

Fable Practice in Malinke

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- Background

There is a rich oral literature in the Mande world. The standard folk literature of such things as fables, proverbs, and riddles is complemented by an extensive heroic literature [Bird and Kendall 1980]. Fables such as Aesop's are generally considered to work as moral discourse. Koné [1997] points out that social and cultural expectations are transmitted through riddles and tales (fables) during childhood in Bamana society, which has a very similar social structure and language as Malinke. However, there are few cases in the literature of adults telling stories (e.g., fables) to children [Lancy 2008].

- Research purpose and aim

The purpose of this research is to examine fable practice in Malinke, by focusing on the activity of storytelling. In particular, I examine how children participate in storytelling.

- Results and achievements from fieldwork

I conducted field research in a farming village of Malinke, situated in the southwestern part of Mali. The primary research methods employed were interviews with villagers, and participant observations in the practice of storytelling. I also conducted occasional voice and video recordings during participant observation. I translated the recorded data, and make transcripts with the help of an assistant.

I clarified below: the place and time that storytelling is done; participants' attributes and relationships, including the narrator's; the content and structure of the fable; and the interactional format of storytelling. In addition, diachronic change in the style of storytelling and the use of fables as teaching materials for public elementary education are found.

- Implications and impact on future research

My future research will analyze the research data in detail. In particular, I will analyze the storytelling transcripts from two perspectives. The first is the format of the interaction in which the narrator and hearer collaborate in storytelling. I will analyze what is "didactic" in such interactions. The second perspective is the difference in the style employed to tell the same fable from one situation or place, such as a village or school, to another. I will analyze how the meaning and the moral implication of the fable changes as the situation or place changes.

References

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Fig. 1. A Scene from storytelling

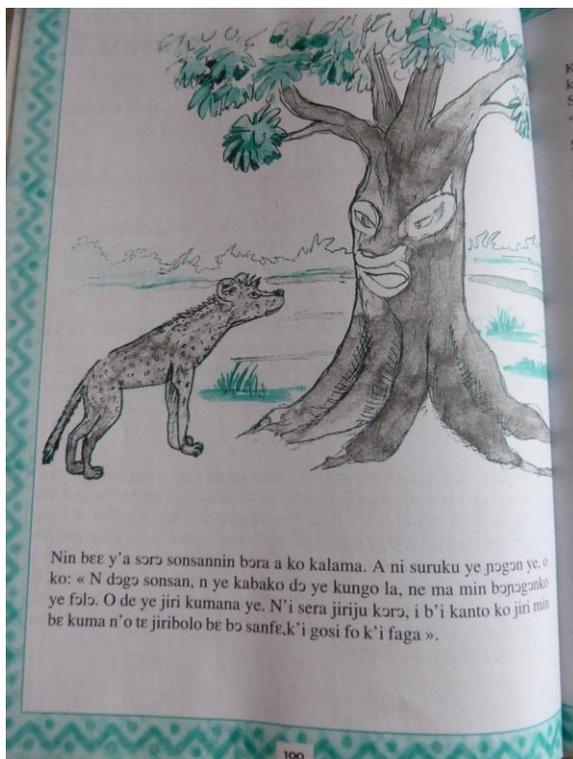


Fig. 2. A Fable in a textbook