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Résumé
M. Jackson — L'identité des morts: aspects des rites mortuaires dans une société d'Afrique occidentale. Les rites mortuaires sont assez généralement reconnus comme constituant un aspect social du travail de deuil. Deux traits spécialement frappants à cet égard sont, d'une part, la façon dont le deuil est assumé ou simulé par des personnes non immédiatement affectées, d'autre part, la façon dont son expression est temporellement déplacée et socialement contrôlée. L'étude montre comment les Kuranko manipulent l'affect pour résoudre, entre autres, les problèmes naissant de la contradiction entre continuité sociale et discontinuité personnelle ; la séparation entre l'identité physique concrète du défunt et son identité culturelle ; la dialectique entre le concept du mort-objet et celui du mort-sujet. Les rites sont étroitement liés à la position sociale du défunt et les funérailles constituent en quelque sorte un psychodrame collectif reproduisant la structure totale de la société.

Citer ce document / Cite this document :
doi : 10.3406/cea.1977.2454

Document généré le 02/06/2016
In recent years several important studies have been published on the psychological processes of mourning, grieving, and the bereavement reaction (Bowlby 1961, 1971, 1975; Krupp 1962; Parkes 1975). The bereavement reaction has been investigated as a special form of separation anxiety and it has been argued that the human social patternings of grief, defence, mourning, and reaction to object loss are fundamentally phylogenetic adaptations. Since Darwin (1872) and Freud (1917) first drew attention to the adaptative value of mourning patterns, the evolved behavioural complexes of mourning and grieving have been studied in detail among both human and infra-human groups (Pollock 1974). One of the most urgent tasks for social anthropologists today is to explore the relationships between ritual behaviour and basic phylogenetic structures, while also seeking to account for the diverse cultural configurations of the basic behavioural elements and the diversity of meanings which these configurations possess.

Two of the most striking characteristics of mortuary rituals are (1) the manner in which the ubiquitous and probably innate patternings of the bereavement reaction are assumed or simulated by persons other than the immediate bereaved (i.e., by persons who experience no direct personal loss), and (2) the manner in which the expression of grief is delayed and socially-managed. The psychological mechanisms of simulation and deferral enable us to understand the social phenomenon of

1. George Steiner’s eloquent comments (1975: 227) upon the ‘dialectic of “alternity”, the genius of language for planned counter-factuality’ are apposite here: ‘Uniquely, one conjectures, among animal species, we cultivate inside us, we conceptualize and prefigure the enigmatic terror of our own personal extinction […] It is unlikely that man, as we know him, would have survived without the fictive, counter-factual, anti-determinist means of language, without the semantic capacity, generated and stored in the “superfluous” zones of the cortex, to conceive of, to articulate possibilities beyond the treadmill of organic decay and death.’

2. Simulation implies, of course, both genuine and feigned sympathy. Mourning is not only the reaction to the loss of a loved person; it occurs with ‘the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as fatherland, liberty, an ideal, and so on’ (Freud 1957: 153).

3. I have examined elsewhere the figurative uses of grief, mourning and death in the context of Kuranko initiation rites (Jackson 1977b).

4. Evolutionary biology recognizes the ‘power to delay or withhold the instinctive responses as an essential precondition for the emergence of adaptive variability from within the rigidity of instinct-systems’ (Stenhouse 1974: 86).

the double or second funeral (Hertz 1960) and the distinction which is commonly made between physical and social death; it is rare that these are conceived to take place simultaneously (Parkes 1975: 183). The conscious management of grief and the social 'control' of affect make it possible to coalesce and resolve together both personal problems of bereavement and community or family problems of social reintegration. From a sociological point of view, a mortuary ritual enables a great variety of individual emotions to find Ego syntonic expression in the same collective activity (Devereux 1961: 236). From a psychological point of view, a mortuary ritual enables the bereaved to 'work through' the three phases of separation anxiety—protest, despair, detachment—and, after a period of social exclusion, to return to the community. From an existential point of view, a mortuary ritual enables people to pass from a situation where death is something that may happen to them (an external and biological 'given') to a position in which they define the character of dying and the moment of death (death becomes a signifier, a metaphor, an invention of the mind).

In this essay I am interested primarily in the social management or 'manipulation' of affect and in the cultural resolution of problems pertaining to death. These problems, which constitute a kind of set, are: the contradiction between the continuity of society and the discontinuity of human life (the mortality of individuals); the problem of separating one's feelings towards the corpse from one's memories of the deceased; the problem of separating physical, idiosyncratic aspects of the dead person's identity from spiritual, cultural aspects. The dialectical interplay between the idea of 'the dead as object' (a thing-for-others) and the idea of 'the dead as subject' (a person-for-himself) underlies these various contrasts. The ethnographical exploration of this interplay will be carried out through an account and analysis of mortuary customs among the Kuranko of northeast Sierra Leone.5

Mortuary Customs

Death

The Kuranko make a clear distinction between the deaths of animals and the deaths of people; in the first case death is a termination of existence, in the second case death is a transformation of existence. Of animals one uses the verb ara faga 'to die' and the same verb is used to describe homicide (fagale; a murderer is known as morgo fagale 'person killer').6 Thus, if Tamba kills Yira one says Tamba ara Yira

5. General ethnographical background to the Kuranko has been published elsewhere (Jackson 1974, 1975, 1977a).
6. Certain localities, known as morgo faga funema 'person, kill, grassed area', were once used for the slaying of captive enemies; it was forbidden for anyone but warriors to go there.
The verb ara sa ‘to die’ is used in human cases. Most significantly it connotes the continuing influence of the spirit (nie) of the dead person in the lives of the living. Apart from these terms we should also note the verb ara ban, used to refer to cessation of activity, such as a piece of work when finished, a woman who can no longer bear children, a lineage which ‘dies out’. Further, there are numerous circumlocutory ways of speaking about death, e.g. a nie ara ta ‘his life has gone’, ara ta lakiraia ro ‘he has gone to lakira [to the realm of the ancestors]’.

Some Kuranko believe in certain portents of death. For example, there are said to be as many stars as there are people in the world. When a person dies his star falls from the sky. Upon observing a falling star one should say n’kel’miye ‘Mine are not the only eyes which have seen you’ several times. In Barawa there is an immense granite inselberg known as Sinikonke. It is associated with the ruling Mara lineage of Barawa and some say that the ancestral rulers dwell there. At times one will hear xylophonists playing and singing praise-songs on the mountain and perhaps too the creaking of a great stone door as it swings open; these are omens that a man of the ruling lineage will soon die.

When a man is seriously ill or at the point of death his wives and daughters must leave him. Sometimes a dying man is removed from the house to a lean-to in the backyard. He is attended by a male friend, his eldest son, and by a senior wife (if past the menopause) or an uninitiated daughter or sororal niece (who are considered to be sexually-innocent). As in sickness, a man will avoid men who may have been sexually intimate with his wives, and he will avoid his wives lest one of them happen to be involved in an adulterous affair; such liaisons are regarded as polluting (ka tine ‘to despoil’, ‘to ruin’, ‘to pollute’) and would exacerbate the invalid’s condition. A woman is nursed by her eldest daughter for similar reasons.

