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Actes du 3eme Colloque Scientifique International des
Laboratoires LAReLSo et LaRMA - (FLSL- UYOB)

tenue les 30 et 31 Mars 2026 à Kabala



Thème : Résolution des crises en Afrique et reconstruction
nationale par les sciences et la recherche scientifique à l'ère
de l'Alliance des États du Sahel (AES)



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LAReLSo et LaRMA de l'Université Yambo Ouologuem de Bamako,
sise à Kabala sur le thème : " RESOLUTION DES CRISES EN
AFRIQUE ET RECONSTRUCTION NATIONALE PAR LES
SCIENCES ET LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE A L'ERE DE
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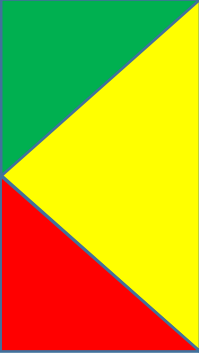
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The journal publishes only quality articles that have not been published or submitted for publication in any other journals. Each article is subjected to a double blind reading. The quality and originality of the articles are the only criteria for publication.



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*Actes du 3eme Colloque
Scientifique International des
Laboratoires LAReLSo et
LaRMA de l'Université des
Lettres et Sciences Humaines de
Bamako, sise à Kabala*

*Sur le thème : Résolution des
crises en Afrique et
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les sciences et la recherche
scientifique à l'ère de
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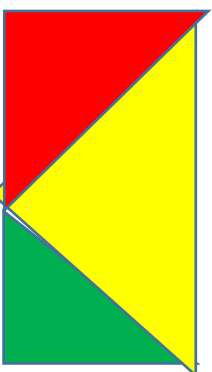
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Argumentaire de l'appel à communication du 3eme Colloque Scientifique International des Laboratoires LAReLSo et LaRMA (UYOB-FLSL)

I-CONTEXTE ET JUSTIFICATION

L'Afrique, depuis son accession à la souveraineté politique dans les années soixante, demeure en proie à des crises multidimensionnelles, mêlant insécurité armée, fractures sociales, fragilité étatique, corruption, *Africaphobie*¹ et chocs économiques, qui compromettent durablement ses trajectoires de développement et entravent l'affirmation d'une véritable indépendance sur tous les plans. C'est dans ce contexte que des leaders patriotes et visionnaires, notamment au sein de l'Alliance des États du Sahel, s'attachent à rompre les chaînes de l'impérialisme, du néocolonialisme, du sous-développement et de la dépendance à l'Occident. Cependant, il convient de noter que les premiers leaders africains révolutionnaires tels que Modibo KEITA, Julius NYERERE, Kwame KRUMMAH, Thomas SANKARA, Mohammad GADAFI et d'autres ont vu leurs luttes avortées en mi-chemin car elles n'étaient pas assez adossées à la science et à la recherche scientifique. De même plusieurs crises assaillent l'Afrique de nos jours, surtout sur le plan sécuritaire, mais la réponse semble être toujours soit militaire, soit faire recours à des personnes non universitaires, voire des non experts dans le domaine de la recherche scientifique. Le Mali, le Burkina Faso et le Niger ne font malheureusement pas exception. Pour pallier cette situation, une place de choix devrait être accordée aux sciences et la recherche scientifique d'où l'impérieuse nécessité de l'implication du monde universitaire.

En effet, les sciences, qu'elles soient africaines ou importées, constituent sans nul doute le véritable creuset de connaissances, de savoir-faire et de technicité permettant de poser des diagnostics fins, des outils de prévention et des évaluations d'impact indispensables pour concevoir des politiques publiques ou stratégies adaptées aux spécificités locales sahéliennes et africaines. Les approches scientifiques permettent également de dépasser les réponses purement militaires en intégrant prévention, résilience sociale, relance économique et réconciliation, et en rendant les interventions plus légitimes et efficaces. Pour corroborer ce qui précède, Aristote dans le *Traité d'Organon* écrit : « La connaissance scientifique se définit comme la connaissance des causes, son approche formelle vise à distinguer le démontrable (théorèmes) et l'indémontrable (axiomes), ce qui relève de l'enchaînement causal et ce qui relève des principes premiers. » (Vrin, 1979, p.89). En termes explicites, la recherche scientifique favorise l'appréhension objective et la découverte réelle des causes d'un problème ou d'une problématique tout en évitant de s'agripper à des causes qui ne découlent pas d'une connaissance scientifique véritablement avérée. Il est également saillant de faire remarquer que la recherche est un effort pour trouver quelque chose ou un effort de l'esprit vers la connaissance (Le Grain, M., 1994, p. 945). De même, D. Bruno (1994, p. 85), soulignera que la recherche est un exercice systématique et méthodique portant sur l'étude d'un problème ou d'une question et mettant en cause des faits qui doivent être vérifiables en vue d'atteindre une fin : la résolution d'un problème ou la réponse à une question ou d'une hypothèse préalable, la recherche exige

¹ Terme utilisé par l'écrivain malien Aboubacar Sidiki COULIBALY (2024, p.95) dans son roman socio-historique, *Le monde Africain doit se réveiller*, Bamako : Alqalam, pour signifier le rejet et le dégoût pour tout ce qui est africain ou renvoie à l'Homme africain ou à l'Afrique

ipso facto un travail d'interprétation. La science, quant à elle, renvoie à l'ensemble des connaissances humaines acquises par la spécialisation (études) ou par l'expérience (pratiques). Son fondement est la raison et l'objectivité.

