

REPORT No. 3

Submitted to the Governor General of French West Africa by

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FROM SEGU TO MOPTI AND BANDIAGARA

During my stay in the territory of the Niger Office, I observed certain matters that it was not appropriate to incorporate into the preceding report. I include these observations here.

MARKALA

I paid a visit to some former pupils of the *Terrasson de Fougères* School¹, who are now employed in offices and workshops. This is how they are living:

1) Bourema Konde, an assistant writer-interpreter, left the upper primary school a year ago. He is single and is earning 450 francs². He occupies two small rooms which he has furnished with a tara³ complete with mosquito net, a locally-made sofa, which cost 25 francs, and a few armchairs. The bedroom and small sitting room were very clean, the latter is decorated with panels depicting mosques. These panels are made of paper of Japanese origin and cost 10 or 15 francs.

¹ Jean Terrasson de Fougères was the Governor of the French Sudan on numerous occasions between 1924 and 1929. The school referred to here was a post-primary or 'upper' primary technical school established in Bamako, the capital of the French Sudan. It became the Lycée Terrasson de Fougères in the 1940s and is now the Lycée Askia Mohamed.

² This is a monthly salary.

³ A local style of bed.

Bourema is paying 20 francs in rent. He gives 90 francs to a woman who provides him with his three meals of rice and meat, and occasionally millet cake. He spends an additional 10 francs on water, 20 francs on laundry (excluding soap), 30 francs on ironing, and 120 francs on clothes. Every month he gives 50 francs to his parents. Since he left school, he has saved 725 francs, but part of this sum went last year on paying the family's tax and the remainder will pay for this year's.

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2) Bakari Ouaégalo is a despatch clerk on the same salary, and Tamoura Amadou is a writer with the *STIN*⁴ where he is earning 300 or 330 francs depending on the month, plus the ration.

These two men are both single and live together with a landlord who, for 75 francs from each of them, rents out three of his rooms and has the food they provide prepared for them. Their living space is organized as in the previous case. These three young people spend their free time at a football association which they enjoy very much. But they would like to be able to get married. Unfortunately and contrary to the tradition, fathers are not providing wives for their civil servant sons; on the contrary, they are demanding regular gifts and so the young men are unable to save up for the dowry.

3) Amadou So, who left the upper primary school in 1931, earns only 450 francs a month. He has a wife and one child, as well as a family to support. It is only with great difficulty that he manages to cover all his expenses.

4) Zantigué Yakité is a 24 year-old turner who left the upper primary school in 1932. He was not taken on as a civil servant, and so he, along with a colleague, were placed in the

⁴ The *Service temporaire d'irrigation du Niger* was a government company created to build canals in the Niger Office in the 1930s.

*STIN*⁵, from where he was passed on to the Consortium. He bemoans the fact that he is not a civil servant. He earns 20 francs a day plus his ration. He works from seven in the morning until seven at night with half an hour for lunch. He has to provide for his mother, a wife and one child. I did not visit his house.

The decent, well-organized lives these young people are leading do great credit to their teachers.

KOKRY

Three pupils from the school at Katibougou, on secondment to the Niger Office, also struck me as being solidly educated, level-headed and upstanding young people. They live in the African-style, they have no choice in the matter given the salaries and lodgings allocated to them. It is certainly the case that the European members of staff in Kokry are given equally bad accommodation. They are hoping that the situation is only temporary. They .../...

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do not like sleeping on mats and eating out of calabashes⁶, having been accustomed to the European way of life at school. They take the view also that the Europeans, and in particular the instructors who will soon be their colleagues, should really not use the 'tu' form of address when speaking to them⁷. I have seen for myself that they are treated like house boys.

NIONO

⁵ See note 4

⁶ A calabash is the inedible fruit of a tree which is dried, sometimes painted and decorated, and used as a receptacle for food.

⁷ French uses two forms of address. The 'tu' form is largely informal, while the alternative 'vous' form is more formal. It was clearly impudent of the Europeans to use the 'tu' form in this context. Ed.

The nurse in Niono complained about having to pay an excessively high price for food in this outlying village where only settlers and workers live, all of whom are given supplies.

He talked me through his budget and I noticed that his wife is making fraudulent claims on it. She is demanding 10 large pieces of soap every month. Nevertheless, he has no intention of rationing her: 'She could not make do with less'.

This young man supports his mother who has seven children. Of the 213 francs he earns, he gives her two thirds and keeps the rest for himself.

The CIRCONIC⁸ Company in Sama.

From Markala, I travelled on November 3rd to Sama, where CIRCONIC runs a sisal works making rope and bricks.

Shortly before my arrival, I met some workers who were loading wood. They were CIRCONIC employees. They told me that their millet ration is insufficient; that they only get meat on Sunday and dried fish on Saturday. Their salaries have just been increased from 2.25 francs to 2.50 francs⁹, but they do not receive their pay until the 20th or the 25th of the following month.

I was at received in Sama by the director of the company, Mr REMY. He showed me a fairly well set up clinic ('the blacks are so stupid that they often injure themselves' he remarked) and cupboards full of medicines. I noticed a number of boxes of 'specialities' which were stained and it looked like the contents had gone off. Mr REMY replied that these were old boxes, no longer in use, and that the current stock is kept .../...

