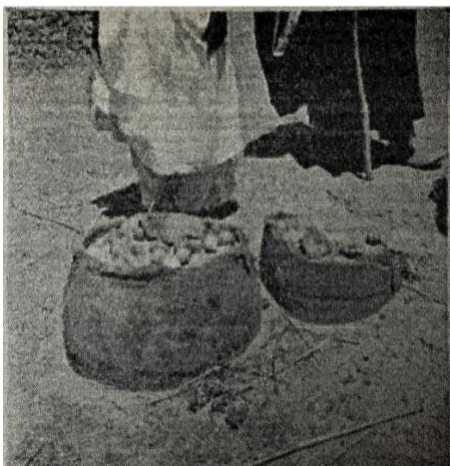
⁸ See *La fondation de la ville et le sacre du chef*. Author cited.

⁹ These two hills are now uninhabited. But sometimes the Kotoko visit them from their old dwellings.

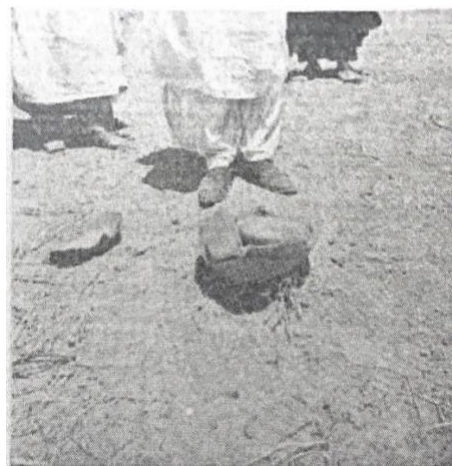
¹⁰ In performing these rites, the Kotoko people emulate the ancient inhabitants of the country.

In Ngala (British Cameroon), the few fragments of the foundation myth of the village that we have been able to gather match those of other Sao villages, and therefore are part of the same set¹¹.

A Sao man named Otoman found, upon his arrival, a white lizard and a striped lizard. After having killed the latter, he adopted the other which became the totemic animal, abuda¹². At the very place of this meeting, there is a large barren area¹³, where he [Otoman] had his prisoners build a mound.



Ngala. Two potteries containing some stones representing ancestors.



Ngala. Fragment of a jar containing several stones representing ancestors.



Ngala. A Sao funeral jar, half-buried.



Ngala. The rock which is the "father and mother of the Sao."

He surrounded the mound with a wall and, in the middle of this enclosure, he built his house in a place that was marked by the presence of stones (fig. 1).

It is on this mound, in the middle of the ruins of the palace, at the location known as bambaram, that we discovered a certain number of half-buried jars containing polished stones of diverse nature and appearance and, at a certain distance, an oval stone the size of an Ostrich egg (fig. above). "These stones could be those that Otoman found upon his arrival. We do not know their origin; we only know that they come from the Sao. Those [stones] which are in the jars, *tada kowe* (lit. small stones, of *tada*, small, and *kowe*, stones) represent the ancestors of the Sao; the oval stone (*kao*) is the father and the mother of all the Sao; it was found there before the others. Even if, nowadays, you can touch them, no one can take them away¹⁴; in any case, this would be a wasted effort because a stone taken from a sacred place will

¹¹ See *La fondation de la ville et le sacre du chef*. Author cited.

¹² Abuda being a Sao word.

¹³ The large trees that can be seen today in the village and in the surrounding areas had only grown much later, after the Muslim Conquest.

¹⁴ which did not prevent the chief of the village to bring me one of them, adding that, "this no longer had enough importance to be given any

return there on its own. It happens sometimes that all the stones leave together during the night for an unknown destination and come back after several days of absence.”

This story from the inhabitants of Ngala shows that we have here a religion comparable to those which exist in certain populations living in the south of the Kotoko country, in the region of Bénoué.

Several of these stones are similar to the ones Theodore Monod had observed in Afadé¹⁵. Their placement in the potteries is reminiscent of those of the Fali of the Dembo-Ram clan¹⁶ which are placed beside other stones that are similar to those observed among all the other Fali peoples. These stones are placed in a specific location of the dwelling for a period which varies between a few weeks to several years after the death of one of the family members¹⁷.

There is no doubt that in Ngala and in Afadé we had the same kind of sacred material that is similar to the Fali peoples' belongings¹⁸. It seems that in these two villages there is an older ancestor worship through representation because the stones they use are all tools, while among the Fali nowadays the stones wear the name of the dead, and even if they are sometimes gathered from a specific place in the bush, they are not less nondescript in terms of their appearance. They are supposed to be as symmetrical in shape as possible but without any trace of human work¹⁹.

offering anymore” See Musée de l’Homme, no 37, 1. Coll, Mis S. C.

15 See *Un problème à étudier, la question Sao : La Terre et la Vie*, April 1932. Th. Monod brought back some of these stones. They can be found at the Musée de l’Homme in the collections of the Sahara-Cameroon Missions to which he meant to add them (No. 45.1 to 5.4).

16 We use this word for its convenience.

17 See *Les rites funéraires chez les Fali* J.P. Lebeuf, Journal of the Society of Africanists, t. VIII, 1938. See also *La fête de mort et les pierres représentatives d’ancêtres chez les Fali*, author cited to appear in the *la Revue d’Histoire des religions*.

18 We intentionally leave out other African populations among which a similar religion may exist, as only the Northern Cameroon cultures belong in the scope of our study.

19 In this sense, there is no reason to keep track of these grindstones which, among certain Fali peoples, represent the dead.