

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL INTELLECTUALS IN MALI AND CAMEROON

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Introduction

My aim is to compare two attempts in West Africa to create a common discourse allowing diverse 'citizens' to imagine themselves, in Anderson's words, as a national community (Anderson 1983). Redolent of European 19th century culture histories, the re-establishment of the tyranny of tradition in the late 20th century continues to stress continuity and sameness as the ideals for nation building and long term security (cf. Stolcke 1995:4). Underpinning ethnic nationalism, a 'politics of belonging' requires simple and expedient means of defining inclusion and exclusion in terms of rights to reside, to own property or simply the right to live which as often as not is defined by claims to have a unique history (cf. Hobsbawm 1992 etc). Equally reminiscent of 19th century European culture histories, the task of creating a unique history in the late 20th century has been the work of academics, intellectuals and others whose job it is to excavate the subterranean layers of the collective consciousness. Filling the 'empty containers of nationalism' however has not been the usually the 'rags and patches' affair that a more Barthian view of ethnic boundaries might lead us to assume. If symbolic representations of the past need some degree of self conscious structuring of identity on the principle, according to Gelner that "peasants and tribesmen, however proficient at folk dancing do not make good nationalists", then there has to be a means to name, document and authenticate what these will be.

This Gramscian theme resurrects the distinction between organic and traditional intellectuals as a useful starting point for discussion (Gramsci 1971:5). If the organic intellectual was self consciously aware of the vanguard position he/she should play in mobilising political action, Gramsci saw the traditional intellectual as the producer of forms of knowledge that pre-existed such self conscious states. Defined by an earlier historical moment, they continue to exist through periods of fundamental change in the organisation of society. He argued that new groups moving towards dominance usually try to make use of traditional intellectuals to further mass acceptance of their hegemony. In Europe these traditional intellectuals were the teachers, priests and folklorists who garnered local knowledges threatened with extinction, formed local history and antiquities societies and defended the redoubt of local knowledge against the rationalism of practical consciousness. This 'heap of passive sedimentations' in Gramsci's vision accounted for the persistence of groups and continuities in traditionalising discourses. The linkage he made between intellectual discourse, production and power without mechanically reducing one to the other has been widely influential. Developed most notably in anthropology by Feierman in his book *Peasant Intellectuals*, he describes how in Tanzania the discourses of traditional chiefs, healers and diviners over healing and harming the land were drawn into the service of colonial authorities and modern politicians through the intermediary of an educated elite (Feirman 1990). Gramsci's distinction has the added attraction of providing agency to both the instrumentalist and primordialist aspects of ethnicity without reducing the affectivity of 'having a past' to the strategic manipulation of it as a resource.

It is these ideas that I wish to bring into the discussion of how elites manage and manipulate traditional discourses in the service of their interests. I compare two cases in West Africa (Cameroon and Mali) that share a francophone colonial past, and yet demonstrate markedly diverging postcolonial state trajectories. My argument is that in one case, Mali, the state elite

does manage to produce a sufficiently compelling image of the nation state by harnessing the past and present as unity. Ideas of the heritage of Mali conjure up in the national imagination that sense of simultaneity close to what Benjamin called messianic time; that something which has always been and will be again in the future but *meanwhile* can be grasped in an instantaneous present (Benjamin 1973:265) In the other case, Cameroon, the state is a source of neither meaning nor security. Powerful ties and loyalties bind urban based elites to their villages and regions of origin as a primary source of cultural meaning. In Cameroon, the state fails to provide a discourse in which all 'citizens' can imagine themselves as a national community. Quite the reverse to the situation in Mali, the state is the actual source of devolutionary tensions between ethnic regional blocks which since the 1990's has reached new heights with political liberalisation. The question I raise in this paper therefore is descriptive: how have the educated elite in these two settings harnessed their 'traditional intellectuals' to serve such divergent trends?

