TEMNE DIVINATION:

THE MANAGEMENT OF SECRECY AND REVELATION

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ABSTRACT

Divination is approached as a means of defining and
redefining people, events and cosmological beliefs through
the management of agreement. Historically, the introduction
of Islam and the assimilation of Manding and Fula 'strangers'
into influential positions among the Temne was facilitated
by Muslim diviners and charm-makers. In Temne thought, power
and truth come primarily from outside the social realm and
are channelled and controlled through the selective use of
secrecy. Distinctions between the principal social cate-
gories, especially those of men and women, are also main-
tained through areas of secrecy. However, since secrecy
can also conceal dangerous forces, particularly those of
witchcraft and adultery, it is regarded as a potential threat
as well as a necessity. Divination brings the hidden into
the open, but the amount that it reveals is determined by
two factors. Firstly, the numerous methods of divination
used by the Temne are divided into those which are private,
semi-private and public, the majority being private.
Secondly, divinatory speech varies in its degree of
specificity; in private divination diviners use restricted
codes, while in public divination they use elaborated codes.
Being mainly private, divination is regarded with consi-
derable suspicion as well as respect. Diviners are very
ambivalent figures, admired for their vision, power and
access to 'truth', but suspected of using this power for
destructive purposes through witchcraft and the use of bad
medicine. Women form the majority of diviners' clients and
are themselves regarded with ambivalence by men, who see
them as necessary and valuable, particularly as childbearers,
but also as potentially destructive through their possible
adultery. Men say that women are excessively secretive,
but women regard their secrecy positively and see it as
essential for their protection. Diviners diagnose problems
in terms of breaches in relations between people and between
people and spirits or ancestors. By controlling what is
revealed and what remains concealed, divination is able to
either maintain or threaten the secrecy marking the division
between men and women and between other social and cosmolo-
gical categories, thus managing the definition of 'reality'
in particular situations.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Part One: Anthropological Approaches to Divination

Although there have been a great many descriptions of divination in the literature, anthropological theories of divination have been relatively few. This is surprising when one considers the wealth of anthropological analyses of witchcraft or of spirit-possession, for example. The following theories of divination have been presented by anthropologists.

1.   Cathartic

A common approach argues for a cathartic function: divination is seen as a way of coping psychologically with the problems and dangers of an unpredictable environment in the absence of any adequate empirical means of doing so. This has long been recognized as an outdated explanation of ritual, but it often seems to be thrown into articles on divination as a matter of course:

> In reply to the question as to what useful purpose
> is served by recourse to magic and religion as
> fortifications against the elements and misfortune,
> one can only answer that lacking other means of
> control, such as is often afforded men in civilized
> societies, native peoples fall back on their oracles.
> This gives them hope and courage and keeps them from
> being paralyzed by inaction.[1]

As Evans-Pritchard points out with respect to ritual in general,[2] how could this alleged cathartic function be proved? Moreover, while it is quite likely that discovering the agent of sickness would reduce anxiety, since steps

could now be taken towards remedial action, it is unwarranted
to turn this effect into a causal theory. Not all situations
in which diviners are consulted are associated with stress
(for instance, the choosing of a child's name in *Afa* divi-
nation among the Ibo[3]), and it is certainly not the case
that all clients who consult diviners are in a state of
anxiety.

2. Cognitive

Lienhardt and Fortes both present cognitive approaches
to divination. Lienhardt's[4] explanation of the diagnosis of
affliction by the Dinka diviner focuses on the sufferer's
experience of his situation. Among the Dinka, sickness, like
affective states, is externalized so that man is seen as the
passive subject acted upon by the spiritual power who is the
active agent. The diviner is called in because the afflicted
person has not been able to dissociate this active subject
from his own suffering, the diviner's task being to bring
about a 'division in experience' without which no remedial
action is possible. Through divination, experience is
structured and put into the appropriate conceptual categories.
It is a pity that this analysis forms such a small part of
Lienhardt's book, and is not developed more fully with regard
to other aspects of Dinka divination.

Fortes[5] explains divination in terms of the dis-
tinction between 'the occult' and 'the patent' as different
aspects of reality.[6] The specialized technique of divination
and the specialized selection, training and public initi-
ation ceremony that the diviner may have to go through are

all expressions of the principle that the occult and the
patent cannot and must not be known by the same means. The
stress on the 'objective' verifiability of divinatory ver-
dicts through further tests and ordeals and the second opinion
of another diviner is crucial because deception must be
eliminated as a possible explanation of the verdict:

> The conceptual curtain between knowledge of the
> occult and knowledge of the patent must be kept
> in place.[7]

Although this is a persuasive point, it is perhaps
overstated by Fortes. It is true ideally that divinatory
verdicts must be objectively verifiable from the viewpoint
of those who use them, but one should also not overlook the
fact that empirically, differential use is made of confirma-
tory tests. For example, although questions are put to the
Zande poison oracle in a negative form in a second test to
confirm or refute the first verdict, Evans-Pritchard writes:

> Azande like to receive a favourable prediction in
> the first test and to put off the corroborative
> test that may contradict it for as long as
> possible.[8]

The reverse is presumably also true, in that if the first
verdict were an adverse one they would be much more eager to
get a possible contradiction to it from the second test.

It is even the case that sometimes, although people
are well aware that a verdict is rigged, they will accept it
provided that the issue is of minor importance. The Zande
makama oracle, which reveals which members of the audience
at a seance are witches, is known to be deliberately

manipulated by witch-doctors and is regarded as rather a joke.[9] However,

> when one who has taken the peg is unable to tug
> it away, the force of the demonstration upon the
> audience is clear enough.[10]

The dramatic quality of this oracular verdict wins out over objective verifiability here.

The occult/patent division outlined by Fortes is undoubtedly a crucial principle on which emic conceptions of divination are based. When divinatory methods are used in actual social situations, however, their objective verifiability is only one of the variables (albeit a very important one) influencing the reaching of a state of agreement between the diviner, the clients and the audience. Other variables, as the Azande examples above show, are the favourability or unfavourability of the verdict and the drama of the divinatory performance.

3. Dramatic

The latter, the dramatic quality of divinatory ritual, is championed by Beattie. He describes the strongly theatrical aspect of the seance of a Nyoro spirit medium, whose dress and behaviour are strikingly different from those of everyday life, and argues that divination is not a would-be practical technique but an expressive performance:

> Like all magic, divination is a rite: it is not
> just a way of doing something; it is also, and
> essentially, a way of saying something.[11]

Beattie suggests that what are expressed, and thereby

relieved, are

> some of the interpersonal stresses and strains
> which are inseparable from life in a small-
> scale community.[12]

This cathartic addition to the dramatic theory, however, like
the cathartic theory mentioned above, is impossible to
either prove or disprove. Societies which have diviners
and mediums have plenty of interpersonal stresses and strains,
and how would one go about finding out if they have less
than societies which have fewer or no diviners?

Leaving this question aside, Beattie's approach is
valuable in that it points out that ritual is, to a great
extent, an end in itself. Like Fortes, though, he overstates
his case. He argues that the drama and expressiveness of
ritual underlies the latter's instrumental efficacy,[13] as
exemplified in the use of the Zande *makama* oracle mentioned
above and in the fact that many Nyoro (including mediums
themselves) say that mediums are not really possessed by
spirits,[14] yet still presumably continue going to seances.
However, a divinatory session may sometimes involve little
or no drama. In the private corroboration of an oracle
operator's verdict by a Lugbara elder with his own rubbing-
stick,[15] for example, it is clearly the elder's authority
and prestige rather than his dramatic performance that give
weight to the agreed-upon verdict.

4. Functionalist

In contrast to Beattie, Park[16] presents a functional
analysis of divination. Pleading for a recognition of

divination's social implications, he gives various examples of its important legitimating function. *Ifa* divination, for instance, is employed in the selection of a house site, and since the Yoruba lineage unit is defined both by agnatic descent and by common residence, the diviner's verdict will have an important effect on social structure. If the oracle chooses a site away from the lineage unit's compound:

> the diviner in effect provides a legitimating
> sanction upon a process of structural realignment
> which, depending as it does upon a voluntary act,
> would be difficult indeed to sanction in any
> remarkably different manner.[17]

This argument is echoed by Shelton[18] and Fortes[19] in their studies of *Afa* divination among the Ibo and of Tallensi divination respectively. Yet little attention has been paid to Park's concluding paragraphs, which I feel contain the most interesting implications of the article. He argues:

> ...where formal legitimation only is concerned
> the movement is simply, as in a lower court of
> law, from 'norm' to 'case'. But as in a higher
> court the movement has a tendency to reverse, and
> the 'case' from providing precedent comes to
> modify the 'norm', so I think we should regard
> divination as a two-edged instrument of social
> control.[20]

Divination, in other words, is capable not only of redefining people and groups in accordance with already established principles (repetitive change), but also in some cases of altering these principles themselves (radical change).

5. Ethno-analytical

Probably the fullest and most interesting anthropological analysis of divination is Turner's[21] study of

divination among the Ndembu.   Interestingly, Turner also
links divination with drama, but in a rather different way
from Beattie. Ndembu divination is a stage in what Turner
calls a 'social drama', part of a 'ritual mechanism of
redress' beginning with the occurrence of some misfortune
(such as unusual death, illness, reproductive troubles,
bad luck in hunting), seen as the result of underlying social
conflicts, which prompts the group to consult a diviner,
and ending with the remedial ritual that the diviner pre-
scribes. All the criteria of drama - the playing of roles,
the use of rhetoric, some sense of audience, acceptance of
a single set of rules and the expectation of the progression
of events towards a climax - are present in this ritual
sequence. Turner argues that a social drama is most likely
to be found in what Gluckman has called 'repetitive' social
systems, in which axiomatic values remain unquestioned and
the 'conflict' around which the redressive ritual sequence
is centered is contained within this cycle, at the end of
which an antecedent equilibrium is felt to have been restored.

The role of the diviner in this process is central.
Misfortune is perceived and expressed among the Ndembu
through the idiom of beliefs about sorcery, witchcraft and
the punitive action of ancestor spirits, all of which are
believed to result from conflict between kin and neighbours.
The diviner proceeds, therefore, by gradually trying to
discover the current social tensions in the relevant politi-
cal unit (of which he is not a member). He is aided in
this partly by his knowledge of the categories of people
who typically make up a village (for example, the victim's

matrilineal and patrilateral kin, affines and unrelated
neighbours), partly through the gossip of travellers and
sometimes his memory of previous consultations, and partly
through trying to elicit clues from his clients (who are
expected to conceal as much as possible from him):

> diviners have learned by experience - their own
> and their society's, incorporated in divinatory
> ritual - to reduce their social system to a few
> basic principles and factors, and to juggle with
> these until they arrive at a decision that accords
> with the views of the majority of their clients
> at any given consultation.[22]

Through the indications the diviner gets of the clea-
vages in his client's village and his knowledge of the
structure of Ndembu society and its moral system, he forms
a hypothesis which allows him to interpret the particular
configuration of symbolic objects which appears when he
tosses his divining basket. If this is agreed upon by his
clients, it then becomes the foundation for future hypo-
theses. On the basis of the diagnosis he thus arrives at
he finally decides on the appropriate remedial ritual, the
performance of which will require (overtly, at least) the
healing of breaches and the coming together of those con-
cerned as a community.

Turner sees this process as the rectification of dis-
turbed social relations and the upholding of morality.
Although one might argue that there is ultimately no way
of knowing whether or not conflict is really healed through
ritual, it is certainly the case that the values of social
harmony and kinship unity are strikingly restated, as are
other aspects of Ndembu morality, through the dramatic

accusation or exoneration of individuals in terms of a
system of moral norms. Most interesting, however, is
Turner's description of the Ndembu diviner as a 'social
analyst', for this leads us to perceive the diviner as
probably the closest example one could find of an indigenous
social anthropologist - except of course that his analysis
of social structure and his discovery of his cleavages
operates within the confines of his society's assumptions,
concepts and beliefs. Since many other writers[23] have
reported that diviners' verdicts are based on a knowledge of
social structure and current events, it seems likely that
the diviner's role as social analyst is a widespread one.

Reality as Agreement

It is proposed that the interpretations discussed
above would have greater applicability and elegance if seen
as corollaries of a single, broader interpretation of divina-
tion as a means by which social agreement is managed and
social and cosmological reality defined. Since this inter-
pretation is derived largely from the writings of Lienhardt
and Finnegan, a brief outline of their relevant work is in
order.

The argument stressed by Lienhardt in the second part
of <u>Divinity and Experience: The Religion of the Dinka</u>[24] is
that rituals are not simply instrumental techniques; they
are also, and importantly, means of controlling the experi-
ence of the participants. This control is achieved both
through the symbolic action of a ritual and through the
words that may accompany it. Both words and action are,

Lienhardt argues, external expressions of the internal
mental intention of those performing the ritual, and
through such expression the experience of the community
attending it is transformed to align with this intention.

Integral parts of Dinka sacrifice, for instance, are
speeches and invocations, which are given more attention than
the physical death of the victim:

> Without speech, or at least an intention which
> could be verbalized, there is no sacrifice.[25]

The speeches at sacrifices describe the relevant incidents
as the Dinka intend them to be, denying quarrels with
relatives and recreating the situation so as to affirm what
the Dinka see as the 'truth' of kinship unity, which is
further symbolized by the unity of the sacrificial victim.
The community repeats the words and agrees to their truth,
so that

> It seems that eventually all those taking part
> are living only in a situation which the ceremony
> has gradually created.[26]

The essential truth as the Dinka see it is thus made real
through communal ritual.

'Truth' here is mainly a socially constituted truth:

> in Dinka thought it is this kind of truth which
> is arrived at and stated by a *communal* intention.[27]

Lienhardt mentions that in ordinary secular disputes, too,
the disputants attempt to present their cases at length to
any gathering of people who are prepared to listen, in order

to arrive at a common, public agreement which will be the
'truth' of that situation. Thus in both communal ritual and
secular disputes, the truth of the situation is created by
managing the public agreement of the participants. Reality
here is thus largely formed by agreement.

Finnegan[28] uses the philosopher J. L. Austin's notion
of 'performative utterances'[29] to explain how the Limba, like
the Dinka, use speech to create a situation, this time in a
formal and sometimes even a legal sense. In Western society
we use certain words not only to describe or express, but
also to do something in the external world, as in the words
'I do' in the marriage ceremony. The Limba similarly give
speech acts such as accepting, announcing, pleading, thanking,
greeting and saying goodbye a performative force in order to
make a contract or to define or maintain a social relation-
ship. The term, 'I accept', for example, is used to formally
seal a contract and, when a gift is given, to acknowledge
the relationship between giver and recipient. The act of
thanking is less specific, but is used to formally acknow-
ledge, as publicly as possible, a state of indebtedness or
an interdependent relationship.

In this way, 'performative utterances' define and re-
define the social world. Like Dinka ritual, these formal
speech acts can bring about a change in experience: although,
for instance, an internal feeling of gratitude is not
required for the act of thanking, the Limba say that the
act in itself 'makes your heart good'.[30] Just as for the
Dinka, the 'truth' of a situation is created by a public
intention and agreement, performative utterances among the

Limba seem to be an important means of maintaining this social agreement in ordinary situations and of manipulating it in disputes.[31]   Divination is another such means:

> Accusations, denials, the findings of divination,
> change the public definitions of persons. In all
> these areas where belief and action are closely
> related, where utterances define situations and
> reclassify them, the notion of 'doing things with
> words' may provide fresh insights.[32]

The verdicts of divination create a state of public consensus or agreement on the validity of certain changes that take place within the community: this is divination's legitimating function, described by Park. In order to perform this function, divination itself has to be an agreed-on technique for revealing otherwise inaccessible 'truth'; hence the specialized methods and training of diviners and the importance of the 'objectivity' of divination stressed by Fortes. Furthermore, incidents are interpreted in accordance with culturally shared assumptions, stereotypes and cosmological ideas, thereby reinforcing the agreed conceptions of society and of reality in general (Lienhardt and Turner). Finally, verdicts are reached through the diviner and his clients at least tacitly agreeing on the choice of one among several possible interpretations. A number of variables can influence this: the status of the method, of the diviner and of the clients, the acceptability of the verdict, the use of argument and rhetoric, the diviner's use of drama (Beattie) and his understanding of and ability to 'juggle' with the basic principles of his social system (Turner).

To summarise this process, ideally in divination a

primary agreement is reached between diviner and client(s), followed or accompanied by a secondary agreement among the wider group of kin and neighbours if the latter are affected by the decision. For the primary and secondary agreements to be reached, the interpretation of incidents must not deviate too far from accepted conceptual patterns.

The term 'agreement' is used in two senses here. Firstly, it means a fairly consciously-made decision, as when diviner and clients agree on the verdict reached, and when the community later (or simultaneously) assents to it. Secondly, it means the largely unexamined mutual understanding of the way reality is construed; for example a society's commonly accepted norms, beliefs and classifications, from which diviners' interpretations are drawn.

These two meanings of agreement are related. In stable conditions an agreement such as that reached in divination would usually be in accordance with, and would therefore strengthen, 'agreement' in the wider sense of a society's acceptance of norms and beliefs. In situations of change, however, divinatory decisions could introduce innovations into existing belief systems. To use Park's analogy,[33] the usual movement from 'norm' to 'case' could reverse, becoming a movement from 'case' to 'norm'.

Through the successful management of agreement, the participants in divination create the situation described: individually they are likely to have different and often uncertain opinions about the relevant incidents, but as a particular interpretation emerges, their experience of the

situation shifts in accordance with this such that the
emerging interpretation becomes 'what *really* happened'. On
the basis of this, the verdict is then used to effect real
changes in the social world. In both stages, reality is
formed out of agreement.

Randomness in Methods of Divination

It could be argued that the ability of either the
diviner or the clients to manage the agreement of the par-
ticipants in divination will be considerably affected by
the randomness of the technique used. Methods of divination
form a continuum in this respect. At one extreme are found
the most random and mechanical techniques, such as the
Zande poison oracle in which a poisoned fowl will die in
approximately fifty per cent of cases, and *Ifa* divination,
in which palm nuts are thrown or a divining chain is cast
so that the objects fall in a random 'heads or tails' pattern.
At the other extreme are easily manipulable techniques such
as the Zande rubbing-board oracle, and spirit-mediumship,
which is unconstrained by mechanical devices altogether.

However, these two extremes are not as far apart as
this might imply. In practice, the use of random devices
does not lead to chance conclusions. For example, every
movement of the fowl under the influence of the Zande poison
oracle is significant to the trained eye, such that it is
often possible to modify the answer given by the oracle in
killing or sparing it. In addition, if a man wishes strongly
to do something he will most likely put his question to the
oracle in terms which make the desired action contingent

upon certain conditions, which can then be altered for
another attempt if the oracle answers adversely.[34] The
randomness of the *Ifa* oracle is also counterbalanced by the
several different verses which belong to each configura-
tion, of which one is chosen as the answer to the client's
problem. Since each figure has verses bearing on a variety
of problems, some specific, some more general, it is not
too difficult to arrive at an answer that the client will
agree with:

> It is more of a shotgun than a blanket technique, [35]
> but the blanket covers up when the shotgun misses.

Divination among the Kalanga of Botswana, described
by Werbner,[36] likewise involves the use of a random tech-
nique, yet the diviner has considerable scope for
interpretation. Through the use of stylized rhetoric and
tightly reasoned arguments, he manipulates the meaning of
the configuration arrived at so that it fits both immediate
events and matters of personal history. To do this he may
bring some implications of the verse belonging to the con-
figuration to the fore by deleting part of it, and he may
abridge or expand it to make it more relevant. Werbner
argues:

> divination can hardly give random decisions,
> because that would require discontinuity of
> evidence from the viewpoint of the people who
> divine; metaphors would have to be restricted,
> without mutual cross-reference; and outcomes
> would have to have a constant discreteness.[37]

Clearly, a random method can still allow diviners and/or
their clients plenty of opportunity to influence the ver-
dict and its acceptance by the group.

At the other end of the scale, often (though not always) those techniques that are most easily manipulated rank lowest in the hierarchy of divinatory methods, such as the Zande rubbing-board oracle[38] and the oracle of the snail shell among the Bene Lulua.[39] This means they have less power to generate agreement among those who use them, so that the conclusions they arrive at may simply be belittled if they are inconvenient.

It is misleading, however, at least in most cases, to present diviners and their clients as deliberate manipulators. They accept the agreed-upon beliefs and world-view of their society, and usually see divination as a genuine means of communication with the sacred.[40] Evans-Pritchard stresses this with regard to the leeway the Azande have in the questioning of their poison oracle:

> In all this Azande are not employing trickery ...
> Azande cannot go beyond the limits set by their
> culture and invent notions, but within these
> limits human behaviour is not rigidly determined
> by custom ...[41]

To take another example, the Bene Lulua diviner consciously realises that she is aided by perceptual cues in the client's facial expression. Yet although these are the terms in which we would describe it, these cues are transformed for the Lulua diviner by the system of ancestor beliefs into a vehicle for the revelation of the sacred, because according to those beliefs, 'ancestors will make people talk with their eyes'.[42]

Community Consensus

Thus the randomness of a technique does not limit as much as one would imagine the ability of diviners or their clients to manage the agreement of those present and influence the divinatory verdict. However, if the outcome of the divination significantly affects the wider group, the primary agreement of those present at the divination must be accompanied or followed by the secondary agreement of the community.

In some cases, this does not present much of a problem, since those who have authority in the community are often precisely those who have control over divination. Lugbara elders have a virtual monopoly on the right to consult oracles,[43] and can therefore influence oracle operators' verdicts so as to reinforce their own authority. Similarly, it is only the older, married men in Zande society who normally have the wealth and experience to consult the poison oracle. Evans-Pritchard writes:

> Control over the poison oracle by the older men
> gives them great power over their juniors and is
> one of the main sources of their prestige ...[44]

A diviner's verdict is, in any case, much more readily agreed to by the community if it validates the community's existing structure, institutions and moral code. Hence the diviner often has a role which maintains the prevailing order. Shelton[45] describes, for example, how *Afa* divination among the Ibo re-establishes the legitimacy of customary law and of the social order in general, especially with regard to gerontocracy, which depends strongly upon ancestor

beliefs and ritual.

Another instance is brought out in Park's illuminating analysis of Hsu's material on divination in peasant China.[46] Diviners are consulted to determine when a corpse should be buried, in a situation where the length of the dead man's stay as a corpse with his family is an indication of the latter's regard for him. Significantly, whereas poorer families divined only the hour of the burial, the diviner's verdict might delay the burial of a man from a wealthy family for up to two months, thereby reinforcing the existing divisions of wealth and status:

> The diviner ... set the worth of a family by thus timing its funeral.[47]

This conservative role may sometimes be so strong that divination serves as a mechanism for excluding innovation. The Kalabari, studied by Horton,[48] have four traditional categories of spirit possession, two of which (*oru seki* and *oru bibi n'ekwen*) are of central importance in upholding traditional values, the other two (*eremin' oru kuro* and possession during masquerade dancing) inclining far more strongly towards innovation. Whereas it is the individual who has the last word as to whether or not he or she belongs in the latter two categories, it is diviners who have the greatest power in assigning individuals to the first two categories, thus insulating traditional Kalabari religion from innovatory elements.

The order that the diviner thus maintains, however, is not static. He is inevitably involved in legitimizing

recurrent social change: the constant realignment of
individuals and groups within society in response to
economic, political and ecological changes. Since this
realignment is likely to be associated with disturbances
in social relations, the 'secondary agreement' in which the
community involved assents to the diviner's verdict is often
complicated by the division of the community into rival
factions.

Divination is therefore frequently a battleground on
which competition for authority takes place. When a Lugbara
oracle operator diagnoses the cause of sickness as 'ghost
invocation', in which a lineage or household head is believed
to have invoked the ancestors to punish a disrespectful
dependant, this backs the authority of the elder with that
of the ancestors.[49] Since an elder or would-be elder bene-
fits in this way by being named as invoker in a case of
sickness, and since the oracle operator's verdict is largely
influenced by the consultant's questions,[50] conflicts of
authority within the lineage system are reflected in the
oracle's statements:

> The oracular interpretation of the situation is,
> of course, the vital part of the process, and ...
> there is usually considerable competition as to
> who shall be chosen to consult the oracles. Here,
> however, the authority-holders have both the
> right and the duty to consult them.[51]

Despite this, a rival would-be elder who wishes to break
off from the lineage as head of his own segment is still
able to rush off to consult the oracle when one of his own
dependants falls ill, thus strengthening his own position
by being named as invoker.

Likewise, Yao divination plays a central part in rivalry over the headmanship.[52] This rivalry takes the form of sorcery accusations and counter-accusations which are validated or invalidated by the diviner's verdict, the latter again being influenced by the consultant's own sus-picions.[53]

A similar process can be discerned in the use of the alien 'witchfinder' by competing groups in Tonga communities. It is the witchfinder's task to discover the scorcerers, but since the people of the community have already decided through gossip and private divinations who their sorcerers are, the witchfinder is really hired by the community to sanction its decision.[54] Among those suspected of sorcery are those of power and wealth in Tonga society, including leaders of rival factions, since it is believed that they may have used sorcery to reach their influential position. Thus by accusing some political rivals and exonerating others, the witchfinder makes significant decisions for Tonga politics.[55]

In these examples, divination, and the social consensus its verdicts are hoped to bring about, are used as fairly passive political resources by those who compete for power and authority. In situations of radical social change, however, the diviner's role often becomes far more active.

Boundaries between different socio-cultural groups are rarely clear and distinct: cultural differences shade into each other, kinship networks overlap and political and economic ties coincide with both. Rather, such boundaries

are conceptual, and are not made real until they are defined
by social agreement, through, for instance, political
opposition or ritual occasion. Parkin[56] has shown that
through the phenomena of innovation and cultural borrowing
in a changing social situation, these group boundaries shift.
Since diviners' verdicts are sanctioned by a greater-than-
human authority, and are thus able to create social agreement,
and since in most cases diviners and/or their clients are
able to influence these verdicts, divination is often an
important vehicle for innovation.

Many have described this innovatory role. Nadel des-
cribes the shaman[57] among the Nyima as 'a social reformer
who need fear no inertia, disbelief or resentment',[58] and
states that Arab assimilation is most strongly pronounced
in those communities which had shamans. Similarly, accor-
ding to Berreman,[59] shamans in Pahari village religion are
religious policy-makers who have considerable scope to make
creative diagnoses. Horton[60] writes that in the category
of Kalabari spirit-possession called *eremin' oru kuro*, which
is associated with the minor water spirits who are respon-
sible for the actions of innovators, the *oru kuro* medium
is likewise an important channel for cultural borrowing and
change. In the 1890s, for instance, a famous medium,
inspired by her spirit, was telling people that they should
all join the church because the day of the Kalabari spirits
was over.

Parkin's study of ritual syncretism among Giriama
diviners[61] places diviners' innovatory actions in a wider

context of economic and political change. The emergence of
a new social category of entrepreneurial farmers in tradi-
tional Giriama society was accompanied by a general increase
of wealth and a growing use of cash in many transactions,
which in turn provided greater opportunities for diviners
and medicine-men. The resulting competition between these
ritual practitioners led to their adoption of certain
'Islamic' objects and techniques, believed to be more
powerful, in order to gain prestige and thereby attract
more custom. A symbiotic relationship emerged between them
and the enterprising farmers whereby the former would
diagnose the latter, in cases of sickness, as being afflicted
by 'Islamic spirits'. As a result, these entrepreneurs were
obliged to observe Islamic prohibitions on drinking alcohol
and eating meat that had not been ritually killed by
fellow-Muslims. This meant that their abstention from
drinking palm-wine and eating with their neighbours was
legitimized, such that certain constricting traditional
obligations could be avoided and the chance of being poisoned
or ensorcelled by jealous relatives was reduced. Their
position on the margins of traditional Giriama society was
thus sanctioned and their entrepreneurial pursuits thereby
facilitated.

The diviners in question were successful in obtaining
their community's agreement both for their innovatory dia-
gnoses of sick enterprising farmers and for their borrowing
of certain elements of Islam which made these diagnoses
possible. Under such conditions, in which the traditional
authority of the community is altering, divination can play

a major part in the redefinition of individuals, social
groups, cosmology and even the culture as a whole, through
its influence on social agreement.

However, diviners' innovations are always subject to
some constraint by the community. Too radical a departure
from tradition all at once would not be tolerated: thus
innovatory Pahari shamans are still bound by their clients'
expectations,[62] and although Giriama diviners adopted
Islamic techniques, they did not become Muslim. Even in
their innovatory role, diviners have to work within their
community's agreement in order to change it.

To sum up the first part of this chapter, after a
review of major anthropological theories of divination, an
approach is suggested which focuses on the definitional
role of divination. Some of the variables shaping this role
- the randomness of methods of divination, the prevailing
pattern of authority and beliefs, and the presence of
social change - have been explored. It is with these factors
in mind that Temne divination and diviners will be examined.
As we shall see, a crucial factor influencing diviners'
abilities to manage agreement and to define and re-define
people and situations are the contrary principles of secrecy
and publicity in Temne society and thought. First, however,
a brief outline of the ecological, economic, social and
historical background will be given in the second part of
this chapter.

Part Two: The Temne People

Ecology, Economy and Social Organization

The Temne, with a population of 648 931,[63] are the second largest ethnic group in Sierra Leone, and occupy the north-western part of the country. Temneland (*ro-Themnɛ*)[64] is bounded to the south by the Temne's traditional rivals, the Mende, while the Limba, the Loko and the Kuranko are their neighbours to the north and the Kono are their neighbours to the east. The Temne language (*ka -Thèmnɛ*) is classed in the Mel language group and is related to Baga, Landuma, Sherbro-Bullom, Kissi and Gola.[65]

The landscape of the Bombali and Tonkolili Districts, in which most of the present fieldwork was carried out, consists of seasonally flooded alluvial plains or 'boli-lands' and gentle hilly areas dotted with small valley swamps. Savannah vegetation predominates, the area being covered mainly by low bush as a result of the practice of shifting cultivation. Climactically, there is a marked contrast between the dry season and the rainy season. Traditional agriculture is well adapted to these conditions and the pattern of social and religious activities follows the seasonal alternation.

The focus of economic activity is the cultivation of upland rice under a bush fallow system. Farm land is held collectively by the patrilineage (*ma-kas*) and controlled by the lineage head, but Temne say that the real owners are the ancestors (*aŋ-bakʈ*), to whom sacrifices are made at bush clearing and harvesting time. There is, additionally,

some swamp-rice farming and cultivation of secondary crops
such as cassava, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, beans, pepper,
okra, onions and tomatoes. The small amount of cash-
cropping practiced is based mainly on the production of
palm kernels, groundnuts, oranges, tobacco, coffee and sur-
plus rice. Land pressure and the consequent bush fallow
decrease in some areas, and labour shortage due to out-
migration to Freetown and the diamond district in others,
have both led to poorer harvests which, coupled with the
demand for cash for taxes, school fees, clothes, house
improvements, etc., have resulted in increased rural indebted-
ness.

Social organization centres around the Paramount Chief
and subchiefs, the secret societies, the village and the
lineage (aŋ-bɔŋsɔ). Lineages tend to be fairly shallow,
and those with a depth of more than five generations are
rare. The patrilineage (ma-kảs) is more important jurally
than the matrilineage (ma-karȃ), since it is the former
which governs residence and the allocation of land and
labour. Marriage, moreover, is traditionally an alliance
between exogamous patrilineages. Residence is virilocal,
entailing considerable movement of women. Marriage is,
ideally, polygynous, and the Temne household usually con-
sists of the male household head and his wives and children,
often together with his brother or adult son and their
immediate family.[66]

History

In the late 14th. or early 15th. century, when the expansion of the Mali empire had caused widespread movements of peoples, the Temne migrated to Sierra Leone.[67] According to Temne oral tradition, they came 'from Futa', the Futa Djallon in present-day Guinée. They settled among the Bullom and Limba[68] and asserted themselves as the politically dominant group.

From the 16th. century onwards the Temne were themselves repeatedly invaded or influenced by predominantly Mande peoples from the north and east: by the Mane invaders in the 16th. century, by mainly Dyula and Mandinka migrants in the 18th. century and by Susu, Mandinka and Fula peoples in the late 18th. and early 19th. centuries. These groups had brought increasing Islamization to the Temne since the middle of the 18th. century. Wylie, however, stresses the 'remarkable adaptability'[69] of the Temne to new social forces:

> At an early date the Temne successfully
> adapted to the alien influences of invaders,
> assimilated intruders, borrowed from their
> neighbours and forged workable amalgams in
> politics which combined ancient customs,
> new structures and elaborate hierarchies.[70]

The Temne, then, have a long history of many centuries of successful assimilation of outside forces, with whom they intermarried and traded, whose political institutions they adapted to their own advantage and whose religion they selectively borrowed from and synthesized with their own traditions. Diviners played an important part in this

assimilation,[71] and we will see in Chapter Four that the
balance between tradition and the innovatory use of
'foreign' elements is manifest in different methods of
divination.

In the following chapter I will shift to a more emic
perspective in order to examine some important conceptual
principles underlying Temne cosmology, social organisation,
morality and person-categories.

CHAPTER ONE: NOTES

1.   Lessa, 1959, p. 203.

2.   1965, pp. 44-46.

3.   Shelton, 1965.

4.   1961, pp. 151-153.

5.   1966.

6.   He avoids the terms 'natural' and 'spiritual' because
     they imply too great a dichotomy to be applicable to
     world-views whose contents are seen as a mixture of
     both. Rather the distinction is between things which
     can be known through sensory experience and which are
     relatively predictable (the patent) and hidden things
     which are relatively unpredictable and can be known
     only indirectly through their effects (the occult).

7.   *Ibid.*, p. 414.

8.   1937, p. 351.

9.   Evans-Pritchard, 1937, p. 376.

10. Park, 1963, p. 199.

11. 1967, p. 230.

12. *Ibid*, p. 231.

13. 1966, p. 60.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

15. Middleton, 1960, p. 135.

16. 1963.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

18. 1965, p. 1454.

19. 1966, p. 421.

20. 1963, p. 208.

21. 1961, 1968 and 1975.

22. 1968, p. 48.

23. Beattie, 1967, p. 216; Evans-Pritchard, 1937, pp. 165,
     170 and 171; Fortes, 1966, p. 421; Lienhardt, 1961,
     p. 69; McLean and Solomon, 1971, p. 34; Werbner, 1973,
     pp. 1414-1416.

24. 1961.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 236.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

28. 1969.

29. 1962.

30. Finnegan, 1969, p. 544.

31. Quarrels ideally end by one disputant 'pleading' and the other 'accepting'; *ibid.*, p. 540.

32. Crick, 1976, p. 123.

33. 1963, p. 208.

34. Evans-Pritchard, 1937, p. 351.

35. Bascom, 1969, p. 72.

36. 1973.

37. *Ibid*, p. 1419.

38. Evans-Pritchard, 1937.

39. McLean and Solomon, 1971.

40. It is true that there is often the realisation within a society that some diviners are frauds (Bascom, 1969, p. 69; Evans-Pritchard, 1937, pp. 183-193; Lienhardt, 1961, p. 70), but this can ultimately have the effect of strengthening people's faith, since, 'Scepticism explains failures of witch-doctors, and being directed towards particular witch-doctors even tends to support faith in others' (Evans-Pritchard, 1937, p. 193).

41. 1937, p. 351.

42. McLean and Solomon, 1971, p. 34.

43. Middleton, 1960, p. 81.

44. 1937, p. 283.

45. 1965, p. 1445.

46. Park, 1963, p. 208.

47. *Ibid.*

48. 1969.

49. Middleton, 1960.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 137.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

52. Mitchell, 1956.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 153n, and 165-174.

54. Colson, 1966, p. 223.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

56. 1970, p. 217.

57. Divination is a principal function of both the Nyima shaman and of the Pahari shaman below.

58. 1946, p. 32.

59. 1964.

60. 1969.

61. 1970.

62. Berreman, 1964, p. 58.

63. Harvey, 1966, p. 37.

64. In transcribing Temne words and phrases I have, as far as possible, used the orthography given in Dalby's 'Temne-English Dictionary'(1972). The same orthography is given in Dalby, 1966.

65. Dalby, 1965, p. 1.

66. See Littlejohn, 1960b, pp. 71-73 and cited in Banton, 1957, pp. 123-125, on Temne kinship and the household.

67. Wylie, 1978, pp. 3 and 14.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

69. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

71. Skinner, 1976 and 1978; Turay, 1971, pp. 61-66; Wylie, 1977, pp. 37 and 48.

CHAPTER TWO: SECRECY, VISION AND POWER

With regard to the study of witchcraft, Crick has made
the following point:

> The identity 'witch' is only one on a board
> which contains other persons with different
> specified characteristics. Moreover, this
> one system interacts with others - with con-
> cepts of human actions, evaluatory ideas,
> and other systems of beliefs. We could say
> that to tackle 'witchcraft' as if it were
> an isolable problem would be like someone
> unfamiliar with the game of chess observing
> a series of movements and then writing a book
> on 'bishops'.[1]

In the same way, Temne diviners and divination need to be

placed in the context of other relevant groups and categories

of people, and of the conceptual principles in terms of

which these are defined and evaluated. Secrecy and reve-

lation are such key principles, and underly not only the

theory and practice of divination but all areas of Temne

social organisation and world-view: cosmological ideas,

including beliefs about spirits, ancestors and witches, the

figure of the chief, the role of secret societies and

relationships between men and women, for instance. The

operation of the principles of secrecy, vision and reve-

lation will be examined in these major areas in this chapter

and in the figure of the diviner and other specialists in

the following chapter. Male-female relationships will be

touched on only briefly here, since they will be discussed

more fully in Chapter Six.

Spirits and Ancestors

In Temne cosmology, the important distinction is that

between the visible and the hidden rather than the spirit-

matter dichotomy so central to Western religious thought.
Apart from the visible world ($n\jmath$-$r\grave{u}$ or d-$\alpha r\grave{u}$), there are
three other 'worlds': ro-$k\vartheta rf\grave{\imath}$,[2] the world of the ancestors
($\partial\eta$-$ba k\hat{\imath}$), ro-$s\jmath k\grave{\imath}$, the world of the spirits ($\partial\eta$-$k\vartheta rf\grave{\imath}$) and
ro-$ser\grave{\jmath}\eta$, the world of the witches ($\partial\eta$-$s\grave{e}r$).[3] These are
described as being spatially 'here', and 'all around us',
but invisible to ordinary people. Their inhabitants -
ancestors, spirits and witches - are likewise hidden from
ordinary perception. Temne say that there is a 'darkness'
($\grave{\bar{a}}$-sum) between them and us.

The ancestors are thought of as being present in the
towns and houses[4] of their descendants, and live with them
so closely that it is said to be bad luck to sweep the house
at night because the ancestors may also be swept out.
They give protection, fertility and prosperity to their
living relatives, who make regular sacrifices to them,
particularly at the time of brushing the bush and at
harvest-time. However, they are also guardians of their
descendants' social morality, particularly where a child's
behaviour to his parents and a wife's behaviour to her
husband are concerned. They punish a disrespectful son
or an unfaithful wife, for instance, by withdrawing their
protection and blessing and thus leaving the wrongdoer
vulnerable to witches and harmful spirits. Like Kuranko
ancestors,[5] they are not actively punitive or malevolent
and contrast with ancestors in other African cultures
(the Lugbara of Uganda, for instance)[6] who send illness
and misfortune directly to their descendants.

Despite the ancestors' closeness to their descendants,
they can only be seen by their ordinary descendants in
dreams. Spirits, however, are sometimes seen by ordinary
people, but usually in a disguised form as an animal, a
human, a gust of wind, or a whirlpool in a river. The
powerful water spirit, *aŋ-yárɔŋ*,[7] can appear in the form
of a big black snake or as a woman, for instance.

