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Manding Ajami samples: Mandinka and Bamana

Valentin Vydrin, INALCO, CNRS-LLACAN
Gérard Dumestre, INALCO, CNRS-LLACAN

1. Introduction

The Manding Ajami writing tradition is much less mysterious today than it was thirty or forty years ago, when scholarly literature would settle for its passing mentions and practically no single authentic text was available. However, the number of texts published still remains extremely low, and they reflect poorly on the geographical spread of this writing system. We are still at the stage where every new text introduced into scholarly circulation is a discovery: with a high degree of probability, it represents either a new variety of the writing, a new literary genre, or even establishes the use in a new geographical area where the existence of Ajami was hitherto unknown. The texts presented here exemplify this situation.

In the following, texts of the manuscripts will be represented in four columns: the source texts in Manding Ajami, i.e. Arabic-based script orthography, a Roman script transliteration, a Roman script standard transcription, and an English translation.

In the transliteration, we tried our best to remain true to the Ajami text. We had to interpret spellings in order to segment texts into words, ________________

1 The authors would like to thank Charles Riley who volunteered to correct the English texts.
whenever Arabic script (based) graphemes are written disconnected to the left. This applies to the letters 'alif, dāl, ḍāl, rā’, zāy, wāw, which are always spelt disconnected to the following letters in Arabic script. Therefore, it is most often impossible to judge whether a word boundary was intended by the author of the manuscript after such a letter or not. In the standard transcription, Bamana text is represented following the official orthography of Bamana language, while dialectal forms are being eliminated\textsuperscript{2}. We suppose that they can be easily restored from the transliteration. Although tones are not marked in Arabic based script, lexical tones are marked in the standard transcription, while contextual and grammatical tonal changes (among them, the tonal article\textsuperscript{3}) are ignored.

The Mandinka document is a sample of a magical text. Unlike all the other authentic documents published so far, it is authored, most probably, by an ordinary Muslim, rather than a Muslim cleric, for hunt remains a domain far remote from the sphere of pious Marabouts. ‘Allāh and Muḥammad are nevertheless mentioned in these texts, and Arabic words are inserted here and there for possibly extra effectiveness, such as e.g. \textit{tamāli} (3:3, 3:4)\textsuperscript{4}, and probably also \textit{qalaqa} (2:2). In essence though, the religious core of this text is quite animist.

\textsuperscript{2} The Ajami writing reflects a dialectal form, different from the Standard Bamana one.

\textsuperscript{3} In Bamana, a definite article is represented by a floating low tone following a noun or a noun group. In current transcription practice, it is rarely marked even in texts with tonal notation.

\textsuperscript{4} In referencing to the texts, the first number (preceding the colon) represents the number of the text, and the second one (following the colon) represents the line. For the Bamana two-page texts, the figure preceding a slash represents the number of the text, while the second figure (following the slash) represents the page number, and the third figure, following the colon, represents the line.
The other set of texts is the very first sample of the authentic Bamana writing tradition published. They come from San, an ancient commercial center in the southwestern part of Mali, and might represent the earliest piece ever of authentic Bamana literature.

In the following, the texts are reproduced in digitalized form, provided with an exact Roman script transliteration, a normalized transcription (with tones in Mandinka texts following Creissels et al. 1982), and an English translation including comments. Each text is followed by an analysis of the peculiarities of the Ajami variety.

2. Mandinka hunter's incantations.

The incantations were shown to Valentin Vydrin by Abdulay Daafée, who was his host in the Samakun village (Sédhiou region, Senegal) in October 2007. His oral comments were very helpful in decoding and transliterating of the texts. However, certain passages (given in italics in the Roman transcription) remain obscure, and their respective transliterations and translations therefore remain tentative. In particular, personal pronouns of second singular í and third plural ì differ only in tone, and the context is usually insufficient to opt for one or the other interpretation. In such cases, decisions were taken more or less at random.

Each incantation begins with an Islamic preamble, followed by magic formulae, which sometimes consist of words which are non-existent in

5 The only Bamana texts published so far (Vydrine 1998) were written at the request of Valentin Vydrin. Therefore, they may be considered as evidence for the study of the orthographic tradition of Bamana Ajami, but they do not exemplify its genres.
Mandinka language (at least, they are absent from Mandinka dictionaries and are not recognized by Mandinka speakers as true words). At the end, the objects and substances are mentioned (apparently, those which are necessary for the magic action), followed by the Arabic word اسمه ʻismuhu 'his name'.