Conceptualising the local

In many parts of Africa in the 90's, authoritarian regimes have proved adept at managing demands for political reform by seeking new ways of establishing control over local populations (cf. Geschiere and Gugler 1998; Geschiere and Nyamnjoh 2000 etc). In an era of 'political liberalisation', regimes that were long used to exercising authoritarian power suddenly needed to find ways of mobilising mass support. The rhetoric of 'nation building' has taken on new forms of expression as the option of ethnic clientship politics backed by coercion has been modified in order to give more room for the development of a local politics that reaffirms allegiance to the 'village' or 'community'. When 'elections' can have real meanings, then the need to control votes has the paradoxical effect of encouraging a politics of autochthony or 'belonging' (cf. Geschiere and Gugler 1998).

Political liberalisation has also resulted in a striking intensification of debate over who has the right to belong. Who really belongs where and how is this to be judged, has led to violent exclusions of people from areas and towns where they have lived for long periods - in some cases for generations. In many parts of West Africa, distinguishing people as native to an area and others as strangers is nothing new. The idea that places have stranger quarters or that there should be a special treatment of strangers (usually extremely generous and hospitable I might add) is part of the culture of West Africa and other parts of Africa. Recent outbursts against 'strangers' is also at variance with long standing ideologies of prestigious stranger origins confirming political claims to the right to rule. In Grassfields Cameroon, for example, for many years there has been a debate over the so-called 'Tikar problem' (Chilver and Kaberry 1971). Various chiefdoms of the western Grassfields region trace their origins from a vaguely defined but extremely important ritual centre called Tikar from where they are said to have originated. Chiefs and notables recognise relations with each other in terms of shared origins and by rights to ritual objects and knowledge that were originally brought from Tikar. There are good reasons to believe that colonial concepts of land codified in "customary" law led to this freezing of history and the creation of a mythical space in which claims to legitimacy could be made (Fisiy 1995). The result was to reduce a fluid and dynamic precolonial pattern of movement and exchange of people and things to a more fixed pattern of permanent ownership and induced stability of settlement. Post independence political elites continued these fictions of private ownership in order to allocate resources for themselves and their clients. More recent neoliberal

ideas have promoted individual ownership based on the standard argument that private property would encourage investment and commitment to development and the intensification of production. What this also appears to include in the light of World Bank pursuit of administrative decentralisation policies, are moves to re-establish historical rights on land and other resources by privileging the idea of primary ownership. This idea has of course to be based on something and increasingly this seems to be the espousal of proving primary origins; the particular association of a people with a sense of place or a site that they claim to own.

There is nothing particularly new in the shaping of contemporary politics by 'tradition' in Cameroon. In the 1970's after the Bamileke wars, with the failure of the rebellion to offer an alternative democratic future, the chiefdoms were re-traditionalised by modernising elites. Palaces and estates that had been sacked in the 50's and 60's as a sign of finally removing the power of the chiefs, arose phoenix like to once more superimpose hierarchy on the same inequalities of land shortage and the exploitation of the labour of women and young men as before (Warnier 1993; Malaquais 1997:491). But with the rise of the new modernising elites to power, there came a significant change in the nature of rulership. Chiefs were appointed as 'modern men' out of the ranks of the new technocratic elites that came to state power (Fisiy and Goheen 1998). They had been government officials or academics before being taken to the palace and were expected to encourage a modernising trend in their administration of the chiefdom. Malaquais describes how this period is associated with the modernising of chiefdoms in architectural form as modern materials and a spatial reorganisation of the palace were funded by wealth provided by members of the new elites as monuments to their success. "Modernism is a political statement –as reference to the 'modern' nature of chiefly power in the postcolonial, post-rebellion era and to the new allegiances upon which this power is based" (Malaquais 1997: 495). But, as she goes on to argue, this was achieved only by reinventing a past which literally saw the corporeal aesthetics of the chief as its major endowment. In the case of the palace, the use of modern materials should be tempered by conservatism, in particular the house where the graves of former chiefs are located (*nshwim*). This should continue to be built on a framework made from the raphia bamboo and with roof thatched with grass that comes from high up on the hillsides near the ancestral lake. And the rest of the palace, although built with modern materials, should retain a traditional form with a high peaked roof and carved wooden pillars supporting the verandah. The theme of the unchanging nature of the chiefdom both in terms of values of hierarchy and in the physical appearance of the key institution of the palace is reinforced precisely at those moments of significant political change.