En sus, l'émergence de l'Alliance des États du Sahel (AES) crée un nouvel espoir pour toute l'Afrique et constitue un espace stratégique sous régional requérant des réponses harmonisées mais devraient être fondées sur des savoirs locaux et scientifiques pour ménager la sécurité, la gouvernance et la reconstruction nationale. C'est pour cette raison que COULIBALY (2024, p.94) écrit : « La seule science qui libère l'Homme véritablement quel que soit le degré de l'aliénation est la science de soi-même. » Nous comprenons ainsi la prééminence des connaissances, des valeurs et savoir-faire endogènes dans la résolution des conflits et la reconstruction nationale à l'ère de la reconfiguration de l'Afrique et de la multipolarisation du monde.

Ce troisième colloque international offrira une tribune idéale pour interroger, analyser et préconiser, dans toute leur étendue, les outils pertinents de décolonisation, les mécanismes de résolution des crises et les dynamiques de reconstruction des États africains par la science et la recherche scientifique, dans un contexte marqué par les enjeux du néocolonialisme et de la menace terroriste. Il convient d'ores et déjà d'affirmer que science et recherche scientifique sont indissociables et qu'elles doivent exercer pleinement leur vocation pour résoudre les grandes problématiques de la cité et favoriser son développement.

Comme Objectif, ce colloque scientifique international vise à créer un cadre de rencontres et d'échanges entre chercheurs nationaux et internationaux sur la problématique de la décolonisation véritable, la résolution des crises par la science et la recherche scientifique au Sahel et en Afrique de façon générale. Il ambitionne également de proposer, à partir des résultats scientifiques issus des travaux menés par les chercheurs et enseignants-chercheurs du Sahel, de l'Afrique et, plus largement, de la communauté scientifique internationale, des pistes de solutions endogènes aux défis sécuritaires et de développement qui fragilisent ces régions sur tous les plans. A cet effet, les axes suivants sont retenus pour les propositions de communication :

II-AXES DE COMMUNICATION

- **Axe 1 : Diagnostic scientifique des crises africaines et reconstruction nationale**

Mettre en lumière la capacité des disciplines scientifiques à analyser finement les causes multidimensionnelles des crises (insécurité armée, fragilité étatique, ruptures sociales, *Africaphobie*, chocs économiques), en mobilisant tant les méthodologies quantitatives que qualitatives pour établir un état des lieux rigoureux.

- **Axe 2 : Littérature, Langue et valorisation des valeurs et savoirs endogènes**

Promouvoir les recherches conduites en terre africaine et la redécouverte des savoir-faire traditionnels comme fondements d'une science authentiquement africaine, apte à proposer des solutions adaptées aux réalités culturelles, sociales et environnementales du Sahel et du continent.

- **Axe 3 : Gouvernance, sécurité et développement fondés sur la recherche**
Souligner l'importance d'intégrer systématiquement les résultats scientifiques dans l'élaboration et l'évaluation des politiques publiques, afin de dépasser les réponses purement militaires et d'instaurer des dispositifs de prévention, de résilience civile et de relance économique légitimes et durablement efficaces.
- **Axe 4 – Libre**
Cet axe est libre et prend en compte tous les autres volets connexes.

III-Calendrier

- Lancement de l'appel : **22 Novembre 2025**
- Date limite de soumissions **des abstracts/résumés : 10 Mars 2026**,
- Les Notifications d'acceptation : **15 mars 2025**
- Date de déroulement du 2^{ème} Colloque Scientifique International : **30 et 31 mars 2026 à l'Université Yambo OUOLOGUEM de Bamako-Kabala-Mali.**

IV-Informations générales sur le colloque

- Les propositions de communication (**New Times Roman, police 12,interligne simple**), assorties d'un résumé de **300 mots** et de **5 mots clés** maximum en **français ou en anglais ou en arabe** sont recevables aux adresses électroniques suivantes : Labolarelso010@gmail.com ou larmaulshbmali@gmail.com jusqu'au **10 Mars 2026**.
Date de notification des résumés acceptés : 15 Mars 2026.Le colloque se déroulera du **30 au 31 mars 2026** à la cité universitaire de Kabala – à l'Université Yambo OUOLOGUEM de Bamako.
- Les auteurs y indiqueront les noms et prénoms du ou des contributeurs, l'institution/laboratoire d'attache, le grade ou la qualité, l'axe d'étude choisi, l'adresse électronique et les mots-clés au-dessous du résumé. Les langues d'écriture des communications ou articles sont le français, l'anglais et l'arabe. **Les auteurs des propositions des résumés retenus seront invités à payer 25.000FCFA comme frais de participation par communicant.** Les meilleurs textes après évaluation seront publiés dans un numéro spécial de la *Revue Kuru kan Fuga* ou la *Revue LaRMA*.

