

Intercultural trade, networks and modalities of trust in the Jula merchant diaspora (1500-1900)

CISSE Chikouna

*Associate Professor, Department of History
Félix Houphouët-Boigny University
Ivory Coast*

Introduction

The study of merchant diasporas in the modern era has enjoyed good fortune since anthropologist Abner Cohen¹ elevated them to the status of an analytical category in the late 1960s. Scott Levi², Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert³, Sebouh Aslanian⁴, Francesca Trivellato⁵, Fahad Ahmad Bishara⁶, and many others have produced remarkable works on the subject, focusing almost exclusively on Asia, Europe and America. Under such conditions, we cannot speak of a global turning point in the discipline, as Francesca Trivellato⁷ proclaims, since Africa, the scene of great connected empires and intercultural trade attested to at least since the 8th century by Arab authors under the rule of the Wangara and later their Jula emulators, is the great forgotten in these studies of diasporic trading communities on a planetary scale. As Olivier Weather points out, network analysis has rarely been applied to sub-Saharan African societies, and even more rarely to regional trade, for at least two main reasons. The explanation is that, firstly, community studies focusing on social and family issues, launched in the 1970s by British sociologists in Africa, have not been recognized as a main area of interest among network scientists. Secondly, the approaches applied simultaneously by economists, historians and geographers have tended to eclipse formal network analysis in favor of econometrics or qualitative studies⁸. Maurice Godelier is right to call for a renewal of the notion of "economic rationality", by grasping people in all the conscious and unconscious aspects of their social relationships⁹. In taking up the Jula question, more than half a century after Yves Person's seminal work, our ambition is to go beyond piecemeal studies by geographical area and produce a global history of the Jula, focusing on the question of trust within this network marchand. In short, a socio-cultural and religious history that has long been overlooked in favor of economic, diplomatic and military history.

Keywords: Trade, intercultural, trust, diaspora, jula

From Niger to the Gulf of Guinea: Coalition jula and intercultural trade in West Africa

Although, as Abdoulaye Bathily suggests, the Englishman Richard Jobson first mentioned the term jula¹⁰ in writing in 1623, in his account of exploration in Gambia¹¹, the term was far from unknown in Manding

¹Abner Cohen, "Cultural strategies in the organization of trading diasporas", in Claude Meillassoux (ed.), *The development of indigenous trade and markets in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 266-281.

²Scott C. Levi, *The Indian Diaspora in Central Asia and its Trade, 1550-1900*, Leiden Brill, 2002.

³Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, « La « nation » portugaise. Réseaux marchands dans l'espace atlantique à l'époque moderne », in *Annales. Histoire, sciences sociales*, 2003/3, 58^e année, pp. 627-648.

⁴Sebouh Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean: The Global Trade Networks of Armenian Merchants from New Julfa*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011.

⁵Francesca Trivellato, *Corail contre diamants. De la Méditerranée à l'océan indien au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, Seuil, 2016.

⁶Fahad Ahmad Bishara, 'A sea of Debt. Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean 1780-1950', Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

⁷Francesca Trivellato, *Corail contre diamants...* p.19.

⁸Olivier J. Walther, 'Trade networks in West Africa: a social network approach', in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, juin 2014, Vol. 52, n° 2, p.181. Francesca Trivellato pointe également la même critique. Voir à ce propos « Juifs de Livourne, italiens de Lisbonne, Hindous de Goa. Réseaux marchands et échanges interculturels à l'époque moderne », in *Annales. Histoire. Sciences Sociales*, 58^e année, n°3, 2003, p. 584.

⁹Maurice Godelier, « Objet et méthodes de l'anthropologie économique », in *L'Homme*, avril-juin 1965, T.5, n°2, p. 90.

¹⁰Selon les auteurs, le terme s'écrit également des façons suivantes : dioula, dyula, juula.

country before that date. In his book devoted to the Manding griot, Drissa Diakité points out that as early as the 13th century, the term jula was applied to hunters. They were called kala jula, because they were always on the move in pursuit of game¹². This idea of being on the move in search of prestige goods is at the root of julaya (doing the jula). From an initial focus on the upper Niger basin between Kangaba and Siguiiri, the Mandé spread and exercised their influence in increasingly distant regions and among increasingly different peoples. This regional migration was part of what Djibril Tamsir Niane calls the second Mandé expansion¹³ following the emergence of Mali in the 13th century, after the fall of the Ghana empire. A wealth of literature¹⁴ has described the historical conditions and modalities of this Mande expansion towards the West African coast. As a rough reminder, inter-regional trade within West Africa was already broadly in place by 1500, and this was the state of affairs experienced by 19th-century explorers. However, ancient mentions prove that the "dioulas" were much earlier: in the 8th-11th centuries, they were an active branch of Old World networks, helping to "connect" and integrate local societies into the transcontinental system¹⁵, albeit timidly. It was really in the 14th century, at the height of Mali's power, that they had to extend their commercial operations to the countries of the south and set up their network of correspondents and relay villages¹⁶, which acted as commercial centers between Djenné and the Ashanti country, exchanging salt and manufactured goods¹⁷. From 1312 onwards, Dioula guilds from Casamance to Sierra Leone linked the coastal countries to the Niger axis. Similarly, another trade ran from the Niger axis to the forest, where the Dioula exchanged salt, copper, cotton and fish for kola nuts, and sometimes palm oil¹⁸.