In the period of democratisation of the 1990's it appears that the chiefs in the Grassfields had once again opted to transform themselves as they vied with each other in making the political choices based on perceptions of which strategy would serve them best in a particularly turbulent era. Multiparty politics did force chiefs to make more open commitments in support of political parties consistent with the power that elites could bring to bear on the palace institutions. The fact that the Grassfields was the origin of the principal opposition party in Cameroon politics, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), meant that elites were divided on whether they supported opposition or government politics and how these vested interests shifted with perceptions of changing circumstances. This meant there was considerable popular pressure on chiefs to support oppositional politics and declare against the ruling party and provide voting support for the SDF. In effect the reality was never as simple as chiefs obeying their urban-based elites, since rural politics often acted to temper their effects. But nevertheless, the perception that chiefs were in the pockets of politicians and no longer could be considered as 'traditional rulers' gained widespread currency. It was widely assumed that this would be the last occasion in which chiefs

would be able to play such political games (cf Warnier 1993:281-282). But this denied the longer history, both colonial and postcolonial, of Grassfields chiefs accepting and colluding in political developments one moment and ignoring and even rejecting these developments the next and still being supported by their local populations in the process. This ability to comply and still appropriate and resist does have something to do with the flexibility of the chiefdom as a site that can redirect eternally state derived coercion and even violence to serve local needs.

Chiefs and chiefdoms have functioned as administrative agents and vote catchers for the postcolonial governments of Cameroon by exploiting their real or imagined status as being the only agents truly and authentically supported by the people (Fisiy 1995:49-50). Instead of the chiefdoms withering away in the face of the power of a modernising state, in the Grassfields almost the precise opposite has occurred as the latter has come to rely increasingly on violence and coercion to impose its will. Whilst the probity and accountability of chiefs has been questioned, this has not radically affected the importance of the chiefdom as the organising framework for the lives of local people in the Grassfields. In the late 1990's the chiefs have also come to realise their power and that colluding with politicians and national parties will not necessarily serve them well in future. For some this implies the removal of the chiefdom from politics and a renewal of traditions as cultural heritage. Chiefdoms must now conserve their traditions and in particular those in which the entire population takes part. Attending the annual festival at the palace becomes de rigueur for elites and their followers as people turn away from the fantasies of modernity and contemporary politics to find solace in an idealised past. For others, probably the more realistic view, the palace of the chiefdom has always been the centre of culture and identity for local populations. Sultan Njoya was one of the first to create a palace museum at Foumban (in 1897!) to hold intact the cultural property of the kingdom (Geary 1984). It is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that 'collecting' is not just a European passion. Many Grassfields chiefs have built museums in the palace to store items associated with chiefly rule and to show to people that they have not been surreptitiously sold to foreign dealers. The museum is the treasury of the palace and holds the drinking horns, wooden ancestor figures, beaded calabashes and decorated '*ndop*' cloth that must be displayed once a year at the annual festival so that people can see the 'things of the palace'. Both in turn emulate and formalise the basic principles of transmission of bodily substances and things that underlay the authority of male elders and notables of a chiefdom (cf. Rowlands 1994). The idea of the palace and the body of the fon and notables as containers that literally hold the substances (blood, semen, saliva, breath) of the chiefdom in trust for future generations is objectified in objects and things that inscribe somatic identities on the landscape of the chiefdom (Warnier 1993). The burial of protective substances at the crossroads and borders of the chiefdom at the beginning of the growing season or at the entrances to compounds and houses to protect against witches are the physical manifestations of this inscription. The human body is therefore metaphorically encoded within the social body to allow actions of the former to affect the latter. Rituals release forces and disclose meanings that go beyond mere representation. Corporeal praxis shapes 'expresses, and re-embodies a particular bodily and social order and a particular view of, and relation with, the lifeworld or cosmos' (1993:46). This is why the cultural forms of these material metaphors in the Grassfields consistently refer to procreative themes intertwining physical with social reproduction and the fact that both depend on the successful cultural transmission of form. But these metaphoric linkages are also the interface between the chiefdom and the state; the fact that the latter and its propensity for violence should so often be what various sensory fields – the visual, olfactory, tactile and the verbal -functions to negate (c.f. Argenti 1998). Literally the fetish like material reality of the chiefdom is elaborated to confront and nullify the agency of the state as violent action. It does so by establishing homologies and communications between

physicality, the social group and life-world of the individual in order to provide a space in which healing and transforming social relations can take place as a regenerative act. It is not surprising therefore that the palace should condense these activities in a single space that cannot be replicated elsewhere since it is where the life force of ancestors is derived from the deceased buried under compound floors or special houses where appropriate rites and libations can take place.