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RECLAIMING ORAL HERITAGE FOR POST-CONFLICT RECONCILIATION IN THE SAHEL (MALI, BURKINA FASO, NIGER)

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Abstract

This paper examines how traditional oral literary forms particularly griot narratives, epic poetry, proverbs, and communal storytelling can serve as indigenous methodologies for post-conflict reconciliation, social cohesion, and national reconstruction in the Alliance of Sahel States (AES: Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger). The research analyses how these endogenous practices contain sophisticated mechanisms for conflict resolution, historical memory preservation, ethical formation, and community healing that contemporary peacebuilding efforts often overlook. Drawing on field recordings, ethnographic research with 60–80 griots and 40–50 elder knowledge-holders, literary analysis of oral corpora, and case studies of successful interventions, the study proposes the systematic integration of oral literary heritage into national reconstruction programmes as authentically African and culturally appropriate complements to Western models transitional justice and peacebuilding models. The paper argues that Sahelian oral traditions constitute indigenous conflict resolution sciences whose recognition and institutionalisation is essential for durable peace in the AES region.

Keywords: AES Sahel States; African epics; griot; oral literary heritage; national reconstruction; post-conflict reconciliation.

Résumé

Cet article examine comment les formes littéraires orales traditionnelles notamment les récits griots, la poésie épique, les proverbes et la narration communautaire peuvent servir de méthodologies endogènes pour la réconciliation post-conflit, la cohésion sociale et la reconstruction nationale dans les pays de l'Alliance des États du Sahel (AES: Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger). La recherche analyse comment ces pratiques littéraires endogènes contiennent des mécanismes sophistiqués de résolution des conflits, de préservation de la mémoire historique, de cadres éthiques et de processus de guérison communautaire que les efforts contemporains de consolidation de la paix négligent souvent. S'appuyant sur des enregistrements de terrain, une recherche ethnographique menée auprès de 60 à 80 griots et de 40 à 50 détenteurs du savoir des anciens, une analyse littéraire de corpus oraux et des études de cas d'interventions réussies, l'étude propose l'intégration systématique du patrimoine

littéraire oral dans les programmes de reconstruction nationale comme alternatives authentiquement africaines et culturellement appropriées aux modèles de justice transitionnelle et de consolidation de la paix d'inspiration occidentale. L'article soutient que les traditions orales sahéliennes constituent des sciences indigènes de résolution des conflits dont la reconnaissance et l'institutionnalisation sont essentielles pour une paix durable dans la région AES.

Mots-clés : AES États du Sahel ; épopées africaines ; griot ; patrimoine littéraire oral ; reconstruction nationale ; réconciliation post-conflit.

INTRODUCTION

The Alliance of Sahel States comprising Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger confronts one of the most severe convergences of crises in contemporary African history. Armed jihadist insurrections, inter-communal violence, state fragility following successive military coups, mass displacement, and the erosion of social trust have created conditions of widespread trauma and fragmentation that demand urgent, sustained, and effective peacebuilding responses. Yet the dominant frameworks available to reconstruction actors truth and reconciliation commissions modelled on South Africa's TRC, rule-of-law institution-building derived from liberal democratic theory, disarmament-demobilisation-reintegration (DDR) programmes designed in Geneva and New York, and transitional justice mechanisms rooted in international criminal law have demonstrated significant limitations when transplanted into Sahelian contexts characterised by deep cultural specificity, linguistic diversity, spiritual cosmologies, and community structures fundamentally different from those in which these models were conceived.

This paper proposes that the resources required for genuine, durable, culturally grounded reconciliation in the AES countries are not absent; they are present, and have always been present, in the rich oral literary traditions that Sahelian societies have developed, maintained, and transmitted across centuries of social disruption, conquest, and reconstruction. Griot narratives, epic poetry cycles, proverbs, praise poetry, genealogical recitations, and communal storytelling practices constitute not merely aesthetic or entertainment traditions but sophisticated indigenous sciences of conflict resolution, social cohesion, historical memory, ethical formation, and community healing. The systematic marginalisation of these traditions by colonial and post-colonial educational and governance frameworks represents both an intellectual impoverishment and a practical peacebuilding deficit that this research seeks to begin to correct.

