Culture as Language of Reconciliation: A Case Study of Malian and South African Post-Conflict Experiences

COULIBALY Aboubacar Sidiki
Département d'Anglais,
Université des Lettres, Langues et Sciences Humaines de Bamako

Résumé : L'article définit et présente les facteurs qui généralement occasionnent les conflits en Afrique. Ensuite, il relativise les points de vue négatifs de certains spécialistes sur l'utilité sociale des conflits, tout en les présentant plutôt comme des leviers de renforcement des liens de cohésion sociale et le préalable à tout véritable changement social. Enfin, il présente un modèle de réconciliation qui utilise l'histoire de façon pédagogique. La culture africaine est aussi utilisée comme un moyen adéquat pour la négociation de la paix et l'atteinte du pardon à travers trois types de stratégies de réconciliation : deux à court terme et l'autre à long terme. Cela implique que dans toute société africaine post-conflit, surtout au Mali et en Côte d'Ivoire, la culture peut être utilisée comme une langue appropriée pour la concrétisation de la paix et la réconciliation à travers l'adoption et la vulgarisation de l'alliance à plaisanterie et les valeurs africaines de la tolérance, du pardon, etc.

Mots clefs : Culture, Conflit, Réconciliation, Histoire, et Pédagogie

Abstract: The paper first defines and presents the factors responsible for most conflicts in Africa. Then, it relativizes the negative scholarly views of conflicts, and sees them as possible means in strengthening social bonds and ensuring true social developments. Thirdly, it presents a model of reconciliation which employs history as pedagogy, and deploys African culture as a valid language for negotiating peace and forgiveness within the limitedness of two short-range strategies of reconciliation and one long-range one. This implies that in any African post-conflict society, especially in Mali and Ivory Coast, culture can be used as an effective language of reconciliation. It also entails the implementation, the valorization and the popularization of the practice of *Synanguya*, the African sense of the sacredness of life, tolerance, forgiveness, solidarity, wisdom, and work in moments of peace negotiation and reconciliation.

Key words: Culture, Conflict, Reconciliation, History, and Pedagogy.

Introduction

African history has frequently been marked by desolate and unfortunate moments of conflicts (inter and intra community conflicts). The first major conflict[1] that Africa experienced was her tragic encounter with Europe through the established institution of slavery. That encounter was based on a conflicting relationship with some white proslavers who failed to recognize Africans as full human beings (binary confrontations: the civilized and the uncivilized). After the abolition of slavery in the United Kingdom (1833) and in the United States of America (1865), Africa had also been overwhelmed by another important historical moment of conflict known as colonialism.

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[1] Conflict should be understood as any confrontation or opposition between two views, two practices, two communities or two races. There is conflict when there is a clash of interests, views, practices or antagonistic relationships between races or communities.

Its defenders established a colonial system in Africa through the power of weapons and the colonial school. This latter conflict obliterated African cultures and divided African nations[2] into "warlike" and "tribal" entities on the basis of their strategy of divide and rule. Besides, Africa had also known many other conflicts such as: the apartheid Black and White conflict in South Africa (from the late 1940s to the early 1990s), the Hutu and Tutsi conflict in Rwanda in 1990s, the first, second and third waves of Tuareg rebellion in Mali (1963, 1990 and 2012).

The paper primarily seeks to develop a model of reconciliation based on some highly respected African cultural values. Among those values, I can cite the practice of *Synaguya*, the sacredness of human life, solidarity, work, forgiveness, and wisdom. In so doing, the paper is engaged to adopt a socio-historical approach to demonstrate and explain how African culture and history can pedagogically be used to ensure peace and heal post-conflict wounds in Mali and Ivory Coast. It is therefore from this perspective that the study strives to articulate an African indigenous model of reconciliation built around three strategies: two short-range strategies and one long-range one.

1-Re-Narrating the Causes of some Conflicts in South Africa and Mali

Any conflict that bursts out at any moment in Man's history has always had one or many causes. In Africa, past and recent conflicts have also their driving factors. I have also noticed that the causes of most conflicts in Africa are related to the following problems: inter-state border issues, ethnicity, xenophobia, inter-state aggression or support for rebel movements, racial and religious discriminations, terrorism, political rivalries, persecution and poor economic performance. The bad handling of the foregoing issues can eventually lead to situations of conflict in African countries. Many examples of these causes are found all across Africa. For instance, the major cause of past South-African conflict was due to the legalization and officialization of the segregationist and discriminatory system of apartheid in 1948.Black South Africans were marginalized and excluded from the different instances of decision-making, and even in the management of a country in which they constituted the majority. So people can guess that racial discrimination or ethnicity can engender serious situations of conflict and war.

If in South Africa the primary factor of the Apartheid conflict was racial segregation and discrimination, in Mali, it was slightly different. This is sustained by the fact that conflicts in Mali were racial and political at the same time. The first Tuareg rebellion which burst out in Kidal in 1963 under the reign of Modibo Keita was mainly motivated by the dissatisfaction of the Tuareg people to be citizens of Mali. They developed a feeling of non-belongingness to the Malian nation because many of them could neither understand nor accept to be ruled by dark-skinned Malians. According to my understanding of the first rebellion, they believed in their racial supremacy compared to the rest of the Malian population. It signifies that the first rebellion in Mali was more racially ideological than founded on actual social factors because the Tuaregs were legally and officially recognized as full Malian citizens although they wanted to have their own state or to be included in the Maghreb states, mainly, because of their "whiteness".