The death is announced by the loud and high-pitched wailing, crying and lamenting of the wives, daughters, sisters, nieces and other close female kin. As the keening is taken up by other village women, men of the dead man’s family go to notify the village chief and elders. A gun is fired to warn other villagers, some of whom may be at work on their farms some distance from the village. Special drum messages are also used. Finally, messengers are dispatched to other hamlets and villages in the chiefdom to notify kinsmen and friends of the death. Kola is tied with the stalks of the wrapping-leaves upward to signify death. In the village, sub-clan (kebile) elders make preparations to send representatives and sympathy gifts (sakondole, lit. ‘death gifts’) to the funeral.

Within two hours of the death, most of the men of the village, led by the village chief and his council of elders, will have assembled in the compound (luiye) outside the house where the man has died. Friends of the deceased, assisted by grand-daughters of the deceased (mamania-
nenu) wash the corpse in fresh water, anoint it with palm oil, then place it on a new mat wrapped in a shroud of white satin or country-cloth. While the corpse is being prepared for burial in the house, village elders or the keminteligi ‘master of the young men’ send young men to cut gravelogs from the ture tree, and to dig the grave. Late-comers continue to arrive as the formal presentation of sympathy gifts begins. Women will often fall to the ground, wailing and lamenting, their cries taken up by the bereaved women inside the house. Men present their gifts (money, kola) to the dead man’s sister’s son, who passes the gifts on to the eldest son and brothers of the deceased. If the dead man was a member of a ruling lineage, then the gifts will be conveyed by a senior jeliba (xylophonist and ‘praise-singer’) to the dead man’s brothers. At the funeral of a man of rank, jeliba also play their xylophones and sing the favourite songs of the deceased as well as standard laments:

‘This year oh, a gold cotton-tree has fallen, oh sorrow, a great cotton-tree has fallen this year oh.’ (Nyina oh, seni banda buira, oh yala, banda be buira nyina oh.)

‘A great cotton tree—that reached to heaven—has fallen. Where shall we find support and shade again?’

‘Lie down, lie down Mara [name of a ruling clan], the war chief has gone.’ (Sayers 1925: 22.)

Up to this time the sound of women wailing has not ceased. But now the lamentation and keening stops suddenly as, from the house of the dead man, emerges a group of women: the mamanianenu. Slowly and dolefully they move around in a tight circle, singing dirges. After a while a few of the women approach the porch where the chief and elders are sitting. They continue their morose performance, the quiet dirge, the shuffling, the deadpan faces, while the men throw money or kola on the ground at their feet. Without any change of expression, one mamane (or mamaniane, sing. of mamanianenu, lit. ‘little grandmother’) stoops and picks up the gifts. The group then disbands.

In the context of mortuary ritual the mamanianenu include all those who call the deceased m’bimba ‘my grandfather’, i.e. sons’ daughters, younger sons’ wives, grandsons’ wives. In ordinary life a joking relationship exists between grandparents and grandchildren; this is known as the mamania tolon. Discussion of the role played by the mamanianenu at their grandfather’s funeral will be postponed until we have given further details of burial, sacrifices, widow quarantine, succession and inheritance (chefare).

**Burial**

When the grave is dug, the topsoil is heaped on one side, separated from the bottom clay. The lower section of the grave is a six-foot

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7. The senior jeliba passes the gift to his own sister’s son who then passes it on to the deceased’s brothers. The intermediary position of the sister’s son will be discussed later.
trench, just large enough to accommodate the body. Exact measurements, using a measuring stick, are made by the grave-diggers. The upper section of the grave is longer and wider and forms a kind of step which enables the burial party to place the body more easily and, subsequently, to ‘seal off’ the lower section with mats, leaves, and logs. Graves are dug on the perimeter of the village among the trees, scrub and rubbish. No formal marking of the grave-site occurs and all that indicates the place of burial after a few months have passed is the earth-mound overgrown with grass.

As soon as all sympathy gifts have been conveyed, the cortege moves towards the burial area. The corpse is shrouded and wrapped into a mat. Elders, representing all the sub-clans in the community, carry the body to the graveside where it is immediately lowered into the bottom trench. Kamara (1932: 94) records that the deceased’s wives are allowed one final opportunity to gaze upon him ‘but they must quit the spot before the body is actually lowered into the grave’. He also notes (ibid.: 95) that the dead man’s debtors and creditors should declare their claims or discharge their debts at this time; it is thought imperative that the dead man’s eldest son clear his father’s debts before the inhumation.

The mat enclosing the body is fixed to the sides of the grave with small wooden pegs. Then the heavy logs of ture wood are placed athwart the lower trench. Two more mats are placed over the logs and the mats are covered with leaves which men of the burial party pick from trees in the vicinity. It is said that there may be one special leaf ‘for lakira’ which will take the dead man’s spirit to the realm of the ancestors. The earth is now returned to the grave, first the topsoil, then the bottom clay. In some instances, heavy stones are placed around the edges of the earth-mound. These interment procedures are regarded as means of preventing the body from being exhumed (by animals) or the spirit from re-entering it. The Kuranko quote an adage to emphasize the gravity and finality of death (in this case the separation of body and spirit): ture lu tintu ‘the ture is very heavy’, i. e. death is all-powerful; the ture logs are an impenetrable barrier.

When the burial is done, the men squat around the earth-mound and then, tamping the clay with their hands, they lean forward and murmur once in unison, ‘Come’. This summoning of the spirit from the grave-site is made necessary by the fact that the spirit will be reluctant to depart. Feeling abandoned and desolate, it will remain near the grave pining and calling, ‘You have left me alone, you have left me alone.’ It is tempting to see this belief as a projection of the pining, searching and calling reactions of the bereaved (Parkes 1975); the belief at least ‘simulates’ the feeling of loss experienced by the mourners.

The men who have attended the burial now wash their hands in water brought for the purpose. Those who entered the grave (shoes are never worn), wash their feet, and tools used in digging the grave
are also washed thoroughly. This cleanses people of the grave ‘dirt’ which is polluting. The washing done, the men quickly quit the grave-site. Kamara (1932: 95) describes what is probably a Muslim custom—the eating of the ‘last rice’—when friends and kin of the deceased share rice-cakes known as keme-de ‘grave-bread’ or de-kuna ‘bitter bread’, prepared by virgin girls.

**Sacrifices**

As soon as the men return from the grave-site, the sacrifices are offered. The first and major sacrifice is of a cow or cows (ninki surake ‘cow sacrifice’) provided by sons or brothers of the deceased. It is offered to God (Ala or Atlala). The cow is tethered to a sacrificial post in the middle of the luiye. Men of the village, representing every sub-clan (kebile), family (dembaiye) and category of persons surround the beast in a circle, stretching their right arms and hands out towards it. Koranic verses (haye) are recited as the cow is consecrated to God. The animal is then forced to the ground by young men and oriented with its head towards the east. A Muslim officiant (karamorgo) quickly cuts its throat. With another knife or machete the karamorgo supervises the butchering of the carcass. Meat is distributed in the customary way: a portion for representative elders from all the village sub-clans, and portions for other people, representing other categories, e. g. the anthropologist as a representative of the tubabunu ‘Europeans’, a visitor from another village as a representative of his village, etc.8

Other sacrifices may be made by the bereaved kin. These sacrifices are seldom of cattle, but of sheep, goats, chickens and hens and, most usually, rice flour (dege). The sacrifices are this time consecrated to the lineage ancestors, the ritual congregation comprising only lineage members and a few matrikin. Numerous sympathy gifts such as kola, money, rice and oil are brought by visitors and mourners who continue to arrive in the village from far afield during the days following the inhumation. But for everyone except the immediate family of the dead man, the mortuary rites are effectively over once the main sacrifice has been offered.