Spirits exemplify very clearly the danger which the
Temne see as inherent in the invisible, the private and
the secret. There are, broadly, three kinds of spirits:
bush spirits, river spirits and town or family spirits.
Littlejohn[8] has pointed out an association between the
qualities of each of these categories of spirit and the
nature of the environment they inhabit. Bush spirits, like
the bush itself, are 'wild and not easily controlled'[9] and
are particularly dangerous to farms and pregnant women,
whereas town spirits are 'more tractable'[10] and can help
women get children. Also, just as the river is an inter-
mediary place between town and bush (since villages are
built near a water source), river spirits have qualities
of both town and bush spirits:

> The river joins bush with town. The river
> demon occupies a place midway between the
> other two, as powerful as the one but like
> the other bestowing riches...[11]

This persuasive association can be taken further.
Although Littlejohn[12] defines 'town demons' as those spirits
which inhabit pebbles kept in small boxes and tins and
which are mostly owned by women for the purpose of getting
children, in the Tane, Kholifa and Bombali Sebora Chiefdoms

such pebbles come from the river and are inhabited by
river spirits. They are personal spirits, helping the
individual obtain children or wealth in exchange for a
sacrifice,[13] while town or family spirits proper[14] have a
different area of responsibility, looking after the
fertility and prosperity of the social group rather than
that of the individual. The male head of the family or
town is responsible for his group's relationship with its
spirit or spirits, and performs sacrifices to the latter
at key points of the agricultural cycle, especially at
brushing and harvest time. In this way he 'hands over' the
group, its children and its farm work to the spirits and
the ancestors, who are usually sacrificed to together. The
social nature of these spirits is evident in the following
'words of handing over' spoken by a family head, Pa Fode
Gbla of Mayan village, Tane Chiefdom, at a sacrifice prior
to brushing in March. Pa Fode addresses Bɑy Kɔthɔf
('Chief of the Earth'), the head of the spirits in that
area:

> Bɑy Kɔthɔf, we have come to you. We have
> started a new year. We worked last year,
> but were disappointed. This year we are
> going to give a sacrifice to you. There
> is a visitor here, Na Sanka Turay, who has
> brought a chicken and some rice for you.[15]
> We have also brought a chicken and some
> rice. We have brought these things for
> you so you may feed us and give us enough
> rice, and so that our children may all be
> well. If any witchcraft comes, we will
> hand this witchcraft over to you. If a
> witch kills small children, we will hand
> this witch over to you. We have some
> chickens and some rice. We have brought
> a sacrifice to you.

Such sacrifices are public, attended by relatives from nearby villages and by any others who wish to come. Pa Fode's sacrifice to Bɑy Kɔthɔf was attended by twenty-three relatives, an unrelated neighbour, myself and my research assistant. The main parts of the ritual - the divination by throwing kola nuts to find out if Bɑy Kɔthɔf accepts the sacrifice, the 'words of handing over' and the slaughter of the chickens - were attended by fifteen male relatives and only one female relative, the seven remaining women being engaged in food preparation for the meal which followed. A sacrifice to a personal spirit is, by contrast, usually a small, private affair.

There are further correspondences, then, between the types of spirit and the space they inhabit. Town and family spirits inhabit the social space of the town or village (though they also inhabit the sacred bush at the edge of the town) and look after the welfare of the social group, while bush spirits inhabit the relatively wild, asocial space of the bush and engage in capricious, asocial acts of destruction such as harming crops and causing women to miscarry. The river is in between the social town and the asocial bush, and river spirits, being used as personal spirits, are likewise mainly associated with the individual, private sphere between the social and the asocial.

The fact that the majority of those who have personal spirits are women, whereas town and family spirits are kept and sacrificed to by men indicates that in this case, at least, men are associated more than women with the social, public side of religion while women tend to be linked with

the individual, private side of religion. However, what
is private is suspicious: men say that women who have a
stone inhabited by a personal spirit are very dangerous,
for as well as using a spirit to obtain children, a jealous
woman can also send it to attack a man she is angry with,
making him ill or impotent. The connection between women,
secrecy and danger will be explored in Chapter Six; it is
sufficient at present to compare the relatively amoral
nature of personal river spirits, used privately for perso-
nal ends, with the relatively moral (or at least social)
nature of town and family spirits, sacrificed to publicly
for the community's welfare. The distinctions between
the main categories of spirits, then, correspond to the
distinctions between the social and the asocial, the public
and the private, and the beneficent and the dangerous.

All spirits are dangerous to people, however, whether
or not they also give protection and fertility. Although
normally invisible or disguised, spirits do sometimes appear
unconcealed, but it is extremely dangerous for an ordinary
person to see one; indeed one of the most common diviners'
diagnoses of insanity is that the afflicted person 'saw a
spirit'. Seeing a spirit of the same sex as oneself is
much more serious than seeing a spirit of the opposite
sex,[16] but the latter can also cause insanity even if it
is a normally beneficent family spirit, as the following
case illustrates.

A young married woman, Mabinti, had to return to her
natal village in Maloŋ, near Magburaka, because she had
become hysterical and dissociated after a previous visit

there during which she had accidentally seen a family
spirit, who only the family head should have direct con-
tact with. After her recovery, Mabinti described what had
happened:

> The first time the spirit came to me, he
> came in the form of a human being, but
> white in colour, like a *yinà*.[17] The spirit
> told me we should both go to where he came
> from. I went with him to the sacred bush
> and we talked for a long time. He said,
> 'I have not come to see you. Why should you
> see me abruptly like this?' I replied, 'It
> is not my fault. I did not know you were
> passing this way.' He said, 'You have no
> right to see me in this way.' I apologised
> and left, and returned to my husband in
> Bendugu.'

Once back in Bendugu, spirits came to Mabinti in a dream
and told her she should go back to her parents' village.
She refused to go and in the morning she became sick and
lost consciousness. Her cousin, a diviner, was present
while Mabinti was recounting this and asked her if she
hadn't made a promise to the spirit which she had broken.
She denied this, but he asserted that he had 'heard of a
creature she should have paid which she didn't', implying
that she had promised to make a sacrifice to the spirit
to appease him, but had failed to do so.

Mabinti's father's brother, a herbalist (*ù-boloŋbà*),
had decided that because she 'had no right to see the
spirit', the elders of the family should come together and
apologise to it. Two diviners were consulted, Mabinti's
cousin and a diviner using *aŋ-yìnà Musà,* (a mediumship
method) accompanied by his female medium. Both prescribed
.the sacrifice of a sheep. After Mabinti's herbalist uncle

washed her with medicine and the family elders sacrificed
a sheep, she recovered.

The implication here is that, unlike the ancestors who
simply *cannot* be seen in waking consciousness, spirits
should not be seen except by the right person - in this case
the family head. Many spirits are, in any case, unpleasant
and frightening in appearance. Diamond spirits, who 'own'
the diamonds in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone, are
said to be deformed and to have big boils. A well-known
spirit of bush and forests, *aŋ-ròŋso*,[18] is consistently
described as a dwarf with feet that are back to front, eyes
that are vertical instead of horizontal and ears that are
twisted, these being 'reversed' characteristics that mirror
his asocial nature. He sometimes enters villages and towns
to steal, and although he usually blows a whistle to warn
people to avoid him, it is said that 'he can make a mother
see him' and thus cause miscarriages. Spirits, then, may
be heard but not seen.[19]

These themes of invisibility, privacy and danger do
not just characterize supernatural powers; they pervade *all*
power relationships, human as well as extra-human. For the
Temne, it would be true to say that:

> Religion and political structure are often
> quite explicitly aspects of a single coherent
> ideology, so that 'government' is not a
> separate sphere but merely a dimension of a
> total symbolic classification.[20]

Since Temne social and political relationships are animated
by the same principles as religious beliefs and actions, it
may be more fruitful to approach all these as parts of a

single system than to impose a division between them through a traditional, functional analysis.[21] 'Power', for the Temne, is a 'total' concept which cannot be easily sub-divided into categories such as 'political force', 'super-natural energy', 'economic wealth', 'social control', 'technological power' or 'fertility'. As Tonkin points out with respect to masking phenomena,

> Coercion, energy and fertility can all be
> linked as aspects of Power.[22]

The Chief

This is clear in the case of Temne chieftaincy. Whereas, according to Little, the Mende chief is a 'purely secular figure'[23] whose political authority is sanctioned by the religious power of the Mende *Pɔrɔ* society, the Temne chief (*ɔ-bày*) is unquestionably a religious figure in his own right, as a Temne writer expresses:

> For us the Chief is priest as well as king.
> He who has been consecrated and anointed
> embodies the community soul;[24]

The Temne chief is surrounded by a number of ritual pro-hibitions (*mə̀-sə̀m*), cannot be deposed, and in the past was killed before he could die of a serious illness as this would endanger the life of the community to which he is linked.[25]

None of these are true for the Mende chief. However, Little's simple dichotomy between the roles of the Mende chiefship and the Mende *Pɔrɔ* have been questioned by Tonkin

on the grounds that chiefs are also *Pɔrɔ* members. This
being the case,

> to divide the analysis of coercive power
> within Poro from that within 'open' govern-
> ment may create non-real problems of
> allocation, and obscure the actual resonances
> of Power that echo from the complexities of
> a single system, not of two systems in co-
> existence.[26]

This is truer still of the Temne chiefship and secret
societies, whose interrelationship is even more complex and
interwoven. The chief, traditionally chosen in 'rotating'
fashion from two or more lineages of a ruling clan, or from
lineages of two separate clans,[27] is installed and buried
by one of the principal secret societies:[28] *ra-Gbeŋle* in
the eastern part of Temneland, *ra-Mɛna* in the centre and
south-west and *aŋ-Pɔrɔ* in the south. In the north and
north-west, the traditional secret societies are much weaker,
and the chieftaincy rituals are largely Islamic.[29] The
chief's special initiation by one of these societies does
not merely give his 'secular' authority a 'mystical'
backing; this initiation gives him *both* of these aspects
of his power, which is seen as a totality rather than as
divided into the separate compartments of 'political' and
'religious'.

During his initiation together with his subchiefs
(*ɛ-kapər*), the chief spends a long period of time (some-
times a year) in a state of ritual seclusion, *kə-kaŋthə*:
this is the same term, with a different prefix, as that
used to describe the ritual 'closing' of a house or farm
against evil forces.[30] In this state he receives instruction

in his role as chief and is taught the secrets of the
chiefdom and of the society initiating him.[31] Since, for
the Temne, the most valuable and powerful knowledge is of
that which is hidden, it is very necessary that the chief's
instruction should be concealed from others. It therefore
takes place in secret within an enclosure (à-kàŋthà) in
the town: this enclosure is considered to be the definitive
example of a ritually closed space.

In his seclusion (and after death) the chief is spoken
of as being 'in Futa', meaning the Futa Djallon in Guinée
from which, according to oral tradition, the Temne once
came. Although it seems likely that this expression refers
to a symbolic link between the Temne and their land of
origin, Littlejohn reports that his informants put forward
the different but interesting interpretation that '"the
chief comes as a stranger, for only from a stranger can you
expect justice"'.[32] Thus the chief's power and his ability
to rule and judge justly come from the knowledge he has
gained during his period of initiatory seclusion 'outside'
the community. As Littlejohn puts it, 'not-being-in-proper-
relation-with-others is for them (the Temne) a condition
of perception of truth'.[33] Likewise the ancestors, having
left the community of the living, are described as 'the old
ones who have gone to the truth' (àŋ-bqkî po kɔnɛ̂ ro-tɛ̂ŋ).

This would seem to indicate a concept of truth which is
the opposite of the socially constituted truth of the
Dinka.[34] Yet for the Temne, 'truth' is also created through
social agreement, as in, for example, the management of
community consensus in a court case or in a public divination.

These two aspects of truth - the public, socially con-
stituted truth and the private, extra-social truth - are
balanced in the figure of the chief. The chief is essen-
tially a very public figure: the judgements he makes in
his open-sided court house, $aŋ-bàrê$, are visible to all
and, as Ture puts it, he 'embodies the community soul'.[35]
He uses the power he has obtained through the acquisition
of secret truth in $kà-kàŋthà$ to administer 'public' truth
in the form of justice after his installation.

Being, traditionally, not only the most powerful person
in the chiefdom but also being identified with it, it is
important that the chief knows of everything going on in
it. Finnegan[36] states that it is a mark of the Limba chief's
authority that he should be formally told of whatever
happens in his chiefdom, such as a death, the killing of
big game, an accident, initiations, and the imposition of
a dangerous oath or ordeal. The same applies to the Temne
chief, who must be informed, for instance, of when the
secret societies intend to carry out their initiations, and
his permission must be formally granted before anyone can
use a 'swear' ($à-sàsà or à-seŋà$)[37] against a wrongdoer or
can hold a witchfinding session. The chief's subchiefs
($ɛ̀-kapàr$) have been described as his 'eyes and ears',[38]
and Turay mentions one of them, $kapàr kenthì$ ($kenthi$ means
'gossip') as specifically having the job of keeping the
chief informed of everything going on.[39]

When a woman in a village near a chiefdom town was
badly bitten by a chimpanzee and had to be hospitalized,
the chief was angry because a week had elapsed before he

was told. Furthermore, he should have been formally told

of the incident by a representative of the village, but

he only found out about it when the police came to question

him. Any wild animal attacking a human is believed to be

a witch in disguise ('since ordinary animals will run away

from you'), and as there had been previous cases of witch-

craft in the village, the inhabitants were afraid to tell

the chief in case they were accused. This, however, made

their guilt more certain in the eyes of the chief, as

inappropriate secrecy is especially suspicious. Anything

unusual or dangerous which is kept from the chief is

regarded as an erosion of his power.

To sum up, the chief's power and authority seem to

derive largely from his access to hidden knowledge, un-

available to ordinary people (the special secrets of the

chiefdom and of the appropriate secret society), and to his

possessing greater knowledge than others have of the events

in his chiefdom. Although there is some ambiguity in the

role of the chief,[40] particularly in recent Temne history

when social, economic and political changes have facili-

tated the pursuit of individual interests by chiefs at

the expense of their people,[41] the chief's extraordinary

knowledge does not give him the sinister, asocial qualities

normally associated with the possession of secrets. The

chief (in theory, at least) uses his knowledge on behalf

of the community with which he is identified and conducts

most of his official affairs in public, where he can be

seen by all.

The Witch

In these respects the chief is the opposite of the witch (ɔ-sèr), who also has extraordinary knowledge but who uses it exclusively for his or her individual ends in ways that normally harm others. Like the chief, the witch knows things that others do not know, and sees things that others do not see, but by illicit supernatural means. Witches are believed to have 'four eyes': the two ordinary ones that everyone has, and two invisible eyes with which they can see the invisible worlds of ro-sɔkî and ro-serɔ̀ŋ and the spirits and witches who inhabit them. People who 'have eyes' (bà ɛ̀-fɔ̀r) of this kind are called àŋ-sɔkî, a term deriving, like ro-sɔkî, from the stem sɔk or sɔ̀k , which is associated with 'vision, visibility, comprehension' and with 'lack of vision, invisibility, incomprehension'.[42] The Temne distinguish between this vision as inherent (described by the adjective sɔki)[43] or as acquired (described by the verb sɔ̀k)[44] by having medicine known as aŋ-thopo dropped in the eyes.

Certain categories of people are believed particularly to be àŋ-sɔkî: diviners (à-thupês), secret society officials, twins (tà-barî), herbalists (à-bolɔŋba), blacksmiths (à-kàbi) white people (à-pòthò) and powerful chiefs (à-bày), warriors (à-kurgbà), hunters (à-kàprà), traders and 'big men'. People who are 'dirty' (nɔkɔ)[45] are also associated with witchcraft, especially very poor crippled or sick beggars with tropical sores (sores which fail to heal are said to have many uses for a witch, who can turn them into 'witch-lamps' or use them as a hiding place for witch-meat).

Both extremes of poverty and wealth are thus suspicious

characteristics, as are any unusual features and skills.

Although not all *à-sɔkî* are *à-sèr*, all *à-sèr* are

à-sɔkî, which renders the above categories of people

believed to be *ā-sɔkî* suspect, since they are more likely

than are ordinary people to be witches. When a renowned

diviner, Pa Saidu Kagbo of Rosɛngbɛ village, Tane Chief-

dom, described to me his vision of *ro-sɔkî* during *aŋ-yìnà*

Musà divination, a mediumship method,[46] he was concerned

to make it clear that despite being *sɔkî*, he was not a

witch:

> I have no dealings with witches and
> *ro-serɔ̀ŋ* . When I use *aŋ-yìnà Musà*, a
> sort of screen is brought to me, on which
> I see things. I sit in this world, but the
> picture comes with the spirits. It comes
> to me as if in a cinema.

The witch's supernatural vision is used for destructive

purposes: witches are sometimes said to eat their victims

with their eyes.[47] This power does not reside solely in

their vision, however, but also in their ability to be

invisible and unknown to others.

The main forms of witchcraft are as follows:

1. The most common mode of attack is for the witch to

invisibly suck the blood and eat the internal organs of

small children[48] at night. When all the blood is drunk and

the heart is eaten, the child will die. The witch has an

additional organ, *à-kuŋthà*, described as a second stomach

for digesting human meat; anyone who does not have *à-kuŋtha*

but is given 'witch-meat' to eat in a dream will develop

a swollen stomach and pains, and will have to be cured by a diviner or herbalist.

Although a child who is given witch-meat in a dream and consumes it without knowing what it is would not be blamed for doing so, consciously eating human flesh in a dream is considered to be witchcraft whether or not one has killed the victim oneself. Unlike the Azande,[49] the Temne consider witchcraft to be a conscious, deliberate activity. Witches are thought to have secret associations whose members have commensal obligations to each other, each providing a victim in turn for communal feasts.[50] The witch usually brings his or her own child, or that of a relative, usually of a co-wife, and either attacks this child directly or lets another witch into the house to do so.[51]

2. Adults are felt to be much stronger than children and much less vulnerable to witchcraft; thus they cannot be killed in the same way as children. Witches attacking adults often do so in the form of dangerous animals such as chimpanzees, elephants, snakes, crocodiles etc. In the above mentioned case of a chimpanzee attack on a woman, the woman's statement to the police denied the witchcraft explanation but thereby shows how readily such events are interpreted in terms of it:

> The monkey was a real monkey. There were
> other bigger monkeys around on the day of
> the incident. And infant monkeys also in
> the village during the day time, and they
> are always driven back. Nothing unusual
> was suspected. I have never quarrelled with
> anybody in the said village. I have never
> heard of any human baboon society[52] going

> on in that area. It is not true that the
> monkey bit me on my private part. I am
> not feeling any serious pain within my
> body. The incident was not a foul one,
> but a coincidence, that is all.[53]

The witch's metamorphosis into another form is des-
cribed by the verbs *làfthɛ̂,* changing form to disguise one's
identity, to hide and to find out secrets, or *folnɛ̂,*
changing form to harm someone. The witch effects this
transformation by putting on special animal clothes in
ro-serɔ̀ŋ: 'they are sort of gowns witches put on in the
witch-world'.

3. Adults may also become weak or paralysed as a result
of being invisibly beaten or flogged by witches.

4. Powerful witches attack their enemies with a 'witch-gun'
(*à-pìŋkâr à serɔ̀ŋ*). This consists of a small hollow object
such as a groundnut shell or papaya stalk in which is placed
a minute object such as a grain of sand or a *funde* seed
(a tiny cultivable grain). The witch whispers the name of
the victim to the 'gun', then 'shoots' it by igniting a
small amount of gunpowder-like substance (*à-pɔpà*) next to
it. The grain or seed will enter the victim's body and
will kill them if it is not removed. The category of *rɑ-sèr*
thus includes external manipulation of objects, which we
would define as sorcery. The witch is motivated here not
by a desire for human flesh, but by a wish to eliminate a
dangerous enemy or inconvenient rival. In this type of
attack the witch is normally thought to be male, probably
because although most witches are said to be women, the
most powerful witches (i.e., those most likely to have a
witch-gun) are said to be men.

The following case, reported in one of the national

newspapers, is that of a man who hired a diviner to kill

his brother with a witch-gun:

LE 10 FOR WITCHGUN BLAST? What, may I ask
you dear readers, is the cost of a man's
life? A thousand leones, two, three or a
million? You're wrong. At Lakka village
in the outskirts of Freetown a few days
ago, the price was only ten leones... And
when you come to think of it, you just
shake your head in disgust and mutter:
'But how can a brother plot against his own
brother his own blood?' Things took their
roots in the mind of Mr. Bee said to be a
driver. He had been at loggerheads with
his brother over some family matter and the
people of Lakka village swore to it, when
LOOK GRON got to the spot, that Bee had
vowed to fix Tom of Chanrai Supermarket.
The best way to do the dirty job, he thought,
was by the witchgun, since the victim would
hardly know what hit him. Hey presto! It
was off to the alphaman[54] then, with a fee
of ten leones. Fix the man, was the order.
Bee waited for a month to see his brother's
corpse, but nothing happened. Tom was as
hale and hearty as ever. So he went back
to the alphaman. But this second meeting
was not in camera. Word leaked out that
Tom was about to be bazookaed. A little
bird then whispered to Tom who went straight
to the Alpha. He cornered his would-be
executioner who confessed. At this, Tom,
unable to control himself any longer, burst
into tears and later reported the matter to
the village headman. It was then that all
hell broke loose, Tom then made for the
Congo Cross Police Station where a statement
about the plot was obtained from him. In
his absence, war had broken out. The villa-
gers were out in full regalia to fight his
battle for him... A truckload of policemen
were dispatched to the area. They raided
the shrine and found our Alpha fast asleep.
He was caught offguard and he gave himself
up without much force. He is now detained
with his employer at the Congo Cross
Station...[55]

5. As well as attacking people directly, witches also

attack their main staple, rice. Witches may invisibly

carry the 'substance' of a rice crop to a communal witch

feast, or they may transfer it to their own farm. This form of *ra-sèr* is believed to be practised mainly by men against other men. Farmers who have an unusually poor rice crop may be suspected of having given it to their co-witches, while farmers with an unusually good crop may be suspected of having transferred it from a neighbour's farm: either extreme is suspicious. Witches can also turn into farm pests such as cane rats, monkeys and birds and destroy the crop in that form; however it is only unusually bad pest attacks which are attributed to witchcraft, since a certain amount of destruction is expected.

Whereas rice is protected specifically against witches by sacrifice (*s-àthkà*), ritual closure (*kànthà*) and swears (*ɛ̀-sàsà, ɛ̀-gbɔ̀m*), the secondary staple, cassava, is protected only against thieves by charms called *ɛ̀-wàŋkà*, as only rice is considered important enough to be liable to witch attack. Attacking a rice crop is very much an anti-life action: rice has considerable religious significance and is incorporated into many Temne rituals as a symbol of 'everyone'.[56]

6. Another form of witchcraft is *ka-thɔfi*, described as 'economic witchcraft': here the witch became invisible (*dìnɛ̂*) in order to steal money and valuables. According to Temne migrants in the diamond digging area in Kono, *ka-thɔfi* is particularly endemic there.

In addition to these six types of witchcraft, there are certain other activities which are not strictly *ra-sèr*, but are considered to be analogous to it. Opinions vary

concerning the first two, in fact, some saying that they are really witchcraft, others saying that they are just very similar. These are as follows:

1. Offering a relative (a child or an old person) as payment to a spirit in return for wealth, power, etc., or sending one's personal spirit to harm an enemy.

2. Activating a swear against someone in secret. Swearing is only a legitimate form of retribution if it is done publicly, loudly and in the open, after getting permission from the chief and having given plenty of warning through the town crier. Using a swear that does not contain the cure for the illness it sends is also likened to witchcraft.

3. Poisoning, particularly of men by women.

4. Spreading harmful gossip about someone.

5. Hiring a diviner to make an enemy, someone you have a 'bad heart' for, sick or insane with 'bad medicine'.

6. Finally, witchcraft is also used as a metaphor for any action which is considered particularly evil, such as injuring a brother or making evil plots against someone.

These actions - those considered to be *rɑ-sèr* proper and those felt to be analogous to it - have three central characteristics. Firstly they are all destructive, either harming people directly or harming a source of their livelihood. Secondly, they are 'supernatural' actions, with the exception of poisoning, slander and general wickedness. Thirdly, they are hidden, usually through the invisibility or metamorphosis of the witch. People agree that *rɑ-sèr* is the epitome of secret and evil action.

There are, however, other aspects of *ra-sɛr* that are admired as well as feared. It is believed that most witches are purely destructive, but that the most powerful witches have wonderful abilities, including the ability to create new inventions. Witches cannot only metamorphose themselves in their passage from *nɔ-rù* to *ro-serɔ̀ŋ*, they can also transform ordinary objects into objects of high technology. They can turn an empty groundnut shell in *nɔ-rù* into a witch-plane in *ro-serɔ̀ŋ*, and turn a papaya stalk and a grain of sand into a witch-gun. The following opinion, expressed at the end of the newspaper article quoted above on the witch-gun attack, is a very common one:

> What is this witch-gun? Does it possess a
> butt, barrel, stock, safety catch and trigger,
> like any other gun? Exactly what goes to
> make its bullets? If we could put such
> scientific knowledge to good use, what a
> great continent Africa would have been![57]

These miraculous skills are spoken of with ill-concealed admiration by those who also denounce witchcraft, and pride in these powers may partly account for the defiant manner in which many witches are said to confess. This ambivalent attitude towards witchcraft can be seen in the following extract from an account of an informant who saw a witch-finding session held by *ma-nɛkɛ*, the spirits of the *ra-Gbeŋle* society, who were called after a small child had died:

> Two boys were accused of being witches.
> Each said, 'Yes, it is true.' After the
> first boy had said this, *ma-nɛkɛ* told the

Chief and the people there that this boy
had been practicing witchcraft for three
years. The boy replied, 'It is more than
that.' Mɑ-nɛkɛ told the chief and the people
that if they want to stop that boy from
practicing witchcraft, they should hand over
the boy to them. The other boy was also
told that he was a witch. He admitted it.
Mɑ-nɛkɛ sang[58] and told the audience: 'This
boy is a friend of the other boy. Together,
they have a witch-gun. When they shoot,
they never miss. These boys are only small
in nɔ-rù, but they are very powerful, and
both always work together.' They asked the
boys: 'Is this not so?' The boys admitted
it: 'Yes, it is so, but it is this man and
this woman who are teaching us all these
things.'

The boys also volunteered the information that they had

a witch-plane in the form of a chameleon. Although

mɑ-nɛkɛ's utterances were based on the premise that witch-

craft is evil, they painted an impressive picture of the

miraculous powers of the boys, to which one of the boys

himself added by insisting that he had been a witch for

more than three years. At the same time, the boys cer-

tainly knew that witchcraft was evil and were keen to dis-

claim full responsibility by accusing their adult relatives

of having taught it to them. The views of both the

accusers and the accused showed some ambivalence about

witchcraft.

Victor Turner writes the following about the world of

witchcraft in many African cosmologies:

It is a world of decay, where all that is
normal, healthy, ordered is reduced to chaos
and 'primordial slime'. It is 'anti-
structure', not inverted structure.[59]

The Temne witch-world, *ro-serɔŋ* is not, however, said to
be like this. Apart from certain macabre features, such
as the sale of 'beefsticks' of human meat on its streets,
ro-serɔŋ as described by most informants has many enticing
qualities. It is a town, a place of order and structure,
filled with wonderful inventions, its more powerful inhabi-
tants owning large houses made of gold and precious stones
and driving big Mercedes cars (as do modern Sierra Leonean
politicians, lawyers and other 'big men' in *nɔ-rù*).
Dawson's[60] paper on Temne witchcraft terminology shows that
the Temne witch-world has an order and structure similar
to that of ordinary Temne life. A certain amount of
inversion is present (beggars with big tropical sores are
the rich ones in *ro-serɔŋ*, for example), but more striking
is the *exaggeration* of certain features of affluent towns
in *ro-serɔŋ*, notably those features considered to be the
symbols of power and wealth. It is a world of selective
exaggeration rather than one of inversion or chaos.

As one might expect from this inclusion of technology,
inventions, affluence and power into witchcraft beliefs,
white people are also said to be witches because of the
Western technology they bring, their relatively affluent
life-style, their high mobility and the control they
exerted during the colonial period. Some say that all
white people are witches, others say that only certain of
them are (particularly white Freemasons), and others again
are sceptical. Although this was never mentioned to me,
probably out of politeness, there are certain anti-social
aspects of European behaviour which are very likely to

contribute to this belief. Turay lists the following
examples of the Temne category of *mà-pòthò*, 'Western ways':
1. living a secluded life; 2. exchanging abrupt greetings
and not stopping to talk; 3. not calling to visit other
people; and 4. eating alone without inviting others.[61]
It is precisely these qualities of seclusion, self-
sufficiency and greed that typify witches in Temne thought.

An important difference between the witchcraft of
Europeans and that of Sierra Leoneans, however, is the
fact that Western inventions, for the most part, are not
kept secret and hidden. This difference was summed up by
an old woman from the provinces visiting her relatives in
Freetown for the first time, who exclaimed, when she saw
a television: 'Ala! The white men are witches! The white
men take their witchcraft out into the world and everybody
sees it. But the black man uses his witchcraft to destroy!'
It is assumed that what is kept completely hidden from the
community is likely to be harmful to it.

Since inappropriate secrecy is the hallmark of witch-
craft, witches are fought by means whose aim is to bring
the hidden into the open. A major weapon, therefore, is
divination, especially the witchfinding sessions of masked
secret society spirits such as *ma-nɛkɛ* of *ra-Gbeŋle*, *ka-
yògbo* of the *Oje* society[62] and *aŋ-gbàŋgbáni*, the powerful
Limba spirit in the Temne circumcision society, *ra-Bày*.[63]
These spirits have a supernatural vision more powerful than
that of the witches they want to catch, and can therefore
reveal witches' hidden actions. In the aforementioned
witchfinding session of *ra-Gbeŋle*, the masked *ma-nɛkɛ*

spirits sang the following song:

> I am the one with the long-sighted eye.
> I can see far beyond the witch.
> I am the one who catches witches.
> However much he changes, I will catch him.[64]

When witches are caught, their invisible eyes are blinded by medicine and they are fined and beaten. Formerly they were killed.

If witches are not caught, it is believed that they will be brought down sooner or later by their à-hàkὲ. Usually translated as 'sin', à-hàkὲ is a force sent by God (K-urû) resulting from hidden wrongdoings, particularly witchcraft. A witch's à-hàkὲ is an underlying force which brings to light what he or she has done. In the above witchfinding session, the aŋ-hàkὲ of the witches was thought to have been the cause of the confession of one of the boys, who told the household head of a dream he had in which he was given the flesh of the dead infant to cook and eat. Among the Temne, as among the Kuranko,[65] direct accusation of witches is less common than confession. Spontaneous confession by witches is believed to be brought about by their à-hàkὲ,[66] which accumulates with each evil action until it is 'full up' and forces witches to confess whether they want to or not, making their concealed crimes verbally explicit and thus reducing their power.

The action of à-hàkὲ is said to be similar to that of the swear, aŋ-sàsà, which also makes hidden evil manifest, usually by causing the wrongdoer to become ill or to have an accident; but whereas swears are set in motion by men,

only $K-ur\hat{u}$ sends the $a\eta-hak\grave{\varepsilon}$. Men can, however, cause a

person's $\grave{a}-hak\grave{\varepsilon}$ to fall on them before it is 'full up' by

making a sacrifice $(s-\partial thk\grave{\partial})$ to $K-ur\hat{u}$ and asking for help.

Such a sacrifice can also be aided by the use of medicine,

as is illustrated by the following case, related by a woman

diviner, Ya Mabinti, in Koidu:

> I had one girl with me who I was bringing
> up. This girl married a man here. Isatu
> gave birth to a boy, and then this baby
> just died - it was not sick. She got
> pregnant again, and when the time came for
> her to give birth, she got very sick. God
> delivered her and she gave birth, but the
> child got sick. The girl came to me to
> 'look'. I said, 'In your house, there will
> be a time when they find witches there.'
> I told her the $as-\partial thk\grave{\partial}$ to make, which she
> did. Then she came again and said she was
> just sitting down and her rival $(\grave{u}-r\hat{e}s$;
> meaning her co-wife) came and said she was
> tired of hearing 'abusive languages', and
> wanted to know if somebody could remove her
> $a\eta-ku\eta th\partial$ (the witch organ). The husband
> heard and called the witch to him. He said,
> 'Are you going to confess to your rival?
> Why didn't you tell me about it first?'[67]
> The girl came and told me about it. I said,
> 'The witch still has to make confession.'
> I gave the girl a bottle and told her the
> woman will confess if she (the girl) washes
> herself and the child with medicine.
> Yesterday, another co-wife came and told
> me that her rival was confessing. So, the
> witch was the cause of the death of the
> first child, and had fallen on the second
> and taken two pints of its blood. The
> one pint is with her, the other with an
> old woman.

The 'abusive languages' mentioned is another means of

making a witch confess, used by witchfinders such as

$ma-n\varepsilon k\varepsilon$, those who activate a swear and those who sacrifice

to $K-ur\hat{u}$ for help in exposing a witch. The spirit or per-

son curses the witch, uttering normally forbidden sexual

terms, such as 'her clitoris' $(ka-lethe\; k\grave{\partial}\; ko\; \partial)$ and 'his

foreskin' (*aŋ-leŋpe à ko à*), thus stating that the witch
has not been circumcised. The witch is harmed by this
curse, since to be uncircumcised is to have no power: the
illicit secrecy of the witch is attacked by a normally
equally inappropriate verbal specificity.

Secret Societies

The *Pɔrɔ, ra-Gbeŋle* and *ra-Mɛna* societies have already
been mentioned above in connection with their roles in the
installation, support and burial of the chief. In addition
to these, *ra-Bay, aŋ-Bɔndɔ, ra-Digba* and *Oje* are principal
societies among the Temne. *Oje* is an *Oku* (Yoruba) Krio
society adopted by the Temne, and has a strong religious
and political role in urban centres of the north-east,
particularly Port Loko and Kambia.[68] *Oje* also has a junior
branch called *à-Dikali*. *Ra-Gbeŋle* (male) and *ra-Mɛna*
(female) are indigenous Temne societies in eastern and
central Temneland respectively, with similar functions
concerning the support of the chieftaincy.[69] *Ra-Bay*, also
indigenous, is the boys' circumcision society. Its name
indicates the pervasive idiom of chiefship it uses to
express the nature of the transition its rituals effect,
transforming boys into 'little kings'.[70] According to
Turay,[71] it is likely that *aŋ-Pɔrɔ, aŋ-Bɔndɔ* and *ra-Digba*
were adopted from the Mende. Thomas,[72] however, presents
material indicating that the Temne *Pɔrɔ* was borrowed from
the Sherbo. *Aŋ-Bɔndɔ* is a female society and, like *ra-Bay,*
is primarily concerned with circumcision and the trans-
formation from childhood to adulthood. *Ra-Digba* is the
senior counterpart of *aŋ-Bɔndɔ;* its membership is restricted

and its officials (ɛ̀-digbà) are responsible for the Bòndò rituals.

The political roles of aŋ-Pɔrɔ and ra-Gbeŋle are well-documented.[73]   Whereas anthropological studies of the 'political function of ritual' are often written as if the anthropologist is the only one aware of it, the Temne are very conscious of the political nature of aŋ-Pɔrɔ, ra-Gbeŋle and Oje. On many occasions different informants, like staunch functional anthropologists, told me: 'The function of the Pɔrɔ is political'. These societies use secrecy as a powerful political tool; important decisions are made in the society bush, which is forbidden to non-initiates, and these decisions are protected by strict oaths of secrecy. Action may be taken in this way against an auto-cratic chief, although the societies are generally suppor-tive to the chieftaincy.[74]

Political power and coercion, though, is only one of the dimensions of the total power channelled by secret societies, as Tonkin has pointed out.[75] Likewise, the use of secrecy is more than just a political weapon. It has already been mentioned that, for the Temne, secret knowledge outside community scrutiny is the most highly-prized and potent 'truth'. The societies give their initiates con-trolled revelations of esoteric knowledge[76] but protect these revelations by strict secrecy, thus keeping 'truth' in its proper place outside the general community.

Society officials mediate between the community and powerful spirits, often those of the bush and river such

as *aŋ-Nawò*, the female river spirit of *aŋ-Bòndò*, and
ɔ-kərfì ka aŋ-Pɔrɔ, 'the spirit of *aŋ-Pɔrɔ*', associated
with the bush. In the *Pɔrɔ* and *Bòndò* at least, these
spirits bring about the transformation of initiands by
swallowing them. The initiands 'die' (*fì aŋ-Pɔrɔ* or *fì
aŋ-Bòndò*) in order to be reborn as new people with new
names and statuses. The term of abuse *ù-gbòrkà*, meaning
'uncircumcised male' and 'non-member of the *Pɔrɔ*',[77] implies
that the person in question has no power and is like a
child. This in turn suggests that a man's power in Temne
society derives from a powerful spirit of the 'outside'.

Kuranko cult associations, according to Jackson, 'trans-
form potentially negative and inimical forces (symbolized
by the bush spirits) into socially-beneficial powers'.[78]
Temne secret society spirits are likewise dangerous forces
from outside the ordinary social world, but whose power can
nevertheless be harnessed for the community's benefit. They
can be compared structurally to 'the anomalous' in the
analyses of Mary Douglas,[79] which is outside ordered
classification and is therefore threatening to it, but is
also a vital source of life and potency. However, as Tonkin
has stated, 'Power is not just the unstructured, nor the
absence of structure'.[80] Society spirits do not merely
embody chaos, but a different and transcendent order. *Bòndò*
society masks of *aŋ-Nawò* do not reveal this spirit as an
unstructured, disordered force; she has symmetry and beauty,
and her hair is plaited into elaborate designs. In tradi-
tional Temne myth the world, *nɔ-rù*, rests on the head of

a giant,[81] and since *rù* means 'to plait' and *nɔ-* is the locative prefix for 'here', 'The name seems to indicate that the giant's hair has been combed and wrought'.[82] The plaits of *aŋ-Nawɔ* would thus seem to associate her with an ordered cosmos, although this order may be separate from, and potentially dangerous to, that of the ordinary human world.

The secret societies who channel the power of their spirits are themselves highly structured, and have important roles in maintaining the structure of wider Temne society. In both cases, secrecy is employed to maintain order and structure. The secret society hierarchies are based on a hierarchy of secrecy and revelation: the higher one goes, the more secret knowledge one acquires, and the greater the restrictions placed on what one can say to others. In the wider context too, distinctions between the social categories of male and female, child and adult, initiate and non-initiate and chiefs and commoners are marked by crucial areas of secrecy and privacy. Secret societies underscore and sharpen these distinctions by revealing to one category of people what they hide from another, as Jackson[83] has shown for the Kuranko.

Jackson was told by the master of the Kuranko *Komo* cult that 'The work of the cults is to maintain the difference between men and women'.[84] Another informant said that the cult associations served:

> to keep men and women separate, to make them
> respect each other; the women cannot under-
> stand the men's cults, therefore a darkness

exists between them which maintains the
mutual respect between womanhood and
manhood.[85]

Jackson points out that it is the principle of secrecy that
is important here; the actual secret cult objects are sym-
bols of this principle.[86]

Temne secret societies also articulate the principle of
secrecy underlying social category distinctions. It is
important to note, though, that secret societies are not
secret in the same way that witchcraft is secret: whereas
the power of witches depends on their being totally clande-
stine, the societies make their secrecy manifest in the
community. Whereas the witch hides from non-witches, masked
secret society spirits entering a town make non-members
hide from them. The secrecy of the witch is a threat to
Temne categories, confusing not only the categories of this
world and another world, human and non-human, town and bush
(which spirits do also), but also, and crucially, those
of 'inside' and 'outside'.[87] The witch is someone who seems
to be inside the community, but who secretly acts like a
destructive force of the outside. Masked spirits also
bring together disparate categories,[88] but although they
come from the outside, from the bush or river into the town,
they manifest their difference from ordinary human beings
and do not pretend to be 'insiders', ordinary members of
the community. Moreover, they are controlled by their
societies in such a way as to maintain social categories
rather than undermine them. Their secrecy is publicised
and overt[89] and therefore relatively 'safe', while the

secrecy of a witch, being illicit, is covert and much more
dangerous.