Text 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bsmi 'llh</td>
<td>1. Bismi Ilahi</td>
<td>1. By the name of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>muḥam2adi</td>
<td>wa'la'liy4</td>
<td>Stop!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nari</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šubu nari mina⁵</td>
<td>Minankaña kòto</td>
<td>3. Animal, stop! Old male antelope, ruins will cut you (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kay₂a kutu tu⁶₃</td>
<td>tunbug bé í kúntu</td>
<td>4. Ruins won't swallow you, faakundamaa, baakundamaa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bi’i ku⁶tu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tu⁶bu ti⁶ku₅₃u</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f₆a'ku₅⁵damạ'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ba'ku₅⁵damạ'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'i y₂ašubu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'i tαndi'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>' saf₃a' i</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y₂a'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šutu kiy₂itadina'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? saf₃a' i y₂a'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>šubu musu 'ita⁵di</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>? na? saf₃a' tt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ti'yuw 'ani⁵ mina⁶</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n兮 kaya tiyuu ni₆</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bu'ba' sulu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ſmḥ man₃₅ kara</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>binamulu₅</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bina mú sùla wùleŋ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

9. Its name is the horn of the m̀nkařa antelope, red monkey.
Line 1. The first spelling could be read as ϰ˶<sbiy₁>. However, such a reading hardly makes any sense. Most probably, it is an ordinary basmala (بَسْمَ | <bsm>) written in a fanciful way.

Line 2. Apparently <sala'ali> sala'ali is a modified form of صلى الله عليه وسلم which might be an abbreviated version of the Arabic language formula صلى الله عليه وسلم. In the second and third incantations, it is spelled as صلى الله وسلم <salali>.

The word nari is absent from all available Mandinka dictionaries. The translation 'stop!' was suggested by Abdulay Daafee.

Line 3. Koto may be also interpreted as another word for 'male' (it usually appears in compounds bàkoto 'he-goat', såkoto 'ram').

Line 4. Faakundamaa, baakundamaa are ideophones depicting the antelope's walk.

Lines 5, 6. j́nna 'bush spirit' is a reading suggested by Abdulay Daafee. The literal reading d́ina 'religion' does not fit the context.

Line 6. k̀ẽee is a word from the respectful vocabulary⁶ for 'to sleep'.

Line 7. The final element of the line is transcribed here as tata. In fact, it might be a decorative element indicating the end of the magic formula. Cf. a similar element at the end of the San Bamana text 5.

Lines 8 and 9. It seems to be an enumeration of ingredients for the fabrication of a fetish or amulet. It looks like they were written post...
factum, in the blank space, and line 9 was fitted into the left margin of the page.

Line 9. mànkara or mànkari is an unidentified species of antelope.

Text 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>استلام مُحمَد</td>
<td>Salali muḥam ʿadi</td>
<td>1. Greetings to Mohammed and the Highest Mohammed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>والعلي</td>
<td>wa’laʿaliy1</td>
<td>Jimbiŋ jimbiŋ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>مُحمَد</td>
<td>muḥam2adi</td>
<td>Jimbiŋ kalaka kalaka jimbiŋ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>فئن مُحمَد</td>
<td>ṣalaq1a</td>
<td>kalaka jimbiŋ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>انْتَيْ</td>
<td>q1alaq1a</td>
<td>jinbiŋ nī̀ té à lá</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>۲۰۱۶</td>
<td>Ḵsalaa</td>
<td>jimbiŋ. If you don't sing this,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>انتْي</td>
<td>ṣalaq1a</td>
<td>4. be puny. Its name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>منْ كاْنْا</td>
<td>ṣalaq1a</td>
<td>args is the leaf of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>جَبَل</td>
<td>ṣalaq1a</td>
<td>kasalaa jàmba mú.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>نَتْيْا</td>
<td>Ḵsalaa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>كَوْدُس</td>
<td>Ḵsalaa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>اسمه كسل</td>
<td>Ḵsalaa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>كُدّس</td>
<td>Ḵsalaa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments

Lines 1-2. Jimbiŋ kalaka kalaka jimbiŋ is a magic formula. There is a Mandinka word jimbi 'a headgear with fringes', but it hardly fits this context. Kalaka is not a Mandinka word, but might possibly be related to qalaq 'anxiety, insomnia (Arabic)'.

Line 4. Kùdasi is a verb meaning 'to remain underdeveloped', 'to fail to reach normal size' (absent from Creissles et al. 1982).

Kásalaa is an unidentified type of grass, also known as kàcancároo.

Abdulay Daafée commented: Í s'à buru jàŋ 'After the incantation is pronounced,) you should rub it'.

Text 3
Transliteration | Transcription | Translation
---|---|---
.dağı\(^n\) daği\(^n\) warika\(^n\) warika\(^n\) ku\(^n\)tu\(^n\) | Dajiŋ dajiŋ warikaŋ warikaŋ kuntuŋ, | 2. Cut dajiŋ dajiŋ warikaŋ warikaŋ,
.tama‘li sakata\(^n\) tama‘li f\(_1\)abi | tamaali sákatuŋ tamaali fàa bii. | 3. always, that is, always, to kill today.
.tama‘li f\(_1\)ubi | Tamaali fó bii ábadaŋ. | 4. Always, up to this day, forever.
.ʔismahi kisi musu ra\(^n\) | Ismihu këse móso rà. | 5. Its name is a rubber bullet.

Comments

Line 2. *dajiŋ dajiŋ warikaŋ warikaŋ* are magic formulae - These are not Mandinka words.

Lines 3, 4. | <tama‘li> *tamaali* is certainly Arabic *tamalli* 'always' (this word is absent from the everyday Mandinka).

Line 3. | <sakatan> *sakatan* was read by Abdulay Daafee as sókotùŋ 'that is'. Cf. in Creissels et al. 1982 sàko, sòko 'surtout, encore plus, à plus fort raison'.