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⁸ 'The Agricultural and Industrial Company' of the French Sudan

⁹ This is a daily wage.

elsewhere.

He also showed me an attempt at a brick-built native hut. It looked like a mausoleum, very low, very narrow, and suffocating. It was not inhabited, incidentally.

When we went to a plantation Mr REMY introduced me to his Mossi labourers, 'animals' in his view, who go about their work with no enthusiasm and no 'taste' for the task in hand, which consists of loading packets of sisal onto a lorry. The foreman is a former rifleman¹⁰ 'who knows how to get some work out of those brutes'.

The foreman remarked that some labourers have not done all their work.

'That's their look out, they'll get paid for what they've done', Mr REMY responded.

This from a man who had just complained that the tariff, a mere 2 francs a day, was too much, as far as he is concerned.

We leave for the village. Mr REMY drove his car at 60 miles an hour on a ploughed up road full of people returning from work. He whistled loudly to open up a passage for himself, turned off the road at full throttle at some thorn bushes and drove into the clearing of huts in the same manner.

He enjoyed showing me how dirty everything is. The village is indeed filthy, littered with rubbish. The people are haggard, and barely dressed. 'They're animals', repeated Mr REMY.

I had left my chauffeur Daouda, one of the best drivers in the Koulouba garage, near the factory with his assistant Odia. They are both very well disposed, and Odia in particular is very intelligent and understands the nuances of French.

¹⁰ A former member of the famous Senegalese Rifles (*les Tirailleurs Sénégalais*) the first regiment of which was formed in Saint Louis, Senegal. The Senegalese Rifles recruited from all over the African empire. As Savineau states in her next report, most of the Rifles recruited in 1937 came from Diré in the French Sudan.

Having seen me carrying out my enquiries, pencil in hand, these two good fellows decided to obtain some information themselves, and Odia had noted it down.

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I include below the text that he produced, I have just tidied up the grammar a little bit.

‘Some people are unhappy. They are saying that the boss is too hard on them. He beats them and puts them in prison; there is a prison just for this purpose. They are pleased with you but they say that he does nothing good for them.

Those workers who were being paid 30 francs he has reduced to 15.

Labourers earn 2.50 francs. They work from seven in the morning till midnight.

He beats the old people and small children.

The food is insufficient. Every week they are given just a small piece of fish, and no meat at all. They are afraid to speak out, if they do, they’ll get more than just a kick in the a... . He has not built a camp for them, they have had to build their concessions themselves.

He goes after workers’ wives. If they say no, he tells them that he will sack their husband. He beats workers until he sees blood. He is a bad commandant, an unfair man.

Working from four in the morning until midnight, there are those who have been here for 10 years, earning just 2.50 francs and poor food. The pay is not enough to clothe their wives and children. Some work all month long and at the end of it he shows them the door without pay.’

It is not difficult to imagine that a report of this kind is fuelled by hatred. But there is always a reason for hatred. What I saw and heard for myself regarding the conduct and language used by Mr REMY gave me reason to believe that he treats his staff shamefully.

Mr REMY is highly thought of in the region as a man with a 'firm-hand' who saved a business that was on the verge of collapse.

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Having returned to Segou from the villages of the Niger Office on November 9th, I continued my journey via:

KOUTIALA	11 th and 12 th November
SAN	13 th and 14 th “
MOPTI	15 th and 16 th “
BANDIAGARA	17 th and 18 th “
SANGHA	19 th November
DJENNE	21 st November
MOPTI	22 nd November

from where I took the boat for the Niger loop, which is the subject of my next report.

As I will be writing up a comprehensive study after my return, so I will limit myself here to the observations I made at each post, finishing with the very distinctive region inhabited by the Habbé people of Bandiagara and Sangha.

SEGOU

The Girls' School

The head is Madame MASSIEUX, whom I found in the middle of a very lively ironing class.

She told me that the local population of Segu is Muslim and hostile to the idea of educating girls. They have had to be recruited by force. They enjoy the domestic science lessons but studying interests them far less.

The Catholic Mission The nuns of Segu give instruction to children, both boys and girls, of Christian parents. The teaching is clearly based around religious rather than educational goals. The pupils in the middle class had difficulty in understanding the questions I put to them and barely replied. Only the older children spoke fairly well. They rarely get to the stage of taking the school-leaving certificate.

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Once they have reached the age of seven or eight, the little girls are in class for only two hours a day. The rest of the time, they are kept busy making hand-knotted carpets. Soon they will be working at this full time.

In a huge workshop, I am shown sixteen girl weavers. There used to be eighty but since then demand has fallen. They make an exact copy of a design laid out next to them. Some of them are very skilful.

Their timetable is as follows:

7.30am to 9am: Weaving.

9am to 9.30am: Break-time

9.30am to 10.30am: Catechism (except Monday, which is pay day)

2pm to 5pm: Weaving.

In total, they do 30 hours of weaving a week, as well as a bit of ironing, I was told. They are paid 5 centimes per 80 stitches for their weaving, and get a 1 franc bonus for every 5 francs earned. When the carpet is ready (it takes months), the worker is given 20 or 30 francs if it is perfect.