Thus the small round *Pɔrɔ* house is prominently placed
in the village and brightly painted with red, white and
blue or black symbols, but it is forbidden for women and
non-initiates to even approach close to it. Public
appearances of *Bɔ̀ndɔ̀* dancers and of *aŋ-Nawɔ̀* draw the commu-
nity's attention to women's secrets and to the rituals
taking place in the *Bɔ̀ndɔ̀* bush without revealing them.
The masked spirits of *ra-Gbeŋle, ma-nɛkɛ,* may not be seen
by women and uncircumcised males, so during the witch-
finding ceremony of *ka-gbàk* they are concealed behind a
mat hung over the doorway of the house in which they are
working. Through their clearly audible singing, however,
they manifest their presence while concealing their visual
appearance. When they leave the house they warn the
women present that if they see them their noses will rot.
When they appear in a town during chieftaincy rituals or
for a 'night performance' (*ma-sɔ̀kɔ̂*), the women and children
have to go indoors and remain there until *ma-nɛkɛ* have
gone. To have to stay inside a house, behind tightly
closed doors and windows, while hearing the distorted
voices of *ma-nɛkɛ* outside, is a dramatic experience which
makes very real the separation of the sexes and the principle
of secrecy which underlies it.

As we have seen, however, secrecy is ambivalent and
is regarded with some suspicion even when it is legitimate.
This is clear with regard to the secret societies, parti-
cularly *aŋ-Pɔrɔ,* the most secret of all, despite its role

in regulating social, economic and sexual behaviour. As
among the Mende,[90] the *Pɔrɔ* regulates agriculture by
erecting *Pɔrɔ* signs (tufts of grass on top of poles) in
farms, signifying that the crop should not be harvested
until it is ready, when the sign will be removed. The
Pɔrɔ also regulates sexual conduct, ruling, for instance,
that intercourse must not take place during the day or in
the bush. The sanctions against those who break these
laws are so severe, however, as to increase the fear in
which the *Pɔrɔ* is held. Most societies also have important
functions of healing and divination, but since diviners
are themselves regarded with suspicion and since 'good'
and 'bad' medicine (both secret areas of knowledge) are
inseparably intertwined, an official who knows how to
heal will also know how to harm. Dorjahn writes of the
Pɔrɔ official, *Pa Kãsi,* and of the official beneath him,
Pa Mãntia:

> It is said that few *Mancha* stay in
> training long enough to master healing,
> but that rather they master bad medi-
> cine; hence the frequently heard
> generalization, only partly true, that
> *Mancha* are evil while *Kashi* are good.[91]

Ra-Gbeŋle has a similar ambivalence with regard to
the chief. Whereas it is usually supportive to the chief,
an origin myth of the society tells of a rivalry between
the chief and those of his relatives from whom *ra-Gbeŋle*
officials are traditionally selected.[92] *Ra-Gbeŋle* offi-
cials have the role of curing the chief.[93] However, they
may sometimes use swearing medicines secretly against an
autocratic chief[94] and traditionally had the power to kill

the chief if he fell seriously ill.[95]

Secret societies are also feared by virtue of being mediators of the potentially dangerous powers of the 'outside', the society spirits. The destructive aspect of these spirits may get out of control, as it does in *mɔ-nɛkɛ athǎmrɔ̂*, uncontrollable spirits of *ra-Gbeŋle* who sometimes run amok at night, harming crops, stealing and introducing definitional chaos into the community by shouting abuse and false accusations.[96]

Thus the principle of secrecy is a double-edged sword for the societies. Secrecy is the basis of their own organizational structure and is the means by which they help maintain the ordered structure of Temne society as a whole. Yet the secret knowledge of society officials can be used for destructive individual purposes as well as constructive collective purposes. Despite the contrast between the illicit secrecy of the witch and the publicised secrecy of the societies, many society officials are believed to be witches.[97] *Pɔrɔ* officials (*aŋ-soko-bǎnà*) in particular are said to often be *aŋ-poŋinɛ̂* or *aŋ-thekre*, the most powerful witches of all. They thus embody a fusion of the moral, social role of the chief, a public figure who uses secret knowledge on behalf of the community, and the evil, anti-social role of the witch, a concealed figure who uses secrecy for purely individual ends.

Conclusion

The following points can be drawn from the above:

1. Invisibility or 'darkness' marks the distinction between ordinary human beings and spirits, ancestors and witches.

2. Secrecy creates and maintains a 'darkness' marking social category distinctions such as those of men and women, chiefs and commoners, and initiates and non-initiates.

3. The most powerful 'truth' is that which is secret, esoteric and located outside the community. Because of its power and its extra-social origin, it can be dangerous, however.

4. Power consists in seeing what others cannot see and knowing what others cannot know, and in not being completely seen and known oneself.

5. Relationships between superordinate and subordinate people should be characterised by greater knowledge and vision on the part of the superordinate.

6. Secret power and truth is 'good' if it is publicised, controlled and used for the community's benefit, but is 'bad' and dangerous if it is uncontrolled and used covertly for individual benefit. There is always the suspicion, however, that *anyone* having access to secret truth may use it covertly and selfishly.

All of these points shape the nature and role of diviners and their clients, and of the methods, language

and diagnoses of divination. The next chapter is con-
cerned with the category of the diviner and its relation
to other categories of specialist who have dealings with
secret truths.

CHAPTER TWO: NOTES

1. Crick, 1976, p. 116.

2. The term for the ancestors' world is based on the word for 'spirit' rather than the word for 'ancestor'. Turay suggests that this may be because originally *ù-kərfì* might have meant 'ancestor' instead of 'spirit'. He derives *ù-kərfì* from the words for 'pillar' (*à-kâr*) and 'dead' (*fì*), and interprets it as meaning 'dead pillar of the community'. (1971, p. 103).

3. See Littlejohn, 1960b, pp. 67-69.

4. Some villages, particularly in Bombali Sebora Chiefdom, have a small square ancestor shrine called *à-bòro-mà-sàr* which shelters a number of stones representing the ancestors. The stones are dug from the graves of the ancestors they represent, and are placed on a white cloth.

5. Jackson, 1977, p. 57.

6. Middleton, 1960.

7. *Λŋ-yàrɔŋ* is depicted as a white mermaid with long hair and a comb, and is known in Freetown and other parts of the West African coast as 'Mami Wata'.

8. 1963.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. They are destructive, however, if they are not given what they were promised. A common diviners' diagnosis of illness, reproductive disorders and other misfortunes is that these are sent by the sufferer's personal spirit as punishment because the sacrifice has not been made.

14. These spirits reside in an area of 'sacred bush' usually containing a cotton tree (*à-polòŋ*) at the edge of the town, as well as in a stone kept by the town or family head.

15. This was the name I had been given in Matotoka, nearby. Pa Fode had previously asked me to contribute two cups of rice, to be pounded into rice flour, and a white or 'red' (brown) chicken.

16. See Dawson, 1966, p. 20.

17. 'Benign spirit', derived from the Arabic *jīnn* via the Manding and Susu *jinà* (Turay, 1971, p. 105).

18. *Λŋ-rònso*, though dangerous, can be a personal spirit of hunters (his name comes from the Manding/Susu word for 'hunter', *dònso*; Turay, 1971, p. 105) and of traders, for whom he acquires wealth by stealing.

19. See Lamp, 1978, p. 39.

20. Crick, 1976, p. 119.

21. In functional analyses, as Crick asserts, the phenomena of religion and politics are 'artificially ripped apart and then joined again by some functional hypothesis about the link between mystical beliefs and political structure, such as that ritual sacralizes political statuses and so supports the social order, and so on.' (*ibid.*)

22. 1979, p. 243.

23. 1951, p. 184.

24. Ture, 1939, p. 95.

25. See Dorjahn, 1960b, p. 114.

26. 1979, p. 245.

27. This system has changed since the establishment of the Protectorate. The office of chief is now more lucrative and less dangerous than it was formerly, and there is considerable competition for it. See Dorjahn, 1960b.

28. See Dorjahn, 1959.

29. See Wylie, 1977, on the history of these northern chiefdoms and the influence of Islam.

30. See Littlejohn, 1960b, p. 65.

31. See Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 38.

32. 1973, p. 298.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Lienhardt, 1961, p. 247.

35. 1939, p. 95.

36. 1969, p. 540.

37. A 'swear' is a powerful ritual object or collection of objects used publicly to find and attack witches, thieves and adulterers. See Littlejohn, 1960a.

38. Wylie, 1977, p. 35.

39. 1971, p. 116.

40. This ambiguity of the chief was formerly manifested in installation and burial rituals in certain chiefdoms. In some chiefdoms, the chief-elect was beaten by the people before receiving office; in others his corpse was covered in leopard skins, verbally abused and dragged through different towns by the secret society responsible for his rituals before being taken to the burial ground. (Williams, 1945, p. 44, cited in Banton, 1957, p. 124.) As Turner has pointed out with reference to the similar ritual humiliation of the Ndembu chief, these rituals express the conviction that a person in high office should not use his position for individual gain but for the benefit of the community. (1974, orig. 1969, pp. 86-91)

41. See Dorjahn, 1960b.

42. Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 41.

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Ibid.*

45. See Dawson, 1963, p. 21.

46. Instead of using a female medium for this technique, as is usual, Pa Saidu himself is the medium.

47. Lamp, 1978, p. 41.

48. The infant mortality and child morbidity rates for Sierra Leone are high: 182 per 1000 live births and 30% up to age 5 respectively (Ministry of Health, 1977: 'Primary Health Care in Sierra Leone', Freetown, p. 1).

49. Evans-Pritchard, 1937.

50. See Dawson, 1963, pp. 16-17.

51. Jackson writes that this also occurs in Kuranko belief, and is called 'opening the door' to the co-witch (1975, p. 391).

52. This is an association of men who disguise themselves as wild animals (such as chimpanzees, leopards or crocodiles) in order to kill people.

53. Statement of the victim at the C.I.D. office, Makeni, taken down on March 10th, 1978.

54. A Moslem diviner; derives from '*alfa*', the Fula term for a Qur'anic teacher (Turay, 1971, p. 147).

55. 'Look Gron', in We Yone, Wed. Nov. 22, 1978, p. 4.

56. See Littlejohn, 1960a.

57. 'Look Gron', We Yone, Wed. Nov. 22, 1978, pp. 4 & 10.

58. While *ma-nɛkɛ* sing in eerie, nasal voices, they go to *ro-serɔ̀ŋ* and obtain information about their suspects from the witches there.

59. 1964, p. 232.

60. 1963.

61. 1971, p. 338.

62. The *Oje* is a society of the Oku (Yoruba) Krio, particularly strong in the Kambia and Port Loko Districts. See Turay, 1971, pp. 305-314.

63. See Lamp, 1978, p. 43; also Turay, 1971, pp. 194-5.

64. '*Minɛ̀ŋ ba ra-fɔr rɛ̀-bɔlĩ. I ti nɛ̀ŋk ɔ-bɔlĩ i tasi aŋ-sɛr. Minɛ̀ŋ mɛ̀ wɔp aŋ-sɛr. To gbɔlĩ làfthɛ bɛ̀ɛ̀, i ti wɔp ko.*'

65. See Jackson, 1975.

66. This is the explanation of why people about to die sometimes confess to witchcraft.

67. It was inappropriate for the witch to confess to her co-wife instead of her husband, just as it was

inappropriate for the villagers in the 'chimpanzee attack' incident not to have informed the chief immediately. Keeping secrets from one's husband is an erosion of his power.

68. Turay, 1971, pp. 305-314.

69. Dorjahn, 1959; Thomas, 1916, pp. 146 and 151; Wylie, 1977, p. 24.

70. A detailed study of the rituals and art of $ra\text{-}B\acute{a}y$ has been carried out by Lamp, 1978.

71. 1971, p. 159.

72. 1916, pp. 143-146.

73. For example, Dorjahn, 1959 and 1960b; Wylie, 1977, pp. 22-24 and 45-48. See also Little, 1965, on the Mende Poro.

74. Dorjahn, 1960b, p. 136.

75. Tonkin, 1979, pp. 243-245.

76. Dorjahn writes that one of the main motivations for becoming a $P\jmath r\jmath$ official is 'Intellectual curiosity', 1961, p. 28.

77. Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 38.

78. Jackson, 1977, p. 228.

79. 1966.

80. 1979, p. 246.

81. Shlenker, 1861, pp. 12-15. The flat folded cloth placed on the head when carrying a load is called $a\eta\text{-}th\jmath f$, 'the earth'.

82. Littlejohn, 1963, p. 2.

83. Jackson, 1977, Ch. 12.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

85. *Ibid.*, p. 221.

86. *Ibid.*

87. See Jackson, 1975, p. 398.

88. See Tonkin, 1979.

89. Compare the definitional role of 'public' secrecy among Krio Freemasons; Cohen, 1971.

90. Little, 1949.

91. 1961, p. 37.

92. Dorjahn, 1959, p. 163.

93. Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 37; Dorjahn, *ibid.*, p. 167.

94. Dorjahn, *ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*; 1960b, pp. 114 and 136.

96. Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 38.

97. See Littlejohn, 1978, p. 8.

CHAPTER THREE: TEMNE DIVINERS

Diviners among the Temne are a fairly heterogeneous group. There are no restrictions of age or sex (although the men heavily outnumber the women), recruitment can be by inheritance, apprenticeship or spontaneous 'call' (and may be a mixture of all three), and socio-economic status varies enormously. Most diviners (*à-thupə̂s*) treat the ailments and misfortunes they diagnose. Some are traditional herbalists (*à-boloŋbà*) and others are Muslim healers and clerics (*à-mɔrê*), but these are not mutually exclusive roles since Muslim healers often use herbal medicines as well as Muslim medicine (*ma-nasî*, the ink washed off a slate on which a passage from the Qur'an is written) and herbalists often use Muslim elements such as Islamic prayers and Qur'anic amulets (*ɛ̀-sɛbɛ̂*) in their treatments.

While most diviners and diviner-healers are relatively minor figures who obtain their main livelihood from farming since they do not obtain a sufficient income from divination and healing alone, those few with a big reputation enjoy wealth and a high status. This is largely an individual matter, and although Muslim diviners do generally have a higher status than traditional diviners, this can be offset if a traditional diviner possesses great personal skill and charisma.

Social and geographical distance are also important criteria in determining status. A diviner practicing in his own village often ranks fairly low among his neighbours; they say that he knows their secrets anyway, so any pronouncements that he makes do not have much independent

validity. Moreover, because he is so well-known, it is
often harder to believe that he possesses extraordinary
power: power comes from without, rather than from within
the community. A stranger residing in one's village usually
ranks higher, a diviner in another village ranks higher
still, and one from far away, particularly from Guinée,
is normally greatly respected. However, this trend is
modified considerably by the personal reputation of indi-
vidual diviners.

Renowned diviners are sometimes given a Government licence
to catch thieves and witches, and on their verdict witches
can be fined and thieves detained. The wealth and status
of such diviners is often high. One licenced diviner in
Magburaka, Tonkolili District, is often 'called' to cases
over a hundred miles away, and is given about £17 for each
thief and £20 for each witch he catches; he has five wives
although he is relatively young and is investing the money
he has gained by building houses to rent out. The demand
for him is so great that he has organized what is essen-
tially a diviners' 'medical practice' in which he sends
out three lesser known diviners to represent him on some
calls after preparing them with his medicine. The diffe-
rence in reputation, wealth and status between him and
small rural diviners who have to rely on farming for their
basic subsistence is obviously considerable.

In rural Temneland divination and healing is one of
the few means by which an individual can become economi-
cally prosperous through his own skill and effort, the
other most obvious ways being cash-cropping and trading.

Interestingly, successful diviners are often also cash-
croppers and/or traders: enterprise in one occupation
seems to correspond to enterprise in others. This view
of diviners as ritual entrepreneurs is often expressed
by diviners themselves. In response to my questions about
why they took up divination, one diviner said, 'I have
knowledge of the Qur'an so it's a way to make money' and
another, describing a conversation with a spirit with whom
he had made a contract, said he had told the spirit, 'I
would like to discover certain things for people so they
will pay me and I will get money.'

Descriptions and brief life-histories of four diviners -
one in a rural village, one in a provincial town, one in
Freetown and one in the diamond district - will demonstrate
this heterogeneity of diviners which, nevertheless, over-
lays certain recurring common features.

1. Pa Alfa Koroma, Petbana Masimbo Village

Petbana is a medium-sized village of twenty-eight
houses, approximately three miles from Makeni in Bombali
Sebora Chiefdom. Pa Koroma is a small man of about fifty
with four wives and nine children, one of whom, his five-
year-old son Noah, is being trained as a diviner. He has
a fairly large farm, and his senior wife, Adama, keeps a
small and rarely-used shop in a room at the front of the
house. Pa Koroma is well-respected in the area as a person
as well as for his skill as a diviner, and he has recently
been selected as the new village headman after the previous
one died.

As his name implies,[1] he is a Muslim diviner, using the *aŋ-yìnà-Musà* method and a technique called *aŋ-sàràfìlo*,[2] which I have not seen used by another diviner. He used to use several other methods but found that these were the best. Petbana is his home village, and his father was a farmer. He was given an Arabic education, along with his brother by a different mother, under a Muslim cleric and diviner-healer; this brother also subsequently became a diviner and now lives and practices in the nearby village of Makama.

When he first began his education, Pa Koroma saw a small female Muslim spirit with whom he made an agreement:

> She said, 'You have seen me and I have
> seen you. What do you want me to do for
> you?' I said, 'Since I am learning the
> Qur'an, I would like to discover certain
> things for people so they will pay me and
> I will get money. So I would like you to
> give me that sense.' The spirit asked,
> 'If I do, what will you do for me?' I
> told her I would give a sheep.

After five years his Arabic training ended, so he gave his teacher a cow, 'forty pounds', shoes, a shirt, a cap and a dress for his senior wife as gifts of appreciation. He sacrificed the sheep he had promised and had a 'graduation ceremony' attended by his family in which rice was cooked and his teacher formally gave him his blessing.

Seeking wealth and opportunity, he travelled to Freetown and lived there for fifteen years, divining and curing mad people, for which he acquired a reputation. He then lived in Sherbro Island in the south west of Sierra Leone for eight years before returning to Petbana.

In the Petbana/Makeni area he has achieved renown as
a diviner and healer, using both *ma-nasî* and herbal medi-
cines from the bush for his cures, and continues to specialise
in the diagnosis and treatment of mad people (he claims to
have cured thirty-seven so far). Most of his clients
travel from nearby villages and from Makeni to consult him,
although some have come from as far away as Freetown and
Port Loko (both are about four hours' lorry journey away),
and he usually gets one or two clients per day, who pay
him 40c. for an ordinary private consultation with *aŋ-
sàràfilo*. In addition he frequently travels around 'on
call' himself, usually to Makeni. Once he was called to
cure Bay Koblo, the Paramount Chief of the next-but-one
chiefdom (Marampa-Masimera), and with the money which the
grateful Chief gave when he recovered he was able to con-
crete the walls and floor of his house, which few villagers
can afford to do.

2. Pa Biyare Seri, Makeni Town.

Pa Biyare, staying temporarily in a room in Makeni,
the capital of the Northern Province, is also about fifty
years of age. He is a herbalist as well as a diviner, and
uses the traditional method of *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*[3] despite having had
an Islamic education for five years. Although Muslim
methods usually have a higher status, Pa Biyare's old
father is a famous *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* diviner (*ù-mɛ̂n*) in Mafoŋke
village, near Makeni, whose already powerful and high-status
position Pa Biyare is eager to take over. When asked why
he had become a diviner, Pa Biyare replied:

> When your relative has property, you have
> to make sure that you get it. The property
> now moves from one member of the family to
> another.

His father had trained him to divine and heal for at least
ten years, according to Pa Biyare. During this training,
he had a dream in which his father told him:

> This work is yours. Take it. But you have
> to have some patience yet.

This is interesting, as it is usually a spirit or a dead
relative who hands over the power of divination in a dream.
There is, however, as in many African peoples, a close
association among the Temne between elders and ancestors,
who are denoted by the same term (aŋ-bakî, 'the old ones'),
and this instance gives support to Kopytoff's[4] assertion
that African ancestorship and eldership form a single com-
plex. It is, however, implied in the dream itself that
Pa Biyare will have to wait patiently for his father to
become an ancestor (ù-bakî po fì, 'an old one who has died')
before he will be given his full power as a diviner.

In Mafoŋke, Pa Biyare has two wives, twelve children
and a farm, which he usually hires others to work for him.
He is teaching aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ to his epileptic daughter, who stays
with him in Makeni. Approximately two clients per day come
to consult him, according to him; they are mostly from
Makeni and he charges them 40c. He has travelled around
on call as far as Freetown and Bo (the capital of the
Southern Province) but has never lived anywhere other than
Mafoŋke and Makeni.

3. Pa Yamba Nhoni Kamara, Freetown.

Pa Yamba, who is about sixty-five years of age, lives in a small tin house in the east part of Freetown. As well as being an *aŋ-mɛmnɛ̀* ('the mirror') and *ta-faŋt* ('the cowrie shells')[5] diviner, he heals with both traditional and Muslim medicine and makes Islamic amulets (*ɛ̀-sɛbɛ̂*). He can be seen as something of a ritual entrepreneur who, despite not having had an Arabic education, has incorporated prestigious and powerful Islamic elements into his repertoire. He is *ù-soko-bànà*, an official of the *Pɔrɔ* society,[6] and is famous in Freetown for his public displays of snake-handling and other miraculous feats, such as inserting knives up his nose. Like all *Pɔrɔ* officials, he has knowledge of bad as well as good medicine (the two are, in any case, seen by the Temne as inseparable), and expresses pride in both aspects of his power, claiming to be 'chief among the *soko-bànà!*[7]

Like Pa Biyare, Pa Yamba's father was a big *ù-mɛ̂n*, and his brother and grandfather were also diviners. In answer to my questions, he described why he had become a diviner:

> When I was young, I saw big people come to
> my father. My father got a lot of respect,
> so I wanted that life. My father didn't
> go to school, but because he was a diviner
> and a herbalist, he had money and respect.
> Also, a woman died when she was about to
> bear. My father said he was going to
> deliver the child, and he did. I was there,
> and my interest grew.

Thus his father trained him to cast *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* and to use herbal medicines. Pa Yamba said that he was given the

knowledge to divine from an ancestor, but that he already had 'four eyes' before this. He later acquired further specialized training from other diviners in different parts of the country. A Kono diviner put liquid medicine in his eyes which enabled him, with the help of his ancestor, to see witches especially clearly:

> I was able to get in me a feeling, without
> divining, of whether someone's a witch.
> If I go to sleep now, I can get knowledge
> of witches.

From a diviner in Segbwema, in the south-east, he learned to use the 'pot' ($a\eta$-$gb\grave{\jmath}t$)[8] ordeal, and from a Kissy diviner in Pendembu, also in the south-east, he learned $a\eta$-$m\varepsilon mn\grave{\varepsilon}$ with ta-$fa\eta t$, the main technique he uses today.

He spent fourteen years in the army, which he left thirteen years ago, but apart from this he has not done any other work. However, he says that he was given land in Yonibana, in southern Temneland, in return for curing the Paramount Chief there, Fula Mansa Bimbikoro; he hires others to farm this land, and additionally hires a small boy to trade for him there.

He has two wives and five children, and lives next door to his sister, who has the title of $Y\check{a}$ $B\grave{a}y$ ('Mother Chief') as a specialist in swearing. As a diviner-healer he is in fairly high demand, and is consulted by between two and seven clients per day, mostly from Freetown, who pay either 40c. or 80c. for a consultation.

4. <u>Ya Mabinti Kamara, Koidu.</u>

Ya Mabinti is a woman in her sixties, and has lived in
Koidu, the heart of the diamond district of Kono, for
twenty-one years. Born in a village near Port Loko, in
north-western Temneland, she accompanied her sister to
Lungi, the site of Sierra Leone's international airport,
when the latter went there to marry. She grew up and married
there herself, and worked as a trader, selling groundnuts
at Lungi airport. During a consultation with a diviner,
the diviner hinted at her future role, telling her that
'people will want to see you at a certain age of your life'.

When she was about forty and had two children (two
others having died) and grandchildren, her husband died.
Around this time she had two dreams which told her to take
up the tə-ʃaŋt (cowrie shells) method of divination. In
the first dream, her dead aunt showed her how to divine
with the shells, and when she woke up she found that she
knew how to use them:

> When I got up, I went on a journey and I
> met women who asked me to divine for them.
> I told the women that I didn't know how to
> 'look' really and that I had no cowries,
> and the women offered twelve cowries to me
> and asked me to 'look' for them. So I
> did. And what the divination was about was
> that their husbands were going to do pros-
> pects (i.e., surveying an area for diamond
> digging). I 'looked' and told them that
> their husbands would get one white diamond,
> a small one, in that area. After that they
> were not going to get anything else. And
> what I told them was exactly what happened.

Shortly afterwards she had a second dream:

> I was in *ro-mə̀-rè* (the place of dreams), then
> I saw these cowries in first a heap and then
> a circle form. When I woke up I was afraid.

After a year she moved to Koidu where her brother was the
head of the Temne migrants. There, she started divining
and healing ('in curing, God gave me knowledge'), which
is her only source of income. She is in demand, and claims
to be consulted by ten clients per day, mostly from Koidu,
whom she charges the standard 40c.

Initiatory Encounters with Spirits and Ancestors

In all four cases, the common theme is contact of
some kind between the future diviner and a spirit and/or an
ancestor. Most diviners say that this was the crucial part
of their training. Usually, but not necessarily, this
initiatory contact takes place in a dream (*mə̀-rè* or *a-wɔrə̂p*)
in the 'darkness' outside ordinary community life, in which
contact between living people, dead people and spirits is
less dangerous. I was often told by diviners that in order
to divine I would also have to have such a dream, since
knowledge of the technical manipulation of divinatory objects
by itself is not sufficient. Others, such as Ya Mabinti,
assumed that I had this internal ability anyway, since white
people have 'four eyes' and are therefore in contact with
spirits. In some cases (Ya Mabinti's initiation into
divination, for example) the dream is all the training that
is required, while in others it is the necessary complement
to, and often the culmination of, the training given by a
Qur'anic teacher or a diviner-relative.

The sacrifices made by the diviner at the end of his
training or after his dream - usually a sheep at the end

of Muslim training - seal the bargain with the spirit or ancestor. This patron spirit or ancestor acts as a mediator between the diviner and the spirits in *ro-sɔkì*.

Most diviners give either very sketchy, enigmatic descriptions of their dream or refuse to talk about it at all. It is not strictly a secret, as 'society secrets' are, but it is simply not usually appropriate to freely discuss powerful encounters with inhabitants of hidden regions in ordinary conversation. However, some defined what they could reveal of their dream more broadly than others. The fullest account of an initiatory dream was given by a very successful young diviner in Magburaka, Abdul Conteh, who uses *aŋ-thàsàbiyà* (the Muslim rosary beads) for private divination, but is frequently called to other chiefdoms to catch thieves and witches by the 'broom' (*aŋ-gbə'lɔ*) technique:[9]

> The gift I have is a family (or lineage, *'à-bɔŋsɔ'*) gift. My great-grandfather was a great warrior. When he died, my grand-father, Pa Kapər Bongo, took over the warriorship. When he died, he left his gift with his son (Abdul's father), who was a famous hunter. When my father died, he called me to him in a sacred (*mə̀-sə̀m*) forest near Makump (where Abdul's family is from). My eyes were tied with a white cloth, and I slept. I saw a fine white lady, who said that my father had asked her to transfer the gift to me, and asked me what kind of gift I would like: to be a famous warrior, hunter, chief or Muslim? I replied that I wanted to learn Arabic and to learn what is hidden. I said, 'Whenever something is hidden, I want to know how to find it.' After this, she stretched out her hand and we greeted each other as a sign of handing over the gift. Then she gave me a red cloth with perfume in it. Anyone who has this per-fume and puts it in their eyes can see

> hidden things.
> The gift from the white lady *aŋ-yìnā* (Muslim
> spirit) was for a certain period only - five,
> ten or twenty years. After this, the power
> stops unless there is a review of the whole
> business, in which she would have to be given
> certain things, such as a sheep...
> I disappeared when I went to sleep and spoke
> to the lady. I was gone for two days; the
> lady had taken me to *ro-sɔkì*. When she left
> me, and I came back, I was not myself. I was
> dizzy for seven days. When I got back, sacri-
> fices were made. My family brought some
> flour, an egg, three cents and some raw gold
> to the forest. These things were placed in a
> bowl with a white cloth spread on top.. They
> fired seven bullets and all turned their
> backs and returned to the town. So I do not
> need to prepare any medicines: the gift is
> inside me.

The gift of the patron spirit, in this case passed down

through the patrilineage from father to son, is thus not

specific to divination, but is the same type as that used

to achieve extraordinary success in other specializations

such as hunting, war and being a chief.

The spirit here is female, as are most diviners' spirits,

since contact with a spirit of the same sex causes insanity

or death, and most diviners are men. She is white, as

are, once again, most diviners' spirits; the colour white

is associated with the supernatural in its benevolent

aspect (ancestors and benign spirits)[10] and with the power

of Europeans.[11] She is also a Muslim spirit, *aŋ-yìna,*

since she is behind Abdul's Muslim method of divination,

aŋ-thàsàbiya.

Like secret society initiations, the encounter took

place in a state of separation from ordinary 'town'

existence. Abdul was called to a sacred forest outside

the town, his ordinary eyes were blindfolded and he slept:

in the bush, inhabited by powers of the outside, he entered
the 'darkness' in which contact between humans, ancestors
and spirits is easiest. Through this darkness he was
taken to *ro-sɔkì*, where the power to divine (characterized
as 'to learn what is hidden') was revealed and transferred
to him in the form of the perfumed red handkerchief. This
experience has striking parallels to ecstatic shamanistic
initiation in which the shaman travels to the 'other world',
where the power to shamanize and heal are imparted to him
by supernatural beings.[12] The sequence also clearly
exhibits Van Gennep's stages of 'separation' followed by
'transition', while the 'incorporation' back into ordinary
life was accomplished with difficulty: '...I was not myself.
I was dizzy for seven days.'

In some cases, it is considered necessary to become a
diviner to cure a sickness sent by the patron spirit of
the reluctant diviner's lineage, as the following two cases
illustrate. Ya Maŋke Kamara, a migrant woman diviner in
a village near Koidu, had watched her father, an *ù-mɛ̂n*,
divine with *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* when she was a child. She described
her 'call' to divination as follows:

> When my father died, my brother took over
> the divination. My brother died too, and
> *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* saw me. I grew sick. They divined
> and I was told to start divination, but I
> did not. I started to go mad and decided
> to take up *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* ... I made a sacrifice of
> white and red material.

A Muslim diviner also in Koidu described his initiatory
dream and sickness when he returned home to attend his
grandfather's 'Forty Days' funeral ceremony. Significantly,

it is at the 'Forty Days' that the dead person's separation
from the living is complete, and he or she becomes an
ancestor: the grandfather's rite of passage into ancestor-
ship is necessary before the grandson's rite of passage
into divination can take place:

> I had a dream. I was told to take up
> divination. A relative who died told me
> this. He told me to give a sheep. When
> I woke up, I told my father. He said it
> had been my grandfather's work, and that
> he's teaching me. When I had this dream
> I was sick. I used to have a sore that
> wouldn't heal on my leg. I had an opera-
> tion and when I recovered I did divination
> and didn't get sick.' I would have got
> worse if I hadn't started it. I am sick
> now, until he gets what was asked for
> (the sheep sacrifice has not yet been
> made). Now I need to find a sheep for my
> grandfather's spirit (ɔ-kərfì). When I
> find a diamond, I will get money and make
> the sacrifice... When I get the sheep,
> I will call people and pray to God. I'll
> be told, 'Go to this place, work here,
> work there.' Now I can't boast.

The diviner's rite of passage is not properly effected until
the sacrifice to the spirit behind the method is made.

These two cases sound similar to those described by
Lewis,[13] in which sickness is diagnosed as the onset of
involuntary spirit-possession. His analysis of such cases
in terms of a 'mystical protest' by subordinate or 'deprived'
categories of people such as women and men of low status
cannot be supported here, however. More men than women
become diviners among the Temne, as was stated above, and
these men on the whole do not come from low-status, sub-
ordinate sections of Temne society. Wilson's[14] alternative
analysis of Lewis's material views possession as a rite
of passage from an ambiguous status (such as that of a

barren wife) into a more defined one (as spirit-medium or
shaman), which appears to fit Ya Mabinti's case; since her
dream coincided with the death of her husband, and the case
of Pa Biyare's epileptic daughter, who is being trained by him
as a diviner. However, although it seems to apply to certain
individual cases, it does not work as a blanket explanation
of divinatory initiation. Abdul Conteh, for instance, came
from a respected background, and indeed most diviners cannot
be said to have had an ambiguous status before their initi-
atory training and dream. Rather, in most cases this dream
and training would more accurately be described as a rite
of passage *into* an ambiguous state.

The Ambivalence of Diviners

—   Like secret society officials, diviners are mediators
between ordinary people and forces of the outside: spirits
from another world, *ro-sɔkì*, who also inhabit the relatively
wild zones of river and bush in this world. These spirits,
are, like secret society spirits, dangerous to human beings,
but when contact with them is carefully controlled they can
be crucial forces of revelation and truth. Diviners therefore
seek both contact with and protection from the spirits
whose messages they convey.

Pa Fode Gbla, ù-*mɛ̂n* in Mayan village, Tane Chiefdom,
spoke of this double aspect of spirits when I asked him why
he had arranged the stones of *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* in columns of four.
My questions are in parentheses:

> You need even numbers to deal with the
> spirits. The 'four' does not matter —
> it could be six or eight. (Why do you

> need even numbers to deal with the spirits?)
> To every negative there is a positive - the
> good and the bad. (How does this apply to
> divination?) This work is always to help
> people for the better, but there are times,
> when you meet the spirits, when you meet
> them on the negative line. It is certain
> that you won't always get what you ask for.
> That is why - they are always working towards
> the good and the bad.

This duality of the spirits he mediates is manifested in
the layout of Pa Fode's divinatory equipment. He called
the right-hand columns of *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* 'the roads to life' and
the left-hand columns 'the road to death', and explained:

> In every way, left is always weaker. You
> only gain force and strength from the right.
> All evil comes from the left.

To his left, on the mat on which he cast *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*, he had
placed a bottle of medicine with pebbles and Muslim amulets,
ɛ̀-sɛbɛ̂ sewn onto it. He described it as a 'guard' and said
that he rubbed the medicine over him before sleep and before
divination as protection against witches and harmful
spirits. Over his right shoulder and hanging by his left
hip he wore a band of white material[15] with cowrie shells,
pebbles and coins sewn on, such that these objects fell
around his left side. When I commented that the bottle
and the band were on the left, Pa Fode replied:

> It is a block. All evil coming this way
> should not pass by this bottle. You need
> something strong on the left to fight the
> evil coming from the left.

The left, the side of that which is dangerous, evil
and outside the community's scrutiny is also, however, the
side of that valuable power and truth which is also external

to ordinary society.[16] Whereas, inside the bounds of
ordinary social action, right is dominant and left is weak,
outside its bounds (as in death and sleep, for instance)
left becomes stronger than right.[17] This dual significance
of the left side mirrors the dual aspect of divinatory
spirits and, indeed, of diviners themselves. Pa Biyare
described himself to me as having the 'luck' of women and
of the left, which he emphasized was stronger than that
of the right:

> If a man stubs his left foot, it is bad. If
> a woman stubs her left foot, it is fine.
> Left-handed diviners are very powerful.[18]
> I have women's luck - if I dream a woman, I
> get good luck. The left hand is the hand
> that God made to be powerful. But most
> people are right-handed. If you sleep and
> it (the left hand) releases its power on
> you, you will not be able to overcome the
> load. Even with shoes, if you are right-
> footed, the left shoe does not spoil quickly.

Thus not only spirits but also diviners can be associated
with the ambivalent left side. The social dualism of right
and left provides a conceptual framework for anyone wishing
to define themselves, or somebody else, as different and
extraordinary.

Diviners, then, like secret society officials, take
on the ambivalence of the spirits whose 'truths' they
channel. Like secret society officials, again, they are
one of those categories of people who have four eyes and
who operate mainly in private and in secret. This, added
to the belief that anyone with a personal patron spirit
may be asked to provide human lives as payment to that
spirit, means that diviners are thought of as very likely
being witches.

They are not only suspected and feared for the secrecy
of their work, but are also sometimes criticized for the
revelations they *do* make in private divination: telling the
wrong secrets can be just as bad as keeping the wrong
secrets. Diviners' diagnoses in private divination often
disrupt social relationships:

> If a diviner tells you your brother is a
> witch, the love between you and your brother
> has been spoiled. The family, it starts to
> break. We don't like them.

Most diviners, in fact, do not make specific accusations
of this kind in private divination, but they can still make
hints by telling a man to 'look at the behaviour of one
of your wives', for instance. By making vague accusations,
—diviners minimize the *aŋ-hakɛ̀* ('sin') which falls upon
them as a result of causing marital or family conflict.

Another frequent and major criticism levelled against
diviners, who are usually healers as well, is that they
use harmful as well as curative medicine. This view is
expressed in the following extract from a newspaper article:

> THE ROLE OF A HERBALIST. Black power or
> juju has been known to Africa for centuries
> before the advent of the white man to our
> continent and even today the impact of this
> mystical science on the life of the black
> man is of great importance. The herbalist
> or precisely a native doctor is a man versed
> in his study of the elements of nature by the
> simple display of herbs so to say in its
> simplest form 'leaves'. It is a common evi-
> dence that the herbalist is the source of
> both happiness and distress to the community
> as a whole.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS. Native doctors for all
generations past and present have played a
tremendous role in supplying answers to our
problems particularly in the field of love.
Take for instance the case of two lovers who
for some time had been head over heels in love
for one another but suddenly the passion sub-
sides and approaches a near separation... The
native doctor by the power of simple leaves is
even able to make a love hypnotism of which
the charm prepared forces the other partner
subject to his demands and love him or her almost
in the superlative. Cases of ATEFOR[19] are
known to us. Similarly, with this art, the her-
balist can cause distress. There are such
numerous instances where the native doctor can
prepare simple leaves to harm or even make
total destruction of life. It is even believed
that with this magic, strings are turned into
deadly pythons against enemies more so to
cause thunderbolts.
HEALING. On the contrary, however, we find
the native doctor quite indispensible in cer-
tain ailments. He becomes the healing agent.
There are often serious cases treated by the
native doctors which become a medical dilemma
with our modern physicians. The case of a
compound practise (sic.) where the bone pierces
the flesh is only treated by our medicos
through amputation. The herbalist only pre-
pares his herbs followed by a little ceremony
cures the patient to normality![20]

The references here to turning strings into pythons and

causing thunderbolts link herbalism with both witchcraft and

the use of powerful swears.

It is a central principle of Temne medicine that know-

ledge of curative medicine is inseparable from knowledge

of harmful medicine.[21] Littlejohn[22] found that the curative

or harmful properties of medicinal plants are affected by

the conditions under which they are collected. A system

of temporal and spatial 'sympathies' and 'antipathies'

operates. In the alternation of dry and wet seasons, 'full

moon time' and 'dead moon time', and day and night, the first

of each temporal pair is in sympathy with man and curative

medicines, while the second of each pair is in antipathy
to them:

> Plants for curative medicines *must* be
> collected by day. Plants for medicines to
> harm people may be collected by day and
> night, but any collected by night can only
> be used for harm. Curative medicine is
> at its best at full moon time in the height
> of the dry season.[23]

Likewise, in the spatial division of right and left, 'right'
is in sympathy and 'left' is in antipathy with man and
curative medicine; curative medicinal plants must therefore
be picked with the right hand and harmful ones with the
left hand.[24] Temne medicine is clearly part of a conceptual
system in which 'good' and 'bad' powers are mutually inter-
dependent.

Although most diviner-healers state emphatically, as
did Pa Fode Gbla, that 'This work is always to help people
for the better', this is not in accord with the ambivalent
social stereotype of diviners. Many case studies I collected
included instances of clients diagnosed as suffering from
illness or insanity because a jealous relative had hired
a diviner to harm the victim with medicine: in this way,
diviners through their own diagnoses give support to the
negative views people hold about them. Some, upon closer
acquaintance, proudly described their powers to harm:

> When people have disputes, a person with a
> bad heart will hire me to make another
> person sick, and I will make something to
> harm them. The person blows medicine on
> his hand and calls the name of the person
> he wants to harm. Then their body will rot -
> it itches and the skin peels.