Line 5. *Móso rà* is an instrument name from the verb móso 'to rub while spitting and pronouncing incantations'. This line denotes the destination of the incantation.

3. *Grammatological remarks to the Mandinka hunters' incantations*
On the grounds of the spelling of the palatal nasal sonant ɲ, these texts would belong to the main Mandinka Ajami variety (cf. Vydrin, this volume): ɲ is OK represented by ى. Further grammatical characteristics of this document are:

- -s is usually written as sin, except for one case where it is written as šin, i.e. <šubu> sùbu 'animal, meat'.
- -j (a voiced palatal affricate) is spelled as eiher ڦ or ڦ, with the latter appearing both word-initially and word-finally 8.
- غ is used as support for any diacritic expressing a vowel, when it is not preceded by a consonant. Furthermore, it also is used for spelling of the palatal oral sonant y, although there is only one occurrence in the text, i.e. غ | <‘ita^n> yitandi 1:7 'to show'.
- The nasal syllabic phoneme ŋ (which appears in Mandinka in only two words: ڦ 'I', ڦ 'we') is written as hamza, i.e. 但仍 (Which could also be an ‘ain, i.e. غ) without any support or vocalic diacritics.
- Letters representing emphatics in the orthography of Arabic are not used, with the only exception of the rather obscure word ٷق | <q1alaq1a> (2:2).
- Nūn, qāf and fā' are written in the Mağribī way: In word-final positions, nūn has normally (with only one exception) no dot, while qāf is always spelled with one dot above, i.e. ق, and fā' always with one dot below, i.e. ﯽ.

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7 In the text, there is not a single word containing a p, which makes the other diagnostic criterion (see Vydrin, present volume) inapplicable.
8 In one word j is probably written using ڌ, ڌ | <dina'> (incantation 1, lines 5 and 6). However, we are not sure about the interpretation of this word.
• Only the three standard vocalic diacritics, i.e. ˴, ˶, and ˵, are used and there are no attempts to differentiate closed and mid vowels.
• 'Alif, wāw, and yā’ do not indicate in any way length of vowels. These letters appear mainly at the end of words, sometimes in disagreement with the preceding vocalic diacritic, and always without any visible correlation to vowel length, e.g. ٴ ḇé ‘imperfective marker’. However, such ‘fake length' is much less frequent than in some other Mandinka Ajami texts.
• The syllable-final nasal element is usually rendered by tanwīn, e.g. سُلْوُلْي سِلا ولَعُلَ 'red monkey' (1:9), and rarely by nūn as in مَكْرَتْ مَن كَرَا 'species of antelope' (1:9).

4. Bamana texts from San

In 1972, during one of his sojourns in Mali, Gérard Dumestre dispatched a friend of his, Almamy Malik Yattara, to the ancient commercial town of San to look for old Bamana manuscripts. Almamy Yattara was a remarkable representative of the Muslim intelligentsia of Mali, and two books were dedicated to him (Yattara & Salvaing 2000; 2003). Being a Muslim cleric, it was much easier for him than for a white man to gain confidence among his coreligionists. A couple of weeks later, Almamy Yattara returned to Bamako with copies of five manuscripts: Bory Bary, the head of one of the Islamic families of San, allowed him (for a modest recompense) to copy by hand texts, which had originally been written by Bary's father, Amadu Bary, in 1911.
Being literate in French, Almamy Yattara provided each manuscript with a brief comment, which yet proved difficult to understand at times. These comments are reproduced here in an English translation, while the French originals are given in footnotes in the author’s own orthography. There is also a comment written by Almamy Yattara referring to the entire set of the documents:

The length of this sheet is equal to the origin. I have written them from a white paper, the characters are equal.

The gift for these five documents was 6000 Malian Francs, for I gave 3000 Francs for two initial ones, when I saw that I was too tough, and I did it in order to have more, if any. And for the other three manuscripts I gave 3000 Franc. It is the time of working the farm. Nobody has time. By Almamy Yattara.9

Today, 39 years after the manuscripts were copied by Almamy Yattara and exactly 100 years after they were created, we proceed to their publication.

Text 1
Almamy Yattara's comment:

9 The original text:
les longere de sette feille et egal de loriginal. je les estrie de papié Bilansse le karaktere et egalla
le cado de cet 5 dockimen. eté 6000 faran. pissique les 2 prumier je done 3000 F lorrssque jevi jessi tro diure et je fai sa pour avar encor si yana. et avec le 3 manisci- lotre je done 3000 F. ya le travaus de samnp. toute monde nonpa de tan. par Almamy Yattara