**Quarantine**

Labinane (from la ‘lying down’, binane ‘forty’) is the Kuranko term for the 40-day quarantine9 period which follows the burial; in the meantime, the widows are isolated from the ordinary life of the community.

8. For full details see Jackson 1977a.

9. The term quarantine comes from quarantina, the Italian for ‘forty’, which was the number of days of sequestration expected of the widow (Parkes 1975: 188).
While other bereaved kin observe mourning by binding threads of raffia around their necks for a seven-day period, the wives must remain inside the house of their late husband for forty days. They let their hair hang loose (it is usually plaited), an indication perhaps of the social recognition of the apathy and loss of interest in personal appearance which often characterises mourning (Parkes 1975: 65). Through an association which the Kuranko make between expression of grief and sentimental attachment to the deceased, it is argued that the widows participate in the death. They are in a state of ritual impurity. Their isolation may follow from the tendency of people to stigmatise the bereaved (ibid.: 22-23). During their seclusion they are ministered to and protected by one of the dead man’s sister’s sons (berinne), and it is the sister’s son who, drumming dolefully, leads the widows (who are dressed in white country-cloth gowns, the senior wife walking before) to the streamside for ceremonial purification when labinane is over. Anyone who has never lost a relative must not see this procession, but remain indoors until it has passed. For such persons, even visual contact with the widows is polluting.

At the streamside confessions are made. The purpose of the confession is to ascertain whether or not any of the widows nurse some grievance against the dead man (whose spirit attends the ceremony), and whether or not the dead man’s spirit has forgiven the wives for any misdemeanours (particularly sexual infidelities) which may have hurt his reputation during his life. The usual technique for deciding if a confession is required consists in splitting a two-cotyledon kola nut and throw the cotyledons on the ground; if they fall facing each other (‘even’) then no confession is required, but if they fall in any other combination (‘odd’) then confession and absolution must follow or else the woman will fall ill and die, accursed by the vengeful ghost of her late husband. When the confessions are over the widows are bathed in the stream, either by a sister of the deceased or by elderly village women (past child-bearing age). The sister’s son remains in attendance, playing his drum to warn people away from the area.

The widows now return to the village to a large meal prepared by close kin. This signifies the end of quarantine and the widows’ forthcoming reincorporation into the ordinary life of the community.

Chefare

Within a few days of the ending of the period of seclusion for the widows, the distribution of the hereditable property (che) takes place.

10. A ‘sense of the continued presence of the deceased’ is characteristic of the bereavement reaction of widows (Parkes 1975: 79). Among the Kuranko, this may be sharpened by self-reproach and self-blaming—introspective reactions which are often characteristic of Kuranko women in crisis (Jackson 1975). During labinane, unfaithful wives are liable to suffer from insomnia (Kamara 1932: 98).
under the supervision of the eldest surviving brother of the deceased. The occasion is known as *chefare*.

Succession is by primogeniture and the eldest son's assumption of his father's role as family-head (*dembaiyetigi*) is signified by the inheritance of his late father's cap and gown. A man's property (*fan*) includes his wives (inherited widows are known as *che musu*), his children (inherited children are known as *che dan*), livestock, clothes, personal possessions, gardens and other land in cultivation, and food in store. The house is 'joint owned' (*serefun*) and usufructuary rights to land cannot, of course, be inherited. According to the levirate, the eldest surviving brother of the deceased inherits the widows, their children, and the bulk of the material property. If a widow happens to choose, she may marry another 'brother' of her late husband. This is often the case when the relations between the inheriting brother and the widow's late husband were strained or hostile. A woman may fear the vengeance of her late husband's spirit if she marries a man he disliked, and she will also be mindful of the disadvantages her children may suffer in the household of an indifferent 'father'. The curse of the dead is known as *furekoe* and it may be regarded as sanction against a widow betraying her late husband's trust or ignoring his expectations.

Small items of hereditable property such as articles of clothing are distributed among sub-clan 'brothers' in order to signify the solidarity of the sub-clan (*kebile*) and amity among its members. According to Kuranko folk-etymology, *kebile* means 'inheritance-sharers'; theoretically, a man has claims upon and rights in the property of his sub-clan 'brothers'.

With the distribution of the hereditable property done and the widows remarried, the sequence of mortuary rites comes to a close. Ideally the community has made the various adjustments necessary to accommodate the loss of a kinsman or neighbour, and the bereaved have reconciled themselves to a new life in which the deceased, now transformed into an ancestor, will play a very different role.

### The Relationships between Mortuary Customs and Social Status

Hertz has contrasted the panic and concern at the death of an important person with the death of a stranger, a slave, or a child. Such a death, he writes (1960: 76), 'will go almost unnoticed; it will arouse no emotion, occasion no ritual. It is thus not as the extinction of an animal life that death occasions social beliefs, sentiments and rites'. This general tendency is true of Kuranko mortuary rites and an investigation of the way in which differences in the scale and character of the rites are correlated with differences in the social status of the dead person,
is of crucial importance in our endeavour to understand the relation between individual affect and customary patterns of social behaviour. (The relationships between place of burial, social status, and composition of ritual congregation are tabulated in Table I.)

Women

Because women have no politico-jural status in the community, a woman’s burial is simply a ‘family affair’. And it is always the husband’s family which organises the burial. The Kuranko often point out (and it forms part of the formal speech when a bride is ‘given away’) that ‘a woman belongs to her husband’s group [kebile] while she is alive and even after she is dead’. Marriage involves a transfer to the husband of all rights: in personam, in uxorem, in genetricem. Kamara (1932: 96) writes that ‘A woman, not a virgin, but dying husbandless, may not be buried until some man is found who will stand in loco mariti.’ If she had a lover that lover will find himself obliged to pay “dowry” for her—a cow or two—in order that she may be buried, duly a married woman.’ In the case of an elderly woman, long time a widow, her grandson may represent and stand as her husband (ibid.).

At the burial of a woman, it is the husband who leads the cortege to the grave-site. If a woman dies while her husband is away from the village, burial is postponed up to one day while he is summoned. A woman’s natal kin attend the burial but play no central part in the rites. As for the actual inhumation, it is noteworthy that a man is buried with his head towards the east and lying on his right side; a woman is buried with her head towards the east and lying on her left side. The ‘left’ (maran) is associated with feminine, weak, polluting attributes; the ‘right’ (bolieme) with masculine, strong, clear/clean attributes. The jurally minor status of a woman (a dependent of and ‘owned’ by her husband) is indicated by the customs described above. A woman can only be buried by her husband or by a symbolic or proxy husband (if a man is unable to attend his wife’s funeral he will delegate to a brother or friend the role of ‘husband’). The personality traits which are attributed to women, partly on the basis of their jurally minor status, are weakness of will, temperamentality, capriciousness, sexual infidelity. The significance of women’s supposed inconstancy will be investigated later.

Witches

A person who dies a confessed witch or as a result of cursing does not receive ordinary burial. Those who die accursed are avoided by all except their immediate kin who are contaminated by the curse anyway. People not only shun the bereaved family, they avoid tears and expressions of sympathy for fear of being associated with the dead person and
his kin and thereby contaminated. Sympathy gifts are not given and the inhumation is conducted unceremoniously, quickly and covertly by the dead man’s immediate family.