The same diviner claimed to have secretly cured witches
who fell sick after being caught by a swear; since witches
should be exposed, this is equivalent to practising witch-
craft oneself. He also showed me a trick in which he lit
a cigarette, saying 'I call something. I say I want money',
then stubbed it out on a medicine bottle and produced a
two Leone[25] note from inside it. He tore it slightly, 'so
that it doesn't disappear', and said that he had drawn it
from other money somewhere in Freetown. This was tantamount
to stating that he had just practiced *ka-thɔfi*, 'economic
witchcraft', in which money is stolen by invisible means.

The same ambivalence, beneath a surface image of bene-
volence, also appears to characterise Limba diviner -
herbalists and their clients, as the following extract
illustrates:

> As time passed the participants gradually
> dropped their public personae and exposed
> their true intentions. Fanka, who presents
> himself as a healer and protector, boasted
> of his prowess at killing, and his assistant
> brought from the dark corners of the shrine
> human bones and reputedly deadly fetishes.
> Dauda told me he sought only protection; but
> after leaving the herbalist's shop, he produced
> a large and forbidding witch gun which Fanka
> had given him secretly with the *hu-ronko*.[26]

This is not to suggest that all diviners use what they
see as harmful medicine against people for their own or
for their clients' ends.

Many do, however, report being hired to help a client
win a court case, and one diviner I worked with claimed to
have been hired by several prominent 'big men' to aid them
in achieving or maintaining power. On one visit to him I

saw a potentially awkward situation develop when two such
'big men' came to see him at the same time. With skill and
energy he went from one to the other, keeping them apart
and not letting either know of the other's presence.

Helping 'big men' further their careers, influencing
court cases, harming people with bad medicine and making
accusations which upset family harmony are all actions which
build up the diviner's à-hàkὲ, or sin. Muslim diviners
therefore attempt to reduce their à-hakὲ as much as possible
through prayer and by ceasing divination during the month
of Ramadan. If they have sufficient funds to make the *hajj*
to Mecca, this is believed to cancel out their à-hàkὲ alto-
gether.

Although using harmful medicine and attempting to increase
the power of 'big men' are probably extreme cases, all the
activities for which diviners are criticized are those in
which the diviner serves either his own interests or those
of his individual clients at the expense of the community.
However, this may give too much weight to the negative aspects
of diviners in popular opinion. People also admire their
extraordinary knowledge and skill, although they point out
that some are fakes. In their role as diagnosticians and
healers they are certainly seen as valuable to the commu-
nity: Pa Koroma of Petbana, for instance, is highly respected
and has been chosen to serve the interests of his community
by being elected as headman.

The negative aspects of diviners, moreover, only appear
to apply to those who work in private. Public divination,

in which the secret and evil actions of witches, thieves
and adulterers are brought into the open, serves the commu-
nity's interests at the expense of the individual wrongdoer.
Yet even here diviners are in a position of ambiguity, since
it is held that witches can only be caught by $\grave{a}$-poŋ inɛ̂, or
$\grave{a}$ -thekre, extremely powerful witches: to catch a witch is
therefore to admit that one has the power and knowledge of
witchcraft oneself. Socially 'good' and 'bad' aspects of
divination thus seem to be as interdependent as curative
and harmful medicine.

This ambivalence of Temne diviners is evident in Temne
folktales, in which a common character is the divining-bird,
Pa Lulu. He is the Senegal Fire Finch (ɑŋ-lúlu), a bird
who frequents human habitations and comes unusually close
to people, thus mediating between town and bush, human and
non-human realms, just as the diviner mediates between nɔ-rù
and ro-sɔkì.[27] He is the Temne equivalent of the British
Robin, who is similarly close to man and who is also given
supernatural qualities in British folklore. The cry of the
Senegal Fire Finch is construed as 'gbətə̂r, gbətə̂r!', meaning
'shakehand, shakehand!', which Pa Lulu utters every time
someone comes to consult him: like most human diviners, he
shows a pragmatic concern over his payment. He gives his
services as diviner to anyone who asks, irrespective of
whether what they want is to obtain something by trickery
or to bring about justice. One story, for instance, relates
how he tells Pa Roto (the toad) how to win a singing compe-
tition at his father-in-law's funeral through false pre-
tences, while in another tale he helps to expose the three
despotic chiefs, Pa Sip (the leopard), Pa Thɔlu (the hyena)

and Pa Sɔyila (the lion) who are secretly devouring the rest of the animals.[28] Since a great many characters in Temne folktales use trickery to obtain their desired ends, however, the diviner is not alone in being an ambivalent figure.

Specialist Person-Categories

It may have been noticed that much of the diviner's ambivalence lies in the overlap between the role of diviner and those of other categories such as those of witch and herbalist. Those of secret society official and Muslim cleric (ù-mɔrê) also overlap, since many àn-soko-bànà (Pɔrɔ officials), ɛ-digbà (officials of ra-Digbà and Bɔ̀ndɔ̀) and àŋ-Gbeŋle (ra-Gbeŋle leaders) are diviners, and the roles of Muslim teacher, diviner, healer and charm-maker are often combined. The category of ɔ-thupɔ̂s, the diviner, among the Temne derives a large part of its significance from its overlap with and distinction from other categories of people also defined as having supernatural power.[29] When such categories are examined, it becomes evident that *all* those who possess special power are felt to be ambivalent in some way, having both social and asocial qualities. When placed in this context, the negative qualities of diviners can be see as the necessary attributes of *anyone* who has power.

In order to examine these person-categories, I adapted a method known as Repertory Grid Technique, devised by a psychologist, George Kelly.[30] According to Kelly, man makes sense of his world by means of a dynamic system of conceptual 'constructs' which form the basic building blocks of his world-view. Repertory Grid Technique is a means of eliciting a person's constructs and determining how they

are interconnected. I used it with ten people, mostly
in Temne villages near Makeni, eliciting constructs asso-
ciated with the following person-categories: the diviner
(ɔ-thupə̂s), the herbalist (ɔ-boloŋbâ), the Muslim cleric
(ɔ-mɔrê), the hunter (ɔ-kàprâ) the blacksmith (ɔ-kàbi),
the twin (ka-barî), the Pɔrɔ official (ɔ-soko-bànà), the
Bòndò/Digbà official (ɔ-digbà), the chief (ɔ-bày), the
witch (ɔ-sèr) and ordinary men (à-fəm à-rùnî) and women
(à -fəm à-bòm).

First, three of these terms were selected: the herba-
list, the hunter and the Muslim cleric, for instance. The
person was asked to think of some important way in which
the first two were alike in contrast to the third, a common
reply being that the herbalist and hunter both 'like the
bush', whereas the Muslim cleric stays in the town. This
process was then repeated for nine further combinations of
terms. The constructs obtained for all ten people were
as follows:

Diviners (à -thupə̂s):
            They are *thekre*[31]
            They find things
            They have knowledge
            They have four eyes
            They cure
            They are powerful
            They kill
            They have secrets
            They are good

Herbalists (à -boloŋbâ):
            They find things
            They use leaves
            They like the bush
            They have knowledge
            They cure
            They make things
            They are *thekre*

Muslim clerics (à -mɔrê):

        They find things
        They make things
        They have knowledge
        They are big people
        They are good
        They cure

Hunters (à -kàprâ):

        They destroy
        They kill
        They have secrets
        They like the bush
        They have strong eyes[32]
        They produce food
        They work at night

Blacksmiths (à -kàbi):

        They are powerful
        They make things
        They have knowledge
        They produce food

Twins (tə -bɑrî):

        They are *thekre*
        They have secrets
        They have four eyes
        They have knowledge
        They are powerful
        They are big people

Pɔrɔ officials (à -soko-bànà):

        They are dangerous
        They use leaves
        They destroy
        They are big people
        They are powerful
        They are *thekre*
        They play with blood
        They have secrets
        They cure
        They are bad

Bɔndò/Digbà officials (ɛ̀ -*digbà*):

        They are good
        They have secrets
        They have strong eyes
        They are *thekre*
        They are big people

Witches (à -sèr):

        They are dangerous
        They are *thekre*
        They destroy
        They are bad
        They play with blood
        They are invisible
        They have four eyes
        They work at night

                    They have secrets
                    They hide themselves

Chiefs (ɑ -bὰy):

                    They are powerful
                    They try to find out everything
                    They are good
                    They are big people
                    They are honoured
                    They have secrets
                    They do not have secrets[33]

Ordinary men and women emerged simply as those in comparison
to whom these special person-categories had the above con-
structs; thus ordinary people are not *sɔki* or *thekre*, are
not especially secretive (though people say that everyone
has secrets), are associated with the town rather than the
bush, do not find or reveal things and do not destroy, for
instance. These constructs are extremely revealing, since
they confirm that oppositions such as town and bush, ordinary
vision and four-eyed vision, openness and secrecy and pro-
ducing and destroying are key elements in the Temne view
of people.

Each person was then asked whether their constructs
also applied to the other person-categories; for example,
'do diviners like the bush?', 'do witches like the bush?',
etc. The total list of constructs elicited and their appli-
cation to the ten person-categories is given in Table 1
below. People tended to choose the same or very similar
constructs fairly consistently, such that only twenty-two
constructs were given in all. These are as follows:

                    They like the bush
                    They use leaves
                    They destroy
                    They are *thekre*
                    They kill
                    They are good

```
They are powerful
They have secrets
They find things
They make things
They are dangerous
They are big people
They are invisible
They have four eyes
They are honoured
They cure
They hide themselves
They are bad
They have knowledge
They work at night
They produce food
They play with blood
```

It can be seen from Table 1 that all the special person-categories have many constructs in common. All categories were said to consist of 'big people' who have power, secrets and knowledge, who use leaves (i.e., employ herbal medicine, _à-tɔ̀l), who have four eyes and who are *thekre* and *poɲinɛ̂*.

As Abdul Conteh's above account of his initiatory dream shows, the power behind successful specialists is essentially the same: a personal patron spirit, sometimes mediated by an ancestor. Patron spirits are suspected of being behind *all* particularly successful people, such as traders, farmers and even footballers. Like diviners, these people take on the ambivalence of the spirits who help them and are suspected of using their power for selfish, destructive ends, even if at the same time they provide valuable services to the community. Also, anyone who communicates with spirits and has four eyes is a possible witch. The ambivalent qualities of traditional and Muslim diviners, herbalists, secret society officials, witches and chiefs have already been described, so a brief characterisation of hunters, twins and blacksmiths is in order.

	Diviners	Herbalists	Muslim Clerics	Black-smiths	Hunters	Twins	Soko-banas	Digbas	Witches	Chiefs
They like the bush		X			X		X	X	X	
They use leaves	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
They destroy	X			X	X	X	X		X	
They make things	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
They kill				X	X	X	X		X	
They cure	X	X	X				X	X		
They are good	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
They are bad	X				X		X	X	X	
They are powerful	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
They have secrets	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
They find things	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
They are *thekre*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
They are dangerous					X		X		X	
They are big people	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
They are honoured	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
They have knowledge	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
They have four eyes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
They are invisible									X	
They hide themselves	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	
They work at night					X				X	
They produce food				X	X					
They play with blood					X		X		X	

Table 1: Constructs applied to 'specialist' person-categories

Hunters:

Professional hunters, who are now rare, provide much-
appreciated meat and kill animals which endanger humans,
such as elephants and bush-cows. In order to do this, how-
ever, the really great hunters are said to be able to
transform themselves into elephants and bush-cows, which is
an attribute of witches. They are also said to have the
powerful and dangerous spirit of forests, *aŋ-rɔ̀ŋso*, as their
helper. Hunters are, as·Littlejohn puts it, 'mediators on
the boundaries. of Good and Evil',[34] working in the bush
at night, but for ends which are beneficial to the community.
The rubbish heap (*aŋ-mùrùn*) at the back of the house is also
a 'mediator' between town and bush, since it marks the boun-
dary between them, and appropriately it is a ritual focus
for the hunter:

> Before going to the bush he prays at the
> rubbish heap, and on returning lays his prey
> on it and offers thanks. Also·, should ill-
> luck dog his hunting he washes with medicine
> while standing in the rubbish heap.[35]

Twins:

Twins are greatly valued, as they also are among Manding
peoples, and a woman who bears twins has a high status.
However, twins and the child born after twins, called *Gbesè*,
have four eyes and are said to be troublesome and mischie-
vous. Many people claim that twins are able to twist the
head of someone who hits them through 180 degrees. Their
capricious power is usually channelled by carvings of twins
kept either on the front verandah of the house or in 'the
house of twins', *aŋ-sêth tè-barî*, a miniature round house

made of sticks. If one twin dies, the living twin is
liable to be drawn into death by the lonely dead twin, so
it is particularly important to have a carving representing
the latter, through which it can be given offerings and its
power controlled. Twins, because of their ambivalent,
double power, are also associated with the rubbish heap: if
they cry too much or become ill, both of which are seen as
signs of their troublesome nature, they are placed there
for a time.

Blacksmiths:

Blacksmiths, like hunters, are involved in the produc-
tion of food (since they make farming implements), but have
sinister attributes. Whereas domestic implements can be
made into ε-waŋka to protect gardens since 'they maintain
the household',[36] the blacksmith's tools are even more potent
as they, like the rubbish heap, are a very powerful swear.
Pa Maŋke Koroma, the blacksmith in Petbana, explained:

> If someone steals, and they swear that
> person here, he will be found. It is these
> tools that make the cutlass and the hoe
> with which food is planted for the people
> here. So if that person who has stolen
> eats food, that person will be made ill.

The tools are also used to make guns, and people say that
blacksmiths who make big guns are especially powerful
$\grave{a}$-poŋinê or $\grave{a}$-thekre. The tools can therefore, through
swears and guns, bring about sickness and death as well as
life.

The blacksmith's bellows, moreover, threaten the

fertility of women. If a woman touches the bellows she
will either not be able to give birth, or if she does the
child will 'breathe like the bellows' (i.e. will get pneu-
monia). If this happens, the blacksmith has to cure the
mother or child with herbal medicine called 'the leaves of
the blacksmith'.

The blacksmith's fire and the ashes and clinkers left
from it are frightening to witches, and it is said that
blacksmiths use the ashes and clinkers as a powerful defence,
capable of killing witches who try to spoil their work.
Once again, however, having the ability to fight witches
implies that one is a witch oneself, and it is interesting
to note that among the neighbouring Limba, the blacksmith
is sometimes described as 'the head witch'.[37]

Thus twins, hunters and blacksmiths are associated with
both production and destruction, with both the social and
the asocial, as are diviners, herbalists and secret society
officials. Witches and chiefs are also not free from ambiva-
lent attributes, since the inventive and miraculous feats
of powerful witches are admired, and it is recognised that
chiefs often seek to benefit themselves rather than the
community. Big warrior-chiefs such as the famous Bay Bureh
of the Hut Tax War, moreover, are said to be $\grave{a}$ -$po\eta in\widehat{\varepsilon}$, the
most powerful type of witch. Those who possess power, know-
ledge and secret 'truths' do so by virtue of an alliance
with an invisible spirit of the bush or river (except the
chief, whose alliance is with the chiefdom guardian spirits).
This power and knowledge and these truths are awesome and
dangerous because of their extra-social origin.

However, power is always admired to a certain extent as well as feared, and what gives each person-category their 'good' and/or 'bad' attributes is the extent to which this power is put to social or asocial use. Two factors are relevant here. Firstly, as we have seen, one who publicises his power is considerably less dangerous and evil than one who keeps its existence completely covert. Secondly, one who uses this power on behalf of the community is considered 'good', while one who uses it for individual benefit at the expense of others is considered 'bad', although in most cases the former implies at least the possibility of the latter. Chiefs are given a predominantly positive evaluation and witches are given a predominantly negative evaluation by both criteria, while traditional and Muslim diviners, herbalists, secret society officials, hunters, twins, and blacksmiths, being both secret and public figures and serving both social and individual ends, fall in between.

Throughout this chapter I have stressed the ambivalence of the diviner, a figure who uses secret knowledge acquired from a potentially dangerous spirit for either constructive (social) or destructive (anti-social) purposes. In the next chapter I will present an account of the methods diviners use to reveal hidden truths, and will examine the significance of these methods.

CHAPTER THREE: NOTES

1. '*Alfa*' means Muslim scholar, with connotations of being a diviner and charm-maker; see Turay, 1971, p. 147.

2. See the descriptions of *aŋ-yinà Musa* and *aŋ-sarafilo* in Ch. 4.

3. See the description of *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* in Ch. 4.

4. 1971.

5. See the descriptions of *aŋ-mɛmnɛ̀* and *ta-faŋt* in Ch. 4.

6. The *Pɔrɔ* is not very strong in Freetown, however.

7. This is an overstatement, as 'Yamba' is not the highest title in the *Pɔrɔ*.

8. See the description in Ch. 4.

9. See the descriptions of *aŋ-thàsàbiyà* and *aŋ-gbǝ'lɔ* in Ch. 4.

10. Red and black are associated with the dangerous, sinister aspect of the supernatural, for example witches, harmful spirits and swears.

11. Paintings of personal spirits I have seen closely resemble Europeans. I was told several times, 'You are like the spirits'.

12. See Eliade, 1964, esp. Ch. 2, and Hultkrantz, 1973.

13. 1971, esp. Chs. 3 and 4.

14. 1967.

15. The colour white (*fera*) is associated with purity, goodness and 'coolness' of heart, and counteracts the evil, destructive forces of witches and bad spirits.

16. Littlejohn, 1973, pp. 294-8.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Pa Biyare is not left-handed himself, however,

19. A herbal love potion, usually given secretly to men by women.

20. S. E. Bockarie, The People, July 20th, 1978, p. 2.

21. See Dorjahn, 1961, p. 37.

22. 1978, pp. 3-6 inclusive.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 3; footnote.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

25. Equivalent to one pound at that time.

26. Opala, 1982, p. 6.

27. This structural analogy was suggested by Michael Jackson (personal communication, 1979).

28. See Appendix.

29. See Crick, 1976, p. 116.

30. 1955. See also Bannister and Fransella, 1971.

31. À-fâm à *thekre* or *poŋinɛ̂* ; people with strong super-
    natural power and vision, with the implication of being
    witches.

32. *Baki ra-fɔ̀r*;synonym for having four eyes, being *sɔki*.

33. When classed with *ɛ̀-digbà* in opposition to ordinary men,
    chiefs are people with secrets, but when compared to
    diviners, chiefs and not seen as secretive.

34. 1978, p. 6.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

36. Littlejohn, 1960b, p. 76.

37. Opala, 1982, p. 2.

CHAPTER FOUR: TECHNIQUES OF DIVINATION

The Temne possess a very wide variety of divinatory methods. In a short article, Dorjahn[1] lists twenty five techniques, and I encountered a further seven not mentioned by him.[2] The same method can vary widely from diviner to diviner, and there is much cross-fertilization, borrowing and innovation. Techniques can be categorized according to whether they are traditional or Islamic, or according to whether they are mechanical or are more direct 'oracular' or mediumship methods. In practice, however, these distinctions tend to be blurred, since Islamic elements have been assimilated into traditional techniques and traditional Temne beliefs underly predominantly Islamic techniques. There are also techniques used for specific purposes, such as ordeals, 'moving vehicle' methods designed to identify thieves, murderers and adulterers, and witch-finding and prophesy by masked spirits.

Whereas spirit-mediumship almost always implies spirit-possession, the former being classed as a sub-category of the latter,[3] this is not the case among the Temne. None of their mediumship methods involve possession, and the masked spirits who prophesy and identify witches and adulterers are not categorized by the Temne as men possessed by spirits, but simply as spirits ($\grave{a}$ -$k\partial rf\grave{\imath}$). The distinction between divination and prophesy, moreover, does not apply here. As Rigby[4] has demonstrated, the difference between the two is usually one of degree rather than one of kind. As ideal categories they are separable, but in practice there is often

considerable overlap between them: one person, for instance,
may perform both roles, and one role can easily turn into
the other. When divining, Temne diviners often spontaneously
give information about coming deaths, and a single term
- ma-$thəŋ$ - denotes both divination and prophesy by ma-$nɛkɛ$.[5]

After a brief survey of different methods, two techniques
will be examined in greater detail ($aŋ$-$bɛ̀rɛ$, a traditional
mechanical technique, and $aŋ$-$yìnà$ $Musà$, an 'Islamic' medium-
ship method), as will the role of dreams and omens.

Mechanical Techniques

1. $Aŋ$-$bɛ̀rɛ$. Round river pebbles ($mə̀$-$sàr$) and/or cowrie
   shells ($tə̀$-$faŋt$) are cast and arranged into a pattern
   determined by the sequence of odd and even numbers
   obtained. Once the pattern is built up, the diviner
   ($ɔ$-$mɛ̂n$[6]) interprets its meaning and prescribes the sacri-
   fice and course of action to be taken.

2. Ta-$faŋt$. A small number of cowrie shells (often seven)
   are thrown or set down onto a surface such as a mat, an
   Arabic slate or a mirror, and the diviner interprets the
   pattern in which they fall according to 'what the shells
   say'. This method is said to have come from Manding
   peoples, and is common in Kono, the diamond area in which
   there is a large Mandinka population. It seems to be
   very similar to Jackson's[7] description of the main
   divination technique among the Kuranko.

3. At-$ɔla$. One or two kola nuts (t-$ɔla$) are split and cast
   in order to discover whether a sacrifice to the spirits
   ($aŋ$-$kərfì$) and the ancestors ($aŋ$-$bakì$) is acceptable.

At a sacrifice to Bɑy Kɔthɔf ('Chief of the Earth')
prior to brushing the bush in Mayan village, near Matotoka,
the sacrificer (Pa Fode Gbla) split and cast a white kola
to the right, then a red kola to the left, saying lòŋ thǎ
('we give respect') four times. They all fell flat side
down, meaning that they 'agree', and that Bɑy Kɔthɔf
will accept the sacrifice, so Pa Fode continued with a
prayer to Bɑy Kɔthɔf.

4. *Aŋ-thǎsǎbiyǎ*.

With his eyes closed, the diviner picks a bead from the
Muslim rosary (ɑŋ-thǎsǎbiyǎ) and counts them off four at
a time until he has either four or less beads remaining
until the end. He makes a note of the number of these
remaining beads and repeats the process three more times.
A combination of the numbers one, two, three or four is
thus obtained, in which each number corresponds to a
prophet: ɔ-nɑbi Mohammed, ɔ-nɑbi Musa, ɔ-nɑbi Isa and ɔ-nɑbi
Idrisa. This correspondence varies between diviners, but
the number four usually corresponds to ɔ-nɑbi Mohammed,
and is the most favourable outcome. The diviner consults
the Qur'an, or a *sura* from it written in an exercise book,
to interpret the numbers.

5. *Aŋ-rǎmɔli*. The diviner uses an Arabic slate (ɑŋ-wǎlkǎ).
After writing the name of Allah, of Jibril (Gabriel, the
agent of revelation) and of the client on the top. the
diviner draws several patterns of dots, joins some of them
together with lines and interprets the pattern.

6. *Ka-sȃŋt*. A small heap of sand is sprinkled on the floor. The diviner makes a series of marks upon it, then interprets these.

7. *Aŋ-sarafilo*. The diviner holds a small woven mat in his hand and orders it to move to the right, to the left or straight ahead in answer to his questions. I only found one diviner using this method, Pa Alfa Koroma of Petbana Masimbo, near Makeni.

Dorjahn describes two additional methods which I did not find: *aŋ-walkȁ*[8] (the slate) and *aŋ-baibɔl*[9] (the Bible). 'Christian' methods such as the latter are fairly rare.

Oracular and Mediumship Methods

1. *Aŋ-mɛmnɛ̀*. The diviner looks in a mirror (*a-mɛmnɛ̀*) in which he sees spirits or just his personal helping spirit, who reveal(s) to him the answers he is looking for. Such mirrors are often elaborately bordered with red cloth, cowrie shells and Muslim charms to distinguish them from ordinary mirrors. This is the most common mediumship method, mediumship being defined here as a direct communication between spirit and diviner, without the use of an intermediary device. Although it is sometimes used by itself, it is more usually used together with a mechanical method, particularly *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* and *ta-faŋt*.

2. *Aŋ-listikȁr*. The diviner writes a passage from the Qur'an and the client's name on a piece of paper and prays to Allah for the answer to the client's problem. The answer is revealed in his dreams that night.

3. *Aŋ-yinà Musà*. The diviner uses a female medium, who
enters a trance state and communicates with the ancestors
and *aŋ-yina Musa*, the divining spirit for this method.
The medium is covered with a white cloth and looks into
a bowl of water containing *mà-nasĩ* (liquid Muslim medi-
cine) and a gold or silver ring: she may alternatively
look into a mirror placed on top of this bowl. The
diviner invokes *aŋ-yina Musa* and the ancestors, and once
the medium is in a trance he asks her questions and
clarifies her answers to the clients present.

4. *Kòm ta-barĩ*. Kòm ta-barĩ, 'bearer of twins' is a 'nomoli',
an old stone figure of unknown origin[10] used by Pa Bari,
a diviner in Makeni. She is a female figure with plaited
hair and four figures carved at her front, at her back
and at each side. According to Pa Bari (who is a twin
himself), these smaller figures are her children, her
twins.[11] He identifies her with the powerful water spirit
aŋ-yàroŋ, 'Mami Wata'. He divines by means of ven-
triloquy, asking her questions to which she replies with
high, whistling noises that he translates. This is the
only instance I encountered of either divination by
ventriloquy, or of divination involving a nomoli.

Ordeals

Ordeals are used on those accused of theft, adultery and
witchcraft who deny their guilt. Dorjahn[12] and Thomas[13] list
many forms of ordeal. Some examples are as follows:

1. *Ma-kòbè*. The accused puts his hand in medicine, then
in boiling palm oil, which only burns the guilty.

2. *Ʌŋ-gbɔ̀t* (1). A small cooking pot is rubbed with medicine inside and outside and then heated on the fire. The rim is placed on the accused's belly, and sticks to the guilty.

3. *Ʌŋ-gbɔ̀t* (2). The accused puts his hand in a cooking pot and if guilty will bring it out with a black snake wrapped around it.

4. *Kɑ-bâp*. An axe (*kɑ-bâp*) is heated red hot. The accused is rubbed with medicine before touching the blade: it burns the guilty but feels cool to the innocent.

5. *Ʌŋ-sɛ'ni*. Medicine is rubbed on a needle (*à-sɛ'ni*), which is then pricked into the suspect's wrist for approximately three minutes. The innocent feel nothing, but the guilty cry with pain.

The words spoken by the diviner are a vital part of the ordeal. The diviner tells the instruments what to do, saying, for instance, when using *ɑŋ-gbɔ̀t* (1): 'If you are the one that stole, let this grip your belly'. Pa Yambə Nhoni Kamara of Freetown says he uses the following words when testing a woman accused of adultery with *ɑŋ-sɛ'ni*:

> A woman has been brought to me to find out
> if she is adulterous. If she is, as soon as
> you go into her skin, let her say it. If not,
> let you not hurt her.

'Moving Vehicles'

'Moving vehicles' is the term Dorjahn[14] uses to describe certain methods used to identify wrongdoers, who are usually thieves, murderers and adulterers, but rarely witches. An

object such as a pestle (kə̀-roŋp), a corpse on a funeral

litter (à-saŋkà), a coffin (à-beŋthɔ) or a broom (à-gbə'lɔ)

is treated with medicine and carried by one or two impartial

people. It forces the carriers to point out the guilty one.

In aŋ-gbə'lɔ, for instance, the bearer of the broom must have

a 'light head', i.e., must be able to enter a trance easily.

The diviner draws a circle of white flour around him and rubs

him with medicine, particularly over the face and eyes. As

the diviner then prays with the Muslim rosary (aŋ-thàsàbiyà),

the bearer and the broom he holds start to shake. First

there is a test: someone hides a coin which the broom must

find. In theory, the bearer should then lead the diviner and

audience to the guilty person's house, but in practice the

diviner indicates the way. The accused is placed on a stool

in the middle of the circle and the bearer (after some

prompting from the diviner) beats him with the broom if guilty.

Witchfinding and Prophesy by Masked Spirits

Certain masked spirits from secret societies are used to

identify witches:

1. Ka-yɔ̀gbo of the Oje society. Flames come out of his
    head to intimidate witches, as witches are afraid of fire.

2. Λn-gbaŋgbáni of the Limba Gbaŋgbáni society. He is used
    by the Temne ra-Bày society to catch witches who endanger
    the novices.[15]

3. Ma-nɛkɛ of ra-Gbeŋle. In the witch-finding ceremony of
    ka-gbàk,[16] ma- nɛkɛ enter the witch-world, ro-serɔ̀ŋ, to

find out about their suspects. While they make this
journey into *ro-serɔŋ* they sing in *nɔ-rù* with eerie,
nasal voices (they are popularly known as 'cut-noses')
which can be heard by the people gathered outside the
house in which they are working. They stand inside the
house, concealed behind a mat (*à-gbãthã*) which covers
the doorway, while outside on the verandah, by the society's
bowl of herbal liquid medicine (*ma-fɔy*), the head of
rɑ-Gbeŋle (ɔ-Gbeŋle) translates the utterances of *ma-nɛkɛ*
and helps interrogate and accuse the suspects. Those
who are accused have to touch the mat separating them
from *ma-nɛkɛ*: those who are witches will defecate.
Ma-nɛkɛ also spontaneously accuse individuals of witch-
craft or adultery and make prophesies of witchcraft attack
or fire, particularly during *ma-sɔkɔ̂*, the 'vigil' or
'night performance' of *ma-nɛkɛ*.[17] Their prophesy and
divination, whether solicited (as in *kɑ-gbàk*) or spon-
taneous, are both called *kɑ-gbày mɑ-thəŋ*, the 'splitting'
of a divination or prophesy, meaning the accusation of
specific individuals and the revelation of their guilt.

Aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ: Powers, Technique and Interpretation[17a]

According to Temne tradition, *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* is the oldest form
of divination. Despite its strongly traditional status, how-
ever, it is probably Manding-derived. *Bɛrɛ* is the Manding
word for 'stone', and the names given to units of the patterns
obtained by casting and lining up the *bɛ̀rɛ* are often clearly
similar to Manding words. We can compare *sikɛ* and *yarabinɛ̂*,
which the Temne *ɔ-mɛ̂n (aŋ-bɛrɛ* diviner) repeats when he
counts the *bɛ̀rɛ* he has cast, to the Manding *ɑrsigɛ*, meaning

'good fortune'[18] and to *yarabiye*, meaning 'misfortune'.[19]
Since techniques vary from diviner to diviner, the following
descriptions are mainly of the technique of one renowned
ù-mɛ̂n, Pa Biyare Seri of Mafoŋke village and Makeni town,
although other diviners' techniques will be mentioned where
relevant.

The stones used in aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ usually come from the river[20]
and are especially associated with river spirits. The method
used by an apprentice diviner to find his bɛ̀rɛ is essentially
the same as that used by an ordinary person who wants to find
a personal spirit who will help them get children, wealth or
'luck'. The seeker walks along the banks of a stream or river
until he or she is attracted by an unusual or beautiful pebble,
normally one which is even and smoothly rounded, translucent,
brightly coloured or strikingly marked. The person picks up
this stone and speaks to the spirit associated with it, making
a request for whatever is desired[21] and promising to make a
sacrifice (s-àthkà) to it in return. The stone is then taken
home and kept in a small tin or basket with a 'shakehand'
(à-gbə̀tə̂r, a gift of food or money given when receiving a
stranger) of an egg or of forty cents ('four shillings'),
and is given occasional libations of alcohol (usually rum)
while the request is repeated. The stones collected for
aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ divination should be small (roughly the same size as
cowrie shells) so that many can fit easily inside the hand,
and should be of an even number, usually between thirty and
sixty. Diviners stress that these stones are not spirits:
'They are things that stand for spirits' and 'The bɛ̀rɛ are
just mediums of the spirits, not spirits themselves', explained

(respectively) Pa Fode Gbla of Mayan village, near Matotoka,
and Ya Mari Gbla of Matotoka, who are both $\grave{a}$-$m\hat{\varepsilon}n$.

It is appropriate that river spirits are the major powers
behind $^{a}\eta$-$b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$. Firstly, $^{a}\eta$-$b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$ mediate between $n\jmath$-$r\grave{u}$ and
ro-$s\jmath k\grave{\imath}$ just as the river mediates between the town and the
bush,[22] town and bush being themselves compared to $n\jmath$-$r\grave{u}$ and
ro-$s\jmath k\grave{\imath}$ by some. Secondly, river spirits, being used as per-
sonal spirits, are associated with the individual realm which
is structurally in between the social (embodied by town or
family spirits) and the asocial (embodied by bush spirits).
This makes river spirits fitting powers behind $^{a}\eta$-$b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$, since
most problems brought to $\grave{a}$-$m\hat{\varepsilon}n$ are perceived, initially at
least, as being individual rather than community problems,
the majority being those of women suffering from barrenness
or miscarriages, or having sick children. And thus, thirdly,
it is to river spirits inhabiting river pebbles that women
make requests for children, and it is also river spirits who
reveal the causes underlying reproductive problems and
children's illness when women consult $^{a}\eta$-$b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$. In both cases,
the concerns of women are associated with river spirits.[23]

The spirits behind $^{a}\eta$-$b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$ are mediated by ancestors who
are headed by the diviner-ancestor Kɔnkɔmusa, the first
diviner to have used $^{a}\eta$-$b\varepsilon r\varepsilon$. The ancestors are sometimes
represented by a small even number of larger pebbles (Pa
Biyare used six) called 'the old ones' ($^{a}\eta$-$ba k\hat{\imath}$) which are
placed above the emerging pattern of $^{a}\eta$-$b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$. It is to them
that the diviner may address himself when he 'looks' ($k\partial l\hat{\imath}$)
with the $b\varepsilon r\varepsilon$, saying '$t\varepsilon nt\varepsilon$ '$n\varepsilon$, Kɔŋkɔmusa, $t\bar{a}$ $t\grave{\jmath}r\hat{\imath}$ su'
('certainly Kɔnkɔmusa, you reveal to us'). It is to them,

also, that the client's 'shakehand' (*aŋ-bɔrə*) is offered:

> If the client gives forty cents for *aŋ-bakî*,
> then Kɔnkɔmusa will work for you (the diviner).
> So the forty cents is now yours, and when you
> 'eat' it (i.e., spend it), *aŋ-bakî* eat it'.[24]

The real power and revelatory force in *aŋ-bɛrɛ* comes
from the spirits, (*aŋ-kərfî*) however, through Kɔnkɔmusa and
aŋ-bakî via *aŋ-bɛrɛ* to the diviner. Just as the ancestors
are represented by Kɔnkɔmusa, the spirits are represented by
the diviner's own personal spirit, a water spirit of the
opposite sex. This spirit appears to the diviner in dreams
(*mə-rɛ*) and sometimes in a mirror (*ɑ-mɛmnɛ*) which the
diviner uses in conjunction with *aŋ-bɛrɛ* to confirm the
stones' message.

The power of medicine (*ɑ-tɔl*) is added to that of the
spirits and ancestors since the diviner, who has usually some
knowledge of herbalism, rubs the *bɛrɛ* with medicinal leaves.
Pa Biyare used a plant with heart-shaped leaves known as
'monkey's ears' (*ɛ-ləŋs ɛ-wɔkɔr*) which is also used to help
women in difficult childbirth: he explained that the leaves
help *aŋ-bɛrɛ* bring forth the truth just as they help women
bring forth children.[25]

When a client asks a diviner to 'look' for him or (more
usually) her, they give their 'shakehand' of forty or eighty
cents and explain their problem. The diviner, seated on a
mat on the floor (usually a Muslim prayer mat, *ɑ-salbɛ*) rubs
the *bɛrɛ* together in his hands and utters a prayer; Pa Biyare
says the Muslim prayer, *Bismillahi Rahmani Rahim*. He then
rolls the *bɛrɛ* on the mat in front of him and asks a general

question about the wellbeing of his client(s) and himself,
such as 'sə pìyàrâ fìnɔ̀ î? (will we be well all day?'). He
picks up a handful of bɛ̀rɛ in his right hand, transfers them
to his left hand, then, throwing them upwards, catches some
in his right hand.[26] Putting these down, he counts them two
at a time, saying either mentally or aloud, 'sìkɛ' for every
two and 'yarabinɛ̂ pɑ̀nthŋɛ̂! if a single one remains at the
end. He then usually arranges them in a circle as follows,
with the two or one remaining bɛ̀rɛ in the centre:

 sìkɛ   yarabinɛ̂ pɑ̀nthŋɛ̂

Ending with a single bɛ̀rɛ (yarabinɛ̂ pɑ̀nthŋɛ̂) is the favour-
able answer to the question, according to Pa Biyare, while
ending with two is unfavourable and could indicate a coming
death. These meanings of one or two bɛ̀rɛ remaining are,
however, reversed with other diviners. Pa Biyare's usage
also reverses the meaning of the Manding terms ərsigɛ
(good fortune) and yarabiye (misfortune).

    If the result is unfavourable, the diviner makes sure
that the death indicated is relevant to his clients or to
himself by repeatedly casting the bɛ̀rɛ in the same way with
increasingly specific questions concerning the social distance
of the person whose death is foreseen.[27] Pa Biyare, whose

old father was seriously ill, once obtained two *bɛ̀rɛ* three
times in succession when we were in Makeni. He concluded,
'It is death', and went on to ask: 'Is it in Makeni town?
People die in the town every day. Let us take out (i.e.,
leave aside) the problems in Makeni. Will we be in peace the
whole day?' The *bɛ̀rɛ* came out in twos again, so he asked,
'Truly, is death going to take place in my own village?' He
obtained twos for the fifth time and declared: 'Death will
take place in my own village. It is an old person, and he
has his own house.'

After obtaining the favourable answer or, as in the above
example, finding out that a coming death is relevant to
those present, the diviner proceeds with the complete casting
and arrangement of the *bɛ̀rɛ*. He first asks, *'tɛntɛ'nɛ,
Kɔŋkɔmusa, tā tɔ̀rî su'*, or *'tɛntɛ'nɛ, aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ, tā tɔ̀rî su'*
('truly Kɔnkɔmusa/aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ, you reveal to us'), and repeats
the client's question to the *bɛ̀rɛ* before casting them in the
way described above. The pattern, which is arranged from
right to left,[28] consists of a variable number of rows,
usually greater than four, each made up of a line of four
single or paired *bɛ̀rɛ*, so that there are four columns.
Alternatively, some diviners, such as Pa Fode Gbla of Mayan
village, near Matotoka, arrange the *bɛ̀rɛ* into four rows and
a variable number of columns, while Ya Maŋke Kamara of Kense
village, near Koidu (a migrant Temne woman diviner) constructs
patterns with three columns.[29] At the first casting, the
remaining single or pair of *bɛ̀rɛ* is placed in the top right-
hand position to begin the first row. If an even number
larger than two remain, they are placed in pairs along the

row, and the last two are replaced in the remaining pile of
bὲrɛ. If in this case the row is completed before all the
bὲrɛ from one casting are put down, all those which remain
are put back in the pile, since each row is begun with a new
throw. If an odd number remains, only the last bὲrɛ counted
is placed in the row, the remainder being put back in the
pile.

The number of rows arranged depends on the context of
the pattern's message. If the message seems incomplete or
is inappropriate to the client's question, the diviner will
continue until the message is complete or modified. If an
appropriate message is obtained early on, however, the diviner
may not complete the whole pattern, and may leave only two
or three units of bὲrɛ in the last row, for instance.

Since aŋ-bὲrɛ divination is private, my information
about the patterns of aŋ-bὲrɛ and their interpretation came
from, firstly, my own consultation of Pa Biyare, and secondly,
from his explanation of patterns obtained when teaching me
aŋ-bὲrɛ in terms of hypothetical problems and diagnoses.
Although it is likely that those hypothetical cases are more
simplified than those of actual clients, they are nevertheless
able to exemplify certain principles in terms of which prob-
lems are perceived and explained, since the diviner uses
the same conceptual framework to generate both the hypothe-
tical cases and the explanations for actual problems. Pa
Biyare's descriptions and diagnoses of hypothetical problems
were, in fact, consistent with those in other diviners'
sessions which I was able to observe.