The Bamako colloque's thematic focus on the resolution of crises through science and scientific research provides the ideal intellectual framework for repositioning oral literary heritage as indigenous scientific knowledge rather than folklore as a body of empirically tested, socially

validated, and culturally transmitted knowledge about how Sahelian societies have managed, survived, and recovered from conflict across generations. This reframing has concrete implications for how reconstruction programmes are designed, funded, implemented, and evaluated, and for the role that universities, research laboratories, and scholars in the AES region play in generating knowledge for their own societies' regeneration.

The central hypothesis guiding this research is as follows. The strategic integration of Sahelian oral literary traditions into formal and community-based reconstruction frameworks would produce durable, culturally legitimate outcomes. These traditions include griot mediation, epic narrative performance, proverb deployment, and genealogical recitation. Their integration would produce measurably higher levels of cultural legitimacy, community participation, and durable social cohesion. This is compared with programmes designed exclusively on the basis of externally imported transitional justice models.

The paper is structured in six parts. Section 1 presents the study area. Section 2 articulates the research problematic. Section 3 states the research objectives. Section 4 presents the methodology. Section 5 analyses the results across five thematic dimensions. The conclusion synthesises the findings and formulates policy recommendations

1. METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach is explicitly oriented to community partnership and indigenous knowledge validation, reflecting the principle articulated by A. Ba (1972, p. 13) that "research on African oral traditions must itself embody the relational and dialogical values of those traditions, or it reproduces the epistemic violence it purports to critique."

The research employs a multi-method, interdisciplinary approach that combines oral literature documentation, ethnographic fieldwork, literary analysis, historical research, linguistic analysis, and applied participatory action

PRESNTATION OF THE STUDY AREA

The study area encompasses the three member states of the Alliance of Sahel States Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger with particular focus on the communities, oral traditions, and peacebuilding contexts within each country. The zone is characterised by remarkable linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity overlaid on shared Sahelian ecological, historical, and religious foundations.

Mali: Cradle of Great Oral Traditions

Mali holds a central position in West African oral literature. The ancient empires of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai were centred in present-day Malian territory, and the oral traditions that narrate, celebrate, and interpret these empires most notably the Sunjata epic (*Épopée du Mandé*), which recounts the

founding of the Mali Empire in the 13th century remain living, performed traditions today rather than merely historical artefacts. As D. T. Niane (1960, p. 5) has established, the Sunjata epic is simultaneously a literary monument and a political charter whose "transmission through griot recitation has served as the primary mechanism for the maintenance of social memory and political legitimacy across Mande-speaking communities for eight centuries."

The Manden Charter (Kurukan Fuga), reportedly proclaimed by Sundiata Keita following the Battle of Kirina (c. 1235), is widely recognised as one of the earliest human rights declarations in history. Its transmission through oral literary tradition griot recitation, communal performance, ritual re-enactment illustrates the political and ethical significance that oral heritage has carried in Malian societies (C. Ndiaye, 2014). Mali's oral literary landscape encompasses the traditions of the Bambara, Malinke, Soninke, Songhai, Dogon, Fulani (Peul), Tuareg, and numerous other ethnic communities, each with distinct but often interconnected traditions of epic narration, praise poetry, proverbs, riddles, and initiatory tales.

Burkina Faso: Ethnic Diversity and Oral Heritage

Burkina Faso's oral literary heritage reflects its status as one of the most ethnically diverse countries in West Africa, with over sixty ethnic groups including the Mossi (approximately 40% of the population), Fulani, Bobo, Lobi, Senufo, Bissa, and Gourounsi. The Mossi kingdoms Ouagadougou, Tenkodogo, Yatenga developed elaborate court traditions centred on griotic performance, royal genealogical recitation, and praise poetry that reinforced political authority and social order. According to S. Hagberg (2006, p. 133), these traditional institutions of mediation constituted "an autonomous sphere of conflict governance that the formal state system has never succeeded in replacing." Burkina Faso has been severely affected by jihadist violence since approximately 2015, with the northern and eastern regions experiencing sustained armed attacks, mass displacement, and the collapse of state services.

Niger: Nomadic and Sedentary Traditions in Dialogue

Niger's oral literary heritage is shaped by the intersection of nomadic and sedentary traditions across its vast territory. The Hausa, Zarma-Songhai, Tuareg, Fulani, Kanuri, and Toubou communities each contribute distinct oral traditions to a national literary landscape of exceptional richness and complexity. The Zarma-Songhai tradition of possession ceremonies, in which oral performance, music, and embodied storytelling serve as mechanisms for community healing and spiritual regulation, represents one of the most sophisticated indigenous therapeutic traditions in the region (S. Bornand, 2005). The Tuareg tradition of spoken poetry (tisiway) serves as a vehicle for political

commentary, social critique, and the negotiation of inter-tribal relations in ways that have historically enabled conflict avoidance and resolution (M. Ag Erless, 2006).