A confessed witch is treated with contempt. Most confessions are made during the last stages of terminal and painful illness, but there are infrequent cases when the dying ‘witch’ is buried alive in order to quickly rid the community of her nefarious influence. The grave will be shallow, usually located in the grassland or bushland beyond the village perimeter. Stones are placed on the grave to prevent the witch’s ghost (known as pulan) from disturbing the living.

The Kuranko liken a witch to an animal; witches can allegedly assume the shapes of predatory and night creatures, and a witch’s ghost often takes the form of a lizard and has to be captured and killed by a specialist (pulan brale). A witch is buried in the bush (fera) rather than the town (sue) because the bush is the domain of animals. Because the lizard is a creature of the wild which invades village space, the Kuranko may have associated it unconsciously with the image of the witch.11

Children

Children who die in early infancy (before weaning) are buried with cotton pods around the body; it is said that a cloth shroud would bruise it. People are enjoined not to express grief or mourn at an infant’s death since ‘tears burn the child’s skin and cause it pain’. The actual burial of a child is a perfunctory affair, involving only the immediate family. Some consolation may be offered in the belief that the infant once dead may be reborn—the only instance of reincarnation beliefs among the Kuranko. A mother, disconsolate and grief-stricken over the loss of a child, may cut off its little finger, slip a sliver of wood under its fingernail or tightly bind a finger with thread before it is buried. When she bears her next child she will examine its fingers for a mark which will indicate reincarnation. Yet, it is pointed out that prolonged grief over the loss of an infant is futile. Even if the child is reborn it will die at the same age that its predecessor did.

Infant dead are buried at the back of the house, in the domestic area known as the sundu or sundu kunye ma (lit. ‘behind/rear head on’) where women prepare food and cook, where domestic refuse is discarded, and which marks the boundary between one compound (luiye) and another. The front of the house (which, incidentally, is associated with the ‘male domain’ ke dugu) opens on to the luiye: the compound area common to several agnatically-interrelated households which form a circle around it.

A child is, to use a phrase of Meyer Fortes (1973: 309), only an ‘incip-
ient person'. Among the Kuranko, only initiation at puberty can create a 'whole' person, a completely socialised adult. Until initiation, children are considered to be 'impure' and incompletely born. That is to say that physical birth must be complemented by the ceremonial 'birth' undergone during initiation. The Kuranko emphasis upon the transient and unstable character of infant life may be a rationalisation of the high infant mortality rate (in one village I surveyed it was 54%, birth to 3 years of age). But this emphasis is also a logical outcome of Kuranko conceptualisations of social positions.

Just as women are marginal to the politico-jural domain, so infant children are marginal to the domestic domain. The custom of burying a dead infant among domestic refuse or under the hearthstones in the *sundu kunye ma* gives symbolic expression to its marginality. The rubbish comprises material which is also part way between life and death: groundnut husks (no kernel), husks of winnowed grain, ash from cooking hearths, sweepings from the house, discarded scraps of food, human excreta, etc. Moreover, an infant that is reincarnated will be named Sundu. The spirit of a dead infant does not leave the world of the living altogether, and while awaiting its new incarnation it resides in the body of the Senegalese Fire Finch (*tintinburuwe*), a tame townbird which nests in the eaves of houses and feeds on leavings and scraps in the *sundu kunye ma*. Hertz (1960: 84), commenting upon the Dyak and Papuan customs of placing the infant dead in trees, summarises beliefs pertaining to the deaths of children:

'...since the children have not yet entered the visible society, there is no reason to exclude them from it slowly and painfully. As they have not really been separated from the world of spirits, they return there directly, without any sacred energies needing to be called upon, and without a period of painful transition appearing necessary. The death of a new-born child is, at most, an infra-social event; since society has not yet given anything of itself to the child, it is not affected by its disappearance and remains indifferent.'

The small-scale, perfunctory and unceremonious character of infant burial rites has been noted in other African societies. It seems that the key factors are the minimal personality and marginal status of children.

**Rulers**

Let us now examine briefly the mortuary rites for a ruler; here *central status* (a chief/ruler is known as *suetigi* 'townowner/master'; or, if paramount, *nyeman'ligi* 'master/owner of the country' or *tontigi* 'law owner')

12. The significance of the *sundu kunye ma* is discussed in greater detail in Jackson 1977.

13. Buxton (Mandari) 1973: 145; Morton-Williams (Yoruba) 1960: 34. Among the LoDagaa, however, 'the loss of a child should be felt more intensely than that of a parent' (Goody 1962: 92) and it is clear that manifestations of grief (as contrasted with actual emotions of grief) vary from society to society, depending upon concepts of the person, status, role, relationship, etc.
master') is associated with maximal personality (miran 'charisma/dignity/bearing/oratorical prowess/warrior strength').

The mortuary rites for a ruler or for a man of a ruling lineage are more elaborate, further prolonged and larger in scale than for other categories of persons. The rites have been studied by Kamara (1932, 1933) and by Sayers (1925); I will therefore briefly summarise those aspects of the rites which are pertinent to the argument of this essay, referring as well to field observations of my own.

The actual burial of a chief follows the pattern already described, except that mourners will come from throughout the chiefdom. At the burial a sword will be carried hilt-downwards to signify the death of a warrior and chief. After the burial, a 'friendly' chief is called upon to fix the date for a special sacrifice known as korfe: the date is customarily the first Thursday after the new moon. Chiefs from other chiefdoms throughout Kuranko country are invited to attend this politically-significant event. Visiting chiefs bring salt and cows to be sacrificed. At the korfe (which Sayers observed) for Fa Bolo Karifa Dialo of Sambaia in 1921, thirty cows were brought although only twelve were actually slaughtered. Kamara (1933: 156) notes that as many as 80-100 cows are slaughtered on some occasions and both Kamara and Sayers suggest that there is a 'potlatching' element in the korfe: 'everyone tried to outdo his neighbour in generosity' (Sayers 1925: 28); 'every visiting chief bringing as many as he can get' (Kamara 1933: 156). Comparatively few cows are slaughtered at a korfe today, and with the decline of chiefly powers and political alliances, mortuary rites for rulers are now comparatively 'ordinary' affairs.

Some indication of the former political significance of a korfe is given in Sayers' account. Three paramount chiefs attended: Bafara of Kalian (a member of the same clan and a political ally of the deceased), Bamba Fara of Nieni (neighbours to the east and ruled by the Koroma clan), and Magba of Diang (neighbours to the north and ruled by the Koroma clan). The Borowa (Barawa?) chief, Karifa Dumari (Mara?), attended briefly, 'held himself ostentatiously aloof [...] and went home' (Sayers 1925: 20). Barawa, situated to the northeast, beyond the 'buffer' chiefdom of Kalian, and ruled by the Mara, still retains a tradition of chauvinistic condescension towards the Sambaia Dialo (or Jallo) who are of foreign (Fula) extraction, Muslims, and erstwhile dependents upon Mara patronage.

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14. The Kuranko associate salt with tears; it signifies sympathy and attachment to the deceased. SAYERS (1925: 27) records that salt is thrown in the bonfire, together with old clothes of the deceased, as 'a sacrifice which is to cleanse the soul of the departed from the guilt of the sins he committed during his lifetime.' As a gift from visiting allies, salt may have had the significance attached to it in Arabic cultures—to sanctify friendships and alliances—but it certainly was a form of wealth, exported into Kuranko from the coast and from the Guinea plains for gold (Kup 1975: 32, 37, 41). Both salt and cattle had similar 'value in exchange' and would have been appropriate gifts from political allies.
On the Wednesday before the *korfe*, the *fina* (genealogists and ‘remembrancers’ to the rulers) meet to appoint one of their members to announce the death on the following day. This does not mean that people are not aware that the chief is dead; simply that the ‘social’ death (the funeral) and the ‘physical’ death (the burial) are regarded as quite different events.

### Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Status</th>
<th>Place of Burial</th>
<th>Ritual Congregation</th>
<th>Fate of the Soul</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paramount chief</td>
<td>Chief’s <em>luiye</em></td>
<td>Representatives of all villages in the chieftdom and from other ‘allied’ or ‘related’ chieftdoms.</td>
<td>Becomes ancestor, influencing the well-being of the inhabitants of the chieftdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founder of a <em>luiye</em></td>
<td><em>Luiye</em></td>
<td>As for any other male elder.</td>
<td>Becomes ancestor, influencing the well-being of those living in the <em>luiye</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult man</td>
<td>Village perimeter</td>
<td>Immediate family (agnates), affines, matrikin, sororal nephew, representatives of all other sub-clans in the village.</td>
<td>Becomes ancestor, influencing the lives of agnatic descendents and, to a lesser degree, the lives of sister’s children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married woman</td>
<td>Village perimeter</td>
<td>Husband’s family</td>
<td>Becomes ‘nominal’ ancestress; no real influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant</td>
<td><em>Sundu kunye ma</em></td>
<td>Immediate family</td>
<td>Possible reincarnation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accursed person</td>
<td>‘Bush’ beyond village perimeter</td>
<td>Immediate family</td>
<td>Spiritual extinction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On Thursday the death is formally announced, followed by a warrior’s dance and accompanied by the weeping and lamenting of the bereaved kinswomen. In the afternoon, a bonfire is prepared. Kamara (1933: 155) writes that a man ‘collects as much wood as will enable every man, woman and child attending the funeral to bring one log each’. Sayers (1925: 26–27) records that a *Koli* dancer15 leads the villagers (men, women, and children) into the bush and fells a tree with a double-bladed axe; everyone must take a sprig and avoid other peoples’ sprigs touching their one. Together with as much wood as they can carry, the villagers bring

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15. *Kole* or *Koli* was a cult association, one of its main purposes being to admonish indolent boys who were lax in their duties of frightening birds from the rice farms. The brass masks and costume of pelts which Sayers (1925: 26) describes are unknown today; the *Kole* dancer wears a cloth ‘mask’ with cowries sewn across it.
the sprigs back to town for the bonfire. It is lit that night and clothes (belonging to the deceased) and salt are thrown onto the flames as a sacrifice and absolution.

On Friday the cows are sacrificed. Some are brought by visiting chiefs, other are contributed by sons, brothers and affines of the dead man.

Saturday (Simbire) is, through Islamic influence, considered a day of rest. Visitors are obliged to prepare and cook their own food.

Sunday is given over to dancing. To the sound of xylophones, harps and flutes, and in festive mood, first the dead man's sisters' sons, then male affines, then the visiting chiefs join in the dancing. All give further gifts to the brothers of the deceased, the chiefs giving gifts to 'show how big and rich they are' (Kamara 1933: 156). The dancing continues throughout the day, punctuated by gift-giving, commensality and various mimetic performances. This marks the close of the ritual sequence.

ROLE REVERSALS AND MIME BIC RITES

From the preceding summary account of the sequence of events in Kuranko mortuary rituals we gain little insight into the emotions, motives and reactions of individual participants. Indeed, while observing people's behaviour during the various rites, there is often little to betray to the outsider of the actual psychological affect of individuals. This is partly because emotions are constrained, organised and expressed according to ritual prescriptions.

In the Kuranko view, spontaneous, private or uncontrolled expressions of grief are more than simply inappropriate; they are dangerous. Hiding one's true feelings (which requires the same kind of conscious control as simulating or feigning certain emotions) is related to the need to prevent recognition by the ghost of the dead person (cf. Goody 1962: 89-90 on LoDagaba 'mourning disguises'). The Kuranko explain that pining after the lost one is both futile and wrong. Too much weeping and lamenting at a funeral will make it difficult for the dead person's spirit to be accepted into lakira; the ancestors in lakira allegedly say, 'the spirit is not with us until those on earth have kept quiet'. Many Kuranko point out that the dead person's spirit will be loath to leave grief-stricken kin, a belief which possibly follows from an attribution of subjective grief to the lost 'object'. The manner in which subjective states such as pining, searching, guilt, and anger are projected onto the dead person was noted by Hertz (1960: 50) long before psychological research enabled us to understand the mechanisms and processes involved (Parkes 1975). Grieving, pining and uncontrolled weeping signify, in the Kuranko view, unduly-prolonged attachment and over-sympathetic
identification with the dead person. As we shall see, grieving and weeping must cease before the spirit of the dead person will detach and dissociate itself from the world of the living and become transformed into an ancestor.

The dislocation, confusion and consternation caused by a death must, according to the Kuranko, be signified by prescribed (i.e. socially-determined) patterns of behaviour, not by spontaneous and haphazard individual expressions. For example, when a jeliba is buried the jelimusu (the ‘jeli women’) play the xylophone (balanje)—an instrument which they are normally prohibited from playing—and jeli men play the karinya—the metal bar which the jelimusu normally play. On some occasions, even men of the ruling lineage may play the xylophone of a deceased jeliba. The Kuranko are quite explicit in relating these usages to the prevailing condition of social disorder.

Sanaku

It is noteworthy that the categories of persons involved in these prescribed patterns of disorderly and anomalous behaviour are never the immediate bereaved. They are ‘joking partners’. When a man has died, members of his sanaku-linked clan (sanakuuye ‘interclan joking partnership’) will often come to the house where the body lies and then bind the hands, feet and body of the corpse with rope. Holding one end of the rope, a sanaku will declare, ‘This rope will be untied when you people have given us something’, or ‘You cannot bury this man; he is our slave’, or as the women are weeping, ‘Keep quiet, keep quiet, we’re going to wake him up now.’ Again, as the cortege moves from the luiye to the place of burial, a sanaku may protest with such words as, ‘He’s not going, he’s my slave’, and as the sacrifice begins a sanaku may appear in the luiye with a pariah dog on a makeshift leash and announce ‘I have brought my cow for sacrifice.’ These privileged modes of disparaging and abusing the person and lineage of the deceased are usually regarded, by the Kuranko, as indications of the prevailing confusion. Some informants say that the levity of the sanakuuye tolon (tolon ‘joking play’) is a way of deflecting attention from the gravity and sorrow of the occasion. Sayers (1925: 24) describes one performance:

‘There runs about the town, meanwhile, in and out amongst the people, a girl, clothed in filthy cast off male attire, ragged, with blackened face and arms, as though with the cinders and ashes of burnt farm, and on her head is a symbolic bundle of faggots, as though to say—a slave fulfilling her household duties.’