A few examples of patterns will illustrate how aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ are arranged and interpreted by Pa Biyare.
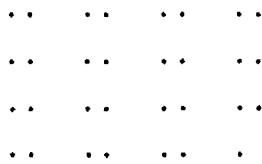
```
..   ..   ..   ..

..   ..   ..   ..

..   ..   ..   ..

..   ..   ..   .  _____   white stone representing a
                             'white' sacrifice; for example
      Figure 1                a white sheep, chicken, kola
                             nuts, cloth, rice-flour cake, etc.
```

This pattern of twos usually indicates a coming death (rà-fì). However, the number two is not inauspicious in Temne number symbolism; instead, the twos are an iconic symbol representing a crowd of people. Although, according to Pa Biyare, the most common reason for a gathering of people is a funeral (hence the meaning of 'death'), the 'crowd' pattern indicates a fortunate outcome if the client is asking whether he should make his farm in a particular place or if he will succeed in a chieftaincy election. Pa Biyare's daughter, who is learning aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ from him, explained:

> The bɛ̀rɛ are showing a crowd. If you farm
> and get plenty of rice, plenty of people
> will come. If you get the chieftaincy, a
> crowd will come. If there is a death, people
> will come for the funeral.

The 'crowd' pattern, then, does not have a single, fixed meaning, but can indicate favourable or unfavourable outcomes in different circumstances.

Figure 2
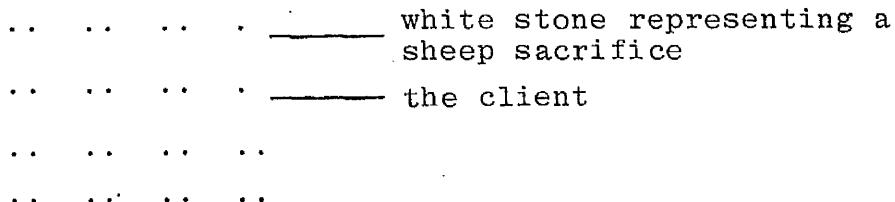
```
..   ..   ..   .  _____   white stone representing a
                           sheep sacrifice
 ..   ..   ..   .  ——————   the client

    ..   ..   ..   ..

    ..   ..   ..   ..
```

This also illustrates the influence of the context upon the pattern's meaning. I asked Pa Biyare to look for my 'luck', and he interpreted the twos in the pattern he obtained as representing, not a crowd of people, but a lot of luck, provided the appropriate sacrifice was made. He explained:

> You have to make a sheep sacrifice. When you
> do this, you will get luck. If you cannot
> give a sheep, then give some white material.
> The two stones all around are all your luck.

It is probable that Pa Biyare's knowledge of the relative affluence of Europeans influenced his interpretation, creating a context in which fortune was perceived as almost certain and misfortune as unlikely, despite the predominance of twos.

Figure 3

```
 ..   ..   ..   ..
 .    .    .    .    ____  big 'horn' swear
 ..   ..   ..   ..   ____  red swear (represented by red
                           stones)
 .    .    .    .
 ..   ..   ..   .    ____  child
           |    ..   ____  child's parents
     child's
     grave
```
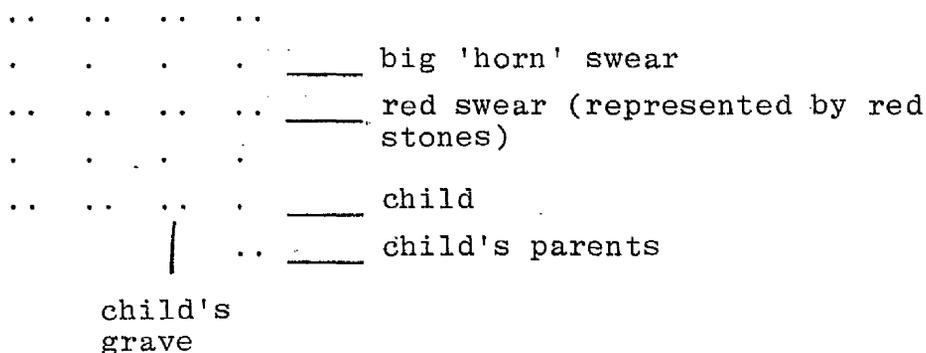
This represents the imminent death of a person who killed a child through witchcraft. Pa Biyare explained it as follows:

> The person has eaten the child by witchcraft,
> and the child has died and been buried. The
> child's parents have sworn the man with a
> big 'horn' swear and a 'red' swear.

The 'death' *(rà-fì)* pattern is a row of double *bèrɛ* followed by a row of singles, and recurs twice here. In the first

and second row it represents the witch who will die unless
he or she confesses, and in the third and fourth rows it
stands for the death of the bewitched child.

Figure 4

        ——— child

        ——— 'problems the woman has to confess' (i.e., adultery)

        ——— woman

        ——— 'somebody older who has to die because of a swear'
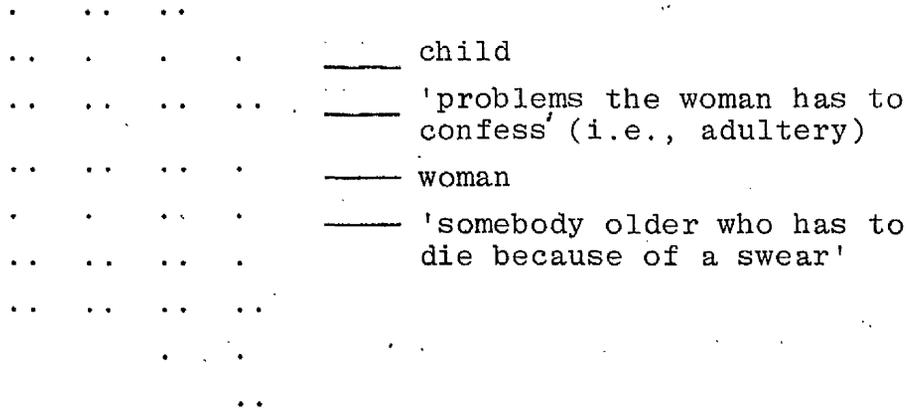
The 'death' pattern recurs twice in this example, in the first
and second rows (more or less) and in the fourth and fifth
rows. It indicates the death of a child caused by its
mother's adultery and the death of a man:

> This man knows something about the woman
> who has this child. The swear catches him
> because of this.

The woman's husband has sworn her lover after the death of
the child, and the man caught by the swear is the lover. I
have no explanation of why the first *bɛ̀rɛ* of the first row
is missing.

Figure 5
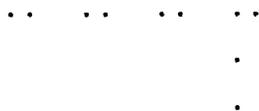
If the 'death' pattern begins to emerge in circumstances in
which death is an unlikely outcome, the usual arrangement of

the *bɛrɛ* from right to left may be altered in order to avoid

the diagnosis of death. This may be done by, for example,

placing a second single *bɛrɛ* underneath the first one instead

of allowing it to continue the second row.

Figure 6

two   —   4   3   2   1
white   —   ..   ..
kola   8   7 . 6   5
                .   ..   .

                9   10   11   12
                .   .   .   .

                13   14   15   16
                .   .   ..   ..

                17   18   19   20
                .   .   ..   ..

                21   22   23   24
                .   ..   .

                25   26   27   28
                ..   ..⟶   two people at the end of the
two   29   30   31 32   journey
white   ——   ..   ..
— kola   33
                      ..

This pattern, indicating a fruitful journey, illustrates how

the usual right-to-left ordering may also be modified to

encourage the emergence of an auspicious pattern in a fairly

straightforward divination. The numbers show the order in

which the *bɛrɛ* were arranged. Since a regular alignment of

single *bɛrɛ* is favourable, the direction changed from right-

left to left-right at no. 9 to encourage this, thus modifying

the meaning of the inauspicious twos in the first two rows:

> Since it started coming 'one-one', it is
> allright. When you leave the people, this
> line (the singles in the third row) is your
> way back home, and there is luck. You need
> not worry about the front lines because the
> ones have come out in a fine order here
> (numbers nine to twelve horizontally and
> eight to twenty-one vertically).

The journey's favourable outcome will be further ensured by a sacrifice (s-àthkà) of four white kola nuts represented by two pairs of bɛ̀rɛ, numbers four and twenty-nine, all of which are white stones:

> If you make a sacrifice with four white kola, your luck will come out. If you cannot do this, just get two white kola for this one (number four). If you make this sacrifice then you can go to these people. Your journey is fine.

Two single bɛ̀rɛ (numbers twenty-eight and thirty-one) represent two people the traveller will find at his destination.

The following principles of interpretation appear to operate:

1. Interpretations of the patterns are not based for the most part on unvarying correspondences between set patterns and set diagnoses. Rather, they are built on imaginative connections perceived by the diviner. A prominent line of single bɛ̀rɛ in Fig. 6 represent a road in a journey, 'red' (brown) and white stones can stand for sacrifices and swears (Figs. 1, 2, 3, and 6), and individual bɛ̀rɛ which stand out conspicuously are able to indicate anything appropriate to the situation: a 'swear' (Fig. 3), a grave (Fig. 3), a dead child (Fig. 4) and a man attacked by a swear (Fig. 4), for instance.

2. A predominance of twos is generally unfavourable in Pa Biyare's technique, while ones indicate a generally favourable outcome. This can be modified, though, by factors such as the position of these single or double

bɛ̀rɛ (Figs. 3 and 4), the regularity of their arrangement
(Fig. 6) and the context in which the divination takes
place (Fig. 2).

3. Despite the latitude of interpretation in aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ, the
    'death' (rà-fì) pattern (Figs. 3, 4 and 5) and the gene-
    ral inauspiciousness of twos are sufficiently fixed in
    meaning for the usual way of ordering the bɛ̀rɛ to be
    modified sometimes in order to avoid or minimise them
    (Figs. 5 and 6).

4. Key messages tend to be located in the right-hand columns.
    Right among the Temne stands for the social and the open
    while left stands for the asocial and hidden, as Little-
    john[30] has shown. It is consistent with this that the
    right-hand columns of the bɛ̀rɛ contain the most important
    information and thus bring what was hidden into the open.
    In Fig. 6, the sacrifice to be given is represented by
    bɛ̀rɛ in the left-hand instead of the right-hand columns,
    which is possibly a reversal caused by the change of
    direction in arranging this pattern (see above). The
    single bɛ̀rɛ representing the people the traveller will
    find are in the right-hand columns, however, and seem
    to have been chosen because they stand out so prominently
    among the twos.

5. The bɛ̀rɛ that carry the most information are nearly always
    those that are conspicuous in some way, for instance by
    virtue of their colour (Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 6), by being
    the only singles in a crowd of doubles (Fig. 6) or *vice
    versa*, by having fallen into an orderly alignment

(Fig. 6), or by being at the extremities of the columns
(Figs. 1, 2 and 6).

Although divination by $aŋ$-$bɛ̀rɛ$ is based on the random
casting of odd and even numbers, then, neither the ordering
of the $bɛ̀rɛ$ nor the interpretation of their arrangement depend
on chance alone. Since no society is ordered on random prin-
ciples, a purely 'random' form of divination could only come
to meaningless and inappropriate conclusions about events
which take placed in a structured milieu, as Werbner has
pointed out.[31]

However, the latitude Temne $à$-$mɛ̂n$ exercise in this res-
pect does not mean that they consciously engineer the outcome
of a divination, for they see themselves as essentially
impartial interpreters of the spirits' messages. A parallel
can be drawn here between divination and signal detection
theory, in which a person detecting a signal obscured by
'noise', and having some idea of what the content of the sig-
nal should be, applies techniques to fit the information
into the set or framework he expects it to belong to. The
conceptual framework underlying Temne divination includes
shared assumptions concerning causes of misfortune, per-
ceived connections between people, actions, events and non-
human beings, and the symbolism used to express these. Thus
the strategies diviners use to modify the ordering of
$aŋ$-$bɛ̀rɛ$, and the freedom they use in their interpretations
can be seen as their techniques for decoding the message and
discovering 'what the $bɛ̀rɛ$ want to say' in terms of their
conceptual framework.

Aŋ-yìnà Musà, 'The Spirit of Moses'

> The *yìnà Musà* method started from the first
> Arabic teachers who had four eyes and could
> see these *aŋ-kərfì* (spirits). Aŋ yina Musa
> is a Muslim *ù-kərfì*. He transferred his
> knowledge to the Qur'an. He showed his know-
> ledge of divination to some of the Muslim
> people, and they wrote it down. So this
> knowledge is written in the Qur'an, and the
> Muslims read it.[32]

'*Aŋ-yìnà*' means both a Muslim spirit (deriving from the Arabic
jīnn) and that part of a person which goes to *ro-kərfì* (the
world of the ancestors) after death.[33] It can thus denote
either an ancestor-to-be or a non-human spirit. Trimingham[34]
suggests that 'Musa' is al-hajj Musa, former king of Mali,
which implies that *aŋ-yina* Musa might have originally been
thought of as a diviner-ancestor like Kɔŋkɔmusa in *aŋ-bɛrɛ*.
However, diviners describe him today as an *ù-kərfì* of terri-
fying appearance who produces fire when he speaks and is
quick to 'seize' (*wòp*) those who offend him. The medium must
be protected by the diviner, or she too would be 'seized'.

Apart from *aŋ-yina* Musa himself, the ancestors of the
town or village are prominent figures in this method. They
arrive one by one, announcing themselves through the medium
and making occasional prophesies of coming deaths:

Medium:	'Pa Rok, who died long ago, has come. The father of Pa Kapər Bana has come. Pa Santigi Koroma, who died, has come. Ya Yebu has come.'
Diviner:	'Anyone that comes, give them a seat.'
Medium:	'Pa Mɛnde Mərəkɛ has come, who died long ago. Pa Woro has come. Ya Bom, mother of Alfa Moru, has come. Pa Sori has come. Pa Raka has come, but says there is going to be a death in the town. Pa Yamba has come. Bomo Kalɔkɔ has come.'

> Diviner: 'Is it a man or a woman who is going
> to die?'
> Medium: 'It is a man, and there is palaver
> (a dispute). The cause of death will
> be what the man has done to a woman.'[35]

While *aŋ-yǐnà Musa* is not a completely public form of
divination, carried out in the open (as are ordeals and
'moving vehicle' techniques), neither is it completely private.
Unlike *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*, which is cast in a private side-room (*à-koŋkô*),
it takes place in the intermediate space of the central living
area, the 'parlour' (*aŋ-palà*). Members of the town or
village are present, and ask the medium to 'look' for their
own problems after the main issue prompting the divination
has been dealt with. If a *kapɜ̀r* chief lives in the town, he
should be informed and should either attend himself or send
a relative to represent him. In contrast, *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* divination
is attended only by the client and occasionally by a few of
the client's relatives.

As the presence of many members of the town, of the
kapɜ̀r chief and of the ancestors (whose presence is far more
dominant than in *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*) indicates, the issues prompting the
use of *aŋ-yǐnà Musà* divination are of greater immediate social
concern than are those prompting the use of private techni-
ques such as *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*. Examples include the illness of a
Paramount Chief, the deaths of several children of the brother
of a *kapɜ̀r* chief, and the aforementioned case in which a
woman, Mabinti, offended the *ɔ-kərfǐ* of her family by seeing
it. Since a session of *aŋ-yǐnà Musa* divination is of wider,
more general concern than usual, some ancestors from neigh-
bouring villages come as well, due to the kinship ties between
villages:

```
Medium:     'Who is Pa Abu?'
Diviner:    'Pa Abu has come.  Accommodate him
            (iyà ko).
            Mm? Pa Abu.  The Makaper people.'
Medium:     'Who is Pa Rok?'
Diviner:    'Pa Rok.  Accommodate him.  The man
            called Pa Rok has come.  Accommodate
            him.  Rok Gbàŋkəli.  Rok Gbàŋkəli.'
Medium:     'Who is Pa Biyare Mɔi?  He is come.'
Diviner:    'Pa Biyare has come.  Accommodate him.'
Medium:     'Na Kama.'
Diviner:    'Ya Na Kama has come.  Accommodate her.'
Medium:     'Who is Yamba Kalɔkɔ?'
Diviner:    'Yamba Kalɔkɔ has come.  Accommodate him.
            Those at towns that are small like this
            - it is a meeting, we just call.'
```

The diviner, Pa Alfa Koroma, did not know Yamba Kalɔkɔ. But because the aŋ-yìnà Musà divination is a semi-public meeting, and Petbana, the town in which it was held, is small, ancestors from nearby villages come too.

The medium must be a woman, since aŋ-yìna Musa is male, and seeing a spirit of the same sex causes insanity. Pa Saidu of Rosɛŋgbɛ, near Matotoka, communicates with aŋ-yìna Musa directly and does not use a medium, but this is most unusual. Trimingham[36] mentions a boy being used as a medium in aŋ-yìnà Musa divination, so it may be that the danger of seeing a spirit of the same sex is a variable phenomenon.

The 'shakehand' paid by the client is much higher than the forty or eighty cents paid when consulting aŋ-bɛrɛ and other private techniques. According to Pa Alfa Koroma, he 'calls' the medium with forty cents, and gives her another forty cents when she arrives. Another eighty cents is given as the shakehand (aŋ-gbətâr) for aŋ-yìna Musa when the divination begins, and a further eighty cents is offered to him at the end. When the medium leaves, she is given an additional four leones.[37]

Pa Alfa Koroma of Petbana Masimbo, near Makeni, is an
ɑŋ-yìnà Musa diviner with a fairly high reputation. He works
with Mami Yeno, his medium, who comes from Makaper, a village
approximately two miles from Petbana. She is past the age
of childbearing, and is the wife of Pa Koroma's wife's
brother: he is thus her ù-nàsin (brother-in-law), a category
characterised by a joking relationship.[38] The following
description is based on two ɑŋ-yìnà Musà sessions of theirs.

When Mami Yeno was present and the people attending were
seated around the parlour, Pa Koroma began to prepare for the
divination. The front door was closed and the back door was
opened, the latter being the door through which the ancestors
and ɑŋ-yìnà Musà were to enter.[39] A chicken was tied by the
back door as a shakehand (à-gbətôr) for ɑŋ-yina Musa on his
arrival; it was later cooked and eaten by Pa Koroma and Mami
Yeno. After the parlour floor was swept by one of his wives,
Pa Koroma laid a Muslim prayer mat (à-salbɛ) in the middle
of it. He then placed a white enamel bowl, an Arabic slate
(à-wàlkà), a length of white cloth, an exercise book and a
writing case containing pens on the mat. The exercise book
contained a sura from the Qur'an entitled 'Sam Suma Rof'(?)
Pa Koroma copied quotations from the book onto the slate,
beginning with 'bismillahi rahmani rahim', 'in the name of
God, the merciful, the compassionate', which begins each
sura. This sura concerns water, and Pa Koroma explained:

> In the book are all the things that are
> happening in the world. It is a sort of map.
> The creation of people started in water.
> Everything started in water. Rice started
> in water. I have come to find out something,
> and it is water that all the things in the
> world come from, so all the secrets in the

world will be brought to me.

This *sura* is, in otherwords, perceived to be a microcosm, containing 'all the things in the world'. The correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm is a central feature of Temne thought, recurring in ritual and medicine; Littlejohn[40] has demonstrated its presence in the swearing medicine, *aŋ-sɑ̃sɑ̃*, for example.

After writing quotations from the *sura* on the slate, Pa Koroma called the ancestors and spirits, asking them to reveal what is hidden:

> Let the ancestors and spirits come..
> Let what is hidden come.
> Let a town (i.e., *ro-sɔkʏ*) appear and let the inhabi-
> tants of that town (the spirits) tell us what we want
> to know.
> If anyone is going to die, let them tell us.
> If anyone has a pain hurting them, let them tell us.

He then turned the slate over and drew a diagram on the other side consisting of a blackened square surrounded by another square formed by elongating and crossing certain Arabic letters:
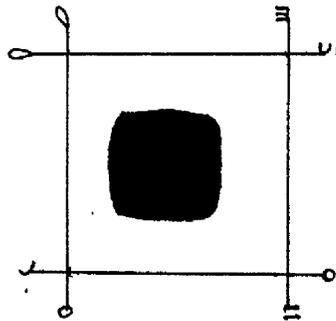

Figure 7

Through this diagram, the spirits (particularly *aŋ-yima Musɑ̃*) are controlled and kept separate from the people present, as Pa Koroma explained in answer to my questions about it:

> The whole symbol is a house or a gathering,
> a compartment for the people (i.e., the
> spirits). The lines are sort of walls to
> prevent the spirits spreading about and
> hurting anybody. The Arabic words are
> tying the fence. I recite these when using
> *aŋ-thàsàbiya* (the rosary). The black part
> is a sign of what is between us and the
> people (the spirits). It is the darkness
> between them and us, so that they do not
> disturb us. It is also that darkness that
> makes a person tremble (i.e., enter a trance).
> He's not in this world or in the other world.

The separation between human beings and spirits, between *nɔ-rù*
and *ro-sɔkì*, is expressed in the idiom of vision, as a 'dark-
ness'. This 'darkness' is particularly important to maintain
in a meeting of men and spirits such as *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divi-
nation: uncontrolled contact between humans and spirits is
often fatal to humans. No-one should obstruct the spirits'
path between the medium and the open back door. Pa Koroma
related that during a previous session of *aŋ-yìnà Musà*
divination, one of the men present walked past the back door
and a spirit seized him; Pa Koroma had had to stop the divi-
nation to fight the spirit, as the man was dying. This is
also why Temne mediums are not possessed by the spirits with
whom they communicate. Littlejohn[41] has pointed out that
the space of a human body, like the space of a house or a
farm, is vulnerable to penetration by harmful spirits and
witches and, like houses and farms, is protected from such
penetration by being ritually 'closed' (*kàŋthà*). If
aŋ-yìnà Musa were to enter Mami Yeno's body, Pa Koroma
emphasised, she would die. The diagram, with the 'darkness'
of its black square, its 'walls' containing the spirits and
its Arabic words 'tying the fence' seems to serve as a
reverse *à-kàŋthà* which keeps spirits inside, rather than

outside, a limited space.

The 'darkness' of the black square is also the 'darkness'
that Mami Yeno enters when Pa Koroma puts her into a trance
(*pə̀ŋkâs kɵ*, from *pə̀ŋk*, 'mad' or 'stupid'). In order to
mediate between humans and spirits, she must enter the dark-
ness between their two realms without being completely in
either of them.[42] She does not enter *ro-sɔkì*, but is able
to see it and its inhabitants; meanwhile in *nɔ-rù* she is
pə̀nk, 'mad' or 'foolish'.

Having drawn the diagram, Pa Koroma made Islamic medicine,
mə̀-nasî, by washing the other side of the slate (on which the
quotation from the *sura* is written) with water and four
abrasive leaves called *ɛ̀-nǎnǎ*. The medicine was caught in
the white bowl, and a silver ring (other diviners said a gold
ring should be used) and eighty cents were added. Pa Koroma
then said to Mami Yeno:

> I am going to cover you. What you see, let
> you say it. Forty cents is given to you as
> your own welcome.

He rubbed the medicine over his face, put the slate on top
of the bowl, then placed a small mirror on the slate's
diagram. He asked Mami Yeno to come and sit down. She
stripped to the waist, taking off her shirt and ear-rings
('*aŋ*-yìna Musa and the spirits do not like these things')
and sat with her legs on either side of the bowl.

Pa Koroma recited Muslim incantations, rubbed more
mə-nasî on his face, threw some into Mami Yeno's eyes and
rubbed it on her hands, arms, ears, chest, hair, feet and

thighs. He covered her completely with the white cloth, making sure there was no opening, and placed the exercise book by her feet. Mami Yeno was thus concealed from the spirits by the medicine and the cloth: the white cloth made them think she was one of them, and she could see them by looking in the mirror, as Pa Koroma explained later.

Pa Koroma guided the divination. He stood over Mami Yeno, touching her with his left hand and praying with his rosary beads, which he held in his right hand and moved around her head. She soon began to shake fairly violently and after a few minutes she started to announce the arrival of the ancestors. Pa Koroma repeated her announcements, telling her to accommodate each person (*iya ko*) and elaborating upon her statements:

> Mami Yeno: 'Ya Ai Bangura.'
> Pa Koroma: 'Ya Ai Bangura has come. One old one has come. She is my mother.'
> Mami Yeno: 'Who is Pa Kɐbɔŋ...?'
> Pa Koroma: 'Pa Kɐbɔŋthɔ, Pa Fode Kɐbɔŋthɔ he is. He is come. Accommodate him.'

Once the ancestors had arrived, ɑŋ-yina Musa entered. His dangerous power was evident as Mami Yeno screamed and shook more violently, while Pa Koroma tried to keep the divination under control:

> Mami Yeno: 'Who is Kolonɛ?'
> Pa Koroma: 'Kolonɛ is the one (it is Kolonɛ). Accommodate her.'
> (Mami Yeno raised herself up, away from the mirror.)
> Pa Koroma: 'Do not be afraid. Do not be afraid.'
> Mami Yeno: (unclearly) 'Gbese has come.'
> Pa Koroma: 'Do not be afraid. Gbese has come. Accommodate her.'
> (Mami Yeno made frightened squeals.)
> Pa Koroma: 'Do not be afraid. Hm. If you are afraid, you spoil the divination.'

Mami Yeno:	'Alfa yina Musa!'
Pa Koroma:	'Well, this is why you should not be afraid to bend down (and look in the mirror). Do not be afraid.'
Mami Yeno:	'A, a wɔy!' (expression of fear)
Pa Koroma:	'Well, this is fearing. Accommodate him.'
Mami Yeno:	'I am not afraid.'
Pa Koroma:	'Do not be afraid.'
Mami Yeno:	'Alfa yina Musa.'
Pa Koroma:	'Accommodate him. Your shakehand, this is it.'[43]
Mami Yeno:	'Mm, mm? Alfa yina Musa.'
Pa Koroma:	'Accommodate him.'
Mami Yeno:	'A, hm! It is heavy. Sit down and have your own shakehand.'
Pa Koroma:	'Well, aŋ-yina Musa has come. The ɔ-kərfi of divination has come.'

The divination then proceeded. Each client addressed his or her question to Pa Koroma, who repeated it to Mami Yeno. Mami Yeno asked aŋ-yina Musa, who gave her the reply, and she passed this back to Pa Koroma. Pa Koroma repeated her utterances, which were often vague and elliptical, to the audience, elaborating upon them and making them more specific. Instead of a spirit speaking directly through a human being, then, which is the usual form of spirit mediumship in Africa and elsewhere, we have a spirit speaking to the medium, who speaks to the diviner, who speaks to the audience. This indirect process exemplifies how, even in spirit-mediumship, which is usually the most intimate association between human and spirit, the barriers the Temne feel should be between humans and spirits are firmly in place.

When there were no more questions to be asked, Pa Koroma brought Mami Yeno out of her trance. This is called ka-dimɛt, 'the extinction', as in extinguishing a fire or blowing out a candle, and refers to the closing of the medium's invisible eyes. Pa Koroma recited Islamic incantations, rubbed Mami

Yeno's head and shoulders under the cloth, then touched her

hands. He pulled out the bowl of medicine, then had to

wrestle with her to take away the slate and mirror. When he

had removed them, she collapsed on the ground. He threw

medicine into her eyes, rubbed it over her and spoke some

Arabic verses. She recovered in a few minutes.

Dreams and Omens:

Writing about omens ($t\grave{e}$-$d\grave{o}r$) among the Temne, Thomas

states the following:

> As a general principle of interpretation of
> events, one of my informants laid down that
> if you see what is 'very hard to see' -
> i.e. an unusual sight - you are going to
> die.[44]

For example, seeing a tree snake on the ground, a wild pig

(a bush creature) in the town or a porcupine in the daytime

all mean death.[45] Vision of the non-ordinary seems to indi-

cate that the one who sees it is himself placed outside

ordinary human existence, in this case by his coming death.

Those omens analysed by Littlejohn[46] as examples of left

and right dualism are more common and indicate less serious

consequences than the above. If, on a journey, a bush rat

runs across your path from left to right, or if you stub the

toes of your right foot, your journey will be successful,

meaning that you will make contact with the people you want

to; the reverse in both cases means an unsuccessful journey.

Also, if your right eye twitches, people are talking well

of you, but if your left eye twitches, they are talking badly

of you. These instances replicate the meanings of right

and left in other contexts as 'inclusion in and exclusion
from normal community life.'[47]

In dreams ($\grave{\varepsilon}$-wɔr̂əp or mə̀-rè), direct communication with
spirits, ancestors and practising witches is possible even
for ordinary people, and dream contents can correspond to
present or future events. As Littlejohn[48] has said, dreaming
is an attainment, and those who dream are described as 'strong
in the head' (bɑki rɑ-boŋp). Pa Yamba Nhoni Kamara told me:

> Not all people dream, only those who have
> good heads and those who the ancestors are
> after.

Pa Yamba described the dream state in spatial terms, as a
'big town dreamers go to' called ro-mə̀-rè which is very
similar to nɔ-rù, the ordinary world, but much closer to the
supernatural realms of ro-sɔkì, ro-kərfì and ro-serɔ̀ŋ. When
I asked Pa Yamba to describe it further, he said:

> If you go to bed and go to ro-mə̀-rè things
> happen there just the same as they happen
> here. Your mind (ə̂-merə̀) will not know
> you've been in nɔ-rù; it's just as if you've
> always been in ro-mə̀-rè. The spirits go
> there. It's different from ro-sɔkì, but
> close to it. Only in ro-mə̀-rè are you able
> to talk to them. Ro-mə̀-rè is their own place
> and you can talk to them there – they're
> just neighbouring towns (i.e., ro-sɔkì and
> ro-mə̀-rè). There are times you will see
> strange and dangerous things; you'll look
> at them but something else helps you go away
> because it's a dangerous place.[49] Sometimes
> a spirit helps you, or an ancestor... When
> someone dreams, what happens to him is just
> like in the normal world. If he comes across
> bad people (ə̀-fəm ə̀ ləs; i.e., witches) and
> they put medicine in his eyes, he'll get
> four eyes.

The ancestors and spirits usually communicate with the
dreamer to ask him or his family for a sacrifice. A spirit

(usually a bush spirit, but sometimes the personal spirit of an enemy) may also appear to a dreaming woman as a male relative, usually her brother,[50] and make love to her, causing barrenness, miscarriages and birth complications.

Such close visual and physical contact between ordinary people and spirits, which would normally cause madness or death, is possible because sleep is described as a 'darkness' (à-sum). 'Darkness', as we have seen, is the boundary separating our world from the supernatural worlds, and is entered by Pɔrɔ society performers and aŋ-yìnà Musa mediums as well as dreamers. The categories of spirit and human must normally be kept separate, but in the 'darkness' there can be some mixing of categories, just as distinct shapes disappear at night. 'Darkness' is thus a means of mediation and contact as well as a means of separation.

In 'darkness', one has greater access to 'truths' (tà-têŋ) which, as has been mentioned before, are located outside ordinary community existence in their most powerful form. Littlejohn[51] has written that the contraries of right and left correspond to a social dualism of 'being-in-proper-relation-with-others' and 'not-being-in-proper-relation-with-others'. This is manifested in a common experience the Temne have of waking up unable to move or speak, crushed by the weight of the left hand which, during the solitary condition of sleep (a state of 'not-being-in-proper-relation-with-others'), has become immensely heavy and has fallen on the sleeper's chest. Littlejohn goes on to explain that 'Weight is for them (the Temne) a virtue of truth or of the power

which becomes equivalent to truth, as it is for us a metaphor

for them ("his words carry weight").'[52] He concludes that

'not-being-in-proper-relation-with-others is for them a

condition of perception of truth'.[53] Thus the 'truth' to

which the dreamer in the 'darkness' outside the ordinary

world has access seems to be manifested by a kind of literal

physical translation into the weight of the left hand. It

may also be significant that Pa Yamba asserted that dreaming

is 'like when we're near death', since those who have died

are spoken of as 'those who have gone to the truths', and

death, like dreaming, is a condition outside ordinary social

relationships in which the power of the left hand takes over.[54]

The left is also, however, associated with evil and

illicit secrecy, particularly witchcraft,[55] and it is during

dreams that witches are most active. Confessed witches often

report having become witches after being given human meat to

eat in a dream. A dream can also be the basis for witch-

craft accusation, as the little boy's dream was in the case

which led to the witchfinding session by *ma-nɛkɛ* at Magburaka.[56]

In another case, a diviner was called to a nearby village after

a man there had a dream in which he saw a person change into

a boa constrictor and swallow his (the dreaming man's) child,

which grew sick the next morning and finally died.

There are certain standard dream interpretations,[57] and

if the content of a dream is judged to be serious enough,

a diviner will be consulted to explain it and prescribe the

appropriate action. Diviners themselves are said to dream

more than most people, and to be in perfect control in their

dreams. It is through their dreams that they are in closest
contact with their helping spirit (or spirits), who reveals
to them those who are witches, thieves and adulterers.
Diviners who use *aŋ-listikər* specifically use dreams to
discover the remedy to clients' problems. In order to be a
diviner at all, as we have seen, a person usually has an initiatory
dream in which he is given special knowledge by his personal
spirit: the diviner's knowledge and power to reveal therefore
come from the 'darkness'.

Evaluations of Methods:

The Temne do not unquestioningly accept the veracity of
all diviners or all divinatory methods. If the diagnosis
and prescribed treatment of one diviner is ineffective or
unpersuasive, clients are likely to consult another. It is
not only the empirical efficacy of the diviner's treatment
that is relevant here, but also the status of the diviner and
of the method he uses: their power, in other words, to create
the agreement of the clients and/or of the community.

Methods vary greatly in their status. In general,
'Muslim' methods are more highly regarded than 'traditional'
methods, and direct and dramatic methods such as *aŋ-yinà Musà*
and *ma-thəŋ* are more highly regarded than purely mechanical
techniques.

Divination by *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* is thereby at a double disadvan-
tage, being both mechanical and non-Muslim. Although it is
not rare in rural villages, it is less well represented than
was formerly the case.[58] Preference for *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* was
expressed to me mainly by older people in rural areas, who

used the criteria of tradition and visibility in their
evaluation, saying, for instance, that 'aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ is the
oldest and best', and that the layout of the pebbles is
'plain for everyone to see.' For those who live in towns
and those who are younger, the classification of a method as
a 'Muslim' or 'non-Muslim' technique is generally a far more
important criterion. This preference for Muslim techniques
has led to the incorporation of Islamic elements into aŋ-
bɛ̀rɛ, such as the prayer mat and the uttering of Muslim
prayers, although the method itself is still regarded as
'traditional'.

In Koidu, capital of the diamond district in the non-
Temne area of Kono, the most common method used by Temne
diviners is ta-faŋt, which is regarded as a 'Muslim' method.
The only Temne diviner I found using aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ, Ya Maŋke
Kamara, lived in a village a few miles outside the town.
Next to the Lebanese, the most wealthy group in the Koidu
diamond business are the immigrant Mandinka, who are Muslims,
while the most successful Sierra Leonean group (more success-
ful than the indigenous Kono) are the Temne migrants, whose
trade with the Mandinka is greatly facilitated by being
Muslim. When I asked Temne diggers and dealers (the majority
of Temne migrants) about aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ, most gave strongly 'Muslim'
criticisms of it, asserting, for instance, that 'diviners
with aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ worship the stones'. To my question of whether,
by this criterion, ta-faŋt diviners did not also worship
their cowrie shells, they replied that this was not so
because the Mandinka, who are Muslims, had brought ta-faŋt.
Temne diviners in Koidu, competing with Mandinka diviners,

have thus successfully adopted a common method of this high-
status African group.

In Freetown, similarly, although Muslim techniques such
as *aŋ-thàsàbiyà* abound, I only found one diviner, Pa Yamba
Nhoni Kamara, who used *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*, and he told me that he almost always
used *ta-faŋt* with *aŋ-mɛmnɛ̀* instead because *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* took too
long to cast, and people in Freetown are busy. However, *ta-*
faŋt are usually cast several times in one divination session,
which therefore does not really turn out to be any shorter
than a session involving *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*. *Ta-faŋt* is far more likely
to have been chosen because of its status as a Muslim method.

Banton has pointed out that Islam, with its high prestige,
universal values and 'African' character, is a particularly
appropriate religion for the Temne and other indigenous Sierra
Leone groups in Freetown:

> ...Islam has acquired a special significance
> in inter-group relations: it provides a cul-
> tural foundation for African regrouping in a
> situation in which Africans feel themselves
> opposed to the European group; it creates
> unity as well as division, for on this founda-
> tion different tribal groups have come
> together and ... their relative positions
> are influenced by the extent to which they
> are committed to the Islamic faith.[59]

Thus whereas Islam links the migrant Temne in Koidu to the
Mandinka and other powerful Muslim groups with whom the Temne
wish to do business, in Freetown (which the Temne consider to
be on their land) Islam distinguishes them from Europeans and
from the majority of Krios, the former Christian elites
against whom the Temne wish to affirm their separate identi-
ty.[60] It also gives them a high status vis-a-vis other

indigenous groups who are not so highly Islamised, such as
the Limba.

Just as Temne migrants in these cities re-define them-
selves more strongly as Muslims, Temne diviners there, in
competition with the diviners of other groups, also define
themselves more strongly as Muslims and use methods classified
as Islamic. Since Muslim methods are the most highly evalu-
ated, they are the most able to generate clients' agreement
with diviners' diagnoses. As in Parkin's[61] study of ritual
syncretism among Giriama diviners, in which a symbiotic
relationship emerged between a new class of enterprising
farmers and diviners who adopted 'Muslim' techniques, the
incorporation of Islamic elements and adoption of Muslim
methods by Temne diviners is also associated with a changing
socio-economic situation.

This process had been very marked in Temneland in the
eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when predominantly
Mande migrants such as the Mandinka, Susu and Dyula, and
later on Fula migrants, brought trade, military power and
Islam. The Muslim 'strangers' and the indigenous Temne rulers
benefited each other; the rulers gave important strangers
political titles, territory and daughters in marriage, while
the strangers brought wealth through trade and increased the
military powers of these rulers.[62] The role of Islam and
of Muslim clerics and diviners ('marabouts') was crucial:

> Welcomed for their powers of divination
> and charm-making by the use of extracts from
> the Koran, the marabouts gained positions
> of influence and power among the Temne who
> sometimes invited an ù-mɔrè to an empty

> throne, or, as was frequent, to make charms
> for a chief. Such a marabout, often
> rewarded by being made a sub-chief over a
> section of the chiefdom, might even marry
> a daughter of one of the ruling houses,
> the children of such a marriage being
> entitled to be candidates for the main
> chieftaincy. The willingness to accept
> chieftaincy also meant a willingness to
> accept traditional customs, the result being
> a large-scale adaptation of Islamic con-
> cepts to traditional Temne customs;
> offerings to dead ancestors were not dis-
> couraged, the Manding and Susu marabouts
> merely replacing the indigenous terms for such
> offerings by items derived from Arabic. The
> custom of divination, traditional among the
> Temne, was also continued, but with the new
> methods introduced by the marabout, and there-
> fore associated with Islam, being considered
> more reliable and more prestigious.[63]

Thus the political and economic power of the Muslim strangers
was linked to the power of their Islamic clerics, diviners,
charms and methods of divination. Moreover, the assimilation
of these strangers into Temne social structure was accompanied
by the assimilation of Islamic divination methods and by the
borrowing of Islamic elements by traditional Temne diviners
competing with the successful Muslim diviners.

It should be remembered, however, that the classification
of a method as 'Islamic' is often arbitrary. Both $aŋ\text{-}b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$
and $ta\text{-}faŋt$ are Manding in origin and contain roughly the
same proportion of Islamic elements: in both methods, the
diviner is usually seated on a Muslim prayer mat and utters
Muslim prayers, for example. Yet because $ta\text{-}faŋt$ is more
closely associated with the Muslim Mandinka it has been
given the more prestigious classification as an 'Islamic'
technique while $aŋ\text{-}b\grave{\varepsilon}r\varepsilon$ is classified as a traditional Temne
technique.