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[2] The term nation is used in the paper through two meanings: the first one is nation as synonymous with people or community whereas the second one is the political meaning of nation. This political sense is the various communities' recognition of a particular territory and its political institutions as representing their country.

However, some other motivations of for the first Tuareg rebellion (1963-1964) are also explicated as follows:

> At the time of Mali's independence, the state had a difficult relationship with its Tuareg populations.Some groups (notably those belonging to the Kel Intessar tribe) had relatively greater access to formal education and state jobs and administrative postings, while many Kel Adagh maintained an aloof posture that matched the state's own ambivalence and mistrust of the Tuareg. Many Kel Adagh wanted independence from the Malian state, while others had sought inclusion within Maghreb states[3].

As for the second wave of Tuareg Rebellion (1990-1996), its main causes were due to the drought of the 1970s and late 1980s and the observed corruption of some Malian officials. Such a situation is confirmed in the below excerpt. To put it in another way, the nomadic people of the North were suffering and their animals were dying without any quick responses from the government of the regime of Moussa Traoré. The situation revolted not only the Tuareg people but also Malian Arabs and Songhaïs. In the same dynamics, Thurston and Lebovich describe this desolate situation in the following terms:

> The 1970s and 1980s were difficult times for northern Mali. Though the late 1960s saw plentiful rain and grazing lands, the balance swung viciously in 1973 and 1984. Crippling drought drove many into refugee camps or far afield in search of grazing land. International aid failed to stem these crises, and money often disappeared into markets or the pockets of corrupt officials. Young Tuareg and Arab *ishumar* sought work in West Africa, the Maghreb, and Europe: some worked as laborers, drawn by the booming oil-driven economies of Algeria and Libya; others joined the trade in smuggled food and petrol, and eventually cigarettes and weapons, that flowed across porous Saharan borders; others heeded calls from Libyan leader Col. Mu'ammar Qaddafi to come to Libya to receive military training and offers of Libyan citizenship that often proved illusory[4].

The massive displacement of Tuaregs to Algeria, Libya and Europe enticed them to think about ways through which they could take care of themselves independently from the 'corrupt' and 'careless' central Malian government. For instance, "by the early 1980s plans were in place for an eventual rebellion whose stated political goal was an independent state in the Sahara, one that would encompass parts of Mali and Niger" (p.22).It is because of the mismanagement of the drought that the rebellion started in 1990 with a Tuareg attack on a Malian military camp in Menaka, specifically on September 4th, 1990.The evoked corruption of the Malian officials is

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[3] Thurston, Alexander and Lebovich, Andrew. *Handbook on Mali's 2012-2013 Crisis* in Working Paper No.13-001: Northwestern Univerisity, 2013.p.21.

[4] Ibid.p.22.

actually sustained in the above quotation to show the extent to which it had played a crucial role in the rising of the first rebellion.

The last Tuareg rebellion (2012-2013) in Mali has its root causes in the mismanagement of the country by the regime of Amadou Toumani Touré and the bad implementation of the different peace agreements. Under his presidency, the practice of corruption spread into all the spheres of Malian society with corrupt civil servants and military officials involved in drug trafficking. Beside to these two factors, stands what people may call the   revenge of the Tuareg rebels who did not forgive the killing of their relatives by the regimes of Moussa, Alpha and Amadou. This vengeance was interspersed with the sense of racial supremacy felt by most Tuareg people in a country dominated by dark-skinned people. The last rebellion was led by armed men who were soldiers in the Libyan national army[5]. Another indirect cause of the 2012 Tuareg rebellion was the passivity of the Malian state in front of Islamism and its affinities with the terrorist group Al Qa'ida, especially with its affiliate Al Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) based in northern Mali. It is in the midst of all these factors that

> On January 17 2012, fighters from the National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (French: Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad, MNLA) attacked the towns of Ménaka, Aguelhok, and Tessalit in northern Mali[…]Even before the rebellion broke out, a confluence of problems, ranging from longstanding communal grievances to official corruption and complicity in drug smuggling and perhaps militant activity as well, had weakened the Malian state[6].

2-Conflicts as Locomotives of Social, Political and Economic Developments

From the outset, it is necessary to highlight that the word "conflict" is defined from many angles depending on the conviction or the ideological orientation of the scholar who defines it. It is also owing to the plurality of conflict's meanings that people can count different scholarly views on the utility of conflict. For instance, scholars like Talcott[7] and Durkeim[8] see conflicts as an anomie (social dysfunction). They believe that conflicts always slow down the socio-economic and political development of any society and constitute the signs of real social disintegration (lack of solidarity and lack of complementary link between individuals living in the same

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[5] They were Tuaregs who fled or left Mali because of persecution, the hardship of life in the north or their dissatisfaction with their being ruled by the black majority of Malians. Some of them were even born in Libya and they cannot even speak the official language of the country. Most of them came in Mali heavily armed because of the collapse of the regime of Mahamar Gaddafi.They were looking for a refuge and a safe place to settle. The regime of Amadou Toumani Touré received them without disarming them; it even gave them money which they used to launch the rebellion.