The author (ibid.) notes that the girl is a member of a sanaku-linked clan; the clansmen ‘as faithful servants […] have a symbolic right to the body of the dead chief, to redeem which, his family and all the people must make presents’. Although I have never observed this particular
performance, I have had it described to me by informants who explain that the sanaku’s self-abasing behaviour is a way of exaggerating the high status position of the deceased ruler.\textsuperscript{16}

\textit{Mamanianenu}

Closely resembling the behaviour of the sanaku jokers (and prompting similar explanations) is the behaviour of the category of women known as mamanianenu. I described earlier the mamané’s doleful circular ‘dance’ for gifts; the mamanianenu also help wash and dress the corpse for burial, and they mimic various idiosyncracies of their late grandfather —his manner of walking, dancing, and speaking. As with the sanaku, the mimetic performers only desist when they are given gifts by those attending the funeral. Kamara (1933: 156) has described one of these performances by the mamanianenu:

‘One of the deceased’s sons’ wives dresses in the Chief’s clothes and tries to imitate his walk and speech, for doing which she receives presents. Another puts on big trousers, goes to the bathing place and falls into the water. She comes out with the trousers full of water and then walks from Chief to Chief with a pestle which she uses to throw water on people. Anybody disliking dirty water buys her off with a present as soon as she tries to come near him.’

Sayers (1925: 24) describes the ‘mamani’ at a funeral, running about with a pestle and morter looking for rice to pound. The behaviour is interpreted as ‘feigning madness’. Sayers also describes ‘mamusa’ (lit. ‘our related woman’, i.e., sister) who is not, as Sayers says, ‘one of the wives of the dead man’; she rolls a makeshift fishing net across the ground recollecting how sisters fish for their brother the chief when he is alive. The mamanianenu also perform a dance on the Thursday of a chief’s funeral during which they fold and unfold their lapa, thus exposing themselves ‘obscenely’ to the crowd. Again, gifts are given by the men who also enjoy with ‘quips and gibes’ and salacious glances the momentary divestment of each of the late chief’s sons’ wives (\textit{ibid.}: 26-27).

\textit{Social v. Personal}

These ‘mimetic’, ‘obscene’, ‘mad’, and transvestite performances by the sanaku jokers and the mamanianenu are far more characteristic of the funeral of a chief than of a commoner, and they do not occur at the funeral of a woman. Clearly, these usages are reflective of the

\textsuperscript{16} It should be noted that a sanaku link implies nullified or at least anomalous status-differentiation between clans. The symbols of the hearth—ash, faggots, cinders—may suggest the essential ambiguity of the situation in which the ‘superiority’ of the sanaku joker over the dead person (just by being alive) must be countermanded by equally exaggerated status-abasement.
THE IDENTITY OF THE DEAD

status of person in life and after life. It is my view that the performances described above assist the polarisation and separation of two aspects of the identity of the deceased: his idiosyncratic and his social personality.

The mimetic performances are simultaneously an attempt to revivify or retain memories of the person and to expunge those memories. The inept and ridiculous aspects of the women's imitations of the person may serve to turn people's attention to the more abstract and socially-defined attributes of the ancestral persona. It is only when memories of the dead person's mannerisms and deficiencies are denied through repression or masking that the dead can exemplify, as an abstract category, the values and customs of the society. Unlike the physical and idiosyncratic aspects of the person, these 'values and customs' have a more definitely external facticity; they belong to the perdurable domain of the social rather than to the mutable and perishable domain of the personal.

This theatrical 'setting apart' of the dead person's idiosyncratic personality is paralleled by various customs, already referred to, which serve to drive away the dead person's spirit and dissociate the living from the dead. Thus, prolonged mourning is prohibited lest the spirit remain among and haunt the villagers as a malevolent ghost, the widows are quarantined, the grave is sealed with heavy logs and stones to prevent the spirit returning to the body, and sacrifices are offered to God and to the ancestors in order to speed the spirit to lakira and ensure its reception there.17

THE TAINT OF DEATH

I have already alluded to the interconnected processes of separating body from spirit, separating the idiosyncratic personality from the social personality, and separating the dead from the living. These are transformative processes, and until the separations are effected, a condition of impurity obtains.

Aftermath

The Kuranko term bonke (‘dust’, ‘dirt’, ‘earth’) or fera bonke (fera signifies the bush, and more generally extra-social space) refers to the physical body. God (Ala) makes each individual person from earth

17. GOODY (1962: 107, 123-124) has referred to the psychological value of 'reversed emotions' in distracting the bereaved from the gravity of the situation. He has also noted the ambivalence of the mimetic performances among the LoDa-gaa: they simultaneously serve an obituary or celebrative/commemorative function and a mocking or eliminating function.
taken from one particular place. When a person dies, *Ala* is supposed to direct people to inter the body at that same place. The word *digu* (or *duge*), which is used to refer to a particular place, location or patch of ground, is also used in some contexts as a synonym for the human body. Sometimes too, the metaphor of a seed within its husk is used to explain how the ‘life’ is in the body. Just as the bush or wilderness surrounds the community, so the body surrounds the life. The complementary term *nie* may be translated as ‘life’, ‘life force’ or ‘spirit’. Of a living person, one says *a ni’ a ro* (lit. ‘he/she life is in’), and it is the *nie* which leaves the body at the moment of death and must be assisted, through human intervention, on its passage to *lahira*. Derived from the Arabic, *lahira* (*lahira* in Temne and Susu) is where the ancestral spirits dwell, although some ancestors (particularly of ruling lineages) are often associated with certain landscape sites: a granite inselberg, a lake, a mountain, a river hole.

This vagueness about and indifference to the actual character of the afterlife is typical of the Kuranko. Mortuary rites are seen as means of removing the dead person from the world of the living rather than transporting him to and installing him in the world of the dead. The dead person’s spirit (*nie*) leaves the world of the living when two conditions have been met: *(1)* the body is buried and sealed under the earth, *(2)* the bereaved have ceased weeping and gone into isolation. But between the moment of death and the moment when the *nie* departs for good, the *nie* remains in the village as a clandestine and wandering ghost. This ‘pitiful yet dangerous’ ghost (Hertz 1960: 36-37) is likened, by the Kuranko, to a shadow (*ninne*; possible etymology ‘life little’). The ghost (which is known as the *yiyei*) is unable to disentangle itself emotionally from kinsmen and friends and thus may be interpreted as a projection of subjective states—in this case, the mixture of ‘protest’ and ‘searching’ reactions on the part of the bereaved. Certainly the association of the *yiyei* with the ‘liminal’ phase of the mortuary rites is reflected in the anomalous characteristics attributed to it. Its footsteps or ghostly sobbing may be heard yet it is as insubstantial as a shadow. It can haunt and afflict the living, yet it is intangible.

There is an important correlation between the emotional attachment between the dead person’s spirit and the immediate bereaved and the condition of impurity or contagion that obtains while the attachment lasts. It can be argued that the ‘image’ of impurity and contagion not only signifies a disordered social condition; it enables people to alter subjective states by manipulating external simulacra. Thus, physical separation is an outward expression of the emotional ‘forgetting’ that is demanded. The deadpan faces of the *mamanianennu* are physically suggestive of the control and suppression of grief that is expected. It is as if the *mamanianennu* and the *sawaku* jokers were manipulated, or did manipulate themselves, as objects in order to effect vicariously and magically a change in the subjective state of the bereaved. Their
automatic and theatrical behaviour stands in contrast to the spontaneous and genuinely-emotional expressions of the immediate bereaved. By giving public prominence to the former it is perhaps unconsciously hoped that the private condition of the latter will be eclipsed or transformed.

When we consider the kinds of situations which are polluting and the prescribed responses to these situations we can see how the ‘pure’ (emotionless) categories are used to transform the ‘impure’ (emotionally-charged) situations. Order is created out of disorder, purity out of danger. Table II summarises the main polluting circumstances and the appropriate ritual responses to them. It also indicates the extent to which the notion of taint or contagion is expressed through metaphors of improper sexual relations.

### Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Polluting Circumstance</th>
<th>Ritual Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A man dying or gravely ill.</td>
<td>(a) objects touched and used by the invalid or attendants must not leave the house; (b) possible adulterers are avoided; (c) attended by son and wife (if passed the menopause).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The grave, the corpse, and grave-digging tools. The burial party.</td>
<td>Purification by washing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Last rice’ for the dead man.</td>
<td>Prepared by virgin girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous and impetuous expressions of grief.</td>
<td>‘Social’ control of affect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adulterer participating in the sacrifice (i.e. a man who has had an affair with the deceased’s wife).</td>
<td>Adulterer must avoid accepting or eating meat from the sacrificed animal lest he die.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows, children and property of the deceased.</td>
<td>Quarantine; no direct communication with the widows is permitted. Those who have never lost a kinsman should avoid seeing the widows. Widows are purified by being dressed in white gowns and bathed by elderly women who have passed the menopause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mimetic performances in which the mamane or mamusa touches men in the crowd.</td>
<td>Gifts given to ‘lay the ghost’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impurity

The association of dirt and coitus and the association of death and sexuality have been discussed by many writers (notably Goody 1962: 56-59; Buxton 1973: 147-150; Beidelman 1966). Among the Kuranko it is not just that procreative sexuality and death are logically opposed (cf. Buxton on the Mandari, 1973: 149); rather that sexuality has ambivalent connotations. Licit, conjugal, procreative sexuality creates social relations; it binds lineages together in reciprocal, life-giving compacts. Illicit, clandestine, adulterous, recreative sexuality sunders social ties; it engenders jealousy, uncertainty and ‘darkness’ among men. This ambivalence of Kuranko attitudes towards sexuality may explain why sexuality is such a dominant symbol in the context of mortuary rites where conflicts between attachment and disengagement, binding and severing, creating and destroying are so ubiquitous.

With reference to Table II, it can be seen that certain categories of persons are ‘pure’ or ‘above contagion’. They mediate, so to speak, between the community and the bereaved kin. The first category comprises elderly women who have passed the menopause and occasionally sexually-innocent (i.e. uninitiated) girls. Here, absence of sexual relations makes it possible for these women to touch the man’s corpse with impunity. Wives and daughters must avoid contact with the corpse. They lead the keening.

The second category comprises the dead man’s sisters’ sons (sing. berinne, lit. ‘little maternal uncle’). A sister’s son (usually a man both genealogically and emotionally close to his uncle) watches over and remains with the widows and property during the period of quarantine. All communications with the widows ‘go through’ him since for others the widows ‘still carry the death with them and are feared’. It is explained that the sister’s son prevents the dead man’s ghost from making contact with the widows. Asked why a brother or sister of the deceased could not keep vigil, the Kuranko usually point out that brother might be harbouring grudge and sister would not have the courage. The sister’s son ‘acts in the place of the dead man’s sister’. One man told me:

‘We permit the sister’s son to watch over the widows because if the dead man’s yiyey approaches it will see the sister’s son there on the porch of the house [where he sits by day and sleeps at night]; it will not go past him and frighten the women;

18 The relationship between Kuranko notions of sexuality and the instability of affinal ties is more fully explored in my monograph study of the Kuranko (Jackson 1977b).

19 Joking relationships between grandparents and grandchildren ‘play up’ an idiom of sexual abuse. Among sanaku partners, the prevailing idiom is one of status abuse. In both cases the (sexual or status) identifications are ambiguous: possibly real, probably fictitious or figurative.
it will immediately think of the sister’s son as the sister [i.e., recollect the strict taboo against a man touching or offending his sister]; the sister will be inside the house to console the widows and prevent them from being frightened by their late husband’s ghost.

The interventive role of the sister’s son is a reflection of the fact that he is simultaneously socially-close (his mother is the deceased’s sister and belonged to his lineage) and socially-distant (he, like his father, belongs to another lineage).

A similar ambiguity obtains for the third and fourth categories: the sanaku-partners and the mamanianenu. I have discussed elsewhere the ‘status ambiguity’ of the sanakuife (Jackson 1974); here some further comments must be made on the role of the mamanianenu.

Stand-ins

A possible explanation for the fact that the principle actors in the mortuary ceremonies are not the immediate bereaved but rather persons ambiguously identified with the lineage of the deceased, is that the powerful and impetuous emotions of the bereavement reaction could not generate or maintain a sequence and pattern of social events whose purposes go further than the mere psychological readjustment of individuals to the death of a loved one. Affect is too random and too diverse to be used to account entirely for social phenomena.

For the bereaved women, profound emotions determine their attitudes towards the deceased. By contrast, the association or identification of the maman with her grandfather is founded upon an artifice of logic. But a girl may develop strong emotional attachment to her father’s father or husband’s grandfather simply because a formal principle in the social system—the identification of non-adjacent generations—makes such attachments possible and appropriate. Structurally speaking, the maman is placed in an ambiguous position: closely identified with the grandfather yet also a stranger because of obvious age, sex, and status differences. As a real or fictive affine (a man jokingly calls his granddaughter ‘my wife’) she is, as it were, halfway between strangerhood (sundanye) and kinship (nakelinyorgoye). Easily assuming her alternative or shadow role, she is well placed to act out on behalf of the bereaved wives and sons the emotional confusions and consternations of the bereavement reaction.20 By ‘standing in’ for the bereaved, the mimetic performers also ‘stand between’ the bereaved and the malevolent ghost of the dead man. By ‘standing aloof’ from the affective turmoil of the occasion, they are also in a position to assist the passage of the dead

20. This is reminiscent of what Turner calls the ‘structural invisibility’ of liminal personae. In this context the maman assumes the guise of the woman with whom she is nominally identified: her grandmother (mama). In this way the grandmother’s identity and grief are disguised. Cf. Goody (1962: 89, 127) on ‘mourning disguises’ among the LoDagaa.
person's spirit from the world of the living (signified by close kinship attachments) to the world of the dead (where personal attachments and affections are transcended).

**Derision**

Another kind of significance possibly attaches to the derisive and derogatory elements in the mimetic performances. These performances are not only given by categories of persons who are at once identified with and dissociated from the dead person; they are indicative of the ambivalence which characterises the attitude of the bereaved. The mixture of affection and animosity is conveyed by the gauche imitations which simultaneously celebrate and mock the memory of the deceased. On the intellectual plane, the derisive treatment of the idiosyncratic personality of the deceased is a crucial phase in the transformation of person into persona of an individual into a category.

The following example indicates how the mamanianenu act out and reflect upon the anomalous position and possibly ambivalent emotions of a son at his father's funeral. As successor, a son is placed in an ambiguous position until the conclusion of the ritual period (forty days). His father is physically dead (buried), yet not socially dead (forgotten) until chefare. While the son assumes a formal and filial attitude, his daughters and junior wives ('joking wives' of the deceased) act in ways which make it manifestly clear that the son has become his father. They don their 'husband's' cap and gown. Thus, while the son's piety and reserve seem to intimate the continued presence of the father, the actions of the mamanianenu signify the contrary and express openly the disguised status of the successor.