¹¹Abdoulaye Bathily, *Guerriers, tributaires et marchands. Le Gajaaga (ou Galam) le 'pays de l'or'.* Le développement et la régression d'une formation économique et sociale sénégalaise (8^e-19^e siècle). Thèse pour le Doctorat d'État Ès-Lettres, Université de Dakar, Département d'Histoire, 1985, p. 142.

¹²Drissa Diakité, *Kuyaté, la force du serment. Aux origines du griot mandingue*, Bamako, l'Harmattan- La Sahélienne, 2009, p. 178.

¹³Djibril Tamsir Niane, « Le Mali et la deuxième expansion manden », in Djibril Tamsir Niane (dir.), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique*, Vol. IV. *L'Afrique du XIII^e au XVI^e siècle*, Paris, Éditions UNESCO, 2000, p. 141-196.

¹⁴Voir par exemple, Antony Gerald Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, Londres, Longman, 1973; Christophe Wondji, *La Côte ouest africaine du Sénégal à la Côte d'Ivoire. Géographie, sociétés, histoire*. 1500-1800, Paris, l'Harmattan, 1985., Richard Roberts, 'Linkages and Multiplier Effects in the Ecologically Specialized Trade of Precolonial West Africa', in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 77-78, Vol. XX, Cahiers 1-2, 1981, p.135-148; Jean-Pierre Chauveau, « Spécialisations écologiques, État et réalisation de la valeur par les échanges à longue distance », in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 77-78, Vol. XX, Cahiers 1-2, 1981, p. 161-167; Yves Person, « Les ancêtres de Samori », in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, IV, n°13, p.125-156; Yves Person, « Du Soudan nigérien à la côte Atlantique », in Hubert Deschamps (éd.), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique noire, II. De 1800 à nos jours*, Paris, P.U.F, 1971, p. 85-121; Yves Person, 'The Atlantic Coast and the Southern Savannahs, 1800-1880', in J.F.Ade. Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.) . *History of West Africa*, vol. II, Londres, Longman 1974, p. 262-307; Yves Person, « Le commerce à longue distance dans l'Ouest africain précolonial comme facteur de diversification sociale », in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 77-78, Vol. XX, Cahiers 1-2, 1981, p.169-171; Emmanuel Terray, *Une histoire du royaume abron du Gyaman. Des origines à la conquête coloniale*, Paris, Karthala, 1995; Djibril Tamsir Niane, *op.cit.*, Chikouna Cissé, « La diaspora marchande des Jula en Afrique de l'Ouest. Connecteurs d'espaces, passeurs de civilisation », in *Revue du CAMES. Nouvelle série, Sciences humaines*, n°006, 1^{er} trimestre 2016, p. 153-162; Chikouna Cissé, « Jula et Julaya en Côte d'Ivoire (XIX^e-XX^e siècles) », in Romaine Bertrand, Hélène Blais et Emmanuelle Sibeud (dir.), *Cultures d'empires. Échanges et affrontements culturels en situation coloniale*, Paris, Karthala, 2015, p. 99-120; Bakary Traoré, *Histoire sociale d'un groupe marchand : les Jula du Burkina Faso*. Thèse de doctorat d'Histoire, Université Paris I, 1996, 2 tomes (1027p); Abdoulaye Bathily, *op.cit.*, Roland Oliver and Anthony Atmore, *Medieval Africa, 1250-1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001; Paul Lovejoy, 'Kola in The History of West Africa', in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 1980, Vol.20, Cahier 77/78, p. 97-134, Philip Curtin, 'Pre-colonial trading networks and traders: the Diakhanké', in Claude Meillassoux (ed.) *The development of indigenous trade and markets in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 228-239; Julius Adekunle, 'Borgu and economic transformation 1700-1900: the wangara factor', in *African Economic History*, n°22, 1994, p.1-18.

¹⁵Christian Grataloup, *Géohistoire de la mondialisation. Le temps long du monde*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2012, p. 91.

¹⁶Raymond Mauny, *Tableau géographique de l'ouest africain au Moyen âge d'après les sources écrites, la tradition et l'archéologie*, Dakar, Mémoires de l'IFAN, 1961, p.389.