[6] Ibid.p.1.

[7] See Parsons, Talcott. *Essays in Sociological Theory*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1954.

[8] See Durkheim, Emile. *Division of Labour*.Trans.W.D.Halls.Hampshire: The MacMillan Press LTD,1984.

society). In addition, they see no utility in conflicts. Although many other scholars share this viewpoint, there is also another category of scholars, such as Karl Marx[9], Max Weber and Simmel[10], who believe that conflicts are the locomotives of authentic social, political and economic developments. They believe that a society cannot actually develop without moments of conflicts which reveal the weaknesses and flaws of that society. If these social weaknesses and flaws are known, appropriate remedies may be applied to them to create a more thriving, fair and just society. For Karl Marx[11], conflicts are responsible for change in any society because change is never given but taken. From this point, the reader may comprehend that if there are some communities or people in a society where they are oppressed, marginalized or discriminated against, they may use conflict (opposition, demonstrations, strikes, boycotting and violent opposition) as an efficient tool to change their initial social condition.

The reader may now retain that conflicts do not have only negative aspects because they can allow people to be aware of the real problems of their society. It means that they are revealers of unobvious and hidden social problems. However, the ignorance of certain social problems may consequently constitute a serious hurdle for any asserted social solidarity, integration and development. This entices us to propound that in any society where people aspire to real change because of high social or political injustices and inequalities, conflicts sometimes become the efficient tools to articulate and concretize true economic and political transformation for their well-being (social conflict enabled a great political change in Burkina Faso with the fall of the regime of Blaise COMPARORE in 2015 and a pacific change of regime in Senegal with the election of Macky SALL).

As already articulated in the above, I can also illustrate the utility of conflicts in the Malian context. What I intend to say is that they enabled the advent of democracy and multiparty political system in Mali as well as alleviating the suffering of the population in the 1990s.As illustrations, conflicts permitted Malians to overthrow the military regime of Moussa Traoré. He ruled Mali for 23 years. During his 23 years of reign, Malians in their totality suffered from the non-respect of their basic rights like the right to go on strike, the right to free speech and freedom in politics. Everything on the market was also expensive and not affordable for the common Malian. Workers, civil servants, traders, students and others had all undergone the hardship of the Moussa Traoré's governance. According to the testimony of Mr. Coulibaly Amadou K, a retired teacher, they could spend four months without being paid. Out of the four months, they were sometimes paid one month only. It was thanks to the struggle of students, mouvements and organisations of women, traders and workers that the regime of Moussa collapsed on March 1991 following the killing of more than 25 people and hundreds of wounded people. Without the revolution of the 1991 and sacrifices of the population, Mali would have never experienced the freedom of democracy and enjoyed the fruit of liberty and free movements.

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[9] See Marx, Karl. *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, 2nd edition, David McLellan (ed.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

[10] See Kurt H. Wolff, (Trans.). *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1950.

[11] Karl Marx conceives conflict as synonymous with revolution. He strongly believes that revolutions are always responsible for real social change. According to him, there is no true change in any society if there is no revolution or conflict from the oppressed and exploited class.

The most recently utility of conflict in Mali has been seen with the youth and population of Gao. They showed their dissatisfaction with the settlement of the interim authorities in Gao as well as the non-inclusion of their preoccupations in the process of reconciliation under way in Mali. For the first one, the 'mouvements d'autodéfense de la jeunesse civile de Gao' revolted against the settlement of the interim authorities. They were obliged to face the bullets of the Malian police which killed 12 young men and 42 wounded on july 11th 2016.But the government was also obliged to reconsider its position. Thanks to the opposition and revolt of the youth of Gao, the elections of mayors were organized in Gao as well as in Tombouctou on November 20th 2016. Once again, conflicts allowed people of Gao to elect the persons that they wished to choose as mayors. As for the second one, the protest of the youth resulted in the reduction of petroleum prices in Gao as well as accepting the fighters of the 'mouvements d'autodéfense de la jeunesse civile de Gao' to be part of the process of reconciliation. The above examples ultimately signify that any great social conflict can always engender a positive social change and ensure a long-range stability, reconciliation and development in post-conflict societies.

3-Strategizing an Indigenous Model of Reconciliation based on Culture and History

The model of reconciliation developed in this paper is based on the belief that language carries culture, shapes the character and personality of people and determines the way people think, speak and behave when they are confronted with problems. If this is an agreed fact, culture can also be used as the language of reconciliation in post-conflict African societies, particularly in the case of Mali and other African nations. By culture as language, we mean the adoption and valorization of certain African cultural practices and values, such as *Synanguya*, the sacredness of life, solidarity, forgiveness and wisdom, and work, during moments of conflict-solving and reconciliation. It is in this direction that this section develops three strategies of reconciliation entangled upon African culture and within a pedagogic limitedness of history.

