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Author

Glinga, Werner

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The Ceddo's Ghost: History and Fiction in Senegal

by Werner Glinga

Ceddo party and Marabout party

The Ceddo was a warrior of the precolonial states of Senegal. He was a professional soldier in the service of his king. Initially, the Ceddo had the status of a crown slave. That, at least, was his legal position within the state apparatus. By the 18th century, however, the Ceddo army had become a military class in its own right, dominating the whole society as the most important political power factor. Ceddo commanders and their soldiers were the pillars on which royal power rested. Without the support of the Ceddo no king could rule and every pretender to the throne had to secure their backing. Today, the figure of the Ceddo has become something of a myth, the symbol of a specific type of precolonial society in Senegal.

The modern myth of the Ceddo is, however, full of contradictions. For some, he is a cultural hero and the representative of the highest ethos of pre-colonial society, both in individual and national terms. The best known example of the Ceddo as an ideal of civilization can be found in Ousmane Sembene's film, which is simply entitled *Ceddo*.

On the other side of the fence there are those who believe the Ceddo to be the most brutal and barbaric creature pre-colonial society produced in Senegal. For them, the Ceddo is the eternal ruffian, misusing his military power to bully peasants and plunder villages. The anti-Ceddo party sees the Ceddo as siding with the slave traders, bartering a human commodity for guns and alcohol. Such outright condemnation has found a clear-cut literary expression in the historical novel *Le Fort maudit*, the Infernal Fortress, by the Senegalese woman writer Nafissatou Diallo.

The basic contradiction of today's myth is that it has both a positive and a negative expression. One could even talk of a myth and its counter-myth, with both parties defending their deeply entrenched positions with an astonishing fierceness. The myth of the Ceddo has become a controversial topic because both parties are actively engaged in

UFAHAMU

rewriting history. Every form of partisan interpretation can produce a public uproar. Again, Sembene's film is a case in point. The Senghor administration at the time of its release - the year 1977 - banned the film from public performance. The reason given was that the spelling of the word Ceddo was not consistent with a presidential decree. Sembene had spelled the word with a double d - which today is the generally accepted way of writing the word - whereas President Senghor had insisted upon spelling Ceddo with a single d. The incident seems to be farcical if you take the quarrel at face value. Behind the scenes, however, there was a violent protest lodged against the film by the Ceddo party's sworn centuries-old enemy: the Marabout, that is, the Islamic priest. Marabout and Ceddo are the human emblems of two different types of societies, almost of two different worlds. Sembene has treated the figure of the Marabout in his film as the very antithesis of the Ceddo, the Ceddo being the liberator of the people and the Marabout the power thirsty tyrant or collaborator.

The antagonism between the Ceddo and his sworn enemy, the Marabout, has dominated the power struggle in the regional states of Senegal for centuries. By the term regional states I mean the seven major states between the River Senegal in the north and the River Gambia in the south. There are some other states in the east and the south within today's national territory, but they have not had the same degree of common history as is the case of the seven major regional ones: the four Wolof kingdoms of Waalo, Jolof, Kajor, and Bawol; the two Sereer kingdoms Siin and Saalum; and the Tukulor state in the north-east along the River Senegal. (The Tukulor country was called Futa Toro). When some authors of contemporary fiction speak about nation, fatherland or mother country, they are in fact referring to those regional states and not to ethnic entities. A Wolof from pre-colonial Waalo had a different national identity than a Wolof of Kajor. This national difference would be deepened by religious differences. In her novel *Le Fort maudit*, Nafissatou Diallo draws a picture of the two states of Kajor and Bawol, in which both Wolof kingdoms are locked in deadly confrontation. The seven major regional states have shared in their history for the last few hundred years, in the sense that they were constantly involved in fighting each other for supremacy and hegemony in the region. The antagonism between the Ceddo and the Marabout party was very much a part of that fight, and therefore an important aspect of pre-colonial history.