¹⁷*Ibid.* p. 177.

¹⁸Christophe Wondji, *op.cit.*, p. 62-63.

This southward expansion took shape in the 15th century with the founding of Begho and Bono, the southernmost points of the Dyula settlements, and eventually reached the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. There, they crossed paths with the Portuguese, as testified by certain accounts from this period. In 1510, Governor Manuel de Gois pointed out that the "Mandinga cottons" were in ruinous competition with the fabrics offered by the Portuguese, and in 1513, the Alcaide Antonio Froes wrote to King Dom Manoël that the Dyula were able to divert a large proportion of the gold mined in the region to their own benefit¹⁹. Finally, according to Joao de Barros, many of the slaves imported by the Portuguese from Benin to the Mine, from at least 1479 onwards, soon fell into the hands of traders from the "province of Mandinga", who in turn sold them to the "Moors"²⁰. By the 17th century, kola had become the main export commodity in the dyula trade to the north. Malinke peasants and warriors, as well as Dyula traders, did not enter the kola-producing area, but stopped at the edge of the forest. Along the new ethnic frontiers, where the representatives of Sudanese civilization met the forest peoples, the Jula established trading centers such as Beyla, Touba, Séguéla and Mankono. These dyula, who lived under the authority of non-Muslim Malinké chiefs, acted as intermediaries between itinerant traders from the north and local kola producers. Along the roads, other centers developed, such as Tengrela, Odienné and Kankan²¹.

The anchor of this Jula expansion was the connection it established between the different ecological spaces of West Africa. The desert, the savannah, the forest and the coast are linked under the banner of the Jula trading network, whose players are scattered throughout the region as they go about their commercial wanderings. The exchange of salt from the desert for kola from the forest zone thus induces ecological specialization. Long distance thus creates what Fahad Ahmad Bishara calls a geography of obligation²², which Francesca Trivellato calls a grammar of obligation²³. Trivellato's work is illuminating on this point. Following Abner Cohen, she suggests focusing on a particular aspect of business relations in long-distance trade:

The creation of sustainable and voluntary commercial exchanges between trading communities that did not share the same cultural values or social norms, and lacked exogenous instruments, whether legal or military, to guarantee their contracts"²⁴.

Further on,

Once these horizontal intercultural exchanges are interpreted as the fruit of a network of communities, it becomes possible to show how trust and reputation function through what we perceive as "natural groups", and to grasp the tension between cultural specificities and interaction processes"²⁵.

Carriers of salt and in search of gold and kola, they developed cultural, economic and social links with the forest zone between Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria, producing these two economic goods, but were careful not to dilute their cultural and ethnic identities and spiritual traits with those of the countries they crossed. Overall, from medieval to modern times, the Manding domain occupied the geographical center of the Mande world, from which the Jula originated. This domain then expanded in all directions, as the Manding became the main vectors of cultural innovation throughout West Africa, both through military and political action and through the long-distance trade that is the *raison d'être* of these famous Jula. To the west, at least since the empire of Mali, it covers the whole of Senegal, Gambia, part of Upper Casamance and Gabu (Guinea Bissau). To the south, Manding islands speaking the Diakhanké dialect dot Fouta-Djalon and the Pays des Rivières, while Malinke settlement nuclei exist as far south as Monrovia (Kondo). Elsewhere, west of the Bandama, the frontier of Manding settlement extended from the 15th to the 18th century to the bangs of the forest, where it pushed back barbarian peoples, generally Mande, known as producers of the kola nuts needed by the Sudanese²⁶. This vast area is designated by linguistics as one of the few large and certain genetic units in West Africa. Despite a certain dialectal diversity, the Manding language is strikingly homogeneous across the vast territory it occupies,

¹⁹Emmanuel Terray, *op.cit* p.57.

²⁰*Ibidem*.

²¹*Ibidem*.

²²Fahad Ahmad Bishara, *op. cit*, p.24.

²³Francesca Trivellato, *Corail contre diamants... op.cit*, p. 238.

²⁴Francesca Trivellato, « Juifs de Livourne... *op.cit*, p. 585.

²⁵*Ibidem*.

²⁶Yves Person, « Les Manding dans l'histoire », in *Études offertes à Henri Brunschwig*, Paris, Éditions de l'EHESS, 1982, p. 47-48.

and this situation appears to be linked to an important historical phenomenon: the hegemony of the Mali empire from the 13th to the 16th century. Kangbè, a sort of lingua franca understood and spoken by the majority of Manding peoples²⁷, will further accentuate the features of this Jula coalition in the diaspora, succeeding in imposing this language on its interlocutors in the countries bordering the Gulf of Guinea.