I was not able to calculate the daily earnings of these workers as not one of them understood French. A teacher married to a former pupil at the mission tells me that it would be around 1 to 2 francs a day.

The carpets are sold at 250 francs per square metre.

Once a weaver gets married she almost invariably stops working at the carpet workshop. But at home she spins wool for the carpets. Once again, it is impossible to calculate earnings for this piecework. The wool is sold at 4.50 francs a kilo.

I was then led into a warehouse where three girls aged between 10 and 12 were beating raw wool with a stick. They are covered in clouds of dust. This work is not done .../...

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on a rota basis. It is always the same girls who beat the wool. They are the less able children, who by doing this manage to 'make themselves useful'.

Others were stirring unpleasant-smelling mixtures, and indigo dying in a closed room (village dyers are careful to do this work in the open air).

Then, I meet an old woman in a hut. She was busy carding wool along with two young children aged five at most, also working 'to give them something to do and keep the old woman company'.

I am also shown a kind of crèche containing four children's beds and a tara¹¹, for the woman in charge of them. All the space in this airless room is taken up with furniture, and it smelt of dirty linen.

Those accommodated here are mixed-race children who will later go on to the orphanage in Bamako. This part of the business is considered unworthy of their attention and so it is not properly maintained.

The nuns also run a clinic.

Health service

When I returned to Segou, the Commandant¹² was absent. I asked his deputy to present me to the various departments. He told me there was no need for that, I should just introduce myself.

At the clinic, Dr CAVALADE told me that he had a patient in need of attention. Since the working day was drawing to a close, I asked whether I could see him the next day. He replied that it was the 11th November¹³. I insisted, as I would soon have to leave, whereupon he pointed out that my visit had not been officially announced. I offered to show him the papers supporting my mission. These were not sufficient, said the doctor.

Dr CAVALADE is the only doctor who did not accept with alacrity the opportunity I offered him to have his efforts and difficulties communicated to those in high places.

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I left Segou without having seen anything of the medical services.

¹¹ A local style of bed.

¹² Literally the 'Circle' commandant, the 'circle' being the French colonial administrative district.

¹³ In France, as in several other European countries, the 11th November is an important day commemorating the signing of the armistice that brought the World War 1 (1914-1918) to a close.

KOUTIALA

The Koutiala District was not on my itinerary but I was invited by the Administrator, Mr MAUREL, to pay a visit, so I thought it a good idea to go and see how Miniankas, some of whom had been transferred to the Niger Office, live at home, and to compare their situation here, under the protection of a flourishing provident society, to that of the settlers in the Niger Office.

The Miniankas live in extended families in high-walled enclosures. From an entrance hall, one enters a shady courtyard. The courtyard is surrounded by loggias and in the centre, there are very tall silos, henhouses, and some large sheds. There are packets of millet and bundles of fodder all around. The overall impression is one of wise and careful organization, and of wealth.

According to the schoolteacher, who has studied their customs, the Miniankas are very hard-working people. The women work as much as or more than the men, and they all work for the head of the family. But they set aside two days a week for work on their own crops, and every man and woman can dispose of their harvests as he or she sees fit. The family head provides one meal a day; each household takes care of the rest. The women harvest shea nuts in the bush, from which they make butter to sell. Last year, it was worth 1.52 francs a kilo, this year, 1 franc. Some of them earn up to 500 francs this way. The Minianka women provide their children's food almost entirely on their own. In the past, they used to go about their daily tasks almost naked. Nowadays they wear a short wrapper¹⁴, necklaces and a head scarf.

¹⁴ A wrap-around garment known in French as a *pagne*

The Minianka marriage is done by exchange. The young girl is given away, without her consent, in exchange for another young girl, and not without protest, often enough.

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After the marriage, many of them go off with the man of their own choice. It definitely seems to be the case that economic independence, albeit only partial, develops certain qualities in these women such as initiative, willpower and energy, the very qualities that are lacking in women who find themselves in a position of absolute dependence. I would imagine that in the Niger Office Minianka women's rights are challenged and that they would have to fight to protect them.

The Provident Society and Families

Mr MAUREL described the typical family as being composed of:

- 1 old man,
- 2 married men,
- 5 adult women (married or widowed)
- 2 young people (boys or girls) capable of the same output as the adults
- 3 young children.

That makes thirteen people in total, of whom nine are workers. This assessment seems much more accurate than in the Niger Office, where only two members of a family of ten are counted as workers.

This typical Koutiala family cultivates 6 hectares¹⁵ of extremely fertile land:

Millet	4 hectares
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¹⁵ Approximately 15 acres

Corn and cotton	1/2 hectare
Dried vegetables	1/4 “
Groundnuts	3/4 “
Gardening and condiments	1/2 “

They produce some 2,600 kilogrammes of millet. They consume a portion of this and sell the remainder for 312 francs, in a poor year. They earn a further 58 francs for the sale of produce they have gathered. Profits made on an individual basis are not included here. In total, without a plough or irrigation, the family earns an average of 389.50 francs a year.

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Its outgoings are as follows:

Tax	144 frs
Clothing	71 frs
Food (salt, sugar, kola nuts, meat)	123 frs
Sundries	23 frs
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	361 frs

The accounts more or less balance.