Even today, being for or against the Ceddo tells a great deal about one's social outlook, political viewpoint and religious creed. The Ceddo was an animist, who not only believed in a different God, but

also had a completely different life style from that of a Moslem. I use the term *animism* here to designate an independent social-religious system, and not to indicate a particular religion or cult. In Sengalese literature the term *animism* is often used in a completely neutral sense merely to designate a non-Islamic society. My purpose is to question the nature of the antagonism between animism and Islam. The only specific type of animism referred to here is the Ceddo society, which had its own social system, philosophy of life, religion and its own state formation. It is an irony of history that animism and Islam had no problems in coming to terms with each other on purely religious grounds. African Islam has absorbed animist rites and practices to such a degree that one may speak of a successful form of peaceful coexistence. In many works of contemporary Sengalese fiction we can find the most extraordinary examples of syncretism between animism and Islam.

Reconciliation, however, only came about on religious grounds. As indicated by early sources, both European and African, religious understanding between the two systems must have occurred quite early. Religious syncretism was obviously the exception. Sembene's film, *Ceddo*, shows that the secular clash between animism and Islam was fatal. The fight between the Ceddo and the Marabout on secular grounds was a struggle for political and social power which knew no compromise whatsoever. As different social systems, animism and Islam were wrestling for power in a deadly fight that lasted several hundred years, ending in the late 19th century with the ultimate triumph of Islam.

In the 19th century the balance of power had definitely tilted in favor of Islam. A series of *jihads* holy wars, lead by militant Marabouts such as Al-Hadj Omar, Maba Jaxu of Sheexu Ahmadu Islam, had weakened the animist Ceddo society to the point of irrevocably undermining its social structure. Colonialism merely stepped in to finish the job, dealing the final blow.

Talking today of Ceddo and Marabout therefore means that we are talking of opposite ideals of civilization, including the history of their confrontation. The modern myth of the Ceddo is shaped and is still shaping itself in silent, and sometimes not so silent, protest against its arch-enemy: the Marabout. The contemporary polemics around it are exacerbated by the fact that, historically, one is the loser and the other, the winner. Looking at the various contemporary sources, however, especially fiction, I have the impression that the Ceddo is having some sort of late revenge today. There definitely is a rehabilitation of Ceddo society in today's Senegal. People are

UFAHAMU

rediscovering the lost values and ethics of the Ceddo, or discovering that the ethos of Ceddo civilization was never really lost, only buried under the rubble of the great colonial defeat.

A case in point is the ultimate ethical value of Ceddo society, *jom*. In Wolof, *jom* means honor and self-pride. For Ceddo society, *jom* is a moral value which is the cornerstone of a whole moral edifice. Honor is a moral value in many societies all over the world, but in each society it has its own genesis and therefore its own historical identity. A current Senegalese proverb says "Si d'une personne je *jom* est parti, il ne lui reste rien", or "Nothing is left of a person, if *jom* has left him." Senegalese fiction shows that the category 'honor' is a fundamental principle to explain individual and social conflicts.

Today's rehabilitation of Ceddo society is being carried out mainly by Senegalese drama. Cheik Aliou Ndao, a representative author of the generation now in their 50's has given one of the best analyses of the inner logic of political power in pre-colonial society in his play *Du sang pour un trone*, "blood for the Throne." Here, the defense of the throne is shown as the defense of the integrity of the nation, that is the nation of Saalum in the south. In Ndao's drama, in the interests of the Ceddo nation, the king is called upon to fight against his own father, who has sought an alliance with the Marabout. The Marabout is called the "grave digger" of Ceddo society, and the conflict can only know one winner.

A very different interpretation of the historic antagonism is given by the Senegalese playwright Alioune Badara Beye. In *Le sacre du Cedo*, "the Consecration of the Ceddo", and *Dialawali*, which is the historical name of the Ceddo battlefield, the author has tried to reconcile the old antagonists, at least on stage. Each party is given highest credit for wanting peace and reconciliation. The plays are set in the 19th century and show a diplomatic mediation between the two sides which actually never occurred. Fiction is here rewriting a slice of history, with the clear intention of making something possible in the present which had not been achieved in the past.