The devolutionary trends of the 90's has therefore reinforced some of the contradictory nature of local politics of belonging in Cameroon. In the Grassfields the power of the chiefs has, in some cases, been reinforced but no longer as administrative extensions of postcolonial governments rather as fundamental to the attachment of people to place. The fact that people have always encoded metaphorical meanings into things, means that these work to reproduce or transform the contexts in which they are embedded. Alternatively, there are cases where the capacity of the palace and the Fon to function in this way has been irredeemably damaged. The Fon of Mankon eg, who has consistently supported the government party in Cameroon, against local support for the opposition Anglophone party, is now a lonely and isolated figure in his palace where iron gates close the entrance to the outside world.

Architecture and a sense of place have taken on new roles as markers of ethnic affiliation. Indigenes are expected to build a house on village land to which eventually they will retire and under which they will be buried. Taking a pride in the heritage of a chiefdom, a pride in one's origins, in communal beliefs and in material culture has become a feature of an ethnic identity. Heritage is understood as an 'old fashioned' museological view of culture, which you can have more or less of and from which you can be deprived, quite literally by your opponents destroying it or stealing it. Among the Bamileke in the last ten years - new palaces have been built with towering roofs and adorned facades, symbols of their defiance to the general hostility they feel is expressed against them in Cameroon. Traditionalising discourses in Cameroon also encourage the idea that the 'local' is not just one place but is dispersed in terms of urban and village networks. The 'village' can be as much in the capital, or a provincial town as in the chiefdom proper. And it is this institutional pluralism, supported by neo-traditional discourses, that has been reinforced, in particular by a decade of political liberalisation. Dispersed elites, by exercising a stranglehold on access to resources (land, forests, mineral rights, water etc), encourage strong centrifugal tendencies in Cameroon.

In certain contexts - this unleashes another paradox, the more local identity becomes necessary for mobilising support for political power, the more there has been a tendency to argue for the removal of local identities from national politics. In 1993 for example a group of Bamileke intellectuals published a report recommending the de-politicisation of traditional chiefship "the traditional chieftainship must turn its back on all enterprises of an electoral nature and respect the customs chiefs are deeply involved in partisan politics. This attitude runs counter to what the chiefs role should be: to defend all of the inhabitants or citizens of his polity, regardless of their political affiliation". (Malaguais 1997:514). The writers of the report recommend that the palace of a traditional chief should be a place where people come to revive their cultural identity which had been lost during the colonial era. The palace should become a heritage site and Bamileke fons were urged to build cultural centres or local museums where they could meet their constituents. Each centre would have a hall where up to 600 people could meet; a library and video centre where the archival resources, oral traditions and material culture of the chiefdom could be kept and stored. Some of the major chiefdoms in the Grassfields such as Bandjoun or Bamoum had already established museums as monuments to the ruling dynasties.

In fact the politicisation of local origins has resulted in some cases in emptying out any explicit political content precisely in order to constitute the chiefdom as a site of pure cultural origins redeemed of any political associations. Building a house in the village should also mean a site for future burial, a place to return to in cases of misfortune. But paradoxically the form it takes is increasingly less than culturally pure. Dominic Malaquais, in describing contemporary Bamileke architecture, shows how the plan of one Bamileke architect, responsible for building one of these cultural centres, is distinctly hybrid. On the one hand the architect declares: "We are in a society which suffers from a veritable cultural chaos - a true crisis of identity - the principal role of the chiefdom must be to resolve this problem". On the other his recommendations on the architectural style chosen to help achieve this aim are distinctly un-Bamileke, being a combination of a Bamoum prototype palace (modelled on King Njoya's 1905 palace) with an entrance style borrowed from the entrance of the Sultan's palace at Rey Bouba from the far north of Cameroon and a roof copied from houses in the Bamenda region. A trans ethnic architectural style is advocated which is an odd choice for a cultural centre that is meant to remind Bamileke youth of their cultural and ethnic origins. Warnier has also noted that the upper echelons of the Cameroon elite are increasingly becoming trans cultural/ ethnic, so that among the rich and powerful, pure ethnicity is fast making way for a 'metissage' of cultures and identities (Warnier 1993).