1. Karantela kòlòmba. Dùgu bëë yà sòrc yàn
2. tùma mìn , dùgu sigïrì kà kòlò mà sòrc yàn.
3. Màà kòò tìw yà fò ànì yò kò kòlò tòì à dì yù nì fùlaw nàna,
4. ò kàì à yë k ì lâjë. Bàìì nì fùlaw yà lâjë à b'ù ìfìn
5. nà kùnàdïyara, nò tè, à tìgì bë sà. Nì à mà sà,
6. à b è ìfìn. Karantela kòlòmba, tùlonì bà kë à dálà
7. sààn ó sààn . Nì mònnikètìoma tìtì, màa bë tàa mànìi kë
8. kò là. Kò mìn tògò kò Sankeere. Nì tùlonì é mà kë à dálà, jëgë tè sòrc. Ë bë fòìì
9. kà tùlonì è kë
10. they should not see it. But if Fulbe see it, it will blind them,
11. if they are lucky, otherwise, they will die. If he does not die, he will become blind. Plays are organized near the big well Karantela. When the time of fishing comes, people go to fish
to the river. The river whose name is Sankaeree. If games are not played near it, there will be no fish. First,
15. The same thing is done at the fishing place, near Sankere. It happens every year. If the village does not abandon it (the rite), food will be abundant, the harvest will be good, the peace will advance. If the village abandons it, food will be scarce, diseases will get ahead, there will be a war in the country, rulers will die, children will fall ill, fire will wreak havoc.

Page 2

11. when Traore children are born, they bring the child there and say to the well: 4. "Karantela, the Big Well, good evening! You are the native, it is you
Almamy Yattara's comment:

The possessor of the document "Janaba koli" is the same Bory Bary, inherited from his father who wrote (it) in order to teach religion to the Bamana people. The copyist Almamy Malik Yattara.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11} The original text:
le detantere de docimen de janaba koli le meme Bory Bary airta a son pere que ecri pour - enssenge les Banbara en religon. le copissite Almamy malick Yattara.
Transliteration
nin⁰'ye₁y₁ ǵn' bụ kwliy₁y₁ 
ğına' ba ku₁w₁i bik₄-e
'ʔa bik-e ni li sanya'leny₁y₁ ʔi bifu₁łu₁ k-a

Transcription
1. Nin yé jānaba kōli yé.
2. Jānaba kōli b é ké, à b é ké ní jí sániyalen yé. Í b é fòlo kà
3. Í kórọla kò kà í tége filà kò kà í dá mūguri
4. Kà í nún kò k 'í nédà kò k'í bólo
5. Fíla kò k 'í kùnkolo màsá ¹² k'í tūló màsá
7. Í b é fòlo ní kùnkolo yé k 'à kò sìncé sàba
8. K'í fàn kēlèn kò k iníbolo f è, kà númabolo
9. Kò k 'à lágé ní jí sèrà à b èé lá. Í b é jí lásé
10. Í kòton ná kà jí k'è jùkùnàw mà. Í b é jí lásé
11. Í kó à ká nà kà jìgin í bárák érò mà, í ká jàntó í yèrè lá
12. Í kànà sè í kèyà la ní i bólo
13. Êkànà sè i.
14. Êkànà sè i.

Translation
1. These are the ablutions.
2. The ablutions are performed with clean water. First of all,
3. Wash your lower parts and your both hands, rinse your mouth,
4. Wash your nose, wash your face, wash both of your
5. Hands, scrape your head and your ears,
6. Wash your feet. Then begin your ablutions.
7. Start with your head and wash it thrice,
8. Wash one side with your right hand, whash your left
9. Hand and examine if water has reached everywhere. Bring water
10. To the lower part of your back, pour water on your buttocks. Make it in a way
11. That the water may reach the lower belly, take care of
12. Not touching your private parts with your hand. Then the
13. A form inexistent in Standard Bamana, which might be Maninka in origin.

¹²
yey₁ ǧn’b ku₁wliyey₁
dè yé jänabakoló yé
has sufficed you.
These are the religious ablutions
dè yé jänabakoló yé

min⁽u⁾f₁u₁wra‘īl₂ⁿha
14. mín f ṣira Ála
sira’y₁ la
sira lá.

‘īl₂ⁿha ma’?n₁u
demena’’my₁n₁.
15. Ála má án
dêmëna. Ámiina.
15. May God help us.
Amen!

---

13 The original text:
le detantere de locimen kalan bidamine ni alatogo ye Bory Bary airite a son pere le meme
Amadou Bari que eciri pour enssenge le Bambara. le copisste - Almamy malick yattara. a
san en 1972.

14 The syntax of this phrase is not clear.
kelen⁰ yey₁ miyn⁰ yey₁ 'll²⁰h mhm⁰ f₁anay₁ 'll²⁰h k-a tiyden⁰ du₁ kàğiğ-e niseba' yey₁ nin⁰ duwru, nunun⁰ de yey₁ sil'meya' yey₁ nima' yey₁ ninun⁰ du₁ n⁰ kà' ba'ra. 'ṣi keyra 'sila' mayey₁ yuman⁰ ya'.

yuman⁰ ya' yumawn⁰ yey₁ 'ʔi k-a 'll²⁰h tiy³tki⁴yey₁ kà' mhmd ti y³tkiya'? 'ʔi kà' melekew⁰ tiy³tki⁴yay₁ kà' 'ʔal³gan²a tiy³tki⁴yay₁ kà' 'ʔal³kiyaw⁰ma du₁ wu₁ tiy³tki⁴yay₁ wu₁ de bima' ke 'sila'ma' yuman⁰ yey₁ 'sila'ma' 'ʔabiwakali 'll⁴⁴h la'. wakali y³umunye₁ wakali de yey₁ nima' yemin⁰ su₁ru₁ 'a ka' du₁en₁ 'll⁹h de ya' diyma' nima' miyn₁ su₁ru₁ 'ʔi k' du₁ 'll⁹h de ma'

ye mín yé Ála, Muhamadu fána Ála kà cíden dön; 5. kà í jíjà sáli lá àni sáníya ; kà sún sunkaló lá ; kà jáka bò;