The hero and his griot

Contemporary fiction is not, however, the only literary source we have which tells us something of the Ceddo and his ideals. Ceddo society has produced its own literature. The most important genres are the epic and the chronicle. Thanks to the excellent research work of Senegalese scholars attached to Dakar University and IFAN, the *Institut*

GLINGA

Fondamental de l'Afrique Noire, within the last ten years some of the major precolonial epics of Senegal have been transcribed, translated and provided with a scholarly commentary.

The other main source in oral literature is the chronicle. For most of the seven regional states, we have in printed form a chronological account of the dynasties and their rulers. Today, what is called a chronicle is really the oral history of the throne. Within the logic of a Ceddo state, the throne is the symbol of the nation, belonging neither to a king nor to a family. The chronicle of a dynasty is therefore a codified way of telling the story of the nation, the people of a particular regional state. The person in charge of memorizing the history of the throne was the *griot*, and the griot at court who was able and entitled to recite epics and chronicles was - in hierarchical terms - far superior to the griot of the village who entertained ordinary folk with tales and legends. The 'aristocratic' griot attached to one particular family is a figure which closely belongs to the Ceddo and his ideal, both in literature and reality.

In the epic, the Ceddo hero always has a griot at his side, from the cradle to the grave. In literary terms, the griot is a mirror of the hero. He tells in words what the Ceddo does in deeds. The griot accompanies the hero wherever he goes: into action on the battleground or into exile. The griot is the conscience of the Ceddo. It is the griot who reminds the young Ceddo of the mission he is called upon to carry out. It is the griot who will tell the Ceddo of the responsibility he has toward his family line. And the griot is always ready to die along with the Ceddo. As an artistic device, griot and Ceddo are complementary figures who are linked with each other in a dialectical relationship. There is a specific reason for doubling the hero into two distinct figures. The Ceddo-griot represents the social side of the mission and the Ceddo-hero the individual one.

Samba Geelajegi, a prince of the northern state of Futa Toro on the River Senegal, is the archetypal Ceddo hero, and an epic is named after him. The story has been known for a long time and we have numerous versions of it, but only recently have further, more complete griot versions been recorded and transcribed. Independent of one another, Amadou Ly and Amadou Abel Sy have published extensive versions of the epic of Samba Geelajegi. With the benefit of hindsight Amadou Abel Sy forthrightly calls his *La geste du Tiedo*, The Gestes of the Ceddo.

Futa Toro and its Islamic revolution

The people of the Futa Toro are Tukolor, a subgroup of the Peul or Fulbe. Like the Peul, the Tukolor call themselves *hal pulaar*, "those who speak pulaar," but they do not identify themselves with all of the Peul who migrated over West Africa from Senegal to Northern Cameroun. The Tukolor feel themselves different because they have a different history as a nation, with a clearly defined territory and a state formation whose foundation, the oral chronicle of Futa Toro traces back to at least 1500. The epic, in fact, goes even further back to Sunjata, the emperor of ancient Mali, and declares the founder of the ruling dynasty in Futa Toro to be a natural son of Sunjata. The epic dates from the first half of the 18th century. Samba Geelajegi, the hero, is a literary symbol of political and military power in a precolonial regional state of Senegal. Futa Toro was at that time an animist state with a feudal structure. Samba Geelajegi is not only a symbol of the social power structure but also of the moral system on which the people of that culture based their life style and indeed their philosophy of life. It is in this double sense that Samba Geelajegi is the archetypal hero of Ceddo society.

Today, the epic of Samba Geelajegi is still one of the most popular Sengalese epics, recited on radio, and passed on from family to family on cassettes. A number of griots in Futa Toro still specialize in its recitation and make a living from it. It is also known that migrant workers in Europe and other African countries listen to the epic on cassette and take the story of Samba Geelajegi as a symbol of home which enshrines their individual and collective memories of a great and glorious past.