Clearly, a skilled balancing act is required of diviners.. In conditions of social change, in which the self-definitions of groups alter, diviners in competition with each other to serve these groups also shift their definition of themselves and of their methods through innovation. Thus Islamic elements are incorporated into traditional techniques and methods defined as 'Muslim' may replace traditional techniques altogether.

Yet innovation is always subject to. some form of conceptual constraint in order to be acceptable to the community. Thus the Muslim strangers did not destroy traditional Temne beliefs, rituals and divination methods, but adapted them. The highly innovatory ventriloquy method of Pa Bari in Makeni, described above, is based on traditional Temne beliefs in the role of spirits (he uses a carving of the water spirit, *aŋ-yárɔŋ*), in the power of twin births (*aŋ-yárɔŋ* is represented as a 'bearer of twins', Kom *ta-barì*) and the use of stones as vehicles- for contact with spirits (the carving was a *nomoli*, a stone figure). Muslim methods such as *aŋ-thàsàbiyà* and *ta-faŋt* are also activated by the spirits, although *Alà* (Allah) is sometimes said to be the ultimate power behind them, and *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divination is firmly based on ancestor beliefs and on common principles of traditional Temne thought such as the use of microcosm, the medium's 'four eyes' and the need to maintain a 'darkness' between men and the inhabitants of *ro-sɔkì* and *ro-kərfì*.

Signs and Symbols in Divination

The Dutch phenomenologist of religion, Gerardus van

der Leeuw,[64] has described divination as the investigation
of power in a selected section or ground-plan of reality:
this section or model is a microcosm which corresponds to
the total situation, the macrocosm. This use of microcosm
is particularly clear in Pa Koroma's explanation that 'all
the things in the world' are present in the liquid Muslim
medicine he uses in *aŋ-yìnà Musà*. Similarly, the pattern of
pebbles in *aŋ-bὲrɛ*, of the shells in *ta-faŋt* and of the dots
in *aŋ-raməli*, the sequence of numbers in *aŋ-thàsàbiyà* and
the content of omens and dreams, for instance, are all 'sec-
tions of reality' which correspond to what are perceived to
be the most significant parts of the situation as a whole
(for example, a swear, an adulterous woman, a witch). This
is not so apparent in very direct methods such as ordeals,
'moving vehicle' techniques and accusations by masked spirits,
in which direct vision into and manifestation of what is
hidden are sufficient. Yet in all of these the use of medi-
cine (*à-tɔ̀l*) is crucial, and it is possible that the
microcosm/macrocosm correspondence may be involved in the
medicinal ingredients and composition, as it was in Pa Koroma's
ma-nasî.

The use of microcosm features not only in Temne divina-
tion, but in Temne thought in general, as Littlejohn[65] has
pointed out. In *aŋ-sàsà*, the swearing medicine, for instance,[66]
two important ingredients are some rice and a dead spider.
Rice represents 'everyone' (since everyone eats rice; it is
'part of everyone's body'[67]) and the spider represents Pa
Nɛs, the mythical Father Spider in the centre of the world,
whose thread connects everything in the world together. The *aŋ-*

εəsə is thus a microcosm, containing 'everyone' and the means
of finding the wrongdoer.

Are these 'sections of reality' used in Temne divination
and medicine signs or symbols? Littlejohn argues that, in
medicine at least, they are not symbols:

> The point I wish to make here is that symbols
> play no part in Temne medicine - they simply
> never use the word in that context. They have
> a very clear concept of the function of the
> symbol - 'it only reminds me of (whatever it
> symbolises)', while the substances composing
> medicines do not 'only remind' - they cure or
> maim. The symbol plays no part either in the
> construction of analogies, the left hand is
> not a symbol of evil, though it may function
> as such sometimes for particular individuals;
> it is evil, capable of polluting, and of
> aiding the conversion of leaves from a thera-
> peutic to a harmful function.[68]

However, Littlejohn seems to have adopted here a 'rationalist'
definition of symbols as having a purely conceptual relation-
ship to that which they symbolise. From a cross-cultural
perspective, this is a rather atypical view; in probably most
religious traditions symbols do not merely remind, but
actually participate in that which they represent.[69] The
mandala in Mahayana Buddhism is not an inert map of the cosmos
but contains the cosmic forces themselves;[70] similarly the
Paschal Candle in the Catholic Easter Vigil Service is a
symbol of the risen Christ which has, in Catholic ritual,
the power to make the water in the 'womb' of the baptismal
font 'fruitful' for the rebirth of initiates.[71] Even outside
the religious context in our culture, our actions with
regard to our own symbols sometimes suggest a more intimate
relationship between a symbol and what it symbolises than
our rather abstract verbal definition of 'symbol' implies:

the burning of a national flag, for instance, is treated
politically as a real insult to the country it stands for.
I would therefore argue that both symbols (based on a meta-
phorical relationship, an asserted similarity, between the
symbol and the symbolized)[72] and signs (based on a metonymi-
cal relationship, a contiguity, between the sign and the
signified)[73] are used in Temne divination and medicine, and
that signs and symbols *both* participate in that which they
represent.

Of greater relevance here than our distinction between
metonymical sign and metaphorical symbol, however, is the
Temne classification of representational terms. Littlejohn[74]
has set out an emic classification of six terms from which
it can be inferred that medicine and divination involve
different principles of representation. The plants and trees
used in the Temne swear, *tàmaboro* represent the ailments
they inflict by 'resemblance'[75] (*aŋ-bàlanê,* 'the resemblance'),
which suggests a metaphorical relationship. He points out,
however, that the part of the plant or tree which is used
as the ingredient is often not that part which 'resembles'
the ailment:

> ... the resemblance is merely a 'signature',
> a sign that whatever is used will produce a
> condition resembling the 'resemblance', the
> signature.[76]

The ingredient is thus linked to its ailment by a combination
of metaphor and metonym: the ingredient has a metonymical
relationship to the 'resemblance' by being part of the same
tree, while the 'resemblance' has a metaphorical relation-
ship to the ailment it resembles.

A different representational term is used in the context
of divination: *ma-təmậ serî*, the standing witness'. Little-
john[77] lists three contexts in which something would be
described as *ma-təmậ serî*: conveying a message from spirits
or ancestors, giving warning of a witch attack, and giving
warning that a diviner should be consulted.

Ma-təmậ serî comes from *təmậ*, 'to stand', and *aŋ-serî*,
'the witness', *ma* being the definite prefix. 'To stand' for
someone is to represent them; in a sacrifice to the spirits
and ancestors, the lineage head 'stands for' (*təmậ ta*) his
lineage members, on whose behalf he makes the sacrifice.[78]
A 'witness' is someone or something which gives a truthful
and impartial report; after death, for instance, the left
hand gives God a 'true account' of the person's life.[79]
Those things chosen as 'standing witnesses' in divination
are not arbitrary, but have a close (usually metonymical)
relationship to the powers they 'stand for': the spoken words
of masked spirits, the Muslim rosary (*aŋ-thậsậbiyậ*) and
slate (*aŋ-wậlkậ*) with which one prays to God, and dreams,
said to be given by God, which take place near the worlds of
ancestors and spirits. Most of the objects used in ordeals
and 'moving vehicle' techniques are household objects:
aŋ-gbɔ̀t ('the pot'), *aŋ-sɛ'ni* ('the needle'), *ka-bâp* ('the axe'),
ka-roŋp ('the pestle') and *aŋ-gbə'lɔ* ('the broom'), for
instance. Littlejohn writes that all household utensils
'sidle over from *daru*[80] into *rosocki* or can be made to do
so'.[81] Most of them can easily be made into *wanka*, which
protect vegetable gardens from thieves, because '"they all
maintain the household"'.[82] Because they have this

signification of 'protectors of the household', the household being the core of ordinary community life, they can also serve to protect the community by exposing the witches, thieves and adulterers who threaten it.

The river pebbles used in *aŋ-bὲrε* divination share in the power of the river spirits who inhabit them, and whose messages they convey. Stones are often used as points of contact between men and invisible beings. The ancestors, for instance, are represented by large stones dug from their graves and kept in an open shrine called *aŋ-bɔ̀rɔ̀ mὲ-sὰr*, 'the house of stones', and the head of a lineage keeps a stone inhabited by the lineage spirit he sacrifices to in a box. Cowrie shells, used in *ta-faŋt* divination and sewn onto other objects used in divination such as *aŋ-mεmnὲ* (the mirror), were formerly used as currency. Money, like food and children, manifests productive power (and is, like them, vulnerable to witchcraft attack); in some cases cowrie shells have been replaced by coins sewn onto divinatory objects. Cowries are still an acceptable form of currency to the spirits and ancestors as 'shakehands' to them.[83] Cowrie shells, which are eye-shaped, can also represent eyes and vision. A cowrie (*ka-faŋt*) hung up as a *waŋka* will cause anyone who steals the vegetables or fruit it guards to feel a sharp pain in the right eye; likewise a pair of cowries in a bowl with liquid medicine can be used as an ordeal in which the wrong-doer feels a pain in both eyes when he looks at them.[84] Additionally, Littlejohn[85] mentions that four cowrie shells tied onto an *a-kaŋtha* instrument in the 'closing' of a farm were its 'four eyes'. In divination, then, the use of

cowries may also symbolise the piercing vision of the spirits and ancestors.

The main functions of the objects used as 'standing witnesses' in divination seem to be those of communication and revelation, bringing the hidden knowledge of the spirits and ancestors into the open. The function of the 'resemblance' in medicine is different: through the ingredient it serves as a 'signature' for, it replicates itself on a person in order to harm them (and presumably, in good medicine, to heal them). Whereas our classification of representational terms is based on the logical relationship between an entity and what it represents (e.g., as in the distinctions between 'index', 'sign', 'symbol' and 'icon'[86]), it seems to be the *function* of a type of representation which is important in Temne classification.

Divination and Vision:

A synonym for divination, *kɜli-kɜli*, meaning 'to look-look', indicates the intense act of vision required of the diviner. We can compare the Mende term for diviner, *toto-gbe-moi*, 'the man who sets in motion intensive seeing',[87] the Kuranko term for diviner, *bolomafelne*, 'hand on looker'[88] and the Krio term for divination, *luk grɔn*, 'look ground'. The Kuranko term does not refer to palmistry but to the fact that the diviner manipulates and lays down certain objects in which he 'sees' the appropriate diagnosis and sacrifice;[89] the Krio term likewise does not refer to geomancy but indicates that the ground is the place on which the diviner lays down his objects and 'looks' at them. The themes of

sight and darkness, visibility and invisibility and the
public and the secret recur constantly in Temne divination.

One instance that has been mentioned already is the use
of mirrors, either alone or in conjunction with other methods
such as *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*, *ta-faŋt* and *aŋ-thàsàbiyà*. When I asked a
Muslim Temne diviner in Koidu, who used the mirror with
aŋ-thàsàbiyà, if either of the two was more important than
the other, he replied that the mirror is the most important,
because 'it is there that you look'. In the mirror the
diviner sees spirits who either give him the diagnosis of
and sacrifice for his client's problem, or confirm the result
of any other method used. Pa Fode Gbla, *ù-mɛ̂n* of Mayan
village, near Matotoka, used his mirror together with *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*
and placed some *bɛ̀rɛ* on the mirror in order to do so. I
asked why he did this, and he replied:

> With them I can see. Through the mirror, if
> someone brings a problem to me, someone comes
> to tell me what to do to solve the problem.

He added, when I asked who he saw in the mirror, 'I see the
spirits through the power of God'.

When diviners look in a mirror, they do not use ordinary
vision, but the penetrative sight of their two invisible
eyes. If an ordinary person looks in the mirror, he sees
nothing. Sometimes the mirrors used are not replaced when
they are broken - that used by Mami Yeno in Pa Koroma's
aŋ-yìnà Musà divination had no reflective surface left at
all - this is not important, for they are not intended for
ordinary sight.

The visual aspect of divination is very marked in
aŋ-yìnà Musà. Pa Koroma put ma-nasî into Mami Yeno's eyes
to give her vision of ro-sɔkî and its inhabitants at the
start of the divination, and extinguished (dimsî) this vision
at the end of it. Pa Koroma and another aŋ-yìnà Musà diviner,
Pa Saidu, who live in villages in different chiefdoms and
do not know each other, both compared the vision of the
other world in aŋ-yìnà Musà to the experience of watching
a film:

> When I use aŋ-yìnà Musà, a sort of screen
> is brought to me, on which I see things.
> I sit in this world, but the picture comes
> with the spirits. It comes to me as if in
> a cinema. (Pa Saidu Kagbo, Rosɛngbɛ, Tane
> Chiefdom)

> Even the Europeans (aŋ-pòthò) are imitating
> this aŋ-yìnà Musà. You go in the cinema
> and you see certain things there. It is so
> with aŋ-yìnà Musà. (Pa Alfa Koroma, Pet-
> bana, Bombali Sebora Chiefdom)

The cinema, with its strong visual impact, is an aspect of
European culture which is of great interest to the Temne
(and to most Sierra Leoneans), as it is seen as a close
equivalent of the special vision of the sɔkî, the person
with four eyes.

Those who have the most powerful vision of all are the
spirits. Ma-nɛkɛ, the spirits of ra-Gbeŋle, are considered
to have extremely piercing supernatural sight, as one of
their witch-finding songs stresses:

> I am the one with the long-sighted eye.
> I can see far beyond the witch.
> I am the one who catches witches.
> However much he changes, I will catch him.

Although the vision of human diviners is not as pene-
trating as that of *ma-nɛkɛ*, diviners are still a category of

people who are *sɔki*, who can see the spirits. Because of

the power of diviners to see what is hidden to ordinary

people, they are allies to the community in that they can

reveal the illicit secrecy threatening the community in the

form of witchcraft, adultery and theft. This makes the

diviner's task dangerous, since he is particularly liable

to attack from witches he might expose. One informant

observed:

> It's very dangerous to be a diviner because
> you're revealing things which are concealed.
> You need a block against witchcraft.

However, although all divination involves some degree

of revelation of the hidden (for example, of the underlying

cause behind a client's problem), 'total' revelation in the

sense of public, verbally unambiguous pronouncements by

diviners is relatively rare. Diviners' revelations are con-

strained by two factors: firstly, by whether divination is

public, taking place in open space, or is private, taking

place in 'closed' space, and secondly by whether diviners'

statements are vague or specific. The former will be

examined next, and the latter will be explored in the next

chapter.

Open and Closed Space

The themes of the hidden and the visible are manifested

in the spatial context of Temne divination. Methods of

divination can be divided into those used in private and

those used in public, the great majority being used for

private, individual consultations. Temne domestic space
is likewise divided into public, semi-public, semi-private
and private areas. The open space in front of the houses
of a town or village is completely public. In this space
is *aŋ-bàrê*, the chief's 'court house' in which law and
justice are administered;[90] *Aŋ-bàrê* is an open structure,
having no walls, in order for the community to be able to
see all that takes place inside it. The verandah (*aŋ-gbàŋthən*) in the front of the house, facing the other houses
and *aŋ-bàrê*, is a predominantly male zone where men talk
together and 'keep company' with each other. The back yard
(*ka-dàrəŋ*) behind the house, facing towards the bush and the
household rubbish-heap (a place of ritual mediation between
town and bush[91]), is a predominantly female zone, site of
the domestic work of women. Both the verandah and the back-
yard are relatively open and semi-public (see Fig. 8).
Inside the house, the central parlour (*aŋ-pàlà*) is a semi-
private space, containing seating but usually no personal
possessions or water, and the side bedrooms (*ɛ-koŋkô*) are
private. It is in the latter, a private side room, that the
majority of divination sessions take place.

P: *aŋ-pàlà*
K: *aŋ-koŋkô*
G: *aŋ-gbàŋthən*
D: *ka-dàrəŋ*
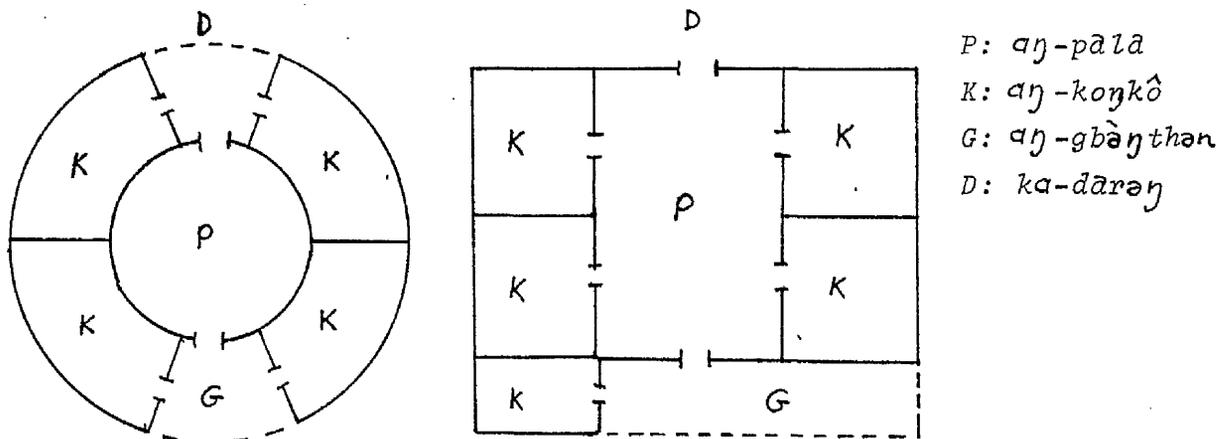
a. Traditional round   b. Typical rectangular
    house (now rare)   house
Figure 8: TEMNE HOUSE PLANS

The space in which private divination takes place is
not only hidden from the community but also from harmful
supernatural beings. Temne houses are ritually 'closed'
(*kaŋtha*) from witches and destructive spirits by being placed
under the protection of the ancestors.[92] The rooms of a
house may also be 'closed' individually, and a room used
for divination will be especially protected because of the
danger diviners are in from witches and other guilty people
whose secret misdeeds they can see, as well as the danger
of malevolent spirits.

Falling in between private and public divination is
aŋ-yinà Musà divination, used when the problem is relatively
serious and/or when the client is wealthy or important. It
is held in the parlour (*aŋ-pàlà*), the intermediate, semi-
private area of the house, and is attended by the local
kapàr chief, by members of the village and by the invisibly
present ancestors. The presence of living and dead members
of the community, and of the representative of the chief
(*ɔ-bày*) who embodies the community, make it a relatively
public, 'social' occasion. However, it has to be held inside
the ritually protected, 'closed' space of the house because
otherwise the medium could be attacked by uncontrolled,
malevolent spirits. When I asked Pa Koroma what would happen
if this method were used outside, he said that if the medium
went into her trance outside the house, spirits would come
'from all directions' and attack her, whereas in the house
only one spirit at a time is allowed to enter through the
back door. Once inside, the spirits are contained by the
power of the diagram on the slate, the 'compartment' whose

'walls' keep them from attacking the people present.

The witchfinding ceremony of *ka-gbàk* is carried out in the open space of the verandah; *ma-nɛkɛ*, who reveal the witches, however are hidden from view behind the mat covering the door. During *ma-sɔ̀kɔ̂*, the night performance of *ma-nɛkɛ*, the prophesies and accusations of the masked spirits are heard by all, but the spirits are not seen by all since the women and uncircumcised males are shut indoors. The fact that it is night, moreover, makes *ma-nɛkɛ* less clearly visible to those who are outside.

Ordeals are administered in open, public space:

> To prevent...any suspicion of improper con-
> duct, the red water[93] is always administered
> in the most public manner, in the open air,
> and in the midst of a large concourse of
> people, who upon these solemn occasions never
> fail to assemble from all quarters...[94]

'Moving vehicle' techniques also take place in open, public space during the daytime. Like the spirits in *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divination, however, who must be spatially contained in order to be rendered harmless, the accusation of a suspect and demonstration of their guilt or innocence takes place within a circle of ashes. Inside the circle, the accused is placed in the power of the diviner's personal spirit: wrongdoers would try to attack the diviner with magical objects, and must be prevented from doing so by the spirit, who is invisible inside the circle.

In *at-ɔlà*, the casting of kola nuts, the community is also present, and the ceremony is visible to them, in open

space. Once again, however, the nuts are cast in a small
white circle of rice flour; it is in this circle that the
sacrifices are offered, while the sacrificer stands in a
separate circle next to it. Some form of spatial limitation
seems to be necessary for all controlled contact with super-
natural beings. In public divination, the spirits must be
kept separate from humans, or at least from all but the
appropriate category of humans.

Ka-gbᴀk, ma-sɔkɔ̃, ordeals, 'moving vehicle' methods and
at-ɔlã take place in public because they are prompted by
issues of direct concern to the community as a whole, such
as theft, adultery, witchcraft and agricultural sacrifice.
Since thieves, witches and adulterers, by operating secretly,
-are threats to the community, it is vital that their acti-
vities are brought into the open by making their discovery
through divination as public as possible.

Thus issues of social concern demand public resolution
by divination in open space or on the verandah of a house,
problems of the individual are diagnosed privately by divi-
nation in a closed room and, in the case of *aŋ-yinã Musã*
divination, questions of intermediate social concern are
investigated in the intermediate space of the parlour. The
secrecy surrounding individual divination is regarded as
appropriate: for a diviner to disclose a private problem
brought to him by a client would be just as unacceptable as
conducting a witch- or thief-catching divination behind
closed doors and not revealing the wrongdoers' names. How-
ever, individual divination is often regarded as suspect
precisely because it is private, since clients can hire

diviners to secretly use harmful medicines against others.
Secrecy in divination is a mixed blessing, as it is in other
areas of Temne culture (such as the secret societies),
protecting what it conceals but thereby making it suspicious.

Divination and Truth

Not surprisingly, there is a constant concern over
'truth' in divination. Those who express a preference for a
particular method of divination usually explain this by
asserting that 'it tells the truth'. Diviners often ask
their divinatory objects repeatedly to 'tell the truth';
aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ divination, as we have seen, begins with the diviner
saying 'certainly, *aŋ-bɛ́rɛ*, you show us' ('*tɛntɛ́nɛ, aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ,
tə tɔ̀rĩ su*'). When using his divinatory object, *aŋ-sarafilo*,
a small woven mat, Pa Koroma intersperses his instructions
to it to move in answer to his questions with additional
questions and instructions concerning the truth of its
answers:

> Get up and tell me the truth. Is it true,
> what you've said? (It shakes) It is true.

The forces behind divination - the spirits, the ancestors
and God (*K-urû* or *Alā*) - are considered to be those beings
who are closest to the truth. The ancestors are described
as 'the old ones who have gone to the truths' (*aŋ-bakĩ po
kɔnɛ ta-têŋ*'), and a synonym for the world of the ancestors,
ro-kərfĩ, is 'the true world', *ro-têŋ*. Pa Biyare, *ù-mɛ̂n*,
added to these forces of truth a medicine with revelatory
power, rubbing the pebbles for *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ* together with leaves
used to aid childbirth, explaining that they help *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*

bring forth the truth in the same way that they help women
bring forth children.

That there is a concern for truth in divination is, of
course, fairly obvious. What is of most interest is what
'truth' means for the Temne. By 'truth', we usually mean
the accuracy of a verbal proposition. 'Truth' in the sense
of justice can also be socially constituted and administered
in courts of law, just as it can be socially constituted
through the use of speech and the creation of public 'agree-
ment' in Dinka ritual and disputes.[95] The Temne use the
term not only in these senses, but also in the sense of
hidden knowledge (for example, the 'secrets' of a society,
or the 'secrets' of the chiefdom that the Chief must learn),
and it is this latter kind of truth that is the most power-
ful.[96] Truth is spoken of in the plural, as *ta-têŋ* 'the
truths', as there are many hidden truths.

Such truths are described in spatial and visual terms
rather than in verbal/propositional terms. As in the secret
societies, in the Paramount Chief's initiatory period in
kə̀-kaŋthà, and in dreams, truths are spatially outside or
closed off from the ordinary community and are visually con-
cealed from it. The truths revealed in divination come from
the spirits and the ancestors (and ultimately from God) and
from their worlds, *ro-sɔkì* and *ro-kərfì*, which are inaccessible
and invisible to ordinary people. The diviner is one who,
through his personal spirit, has acquired secret knowledge
(usually revealed to him in a dream) and has access to the
truths of *ro-sɔkì* and *ro-kərfì*.

This secret knowledge is distinct from the actual techniques of divination. When I asked a *tɑ-faŋt* diviner in Koidu, Ya Mabinti, to teach me *tɑ-faŋt,* she replied:

> The cowries are controlled by something
> else. You need to have knowledge about
> this control before you can use them.
> You people (Europeans) are the owners of
> these cowries. There's no need to teach
> you. You just don't understand how to
> 'play' with them. You can see cowries.
> You know. But you don't understand.

Thus Europeans have the hidden knowledge of the power behind *ta-faŋt* (expressed in visual terms: 'you can see cowries'), since they are one of the categories of people who have four eyes, but they lack merely the technique of manipulating the shells.

Hidden truth is associated with the colour black and with the left hand. Black (*bi*) has a number of negative associations, including negative aspects of hidden things, such as witchcraft and a hypocritical friend who is really an enemy, but it can also embody the positive aspects of hidden things. A *Pɔrɔ* official in Makeni, Pa Sese Conteh, who I had asked about the meaning of the colours he had on his costume and ritual objects, told me that:

> Black is a hiding place - black or darkness.
> If you have this kind of knowledge, others
> want to destroy you. This black can hide
> you from your enemies. The other meaning
> is, 'there, the knowledge is'. It is secret.
> I can cut my arm, go into the hiding place,
> and when I come back there's no blood.

The colour black is equivalent to 'darkness' and to the truths concealed in the darkness which have power - the

power to hide the one who knows them from his enemies, and
to avoid injury by transforming himself from the ordinary
state into the place of darkness. The left hand also signi-
fies that which is outside the community' scrutiny (and
which is usually, therefore, extremely suspicious) and the
truth which inheres in 'not-being-in-proper-relation-with-
others'.[97]

The spatial and visual conception of truth is very clear
in the expression 'ka-gbày ma-thəŋ', 'to split a divination/
prophesy'.[98] Ma-thəŋ denotes all specific accusations and
proofs of a person's guilt (in cases of witchcraft, adul-
tery, theft and murder) and specific predictions about the
future (coming death, fires etc.), which are normally only
made by masked spirits and by diviners using 'moving vehicle'
methods and ordeals. Specific accusation and proof is
considered to be the most important function of divination.
One informant explained ka-gbày ma-thəŋ as follows:

> The divination/prophesy is like a box that
> you split and reveal the truth.

The image of the box here is significant. Boxes are used
to contain stones inhabited by personal or lineage spirits,
and are also used by secret societies to contain their
most sacred objects. The head of the former Paramount Chief,
for instance, is kept in chiefdoms in the south and east of
Temneland in one of the Chief's sacred boxes; likewise the
spirit of the Pɔrɔ society is carried ceremonially by society
officials in a gold box wrapped in white cloth.[99] In a box,
objects are both spatially enclosed and hidden from view.

Since the proper location for hidden truths is outside the community (outside the town or outside *nɔ-rù* altogether), then if a thing which has 'truth' (or the power associated with truth) is brought or kept inside the community, it must be shielded and enclosed, as its power is potentially dangerous. Whereas individual houses, farms and people are 'closed' (*kàŋthà*) against uncontrolled forces of the 'outside' (bush-spirits and witches), the forces controlled and mediated by the secret societies are themselves enclosed and concealed to prevent disordered contact with the community. Thus in *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divination, the spirits are contained in the square 'compartment' formed by the Arabic words on the slate, and in *an-gbə'lo* and *at-ɔlà* the spirit concerned is enclosed within a circle drawn on the ground. In *ma-thəŋ*, however, the diviner or masked spirit splits open the conceptual 'box' hiding the secret truth in order to bring it to the community's view and make it a public truth, like those of the court *aŋ-bàrê*. As the next chapter on divinatory speech shows, this is not done lightly.

CHAPTER FOUR: NOTES

1. Dorjahn, 1962.

2. *Ta-faŋt, aŋ-thàsàbiyà, aŋ-sàràfilo, aŋ-gbɔ̀t (2), ka-bâp, ka-gbàk* and *kòm ta-barî*.

3. See, e.g., Firth, 1959, p. 141.

4. 1975.

5. See Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 40.

6. *Ù-mɛ̂n* is the special term for a diviner who uses *aŋ-bɛ̀rɛ*. The usual word for 'diviner' is *ù-thupâs*.

7. 1978.

8. 1962, p. 4.

9. *Ibid.,* p. 5.

10. See Atherton and Kalous, 1970.

11. Twins (*tɔ̀-barî*) are highly valued and are said to be *sɔki*, i.e. to have invisible eyes and supernatural vision. When a twin dies it is represented by a carving through which its capricious power can be controlled. See Lamp, 1978, p. 44.

12. 1962, pp. 5-6.

13. 1916, I, pp. 80-86.

14. 1962, p. 6.

15. See Lamp, 1978, p. 43.

16. See Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 40.

17. See Dalby and Kamara, 1964, pp. 39, 40 and 41.

17a. See Shaw, 1978.

18. Turay, 1971, p. 95.

19. Jackson, 1977, p. 17.

20. Littlejohn mentions, however, that they should be taken from an elephant's stomach (1978, p. 13).

21. More women than men are said to have personal spirits, and they have them to help them bear children.

22. See Littlejohn, 1963, p. 5.

23. *Λn-Nawò,* the spirit of the women's *Bòndò* society, is also a river spirit.

24. Pa Biyare.

25. This is possibly a further connection between *an-bɛ̀rɛ*, river spirits and women's reproductive concerns.

26. Another method of casting the *bɛ̀rɛ*, practised by Ya Manke Kamara, a migrant woman diviner in Kense village, near Koidu (originally from Port Loko District), consists of throwing a handful of *bɛ̀rɛ* onto a mirror and counting those that fall off.

27. This has the effect of increasing the probability of obtaining a favourable answer, a sign that the death

will not directly affect those present.

28. This is the same direction as Arabic script and the glyphs on the *Pɔrɔ* house are read and written.

29. Ya Manke may have used three columns because three is the 'women's number', although there is some confusion as to whether three is the female number and four the male number, as among the Kuranko (Jackson, 1975, p. 390) and the Mende (Sawyerr and Todd, 1970), or whether it is reversed, which is the more usual Mande significance.

30. 1973.

31. 1973, p. 1419.

32. Pa Alfa Koroma, Petbana Masimbo village.

33. The two other constituents of the human being are *aŋ-ŋesâm*, the life or breath, and *aŋ-dɛr*, the body.

34. 1959, p. 122.

35. This means that the man has committed adultery, the dispute being a 'woman palaver'.

36. 1959, p. 122.

37. Two pounds at that time. The number four also recurs in gifts and praises given to chiefs and in prayers and offerings made to spirits and ancestors. In either case, for instance, a request for help is made after chanting the words '*lòŋ thà*' (we give respect) four times.

38. See Littlejohn, 1960b, pp. 72-73.

39. The back door must also be used when a corpse is removed from the house.

40. 1960a.

41. 1963, p. 8.

42. A *soko-bànà (Pɔrɔ* official), Pa Sese Conteh of Makeni, described a similar process in answer to my questions about colour symbolism. He said that the colour black can be a 'hiding place' from danger and enemies, and that when he performs miraculous feats in public he cuts himself, enters his 'hiding place' to avoid harm, and returns unwounded.

43. He explained later that he had urged her to give *aŋ-yìnà* Musa his shakehand to make him calm, in case she was so afraid that she had forgotten to do so.

44. 1916, p. 89.

45. *Ibid.*

46. 1973, pp. 293-4.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

48. 1978, p. 13.

49. Seeing the strange and non-ordinary is dangerous, as it is in the meaning of omens.

50. See Littlejohn, 1961b, p. 70.

51. 1973, p. 292.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

54. At death, the left hand gives God a true account of the person's life (*Ibid.*, p. 294).

55. *Ibid.*, p. 293.

56. See Ch. 2 above.

57. See Thomas, 1916, pp. 87-88 and Littlejohn, 1978, p. 13.

58. See Dorjahn, 1962, p. 3.

59. 1957, p. 118.

60. Members of the one small Temne Church in Freetown told me they were often accused by other Temne of betraying their people by being Christian.

61. Parkin, 1970.

62. See Skinner, 1976 and 1978; also Dorjahn, 1960a.

63. Turay, 1971, pp. 63-64.

64. 1964, Ch. 5.

65. 1978, p. 2.

66. Littlejohn, 1960a.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

68. Littlejohn, 1978, p. 10.

69. See Wheelwright, 1954, pp. 62, 161, 182, 185 and 304.

70. Tucci, 1961, p. 24.

71. Watts, 1954, p. 179.

72. See Leach, 1976, pp. 12-15.

73. *Ibid.*

74. 1978, pp. 9-10.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

78. At Pa Fode Gbla's sacrifice at Mayan village (see Ch. 2), Pa Fode drew three circles with rice-flour; one for Bɔy Kɔthɔf ('Chief of the Earth') as representative of the spirits, one for himself as representative of his lineage, and one for me, 'standing for' all Europeans.

79. Littlejohn, 1973, p. 294.

80. Synonym for *nɔ-rù*.

81. 1960b, p. 74.

82. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

83. See Littlejohn, 1960a, p. 34 on cowries on *aŋ-sàsà*.

84. See Dorjahn, 1962, p. 5.

85. 1960b, p. 68.

86. See the classification of 'communication events' in Leach, 1976, pp. 12-14.

87. Harris and Sawyerr, 1968, p. 136.

88. Jackson, 1978, p. 118.

89. *Ibid*.

90. See Lamp, 1981a, for the location and significance of other structures and special areas in the traditional Temne village plan.

91. Littlejohn, 1978, pp. 5, 6 and 7.

92. Littlejohn, 1960b, pp. 65, 69 and 71; 1963, pp. 6-8.

93. A liquid medicine made from the bark of a tree. If the suspect vomits it up, he is innocent. If he fails to, and dies, he is guilty.

94. Winterbottom, 1803, vol. 1, p. 130.

95. Lienhardt, 1961, p. 247.

96. Parkin has suggested that in some African thought, something is 'true' if it 'works', or if it is 'good for us'. Although there is not an exact correspondence, the former is close to Temne secret truths which are 'true' because they have power, and the latter is close to the public, socially constituted truth administered in the court *an-bàrê* among the Temne. (Forthcoming paper: 'Truth as Efficacy and Partiality'.)

97. Littlejohn, 1973.

98. See Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 40.

99. Lamp, 1981c, p. 3.

CHAPTER FIVE: DIVINATORY SPEECH

The Use and Significance of Temne Ritual Speech

Writing about Limba speech, Finnegan[1] has put forward the idea that the words and actions of religious ritual may be more fruitfully approached as examples of 'performative utterances' than as descriptive, expressive or symbolic utterances. Her analysis of 'accepting', 'announcing', 'pleading', 'greeting', 'thanking' and 'saying goodbye' as speech acts used with illocutionary force to define and maintain social relationships could apply equally well to Temne speech, which displays a strongly performative aspect. The analogy she draws between 'praying' in ritual and 'pleading' with a chief[2] is also persuasive.

However, the use and meaning of other types of ritual speech among the Temne would be only partially accounted for by an analysis in terms of performative utterances. It is true that Temne ritual speech is not merely expressive or descriptive, and neither is it purely instrumental; Crick[3] has pointed out in any case that this distinction is misleading since language is not divided into 'instrumental' and 'expressive' compartments. But if we do not define 'symbolic' too narrowly and do not equate it with the purely 'expressive' as opposed to the 'instrumental', then much of Temne speech can indeed be described as symbolic. As was argued in the previous chapter, religious symbols typically do not merely point to but actually participate in that which they represent.

Language is often used by the Temne in a way which indicates that the words used have power. In certain contexts, words do not merely denote but participate in what they represent, such that uttering or writing certain words or formulae can make real what is denoted. This is implied in the Temne word for 'name', ŋ-es, which is cognate with the word for 'life' or 'breath', ŋ-esâm, suggesting that name and existence are intimately linked.

If words are not just arbitrary labels but can participate in what they stand for, it follows that certain words and phrases should be used with circumspection or not at all to avoid making a dangerous or undesirable thing or situation real. Hence the frequent use of euphamism and of -circuitous, ambiguous statements in certain areas of Temne speech. When witches are mentioned in ordinary conversation they are not usually called 'witches' (à -sèr), but just 'bad people' (à-fâm à ləs). When the chief dies, moreover, his death is never announced by the words, 'the chief has died', since the life of the chief is linked to the life of his chiefdom, and the utterance of those words would make real a situation of chaos. Instead it is announced that 'the chief has gone to Futa', the place from which the Temne say they originated.

Writing about Temne medicine, Littlejohn states that:

> words are not sharply separated from what
> they signify, but relations between words
> and things take various complex forms.[4]

Herbal medicines, for instance, would be ineffective without appropriate words spoken during their preparation and use;

this is called 'speaking to leaves'.[5]   The popular Islamic

belief that the words of the Qu'ran have power and can be

used to heal and protect has been very readily assimilated

into Temne medicine, in which Qu'ranic quotations are written

on a slate and washed off to make liquid medicine (mà-nasi).

They are also written on pieces of paper, which are then

usually folded, hung up or buried or covered with leather

and worn as charms, ὲ-sɛbὲ.   Written Arabic words, as

Littlejohn[6] says, are thus equivalent to medicinal leaves,

and the principles of their use are virtually the same as

those of herbal medicine.   When a mother goes to a Muslim

cleric for mà-nasî to enable her child to walk, for example,

the Qu'ranic formula used to make the medicine (one such

formula being a prayer for grace to walk the path of

righteousness) is chosen, like the ingredients of herbal

medicine, because of its 'resemblance' to the desired ability

to walk:

> Its resemblance to what the mother wishes
> for her infant functions as the signature
> guiding the imam in his search for the
> hidden efficacy in holy words.[7]

Unlike performative utterances, this way of 'doing

things with words' is not dependent on the presence, assent

or understanding of others.   Littlejohn[8] points out that

although witches are not assumed to be able to read, written

Arabic charms buried in farms to protect the rice crops are

nevertheless considered to be effective against them.

Whereas performative utterances require as public a context

as possible, the use of words as powerful participatory

symbols is just as effective in private, and is indeed often

carried out in secret. Performative utterances such as
'announcing', 'accepting' etc. are used to create agreement,
to create public 'truth', while 'participatory' speech or
writing embodies a 'truth', an efficacy, which is independent
of the social community.

Swearing and cursing are examples of both performative
and participatory speech, and can be carried out in public
and in secret with equal effectiveness. Once again, how-
ever, the secret use of power - including the power of words
- is considered to be morally evil and equivalent to witch-
craft. Swearing a wrongdoer is socially sanctioned as long
as it is socially observable: one who wants to swear must
obtain the permission of the chief (who is identified with
and represents the community), must give advance public
warning of his intention to swear via the town crier, and
must activate the swearing medicine noisily (usually by
ringing a bell) and in an open place. Swearing inside a
house is equivalent to witchcraft.

Licit, public swearing includes performative utterances:
the plaintiff starts by formally 'announcing' what is going
to take place, then 'pleads' with the swear, personnified
as 'Pa Sasa' (Father Swear) and sometimes with God and the
ancestors as well. However, the words are used as more
than performative utterances; they do not simply define the
situation, people and relationships involved, but also have
the power to harm the wrongdoers by activating the swearing
medicine. The following was spoken by Yă Bǎy ('Mother
Chief', the title of female specialists in swearing), the

sister of the Freetown diviner Pa Yamba, at the end of a

swearing ceremony against thieves. She formally greeted

ɛ-gbɔ̀m, the collection of swearing medicines, bowing and

intoning 'I ko rɛ̂ muuuu' ('I greet you'), then she beat them

with a broom, saying:

> You, Pa Sasa. This young man's property
> has been stolen. He has brought his case
> to you, and so all those concerned, do not
> leave them. Seize them. Do not leave
> them. Those who stole, make them paralysed.
> They say you are aŋ-sâsà gbɔ̀rkà.[9] Those
> who stole, ɛ-leŋpe ɛ̀ àn kàs nàŋ (your
> fathers' foreskins). Their people are
> gbɔ̀rkà. Ta-lethe tà àŋ-fə̂m nàŋ (your
> peoples' clitorises). (Pa Yamba, who was
> present, exploded a small amount of powder
> a-pɔpà, on the swears). These people, do
> not leave them at all. We hand them over
> to you to deal with. Lòŋ thà. Lòŋ thà.
> Lòŋ thà. Lòŋ thà.[10]

This speech is very specific, with no euphamisms or ambi-

guities. The verbal climax is the specific naming of the

uncircumcised sexual organs of the thieves' parents.