Elite associations are heavily involved in encouraging a politics of localised but hybrid autochthony in Cameroon and the state finds many advantages in promoting this to intervene in local politics. Cameroon is described in official discourse as a country of great linguistic and cultural diversity which has managed to avoid the ethnic violence of some of its neighbours in West Africa. The notion of *convivialite culturelle* is used to describe Cameroon as a land united by diversity, constantly needing to balance the tensions of a triple colonial heritage and other multiple identities that have made it 'Africa in miniature'. It alludes to the idea that by transcending local differences, a spirit of mixture and conviviality identifies Cameroon and national success as a commonality and uses football as one of its dominant metaphors. It also has the paradoxical effect of re-traditionalising the chiefship - by demanding that Fons /Chiefs and important notables should shrive themselves of previous secularised tendencies in pursuit of political and business ambitions and instead return to a true vocation of being an authentic arbiter of tradition. But such localisation by elites and politicians underestimates the power this gives chiefs and elders to re-assert their authority and shrive themselves of the ambivalence inherited since colonial times. If the chiefs/fons want museums and cultural centres to define their re-traditionalised status then elites appear to have more nationalising ambitions, to create a more technocratic and eventually less ethnicised basis for their politics. Whilst both tendencies lead to the devolution of 'tradition', the first asserts it as a pure and homogenous cultural state into which their elites have to be induced whilst the second, by attempting to usurp tradition as a hyperreal and mobilising identity, hybridises its cultural form, thus making it at the same time everywhere and nowhere.

The national imaginary in Mali

The situation of Cameroon is not unique either in Africa or other parts of the world; in particular where there is a long-term pattern of regimes ruling by stressing ethnic diversity and the need for a strong centre capable of overcoming divisions. A more pervasive, if not exclusive, alternative strategy is found where politicians succeed in describing the nation as a unity in difference. It is therefore quite surprising that relatively few African states have been able to effectively use the past - in particular a glorious past - as a means of maintaining unity. Mali is

one case where the attempt has been made in the last ten years.

Since the writings of Renan on nationalism, it has been almost unthinkable for the idea of the nation to exist without being embedded in a glorious past. When the French President Francois Mitterand declared at the opening of the archaeological excavations of Mont Beauvray "Bibracte (its Roman name) is a sacred site where the first act of our French history was played out" his intention was not just to claim that the nation owed its origins to a common ancestor who resisted Roman occupation but also that the resulting Gaulish-Celtic confederacy symbolised France as the first of many unities in difference in the face of external opposition. This Francophone ideal of the nation, not surprisingly, was disseminated within its colonial empire with varying degrees of success.

The extent of this did rather depend on what historical resources were available to be captured in this manner. Mali held a particular attraction for French rule because of its imperial histories. A centre for the Empires of Ghana, Mali and Songhai and the later kingdoms of the 19th century that French colonial rule effectively dismantled and in part emulated, Mali has a past that allows the contemporary state a basis in shared unity. What is shared however is effectively a sense of loss both in terms of shared identity but also belief in a past when relations were more harmonious and achievements more praiseworthy. If investing in the past, collecting and storing its remains, has a curative value then sometimes it is not so important to distinguish one form of past from another. Possessing a sense of heritage to develop a community of memory can require accepting that, whether good or bad, it all contributes to claims to have a right to exist in the present. There are many signs that the merits of this redemptive formula are well recognised by members of the Malian intellectual elite. The government of Alphonse Konare may go down in the popular imagination as a period when a monument was built at every crossroad and roundabout in the capital (there are over 300 monuments and memorials in the capital Bamako). Whilst the most prominent relate to the events of independence and in particular the suffering of the brief but brutal civil war in 1991, a number relate to colonial battles and triumphs by French armies that are preserved and maintained. One of the apocryphal stories attached to the President (who was professionally trained as an archaeologist) is that soon after inauguration he was being driven through the capital when he noticed that a French colonial building was being demolished for a new hotel to be built. Leaping out of the presidential car, he ordered the demolition to be halted and had a heritage order slapped on the building.