The irony is that those people who appear to be so sensitive and responsive to the Ceddo ideal, those people who today may work themselves up into absolute frenzy when listening to Samba Geelajegi's hymn *Lagya* or the warriors' song *Goumbala*, are at the same time devout, practicing Moslems. At least to them, there seems to be no contradiction between the animist Ceddo and the Islamic Marabout.

There is another point in the history of Futa Toro which is even more striking. It is Futa Toro that has created the archetypal Ceddo hero, Samba Geelajegi, and it is the same Futa Toro which is considered today to be the cradle of West African Islam. The Tukolor and their Islamic aristocracy, the *Torobbe*, have produced the most famous Marabouts of the 19th and 20th century, men such as Al-Hadj Omar, the successful leader of the military Jihad between 1852 and 1864.

GLINGA

Samba Geelajegi, the Ceddo, and Al-Hadj Omar, the Marabout, are absolute opposites, and yet originate from the same nation. They are both Tukulor, and even today they are still equally respected representatives of that nation, even though the systems they stand for have been arch-enemies throughout the ages. There are striking similarities between the two figures. Like his counterpart, Samba Geelajegi, Al-Hadj Omar is both a historical figure and a epic hero. Within one century, Futa Toro has produced the most representative Ceddo epic and the most representative Marabout epic of Senegal. Both figures continue to be "alive" today as modern myths. To explain this apparent contradiction, let us take a brief look at the real history of Futa Toro.

Futa Toro had been an animist state until the middle of the 18th century. By then the animist dynasty and state structure was so weakened by civil war and outside interference - from the Moors in the north and the Europeans on the coast - that the Marabouts staged a successful revolution, overthrew the animist dynasty of the Denanke, smashed the old aristocracy and put their own in its place. In 1776, Futa Toro became a theocratic state with an Imam as its head. The new Islamic state formation was called an *Almamat*, and had a very troubled existence, but lasted until the French colonial army entered on the scene and put an end to every sort of independent state structure by 1890.

As epic figures, Samba Geelajegi and Al-Hadj Omar represent two different phases in the history of the nation. Looking at the whole complex from the position of oral tradition, we can see what artistic expression had achieved in explaining the human side of the effects of the revolution. Literature has refused to acknowledge historical defeat. Not because it was blind to the facts of life, but because in some vital way there was no real defeat. The old state was smashed, the old aristocracy was beheaded, the fetishes were destroyed, but the Ceddo ideal proved to be invincible. Like a poison, it crept into the new Islamic body of society, infected its original orthodox spirit and changed its ethical texture. It is oral literature itself that has given us a fascinating description of that process. The epic of Al-Hadj Omar itself comes to the conclusion that the result of that process is a high degree of syncretism.

The Al-Hadj Omar epic is in itself a most striking example of the capability of oral literature to analyze the history of ideas which may be hidden behind the history of facts. In the Al-Hadj Omar epic, the antagonism between Islam and animism is shown as a fight between two equal opponents who equally respect each other. The Marabout has found in the Ceddo his peer. Islam is only capable of winning by using

UFAHAMU

animist rites and practices and the epic takes great pains to show it in detail. Animism was only conquered with the help of animism, and as a result of it, Islam was no longer the same.

This is, of course, only literature's version of the story. The real Al-Hadj Omar was a completely different man, who had nothing in common with the compromiser in the epic. The real Al-Hadj Omar was a very learned theologian of Islam. He wrote only in Arabic and had a very purist conception of bringing Islam to the pagans. He wanted to wipe out paganism completely. He never compromised with animist forces and would never have approved of having become a hero of syncretism. Oral literature, however, is not interested in what historical figures really had in mind. It uses them as literary symbols to express forms of social change which went far beyond the limitations of the actual individual.

Samba Geelajegi: epic and reality

In the case of Samba Geelajegi, oral tradition has ignored historical reality to a much greater degree. Contrary to the facts, the epic has turned him into a hero of Ceddo society of the purest type. The historical Samba Geelajegi, who ruled Futa Toro intermittently between 1725 and 1741, was nothing of a hero whatsoever. He traded in slaves with the French and was probably responsible for signing the first fatal treaties with the colonial Governor in Saint-Louis-du-Senegal, almost pressing the French to accept some sort of permanent military presence in Futa Toro to help him fight off both the Moors from outside and his internal pretenders. The real Samba Geelajegi contributed to the downfall of Futa Toro, but the epic sees it differently. Initially, oral tradition may have made an arbitrary choice, but once a symbol was created, it was given the full rationale of Ceddo society.