It was no doubt because of this corporatist spirit of the Jula that Ch le Coeur, the French traveler in West Africa, considered them to be the Jews of Africa²⁸. Ultimately, the "trading diaspora" model, originally developed by Cohen but popularized by Curtin²⁹, provides a useful sociological framework for the following questions relating to the organization of long-distance trade. It explains how members of a particular family or ethnic group cooperate in long-distance trade to overcome basic logistical challenges such as obtaining financing and market information, coordinating transport and regulating transactions, while preserving cultural and religious identities as minorities in foreign countries³⁰. It is in response to these logistical challenges that we better understand the crucial role of jatigui, particularly in establishing the rules of trust between actors in these long-distance commercial practices.

The jatigui: a key element of the trust system

The survival of this long-distance trade is necessarily linked to the trust that can exist between the players. This trust is based on honesty and a system of social and ethical control, as Avner Greif has shown with regard to Maghrebi merchants in medieval times³¹. As early as the 14th century, this question of trust seems to have been at the heart of commercial transactions on the African coast, if we are to believe the testimony of the Portuguese traveler Valentim Fernandès. Referring to the Wangara (ancestors of Jula) who traded between Djenné and the gold mines of the south, he observed: "Only those of this race are allowed to approach the mines, to the exclusion of others, because they are considered very trustworthy"³². This was the time of the silent gold trade, the mechanism of which we know thanks to Arab travellers such as Maçoudi, who described it as follows:

In this land (of gold), on the other side of a great river, lives a tribe who trade without showing themselves or communicating with foreign merchants. The merchants drop off their goods and leave; the next day, they find a certain quantity of gold next to each parcel. If they accept the deal, they take the gold and leave their junk; if not, they take it away without touching the gold; to make it clear that they want a higher price, they leave both the gold and the merchandise³³.

²⁷Francis Simonis, « Du mandingue aux bambara, dioula et malinké : la naissances des langues nationales en Afrique de l'ouest », in C. Dubois, M. Michel et P. Soumille (éds.), *Frontières plurielles. Frontières conflictuelles en Afrique subsaharienne*, Paris, l'Harmattan, 2000, p. 109.

²⁸Ch Le Cœur, « le commerce de la noix de kola en Afrique occidentale », in *Annales de géographie*, 1927, T.36, n°200, p.146.

²⁹Philip Curtin, *Cross-cultural trade in world history*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984.

³⁰Ghislaine Lydon, *On Trans-Saharan Trails. Islamic Law, Trade Networks, and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century West Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p.343. Voir également Abner Cohen, " Cultural strategies in the organization of trading diasporas", in Claude Meillassoux (ed.), *The development of indigenous trade and markets in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1971, pp. 266-281.

³¹Avner Greif, " Reputation and Coalitions in Medieval Trade: Evidence on the Maghribi Traders" in *The Journal of Economic History*, Dec 1989, Vol. 49, N°4, p. 857-882.

³²Valentim Fernandès, *Description de la Côte d'Afrique de Ceuta au Sénégal (1506-1507)*, Paris, Émile Larose, 1938, p. 81.

³³Maçoudi cité par Raymond Mauny, op.cit, *Tableau géographique de l'ouest africain au Moyen âge d'après les sources écrites, la tradition et l'archéologie*, Dakar, Mémoires de l'IFAN, 1961, p.363. Voir également sur le commerce muet : E.W. Bovill, ' The Silent Trade of Wangara', in *Journal of the Royal African Society*, octobre 1929, Vol. 29, n°113, p. 27-38 ; Georges Boisvert, "La dénomination de l'Autre africain au 15e siècle dans les récits des découvertes portugaises », in *L'Homme*, Janvier-Mars 2000. Observer, Nommer Classifier, p. 165-171 ; Jean Devisse, « Routes du commerce et échanges en Afrique occidentale en relation avec la Méditerranée : Un essai sur le commerce africain médiéval du Xie au XVIe siècle », in *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale*, 1972. Vol. 50, n°3, p.357-397 ; Charles de la Roncière, « De Paris à Tombouctou au temps de Louis XI », in *Revue des Deux mondes*, 1923, 7^e période, Vol. 13, n°3, p. 653-675 ; Paulo F de Moraes Farias, « Silent Trade : Myth and Historical Evidence », in *History in Africa*, 1974, Vol.1, p. 9-24 ; Sékéné Mody Cissoko, « Formations sociales et État en Afrique précoloniale : Approche historique », in *Présence africaine*, 3^e et 4^e trimestres, Nouvelle série, n°127-128, pp.50-71 ; Cheikh Anta Diop, *L'Afrique noire précoloniale*, Paris, Présence africaine, 1987.