Again without a plough, but under the supervision of the Provident Society, the same family finds itself, after 4 years, in the following situation:

Income:	855
Outgoings:	535
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Reserves:	320

With a plough, they double their crop production while maintaining the same level of consumption, so their reserves rise to 1,000 francs.

The Miniankas used to be in debt and were giving away daughters as security to pay the tax. Sons were leaving the region as they were no longer able to exchange their sisters for wives. Sometimes the father ended up putting himself up as security.

The work provided by the person put up as security did not cover the debt, which resulted in perpetual slavery, unless an inheritance changed the situation.

Mr. MAUREL has been working at getting this work-for-debt tradition abolished - only an administrator could have done this - and he has freed a great many people. Thanks to the Provident Society's success in liberating people, individuals are no longer being put up as security.

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An attempt is currently being made to build up the livestock again.

The Provident Society has created a sort of savings bank. It does not provide interest - the native farmer does not want that - but rather it provides the investor with instant access to funds.

A plough is only given to those who request one. So far, a maximum of two have been given to any one family, in order to prevent the family head from extending his crops beyond manageable proportions, which would lead to overwork or the hiring of low-cost labourers. An attempt is also being made to obtain low cost farming equipment that the family would be able to repair.

All this is a very socially-beneficial undertaking, which is being managed in the interests of Africans not Europeans but nonetheless Europeans do have a stake in this: Mr MAUREL showed me his enormous fields of very impressive-looking cotton.

The process is slow all the same. The Provident Society owns 1,075 ploughs, and only 850 have been distributed. Mr MAUREL thinks that only about 200 of these are in perfect working order. But this slowness helps ensure assimilation. Needless to say, Mr MAUREL is opposed to the departure of his Miniankas, who are not short of land, for the Niger Office.

Education

There is no girls' school in Koutiala, but there are a few girls in the boys' classes. These are the girls who asked to be allowed to do the same as their brothers. Fifteen of them were accepted but due to lack of space, only the daughters of chiefs were admitted which means there are only nine of them got in and they all want to be midwives. The boys in the top class want to marry educated girls who know how to take proper care of children.

A girls' school would be filled immediately.

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Health Service

It is run by an auxiliary doctor¹⁶, the same one since 1925, a man who appears brimming with enthusiasm and intelligence. Even though the population is rural, people come willingly for medical treatment.

The midwife has four children, all of them in good health, which is an excellent advertisement for the maternity ward. According to the doctor, no delivery takes place in

¹⁶ These were usually Africans trained over three years by the colonial medical service at the medical college in Dakar, Senegal.

Koutiala without her. Several women can be accommodated in a room containing taras. At the time of my visit, only one of these was occupied. For the last 5 months, two women who are traditional African birthing attendants have been on placement with the midwife.

The district nurse is the wife of the auxiliary doctor. She seems extremely shy. The female personnel seem to be lacking in maturity. It would be useful to see whether they are being dealt with in a sufficiently enlivening manner in Dakar¹⁷.

SAN

Education

This is a Moslem population and it is less well disposed to the teaching of French than the population just mentioned. A girls' school would attract about thirty pupils, the daughters of civil servants and other employees.

Health Service

It is run by a young and very enthusiastic doctor who is doing the best he can, given the dreadful place he has to work in. In the clinic in San he can get as many as 340 patients coming in, and in the permanent centres it occasionally exceeds 200. The midwife and the visiting nurse accompany the doctor when he is on his rounds. He drops them off in the villages where the women are growing increasingly more inclined to come forward. The midwife is delivering 4 or 5 more babies every month. These totalled 34 in November 1937. The premises are no longer big enough and a .../...

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¹⁷ Training for local district nurses and midwives employed in French West Africa was provided in the school of midwifery in Dakar.

new ward with eight beds is going to be opened.

The doctor rewards women who have had an attended birth by stitching up their noses or ears where these have been torn by excessively heavy jewellery. More than one of them has come to the maternity ward because of this 'cosmetic surgery'.

San's health service has been concentrating on educating women with regard to two main issues, namely gaining their acceptance that pregnant women should not fast during Lent, and that mothers should not forget the child they are carrying on their back. Sometimes they arrive at the market and find that the child has died of thirst.

Lepers' camp

Twenty or so poor people, covered in horrendous sores, are housed in a camp where they receive medical attention and good food and find rest. They are peaceful and grateful.

Catholic Mission

I was unable to visit this mission, as it was too far out of my way. The Circle Commandant's wife, Madame TROUPEAU, showed me some perfectly executed pieces of embroidery, which would have required interminable hours of application and patience. I was told by Madame TROUPEAU that some of the girls doing this work are at most ten years old.

MOPTI

Maternity ward

The midwife is a Peul who graduated top of her class from the school in Dakar. She is very well respected, according to the doctor, but not at all warm as far as her personality is

concerned. Her face bears an expression of utter boredom and she is very hard on the women giving birth.

The district nurse is a Malinka woman. The women in Mopti do not take her seriously, the doctor told me, because she is not the same race. She also has .../...

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difficulty in making herself understood by Bozo women, as she does not speak their language.

Almost all the women living in Mopti are seen, but not those who live in the bush. At harvest time, they do not want to travel.