14. diymay₁ ni'?i'í buñà 'ʔi kà du₁ 'll⁹h de ya' siymay₁ ni'?i sa'ra 'll⁹h de y' seymay₁ 15. diymay₁ ni'?i'í buñà 'ʔi kà du₁ 'll⁹h de ya' siymay₁ ni'?i sa'ra 'll⁹h de y' seymay₁ 16.
The possessor of the medical document for hernia that is named San. Bary, a Muslim cleric. Written by his father Amadou Bary, a Muslim cleric. The copyist Almamy Malik Yattara in 1972 in San.¹⁵

¹⁵ The original text:
1. Nin yé fúra kúma y él, kókili fúra.
3. n’à bànanà, à bé ké bàrxarxàdimi yé.
4. Wò fúrx é suxé: é b é gòkun16 mugà
5. ânî kélen b ó, ì b’òbì k ‘à m b kórèbe.
6. Wò tûmà î b ’à wórc, ì b é Tumbutu kôô dönì
7. k’à lá f ‘à ká tîmïxà. Ì b’à sli só kôò k’à dàtu gù
8. kà só fàna dàtu gù à dà lâ. Nî dúgu jèrä
9. kà b’ô tå k’ à dûn fà k’ î kòñbàrà fà. Nî jî b’à lâ
10. í b’ô min. Nî yé ngélènnin sôrc í b’à fàga k’à kíli bó
11. k’à dûn kà hêrà à kàn . Wô tûmà î b ’i jàntó i

Transcription
1. fúra
kúma y ì, kókili
fúra.
2. fúrx
kókili fúrx
é. Kókili.
3. n’à bànanà, à
bé ké
bàrxarxàdimi yé.
4. Wò fúrx suxé:
è b è
gòkun16 mugà
5. ânî kélen b ó,
ì b’òbì k
’à m b
kórèbe.
6. Wò tûmà î
b’ à wórc,
ì b é
Tumbutu kôô
dònì
7. k’à lá f
à ká
tîmïxà. Ì b’à
sli só
kôò
k’à
dàtu gù
8. kà só
fàna
dàtu gù
à dà lâ. Nî
dúgu jèrä
9. kà b’ô tå
k’ à
dûn fà k’ î
kòñbàrà fà.
Nî jî b’à lâ
10. í b’ô
min. Nî
yé
ngélènnin
sôrc
b’à
fàga
k’à
bó
dûn
kà
hêrà
à
kàn .
Wô
tûmà
î
b’ i
jàntó i

Translation
1. These are words of a medicine, a testicle (hernia) medicine.
2. A medicine which heals testicles. Testicles,
3. if there is a disease, it manifests itself as an ache of the lower belly.
4. Here is a means to treat it: get twenty-one beans of the wonderbean plant
(Canavalia ensiformis),
5. boil them till they are very well cooked.
6. Then peel them, put a little salt of Tombaktu
7. to make it mild.
Put it in the house and close it
8. and also close the door of the house. At dawn,
9. take it and eat it so that it fills your belly. If there is a juice,
10 drink it. If you can get a ground squirrel, kill it, take its
testicles
11. and eat them, and be reassured with it. Then abstain

le detantere de docimen medicalman pour le hérnì conapele kookili foura. le même Bory Bary - éciri par son pere Amadou Bay marabou. le kopisse Almamy malick Yattara. a 1972 a san.
16 It could be also nkòkun 'head of a species of locust', although the following context makes this interpretation less probable.
Text 5

Almamy Yattara's comment:

The possessor of the document "cilissi foura" is again Bory Bary. Found in the belongings of his father Amadou Bary, a Muslim cleric. Copied by Almamy Malik Yattara in 1972 in San.17

---

Transliteration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transliteration</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nin⁰ye'y₁ kilis-i 1.</td>
<td>Nin yé kilisifura 1.</td>
<td>This it a medicine for magic spell. If a person falls ill,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiwuра y₁</td>
<td>yé.</td>
<td>if you see that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ye'y₁</td>
<td>nimu₁k₄-u₁</td>
<td>banana’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'ʔi mana’ bana’</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

17 The original text:
le detantere de dociman de cilissi foura. tougoure Bory Barty tourve danles afer de son pere - Amadou Bary le marabou. copié par Almamy malick yattara a san en 1972 a san
k₄elyalen₁⁰ yey₁  gëleyalen yé m ̀go ṭë, i b'à bòlo mine
mu₁k₄u₁f₁ey₁ ’?i ba’ bulu₄mine
ka’ y₃es-i yiri ma’ wu₁ yirin₁⁰ tu₁k₄u₁ k-u₁ kun₀’gyey₁
3. k’à nénin yiri mà, wò yirin t’ıgo kó kùnje.