The designation of world heritage by UNESCO has had considerable influence in Mali. UNESCO works on a philosophy that claims that world heritage sites are not just of local significance but are part of the heritage of humanity and their loss or destruction would be a diminishment for us all. Mali is the home of three such world heritage sites, the Islamic city of Djenne, the Bandiagara escarpment and the Dogon and the mosques at Timboctou. Claimed by UNESCO, on our behalf, to belong to our common heritage, the Malian state has agreed to protect them for our future well-being. The onus is quite heavy since each must be protected by state legislation and has a state financed cultural mission to preserve and restore it, encourage tourism and prevent its loss or destruction. If WE want them, then it is assumed to be because WE will visit and consume the value that has been generated. In cases such as 'le pays Dogon', which has been a tourist attraction since before the First World War, the 90's has seen an explosion in the number of tourists coming to Mali, accompanied by a quick appreciation that this will form the major source of foreign income in the future. Loss of the UNESCO World heritage status would therefore be a disaster for various plans concerned to develop tourism in Mali and build a sense of national culture, at a time when there is severe pressure from the World Bank to decentralise power to the regions. Whilst UNESCO provides no funds to support and preserve these heritage sites, the Malian government is expected to install and pursue state

legislation to prevent any substantial change or damage to these sites. It may also use the designation to make applications to the World Bank for special status loans that would encourage not only the restoration and preservation of the sites but also their exploitation for tourism and representing the cultural value of Mali.

The promotion of 'Patrimoine Culturel' as the embodiment of national treasures' is a hotly debated issue in Mali. For the cultural missions established to protect cultural heritage sites in Mali, it means containing the past and preventing any loss of cultural property through illegal excavations of archaeological sites, stealing and smuggling of antiquities. The heads of missions should also organise sensibilisation programmes to educate local people as to the value of 'heritage' and the loss to national identity if they facilitate the pillaging of archaeological sites and the selling of antiquities to dealers. Such programmes are strongly supported by outside agencies such as the World Bank where there is an explicit policy that culture and identity should precede development and projects should have some clear assessment of how they will affect 'local culture'. This spread of a quite fettered notion of 'culture' does mean it can be objectified in material forms that are both open to collection, preservation and consumption. For the cultural missions the encouragement of tourism may not be an explicit goal but it is part of the environment in which their actions are evaluated.

For the national Museum, 'patrimoine culturel' is a selective idea based on a qualitative assessment of national treasures. The fact that most of these now reside in foreign museums and private collections is a source of anguish. Every attempt is made to purchase back such treasures when they appear on the international art market or compel other museums to repatriate 'stolen property'. Finally there is a view that 'patrimoine culturel' represents the hidden and suppressed creativity and talents of the Malian people. Repressed by colonialism and poverty, traditional skills and creativity needs to be rediscovered and revalorised in new modernising settings. This is part of the mission statement of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism whose job it is to 'intervene' and bring these hidden elements of the Malian way of life into the light of day and capitalise on their artistic production for the purposes of cultural and institutional development and tourism. Tourism in Mali is largely people and culture oriented since there is little wildlife left. Tourists come for the mix of scenery and culture and authenticity, in particular of experience, is emphasised. The camera is aimed at people and their daily lives, at festivals and in particular in the case of Dogon ritual, at material culture in the shape of masks, statues and the physical setting of architecture set in the Bandiagara escarpment. Tourism defines 'culture' as no longer a peripheral concern but central to the development policy of the Malian government. The contribution of Mali to World Music is another example of what is seen as suppressed creativity, previously hidden in the interstices of rural Mande society, now globalised and through the activities of friends such as the BBC World Service, being a good enough reason to make the trip to Bamako. Whilst many have heard of Salif Keita or Baba Maal, this is not really the level of expertise being harnessed at the present time, since the sources of both musical technical expertise and music are widely disseminated through tape and cassette.