It should be added that wealthy women do not wish to be hospitalised in the same room as poor women. They need a special room of their own, even if it means they would have to pay.

'Berceau Africain'¹⁸ Some of the wives of civil servants weigh babies, distribute milk and presents and send sick children to the doctor. This organization, the headquarters of which are to be found in Bamako, is presided over by Madame ROUGIER.

I attended a session for poverty-stricken mothers attended by about twenty abandoned women and teenage-mothers. Every week they receive millet, soap and one or two 2 francs and once a month they get some meat and a boubou¹⁹ for the child.

One of these women has three children; she is dreadfully thin as a result of a bout of dysentery. She was abandoned far from home by her husband, and has no means of rejoining

¹⁸ A local charity, set up by European women in Bamako, French Sudan in June 1936, the name of which translates into English as 'African Cradle'.

¹⁹ A loose robe resembling a kaftan.

her family. In such cases, which occur frequently and lead women into prostitution, it would be as well, perhaps, to allow repatriation.

Education

The girls' school in Mopti is composed of two classes. One accommodates forty pupils, and the other fifty-eight. It is run by Madame AUDIPONT, the wife of the head of the boys' school. Madame AUDIPONT takes charge of the older pupils. A mixed-race teaching assistant takes the younger ones, and is considered to work well.

Madame AUDIPONT teaches in a practical and appealing manner. She calls on each pupil to make a personal effort and she draws their attention to the world around them with the aim of changing it for the better.

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They write a daily resolution in their exercise books e.g. 'I will not have lice.'

When I went into the classroom, unannounced, they were all writing up a 'language diary'. One of the pupils had just written hers on the board for them all to comment on. This is what I read:

'On Wednesday evening, we held a meeting of the schoolgirls' club. We put cloths and bouquets of water lilies on the tables. We danced to accordion music and after that we had a big meal. There were four legs of lamb and five roast chickens, fried potatoes, macaroni in juice, pancakes and fried rice. We had lemon cordial and red-current syrup to drink. After the meal, we went on dancing until midnight.'

I quote from this text because it shows firstly that the pupils at the girls school in Mopti can express themselves correctly in French and write more or less without error (two

mistakes corrected); secondly that they can prepare new dishes, enjoy them, and derive pleasure from serving them European-style, even when they are among themselves; and, finally, that in modifying the old customs of the traditional youth clubs, they have formed a schoolgirls' association which shows that they are proud of being schoolgirls. Madame AUDIPONT was unaware of the existence of this club.

I asked these young girls what they wanted to be. Only one wants to be a midwife. The others want to get married. We will see later how former pupils of the school get married.

The domestic science class

Adjacent to the classroom, another room is being used for the teaching of domestic science. It is full of benches, kitchen utensils, stone ovens, and .../...

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a child's bed. Flounced curtains hang in the windows.

Alas, the utensils leave much to be desired: the filter has holes in it and there are not nearly enough plates or cutlery. Madame AUDIPONT has filled in the gaps with her own utensils, though she is greatly concerned that they might get ruined. And she often pays for fabric, thread and needles out of her own pocket.

I spent an entire afternoon observing a domestic science lesson. On account of my visit, various activities were carried out during the same session. these included ironing shorts belonging to boys in the sports club, preparing coffee and lemon juice (the cooking activity) for some expected visitors, and needlework where they demonstrated hemming, *broderie anglaise*, embroidery and working with canvas.

All the pupils were active, talkative, and happy. They recited poems adapted for black African countries and sang. They were almost dancing when they put everything away at the end of the lesson.

The pupils returned to the classroom to write up an account of their afternoon's activities. It was almost dark as they bent over their exercise books. They looked very irritated, I felt sorry that this task had not been put off until the following day.

Then the hens and the rabbits were fed. These creatures are doted on. They wear collars bearing the name of the little girl looking after them.

Former pupils of the school

I mentioned earlier that they were expecting some visitors. These were former pupils, whom Madame AUDIPONT wished to introduce to me. They duly came along, extremely elegant and equally shy. Almost all of them brought with them a pretty baby born at the maternity ward. They had attended the school for 8, 10 or 11 years. They were the daughters of chiefs or civil servants. The school has also educated poor girls.

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I was sorry not to have met any of them. The former pupils I did meet had all been married off by their fathers, either to a shopkeeper or to a civil servant. I had great difficulty in getting them to say anything about their married lives. And instead of replying frankly, they told me memories from their schooldays. They said that they had added roast chicken cooked in the pot and coffee to the local repertoire of dishes.

Madame AUDIPONT's pupils picked up the babies and they all wanted to pamper them. We ought to make greater use of these young girls' love of babies. School crèches would have the double advantage of being popular and training expert mothers.

I went to visit a few of the former pupils of the school in their own homes. Whether they are Peul, Bambara or Bozo, their bedrooms are all decorated with the same Arabic images made in Japan that I mentioned earlier. Their bedrooms were impeccably clean, the beds covered with blankets and cotton muslin, and here and there I saw a few embroidered cloths.

Just one of these young women was a third wife. I was unable to find out what she thought of the situation. The others were on their own. One of them had insisted on always being the only wife.

The women of Mopti and the Justice System

In Mopti's prison, there were three thieves and two women condemned for fighting. They are kept together in a small, unpleasant-smelling room that gets very stuffy at night. They have access only to the men's yard.