In the epic, Samba Geelajegi is a young prince who has been deprived, by his uncle Konko, of succeeding his father to the throne of Futa Toro as *satigi*. (*Satigi* was the title of the king before the Islamic revolution). Konko had tried to kill every one of his brother's male children after his death. Samba's mother, however, had dressed up her son as a girl, and so he survived the massacre that Konko had ordered after his accession to power. When Samba reached the age of seven, he revealed his real identity as the son of the dead king and started defying his uncle by claiming the throne publicly.

Up to this episode, the epic describes a pattern of crisis which had happened in reality time and time again after the death of a ruler.

GLINGA

The chronicles, for instance, concentrate their attention on those very moments of power crisis which were a constant source of instability in the regional states from 1500 to 1900. The epic has simplified the pattern of crisis into a fight between a legitimate heir to the throne, Samba Geelajegi, and an usurper, his uncle Konko. The next section of the epic tells of Samba Geelajegi going into exile and securing himself an army. He then returns, defeats his uncle at the battle of Bilbassy, and wins back the throne.

This summary of the plot, of course, tells nothing of the reasons for the attraction that this epic still has for people of today. The story of a young prince who doesn't flinch from fighting for his legitimate right is only narrative, and gives little indication of its symbolic significance. The different narrative sequences have a specific logic and follow a pattern of initiation. But not any kind of initiation. It's the initiation of the Ceddo, which is completely different from other narratives of initiation, such as the famous Peul tale *Kaydara*, written down and annotated by Amadou Hampate Ba.

Samba Geelajegi is a hero who has a mission to carry out, a mission which is pre-determined and not chosen by him individually. His griot is there to remind him constantly of that task, and his initiation is the education of a hero who has to prove that he is at the height of his own prowess.

The epic insists that the hero is not identical with his mission because the goal is not an individual one. The hero's mission is to live up to the high rank of his lineage. Samba Geelajegi doesn't fight to gain the throne for himself, but to win it back for his family line. This close link between individual fulfillment and social satisfaction is a moral value which to this very day can determine individual behavior. Social satisfaction doesn't refer to the community as a whole, not even to the whole clan, but rather to a particular lineage. In Wolof, this moral value is called *rafet* which means "beautiful". The aesthetic value of "beauty" is at the same time an ethical value. To make a beautiful gesture in that sense often means that a person lives up to the highest standards of his family name. The readiness to defend his *social beauty* at every moment with the cost of his life is a major Ceddo ideal.

The category *beaute sociale*, social beauty, has been put forward by the Senegalese critic Bassirou Dieng in his commentary on the epics of Kajor, which he published in a bilingual version in Dakar. *Social beauty* is an ideal which puts stress on the dialectical relationship between individual and society as seen from society's point of view. The same relationship seen from the individual's point of view is the already mentioned *jom*, which means "honor". For the Ceddo, "honor"

UFAHAMU

means the absolute readiness at any given moment to reply to the slightest infringement on his dignity. Whenever he is challenged, he must respond to the challenge immediately and without hesitation. This ethos has produced the legendary courage of the Ceddo. If he is challenged, he has to answer with his heart and not with his head. His head might tell him "be careful, the opponent is stronger" but his heart has no such reason. To defend his honor he has to listen to the voice of his heart.

The epic has put this ideal into a beautiful formula by defining the Ceddo as "un preux dont le coeur est plus fort que lui meme" (A. A. Sy, 401), "a hero whose heart is stronger than himself." In the epic and in today's fiction, the Ceddo's refusal to accept any sort of infringement on his honor or social beauty is called *le culte du refus*, the cult of refusal. The Ceddo is therefore sometimes called *l'homme des refus legendaires*, the man of legendary refusals. The formula of "refusal" is coined in a double negative and is therefore a bit confusing: The Ceddo refuses to accept any challenge. In other words the "cult of refusal" means direct and immediate reaction in defense of one's dignity.