’?i ba’ f₁u₁ yiri ma’ yiriba’ kun’gyey₁ ’i de yey₁ yiri k₄₁u₁ yé yiri kòrò yé, yiri yey₁ yiri
ku₁ru₁ de bibana’
5. kòrò dè bë bàna
banaba’ tu₁nu⁰ ’a seray₁ ma’ ku₁ru₁w⁰ bela
6. ù má sé kà bàna
’u masey₁ ka’ bana’
keneya’ kun’gyey₁.

m⁰’biydeli nifúra yey₁
7. n b’i dèli ní fúra
miy₄₁° bi’?i k-a
bulu₄ lo la tilebebulu
tu₂f₁ey₁
8. ní kòrownfèbúlu ní
niku₁ru₁n ’f₁ey₁ buлу
báfanbúlu ní
tu₂f₁u₁
9. wò túma i b ’jì dòni, wò túma i
niwu₁ru₁d₄-k-u₁ buлу
bólú kári fàn b ee
f₁a’n⁰bef₁ey₁
10. i b’ò màra i b é
tu₂f₁ey₁ ’i
ba’ tu₁bi
kasu₁ ’i ba’ tu₁bi
banaba’tu₁
11. b’à min k ‘à kò
ka’ mi ka’ k₄₁w ka’ mi
ku₄w ’i ku₄w
f₁u₁w sìy₃isek₄-i
kò fòo sì NRN séegín
tile₄se₄-i ku₄nu₁w
bnba’tu₁ ’a bkeneya’.
’b’ muy₃u₄d₄niy₁
12. tile séegin
kòń. Bànaba’t, à
be kéneya. A b ’à
mụnyu dòsnin

the person is
seriously ill, take
him by the hand
3. and direct him to
the plant whose
name is kunje
(Guiera
senegalensis
shrub).
4. You say about
the plant, kunje big
tree. You have seen
a big tree, it is an
old
5. tree that heals
old disease. A sick
person, if it was a
question of any old
person,
6. they could not
treat old diseases
and heal them.
Kunje,

7. I beg you, if all
the medicine that
you have in foliage,
the western foliage
8. and eastern
foliage, and
northern foliage and
southern foliage,
9. then stay a little
bit, then cut it
everywhere,

10. keep it and
bring it to your
house, cook it, let
the sick person
11. drink it and
wash him, let him
drink it and wash
him, and wash him,
up to eight times
12. during eight
days. The sick
person will recover.
Let him wait a little
13. again eight
days, if he has not
Recovered, repeat it, do it as for the first time.

14. "ba ká sé dàn ná. Í bë táa só, í b'á tóbi k'á kê fólo.

14. till the end. Go home, cook it and do it.

15. tá nògò ñé, fóó sì ní n'séeGIN. Ní bànabaatò má kéNÉYa

15. like the first time, and so, eight times. If the sick person has not recovered

16. wò lá, wò túma ã bê sà. Wò dë yé kùNJEFURA yé.

16. this time, then he will die. It is the medicine of kunjè.

17. A báNNà.

17. It is the end.

---

5. Grammatological properties of the Bamana Ajami from San

Table 1: Independent units of the Bamana Ajami orthography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Phonemic value</th>
<th>Transliteration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ؕ</td>
<td>∅</td>
<td>∅</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ؕ</td>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ؕ</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>/n/</td>
<td>n(_1) / n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>/n/</td>
<td>y(_3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>/h/</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ؕ</td>
<td>w; length of u, o, ɔ</td>
<td>/w/, /Vː/</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ñ</td>
<td>y, ñ; length of i, e, ɛ</td>
<td>/j/, /ʃ/, /Vː/</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 In final position.
Comments:

- ح appears only in the name of the Prophet محمد <mḥmd> Muḥammad.
- ز is used representing ژ only once in an Arabic loan, i.e. زکا | <zak’> ژکا 'alms' (3:5) (from Arabic zakāt)
- ص appears only once, in an Arabic loan, i.e. صلی | <ṣalila> سلیlá 'with a greeting' (3:1) (from Arabic șalā).
- ع appears only once (2:15), with its meaning remaining unclear.
- ق (with two upper dots as in Mašriqī) representing گ occurs only once, i.e. in the word قلن | <kuqu1na’> قلون 'arrived to maturity (perfective form)' (3:15).
- Nūn in word-final position appears usually without a dot, i.e. ن. However, the dotted variant, i.e. م، is also encountered in the texts.
- The usual graphemic representation of ɲ as ﺱ (with two lower dots and one upper dot) never appears in word-final positions. If a word has ɲ in the final syllable, ﺱ is always followed by ی. Therefore, it is impossible to figure out which Arabic character served as its base, i.e. ﺱ ی or ﺱ ی.
- ﻣ is used representing ں in only one single case, i.e. سیم | <siyey1> سینه 'time' (1/2:6) (which may be a copyist's or author's error).
- ی appears in the texts only twice, i.e. in ﺑ ﺘو | <y2umawn0y3y1> نهمن يه 'it is good...' (3/1:8), and in ﺑ ﻢ ﺘو | <y2u1k4u1n0y3y1> نگمن يه 'with each other' (5:15).
Prenasalization of initial consonants is marked in the same manner as word-internal nasalization by a \( n \ddash \), i.e. \( <n^0> \), such as in \( \text{n̄ n} \) | \( <n^0\text{k}_4\text{eleni}> \) \( ng̊éënnin \) 'ground squirrel'. Compare also a form \( \text{˸} \) | \( <k^4_4\text{u}_1\text{w}> \) \( gò \) 'wonderbean (Canavalia ensiformis)' (4:4) which is attested in Charles Bailleul's dictionary (2007) as \( ngò \) (the prenasalization in this word might be absent from the dialect of the manuscript's author).