These differences of view emerge in the concrete settings of heritage projects and disputes over what is considered 'of value', 'discovering' and worth preserving. A 'Western' philosophy of 'restoration' has been disseminated as part of an exegesis on the value of particular sites, buildings, performances and objects as repositories of national cultural capital. The World Bank for instance has recently made a long-term loan for the restoration of the mosques of Timboctou based on the advice of the Ghetty Foundation. The previous Minister of Culture, Aminate Traore, hotly disputed the need for this loan, arguing that it would add to crippling debt without visible benefit and the mosques didn't need this amount of money spent on them anyway. According to her, financing the development of national music, theatre and dance was a more

pressing concern. But the restoration of mosques is itself not unproblematic in a country that is 80% muslim. The mosque in Djenné for example has recently been the site of some disagreement between the Imam and the new minister of culture. Whilst the former would like to modernise the mosque and has the money to do this (from the Saudis), including plans to cement over the mud architecture and use white and green glaze tiles to give it a more prestigious 'modern' appearance, the Minister is committed to its preservation as a world heritage site, an attraction to tourists and probably a site of some controversy over who governs culture in the public sphere.

In Mali, a national elite could be defined as being in part comprised by those who participate in a debate on the development of national cultural heritage. Ideas of citizenship and the capacity or will to identify oneself or others as Malian is crucially bound up with sensitising various abstract categories like the 'peasantry', 'women' and 'ethnic groups' to a sense of common heritage. The national Theatre in Bamako has produced a play on the plundering and illicit export of cultural heritage which a group of actors take round the villages near the major heritage sites. The performance is accompanied by a travelling exhibition on the archaeology of Mali and this should be followed up by a visit from the head of the cultural mission who will discuss effects of the plundering of archaeological sites and how the village will benefit if they set up a 'youth committee' to prevent it. Some rather complex issues are certainly raised by the different reactions of local groups to these enticements. Categories like the 'peasantry' have little purchase in a setting where clearly complex issues of land and access to land define peoples perceptions of whether they should allow illegal excavations for the antiquities trade or will have already refused to be involved, regardless of any external stimulus. Rather like music or tourism, archaeological sites are a resource but it is never clear whether the question is to use them as a source of rent, as a means of attracting resources from central government as the price of forbidding illegal activities, or whether there are really local concerns being tapped about the disturbance of ancestral sites. Tourism is more explicitly a source of income, for the tour operators in Bamako, many of whom are European, and the hotels that are now largely privately owned. But also tourism benefits the guides, drivers, porters, cooks and other assistants required to support it, as well as the masked performers, the makers and sellers of ethnic tourist art and the dealers in antiquities. In many respects the impact of tourism is strongly channelled by the way it is organised through middlemen and the fact is that people at the local level have very little influence over who comes and how they are organised. In some respects therefore it reinforces the sense that 'local expertise', those elders who may have their photo taken under a togana or will recount to tourists some thing from Griot on Dogon cosmology, are likely to be peripheralised by the experience and limited to performing a fairly stereotyped role. If the 'heritage industry' has a pervasive influence in Mali, it does so in orchestrating diverse and sometimes conflicting relations between the national and the local if such terms really have much meaning.

Conclusion

Elites in both Cameroon and Mali play brokerage and gate keeping functions in the classic manner described by Weber. But in the dialectics of 'belonging' and 'longing' described by van der Veer and others, there is an identification with questions of 'heritage' that shapes the role of elites. In Mali, it relies on the harnessing of local sentiments by engaging the writings of marabouts or encouraging peasant intellectuals to value ancestral pasts for harnessing a sense of longing for the creation of a national culture. Elite associations operate in similar mode in

Cameroon by harnessing local sentiments and 'traditionalising' discourses in the recognition of regional alliances on which any negotiation at the national level has to depend.

It is symptomatic of the situation that there have been plans and the budget available for over eight years to build a national museum for Cameroon and yet nothing has been agreed nor a foundation stone lain. By contrast in Mali, a massive new national Museum is under construction at the present time and it probably has one of the most sophisticated museum services in Africa. The difference between the two is neither fortuitous nor inevitable but more a product of how elites manage 'culture' in a world that treats it increasingly as something valued only when copyrighted, preserved and deployed.