Context of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES)

The formation of the AES in September 2023, following military transitions in all three countries, has created a new political and governance context for national reconstruction. The AES governments have explicitly invoked the valorisation of African cultural heritage and the rejection of externally imposed models as foundational elements of their legitimating narratives. This creates both an opportunity for the elevation of oral literary heritage as a state-supported resource for reconstruction and a risk, namely that the instrumentalisation of cultural heritage for political legitimization may distort or constrain authentic community-based practices. Navigating this tension constitutes one of the central intellectual and political challenges that this research must address.

PROBLEMATIC

The central problematic of this research concerns the paradox of abundant indigenous peacebuilding resources and persistent peacebuilding deficit: the AES countries possess extraordinarily rich oral literary traditions containing proven mechanisms for conflict resolution, social cohesion, and community healing, yet the dominant frameworks for post-conflict reconstruction systematically fail to engage these resources, producing programmes that lack cultural legitimacy, community ownership, and sustainable impact.

The Paradox of the Marginalization of Endogenous Knowledge

The first dimension of the problematic concerns the epistemological marginalisation of oral literary knowledge within both the academy and the peacebuilding sector. The historical legacy of colonial rule in the AES countries included the systematic delegitimisation of indigenous knowledge systems. Oral traditions were categorised as folklore, superstition, or pre-scientific thought, rather than as sophisticated bodies of knowledge worthy of systematic study and practical application (A. Mbembe, 2013). As I. Okpewho (1992, p. 3) argues:

The oral tradition of Africa was so rich and varied that it had to be systematically dismissed and distorted by colonial scholarship before the continent could be designated as 'without history', without literature, and without philosophy. The task of contemporary African scholarship is precisely the reversal of this epistemic violence.

The consequence is a profound mismatch between the frameworks that external peacebuilding actors deploy and the cultural frames of reference within which Sahelian communities actually process conflict, assign responsibility, perform reconciliation, and rebuild trust. Truth and reconciliation commissions that proceed through formal testimony, adversarial legal procedures, and written

documentation may satisfy international accountability norms while leaving untouched the social and spiritual dimensions of harm that community members experience as most significant.

The Question of Authenticity and Instrumentalization

A second dimension of the problematic concerns the tension between the authentic, community-embedded functions of oral literary traditions and the risk of their instrumentalisation by external actors in ways that distort, commodify, or undermine those traditions. As B. G. Hoffman (2000, p. 8) has observed, griot authority "derives from genealogical relationships, social positioning, and the accumulated trust of generations"—authority that is compromised when griots are extracted from their social contexts and deployed as performers in externally designed programmes. The research must therefore grapple with how oral literary heritage can be integrated into contemporary reconstruction frameworks in ways that enhance rather than undermine its authenticity and effectiveness.

The Linguistic Dimension

A third dimension of the problematic concerns language. In Mali alone, over 80 languages are spoken, with Bambara serving as a lingua franca but Fulfulde, Songhay, Dogon, Tamasheq, and many other languages carrying their own oral literary traditions. Formal post-conflict processes conducted primarily in French the official colonial language systematically exclude the majority of rural, less formally educated populations from meaningful participation. As N. Thiong'o (1986, p. 4) has argued, "the choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment." Oral literary traditions, by contrast, function in the languages of their communities, reaching and involving populations that formal, French-language processes cannot.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Main Objectives

The first principal objective of this research is to document, analyse, and theorise the conflict resolution mechanisms, reconciliation models, and social cohesion strategies embedded within traditional oral literary forms epic narratives, griot recitations, proverbs, praise poetry, genealogical texts, initiatory tales across the three AES countries, with systematic attention to linguistic and ethnic diversity.

The second principal objective is to examine the historical and contemporary role of griots and other traditional oral artists as specialised peacebuilding practitioners' mediators, genealogical witnesses, emotional catalysts, and keepers of precedent and to develop a theoretical framework that positions

griot expertise as an indigenous conflict resolution science worthy of formal recognition and institutional support (B. G. Hoffman, 2000; T. A. Hale, 1998).

The third principal objective is to propose evidence-based frameworks for the integration of oral literary heritage into national reconstruction programmes, truth and reconciliation processes, community healing initiatives, and educational curricula in the AES countries, based on analysis of existing successful examples and participatory research with griot communities and elders.

Secondary Objectives

Secondary objectives include: (1) conducting comparative analysis of oral literary conflict resolution traditions across the major ethnic and linguistic communities of the AES region Bambara, Songhay, Fulani, Mossi, Zarma, Tuareg, Dogon, Hausa, Kanuri, and others; (2) examining how contemporary Sahelian writers, musicians, filmmakers, and performing artists draw upon and innovate traditional oral forms to address current crises; (3) developing an indigenous methodological framework for oral literary research that centres community knowledge-holders as research partners rather than research subjects; and (4) contributing to language policy recommendations that promote the use of Sahelian languages in post-conflict reconstruction processes.