However, it is salient to specify that the phrase 'within a pedagogic limitedness of history' is used to refer to the use of history as a fountain of didactic lessons learnt from past post-conflict examples or models of reconciliation. It means that history can become a means of pedagogy to reconcile antagonistic people and heal wounds of recently past conflicts. As for *Synanguya,* it is an age-old joking cultural practice in the Manden society. It was practiced to maintain peace and good social relationships among and between peoples. The practice was officialized by the Emperor of Mali, Sundjata KEITA, in his promulgated charter known as the Kurukan Fuga Charter in the 13th century. The seventh provision of the charter is responsible for the institutionalization the practice of *Synanguya* between and among all the Mandekas or Mandingo people.

3-1-Culture as an Efficient Language of Reconciliation

The first strategy of reconciliation in a post-conflict society like Mali is to reactivate and remodel traditional mechanisms of bringing together dislocated communities. By this, we imply that African culture contains some practices and values out of which can softly be constructed a language of peace negotiation and reconciliation after a violent or non-violent conflict. In this frame of mind, the first short-range suggested mode of reconciliation is the implementation of the practice of *Synanguya* to narrow down the mistrust and social distance between communities. It is however done on four major cultural bases: a person can be your joking partner because of

54

his/her family name. For instance, people bearing the family names Keïta, Konaté, Cissé, Camara, Kouyaté are the *Synangus* or joking partners of all the Coulibaly. The Diarra, Dembelé are also the joking partners of the Traoré. Secondly, a person can be your *Synangus* depending on his/her ethnic group (Senoufo and Mianka, Bozo and Dogon, Tuareg and Dogon, Songhaïs), I mean here that if someone is a Senoufo regardless of his family name is the joking partner of the Mianka and vice versa. The third one depends on the geographical locations of the person. It implies that the geographical location is another key criterion which determines and establishes *Synanguya* between people of different villages or different locations. As examples in Mali: Sinzani in Segou region and Niamina in the Koulikoro region are *Synangus*. Massala and Torgor in Segou region are *Synangu villages*, Ganadougou and Baniko are also *Synangus*).These villages never harm each other because they are joking partners. A person from Ganadounadou regardless his or her family name or ethnic belonging can never refuse or harm someone from Baniko and vice versa. The fourth one is related to certain professions such as blacksmiths and griots.Blacksmiths and griots, because of their professions, are the joking partners of all the communities of the Manden society. They are accordingly rated as the national joking partners.

As a reminder, *Synanguya* was practiced in Manden society many years before its officialization by the Emperor of Mali in the 13th century after the battle of Kirina (1236). It was actually legalized by Sundjata Keita to maintain peace, solidarity and strengthen social cohesion and relationships between all the different Mandekas. This social practice at heart consists of playing with your joking partners by behaving in a funny and friendly manner or to use effectively joking depending on the situation without offending or even hurting your joking partner. Such a societal practice was highly praised and respected by the Manden people because they quickly grasped that good family or blood links only between brothers of the same family was very good and valued, but not enough to maintain social stability and solidarity in the entire society.

In addition, *Synanguya* allows a new kind of brotherhood, this time not between brothers of the same family but between everyone and all the communities in the society. It allows everybody in the society, young and old, men and women, children and adults, educated and non-educated, leaders and common people, to have someone with whom to joke and collaborate. Loneliness and hatred are avoided and togetherness and friendship are reinforced in the society. With this simple practice, everyone becomes the student and receiver, and the teacher and guide at the same time. Another great advantage of *Synanguya* is that, people are forbidden to kill, wound, shed the tears and spoil the reputation of their *Synangus*(joking partners).

In short, *Synanguya* literally means to compromise and this is indicative of its popularization by the Mandekas. However *synanguya*, as a social pact to ensure peace and harmonious cohabitation among people of different activities and ethnic belongings, dates back to Ancient Egypt, especially in the Nile valley where farmers and cattle breeders sealed an oral pact to avoid any conflict between them. The pact was not really based on joking as in contemporary *synanguya* but it constitutes the first form of this African value which is largely shared in African culture, specifically in west Africa. The form of *synanguya* which is known today originates from the Empire of Ghana with the Soninke people. This is to explicate that this social practice is not peculiar to the Empire of Mali only, but it was the creation of the Soninke people to make Ghana a peaceful and better place to live.

The *Synangu* or your joking partner cannot refuse anything from you and vice versa. For example, if Keita has a dispute with his wife, the wife can look for a Coulibaly to settle the dispute because there is a ***djoo*[12]** between them. The practice of *Synaguya* can be used by Malian government and peace negotiators to re-establish dialogue between Malian southerners and northerners, and reconcile all the children of Mali. In this dynamics, the Tuareg and Songhaïs should be sent their ***Synangus,*** Dogons and Bambara, during peace-negotiations and reconciliation-talks. This joking relationship works when it is efficiently applied and it is one of the most ancient Mandekas' ways to settle conflicts and disputes between communities and villages before colonization. In post-conflict countries where this kind of cultural practice does not exist, people can establish it there to ease reconciliation because *Synanguya* can positively needle the hearts of distant or opposed communities.