There are not many adulterers in Mopti, the Commandant²⁰ explained this in terms of the women not being very demanding.

Progress

I was told by a local notable that in days gone by a woman was obliged to stay with her husband, who beat her if necessary. Nowadays, he cannot beat her any more because she

²⁰ The head of the administrative district or 'Circle'.

goes to court if he does. So, while women in the bush have not changed, women in Mopti are becoming very independent. They go off to market without asking permission. She sees things there that she wants, and if her husband refuses to give them to her, she argues with him. If he continues to say no, she gets them from somebody else.

The girls at school can no longer be married off, they want a boy who has been to school. They cannot get on with one who has not. They do not want to pound millet or spin cotton.

However, it is good that some girls become midwives who know better than traditional birthing attendants how to look after children.

The older schoolboys see things differently: they want to marry a girl who has been to school so she can keep the house clean and take care of the children.

DJENNE

Education

I arrived in Djenné on a Sunday. The headmaster of the school, who is also the head of the local subdivision, is away every weekend from Saturday morning to Sunday evening. When I got back to Mopti I learned from the Circle Commandant that this is because 'he has to call in on his villages'. But when I left to go to Djenné he had not told me about this situation. I presented myself to his deputy, Mr FRANÇOIS, a man of mixed-race born in Djenné. His wife, also of mixed race, runs the girls' school, which has 150 pupils. It had been divided into two classes but now there is only one, .../...

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due to a shortage of staff.

I saw the class. The exercise books show that Madame FRANÇOIS teaches with taste and intelligence; that she knows how to adapt her teaching to local realities, and how to teach her pupils the merits of goodness and hygiene in a lively and practical way.

She showed me the domestic science classroom, which is well stocked with kitchen utensils and a large cupboard containing equipment for sewing and ironing, although there were no fabrics or thread or anything else that needs replacing after use.

Madame FRANÇOIS told me that the girls pound millet and spin the cotton harvested by the boys. They prepare the balls of millet dough and millet cakes for them. They weave baskets and prepare the grass for the rabbits. Except for the rabbit grass, this is all a girl can learn at home.

‘At least their mothers benefit from that’, I said to Madame FRANÇOIS.

As the wife of a former village child, she strongly agreed with my view and, getting bolder all the while, she explained the situation to me:

‘Mr COZZANO, the head of the school, is living with a person he is to marry after a divorce has been settled. The girls’ school was handed over to this Mrs Cozzano-to-be, then taken away from her because of protests from the teachers’ union. The school was then entrusted to Madame FRANÇOIS, who until then had been the mistress in charge of the second of the two classes. Mr COZZANO and his partner then tried to sabotage the girls’ school. Madame FRANÇOIS received only 10 to 20 francs a month for stationery. In Mopti, Mr RANNOU, the Circle Commandant, told me that he provides 120 francs per term for this. The ousted headmistress has retained control over the poultry and the rabbits. The girls feed the .../...

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animals and when they want to eat an omelette, Madame FRANÇOIS buys the eggs. They do not know what rabbit tastes like, which is hardly conducive to encouraging the girls to breed them. Incidentally, the fur of the rabbits was in a very bad condition. Madame FRANÇOIS thought that it was just like that. She does not possess a single book on caring for farmyard animals.

It is the so-called Madame COZZANO who uses the sewing machine. She has tried to turn the girls against their new headmistress, who has had to work hard to gain their confidence.

Even without this dispute, the girls' school would not be doing well; the girls would still be being used as servants for the boys' school. Mr EMERY, the Inspector for Administrative Affairs, whom I saw on my return to Mopti, informed me that by special order the girls in Djenné were doing an additional year devoted explicitly to the 'housekeeping' of the rural school.

Mr FRANÇOIS added that in the village, people are very unhappy with Mr COZZANO. Mr EMERY also received numerous complaints when he was passing though. The village scribe took down the names of everybody who called on the Inspector and there were altercations after he had gone.

I passed on the complaints to Mr EMERY, asking whether what I had been told tallied with his own information. He said that he was returning to Djenné to shed some further light on these matters. But he seemed to me to be particularly interested in the scribe. He was not convinced by what the FRANÇOIS had to say, remarking on the gossip of people (and of mixed-race people in particular) who are scared of losing an advantageous situation. Mr COZZANO's accounts were in order: he is paying for the eggs and rabbits that he takes for

his own use. (Is he paying for all of them though?) I do not wish to cast any doubt over Mr EMERY's clear-sightedness, or his sense of justice, and I do not .../...

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claim to be able to settle the argument, without even having met Mr COZZANO. But Mr and Madame François were very nice to me. They made no recriminations and were distraught at the situation, thinking of the pupils and of their families. I visited the village with them, accompanied by the sons of the local chiefs. The two teachers were on good terms with everyone and well received everywhere.

Before handing the school over to Madame COZZANO, it would be as well to find out whether she really did attempt to sabotage the school, and who, between herself and Madame FRANÇOIS, would be the better woman to run the school.