We're a long way from the fool's bargain described by Fernand Braudel in relation to gold transactions between the Congolese and Portuguese on Africa's Atlantic seaboard in the 15th century³⁴. Here, as we have said, trust is the foundation of this economic activity between Africans and Europeans. While, in the context of the silent gold trade, no one else, black or white, could reach the gold mines apart from the Wangara³⁵, the emergence of long-distance trade from the 14th century onwards under the banner of the Jula merchant network gave rise to the figure of an intermediary known as the jatigui. A Manding term, the jatigui is the one who offers hospitality to the traveler, as suggested by French administrators and explorers of the 19th and 20th centuries, such as Captain Louis Gustave Binger, author of a remarkable travelogue on the Jula countries of the Haut-Niger and the Ivorian savannahs³⁶, Lieutenant Plat³⁷, General Gouraud³⁸ and Louis Tauxier³⁹. Paul Guébard, colonial administrator, recalls that in the villages of Fouta Jalon, professional caravanners find friends, the "Yatiguis", who put them up for a fee⁴⁰.

This would be to ignore the plasticity of the term, which, on the other hand, is well perceived by postcolonial researchers. For the latter, like Robert Launay, the concept of jatigui only makes sense in the context of a relationship between individuals or groups⁴¹. Long-distance trade, with its multiplicity of actors and ecological diversity, offered such a framework for the emergence of the jatigui figure. There was no shortage of attributions. He was the master of the caravanserai, the antenna of Jula trade in the country traversed⁴², the provider of credit to the Jula trader, the guarantor of his debts⁴³, the defender of his rights in the event of a commercial dispute with his hosts⁴⁴, his broker and banker⁴⁵, the facilitator of his integration into the host society⁴⁶, the disseminator of commercial information⁴⁷, in short, the master builder of this intercultural trade between the desert and the forest in West Africa. He normally belonged to the same ethnic group as the itinerant merchants, but had generally been established in foreign territory for several years, often for several generations. It could take that long to acquire local knowledge, local roots and local standing, which he could then put at the service of the itinerant merchants - at a price. The most important things he had to offer were accommodation and protection.

This included facilities for the physical safety of goods or slaves in transit, access to food supplies for his customers, protection from interference by local political authorities (or the means to pay them), a possible commercial line of credit with local moneylenders, and a guarantee of good conduct and commercial probity on both sides. This last point was the most important. Since the owner would remain after the caravans had left, he could give assurances to the local population. At the same time, the caravan leader was urged to keep the moving traders as orderly as possible. Some of them might never pass this way again, but he himself was likely to return

³⁴Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme. XVe-XVIIIe siècle*. T.3. Le temps du monde, Paris, Armand Colin, 1979, p. 539.

³⁵Valentin Fernandès, *op.cit*, p. 85.

³⁶Louis Gustave Binger, *Du Niger au Golfe de Guinée par le pays de Kong et le Mossi (1887-1889)*, T. 1, Paris, Hachette, 1892, p. 319.

³⁷« Campagne 1887-1888 dans le Soudan Français. Missions dans le Fouta Djallon par le Lieutenant J. Plat », in *Bulletin de géographie commerciale de Bordeaux* du 2 juin 1890 (suite), p. 277.

³⁸Général Gouraud, *Souvenirs d'un Africain. Au soudan*, Paris, Éditions Pierre Tisné, 1939, p. 126.

³⁹Louis Tauxier, *Le Noir du Yatenga*, Paris, Émile Larose, 1917, p. 723.

⁴⁰Paul Ghébard, *Au Fouta-Dialon. Élevage, agriculture, commerce, régime foncier, religion*, Paris, Augustin Challamel, 1910, p. 28.

⁴¹Robert Launay, "Landlords, Hosts, and Strangers among the Dyula", in *Ethnology*, Jan., 1979, Vol. 18, No. 1 (Jan., 1979), p. 76.

⁴²Jean Gallais, *Le Delta intérieur du Niger. Étude de géographie régionale*, T.2, 1968, Voir également Jean-Loup Amselle, *Les négociants de la savane*, Paris, Anthropos, 1977.

⁴³Yves Person, *Samori. Une révolution dyula. T.1*. Mémoires de l'IFAN, Dakar-IFAN, 1968, p.106.

⁴⁴Donald R. Wright, *op.cit*, p.35.

⁴⁵Laurent Fourchard, "De la résidence lignagère à la rente immobilière. Cours et compounds en Afrique occidentale française et au Nigeria fin XIXe siècle-1960", in *Le mouvement social*, juillet-septembre 2003, n°24, p. 50.

⁴⁶Donald R. Wright, *op.cit*, p. 35. Voir également B. Marie Perinbam, "Trade and Society in the Western Sahara and the Western Sudan: An overview", in *Bulletin de l'IFAN, Serie B. Sc Hum*, 34. 4. 1972, 787-792; Claude Meillassoux, « Histoire et institutions du "kafo" de Bamako d'après la tradition des Niaré », in *Cahier d'études africaines*, Vol. 4, Cahier 14, 1963, p.186-227.