I have observed and witnessed in several cases that many problems were and are easily resolved in Mali today thanks to the practice of *Synanguya*. The most recent illustration of the utility and efficiency of such a cultural practice was seen in the land ownership conflict opposing the neighboring villages of Poporopin and Derou in Koro area, especially in the Mopti region. The two villages are actually inhabited by Dogon people. In spite of being from the same nation and with the same language, they fought and caused more than one hundred dead and victims in 2012.The authorities through several legal procedures failed to resolve the situation. The solution finally came from the *Synangus* of the Dogons who are called the Bozos. What they did was to re-appropriate the disputed land by settling on it and growing their crops. Since then there has been no conflict in the area because the ***Djoo*** of *Synanguya* between the Dogons and the Bozos is the most sacred one and they can never protest against the will of the Bozos. For instance, when a Dogon dies, a Bozo can never attend his burial because when he sees the body of the deceased, he will also pass away in his turn. Such a belief is strongly shared by both sides.

The above example shows that *Synanguya* is even stronger than the power of weapons and bombs. But in the case of the Malian contemporary conflict, the authorities did not appropriately use this cultural diplomacy to ensure peace and reconciliation because they have opted for a westernized model. The efficient application of *Synanguya* may impact positively on the process of reconciliation under way in Mali as well as being implemented elsewhere like in Ivory Coast.

The second step of this mechanism of reconciliation is to call for the ***Nyamakalas*[13]** as mediators, especially the ***Djélis*** (the masters of speech or rhetoric, historians, guardians of ancient

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[12] It is a strong social bond which was established by our forefathers through swearing (taking an oath) or ***kalékan*** not to harm or refuse to do something for your ***synangu*** or joking partner**.** If someone happens to violate this code, he or she may be exposed to the curse of the ancestors. This practice of *Synanguya* is based on developing joking and friendly relationships among and between different ethnic groups, families and places. Even if you are a king, your *Synangu* can tell you the truth and guide you where others are afraid of telling you the truth. In addition, *Synanguya* can enable people share or solve their personal problems with their *Synangus* because there is no taboo between them. Your *synangu* may even help you as a psychologist by listening to your problems and propose or get solutions to them.

[13] They represented the second most important class in the Empire of Mali after the class of ***Honron***(nobles).This class was also divided into four subcategories: the ***Djélis*** (griots), the ***Noumous*** (blacksmiths),the ***Garankés*** (shoe-makers) and the ***Founés*** (another type of griots but very good in bargaining).They are also believed to possess a

secrets and culture).Since the **Djélis**[14] are the keepers of traditions, customs , history and know how to rhetorically manipulate words or language according to the situations and circumstances, they can evidently play a prominent role in the reconciliation of opposed peoples in a nation. In the case of Mali, for instance, the government and the international community should associate the **Djélis** in the process of peace-negotiation and reconciliation. These **Djélis** may remind and teach all the antagonists (government, other ethnic groups and Tuaregs) of the Malian crisis certain cultural values which may help them understand the necessity for peace and reconciliation. They can also exert a positive psychological effect on these dislocated communities by using their knowledge of human relations, culture and history. At this level, it is axiomatic to specify that the mind is the key area where the diplomacy through culture may dismantle people's desire or will to provoke conflicts or even kill. If the **Djélis** succeed in convincing and teaching the stakeholders of the Malian crisis about life sacredness, they would discover that the loss of any life is a great loss for the entire society. In other words, if the **Djélis** show them that conflicts constitute a serious hurdle for social cohesion and development across economic, political and cultural spheres, they could probably be enticed to pardon and accept compromises. Such a particular psychological sensitization by the **Djélis** may easily pave the way for peace and reconciliation to become a reality. This indicates that the opposed groups would construe that human life is more important than money and any materialistic thing or interest.

In other terms, the **Djélis** are pedagogically powerful and they can also deploy this pedagogic knowledge of culture and history to show all the stakeholders that the most precious treasure of life is life itself because it is when people are alive that they can achieve economic development, cultural freedom and political integration through work. When communities in a country understand that they are a nation despite the problems that may divide them thanks to the **Djélis**, they would be able to even move mountains. Yet, this sacredness of life has always been valued and promoted in African culture and one concrete example is the fifth provision of the Manden Charter where it is stipulated that: « Chacun a le droit à la vie et à la préserver, de son intégrité physique. En conséquence, toute tentative d'enlever la vie à son prochain est punie par la peine de mort[15]. »

The Mandekas quickly understood that life was sacred and this fifth provision was meant to protect life and avoid situations of conflicts where lives were to be destroyed. This cultural value is still true in many West African countries, especially in Mali where traditionalists and elders prefer and value human relations to selfish materialistic interests based on individualism. In social situations where human lives were to be destroyed for self-actualization or individual

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powerful secret which makes them more artistic and diplomatic than any other person. They know how to use the right words at the right time and know the probable effects of each word uttered on people. The word *Djéli literally* means blood and signifies the vital role that the griots play in any society like the one plays by blood in the organism of human beings.

[14] They were also the ones who could tell the truth to the Kings, as well as guiding them on many social issues.