The *Berceau Africain* organisation

In Djenné, there is neither a midwife nor a district nurse, but only a nurse. After I was given some fairly insignificant information that I will not relate here, the nurse came and found me in the camp, he was very upset and embarrassed. Mr COZZANO would surely reprimand him for having spoken to me. Was I going to take his words as criticism of Mr COZZANO?

Madame COZZANO presides over the local section of *Berceau Africain* and every week examines 200 infants. According to Mr and Madame FRANÇOIS, the mothers are sent along by the village chiefs, who are threatened with hard labour if they do not comply.

The VALLERY-RADOT Farm

Knowing that Professor VALLERY-RADOT provided bursaries for a few pupils at the school in Djenné who have been placed on farms, I asked to see one of these farms. I was taken by river in a pirogue²¹ to the household of young MANGUEL and BOCKOU in the village of Rondé Siron.

These young people, aged 18 and 15, live in a rectangular enclosure. At the rear, there are two square-shaped rooms made of banco²², one of which is furnished with a tara²³ with no mosquito net, and a cot awaiting the imminent arrival of a baby. Next to this, there is the kitchen, with a cooking-pot on three stones. It also houses the plough.

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In the yard to the right, there are small sheds covered in straw in a state of semi-collapse. To the left, there are two big, empty silos. Behind the hut, there is a large garden with a few trees half a metre high, and some local pumpkins.

MANGUEL and BOKOU's story is as follows:

MANGUEL, who finished top of his class, was earmarked to get a farm. Once this one had been built by forced labour²⁴, it was supplied with two oxen, two rabbits, three goats, and a few hens. Four pomegranate trees, four lemon trees and a paw-paw tree were planted. A plough was brought in and MANGUEL worked the land and planted seed in the rice-field that had been assigned to him. But he did not do any gardening: he had not been given any seed for a vegetable garden.

²¹ A type of dugout canoe used throughout West Africa.

²² A building material made of compacted earth similar to adobe.

²³ A bed

²⁴ This was the '*prestation*' system whereby the French colonial authorities demanded 9 days of labour from each able-bodied African man for which they were paid 4.50 francs a day. In practice the system was not well-regulated and abuses were rife.

He came and farmed every day and returned to his parents in the evening. He harvested and filled his silos. Then all of a sudden Mr DAIRE, Mr COZZANO's predecessor, said to him: 'Bokou came out top of her class; you are going to marry her.' Because he was too young, MANGUEL had not given any thought to marriage, in any case he was not interested in BOKOU. As for BOKOU, she had a fiancé that she liked. As with the other girls at the school, she wanted to marry well. Nevertheless, they were married. They both complain bitterly about it. They would be happy with one another if they were comfortably off, but they are not.

To pay for part of the dowry, the presents and the unforeseen wedding celebrations, MANGUEL emptied his silos. That was last February. In this way the young couple started married life without a penny to their name. They had to earn their food every day. MANGUEL hires himself out to neighbours for 2 or 2.50 francs a day. BOKOU goes to Djenné to sell fruit from the tamarind tree that, as luck would have it, grows in their yard. A snake killed their rabbits. The goats and the hens died. The oxen are in summer pastures with the oxen from the school. Pomegranate and lemon trees grow very slowly; and the pawpaw tree is male.

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Next year does not look any more hopeful either. This year MANGUEL has sown two hectares²⁵ of rice and one hectare of millet and the locusts ate the lot.

However, this young man MANGUEL, is full of youthful energy, and is a healthy, vigorous, intelligent and courageous individual. He is not whining, he is making a complaint. He loves his farm, his oxen, his plough and is only asking to be given the opportunity to get

²⁵ Approximately 5 acres.

full value from his goods. BOKOU is more discouraged. Throughout the rainy season you can only get from Rondé Siron to Djenné by pirogue. So she stays on her own. The house does not have a door. The door to the yard, made of a few planks of wood badly nailed together, is falling apart. The wall is too low. The little village is too far away. MANGUEL pointed all this out when the building work was being carried out but nobody took any notice. BOKOU is lonely and resented by the neighbours, whose fields were taken and given to her husband. She is afraid and sometimes hungry. And she worries for the little one on the way.

But isn't MANGUEL going to seek help from Mr COZZANO?

How does he treat him?

Looking at the ground, MANGUEL replied shortly:

'He treats us well'.

And what about those two letters published in the journal *Éducation Africaine* where MANGUEL and BOKOU express their joy and gratitude to Mr CHARTON?

'Mr DAIRE forced us to write them'.

Former pupils from the Djenné Girls' School

The girls' school in Djenné has been in existence for many years and since Djenné is quite developed many of its former pupils have got married and stayed there. They understand French but do not want to speak it. They do not sew but do a little embroidery. The one dish they have adopted from French cooking is omelette. All the same there clearly there has been some impact, according to Mr and Madame FRANÇOIS they wash their babies now and dress them in boubous made by the tailor.

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I asked the sons of the local chiefs whether they prefer girls who have been to school to those who have not left their mother's side. The Peul seemed to think my question indecent and moved away. The Bozo replied:

'I would like to marry a girl from the school but none of them would be interested in me'.

As this Bozo was young, good-looking, intelligent, and from a good family, I thought that was just a clever ruse to avoid the question and told him so.

A little later, seeing a tall girl wearing lots of jewellery approach, he stopped her:

'Would you like to marry me?'