⁴⁷Yves Person, *Samori. Une révolution dyula... op.cit*, p.118.

year⁴⁸ after year. To further bolster confidence, a Touré peddler will have an appointed Touré jatigui in each village where he stops, and through whom he passes if he decides to sell part or all of his load (for a fee of 10%). The diatigui ensures his safety in the village and is responsible for his debts. In Bamako, a major pre-colonial West African trading center, the role of jatigui was played by the powerful Touré and Dravé families, hosts to Jula and Soninké traders⁴⁹. Darbo traders, Senegalese Mandeka, operating from their base in Wuli, could also count on the jatigui, a permanent resident of the locality with marital ties to the ruling family of the state, Mali. This host could easily organize the mansa's customs payments, provide food and lodging, and negotiate any trade that the mansa or Darbo caravan leader (silatigi) wished to make. While customs payments varied considerably between the Gambian states, one influential host could save the whole enterprise a considerable sum⁵⁰. This system of trust crystallized by the jatigui is far from being an exception in the Jula trading network. Jean-Loup Amselle's well-studied Koroko trading network is the soul of "indigenous" trade between southern Mali and the Ivorian coast, in both pre-colonial and colonial contexts⁵¹. This host with multiple functions took the name of Mai-gida within the Hausa trading network studied in particular by Edward William Bovill⁵², Abner Cohen⁵³, and Polly Hill⁵⁴. Also known as Baba Kere in Ilorin in the 19th century, when this city located between Haoussa country and the north became an important commercial warehouse, Baba Ogun in Ibadan and Kofa in the Haoussa emirates, these political intermediaries transferred their influence to the commercial field, where they served as, for example brokers to enable passing merchants to obtain trading privileges in Ilorin⁵⁵.

Returning to the jula, the subject of this study, the jatigui's services were far from disinterested. They had a monopoly on their visitors' transactions, apart from small market sales, and charged a brokerage fee that was generally one-tenth⁵⁶. In the south, and especially in the courtier zone, this whole organization had crystallized around the kola trade. Nowhere were the diatigui so dominant, as foreign peddlers were forbidden to go any further, let alone contact the barbarian producers. Apart from what he could buy on the local market, he had to rely on sou hôte to procure the kolas he came for. Very often, the diatigui would take care of disposing of the visitor's goods and provide him with gèzè (iron currency in Guinea), as northern currencies were not current on the local market. For kolas, if he didn't have any in stock, and if the local supply wasn't enough, the diatigui would send his wives or relatives to fetch them from the southern markets to which their alliances gave them access.

As the people of the forest ethnic groups never left their territory, it was indeed up to the Malinké to move around, but only those from the border kafu (territorial units of reduced size) could do so in safety, and only among the tribes to which an alliance united each of them. The masters of a pre-forest market wanted to see as many peddlers as possible within their walls, so that competition would drive down the price of salt and raise the price of kolas. So they didn't hesitate to send agents to meet the caravans to carry out a real coxage nor to spread false rumors about the abundance of the harvest that their forest allies controlled. Once they arrived at a market, each visitor was naturally free to choose his diatigui. He could even change it if he already had one, but such a gesture was rare and dangerous, as a persistent enemy could exclude him permanently from the place⁵⁷. At the end of the 19th century, at the time of Binger's visit to northern Côte d'Ivoire, certain wealthy jatiguis were behind the formation of veritable monopolies on the kola trade. Binger's native informants, notably Kéléba Diarra from northern Côte d'Ivoire, report that brokering the trade between kola and gold provided a source of wealth which the Jula intermediaries are keen to preserve, not hesitating to cut off the necks of the

⁴⁸Jean-Claude Arnaud, *Le pays malinké de Côte d'Ivoire (Aire ethnique et expansion migratoire)*. Thèse pour le Doctorat d'État. Université de Rouen-Haute-Normandie, Institut de géographie, 1987, T.3, p.590.

⁴⁹Claude Meillassoux, « Histoire et institutions du kafo... » *op.cit.*, p. 209.

⁵⁰Donald Wright, *op.cit.*, p. 40.

⁵¹Jean-Loup Amselle, *op.cit.*, p.49.

⁵²Edward William. Bovill, "Jega Market", in *Journal of the Royal African Society*, octobre 1922, Vol. 22, n°85, p. 50-60.

⁵³Abner Cohen, "Politics of the Kola trade. Some Processes of Tribal community Formation among Migrants in West African Towns", in *Journal of the International African Institute*, 1966, Vol. 36, n°1, p. 18-36.