5.1 Diacritics

\( \text{Fatha}, \text{kasra}, \) and \( \text{ḍamma} \) are used for representation of \( a, i, \) and \( u \) respectively, while \( \text{sukūn} \) represents the lack of any vowel (in fact, it used only with \( nūn \)).

\( \text{Tašdīd} \) is rarely employed representing gemination of a nasal sonant as in e.g. \( \text{ḵbl}_1\text{n}^2\text{a'} > \text{ḵbl}_1\text{n} \) 'to the well' (1/2:9) - mostly it is used with unclear purpose, e.g. \( \text{ḇš} \) | \( <\text{dimis}^2\text{aw}^0> \) \( \text{dénmīsēnw} \) 'children' (1/1:16). Also, it occurs in Arabic loans in order to reproduce the original orthography, e.g. \( \text{nl} \) | \( <\text{r}_1\text{d}^0\text{gan}^2\text{a}> \) \( \text{̀lijān}_1\text{a} \) 'Paradise' (3/1:9), \( \text{̱n} \) | \( <\text{g̱h}^2\text{an}^2\text{ama}> \) \( \text{̀jāhān}_1\text{ama} \) 'hell' (3/1:9).

In the Bamana Ajami orthography, new diacritics have been introduced for the representation of middle vowels: an 'inversed \( \text{ḍamma} \)', i.e. \( \ddash \) | \( <\text{u}_1> \), representing \( o \) or \( ɔ \), as well as a lower dot, i.e. \( \cdot \) | \( <\text{e}> \), representing \( e \) and \( ɛ \). There is also a combination of lower dot + \( \text{fatha} \), i.e. \( \ddash \) | \( <\text{ae}> \), which represents the open front vowel \( ɛ \), and which is used only

\[ \text{19 The tašdīd on top of the hā' was put here mistakenly by the writer.} \]
in text 4:  هر: 'be in peace' (4:11),  ير: 'self' (4:11).

Generally, vocalic diacritics are provided. However, they may be omitted from time to time, apparently due to negligence of the writer or copyist.

Diacritics representing vowels which are not preceded by a consonant are placed on top of a supporting ْdaeim hamza, i.e. ٰ | <‘?a> or ! | <‘?i>, such as e.g. in ٰ | <‘?u> Û ‘they' (1/2:6), ! | <’?e> Û 'you (singular emphatic)' (1/2:3).

Vocalic nasality is marked either by ٰ in word-internal position, when the nasal vowel is followed by a labial consonant, or by ٰ with ٰ, i.e. ٰ | <n⁰>, in all the other contexts, e.g. ٰ | <karan⁰tela ku₁lu₁m⁰ba≥ Karantela k lånba 'big well of Karantela' (1/1:1), ٰ | <yan₁⁰> yàn 'here' (1/1:1). Not infrequently, the nasality remains unmarked in word-final positions, such as e.g. ꔺ | <du₁> versus ꔺ | <du₁n⁰> d´n 'to know' (1/2:1) (both spelling variants appear in the same line), ꔺ | <bau⁰> b à fàn 'North' (1/2:7), ꔺ | <’?a bìfiyey₁≥ à bì fiyen 'he will become blind' (1/1:6), ꔺ | <kele> kélen 4:5 'one'. More rarely, and probably by negligence, it also remains unmarked in word-internal positions, as e.g. in ꔺ | <den⁰kuwdi≥ dênkundi ‘baptism' (1/2:8). When followed by the plural marker -w /û/, nasality is never marked in the spelling of vowels - e.g. ꔺ | <dug⁴lew⁰> -dûgulew ‘natives' (1/2:2), ꔺ | <dunaw⁰> dûnanw 'strangers' (1/2:1), ꔺ | <nidew⁰> nî dênw… ‘if children…' (1/2:3).

The syllabic nasal ꔺ, which occurs in the first singular pronoun of Bamana is featured in the texts only once, where it is followed by a labial
consonant and expressed by a mīm with a sukūn, e.g. <m⁰biydeli> ń b’í déli 'I beg you' (5:10). Supposedly, in all other contexts it is rendered by nūn (in the same way as prenasalization and syllable-final nasal).