**Theoretical and Comparative Considerations**

It is clear from the evidence adduced in the preceding account and analysis of Kuranko mortuary customs that a reductionist approach which seeks to explain a particular social configuration in terms of psychological or ethological factors (i.e., in terms of linear causality) is inadequate. As information about the psychological or behavioural fragments is gained, so information about the total system is lost. The polysemic and multi-dimensional character of the ritual configuration can be respected and communicated only when we adopt an approach which integrates and synthesises several available perspectives.

I have taken the view that the psychological processes and the behaviour which characterise the bereavement reaction are phylogenetic adaptations. But this repertoire of affective states and behaviour patterns is subject to social 'control' and manipulation. The ways in which elements from this repertoire are arranged and the meanings ascribed to these elements differ significantly from one society to another.
and from one social context to another (Mead 1952: 411-414; Volkart 1957: 286-301; Bastide 1972: 158-160; Mandelbaum 1965: 338-360). The actual configuration of these ‘given’ elements is reflective of certain universal structuring principles, e.g., the principle of ‘dialectical negation’. But the purpose of the ritual configuration, like its meaning, differs from society to society. This is undoubtedly because the problem of the bereaved is only one of many problems which mortuary rites are designed to solve. For example, among the LoDagaa the ‘main concern’ of mortuary institutions is the reallocation of rights and duties of the dead man among the surviving members of the community, particularly property rights and sexual rights (Goody 1962, ch. 13). Jean Buxton (1973: 153) has emphasised that both ‘personal emotional adjustments’ and ‘social adjustments’ have to be made through Mandari death rites. Among the Yoruba, Nuer, Lugbara and many other African peoples, great emphasis is placed upon the transformation of the identity of the dead (Morton-Williams 1960; Evans-Pritchard 1956, ch. 6; Middleton 1971).

What remains typical in all these various cases is that the affective elements are managed, allocated, simulated, controlled and interpreted in various ways depending upon the kinds of problems—both personal and social—to be solved. This means that identical behaviour in two or more societies does not necessarily imply identical affect or motivation. Furthermore, the ‘social problems’ to be solved are not necessarily mere secondary elaborations or extensions of the ‘psychological problems’ of bereavement. To elucidate this point I want to consider briefly the manner in which the person is transformed into a category, i.e., an ancestor.

Freud (1965: 65) noted that mourning ‘has a quite specific psychical task to perform: its function is to detach the survivors’ memories and hopes from the dead’. More recent studies have shown how ‘selective forgetting’ assists this detaching function and helps mitigate the pain of grieving (Parkes 1975; Lindemann 1960). This psychological process is, however, acted out by persons other than the bereaved in order to perform a uniquely social task: a cognitive alteration in which the person is transformed into an ancestor by first suppressing awareness of his physical and idiosyncratic aspects. At the final funeral of a Kaguru man, the dead person is said to have been ‘forgotten’ (Beidelman 1971: 115). Among the Yoruba, before the second burial is held, an engungun masquerader simulates for the last time the ‘actual bodily appearance’ of the deceased (Morton-Williams 1960: 36). The Mandari, Tallensi, and Lugbara destroy possessions which represent aspects of the ‘social personality’ of the deceased (i.e., with the individual); other ‘lineage property’ is inherited (Buxton 1973: 121; Fortes 1973: 303; Middleton 1965: 65-66).

The destruction of personal property, like the forgetting and expung-
ing of the idiosyncratic corporal personality of the dead, is of course a preliminary to creating the transcendent image of ancestor. For example, among the Tallensi a small strip of the deceased’s daily clothing is referred to as the deceased’s ‘dirt’; it ‘stands for the deceased’ and ‘represents the dead during the interval between the mortuary and the final funeral ceremonies’. Fortes (1973: 303) notes that it ‘is finally disposed of when a collection of his personal ustensils, such as dishes for food and water, is ritually destroyed, to dispatch him finally to the ancestors. This clears the way for him to be brought back into his family and lineage in the character of an ancestor, that is not a human person, endowed with mystical and spiritual powers, and therefore with rights to worship and service.’

This is comparable with the Nuer distinction between the individual (who should not survive) and the name (which should endure), or with the Lugbara notion that at death attributes of the physical body must be extinguished so that ideal attributes of the soul can survive (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 162-163; Middleton 1971: 194).

This process of ‘induced amnesia’ is often said to take three generations, which is in fact approximately the time required for all those who knew a particular individual to die. Thereafter there is no direct knowledge or real memory of that individual (Iberall 1972: 252). Thus, among the Mandari, three generations after death ‘a deceased person is merged in the ancestral collectivity and the dropping-out of the long dead reflects the working of actual memory in relation to passing time’ (Buxton 1973: 151). Bloch’s superb study of the secondary funeral (famadihana) among the Merina of Madagascar (1971: 158, 168-169) indicates how the names and personalities of the dead are forgotten: a ‘ritually sacrilegious attitude’ is forced upon the living, involving rough treatment of the corpse and obligations to handle the skeleton so that the close relatives will accept the irreversibility and finality of death. Among the Fang, reliquary figures ‘represent [...] living persons in general’ and not particular living persons (Fernandez 1973: 204). One of Fernandez’s informants explained why this should be so:

‘The figure represents no ancestor. There are many skulls in the reliquary. Who should we choose to represent? And who would be satisfied with the choice if his own grandfather should be ignored? The figures were made to warn others that this was “the box of skulls” and they were made to represent all the ancestors within.’ (Ibid.: 205.)

The foregoing digression, which only touches upon a subject of immense interest and significance, does indicate that ‘psychological’ factors and processes are often the raw material out of which consciously-contrived ceremonial and metaphorical patterns are fashioned and elaborated. But these patterns should not be reduced to psychogenic factors, even though they frequently display a ‘vocabulary of affect’. With reference to mortuary rites, there is a remarkable similarity between the psychological process of withdrawal or detachment prior to a new
attachment being made, the socio-economic process of withholding and then redistributing property and offices, and the intellectual process of suppressing or denying the idiosyncratic personality of the deceased in preparation for a new 'ancestral' role.

But it would be incorrect, in my view, to regard any one of these processes as determinant. The psychological processes of mourning, grieving, and the bereavement reaction constitute a repertoire of 'data'. These elements are subject to manipulation, variant signification, rearrangement, and simulation for the purposes of resolving problems and effecting transformations which go beyond the domain of mere affect. It is to the interactions between affective, cognitive and social dimensions of reality that our studies must now turn, in order to know just what relative weight certain factors have — age, sex, personality, institutionalised beliefs concerning death and the afterlife, concepts of the person, degree of diffusion of affective bonds in childhood—in determining particular configurations of mortuary rites and customs.

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M. Jackson — L'identité des morts: aspects des rites mortuaires dans une société d’Afrique occidentale. Les rites mortuaires sont assez généralement reconnus comme constituant un aspect social du travail de deuil. Deux traits spécialement frappants à cet égard sont, d’une part, la façon dont le deuil est assumé ou simulé par des personnes non immédiatement affectées, d’autre part, la façon dont son expression est temporellement déplacée et socialement contrôlée. L’étude montre comment les Kuranko manipulent l’affect pour résoudre, entre autres, les problèmes naissant de la contradiction entre continuité sociale et discontinuité personnelle ; la séparation entre l’identité physique concrète du défunt et son identité culturelle ; la dialectique entre le concept du mort-objet et celui du mort-sujet. Les rites sont étroitement liés à la position sociale du défunt et les funérailles constituent en quelque sorte un psychodrame collectif reproduisant la structure totale de la société.