'No', she replied.

'Why not?' I asked. 'Is he not good-looking enough? Not rich enough?'

'No...no....'

'Is it because he is already married?' I asked.

'Yes!' she said, emphatically.

'And you', I said to the young man, 'would you take her as your only wife?'

'Oh no!'

The dream of the educated young girls in Djenné is to marry a civil servant. But there are so few in Djenné! So they resign themselves to taking a farmer, but insist on monogamy. Those who do marry a man who is already married live far away from their co-wives.

Women's industries

The pottery in Djenné is remarkable for the variety of objects it makes:

Dishes and water carriers

Water troughs for rabbits,

Gargoyles,
Cooking-pots, .../...

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Washing bowls
Lids
Bed supports

The water trough for rabbits costs less than 25 centimes. A fine example of a decorated water carrier with curved ornamental mouldings was on sale for 7.50 francs.

Bozo women boil little yellow-tailed fish and extract the oil from them for their cooking.

BANDIAGARA

In Bandiagara women are engaged to be married when still children and they have to marry the man their fathers chose, although later she can leave with another husband. But she has to leave any children behind. Such separations are rare.

Husband and wife farm together. The harvest goes to the husband, who feeds the family.

The wife spins the cotton which her husband will weave and which she will sell at the market to raise the money needed to pay the tax. With whatever money remains, she buys some small livestock for the household.

She also sells millet beer, a little millet and cotton taken from the family harvest, and buys herself jewellery.

Women's industries

Due to a lack of suitable earth, the potter grinds up old water carriers and pours the powder into the mixture used to make new ones. In other words, she uses her raw materials very carefully and skilfully makes the walls of the spherical bowls very thin. She can make as many as 6 or 7 water carriers a day and sells them for 1.50 or 2 francs. With the money she earns, she feeds and clothes herself.

The prices charged by the Bambara hairdresser vary. She asks either 5 francs, 3 francs or 2.50 francs according to how elaborate the hairstyle is. A hairstyle that costs 5 francs takes an entire day. The customer washes her hair herself then all the hairdresser has to do is plait it. The tools .../...

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are very simple: an awl that serves as a comb, a sort of hook for making partings and a kind of brush. False hairpieces are woven into thin hair. At festive times of the year there is no shortage of customers. A hairstyle lasts for about 2 or 3 months. The hairdresser is the blacksmith's wife. She is also a griot²⁶ and sometimes she stops work to go off and perform her praise-singing duties.

With graceful movements, the wives of the Habbé farmers dye the cotton that has been harvested and spun by the family in indigo. This cotton will be given to the weaver who, for about 12 to 15 francs, will make a boubou²⁷ for the husband, a wrapper²⁸ for the woman, and small items of clothing for older children.

²⁶ A storyteller and praise singer.

²⁷ A long robe resembling a kaftan.

²⁸ A long piece of cloth for wrapping around the body, known as a *pagne* in French.

Habbé women and the Justice System

The Head of the Subdivision, Mr ORTOLI, is conducting an investigation into a case of poisoning. A woman is alleged to have poisoned several children. Ritual crimes of this sort, invariably committed by women, are said to occur fairly frequently.

Education

There are few girls at the school in Bandiagara. Habbé women are very shy and less open to new ideas than the men. They have their ritual secrets that the men know nothing about, and to which they are very attached, as though these are signs of their independence.

Health Service

The doctor was away.

SANGHA

The Habbé men and women of Sangha farm lots of small, square-shaped plots of peppers on the edge of floodwaters, which they weed carefully and water day and night with a calabash. Each member of the family, father mother, son, daughter, has his or her own plot, each of which can bring in up to 100 francs. The produce is sold in Mopti. They also produce .../...

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a little millet, but not enough to feed themselves. They buy the rest. In Sangha, the woman pays the tax for herself and her daughters.

The Habbé people strew their yards with millet stalks which everybody walks over to flatten them down. When the rains come they get soaked and mixed into the soil and end up making a blackish mud which then serves as fertiliser.

Habbé dwellings are low, narrow, dark, and dirty buildings, but are curiously well decorated. The doors have beautiful sculpted locks.

Women's industries

Among the products made by the women, mention has to be made of a greasy sour-smelling substance used to perfume the body. It is made from crushing wild grape seeds.

The American Mission

Two American couples are trying to spread the Protestant religion in Sangha. They claim to have got 109²⁹ Habbés to attend a get-together during harvest time, and to be having a far wider influence. But they do not have a single Christian woman to show for their efforts, nor any Christian men for that matter as they are Christian only in secret.

The head of the Bandiagara subdivision believes that only a few houseboys are followers of this mission.

Customs

Everywhere, during my travels through the area, I gathered information on local customs regarding matters such as engagement, marriage, divorce, widowhood, inheritance, youth clubs, and rites observed on the birth of a child. I now have a great deal of information

²⁹ This number is no longer entirely legible in the original document, it may be 105 or 103.

on these matters and as this material would be out of place in this report I will keep it for a special study.

Signed: M³⁰. SAVINEAU

NIAMEY, 26th December 1937

³⁰ Denise Savineau normally signed her reports 'Mme' Savineau, here she uses 'M', the standard abbreviation for 'Monsieur'.