Vowel length is marked irregularly: 〈bey’a su₁ru₁〉 bēē y’ā sārī 'all have found it...' (1/1:1), but 〈tiy₃batu〉 tiṣnebaatu 'truthful' (3/1:3). On the other hand, letters marking vocalic length in Arabic orthography, i.e. ۴, ي, ۵, and ٠, may appear where there is no vocalic length in Bamana: 〈na’na〉 nāna 'came' (1/1:3), 〈sama’sen₁⁰〉 sāmasen 'buttress' (3/1:3), 〈miyn¹⁰〉 mīn relativization marker (3/1:2).

Quite regularly, vocalic assimilation (usually referred to in the description of Bamana as "elision") is expressed by a letter representing a long vowel in Arabic orthography, particularly when the resulting vowel is a long aa or oo: 〈ʔu kana’ yey₁ ka’ lağey₁〉 ु kān’ā [kānā] yē k’ā [kā] lājē 'they should not see it' (1/1:4), 〈’i bu₁w tu₁bi〉 í b’ò [bòò] tōbi 'you will cook it' (4:5). If this assimilation results in an i, it is represented as a separate syllable: In such a case, ii is written as kasra below a supporting ‘alif hamza, with an additional kasra on the preceding letter, i.e. ی. E.g. 〈k₂-i ’i sen₁⁰ ku₁w〉 k’í sēn kò ‘to wash your feet' (2:6).

Very frequently, word-finally 'length letters' are encountered which do not express any length in Bamana Ajami orthography, as they do in other orthographic traditions, e.g. <wú₁ ku₁f₁ey₁> wò kó fè 'after that' (1/1:11), <sumay₁ by₃y₁> sùma bí nè ‘food will be abundant’ (1/1:13), <suk₄uw> súgu 'sort' (4:4).
The plural marker, /u/, is rendered by a wāw with a sukūn, i.e. َ|<w^0> as in e.g. مَا زَرَّعُ |<ma ku_ru_w^0> màa kɔʁɔw /màa kɔʁʁɔ/ 'old people' (1/1:3).

The author of the texts makes an effort to maintain the original orthography in Arabic loans, although he does not always succeed, as e.g. in Al-kiyūm |<ʔal^0kiyaw^0ma> ʾalikiyama 'Doomsday', which should rather be القيامة |<ʔalqiya’mt> al-qiyāma. In any case, the author writes Arabic loans which have undergone phonological changes following Bamana Ajami orthographic tradition, such as e.g. ِ|<gie_y1> jīnɛ 'world' (cf. Arabic dunyā) (3/1:14), ِ|<haera> héra 'be in peace' (cf. Arabic ḥayra) (4:11).

5.1 Orthographic segmentation of words

Segmentation of written speech into graphic words in San Bamana Ajami is more or less orderly (especially in comparison with the specimens published in Vydrine 1998). Content words are normally written separately and are fused together only rarely, e.g. as in مَا تَنَافِنَ |<ma' tibenima'> yey_1> Màa té bën ní màa yé ‘people do not meet each other' (literally 'a man does not meet a man') (1/2:9).

Postpositions are mostly, albeit not always, written together with the preceding word, e.g. إِبِي نْغُلْبِي |<ʔe de yey_1 duk_4ulen^0 yey_1> é dè yé dùgulen yé ‘you are the native’ (1/2:4), تَبِي أَنْكُرُنِي |<tilebif_ey_1 'ʔaniku_ru_n^0 f_1 yey_1> tilebi fè ànî káran fè 'on the western side and on the eastern side' (1/2:6). Monosyllabic auxiliaries (predictive markers) are usually written together with either the preceding or the subsequent word.
In some instances, derived words are split up orthographically in accordance with their morpheme boundaries, e.g. ٣٣٣٣ | <du₁k⁴-u₁ lila’> dògoli lá 1/2:9 'secretely'.

5.2 The dialectal characteristics of the texts

The manuscripts are written in a Bamana variety quite close to what is today Standard Bamana, with certain features typical of the eastern dialects, such as the imperfective marker b́, as opposed to bɛ in Standard Bamana.

Most often, the lexeme for 'person' appears in its eastern dialectal form, i.e. ٣٣٣٣ | <ma'> màa (1/1:3,5:5). However, occasionally it may also appear in the western dialectal form, i.e. ٣٣٣٣ | <mu₁k⁴-u₁> mögɔ (5:1). Throughout all the manuscripts, western forms predominate, e.g. ٣٣٣٣ | <tu₁k⁴-u₁> tɔgɔ 'name' (1/1:8, 3/1:1, 5:3 ) (cf. the eastern form twàa).

Occasionally, intervocalic velars are elided, as for example in ٣٣٣٣ | <siiyy₁> sii 'to sit' (4:7) (cf. Standard Bamana sigi), or ٣٣٣٣ | <y₃u₁w nay₁> nɔɔn ná 'to each other' (4:13) (cf. Standard Bamana nɔgɔn ná). Elision of intervocalic velar consonants is typical of Maninka and Mandinka languages spoken in the western part of the Manding area, but also for numerous Manding variants on the southern and eastern periphery of that area.

Also, at times archaic forms are encountered in the texts, such as e.g. ٣٣٣٣ | <kɪya'> gíya 'to grow clear' (4:8) (cf. Standard Bamana jé or jé-ya, Proto-Manding *xóyɪ, and in certain Maninka varieties gé).
References