The woman as Ceddo heroine

At the beginning of my essay I mentioned the Ceddo ideal in our times as it is shown in Sembene's film *Ceddo*. This is, however, a historical film set in an imaginary kingdom which is meant to be a symbolic epitome of all regional states. The historical time is not specified, but the plot consists of a pattern typical of power struggles between 1700 and 1800. The protagonist of that film is a woman, a princess who is kidnapped by some Ceddo who want to exert pressure on the king. She is, however, won over by the seriousness of their mission in defense of ordinary people and of the sovereignty of the nation. It is she who becomes the Ceddo heroine. She stands up to her task and carries out the Ceddo mission to the bitter end. She kills the tyrant who has usurped the throne. In the film, that tyrant is the historical enemy of the Ceddo: the Marabout.

It is not an exception that a woman is the Ceddo heroine. There are a number of famous women who are as much an incarnation of the Ceddo ideal as men. It is usually the *Lingeer*, the Queen mother, who is the symbol of the lineage. The *Lingeer* will fight in defense of the social beauty of her family in true Ceddo spirit. In oral literature and in modern fiction, she is shown as a person who is highly conscious of her role as a trustee of the lineage and of the throne. Her strong position

GLINGA

is constitutionally due to the fact that by virtue of her status as Lingeer, she is a member of the crown council. Her moral preeminence is based on the matrilineal bias of the right of succession to the throne. As a point of principle in Ceddo society matrilineal rights overrule patrilineal claims.

One of the most famous Senegalese Lingeer is Yassin Buubu. The real Yassin Buubu lived approximately between 1630 and 1690. She figures in a legend which differs as much from reality as is the case of Samba Geelajegi and Al-Hadj Omar. Yassin Buubu is the mythical Ceddo woman who refused not to defend beauty. As legend has it she did not hesitate a single moment to sacrifice her life in order to save the throne. In contemporary drama, Ibrahima Sall has reinterpreted the legend in his play *Le choix de Madior*, "Madior's Choice".

Malick Dia: *Le balcon de l'honneur*

Not only in the past were women heroines of the Ceddo ideal. In the contemporary Senegalese novel it is still the woman who represents the purest spirit of Ceddo in its most consequential and beautiful form. Beautiful, that is, in the meaning of *rafet* as moral and social beauty. A fine example of a Ceddo heroine in modern independent society can be found in the novel *Le balcon de l'honneur*, "the Balcony of Honor", published in 1984. by the Senegalese author, Malick Dia. The protagonist of that novel is the young woman Kura Baasine. Kura Bassine is the daughter of an old aristocrat who is the chief of a village in the Senegalese hinterland, where the old ethos of the Ceddo society is still very much alive. His daughter Kura Bassine, however went to school and then to University, becoming a high school teacher of French language and literature in Dakar. She soon meets a young engineer and gets married. Her husband's family is quite the opposite of her own, not in terms of social class but in terms of cultural orientation. Her husband's family has been deeply rooted for generations in the urban life of the *quatre communes*, the four cities which had been granted French citizenship since the 1870s. Her husband is an engineer and a man of rational thinking as well as a devotee of technical progress. He has a good salary and can afford a high standard of living according to the rules of a consumer society.

His wife Kura Baasine tries to be as modern as he, and follows him readily into a beautiful villa in Dakar's fashionable *Cite des cadres*, the district of the upper echelons of society. They soon have a child and everything seems to be just perfect for leading a carefree life. The novel

