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Robert Launay

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TRADERS WITHOUT TRADE

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Traders without trade

Responses to change in two Dyula communities

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Preface

In the summer of 1969, while I was still an undergraduate at Columbia University, I had the remarkable good fortune to spend two months in Ouagadougou, Upper Volta. Through Lady Barbara Ward Jackson, I had been awarded an Albert Schweitzer Travelling Fellowship in order to study the processes of urbanization there. With all the enthusiasm of a novice, I set out to live with an African family. Through a series of fortuitous circumstances, and with the assistance of Elliot Skinner, then American ambassador, and of Françoise Héritier and Roger and Suzy Platiel at the Centre Voltaïque de la Recherche Scientifique (C.V.R.S.), I found a room in the compound of Saïdou Dao. Saïdou, as I soon learned, was a Dyula whose father had emigrated from Ivory Coast. The Dyula are a mobile people; frequently dependent on the hospitality of others, they are masters of the art of offering it themselves. Saïdou and his family were no exception. With hindsight, I can say that my first (and all too brief) trip to the field was thoroughly amateurish. I cannot claim to have learned a great deal about urbanization in Ouagadougou, but my chance encounter with a charming host left me with the determination to return to Africa, this time to study the Dyula in their home territory in northern Ivory Coast.

This book is the fruit of that determination. I spent over twenty-one months among the Dyula in northern Ivory Coast, from January 1972 to December 1973, thanks to a fellowship from the National Science Foundation and a Eureka J. Kellet Fellowship from Columbia University. The initial result of my labors was a Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Cambridge written under the invaluable supervision of Jack Goody. At the time, it seemed to me the best way to synthesize the material which I had managed to glean in the field. With several more years' hindsight, I have returned to the same data from a somewhat different perspective. As a result, about half of this book consists of a revision, in some instances a substantial one, of parts of my dissertation, while the rest is entirely new.

I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to all my colleagues who have read and commented on all or parts of my dissertation and drafts of this book: Esther

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Goody, Marc Augé, Meyer Fortes, Tim Weiskel, Joseph Berland, and, above all, Jack Goody, who has been a consistent source of inspiration and encouragement. I would also like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Anthropology at Northwestern University for their support during the preparation of the manuscript, and Len Paplauskas of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs of Northwestern for helping to fund the expenses involved. A host of others have kindly provided encouragement and assistance: Susan Allen-Mills and Louise Sanders of Cambridge University Press; Andrea Dubnick, who typed the final draft; Jane Taylor, who proofread it and kindly 'picked nits' in my English; Antonio Quintanilla, who prepared the maps and diagrams; and Robert Pickering, who photographed the cloth portrayed on the front cover.

But my greatest thanks of all must go to all those Ivoirians without whose continued help and sympathy my research would never have been possible. First of all, I thank those officials of the Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire (P.D.C.I.), particularly Fatogoma Coulibaly and Mory Kounandy Cisse, who, when my wife and I arrived, totally bewildered, in Korhogo, immediately set themselves to find us a place to stay, and were throughout our sojourn of continued and precious assistance. Tidiane Dem, whose fund of knowledge about the history of the region is apparently inexhaustible, was of similar help. No words of thanks for the hospitality of my hosts in Korhogo and Kadioha, Al Hajj Valy Cisse and Fetegue Cisse, could be sufficient. Their wives deserve similar gratitude. Nor could I have gone without the real and enduring friendship of a host of other members of the Cisse family: Mory Kounandy, Ladj, Sitafa, Vamara, Basory, Sabati, Bakamory, Fadua, Karamoko Fatoma, Banambi, to name only a few. The fact that I was a guest of the Cisse in both Korhogo and Kadioha meant that I enjoyed a particularly privileged relationship with them and with their families. But I am also indebted to a large number of Dyula in both communities, and in particular to the late Bassirima Saganogo, to Sory Diane, to Karamoko Suware, and to Massa Dambele.

I have far from exhausted the list of all those who, by their friendship, guidance and assistance, have made this volume possible. I hope that all those whose names I have omitted will not take this as a token of ingratitude.

Finally, my wife Catherine deserves a special mention, for bearing with me both in the field and afterwards, in conditions which were often difficult to endure. In times of difficulty and even of despair, her persistence has made this book possible.