⁵⁴Polly Hill, "Landlords and Brokers: A West African Trading System (with a note on Kumasi Butchers), in *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 1966, Vol. 6, Cahier 23, p. 349-366.

⁵⁵Ann O'Hear, "Political and Commercial Clientage in Nineteenth-Century Ilorin" in *African Economic History*, N° 15 (1986), p. 69-83.

⁵⁶Yves Person, Samori. T.1. *op.cit.*, p. 106.

⁵⁷*Ibidem.*

uninitiated who might venture into their areas of operation. This is why a kind of secret society was set up⁵⁸. Such monopolies presupposed a strong entanglement between the political and commercial spheres, enabling the diatigui to control the kola trade with the support of local chiefs who naturally profited from it. Bubu Sylla's career as a jatigui in Kankan at the end of the 19th century is illustrative in this respect. Belonging to an ancient Baté lineage, he was the first to make a fortune by specializing in trade with Sierra Leone. Much of the European produce distributed in the pre-forest zone, from the Kisi country to Konya, passed through his hands. He also acted as diatigui for Bamako salt merchants and Futa-Dyalôn beef sellers. In the opposite direction, he received numerous kola peddlers. It was he who pushed for the first alliance between Samori and the Muslims. He rallied to the conqueror as soon as the metropolis fell, and played a considerable role in organizing the official trade that Almami wanted to direct towards the coast. His prestige rested on his role as diatigui, which presupposed strong links with customary and political authorities. Through his hosts, he kept in touch, despite the distance, with the areas from which the traded products originated. If he didn't set up real branches there, he at least had regular correspondents who kept him informed about the quality of harvests, the evolution of prices and the formation of caravans. Our man could then speculate, selling before a troop of peddlers brought prices down, or stockpiling until scarcity raised them. In this way, he could buy cheaply, under the guise of helping hosts unable to sell their wares, or sell on credit to peddlers he wanted to favor or whom one of his correspondents recommended.

Bubu Silla would often advance European goods (cloth, gunpowder, weapons) to dyula heading down to the forest, who would pay him a hefty commission in kolas on their return. He would send samples of nuts to Nana-Fali, the king of Buté, and warn him of foreseeable prices: the master of Didi would then inform him of his needs, and often advance him the necessary gold powder⁵⁹. This reticular merchant state better reflects the interactions that characterize long-distance trade, not without requiring a system of arbitration in the event of conflict. Men of knowledge, jurists and moralists emerged to place morality under the watchful eye of an omnipresent god⁶⁰. This will be Islam, which, combined with Jula, leads me to say that we're dealing with the islamo-jula model, which converges the reciprocal interests of the Islamic faith and the jula, as many studies have shown⁶¹. The Muslim faith effect, was then used as a distinguishing mark, making ethnic and religious identity the basis of intercultural trade⁶², as shown by the analysis of the Diabi tarikhs⁶³, with the aim of maintaining a monopoly on intercultural trade and remaining consistent with the Suwarian praxis⁶⁴ of a form of

⁵⁸Louis Gustave Binger, *op.cit.*, p. 106.

⁵⁹Yves Person, Samori. T.1, *op.cit.*, p.117.

⁶⁰Claude Meillassoux, *Anthropologie de l'esclave. Le ventre de fer et d'argent*, Paris, P.U.F, 1986, p.239.

⁶¹Voir Richard Roberts, "Production and Reproduction of Warrior states: Segu Bambara and Segu Tokolor 1712-1890", in *The Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1980, Vol. 13, N°3, p. 389-419; Ivor Wilks "The Juula and the Expansion of Islam"... *op.cit.* Philip Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade... op.cit.* Roland Olivier and Anthony Atmore, *Medieval Africa...op.cit.* Georges W. Ellis, "Islam as a factor in West African Culture", in *The Journal of Race Development*; Vol. 2, n°2, 1911, p. 105-130; Walter Rodney, "The Guinea Coast", in Richard Gray (éd), *The Cambridge History of Africa, Vol.4. From 1600 to 1790*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 223-324; Mervyn Hiskett, "The nineteenth-century jihads in West Africa", in Jhon E. Flint (éd), *The Cambridge history of Africa, Vol.5 from 1790 to 1890*, 2004, p. 125-169; Ade Ajayi and Benjamin Oloruntimehin, "West Africa in the anti-slave trade era", in Jhon E. Flint (éd), *The Cambridge history of Africa, Vol.5 from 1790 to 1890*, 2004, p. 200-221; Mohamed El Fasi et Ivan Hrbek, "Etapas du développement de l'islam et de sa diffusion en Afrique", in Mohamed El Fasi et Ivan Hrbek (dir.), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique, Vol.3, L'Afrique du VIIe au XIe siècle*, Paris, UNESCO, 1990, p. 81-116; François de Medeiros, "Les peuples du Soudan: mouvements de population", in Mohamed El Fasi et Ivan Hrbek (dir.), *Histoire générale de l'Afrique, Vol.3, L'Afrique du VIIe au XIe siècle*, Paris, UNESCO, 1990, p. 143-164; Daniel Amara Cissé, *Histoire économique de l'Afrique noire*, T.3, Paris, PUSAF- Harmattan, 1988; Paul Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola. The Hausa Kola Trade 1700-1900*, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980; Marie Perinbam, "Notes on dyula origins and nomenclature", in *Bulletin de l'IFAN*. T. XXXVI, Série B, n°4, 1974, p.676-689, Nehemia Levtzion, "Commerce et Islam chez les Dagomba du Nord-Ghana", in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, Juillet-août 1968, 23e année, n°4, p.723-743.