UFAHAMU

succeeds admirably in building up an unspecified uneasiness. The catastrophe seems to come out of the blue. Within the logic of the new society nothing tragic has actually happened, no human accident and no natural disaster. The heroine Kura Baasine had gradually surrounded herself with reminiscences of the old Ceddo society and tried to live up to the old standards of social beauty in her modern surroundings. Like the ancient aristocracy, she took on a personal griot who immediately started to reorganize her private life. However, some remnants of Ceddo society, such as the griot tradition have long since become fake. The heroine Kura Baasine can see that the modern monied classes abuse the pure spirit of honor and social beauty in making use of it as an easy way of gaining prestige and celebrating their own egos. Kura Baasine can see the abuse but she is unable to protect herself against the disastrous effect of it. She has agreed to live in that world, and she has to bear the brunt of it more than others because she has remained a woman of honor. Every abuse, therefore, that concerns her own self can become fatal. For people of honor, the slightest humiliation or indignity is a challenge aimed at their very existence. A corrupt person will laugh when being humiliated, whereas a person of honor can be killed by one single word of humiliation. The basic Ceddo maxim in this respect is "craindre plus la honte que la mort," "to fear the loss of honor more than death." This maxim is repeated in numerous versions both in oral and contemporary literature.

In *Le balcon de l'honneur*, the heroine comes into conflict with her griot and begins to keep her distance. The griot is, however, full of intrigue and prepares a terrible revenge. In comparison to the traditional epic, we can see here that the once-noble alliance between hero and griot has degenerated into a relationship of slimy interests. One day, Kura Baasine receives an invitation to visit the griot's home, as she (the griot) has declared herself ill. Kura Baasine goes to the indicated address, which is a flat in one of the main multi-storied concrete blocks of flats in the city. She enters a world hitherto unknown to her. The further she penetrates into the building, the filthier and noisier it is. At the flat itself, nobody answers the bell but the door is half open. Kura Baasine has all her senses widely awake. She can feel a danger but she doesn't know where it could come from. With caution she enters the living room and there a barely dressed man who is unknown to her steps out of the bedroom. He speaks to her in a vulgar and sarcastic way and beckons her to follow him into the bedroom. Kura Baasine is deeply offended and hurt. She turns round to leave but that is not the end of the griot's plot.

GLINGA

At the same time and with a similar pretext, she (the griot) had asked Kura Baasine's mother-in-law to the flat to make her an unwilling witness of her daughter-in-law's disgrace. When Kura Baasine turns round she finds herself face to face with her mother-in-law, in the company of another member of her family. In that moment her existence hangs in the balance and she reacts immediately without the slightest hesitation. That reaction is in the purest Ceddo style: it comes straight from the heart not from the head. Not for a second does she try to give an explanation. There is no room left for accusing the griot who is entirely to blame. The only freedom of action which is left and which can wipe out the dishonor is the immediate sacrifice of her own life. Kura Baasine calmly but quickly goes past her mother-in-law onto the outer corridor and throws herself over the balustrade into the void without a single cry. From that incident the novel takes its title: *Le balcon de l'honneur*, "The Balcony of Honor."

The suicide of honor is a respected and accepted form because it is taken as a sacrifice. A sacrifice is an act of communal redemption, of purification. Kura Baasine had the utmost courage to throw her life into the balance in order to cleanse her own social beauty. Her suicide becomes also a reminder to society as a whole, that it has suffered the onslaught of filth and villainy. In that specific sense her suicide is a beautiful act. As a Ceddo, she could not have done otherwise. In the words of the novel "Kura Baasine had played her personality right to the very end," "Kura Baasine avait joué son personnage jusqu'au bout (145)." In a moment of crisis she acted in accordance with the ethos of the old Ceddo society, as though only consistency with that ancient ethos could redeem her.

A Ceddo is either a person of honor "with a heart bigger than himself" or no Ceddo at all. As the novel's narrator puts it, "honor is part of his own self, like the shadow of a walker in the evening sun:" "l'honneur avait la forme de l'ombre qui suivait le marcheur et se fondait en lui, le soir venu, pour ne plus le quitter (139)." Honor follows the Ceddo wherever he goes to the point at which they become one and the same. In a similar way, the Ceddo of the past haunts the people of today. It is in this sense that I have called my essay "the Ceddo's ghost." Today's myth of the Ceddo is like a spirit of the past which haunts people of the present.

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