[15] *La Charte du Nouveau Manden*.www.modibokeita.free.fr.Retrived on january, 6th, 2016.The translation of the quotation is as follows: *Each individual has the right to life and to preserve it. Any attempt made to kill a person is sanctioned with death penalty*.

materialistic interests, Mandekas used to avoid them because they understood that they could weaken social cohesion and endanger peace. The Manden people actually made life sacred to avoid wars, tensions and instability in the land, and at the same time, to ensure peace and development in the Empire. If such examples are pedagogically explicated to belligerent groups in Africa, especially in Mali, by the ***Djélis***, they would learn to solve their problems through dialogue and *Synanguya*.

In addition to the sacredness of life; the ***Djélis*** can as well adopt a language of tolerance and forgiveness by showing people that the strength of an African man or woman is to be able to tolerate and forgive his/her brothers and sisters. It is tolerance and forgiveness that can reunite once opposed children of the same nation. In Manden society for instance, particularly in Malian culture a man or woman is rated as wise[16] when he or she can tolerate and forgive his or her brothers and sisters despite their disagreement or opposition of the moment.It can also work if it becomes a key discourse of reconciliation. As an illustration, the *Synangus* of each camp should be sent to their counterparts' *Synangus* in the other camp in order to diplomatically ask them to tolerate and forgive each other in the name of peace and reconciliation as their ancestors used to do in the past. Customarily, it was not a shame in Manden society for someone to ask for forgiveness when he/she was not right. This is a cultural value which can be adopted in any process of reconciliation, chiefly in contemporary post-conflict Mali and elsewhere.

The third major step of this mode of reconciliation is to shift the discourse from tolerance and forgiveness to the African sense of solidarity[17] which implies unity and mutual help between various ethnic groups or races of the same country. If it is well directed and implemented in situations of reconciliation, the African sense of solidarity could help post-conflict communities materialize their dreams, ambitions, and develop the way that they wish to build their country. One of the major strengths of Africa is the implementation of the practice of solidarity between Africans even if they don't know each other. Thanks to solidarity, no one was excluded or marginalized in the Manden society either on the basis of his/her ethnic group or racial affiliations because they understood that their power resided in their reciprocal assistance and help. For the Mandekas, the problems of your brothers or neighbors were also your problems and their happiness was also your happiness. I mean here that such African sense of communalism ensures social integration and reinforces social trust between people. It is the very antithesis of individualism and selfish interests.

In other words, it implies collective interests against individualistic interests, avoidance of exclusion and marginalization of minorities. But, many of the problems and conflicts of contemporary Africa are unfortunately due to the disappearance of this cultural value in Africans'

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[16] The sense of wisdom in Africa was seen in the capability of a person to understand different things, control his temper and forgive his brothers and sisters. For instance, if a person was considered as not wise, he was not given certain ancient secrets because he may fail to control his temper and harm people by using as them.

[17] Solidarity is seen in the behavior of people. It means the act of helping your brothers, sisters, foreigners or neighbors in difficulty (with food, foodstuffs, money etc). It is also manifested through the way people greet one another, help each other during happy and unhappy moments such marriages, naming ceremonies, deaths, famine and wars.

lives. People may now see that the popularization of solidarity in situations of reconciliation may create and reinforce in the hearts of opposed brothers and sisters the feeling of belonging to the same nation or state. For instance in the case of Mali, the southerners can help and assist northerners with medicines, foodstuffs and money to alleviate their suffering. In the name of reconciliation, this might work and solidify trust between south and north. For more than three years, the children of Kidal are not attending school. Here again, solidarity can operate to ease reconciliation. Southerners can accept to receive and feed needy pupils of Kidal before the total resolution of the crisis. In another way, northern pupils can study in the South before the official opening of all the schools in the North. It becomes evident that the practice of solidarity can also be a needle which reconciles the broken pieces of a nation into one reunited nation.

The last step of this first strategy of reconciliation consists of popularizing another important African cultural value which is work. It may surprisingly ease and strengthen reconciliation in any post-conflict situation where work is valued and job opportunities are created for everyone regardless of one's skin color or ethnic belonging. From history, people may learn that Africans have always valued this particular societal value to avoid laziness, stealing, razzias and reliance on other people[18]. For example since the 13th century the Emperor of Mali, Sundjata Keita had frequently reiterated in many occasions, especially at the proclamation of the Kurukan Fuga Charter(1236), that only hard work can liberate a man and make him a noble and respected man in society. Beside to this, its motto, which is **Baara**, **Tilen ani Kolon** (Work, Justice and Science), also confirms the latter. In a society where work is promoted and laziness devalued, people would work hard to improve their living conditions, and therefore develop their society as a whole. It is because of such a situation that the Mandekas agreed that: «Il y' a cinq façons d'acquérir la propriété: l'achat, la donation, l'échange, le travail et la succession. Toute autre forme sans témoignage probant est équivoque[19]».

The above excerpt means that there are five legal ways of acquiring things and property in Manden society: through buying, donation, exchange, work and heritage. If anyone acquires any thing or property outside these norms, he/she was punished and could even be excommunicated.

In a situation of reconciliation, mediators and governments should pedagogically insist on sensitizing the people about the importance of work by each citizen in solving many of the problems and reducing the socio-economic and political disparities between the South and the North of contemporary Mali. If each citizen works hard, especially the government, this would generate many jobs. If many jobs are available for people and they can work wherever in the country, this would eventually help any post-conflict society to easily heal many of its past wounds. By working, people would feel useful and important in their society and it can also ensure cooperation and collaboration between once distant communities. For instance, the recent rebellion in Mali also broke out because many northerners wanted to obtain positions in the administration, the government, the army, and in other Malian sectors without working hard or

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[18]For further information, see the 6th provision of the Kurukan Fuga Charter at www.modibokeita.free.fr.