⁶²Michael Bennett, "Migration", in William Pettigrew and David Veevers (éd), *The corporation as a Protagonist in Global History, 1550-1750*, Leiden, Brill, 2019, pp. 68-95.

⁶³Thomas Hunter, "The JabiTa'rikhs: Their Significance in West African Islam", in *The international Journal of African Historical Studies*, 1976, Vol. 9, n°3, p. 450.

⁶⁴On this mythical figure, see Ivor Wilks, "Al-Hajj Salim Souari and the Suwaris: a search for sources, in *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, 2011, New Series, n°13, pp. 1-79; Lamine Sanneh, "The origins of clericalism in West African Islam", in *The Journal of African History*, 1976. Vol. 17; n°1, pp. 49-72;

coexistence that enabled the Juula to operate in a land of disbelief without undermining their distinct Muslim identity⁶⁵. This historical reality puts into perspective Trivellato's approach, which rejects the idea of homogeneous diasporas operating in a vacuum, where family, religious and cultural ties of varying degrees of closeness explain the confidence and cohesion inherent in diasporic groups, factors of economic efficiency⁶⁶

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Jula trade hindered the deployment of an economic culture of empire by taking advantage of the different rhythms of imperial monetarization to play a continuous game with the border, with the aim of continuing to use the cowrie shell as a currency, even though it had been banned by the French administration. Cross-border dynamics thus enabled the Jula to keep up with European and Lebanese-Syrian trade in a colony like Côte d'Ivoire⁶⁷. So, in the end, long distance was not a decisive factor in the organization of intra-African trade involving peoples from different backgrounds and ecological areas.

Conclusion

Far from a justiciary conception of history, this article nevertheless seeks to do justice to the diversity of human experience in the field of commercial diaspora studies on a global scale, in order to arrive at a global understanding of the history of commercial diasporas in the modern era. The restitution of the missing link constituted by the Jula trade in West Africa will undoubtedly allow us to decentralize our reading grids, which for too long have been dependent on Eurasian and American dynamics. The Jula experience described in this article shows that the question of trust in the context of this intercultural African trade cannot be reduced to a single written document, the bill of exchange, which was non-existent in the Jula commercial field in the pre-colonial era. The network of matrimonial alliances, the bonds of kinship and sociability, Islam as a moral standard and its impact on the Jula's host societies, and the figure of the jatigui were all guarantees of trust between actors from diverse ecological and ethnic backgrounds engaged in this long-distance intercultural trade. It's with this cultural and human abundance in mind that I've chosen Barth's interactionist perspective as my theoretical framework, which takes me away from what sociologist Rogers Brubaker calls "groupism", i.e. "the tendency to consider the existence of distinct groups, clearly differentiated, internally homogeneous and externally delimited, as a necessary component of social life"⁶⁸. The question of the role of the state (and its militaristic aspect) in this generally peaceful jula trade, barely touched upon by certain researchers such as Meillassoux⁶⁹, deserves greater attention in order to understand the regression of the julaya to the benefit of the colonial trading economy at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th.

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⁶⁵Ivor Wilks, "The Juula and the Expansion..." p. 98.

⁶⁶Guillaume Calafat, « Diasporas marchandes et commerce interculturel. Famille, réseaux et confiance dans l'économie de l'époque moderne », in *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, avril-juin 2011, n°2, p. 514.

⁶⁷Chikouna Cissé, « Jula et Julaya en Côte d'Ivoire (XIXe-XXe siècles) », in Romaine Bertrand, Hélène Blais et Emmanuelle Sibeud (dir.), *Cultures d'empires. Échanges et affrontements culturels en situation coloniale*, Paris, Karthala, 2015, p. 99-120.

⁶⁸Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity Without Groups*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 8.

⁶⁹Claude Meillassoux, Meillassoux Claude, « Introduction », in Claude Meillassoux (éd.), in *The development of indigenous trade and markets in West Africa*, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 34.

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