1.1. Documentation and Analysis of the Oral Literature Corpus

The primary methodological strand involves systematic fieldwork documentation of oral literary performances across the three AES countries. Field recording sessions employing high-quality audio and video equipment are conducted with griots, storytellers, praise poets, genealogical reciters, and elder knowledge-holders in urban, peri-urban, and rural settings across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Recorded performances are transcribed by native speaker research assistants trained in oral literary analysis, translated into French, and preserved alongside the original-language texts. Literary analysis of the corpus employs a combination of Western oral-formulaic theory (M. Parry, 1971; A. B. Lord, 1960; I. Okpewho, 1979; C. Seydou, 1972), African-centred critical frameworks including Afrocentricity (M. K. Asante, 1987) and the Ubuntu philosophical tradition, and indigenous analytical categories derived from the communities' own evaluative vocabularies.

1.2. Ethnographic Research on Practitioners of Oral Art

The second methodological strand involves in-depth ethnographic research with griots, storytellers, praise poets, and elder knowledge-holders as the human carriers and living theorists of the traditions being studied. The research targets 60 to 80 griot interviews and 40 to 50 elder interviews across the three countries, conducted in participants' preferred languages by research assistants trained in life history methodology. Griot interviews follow a structured life history protocol covering: apprenticeship and training; the specific oral literary forms mastered; social roles and institutional

relationships; documented examples of griot mediation in inter-communal conflicts; experiences in formal or semi-formal peacebuilding contexts; and perspectives on the integration of griot expertise into contemporary reconstruction programmes (K. Barber, 2007).

Participant observation at performances, community gatherings, mediation sessions, and customary ceremonies provides contextual depth that interview data alone cannot capture. Attending a griot performance of the Sunjata epic in a village reconciliation ceremony, or observing a Tuareg tisiway session in which community members negotiate inter-tribal relations through poetic exchange, enables analysis of the performative, relational, and emotional dimensions of oral literary peacebuilding that are invisible in transcript form. Focus group discussions with women's associations, youth groups, displaced populations, and former combatants probe community perspectives on the role of oral traditions in contemporary social life.

1.3. Historical and Archival Analysis

The third strand involves systematic historical research on the role of oral literary traditions in earlier periods of Sahelian crisis and reconstruction. Colonial archival sources administrative reports, ethnographic surveys, correspondence between colonial officials and traditional authorities contain significant documentation of griot practices and customary conflict resolution processes, despite the distorting lens of colonial epistemology through which this documentation was produced (J. Vansina, 1985). Historical case analysis identifies specific documented instances of griot-mediated conflict resolution across the region: the resolution of the Bambara-Fulani conflict cycles in 19th-century Mali, the negotiation of grazing rights between Tuareg and Zarma communities in pre-colonial Niger, and the role of royal griots in managing succession crises in Mossi kingdoms (A. Ba and J. Daget, 1955; T. Tamari, 1991).

1.4. Case Studies and Participatory Action Research

The fourth strand involves analysis of 10 to 15 contemporary case studies in which oral literary traditions have contributed to post-conflict peacebuilding or social cohesion in the AES region or comparable Sahelian contexts. Case selection prioritises documented examples where the contribution of oral literary practices to measurable social outcomes reduction of inter-communal tension, restoration of community relationships, increased participation in reconciliation processes can be analysed. Pilot programmes designed in partnership with griot communities and local peacebuilding organisations test oral literature-based reconciliation methodologies in three sites one in each AES country following a participatory action research (PAR) methodology that centres community knowledge-holders as co-designers, co-implementers, and co-evaluators (J. P. Lederach, 1997).

1.5. Linguistic Analysis

The fifth methodological strand addresses the linguistic dimension of oral literary peacebuilding. Discourse analysis of conflict resolution language in oral texts examines how griots and storytellers construct the speech acts of reconciliation apology, forgiveness, commitment to future cooperation, restoration of genealogical dignity in ways that are culturally meaningful and effective. Metaphor analysis reveals the conceptual frameworks through which Sahelian oral traditions understand conflict (as illness, as fire, as disorder requiring cosmic restoration) and the healing processes they propose. Rhetorical analysis examines the specific persuasive strategies employed in griot mediation historical precedent invocation, genealogical appeal, emotional catharsis through praise, public commitment through performance and their effectiveness in different conflict contexts (D. Zahan, 1963; M. Diawara, 1990).

2. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the research across five thematic dimensions, drawing on the documented oral literature corpus, ethnographic interviews with griots and elders, historical case analysis, and the participatory case studies described in the methodology. It begins by establishing the epistemological status of Sahelian oral literary traditions as indigenous conflict resolution science, before examining the griot as a specialised peace practitioner, the function of epics as social cohesion infrastructure, the role of cultural appropriateness in programme effectiveness, and finally the contemporary innovations that keep these traditions alive. Taken together, these findings substantiate the paper's central hypothesis that oral literary traditions offer a culturally legitimate and durable alternative to externally imported reconstruction models.