Naming a person's sexual organs is itself a curse (kə̀-nàl),

naming them as uncircumcised means that the person con-

cerned is asocial and powerless, and naming a person's

parents' uncircumcised organs places that person even further

from ordinary socialised humanity since one who is gbɔ̀rkà

is classified as a child and therefore cannot marry or have

children. The child of a gbɔ̀rkà is therefore a complete

anomaly and should not exist at all. The curse activates

the swearing medicines, and the explosion of the powder

effects their transition from nɔ-rù to ro-sɔkì in order to

begin their search for the thieves.

The curse, then, is effective both as a performative utterance and as participatory ritual speech. In public situations such as disputes, the performative aspect of the curse predominates: considerable sums of money are frequently spent in litigation when 'abusive language' is used against oneself or one's parents. Cursing is appropriate if the person cursed is truly a wrongdoer, since theft, witchcraft and adultery, for instance, are anti-social activities. By defining the wrongdoer as *gbɔ̀rkɔ̀* or as the child of *gbɔ̀rkɔ̀* parents, the curse relegates the wrongdoer to the anti-social category to which he or she really belongs. If the person cursed is innocent, however, the one who curses must formally 'beg' their forgiveness, thus redefining the innocent person as a good member of society. Cursing as a performative utterance, then, has the opposite effect of those speech acts described by Finnegan,[11] since whereas begging, accepting, greeting etc. are all concerned with the inclusion and definition of people *within* society, the purpose of the curse is to define them as *excluded* from it.

That cursing involves more than simply the public definition and redefinition of individuals, however, is shown in the fact that a curse against a wrongdoer is believed to be effective even when the identity of the latter is unknown, as in the swearing ritual above. Moreover, cursing an unknown witch who has harmed one's children will eventually cause the witch to confess, thus attacking the witch's illicit secrecy with a verbal specificity which is normally illicit itself.

Speech in Temne Divination

Since words in certain contexts have power, diviners
can use words for both helpful and harmful purposes.
Diviners are suspected of misusing the participatory power
of words in the secret use of bad medicine against their
enemies or those of their clients. The medicine is acti-
vated by words, in which the name ($a\eta$-es) of the victim is
essential: when people talk about a case in which a diviner
was hired to attack a client's enemy, they say 'he gave
his (the victim's) name to a diviner'.

In divination proper, the use of speech should follow
certain broad rules. Jackson, describing private Kuranko
divination, observes that 'dialogue between the diviner and
the consultor is minimal'[12] and that 'There is no "social
analysis" such as Turner lucidly describes in his studies
of Ndembu divination'.[13] This is also the case in Temne
private divination, particularly when the issue is a rela-
tively minor, individual one. However, the more the issue
is seen to be of serious social concern, the less private
the divinatory session should be and the more elaborate and
explicit the divinatory dialogue should be. Four cases
will illustrate this.

Case One:

A woman, Pa Koroma's mother's sister, came to consult
him about her son's proposed marriage.[14] Pa Koroma held
$a\eta$-$s\bar{a}r\bar{a}filo$, prayed under his breath, then ordered it to
'get up', which it did. He interrogated it as follows:

> Is it a good woman who will be the wife?
> (It shook) Lie down. If you find a
> problem in this marriage, lie down.
> (It did not) Come to the left and to
> the right. Get up. (It did) What is
> the sacrifice? If the sacrifice is rice,
> get up. If it is money, get up. If it
> is gold, get up. If it is salt, get up.
> (It did) You say salt. Well, stand.
> What is the number of the salt - seven?
> (It 'stood') Seven is the number. Will
> this man get the woman? (It stood) Will
> she give birth? (It stood) Will there
> be any hypocrite? (It did not stand) No.
> Is there any problem in the marriage?
> (It did not stand) No. If they make this
> sacrifice, will the man get the woman?
> (It stood) Yes.

Pa Koroma then recited a Muslim prayer and made the follo-

wing announcement:

> This woman has come to find out about the
> marriage of Lamin (her son). Lamin is
> going to marry a woman. But this woman
> (the client) should get seven cups of salt
> and put them in the fanner, calling the
> man's and the woman's names one after the
> other. Then she should mix the salt, the
> two names, together. They should gather
> people and recite prayers and give the
> salt to a woman of the same complexion as
> the woman. Lamin needs a gold ring for his
> own sacrifice. He should put it in water
> with kola in a small cooking pot, recite
> prayers, then put the ring on his finger.
> Let him take one kola nut from the pot and
> divide it between ten people.

Beyond telling Pa Koroma the question she had come to ask

about, the client did not speak at all during the divination.

The speech was an uninterrupted monologue consisting of Pa

Koroma's interrogation of *aŋ-sārāfilo*, his announcement of

the prognosis and his description of the required sacrifice.

The relatively minor nature of the question was reflected

in the short interrogation about the favourability of the

marriage; more attention was given to the details of the

sacrifice to ensure the good prognosis. The diviner's role
here was to legitimise a fairly straightforward decision.

Case Two:

Nine members of a family brought a seriously ill little
girl of about two years old to Pa Koroma. The child's
mother was away in Freetown, and those present, with the
exception of the mother's co-wife, were of the father's side
only: these were the father himself, his own father, his
mother, his two brothers, his sister, his sister's husband
and his sister's husband's sister.

Pa Koroma sat on a mat on the floor, holding *aŋ-thàsàbiyà,*
the rosary beads. An Arabic book was open in front of him,
together with two exercise books containing written symbols
and diagrams, and with two more Arabic books with a small
mirror placed on top. He wrote in one of the exercise books,
then questioned the father's elder brother, who spoke for
the family:

> Pa Koroma- 'Why is the child brought here?'
> Father's brother- 'The child is not well.'
> Pa Koroma- 'Are you the real father.'
> Father's brother- 'Ibrahim Turay is the real
>   father.'
> Pa Koroma- 'Do you want to know the cause of
>   the illness?'
> Father's brother- 'Yes.'
> Pa Koroma- 'What is the name of the mother?'
> Father's brother- 'Mabinti Conteh.'
> Pa Koroma- 'Lift the child up. (He flicked
>   *mà-nasî* from a jug onto the child's face
>   and rubbed it all over her body.) Why
>   didn't you bring the child earlier?'
> Father's brother- 'We didn't know the sick-
>   ness was going to press the child so much.'

Pa Koroma made two columns in the exercise book. He rubbed
the mirror, recited under his breath and took out *àn-sàràfilo.*

He made twelve dots in the left-hand column of the exercise
book in the manner of *aŋ-ramɔli* divination, then wrote
Arabic words and symbols in the right-and column. He repeated
the names of the father and mother, then asked for the name
of the child, which was given as 'Baby Conteh'. He held and
rubbed her feet and legs, then asked 'Where is the money to
consult?' Forty cents was put down. He picked up the rosary
beads and prayed with them, then asked, 'Among those present,
is there someone who has learnt Arābic?' The father's
brother replied that none had, so Pa Koroma had to find out
what the child's 'star' or destiny was. He selected a bead
and counted the beads off two at a time until the end, as
in *aŋ-thàsàbiyà* divination. He repeated this, looked up
the resulting numbers in one of the Arabic books and announced
that the child's star had fallen to ɔ-nabī Isa (the prophet
Jesus), which he said involved sickness and spending money.
He took up *aŋ-sàràfilo*, kissed it, tapped it repeatedly on
the forty cents, gazed at a circular diagram of symbols in
one of the Arabic books, and recited prayers with his rosary
beads. With his beads in his left hand and *aŋ-sàràfilo* in
his right hand, Pa Koroma proceeded to interrogate the latter:

> If there is a cause[15] for the sickness, come
> to the left hand. (It does.) If you are
> going to show us the cause, come to the left
> hand. (It does.) Now stand still. (It
> does.) You said the sickness is heavy. Can
> we cure it? (It moves.) Yes. Is it a spirit?
> (It moves.)

He then addressed the relatives:

> You take the child from a spirit and bring
> it to me. You have paid the child to a
> spirit. If you redeem the child from the
> spirit, she will be cured.

The family responded to this accusation:

> Child's father- 'I am the father in this
> case. It is only my own wife who takes
> care of the child. If I am included in
> this handing over of the child, let me
> be found out.'
> Father's brother- 'Let you (Pa Koroma)
> find the person who handed over the
> child to the spirit. Let us know if they
> are in the matrilineage (*ma-karâ*) or the
> patrilineage (*ma-kãs*).'

Pa Koroma replied:

> I am not going to point to one person.
> You know it very well among yourselves and
> you want me to lie. I will not lie.

The father's father gave a further eighty cents to Pa Koroma
and begged him to fight, telling him that they have handed
the child over to Pa Koroma and to the child's mother. Pa
Koroma replied that this was a very good thing, but asked
how he could fight without the mother's presence. He said
that it is good for both the mother and father to be present,
since they all made the arrangement. The family decided to
send for the mother quickly, and asked Pa Koroma if he was
now willing to help. They said they knew he was famous in
the area, and since the mother was not there, let him give
his help. He agreed to do so and told the family to leave
a woman (the father's sister) to look after the child and
to return the following day, adding that he was not afraid
to get hold of the culprit.

In this case, which was clearly much more serious than
the previous one, (selling a child to a spirit is regarded
as witchcraft, or as equivalent to it) the divinatory ritual

was much more complex and there was considerable dialogue
between Pa Koroma and the clients about the diagnosis.
Whereas 'social analysis' of the kind described by Turner
was virtually absent from the previous case, it was very
clear in this one, in the competing explanations of Pa Koroma
and the clients. A discussion of this social analysis will
be left to Chapter Seven. Suffice it to say that despite
pressure from those present to accuse the child's mother,
Pa Koroma refused to make a specific accusation. He avoided
ka-gbày ma-thəŋ, the 'splitting' of a divination. His
accusations were consistently vague and general, although
it would have been easy for him to accept the strong hints
of his clients. By his avoidance of specific accusation,
he avoided *aŋ-hākɛ̀*, the 'sin' accruing to those who, among
other things, disrupt social relations, particularly marital
harmony.

Case Three:

I initiated a session of divination by *aŋ-yìnà Musà*
with Pa Koroma as diviner and Mami Yeno as medium. Because
this semi-public method is expensive and is usually used
only in what are considered to be the more important cases,
it is used relatively rarely. After the main problem has
been dealt with, other people present are able to ask their
own questions. Extracts (a) and (b) below concern the
sacrifices prescribed for myself and for my research assis-
tant, Michael: we had both asked about the success of our
work and were given favourable answers. Extract (c) concerns
the unemployment of a man called Abdulai.

a.   Mami Yeno- 'They (the ancestors and
aŋ-yina Musa) say the work she is doing
is a work of good fortune (hàrsikè).'
Pa Koroma- 'In your work, you will get
good fortune. A work of happiness to
those who sent you here. They will be
happy.'
Mami Yeno- 'When the sacrifice (of cloth)
has been made, just go on. She must not
see it (the cloth offered) with her own
eye.'
Pa Koroma- 'You see now (you understand),
they finish pulling[16] (making) the
sacrifice... After they have finished
making the sacrifice, well, when you look
and see that cloth, you should not see it
again.'
Mami Yeno- 'The one they have to give to,
they give it.'
Pa Koroma- 'The one that makes the sacri-
fice, he takes the cloth.'
Mami Yeno- 'And the small small food they
give away, give it to children.'
Pa Koroma- 'And the small small food, like
Diamints,[17] biscuits, put it in a tray.[18]
After they have made the sacrifice, give
them away to children. Give them away to
people. Anybody who is a child is able to
eat them.'
Mami Yeno- 'Let your good fortune continue
to open.'
Pa Koroma- 'When they finish, your good
fortune will be open for the work you are
doing.'

b.   Mami Yeno- 'They say, let me show him,
that thing that is following him, why does
he not make it?
Pa Koroma- 'The sheep that is following you
(figuratively) for sacrifice, why do you not
make it?
Mami Yeno- 'He should put it in his house.'
Pa Koroma- 'Do you have it at home?'
Mami Yeno- 'Do you have it?'
Pa Koroma- 'The sheep, do you have it?'
Michael- 'The sheep, I have it at Magburaka.'
Pa Koroma- 'You yourself, was it pulled by you?'
Michael- 'My grandmother, she made it. She
made it for us.'
Mami Yeno- 'You yourself, your own truly.'
Pa Koroma- 'Your own which you laboured for
truly, they (the ancestors) want.'
Mami Yeno- 'I do not say, let you be (merely)
included. Your own alone. When they pull it
for you, the sacrifice, it should be in your
house.'
Pa Koroma- 'It should be in the place where
you sit down (your home). There it should remain.'

c. Abdulai- 'I myself am looking for work.
They promise me but I do not get it. All
the time they say come; when I go they send
me back.'
Mami Yeno- 'Go and beg (apologise to) your
mother, Ya Na Musu.'
Pa Koroma- 'It is not difficult, since she is
yet in this world (she is still alive). You
just go there and have the same voice (com-
promise).'
Mami Yeno- 'Buy her a lappa (length of cloth)
and beg her. You hear?'
Abdulai- 'Yes.'
Mami Yeno- 'The begging is not (needed) because
she says, "Let you not get" (a job); but to
bear (children) is painful.'[19]
Pa Koroma- 'That is, she has a bad mind for
him.'
Mami Yeno- 'Yes.'
Pa Koroma- 'Well, you believe!' (Jokingly
blaming him).
Pa Santigi Koroma (Pa Koroma's father)- 'The
case we talk about is this. The father, the
mother, do not treat them carelessly.'
Adama (Pa Koroma's wife)- 'The heart, if it
is in pain, she (the mother) curses.'
Mami Yeno- 'You hear? Beg her. If you beg
her, the voice she spoke will come out. You
will learn what she said to a spirit. You
were sick and about to die in her care.'
Pa Koroma- 'You did know this.'
Abdulai- 'It is so.'
(Pa Koroma laughs.)
Mami Yeno - 'You hear?'
Abdulai- 'Yes.'
Mami Yeno- 'She talked somewhere. Is this
not so?'
Abdulai- 'Yes.'
Mami Yeno- 'Well, why did they not make a
sacrifice?'[20] You were doing to the woman
something like ingratitude.' (rà-fisrawɔli)
Pa Koroma- 'It is ingratitude. Is it true?'
Abdulai- 'En, hm hm (Yes).'
Mami Yeno- 'She is troubled in her mind. The
sacrifice, they don't make it... Abdulai,
please beg the mother.'
Abdulai- 'Yes.'
Mami Yeno- 'So that your good fortune will open.
It is not that they do not want to take you (for
a job).'
Abdulai- 'Yes.'
Mami Yeno- 'But (it is) this case that lies
between.'
Abdulai- 'But if this case is finished now,
it will be all right, not so?'
Mami Yeno- 'Yes. If you finish begging the
mother, her heart will be cool.'

The content of this last diagnosis will also be examined
in Chapter Seven; however, what concerns us here is divi-
natory language. Three points may be noted. Firstly, there
was no attempt by Abdulai in extract (c) to steer the diag-
nosis in a desired direction, probably because he was not
being blamed for anything as serious as witchcraft, which
those in case 2 were accused of. There were, however, many
interjections from those present in support of Mami Yeno's
statements. Secondly, Mami Yeno's statements were often
extremely vague and euphamistic; for example she said 'She
talked somewhere', meaning that Abdulai's mother spoke to
a spirit to make a bargain over Abdulai's illness. When
repeating her statements to those present, Pa Koroma often
elaborated upon them and made them much more specific, for
example:

> Mami Yeno- 'And the small small food they
> give away, give it to children.'
> Pa Koroma- 'And the small small food, like
> Diamints, biscuits, put it in a tray. After
> they have made the sacrifice, give them away
> to children. Give them away to people.
> Anybody who is a child is able to eat them.'

Also:

> Mami Yeno- 'They say, let me show him,
> that thing that is following him, why does
> he not make it?'
> Pa Koroma- 'The sheep that is following
> you for sacrifice, why do you not make it?'

This is reminiscent of the difference between 'restricted
code' speech and 'elaborated code' speech described by
Bernstein.[21] The latter is a highly explicit and ordered
form of speech, while the former is less explicit and is
not easily comprehensible to an outsider, but often has

great directness and richness. There was thus a verbal
'division of labour' between medium and diviner: Mami Yeno
made mostly 'restricted code' utterances which may be seen
as mirroring the state of 'darkness' she was in, while Pa
Koroma, the controlling and ordering presence in charge of
the divination, made explicit 'elaborated code' interpre-
tations easily understood by those present.

Thirdly, *ka-gbày ma-thəŋ*, the 'splitting' of a divina-
tion to reveal a 'truth', took place. Unlike the previous
case, a specific accusation of an individual was made:
Abdulai's problems in finding work were diagnosed as stemming
from his ingratitude to his mother and from an unpaid debt
to a spirit. Both Mami Yeno and Pa Koroma were quite explicit
about Abdulai's culpability, in contrast to case 2 in
which Pa Koroma refused to be drawn into blaming a parti-
cular individual. It is tempting to relate this increased
specificity to the more public nature of *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divi-
nation, but it must be noted that the implications of a
specific accusation were much more serious in the previous
case than in this one. In the former, had Pa Koroma accepted
the family's implied blame of the child's mother, he would
have brought about or worsened marital disruption, and he
would have been accusing an individual of an act equivalent
to witchcraft. In the latter Mami Yeno's diagnosis was only
likely to bring about an improvement in Abdulai's behaviour
towards his mother.

Case Four:

The last example is that of the witchfinding ceremony

(*ka-gbàk*) at Magburaka which was described in Chapter Two
above. Here it was the task of *ma-nɛkɛ* and *ɔ-Gbeŋle*, the
head of *ra-Gbeŋle* to carry out the most serious kind of
ma-thəŋ, namely to make specific accusations of witchcraft
and to publicly manifest the guilt of those accused. *Ma-nɛkɛ*,
the masked spirits of *ra-Gbeŋle*, sing and interrogate the
suspects while concealed behind a mat (*à-gbàthà*) covering
the open doorway of a house. They are thus audible but not
visible; their songs, moreover, are aurally 'masked' since
they are sung in such a strongly nasal tone as to be almost
incomprehensible. This visual and auditory 'masking' of
ma-nɛkɛ contrasts with the direct verbal questioning,
accusation and cursing by them and by *ɔ-Gbeŋle*. In the
following extract, *ma-nɛkɛ* elicit a confession from one of
the men suspected of witchcraft:

> *Ma-nɛkɛ* - 'You are a witch, not so?'
> Accused- 'It is not true.'
> *Ma-nɛkɛ* - 'Your foreskin (*aŋ-leŋpe à mɔ̀ à*).'
> Accused- 'It is not true.'
> *Ma-nɛkɛ* - 'Let the audience listen. I want to
> make a bet (*kà-bəktà*) of twenty pounds with
> this man that he is a witch.'[22]
> Accused- 'I have not got that twenty pounds.'
> *Ma-nɛkɛ* - 'Do you remember making a farm with
> your family at ..... place? Did you get rice?'
> Accused- 'I did not get rice.'
> *Ma-nɛkɛ* - 'What was the cause of this? Was it
> not you and your witch friends who spoiled
> that rice?'
> Accused- 'It is true.'
> *Ma-nɛkɛ* - 'Well, why do you deny being a witch?'

As in the swear, verbal specificity is used to attack the
witch's illicit secrecy. If the accused had continued to
deny being a witch and had put up twenty pounds as *kà-bəktà*
he would have been challenged to touch the mat separating
him from *ma-nɛkɛ*: any wrongdoer denying his guilt is believed

to defecate involuntarily upon doing so. Defecation, like witchcraft, is both private and 'dirty' (nɔkɔ), and involuntary defecation when touching the mat can be seen as a visible manifestation of witchcraft in metaphor.

To sum up, of these four cases, the first was private and minor, the second was private and serious, the third was semi-public and semi-serious and the last was public and very serious. In the first, there was no dialogue between diviner and client, and the diviner merely gave the legitimation to a desired decision. In the second, there was considerable dialogue as diviner and clients attempted to manage the agreement of the session by giving or implying competing explanations, but the diviner refused to accuse a specific individual of witchcraft. In the third case there were frequent questions and comments from those present, and the medium accused an individual of filial ingratitude towards his mother. The medium's utterances were often vague and of a 'restricted code' type, while the diviner made these utterances more defined and explicit through 'elaborated code' speech. In the fourth case, the utterances of the hidden spirits were highly explicit and detailed, but were interspersed with near-incomprehensible songs. There was often a competing dialogue between the spirits and those they questioned; the spirits accused particular individuals of witchcraft and elicited confessions by specifically naming the latter's sexual organs as uncircumcised and by challenging them to a financial and physiological ordeal.

In general, then, the more serious the implications of
a case for the community, the more public the divination,
the richer the divinatory dialogue and the more appropriate
the specific accusations, *ma-thəŋ*. This correlation between
serious problems and public divination was modified in cases
2 and 3 above, however, since case 2 was more
serious than case 3, but was more private. This was
largely due to the artificiality of case 3, since where-
as *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divination is normally prompted by fairly
serious problems of a social nature, this session was initi-
ated by the author. Moreover, the problem prompting the
divination in case 2 was not initially of obvious community
concern (although it was clearly of great concern to the
family) as infant deaths are common and only some of them
are attributed to witchcraft. It was only in the divinatory
process itself that the diagnosis that the child had been
sold to a spirit emerged.

In these circumstances, *à-hàkɛ̀*, 'sin', would fall on
the diviner if he explicitly accused specific individuals.
Although he can see that social relations are disturbed,
this disturbance is not yet acknowledged, and to accuse
individuals is seen as worsening it. The same applies to
accusations of adultery in private divination; diviners say
that rather than make a direct accusation if they 'see'
that a male client's misfortune is caused by his wife's
adultery, they will make a veiled innuendo, advising him
to 'look at the behaviour of your wife'. Ya Mabinti Kamara,
the migrant woman diviner in Koidu, claimed that even this
would be wrong:

> I get problems of unfaithful wives, but I
> don't tell men about it. I just tell a
> man about the *s-athkà* (sacrifice) he must
> make, so that the woman falls into *à-hàkɛ̀*
> and he will see what she has done (i.e.
> she will confess). Men diviners 'set the
> fire'; they always tell a man if his wife
> is unfaithful.

The importance of 'truth' in divination is thus counter-
balanced by the importance of the conjugal relationship; the
exposure of truth is, in any case, only delayed in Ya Mabinti's
view, since as a result of the sacrifice God will cause
à-hàkɛ̀ to reveal the truth.

When, on the other hand, the situation worsens and a
public divination is called, this is itself an acknowledge-
ment that social relations are already disturbed. The
diviner or the society spirits are called to accuse indivi-
duals and make their guilt visible so as to restore order;
thus no *à-hàkɛ̀* falls on them. Under these circumstances,
ka-gbày ma-thəŋ, the 'splitting' of a divination to reveal
hidden truths by specific accusation, is not only appropriate
but necessary, since the community is perceived as being
vulnerable to attack from hidden wrongdoers.

Verbal specificity, like the visual acuity of powerful
diviners and society spirits, has penetrative connotations,
cutting through secrecy just as four-eyed vision cuts through
'darkness'. This idiom of penetration is evident in the
expression *ka-gbày ma-thəŋ* itself, the 'splitting' or
'cleaving open' of a divination. Those who perform *ma-thəŋ*
and pierce the 'darkness' are, of course, in 'darkness' them-
selves: their superior power is manifested by the fact that

nothing is hidden from them, but they are hidden to us.
The medium in *aŋ-yìnà̀ Musà̄* divination is covered in a white
cloth and enters a trance, and in *ka-gbàk̀, ma-nɛ̀kɛ* are con-
cealed behind the mat over the door and pass between *nɔ-rù̀*
and *ro-sɔkì̀* during their singing. The 'restricted' nature
of the medium's utterances and the 'masked' quality of the
singing of *ma-nɛ̀kɛ* could be interpreted as verbal expressions
of their invisibility, while the sharp verbal specificity of
their utterances when performing *ma-thə̀ŋ* expresses, on the
other hand, their piercing four-eyed vision.

Since *ma-thə̀ŋ* takes place publicly, the performative
aspect of divinatory speech predominates. Public accusation
and cursing brings about the re-definition of individuals
as 'outside' the community. Confession and 'begging' by
these individuals begins the process of bringing them inside
again. Interestingly, *ma-thə̀ŋ* has an opposite equivalent
in the verbal utterances of *ma-nɛ̀kɛ àthà̀mrɔ̂,* uncontrolled
spirits of *ra-Gbeŋ̀le* who run amok at night stealing, des-
troying crops and shouting abuse and false accusations.[23]
Whereas *ma-thə̀ŋ* is a performative utterance which brings
about definitional clarity, *ma-nɛ̀kɛ àthà̀mrɔ̂* use the illocu-
tionary force of curses and accusations to bring about a
state of definitional chaos.

Towards a Semiology of Divination

A correlation between socially serious cases, public
divination and elaborate, specific divinatory dialogue might
seem an obvious finding which could be expected to recur in
all instances of divination, but this is not the case.

Among the Azande, for instance, the utterances of witch-doctors at their well-attended public seances are typically obscure, ungrammatical and incoherent.[24] Although specific accusations are made, they are usually either whispered to the client or conveyed by innuendo comprehended only by the client.[25] The initiative is thus left with the client, who puts the names of those hinted at or whispered by the witch-doctor to the poison oracle, which is held to be more reliable than the witch-doctor's seance and is, unlike the latter, legally binding.[26] The implications of the poison oracle's revelations are thus more socially serious than those of the seance. In contrast to the seance, the poison oracle is consulted away from human habitations, at the edge of cultivations and preferably screened from view by high grasses so as to ensure secrecy.[27] The language used is explicit and elaborate; Evans-Pritchard observed that the oracle is addressed 'with all the care for detail that one observes in court cases before a prince'.[28]

The differences between Temne and Azande witch-detection reflect differences in both the social significance of privacy and in the category of 'witchcraft' itself in each society. Zande *mangu* is involuntary and unconscious and does not have the attributes of deliberate anti-social male-volence characterizing Temne *ra-sèr*. The Azande witch *is* an ordinary member of the community and does not merely *pretend* to be so, as the Temne witch does. Whereas the Temne witch is conceptually 'outside' the community, associated with the bush and *ro-serɔŋ* and therefore needing to be exposed to the community he or she pretends to belong to,

the Azande witch is conceptually 'inside' the community
(although he or she constitutes a dangerous presence there),
and is correspondingly 'less likely to corrupt the oracle
in the bush than in a homestead'.[29]

Underneath these differences, however, in both Temne and
Azande divination explicit speech is used in cases having
serious social implications. Both public *ma-thəŋ* among the
Temne and the diagnoses of the Azande poison oracle are
legally binding. They are both performative utterances
which, in order to be effective in their re-definition of
people and relationships, need to be explicit and unambi-
guous. Temne private divination, on the other hand, is
concerned with relatively 'minor' cases (i.e., which concern
only individuals) and with the elimination of those
explanations which are not of social concern in potentially
serious cases. Azande witch-doctors' seances, similarly,
accomplish a preliminary narrowing down of suspects prior to
consultation of the poison oracle. Neither Temne private
divination nor Azande seances are legally binding; they are
not regarded as appropriate situations for the specific
revelation of individual wrongdoers, and there is a concern
among Temne private diviners and Azande witch-doctors[30] that
social relations should not be disturbed too hastily.
Therefore obscure, 'restricted code' divinatory speech is
actually more appropriate in these types of divination.

Divinatory speech even within one society, then, may
be of different types, tailored to the concerns of diffe-
rent divinatory situations. In his study of Giriama and
Swahili divination, Parkin[31] has described and analysed

the changes in the diviner's speech within the divinatory
session itself. The Kenyan diviners he studied use the
narrative idiom of a journey in which the patient's suffering
soul initially wanders aimlessly in a wilderness, then
joins the spirits in a voyage through the body to locate
the site of the problem. This metaphorical journey from
wilderness to settlement has parallels with the divinatory
language used. The diviner, who does not know the client's
problem, begins by using 'jumbled speech' characterised by
the simultaneous use of polysemous metaphors in which the
diviner jumps inconsistently back and forth from one meaning
to another. The diviner's speech then becomes more ordered
in the journey through the different parts of the patient's
body, and the diviner ends up by giving a precise classifi-
cation of the causative agents involved and of the ingredients
for the remedy.

Parkin points out parallels between the idiom of the
wilderness, the use of 'jumbled speech' and the orderless,
synchronous network of deep-structure semantics; these con-
trast with the idiom of ordered settlement, the use of
classification and taxonomy in the diviner's 'clear speech'
and the sequential grammatical ranking of surface semantics.[32]
Just as the tangle of the wilderness may be seen as a source
of power, the diviner's jumbled speech is rich and creative
and the synchronous picture given by deep-structure seman-
tics is more striking than that given by surface semantics,
and corresponds more closely to our immediate experience of
reality.

The client's problem is solved in these Kenyan examples,

then, by both diviner and client going through an initial
confused, 'wandering' state and finally becoming settled
and 'straightened out'. The assumption behind this pro-
cedure (and, Parkin points out, behind psychoanalysis), is
that 'to clarify a problem is to solve it.'[33]

In the Kenyan, Azande and Temne cases alike, there is
a progression from 'vague' or 'jumbled' speech to 'specific'
or 'clear' speech. In the Kenyan cases this marked change
takes place within the divinatory session, while in Temne
and Azande divination it takes place in the transition from
one type of divination to another. These changes in speech
are necessary in order for parallel progressions to take
place from 'darkness' to 'clarity' or from 'wilderness' to
'settlement', in which 'darkness' and 'wilderness' indicate
equivalent states of definitional chaos. Moreover, just as
specific Temne and Azande divinatory speech has a performa-
tive function in the accusation of individuals, the 'clear'
ordered speech in Swahili and Giriama divination is also
a way of 'doing things with words', since problem-specifying
here is also problem-solving.

This paradigm will be examined in a brief consideration
of two other examples: that of Kalanga divinatory speech
and Ndembu divinatory symbols. Werbner describes the
rhetoric used by the diviner and his congregation in Kalanga
domestic divination as follows:

> Both may begin with an abundance, perhaps
> a superabundance, of fine, very specific,
> mutual understanding about the personal
> circumstances of the congregation's members.
> During the divination, there may be dis-
> course which, manifestly at least, is

> concerned with very general formulations,
> while it moves away from particulars.
> A diviner may have to extinguish some
> highly specific implications that are
> troublesome. Thus, even though there
> may also be enquiry that probes and reduces
> from the general to the particular, such
> as has been so adequately described in
> literature on divination, this reduction
> is merely one among the many patterns of
> personal communication at seances. Indeed,
> much of the time, what is virtually the
> opposite - the appeal to general formula-
> tions to avoid or exclude some particulars
> - may occur, and this is especially likely
> at seances where the diviner and his con-
> gregation are all intimates and neighbours.[34]

In these verbal processes, metaphors are used which express
many meanings on different levels,[35] as in the 'jumbled
speech' of the Kenyan diviners. In fact the 'superabundance
of understanding' which the Kalanga diviner prunes down to
manageable proportions seems very similar to the 'simultan-
eity of metaphor' described by Parkin.

A similar pattern appears in Ndembu divination, which
interestingly combines the idiom of the journey from the
wilderness used in Giriama and Swahili divination (the
Ndembu word for 'symbol', *chinjikijilu*, is derived from
ku-jikijila, the word denoting the marking of a trail back
from the bush[36]) with the theme of bringing the hidden into
the open[37] found in Temne divination. The Ndembu diviner
tosses in his basket divinatory symbols whose spectrum of
meanings covers the range of Ndembu misfortunes and their
underlying origins in social life. These symbols are used
in a very similar way to that in which Swahili and Giriama
diviners use language. In the 'jumbled speech' of these
Kenyan diviners, tenuously connected meanings are piled on
top of each other by the inconsistent and mixed use of

metaphor. Likewise, each Ndembu divinatory symbol has
multiple meanings which are only vaguely linked together
and show 'brittle segmentation'.[38] Turner writes:

> Divinatory symbols are multi-referential,
> and their referents are highly autonomous
> and readily detachable from one another.
> Ritual symbols are much more highly con-
> densed; their meanings interpenetrate and
> fuse, giving them greater emotional
> resonance.[39]

The Ndembu diviner's tossing of the mixed up objects in
his basket resembles the Kenyan diviners' methods of 'playing
with' and manipulating 'mixed up' verbal concepts and meta-
phors. The Kenyan diviners thus use language in a way
which makes it resemble non-linguistic symbols. This
striking resemblance between Kenyan divinatory language and
Ndembu divinatory symbols may be connected to the fact that
in both examples the diviner is not told the problem about
which he is consulted. Emic categories associated with
social structure and causes of misfortune are thus 'tossed
about' in the form of symbols or verbal metaphors in the
course of a 'social analysis' which one would expect to be
more extensive than that performed in instances where the
diviner already knows the problem and only has to diagnose
it. The transition in Kenyan divination from jumbled to
clear speech is mirrored by the transition in Ndembu divina-
tion from fragmented symbols to clear speech, since at the
end of his 'social analysis' the Ndembu diviner arrives at
single, clear meanings, makes specific accusations and pre-
scribes remedial ritual in semantically unambiguous words.

In all the examples of divination from West (Temne),
East (Azande, Giriama and Swahili) and Southern Africa
(Kalanga and Ndembu) examined in this analysis, a common
paradigm can be discerned. Either within the divinatory
session itself (as in Giriama, Swahili, Kalanga and Ndembu
divination) or between one type of divination and another
(as in Temne and Azande divination) there is a transition
from 'unclear speech' to 'clear speech' (Temne, Azande,
Giriama, Swahili and Kalanga) or from fragmented symbols to
clear speech (Ndembu). Because of its performative nature,
this semiological change does not merely reflect but
actually accomplishes a corresponding change from definitional
disorder to clear definition or re-definition of the situation.
Whereas it has often been noted that, in ritual, words and
symbols 'do the same thing',[40] it appears that in divina-
tion, speech and symbols do not only have similar functions
but may also have almost identical characteristics, which
are very different from those they have in more usual con-
texts.

To conclude, then, different types of divinatory speech
(or symbols) serve different purposes and have different
conceptual and social implications. These implications for
the Temne will be explored in Chapter Seven, which concerns
the diagnoses of divination; the former are, I will argue,
on the whole different for men and women. We have seen that
speech in Temne public divination clarifies and re-defines
the situation, while speech in private divination often
leaves the situation in an ambiguous state. Since women
heavily outnumber men as clients in private divination, the

following chapter will give a brief account of the position
of women with regard to Temne religion.

CHAPTER FIVE: NOTES

1. 1969, p. 550.

2. *Ibid.*

3. 1976, p. 159.

4. 1978, p. 12.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

9. 'The uncircumcised swear' meaning that it has no power. This is said to anger the swear and make it fight.

10. Term of praise and respect: 'we give respect'.

11. 1969.

12. 1978, p. 126.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 129.

14. Pa Koroma was the only diviner who allowed me to attend private divinations.

15. *Λ-sàbù*, with implications of being a non-ordinary cause.

16. *'Wurá'*, used for socially significant actions performed with others.

17. A commercial brand of mint sweets.

18. This is *à-fànkàdàmà*, a 'mixed offering' consisting of an assortment of foodstuffs. See Turay, 1971, p. 86.

19. She does not want to spoil his luck; she just suffered birth pains.

20. His mother made a bargain with a spirit, promising it a sacrifice if Abdulai recovered.

21. Bernstein, 1971.

22. Diviners accusing individuals put up a sum of money which the latter must match if they deny their guilt. See Dorjahn, 1962, p. 3.

23. See Dalby and Kamara, 1964, p. 38.

24. Evans-Pritchard, 1937, p. 169.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 172.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 260.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 281.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 165.

31. 1979.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

34. 1973, pp. 1414-1415.

35. *Ibid.*, p. 1415.

36. Turner, 1975, p. 212.

37. *Ibid.*

38. 1968, p. 44.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

40. See, for example, Lienhardt's analysis of Dinka invocation and prayer (1961, Ch. VI), and Leach, 1976, pp. 25-27 and 41.

CHAPTER SIX: WOMEN AS DIVINERS' CLIENTS

In much of the anthropological literature on divination
the question of the sex of diviners' clients remains
unexamined. Where an approximately equal number of men
and women consult diviners for approximately the same reasons,
this question may be unimportant. However, Evans-Pritchard[1]
has noted that due to the fact that Azande women are
debarred from having anything to do with the poison oracle,
the latter is one of the main mechanisms of male control
in Azande society. The same is probably true of Tallensi
divination, in which it is also the case that women cannot
consult diviners,[2] and of Lugbara oracles, which male elders
(or would-be elders) alone have the right to consult.[3]
These examples indicate the importance of divination as
a means of managing the agreement of the social group by
legitimizing decisions and realignment. By monopolising
the divinatory process, men in the above societies are able
to reinforce their own authority and prestige.

This is also the case in Temne public divination.
These dramatic and expensive divinations, concerned with
issues recognised as having importance for the community
as a whole (usually witchcraft, theft and adultery), are
initiated by men. By contrast, in Temne private divination
which, it will be remembered, is the most common form of
divination, the great majority of clients are women. This
is the case whether the diviner is male or female or is a
Muslim or traditional diviner.

The most common problems brought to private diviners

are those of sickness in children and adults, barrenness
and reproductive disorders, the latter two being specifi-
cally female problems. Sick children are typically brought
to diviners by their mothers; fathers tend to do so only
in very serious cases. The great concern of women over
fertility and children, the association of women with the
private side of divination and the consequences of this
association need to be examined in the context of the struc-
ture of male-female relationships in Temne society.

Male-Female Relationships

The Temne concern over boundaries between male and
female, human being and ù-kərfì, child and adult and chief
and commoner has already been noted in Chapter Two. In
Chapter Four, I described male-female spatial domains.
The front verandah (aŋ-gbə̀ŋthə n) facing the public space
between the houses of a town is a place of men's discussion,
as is aŋ-bàrê, the open-sided court house inside this public
space. Behind the house, the back yard (ka-dàrəŋ) facing
towards the bush and containing the rubbish heap (a focus
of ritual activity mediating town and bush[4]) is the site
of women's domestic activity. The men's Pɔrɔ society and the
women's Bɔ̀ndɔ̀ society likewise have different spatial
domains corresponding to the west and the east respectively.[5]

In economic activity there is a division of labour
between men and women and children. Men carry out what
are regarded as the principal agricultural tasks of 'brushing'
(bàf) the bush to clear the farm site and sowing the rice
seed, while women and children perform the 'subsiduary'

tasks of weeding and bird-scaring and cultivating secondary
crops and vegetables in gardens. The division between men
and women is further exemplified by the fact that they do
not eat together. Eating is a highly significant social
activity, and one which should be carried out together with
other people.[6] Consistently eating alone is one charac-
teristic of witchcraft and of *mà-pòthò*, asocial European
behaviour.[7] Although men eat together with men and women
eat together with women, the only instance I encountered
of men and women eating together was that of my own case,
in which I was always given a place to eat with the men
rather than the women of a household and seem to have been
regarded as an honourary man for the occasion. As might be
expected, sexual contact is governed by clear rules, which
are laid down and enforced by the *Pɔrɔ* society. One of
these, interestingly, is that intercourse should only take
place at night, just as contact between the different cate-
gories of men and *à-kərfì* is least dangerous in the 'dark-
ness' of dreams.

This segregation of the sexes is maintained by areas
of secrecy, especially concerning childbirth, men's and
women's medicines and secret society rituals. Whether or
not women really know what takes place in men's initiations,
or *vice versa*, it is fitting to act as if they do not. Even
where secrecy proper is not involved, men and women gene-
rally display respect for each other's privacy. Women,
for instance, usually show as little inclination to join
in men's discussions as men do to participate in women's
conversations and domestic activities in the back yard.