[19] It is the 31st provision of the kurukan Fuga Charter. Ibid. The quotation is translated as it follows: *There are actually five legal ways to acquire property in the Manden society: Buying, donation, exchange, work and heritage. Any other way without a convincing testimony is therefore illegitimate*.

having the required qualification. If this African cultural value is popularized in times of peace-seeking and reconciliation, it would likely produce a positive effect on normalizing the social bond between all the children of the same nation. Its popularization may also entice government, rebels and other communities to work honestly without any nepotism, embezzlement and corruption. This would culminate in creating real job opportunities for all the citizens. The valorization of this cultural value therefore explicates that the very African sense of work is antagonistic with corruption and laziness[20].

The second strategy is a long-range type of reconciliation based on the use of education (schools), civil service and mixed marriage (inter-racial and inter-community marriages).This strategy is founded on the belief that education is an efficient means of re-socializing and reconciling broken nations and mixing people through the teaching of African cultural values in schools. The first thing to be done is a total change of school curricula to include the teaching of values such as *Synanguya*, sacredness of life, forgiveness, patriotism, solidarity, citizenship, African sense of wisdom and the feeling of belonging to the same nation. If African post-crisis societies educate their children by initiating them into these values and by teaching them their languages, they would grow up by practicing *Synanguya*, by respecting life, by working hard, by being able to forgive the other depending on the situation because they would become wiser. Also, these children would learn to help and rely on one another. They would therefore love and rediscover the history, laws and institutions of their country.

Furthermore, the popularization of these values through education would better prepare children to be definitively reconciled with one another in the future. These new types of children would sensitize and convince their parents to also forgive and accept reconciliation because education would mentally frame them to avoid and refuse future situations of conflicts against their own brothers and sisters. Thus, the teaching of these African values in schools from elementary to university levels can reconcile communities in Mali as well as in Ivory Coast. To ensure the efficiency of this long-range way of reconciliation, post-conflict governments should subsequently create and promote boarding schools where students from all the ethnic groups are mixed and taught the same values as the foregoing.

The second step in this strategy is to reconsider and redirect the schema of the civil service, especially in the appointment of civil servants. What we imply is that civil servants from the north should in majority be sent to work in southern, western and eastern parts of the country and vice versa as done during the time of President Modibo Keita. The more, the government implements this, the more people would know each other, they would collaborate and their social links would therefore be solidified by favoring peace and reconciliation. For instance, this mode of reconciliation can also be applied in post-rebellion Mali and Ivory Coast to guarantee peace and reconciliation in a long-range dynamics.

The last step in this long-range strategy is to encourage inter-community and inter-racial marriages, especially in the case of Mali. When people get married, they blend and are linked

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[20] In the Manden society, laziness was considered as a crime and a lazy man could never get a wife in his community. Hard workers were generally respected and cited as examples for others and they were sometimes celebrated by giving them the title of **GNO MASSA (king of millet)**.

through strong blood bonds. Out of these kinds of marriages, would be born new types of citizens. These citizens would serve as the cement between their parents or communities. When the cement takes, it is difficult for the bricks to break or disintegrate. So, in a post-conflict society like Ivory Coast, inter-community marriages can speed up the reconciliation process and strengthen peace because people would go beyond their differences and forgive each other in the name of love and blood bonds. This indicates that children born out of inter-community or inter-racial marriages would reunite the nation and would represent what Homi Bhabha has once called the third space of enunciation or negotiation[21].

3-2-History as a Pedagogic Reference to Solve Contemporary Conflicts in Africa

The third major strategy proposes a kind of reconciliation drawn from past models of reconciliation in South Africa and Mali. It is developed around a suggested set of recommendations. This engages us to utter that history can pedagogically be used to correct or even avoid imperfections in successful past models of reconciliation. In many African countries, especially in South Africa and Mali, different models of reconciliation were adopted to reunite communities after a violent conflict. For instance, the model of reconciliation implemented in post-apartheid South Africa was successful because it was based on a *restorative justice*[22] model of reconciliation. Its key tools to ensure reconciliation and heal past wounds of apartheid were designed around three elements: **truth**, **justice** and **forgiveness**. People recognized their crimes, wrongs and asked for forgiveness. This was done by both sides (perpetrators of crimes and victims) and they forgave each other during official and mutual hearings before all the antagonists. At the end of all the hearings and the presentation of forgiveness, amnesty was given to crimes perpetrators or offenders and the victims were indemnified and rehabilitated. All the process of reconciliation was piloted by the commission of Truth, Justice and Reconciliation which worked to reconcile South Africans on the basis of a model of restorative justice. At the end of reconciliation process, white and black South Africans consequently decided to live together anew. Since then, South Africa has become a reconciled nation where Whites and Blacks collaborate, can do the same things, intermarry and go to the same places without any restriction.