2.1. Oral Literature as Indigenous Conflict Resolution Science

The most foundational finding of the research concerns the epistemological status of Sahelian oral literary traditions as bodies of empirically developed, socially validated, and intergenerationally transmitted knowledge about conflict management. Analysis of the documented corpus across the three AES countries reveals systematic, sophisticated mechanisms for conflict prevention, de-escalation, and resolution embedded within oral literary forms mechanisms that are constitutive features of these traditions, developed because Sahelian societies required effective tools for managing social tension in conditions of resource scarcity, ethnic diversity, and inter-community competition.

The Sunjata epic, performed across Bambara, Malinke, Soninke, and other Mande-speaking communities in Mali and beyond, illustrates this argument most powerfully. As J. Jansen (2000, p. 15) observes, "the narrative arc of the epic is structured around the principles of reconciliation: former

enemies becoming allies through the recognition of shared interests and values, the sublimation of personal grievance to collective purpose, and the institutionalisation of peace through political structures." Griots who perform this epic in contemporary contexts of inter-communal tension are not offering historical entertainment but are using the narrative as a model and a mirror showing communities in conflict the possibility and the pathway of reconciliation through culturally authoritative historical precedent.

The corpus analysis further reveals a sophisticated taxonomy of conflict resolution functions distributed across different oral literary forms. Epic narratives primarily serve the functions of historical precedent, identity construction, and the modelling of reconciliation at the macro-social level. Proverbs function as condensed ethical maxims that mediators deploy to invoke shared moral frameworks in the heat of dispute (K. Barber, 1991). Praise poetry serves the function of restoring dignity and social honour to parties in conflict whose grievances may be rooted in perceived humiliation or disrespect. Genealogical recitation establishes the relational foundations the shared ancestors, the historical alliances, the intermarriage networks that provide the social infrastructure for reconciliation. These findings are consistent with and extend the framework proposed by T. A. Hale (1998, p. 45), who described the griot as simultaneously "historian, genealogist, praise singer, diplomatic intermediary, and conflict mediator."

2.2. The Griot as a Specialized Peace Practitioner

The ethnographic research with griots reveals a richly textured picture of professional peacebuilding expertise that operates through three distinct but interconnected capacities. The first is positional neutrality: in most Sahelian social systems, the griot belongs to an endogamous occupational caste that stands outside the noble and farmer lineages whose conflicts they mediate (T. Tamari, 1991). This positional outsider status provides griots with a structural neutrality that neither party can claim. The second capacity is historical knowledge and precedent management. Griots are the living repositories of community history they know which families have been in conflict before and how those conflicts were resolved, which alliances have historically bound communities together, and which events of shared suffering provide emotional common ground. The third capacity is performative and emotional. Griot performances create collective emotional experiences catharsis through lamentation, exaltation through praise, solidarity through shared narrative that shift the emotional register of communities in conflict in ways that purely rational deliberation cannot (M. Diawara, 1997). As one Bamako griot interviewed during fieldwork described:

When I perform the genealogy of two families in conflict before their assembled community, I am not simply reciting names. I am reconstructing the web of relationship that existed before

the quarrel I am reminding them who they are to each other, and who they are to the ancestors who are watching.

2.3. *Epics as Social Cohesion Infrastructure*

A particularly significant finding concerns the function of epic narratives as social cohesion infrastructure: shared cultural reference points that transcend ethnic and linguistic boundaries, providing common historical narratives, ethical frameworks, and identity foundations across diverse Sahelian societies. The Sunjata epic is perhaps the clearest example, performed across at least seven major linguistic communities in Mali and across Senegal, Guinea, Gambia, and Burkina Faso (S. Belcher, 1999). Despite variations in detail and emphasis between versions performed by griots of different ethnic communities, the core narrative and its ethical message of reconciliation, coalition, and shared regional identity provides a common cultural currency that community members across ethnic boundaries can use to communicate about shared values and commitments.

The Manden Charter, transmitted through oral performance for nearly eight centuries, is particularly significant in this regard. Its provisions prohibitions on the killing of innocents, on enslavement based on false pretexts, on the destruction of food sources constitute an indigenous human rights framework transmitted through oral literary tradition rather than written law (C. Ndiaye, 2014; UNESCO, 2010). The research also documents the peacebuilding functions of less widely known epic traditions: the Wagadu epic of the Soninke, the Silâmaka and Poullôri epics of the Fulani (C. Seydou, 1972), and the Tuareg epic traditions narrating desert crossing, resource negotiation, and inter-tribal alliance formation (M. Ag Erless, 2006).

2.4. *Cultural Appropriateness as a Factor of Effectiveness*

The case study analysis provides consistent evidence that reconciliation and reconstruction programmes incorporating oral literary traditions achieve higher levels of community participation, greater legitimacy in the eyes of participants, and more durable outcomes than programmes based exclusively on externally imported models. Analysis of fifteen case studies spanning the three AES countries and covering the period 2000 to 2025 identifies three mechanisms through which cultural appropriateness enhances effectiveness.

