

7. Daniel P. Kunene, *Heroic Poetry of the Basotho* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

Wandile Kuse

Veronika Görög. *Contes bambara du Mali and Contes bambara du Mali: Mali Bamanan Nsiirinw*. Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1979. 119 and 111 pages.

Nineteen of the twenty-four tales presented in Bambara and in a highly readable French translation were recorded by the author in 1975 in Bamako. For three evenings, the four (?) wives (acknowledged on p. 5) of a household head narrated these tales in the presence of other members of the family. Five other texts were collected in 1972 in Bamako and elsewhere.

The emphasis is on the texts (transcribed and translated in collaboration with Abdoulaye Diarra) and not on the narrators or on the performance. The transcription of the Bambara texts follows the rules laid down in 1967 by the Mali government. The translation aims at combining criteria of authenticity and readability (excessive repetition and personal pronouns, and some other procedures characteristic of oral expression have been eliminated; see p. 6). The author has fully succeeded in producing translations that can easily be read without continued need for ethnographical commentary. Each text is followed by a brief apparatus in which motifs, themes, types, variants, and unusual features are outlined in the light of earlier writings on Bambara tales (Travele 1923; Traore 1970; Equilbecq 1972; Görög-Karady and Meyer 1974) and of various comparative studies, mostly on West African tales.

In a brief introduction (pp. 7-13), Görög presents some general data on the narratives: these short tales (mostly from one hundred to two hundred lines) begin and end with fixed formulas of which there are several variants; they are mostly intersected by songs, often conceived as a dialogue between two persons; they have more than one function, although the pedagogical aspect is always included. The tales revolve around widespread themes (e.g., the conflict between spouses; the obstinate woman who desires to choose her own husband; the orphan mistreated by a stepmother) and around themes for which the Bambara seem to have some predilection (e.g., the orphan left by a dying parent in the custody of a senior sister, but abandoned by her when she decides to follow a man; twins, born in the bush, abandoned by their mother,

raised by a lioness, and later sent out in search of their mother). The tales deal with problems: tensions created by polygamy, inter-generational conflict, the relative importance of consanguineal and affinal connections, relations between humans and animals or humans and supernaturals. Over two-thirds involve a conflict or misdeed followed by a solution or a sanction. Some tales, however, present the perfect hero in a no-conflict situation. Whereas most of them end in conformity with the moral code, some are *anti-contes* finishing with the triumph of evil.

The author has already assembled numerous variants of single Bambara narratives; these variants are obviously important for the study of possible thematic deviations and aspects of fixity and instability in the form and content of the tales. She notes that creative freedom, manifest for example in the elaboration of a text through the inclusion of episodes and personages borrowed from other tales, is encouraged in some societies and criticized in others and that, where both types of narrators occur in the same society, only one will serve as the model (pp. 12-13).

The exact purpose of these booklets is unclear to me. If they are intended to be used in schools in Africa or in the West, they must be qualified as excellent introductions to Bambara narratives. Their scholarly scope is somewhat limited, however, because of the succinctness of the explanatory data. Since we are dealing here with a number of texts narrated by the female members of a single household, an interpretation of the texts in terms of the performance situation and of the relative statuses of the female narrators might have been revealing.

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Sigrid Schmidt. *Märchen aus Namibia*. Düsseldorf/Köln: Eugen Diederichs, 1980. 285 pages. \$11.48.

Sigrid Schmidt, leading library specialist in the folklore of the Khoisan (click-speaking) peoples, has now published (in German) a volume of tales based primarily on several recent collecting trips of her own to Namibia. In doing this she has added immeasurably to the published tale repertoire available to those who study not only the folklore of the Khoisan peoples of Namibia but the traditions of the Bushmen and other non-Bantu populations of nearby Botswana and South Africa. The previous major collections of stories told by these peoples were published over a century ago by