As in the above, the South African model of reconciliation can also be applied to many contemporary post-conflict countries in Africa such as in Central Africa, Ivory Coast and Libya. The adoption of this past model of reconciliation can accelerate the process of reconciliation in the foregoing countries because it can spare time and reconcile post-conflict broken hearts. However, it is axiomatic to specify that the model of reconciliation implemented in the context of

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[21] For further information, see Bhabha, Homi .*Location of Culture*. London: Routledge .1994.

[22] This model of reconciliation is enshrined in the formula of acknowledgement and contrition from perpetrators or culprits and forgiveness from victims and it is done in face-to-face meetings or hearings .In other words, it is a cooperative process of reconciliation which involved all the parties and its outcome is to compensate or rehabilitate the victims.

South African conflict draws its strength from the South Africans' cultural sense of *Ubuntu* philosophy[23].

The didactic lessons from the past teach us that history repeats itself and this can inspire people to ponder over the serious use of history pedagogically in anticipating future conflicts, as well as paving the way for a better reconciliation after a conflict. One illustrating didactic lesson is the case of the handling of the first, second and third waves of Tuareg rebellions in Mali. The rebellion of 1961-1963 was solved through the use of violence instead of non-violent models of conflict-solving and reconciliation. This kind of reconciliation adopted by the regime of the first president of Mali did not prevent Tuareg people from taking arms again and against the central government of Mali in the late 1980s. It even created frustrations among Tuaregs and pushed many of them to exile in foreign countries. This particular situation contributed to drive Tuaregs to revolt against the Malian government under the regime of Moussa Traoré. Although his regime used violence to put an end to the rebellion, it also struggled to obtain the reconciliation of Malians through negotiations. The negotiations finally ended up with the signing of the "Tamanrasset Accord" between the Malian government and the rebellion in January, 1991.This agreement was meant to obtain cease fire and the demilitarization of northern regions such as Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao.

The signing of the Tamanrasset agreement coincided with the collapse of the regime of Moussa Traoré. The transitional regime of Amadou Toumani Touré and the newly elected regime of Alpha Oumar Konaré adopted the same restorative justice model of reconciliation based on negotiations instead of a violent conflict. The negotiations culminated in the signing of the "Pacte National" on the 11th of April 1992 between the rebels and the democratic regime of Alpha Oumar Konaré. The "Pacte National" gave for the first time some breakthrough advantages and rights to marginalized Tuaregs, Arabs and Songhaïs in the Malian social, political and economic spheres. But the bad implementation of the "Pacte National" by the Malian Government and the high corruption of Malian high officials in the army and in the different governments of Alpha and Amadou resulted in a violent conflict in 2012 with the Tuareg movement MNLA. This latter also resulted in the signing of the 'Accords d'Alger' in Bamako on the 15th of May 2015 by the Malian government and then by the coalition of rebel groups(CMA) one month after, especially on the 20th of June 2015.Unlike all the past agreements signed by the different Malian governments with rebel groups, the last peace agreement, which has just been signed, constitutes a latent risk for the future division of Mali into two separate countries (Southern Mali and Northern Mali, also referred by the rebels as Azawad) .But the strategies suggested in this paper on the basis of some African values may eventually help Malians to overcome nearly all the obstacles for true reconciliation and integration of separatists rebels into the socio-economic and political spheres of Mali.

Conclusion

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[23] This philosophy is based on the belief that a human being alone has no existence or utility unless he or she belongs to a group of people or community. This African philosophy is summed up in the following words of Desmond Tutu: "**I am because of who we all are**". In short, it promotes tolerance, solidarity, kindness, humanism, good manners and how to treat each other in the community. Its ultimate outcome is to ensure peace and facilitate social conflicts resolutions peacefully.

In conclusion, we can pinpoint that there are many factors which generally favor situations of conflicts in Africa. Among them, I enumerate inter-state border issues, ethnicity, xenophobia, inter-state aggression or support for rebel movements, racial and religious discriminations, terrorism, political rivalries, persecution and poor economic performance. The knowing of these factors as concretized in the paper can help Africans anticipate or even avoid latent situations of conflict across the continent if they are carefully handled by African authorities. However, it is as well important to specify that conflicts should not always be seen as anomaly but they should rather be considered as the locomotives of true and great social changes as seen in the cases of Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali, Ivory Coast and many other countries across the globe.

As developed in the paper, it can be uttered that African culture constitutes another efficient language of reconciliation. If the suggested model of reconciliation entangled upon African cultural values such as: *Synanguya*, sacredness of human life, solidarity, work, forgiveness and wisdom is implemented in post-conflict African societies seeking peace and reconciliation, many crises and problems following conflicts can easily be resolved on the short and long terms. It is due to this that I developed an African indigenous model of reconciliation built around three strategies: two short-range strategies and one long-range one. The short and long-range strategies of reconciliation explicated in the paper are African strategized patterns towards "real" social reconciliation. In short, I mean that the solutions of many conflicts in contemporary Africa could be found in African culture and within the pedagogic limitedness of history as engrained in the text.

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Person Interviewed

- Amadou Konkonyiri Coulibaly né vers 1941 a M'pessoba, cercle de Koutiala, région de Sikasso.

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