The first mechanism is accessibility. Oral literary processes conducted in community languages, employing familiar performance forms and cultural references, are accessible to populations including women, elders, rural dwellers, and those with limited formal education systematically excluded from formal reconciliation processes (A. Ly, 2016). The second mechanism is emotional authenticity: participants in oral literary reconciliation processes consistently report deeper emotional engagement and greater willingness to express genuine feelings of grief, regret, and desire for

reconciliation. The third mechanism is spiritual integration. Sahelian worldviews typically understand conflict as having both material and spiritual dimensions disputes between living community members exist in relationship with the community of ancestors, with spiritual forces, and with cosmological order. Oral literary reconciliation ceremonies that invoke ancestral authority and restore genealogical dignity address dimensions of conflict that secular, material processes leave unaddressed (D. Zahan, 1974).

2.5. Contemporary Perspectives: Innovation and Continuity

A final dimension of the research results concerns the dynamic, innovative character of contemporary oral literary traditions in the AES countries. Analysis of contemporary Malian and Burkinabè musicians working in the traditions of West African kora music, balafon composition, and griot vocal poetry reveals works that explicitly address the jihadist violence, military coups, and social fragmentation of the 2012–2025 crisis period, using traditional musical and poetic forms to process collective trauma, critique political failure, and articulate visions of reconciled futures. These contemporary artists occupy the same social function as their historical predecessors speaking truth to power, giving voice to community suffering, and imagining paths toward healing while adapting their media and messages to contemporary audiences reached through radio, social media, and live performance.

The research also documents innovative institutional uses of oral literary heritage. Several NGOs operating in Mali and Burkina Faso have developed programmes that employ griots as community peacebuilding facilitators training them in human rights principles and conflict mediation techniques while drawing on their traditional authority and performative skills. The results reported from these programmes higher community participation, greater durability of agreements, and stronger community ownership of reconciliation outcomes provide practical evidence for the effectiveness claims advanced in the research's theoretical framework (A. Coulibaly, 2014; D. Brehima, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This paper has argued that the oral literary traditions of the AES Sahel States griot narratives, epic poetry cycles, proverbs, praise poetry, genealogical recitations, and communal storytelling constitute sophisticated indigenous sciences of conflict resolution, social cohesion, and community healing whose systematic engagement is essential for durable peace and genuine national reconstruction in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The argument is grounded in documentary analysis of oral corpora, ethnographic research with griot practitioners, historical case analysis, and applied case studies

demonstrating the superior effectiveness of culturally appropriate oral literary approaches compared with externally imported peacebuilding frameworks.

Four principal conclusions emerge from the research. First, oral literary traditions are not peripheral cultural resources. They are central peacebuilding infrastructure. They contain the tools that externally derived transitional justice and reconciliation frameworks systematically lack. These tools include historical precedent, genealogical witness, emotional catharsis, spiritual integration, and multilingual accessibility. Second, the griot institution represents a body of specialised peacebuilding expertise. Its recognition, support, and integration into formal reconstruction frameworks would dramatically increase the cultural legitimacy and community ownership of peacebuilding processes. Third, epic narratives function as shared social cohesion infrastructure. They transcend ethnic boundaries. They provide common cultural references, ethical frameworks, and identity foundations. States have struggled to generate these through formal nation-building measures alone. Fourth, the most effective contemporary peacebuilding interventions in the AES region combine oral literary approaches with rights-based principles and institutional support. They do not treat traditional and modern frameworks as mutually exclusive alternatives.

The policy recommendations that follow from this research are addressed to three audiences. For AES governments: recognise oral literary heritage as a strategic resource for national reconstruction; establish and fund griot peacebuilding networks with mandates to serve inter-communal mediation functions; integrate oral literary content and multilingual approaches into school curricula; and support radio and media programming in Sahelian languages that broadcasts oral traditions promoting social cohesion. For international organisations and donors: redirect resources toward community-controlled, oral literary-based processes; fund systematic documentation, training, and institutional support for griot peacebuilding practice; and commission independent evaluations comparing the outcomes of oral literary approaches with conventional transitional justice mechanisms. For universities and research laboratories in the AES region, including the Laboratoires LAReLSo and LaRMA: continue and expand systematic research on oral literary traditions as indigenous knowledge systems; develop curricula and training programmes for the academic study of oral literature as a peacebuilding science; and build research partnerships with griot communities that honour knowledge-holders as intellectual collaborators.

The peace that the AES countries urgently need cannot be imported. It must be built from within, from the resources that Sahelian societies have developed across centuries of navigating crisis and renewal. The oral literary traditions examined in this paper are among the most powerful of those resources and their time, in the era of the Alliance of Sahel States, has come.

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