Legally, the major rights, obligations and property
are inherited through the male line, through the indivi-
dual's father's lineage, *ma-kɔs*.[8] Traditionally, women
could not own personal property. Today they regard their
domestic utensils, clothes and gifts as theirs, and have
acquired greater economic independence through growing small
cash crops and trading. This, however, can be a cause of
tension,[9] particularly as women feel that the area of
privacy between husband and wife extends to the amount of
money they earn in this way.

Men claim that women in general - not merely in the area
of personal income - are 'too secretive', and cannot be
fully known. The view of the *kapər* chief in Petbana, Pa
Kapər Bana, is typical:

> A man sees a woman and marries her. He
> does not know the behaviour of the woman,
> whether it is good or bad. Men should
> have patience, because women are not
> people to trust... All problems in the
> world are caused by women. When God
> created the world, he created life through
> women. Women bear children. But there
> are women who go in different directions
> and cause problems. A woman can live
> with her husband and commit adultery,
> then she brings misfortune, and if I do
> farming the rice will not grow properly
> if she does not confess.

Through women men gain status and the children through which
the lineage will be continued. However, in the men's view
of women, the latter are secretive, weak and dangerous.
The secrecy of women is a consequence of the secrecy marking
and maintaining the boundary between both sexes: men guard
their own secrets, but are afraid that the legitimate

secrecy separating the sexes will become illicit secrecy over

matters such as adultery, which women ought to reveal to

their husbands. The 'weakness' of women has an archetypal

precedent in the traditional Temne myth of the origin of

sexuality in the first human couple:

> When they (the first couple) saw that they
> had plenty of victuals, they sent the ser-
> vant, that he might go and tell God: "Now
> we have plenty of food; but we are only
> two: what must we do to increase?" God
> said: "It is of no consequence; wait me."
> God went and fetched medicine, eight
> pills, and gave (them) to the servant,
> that he might carry them, and that they
> might eat them. That God made them two
> they knew it; but they did not know what
> they must do to increase. When the servant
> brought the medicine, the woman said that
> she must eat the medicine; but the servant
> was not willing for it, he said: "Wait me,
> that I may go and inform the Master of it."
> Therefore he returned in order to tell
> God what the woman had said. God said to
> the servant: "Go and give her the two
> large ones, that she may eat them first."
> And the servant went, and gave them to her;
> and the woman ate the two. This is the
> reason that the woman has a stronger
> (sexual) desire; this is the reason that
> all women have the menses when the moon is
> full, or when the moon is new (dead).
> The servant took out the six (pills),
> which were left, and gave three to the
> man and three to the woman. The man ate
> his medicine, and drank also water. When
> they had eaten the medicine, they had power
> to get children; but this thing could not
> happen, unless they had a sexual commerce
> with each other. God asked the servant:
> "Did they eat the medicine?" The servant
> answered in the affirmative. And God
> gave him another medicine, and said: "Go
> and put modesty on the woman, and boldness
> on the man." This is the reason that all
> men are bold; this is also the reason that
> women are modest.[10]

It is believed that because of this greater desire of women,

women are less able than men to resist temptation,

particularly sexual temptation. The reason men give for clitoridectomy is that this operation weakens women's desire and makes it more easily controllable.

Women's weakness of will and increased desire is also given as the reason behind the separation of women from the *Pɔrɔ* society and its spirit. Lamp[11] cites the myth of the men's acquisition of the *Pɔrɔ* spirit recorded by Sayers.[12] The myth relates that a young woman, Yamai, refused to marry any man because she had fallen in love with a spirit called Pele. She and the spirit married and had a son, Gbuno. The child howled with distress when in the town, however, and could only be comforted by his spirit father in the forest, whose sweet songs sent him to sleep. Yamai's father, who had heard the spirit's sweet singing, wanted to bring him into the town. He agreed, but because his singing was so dangerously alluring to the women of the town he had to be enclosed in a house. The myth continues:

> The men took the krifi out of the town, as
> they feared his sweet voice would lead
> other of their women astray, and to forsake
> them, as Yamai had done, for the love of the
> krifi. They took him out by the West road;
> there they made a house for him in the bush
> (called Mambo), that they might go and hear
> him sing. Sometimes he wishes to come to
> town, and tells them to make a house for him
> at his mother-in-law's, so that he may come
> and get women. Then he sings out and people
> say 'the krifi is yawning,' or 'he is sad,'
> or 'he is sorrowing for his lost Yamai.'
> ...When the krifi wants to come to town he
> sings:
>
> > *ya ninkara, gbala mi an-kan*
> > *i ti langba*
> > *bomna yi ri mamboi*
> > *e, e, e, iyi. e, e, i, i.*
>
> (translation overleaf)

Mother-in-law, clear my courtyard.
I want to make love.
Are there women there in Mambo?
(exclamation -- 'Not a chance!')[13]

The 'sweet', alluring quality of the *Pɔrɔ* and its spirit is
comparable to the 'sweetness' of sex.[14] The attraction of
women to both forms of 'sweetness', however, threatens the
social order.

Women, through their weakness, are dangerous. As Pa
Kɑpər Bana said, a wife's adultery can cause her husband's
rice crop to fail: a woman's misuse of her powers of fertility
and reproduction (which her husband has acquired through
payment of bridewealth) can blight fertility in other
areas. A woman's adultery can also endanger her children,
whether born or unborn, since the blessing and protection
of a child's paternal ancestors depend upon the mother's
behaviour. If the mother dishonours her husband, the
ancestors' protection and blessing are withdrawn, which
adversely affects the child's destiny and makes the child
vulnerable to attack by witches and harmful spirits. The
child's paternal ancestors are thus mediated through the
mother. The same is true in the Kuranko view, of which
Jackson writes: 'the patrilineal ideology... depends upon
a harmony between husband-wife and paternal-maternal roles.'[15]

This harmony can be restored through the institution
of *wày kà-bàl* (lit. 'to pay for adultery'), known all over
Sierra Leone as 'woman damage'. The wife's confession is
crucial, as Pa Kɑpər Bana expressed: 'the rice will not grow
properly if she does not confess.' The woman has to 'call

the name' (bòŋt) of her lover, who is brought to court
and pays a fine to the husband. Significantly, the woman
herself appears in court not as a defendant but as a wit-
ness. Because of the Temne men's view of women, the lover
is seen as the greater culprit for tempting the woman and
taking advantage of her weakness of will and sexual desire.
She is' beaten by her husband, however, to dissuade her
from further infidelity.

The wife's unconfessed adultery is illicit secrecy.
In the husband-wife relationship, as in the chief-subject
relationship, the husband's authority should be manifested
by his knowing more about his wife than she does of him.
If a wife keeps secrets which should be told to her husband,
she erodes his knowledge of her, which is equivalent to
his authority over her.[16] It is *unconfessed* adultery which
is dangerous. The wife's confession and naming (kə-bòŋt)
of her lover brings what is inappropriately hidden into
the open and restores the proper relationship between man
and wife.

Unlike the chief-subject relationship, however, both
men and women have legitimate secrets from each other.
Jackson's characterization of this aspect of male-female
relationships among the Kuranko also applies to the Temne:

> The fact is that both men and women
> willingly respect the secrets of the
> opposite sex; it is a matter of active
> cooperation and deliberate collusion
> rather than of mere submission or fear.
> .This generates a relationship of
> complementarity between the sexes
> which, at the level of mystical or cult
> activity, leads to a 'horizontal'

equality of male and female domains
that transcends the everyday hierarchi-
cal relationship between the super-
ordinate male and the subordinate
female.[17]

In certain contexts then (notably that of the secret

societies), male and female are classified 'horizontally'

as complementary opposites, kept distinct by areas of mutual

secrecy. In other contexts (notably that of marriage),

male and female are classified 'vertically' as superordi-

nate and subordinate, kept distinct by the greater knowledge

of the superordinate male.

These two principles underlying male-female relation-

ships can come into conflict. According to the first

principle of separate complementarity, structure is main-

tained by the secrecy of both sexes, but according to the

second principle of hierarchy, structure is threatened by

the secrecy of women. In claiming that women are 'too

secretive', men are expressing a fear that the legitimate

secrecy separating the sexes may become illicit secrecy

undermining the superordinate authority of men.

It is implicit in the above that 'adultery' is that of

the married woman. There is no term for the adultery of

the married man: $k\partial-b\partial l$, 'adultery', is cognate with $b\partial l\hat{a}$,

the verb 'to marry' when referring to the marriage of a

woman, rather than $na\eta t\hat{a}$, the same verb when referring to

the marriage of a man. Because marriage is polygynous and

descent in agnatic, the sexual infidelity of the wife is

seen as dangerous but that of the husband is seen as merely

undesirable. Whereas the husband of an unfaithful wife

has recourse to legitimate public retribution in the form

of swears, diviners' ordeals to make the wife confess, and

'woman damage', the wife of an unfaithful husband has

recourse only to secret, illegitimate forms of retribution.

These contribute further to the male view of women as

dangerous.

One of these is the 'handing over' of the husband to

the woman's personal spirit, which makes the man impotent

or ill. Pa Yamba, the Freetown diviner described in Chapter

Three, told me the following when I asked him about the

problems men bring to him:

> There are men who are impotent. Maybe he's
> been give to an ù-kərfì who has made him so.
> Women do this to men. The wife does this
> if the man is very 'lively' with women, and
> she gets jealous. Or if a man has two
> wives, the less favoured wife tells her
> ù-kərfì to 'take care of him.'

On another occasion my research assistant, Michael, recog-

nised a friend of his clutching a chicken in Pa Yamba's

house. Pa Yamba told us afterwards that Michael's friend

was being attacked by a spirit who was making him impotent.

The diagnosis was that a woman had taken a stone (inhabited

by a spirit) and spoken to it to make him impotent, so

with Pa Yamba's help he made a sacrifice of the chicken to

the spirit concerned. Michael, laughing about this after-

wards, told me that his friend had always been a womaniser.

Alternatively, a woman who is angry with her husband

or lover can 'hand him over' to a diviner-herbalist, who

will use bad medicine to harm him. Since women regularly

consult diviner-herbalists, this is a frequently-expressed

fear of men, as one male informant observed:

> Some (women) get your hairs and nails and
> take them to à.-mɔrê (Muslim diviners) to
> harm you. Even footprints, they take earth
> from them to harm you.

Women do not necessarily need the aid of a diviner or per-
sonal spirit, however. If her husband or lover has behaved
badly to her, a woman can use a curse called à-fisrəwɔli,
'ingratitude', which the same informant described:

> If a man seduces a woman and then doesn't
> care any more, the woman uses this. She
> can urinate in a bottle, cursing the man,
> then stop up the bottle and throw it some-
> where. The man won't urinate, and will
> get pain in his private parts.[18]

A man may also be cursed (rǎnkǎ) by his mother or sister
if he does not fulfil his responsibilities towards them.
The mother's curse is usually also occasioned by the 'ingra-
titude' (aŋ-fisrəwɔli) of her son, but is not accompanied
by urinating in a bottle. It is very rare, by contrast,
for a son to be cursed by his father: since the son is
jurally dependant on his father, no supernatural sanction
is needed to reinforce the son's obedience. Women rely on
their sons and brothers to look after them, however, as
they typically get little support or security from their
husband's family, particularly after their husband's death.[19]

The devotion of a husband or lover can be ensured by
the use of a herbal medicine called à.-fuŋku, which makes
anyone who eats it fall helplessly in love. A herbalist
in Makeni told me that far more women than men buy à-fuŋku
from him. A man who eats it in his food is said to become

completely dominated by his wife or girlfriend, which is a reversal of the usual role.[20]

Further examples of the 'danger' of women can be seen in ideas about relationships between men and female spirits and between women and male spirits. Many people relate stories about *aŋ-yároŋ*, the female water spirit commonly known elsewhere on the West African coast as Mami Wata. They tell of how a man finds an unusual comb by the side of the river. If he keeps it, *aŋ-yároŋ* will visit him either in her true form as a white woman[21] or disguised as a black woman or a black snake.[22] She will ask him for her comb back, but he should refuse, for as long as he keeps it she will enter into an exclusive relationship with him and bring him wealth. Eventually, however, *aŋ-yároŋ* almost always gets her comb back and either kills the man or impoverishes him. This is a reversal of the usual male-female sexual relationship since the woman gives wealth to the man instead of the man giving bridewealth for his wife or buying gifts for his girlfriend. Also, it is the woman who demands the sexual fidelity of the man, whereas in ordinary life the man demands the fidelity of his wife or girlfriend. Once again, however, this male-female relationship is dangerous to the man: *aŋ yároŋ* is a capricious spirit of the 'outside'.

Women's sexual relations with male spirits are also dangerous. During a woman's dream, a male bush spirit may appear in human form and have sex with her. This 'super-natural adultery' is at least as dangerous as ordinary

adultery, since it can cause barrenness, and if the woman

is pregnant she will either miscarry or give birth to a

monstrosity.[23]   Littlejohn points out a correspondence

between the invading and despoiling bush spirit attracted

into the house by the dreaming woman and the wife's brother

(ɔ-nɑ̈sin), who is entitled to enter the husband's house at

any time and take small possessions:

> From the point of view of adult men each
> wife brought in is, as well as a source
> of children, the point of irruption of
> plundering nasin into the house. (Plunder-
> ing is the word the Temne use of nasin.)
> Now in the dream of cópulation with a
> pregnancy spoiling bush-demon, the demon
> almost invariably appears as a male relative
> of the woman with whom copulation is incest,
> and most often is her brother, is her
> husband's nasin.[24]

Although the husband has paid bridewealth, it is said that

no amount can really pay for a wife's fertility,[25] and

the husband is indebted to his wife's family: this is why

ɔ-nɑ̈sin can come and take things from his sister's husband.

The dream seems to express an ambiguity about whether the

wife fully belongs to her husband or whether she still belongs

to her male relatives in her natal family. As we shall see,

the wife is in a difficult position, tied jurally to her

husband's group but emotionally still attached to her natal

group, in which her links with her brother are very strong.

Lastly, due to their weakness and their secretive

natures, women are also thought to be more susceptible to

the temptations of witchcraft. People say that the majority

of witches are women, although the most powerful and

'wonderful' witches - à-poɲinɛ̂ and à-thekre - are men.

The most common form of witchcraft ($ra\text{-}s\grave{e}r$) is the invisible devouring of infants. The most common reasons given for it are those of emnity between co-wives and between husband and wife, particularly when a wife is barren.

Jackson[26] has analysed Kuranko witchcraft in terms of the structural position of the wife as the 'stranger within':

> Virilocal residence means that women from
> outside the compound (and in some cases
> from outside the village) come as relative
> strangers into a group whose cohesion
> depends upon a clear disjunction between
> insiders and outsiders. Although the in-
> marrying woman relinquishes all jural
> rights in her natal group, she retains
> sentimental links with it; in particular
> her active influence over her brother
> contrasts markedly with her ideally passive
> role as wife.[27]

The wife is thus an 'outsider within' - which is also how witches are regarded - who links one group of affines to another and is herself linked to both groups by different ties. The wife's transition from her natal family to her husband's family is often a difficult one, particularly when she is subordinate not only to her husband and husband's mother but to her senior co-wife as well. However, if her attachment to her natal family is too strong and she is judged to be spending too much time with her brothers, she is not fulfilling her conjugal role. Jackson writes:

> I suggest that the witch can be defined as
> a woman who puts her role as sister before
> her role as wife and mother; she subverts
> the conjugal relationship by acting towards
> the husband as if he were a brother, i.e.
> someone she has a direct claim upon.[28]

In Temne marriage, the wife seems even more of an outsider in her husband's household than is the case among the Kuranko. She retains her clan name and strong affective links (as well as a certain measure of influence) with her natal home, and whereas a Kuranko husband's jural claims over his wife are absolute, a Temne husband's authority with regard to her and her natal family is somewhat ambiguous. As we have seen, Temne men say that 'you always owe your wife's people',[29] even when the bridewealth has been paid. Not only is the wife an outsider, she also brings the 'plundering *nɑ̃sin*' into her husband's household, who in the 'bush spirit' dream is identified with a dangerous invading force of the outside. In this dream, as in Jackson's analysis of Kuranko witchcraft, the roles of wife and sister are confused as the brother takes the reproductive services of his sister, which should belong to her husband.

As well as being the ambiguous hinge-point between her husband's family and her natal family, the wife is also in a position of tension within her husband's household, particularly in her relationship with her husband's other wives. Although having co-wives is considered in some ways very desirable by women - a first wife, for instance, will often ask her husband to acquire a second wife to help with farming and arduous domestic tasks - conflict between co-wives can be considerable, as the incidence of witchcraft cases between co-wives indicates. A wife will call her co-wife 'my sister' (ɔw-ɔŋt *kɑ̃mi*) in her presence, but in her absence will refer to her as 'my rival'. (ɔ-rês *kɑ̃mi*).

The wife's resentment of other wives can conflict
with her husband's desire to have many wives. In Petbana,
the only wife of Pa Yamba Seri, a powerful *Pɔrɔ* official,
confessed on her deathbed that she was a witch and had
used her powers to prevent her husband from acquiring other
wives. She also confessed that she had been responsible for
the death of her husband's elderly parents by selling them
to a spirit, which can be seen as a further expression of
the tension inherent in the position of the wife in her
husband's family.

A wife's status in her husband's family is dependent
primarily upon her ability to bear children to ensure the
continuity of the patrilineage. She is thus dependent on
her children for her status. At the same time, the belief
that the blessings of her child's ancestors go through her
means that her children are dependent upon her for their
health and prosperity. This mutual interdependence of
mother and child is expressed in the saying: 'The child is
the mother, the mother is the child' ('ɔw-ân, kɔnɔ e ɔ-karâ,
ɔ-karâ, kɔnɔ e ɔw-ân'). Given this interdependence, it is
not surprising that barrenness, reproductive problems and
sick children are of overwhelming concern to women and are
the most common problems that women bring to diviners.
Since 'the mother is the child', all of these problems are
potential threats to women themselves. A barren woman is
unable to fulfil her expected role in her husband's family,
and is the primary suspect when her co-wives' children fall
ill and die. She is thought to have contributed her womb
to the witch-feast[30] and to be continuing to contribute

her co-wives' children as victims. Also, since a woman
is believed to be responsible for her child's prosperity,
if her child is ill she may be suspected of not conforming
to her role as an obedient and faithful wife. The diviner
thus offers not only, hopefully, the cure of the child,
but also the possibility of an alternative explanation of
the child's illness.

Women's views of the beliefs held about them by men
are, as one might expect, different. When asked what they
think of the male view of women as excessively secretive,
women usually explain that their secrecy is necessary because
of their precarious position in their husband's household,
especially with regard to co-wives, as two senior wives expressed:

> It is not all secrets that you tell
> your husband. If you tell all your
> secrets, then he might get another wife.
> If the three of you now live together
> and there is competition between you
> and your co-wife, then your husband
> will pay more attention to the other
> wife whose secrets he does not know.

> It is a good thing to keep secrets
> from your husband because of jealousy.
> If your husband has plenty of wives,
> you keep your own secrets, such as
> money. If you are earning money, you
> do not let your husband know, since
> he has other wives.

Thus whereas men see women's secrecy as threatening to
marriage, women see their secrecy as essential for their
security in marriage. According to Ya Rukoh Kamara, a
respected elderly woman in Magburaka, the position of women
in marriage, rather than the 'weakness' of women, is the
cause of their adultery:

> Some women are faithful, some are
> unfaithful. If your husband has more
> than one wife, your heart is bad and
> you are unfaithful.

Regarding beliefs in the 'danger' of women for men, and
the male view that women's reproductive problems are often
caused by their adultery, Ya Mari Gbla, a woman diviner in
Matotoka, expressed the following opinion:

> Women's problems are usually not their
> fault. Some have spirits in a stone, a
> cotton tree or an anthill. They come to
> talk to them, saying, 'I'm getting
> married. If you make me bear a child,
> I will sacrifice a sheep to you.' Then
> they break their promise, which makes
> the spirit take revenge. Often it is
> a man at fault. Women get diseases from
> them, or are beaten by them.

I will show in the following chapter, however, that it is
the male view rather than the female view which is publi-
cised and legitimized.

To sum up, the dangers men associate with women are as
follows:

1. Women's adultery, causing crop failure, misfortune
    and the sickness and death of children.

2. The woman's curse against her husband, lover, son
    or brother.

3. The handing over of a woman's husband or lover to
    her personal spirit.

4. The hiring of a diviner-herbalist to use bad medicine
    against the husband or lover.

5. The use of $\grave{\partial}$-fuŋku in the unsuspecting husband's or
    lover's food.

6. Death at the hand of the female water spirit,
   aŋ-yɑ́rɔŋ.

7. A woman's copulation with a bush spirit, causing
   barrenness, miscarriage or abnormal birth.

8. Women's witchcraft, bred particularly by emnity
   between co-wives and between husband and wife.

Women, Men and Diviners

The above shows that men's ideas about the danger of
women are a necessary consequence of the structure of Temne
thought and the structure of male-female relationships,
particularly marriage. The association between women and
private divination is another such consequence. Firstly,
the lack of legitimate sanctions or means of retribution
against an unfaithful husband means that wives are obliged
to seek more underhand ways of ensuring fidelity or punishing
infidelity, which include the use of diviner-herbalists and
their medicine. Secondly, the dependence of the wife on
her children for her position, coupled with the beliefs in
the child's prosperity mirroring the mother's behaviour,
means that barrenness, reproductive problems and children's
sickness are taken very seriously. Women will do all they
can to remove or alleviate these problems and to seek
explanations for them in which they themselves are not to
blame, which again includes consulting diviners.

The fact that women do often consult diviners rein-
forces men's suspicions about women. It is not only that
women may be secretly using bad medicine through diviners;
diviners are themselves regarded with suspicion and

ambivalence, as we have seen. Women and diviners alike

have personal river spirits and are regarded as secretive

and as having a predisposition to witchcraft.

As well as their frequenting of diviners, women are

associated with the private, individual side of everyday

religion to a greater extent than men. As we have seen in

Chapter Two, town or lineage spirits, who safeguard the

farms, children and prosperity of the social group, are

sacrificed to publicly by the male head of the lineage or

the town. In the sacrifice to Bɑy Kɔthɔf prior to 'brushing'

described in Chapter Two, virtually no women were present.

Although, moreover, the patrilineal ancestors' blessing

upon a child goes through the mother, they do not help her

obtain children: she has to consult private diviners and/or

to cultivate a river spirit (a relatively asocial and

amoral force of the outside) as a personal spirit. Men

also have personal spirits (again, usually river spirits)

to help them obtain individual wealth and prosperity, but

far more women than men have such spirits. Thus while men

mostly perform public rituals to 'social', 'moral' spirits

of the community, women are mostly involved in private

rituals to 'amoral' river spirits who are external to the

community.

In the secret societies, however, there is far more of

a complementary 'equality' between male and female religion.

Both women's and men's societies have a roughly similar

hierarchical organisation and both mediate forces of the

'outside': the Pɔrɔ spirit is a bush spirit, for instance,

who could be said to be more of an outside force than the
Bɔ̀ndɔ̀ spirit, a river spirit. This reverses the normal
association in everyday life between men and 'social'
spirits and women and 'asocial' spirits.[31] In addition to the
complementarity of the *Pɔrɔ̀* and the *Bɔ̀ndɔ̀* and *Digbà*
societies, the woman's *ra-Mɛna* society in central Temneland
fulfils most of the functions of the men's *ra-Gbeŋle* society
in the installation and burial of the Paramount Chief.[32]

The difference between male-female roles in 'everyday'
private, domestic or agricultural rituals and male-female
roles in secret society rituals seems to manifest the
alternative 'vertical' and 'horizontal' classifications of
men and women discussed earlier in this chapter. The
'horizontal' classification of male and female as comple-
mentaries operates primarily in the secret societies and
is manifested in secret society rituals. The 'vertical',
hierarchical classification operates in most of everyday
life. In the latter, men are superordinate, and due to
agnatic descent and ideology are contractually linked to
each other, particularly in the patrilineage. This agnatic
ideology is manifest in sacrifices to town and lineage
spirits, which are social, public and performed by male
members of the patrilineage. Women are subordinate, are
not contractually tied to each other, and are outsiders
in their husband's household. This classification of women
is manifested by their being more involved than men in the
relatively asocial, private, individual side of religion,
notably in their use of personal spirits, medicine, curses
and private divination. Some of the consequences of this

use of private divination by women will be described in the
next chapter and compared to the consequences of men's use
of public divination.

CHAPTER SIX: NOTES

1. 1937, p. 284.

2. Fortes, 1966, p. 416.

3. Middleton, 1960, p. 81.

4. Littlejohn, 1978, pp. 5, 6 and 7.

5. Lamp, 1981a.

6. See Littlejohn, 1973, p. 292.

7. See Ch. 2 above, and Turay, 1971, p. 338.

8. See Littlejohn, 1960b, pp. 71-72.

9. Harrell-Bond and Rijnsdorp, 1976, pp. 37-38.

10. Schlenker, 1861, pp. 17-19.

11. 1981c.

12. 1927, pp. 24-26.

13. Quoted in Lamp, *ibid.*, pp. 5-6. (Lamp has revised Sayers' translation and orthography.)

14. Lamp, *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

15. 1977, p. 87.

16. Thus in Chapter 2 above, a wife who started to confess her witchcraft to her co-wife was reprimanded by her husband: 'Are you going to confess to your rival (ɔ-rês)? Why didn't you tell me about it first?'

17. 1977, p. 83.

18. C.f. an almost identical Mende curse in Harris and Sawyerr, 1968, p. 63.

19. Marion Kilson notes the following about relationships between mothers and children in Mende folktales (dɔmɛisia): 'In this collection of dɔmɛisia there is not any example of a child disobeying his father; there are, however, several instances in which a child disobeys his mother. In one of the latter disobedience led to the death of the offending child, which suggests the strength of the sanction governing respect for one's mother.' 1961, p. 171.

20. In Krio this medicine is called *atefor* or *ɛfodi*. Harrell-Bond writes: 'Husbands who are very indulgent with their wives or young men who ignore their own male companions and spend an 'unnatural' amount of time with their girl-friends are understood to be suffering from the results of such medicine. A Krio song goes 'He has eaten *ɛfodi* so he should sit down quietly' (*ɛfodi, ɛfodi, i dɔn eat ɛfodi, sidɔn saful*).

21. A friend of mine was warned by his brother to beware of me in case I turned out to be *aŋ-yárɔŋ*.

22. If a woman has taken her comb, *aŋ-yárɔŋ* will first appear as a man in order to avoid bringing on the insanity caused by seeing a spirit of the same sex. If

the woman refuses to return the comb, *aŋ-ydrɔŋ* reveals her true form and makes the woman mad.

23. Littlejohn, 1960b, p. 70.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 72.

26. 1975 and 1977, Chs. 5, 6 and 7.

27. 1977, p. 90.

28. 1975, p. 398.

29. Littlejohn, 1960b, p. 72.

30. See Dawson, 1963, p. 20.

31. Lamp, 1981b and c, analyses *Pɔrɔ* and *Bòndò* ritual and symbolism in terms of this classification of the female sphere as 'inside' and the male sphere as 'outside'.

32. Dorjahn, 1959, p. 160.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DIVINATORY DIAGNOSIS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF AGREEMENT

Problems and their Diagnosis

As Jackson[1] has pointed out for the Kuranko, the situations in which people consult diviners are liminal, 'threshold' situations involving breaks with routine or changes of status or of relationships. The following reasons for consulting a diviner were given most often by the Temne: barrenness, miscarriages, menstrual irregularities, birth problems, a swollen stomach, paralysis, madness, children's sickness and death, persistent pains or sickness, bad dreams, weight loss, sores which fail to heal, accidents, theft, suspected adultery, suspected witchcraft, wanting to make a journey, wanting to 'brush' an area of the bush to make a farm, wanting to build a house, wanting to win a court case, wanting to win an election for a political position, unemployment, changing jobs, wanting promotion, before marriage, before initiation, before childbirth, before the Paramount Chief leaves $k\grave{\partial}$-$ka\eta th\partial$, difficulties in marital relationships and general misfortune.

There is some correspondence between types of misfortune and the types of explanation diviners give for them, although explanations are by no means unvarying. There are usually several possible explanations for a particular misfortune, some of which may also apply to other misfortunes.

Diviners, for instance, say that insanity ($a\eta$-$p\grave{\partial}\eta k$) is mostly caused by 'seeing a spirit', but sometimes also by

attack from a witch or a 'swear', or by a diviner-herbalist
who an enemy has hired to harm the victim with medicine.[2]
Barrenness, miscarriages, other reproductive problems and
difficult births tend to be diagnosed as being due either
to adultery or to 'supernatural' adultery with an $\grave{u}$-$k\partial r\acute{i}$.
Miscarriages can also have a 'natural' explanation, such as
the presence of a worm in the woman's stomach. Problem
births, however, are said to be almost always attributed
to adultery. If a woman is having a difficult labour, a
diviner is usually called, and usually diagnoses adultery.
The woman will then be pressured to 'call the name' ($b\grave{\partial}\eta t$)
of her lover, and is likely to be beaten if she does not
confess.

There is a greater number of stock explanations for
illness in children. The effects of malnutrition in young
children are commonly explained as the result of attack
from a type of $\grave{a}$-$wa\eta k\bar{a}$, the charm used to protect cassava
and vegetable gardens. This type, called ka-tap, is a
branch cut from a species of tree. When hung up by the
garden and activated by a verbal curse, it attacks not only
anyone who steals from the garden but also small children
who approach too near, whether the latter have the intention
to steal or not, because children are 'weak-minded' and
vulnerable. The body of a victim of ka-tap will become
very thin and 'dry', like a stick.

A child with a badly swollen stomach is typically diag-
nosed as having eaten a piece of 'witch-meat' ($\grave{a}$-$b\hat{o}th$ $\grave{a}$
$ser\grave{\partial}\eta$) - i.e., human meat - in a dream without having been

able to digest it. Human meat can only be digested with
aŋ-kuŋthà, the second stomach that witches either grow or
are born with. Such a child is said to have been given
witch-meat in a dream by adult witches who want to teach
the child witchcraft, but the child is not necessarily aware
that he or she has eaten human meat. Some adults have the
same affliction, but are assumed to have known that the
meat they were given in their dream was witch-meat; because
they were aware of their action they are therefore witches,
whether their *aŋ-kuŋthà* has developed or not.

Serious illness and death in children may be explained
in terms of the mother's adultery, of witchcraft or of
attack by a destructive spirit (usually a bush spirit).
Young children often wear protective shirts made out of red,
white and black strips of material[3] which have been treated
with medicine, or they wear protective *ὲ-sɛbὲ* around their
neck or wrist in order to 'close' (*kàŋthà*) their body from
witches and spirits.[4] The latter three causative agents –
an adulterous mother, a witch, and a harmful spirit – are
often interconnected. Firstly, a spirit who harms a child
may have been sent by an enemy of the mother, or the mother
herself or another relative may have 'sold' the child to
a spirit: both possibilities are either classified as or
are regarded as comparable to witchcraft. Secondly, as we
have seen in Chapter Six, a child is made vulnerable to
attack by witches and spirits when its mother commits adul-
tery, since this causes the child's ancestors to withdraw
their protection and blessing.

Adultery, witchcraft and destructive spirits are also stock diagnoses for unusual crop failure or farm pest devastation. Once again, a woman's adultery results in her husband's ancestors withdrawing their blessing and protection from the rice crop, thus leaving it open to witch or spirit attack. Witches or spirits (and sometimes both, in league with each other) can consume the crop invisibly so that the farmer's yield is low, or can turn into pests such as cane rats, monkeys or birds and destroy the crop in these forms.

Diviners do not give 'supernatural' explanations for all misfortunes, however. Sometimes they will say that a sickness has no $\grave{a}$-$s\grave{a}b\grave{u}$ (underlying cause) or is 'of God' (K-$ur\hat{u}$ or $Al\grave{a}$), which in our terms means that it is 'natural'. This seems to be the case more often if the illness is either relatively minor or is predictable: it is in accordance with the order laid down by God for people to get ill sometimes and to grow old and die. Both witchcraft and adultery go against this order, however, and it is noteworthy that they are believed to attack life itself, particularly the life of the patrilineage (i.e., miscarriages, problem births, infant deaths), or the means of life (i.e., rice and money). The same applies to attack by bush-spirits, which causes roughly the same problems as witchcraft and adultery. Since bush-spirits and human beings occupy different realms (town and bush) in the order laid down by God, 'life' is threatened by either being out of place and in uncontrolled contact with each other.

From these explanations it can be seen that a diviner's
diagnosis will implicate as the responsible party either
the client, another person or, if the misfortune comes from
an arbitrary non-human agent, nobody. The following is a
list of fifteen cases brought to Pa Koroma of Petbana, with
the diagnoses he or Mami Yeno (his medium for *aŋ-yìnà Musà*
divination) made:

1. A paralysed child unable to stand was brought to be
   cured. Pa Koroma diagnosed that he had been attacked
   by a witch.

2. Bay Koblo, the Paramount Chief of Marampa-Masimera
   Chiefdom, called Pa Koroma as his hand and leg were
   paralysed. Pa Koroma diagnosed that jealous relatives
   had given the chief's name to a Muslim diviner, who
   had made an *à-sɛbê* to cause illness.

3. A little girl was brought with a painful swollen
   stomach. Pa Koroma, who is her father's brother,
   diagnosed that witches had given her human meat to eat;
   they had chosen her because she was *sɔki*, she had
   'four eyes', so it would be easy to teach her to be
   a witch.

4. A fatally sick infant girl with possible tetanus was
   diagnosed as having been sold to a spirit by her
   family.[5]

5. A woman came with a terrible headache. Pa Koroma
   diagnosed that it was just 'from God'.

6. A sick man came. Pa Koroma again said that his sick-
   ness was from God.

7. A woman (Pa Koroma's mother's sister) came to 'look'

for the favourability of her son's forthcoming

marriage. Pa Koroma predicted no problems with the

match.[6]

8. A young married woman (Pa Koroma's brother's daughter)

    had great problems in her relationship with her husband

    and his family. Mami Yeno said that the woman had

    done nothing wrong, but her husband's elder brother

    disliked her. During the day this brother feigned

    goodness but at night he sent his personal spirit to

    have sex with her husband, and additionally to have

    sex in the form of a man with the woman herself. Mami

    Yeno warned that, if unchecked, the spirit would cause

    birth problems.

9. Pa Kapər Bana, the kapər chief in Petbana, wanted to

    know why his younger brother's children kept dying

    and why his own son had broken his arm when climbing

    a tree. Pa Koroma and Mami Yeno 'looked' for him and

    diagnosed witchcraft and spirit attack. They said

    that Pa Kapər Bana's elder brother, now dead, had

    been a witch and had had a pact with a spirit. In

    league with this spirit, he had attacked his own family.

    This elder brother had been killed by a swear, and

    the spirit would have to be given a sacrifice or it

    would continue to kill the children of the lineage.

    Mami Yeno warned that in the meantime nobody should go

    to the part of the bush where the child had broken

    his arm, as it was inhabited by the spirit.

10. A young woman who had had pains in her stomach for

    about three months and had been unsuccessfully treated

by six other diviners came to Pa Koroma. She was
another brother's daughter. His diagnosis was that
her husband's third wife (she was the second wife),
with whom she quarreled, was jealous of her and had
given her name to a diviner to make her ill.

11. Two barren women came for treatment. One was the wife
of Pa Koroma's wife's brother. The other was the
grand-daughter of a man in the same lineage as Pa
Koroma. Pa Koroma told them they had 'bad water' in
their stomachs which prevented pregnancy because they
had slept with a spirit.

12. Pa Koroma's own two-year-old son was very thin: 'he
eats food, but it just passes through'. Pa Koroma
'looked' and found that the child had been attacked
by *aŋ-tap*, the *aŋ-wɑ̃nkɑ̃* which makes the body grow thin.

13. Pa Koroma's old father is blind and partially deaf.
When Pa Koroma asked about this in an *aŋ-yìnɑ̀ Musɑ̄*
divination session, Mami Yeno said that 'his sickness
is just that of this world (*nɔ-rù*)'. In other words,
it did not come from *ro-sɔkì* (the spirit world) or
ro-serɔ̀ŋ (the witch world); it was 'of God'.

14. A man who was a Christian complained that although he
got money, he never seemed to keep it for long. Mami
Yeno answered that he had dreams (presumably sent by
a spirit or ancester asking for a sacrifice) in which
he saw the thing that he should sacrifice. Therefore,
Christian or not, he should make this sacrifice.

15. A man complained of unemployment. He was told that
his mother had cursed him because of his ingratitude

to her, and that a spirit who had brought about

his recovery from a childhood illness had not yet

been given the sacrifice it was promised.[7]

Of these cases, six definitely involved breaches in

social relations (nos. 2,4,8,9,10 and 15) and two more

probably also did (nos. 1 and 3) since they were witchcraft

cases. Three more cases involved 'natural' sickness, des-

cribed as being either 'from God' (nos. 5 and 6) or 'of

this world' (no. 13). One case concerned the legitimation

of a restructuring of social relations through marriage

(no. 7).[8] The remaining three cases (nos. 11, 12 and 14)

concerned the danger of uncontrolled contact between 'weak'

human beings and non-human forces (sexual relations between

women and spirits in no. 11, and proximity between a child

and *aŋ-wəŋkə* in no. 12), and the danger of a breach in

relations between a man and a spirit or ancestor (no. 14).

As in the case among many other peoples,[9] then, Temne

diviners commonly diagnose problems brought to them in terms

of breaches in social relations and interruptions in normal

relationships between man and non-human powers. Often, of

course, these overlap, as when the ancestors withdraw their

blessing because of a wife's adultery, or when a witch sends

a spirit to kill a relative.

Competition and Collusion in the Negotiation of Consensus

Many writers have mentioned or analysed the negotiation

of the emerging consensus in divination.[10] Because of the

social nature of many divinatory diagnoses, this negotiation

may take the form of either competition or implicit collusion

involving the client, the client's relatives and the

diviner over the explanation of a problem. The former

is particularly clear in the dialogue of case 2 in Chapter

Five (case 4 in the present chapter), in which Pa Koroma

and his clients competed over the diagnosis of a very sick

child. Pa Koroma accused the family who had brought the

child (and who consisted almost entirely of the patrilineage

ma-kas) of having sold the child to a spirit, which is equiva-

lent to witchcraft. There followed an elliptical denial

of guilt in the form of a challenge by the child's father,

who at the same time tried to shift the focus of suspicion

onto the absent mother without accusing her directly. This

implicit denial and accusation was reiterated by the

father's elder brother, who asked whether the matrilineage

or the patrilineage were guilty. Pa Koroma, however,

refused to make a specific accusation and kept the blame

more vaguely focused on the family as a whole. The family

were in a relatively weak position since Pa Koroma does have

a good reputation, and it was clear that the child would

die without treatment. They had already removed the child

from the care of another diviner, their village *ù-mɛ̂n*,

who had failed to cure the child after diagnosing that her

illness was sent by a spirit that the mother had spoken

'harsh words' to.. Since the child was at this stage so

critically ill that there was no time left to take her to

another diviner, the family had little option to do anything

other than accept Pa Koroma's authority and 'beg' him for

help. although they did not explicitly accept his blame

of them all. Thus both diviner and clients tried to 'manage'

the emerging agreement about the underlying reality of

the situation.

Like the Ndembu diviner described by Turner,[11] Pa
Koroma was presumably aware of areas of tension within the
social group; in this case these were the structural strains,
discussed in the previous chapter, between a wife and her
husband's family. These strains were manifested in the
divination by the unity of the patrilineal group in its
readiness to present the wife's guilt as the explanation
for the child's illness. It will be remembered, however,
that 'sin' ($\grave{a}$-$h\check{a}k\grave{\varepsilon}$) accrues to diviners who disrupt social
relationships by making serious individual accusations of
guilt. As a Temne subchief expressed it:

> If a diviner tells you your brother is a
> witch, the love between you and your brother
> has been spoiled. The family, it starts
> to break.

Specific individual accusation of serious offences is
inappropriate in private divination.[12] If the case were
to be taken further to a public witch-finding ritual such
as ka-$gb\grave{a}k$ of ra-$Gbe\eta le$, however, then ma-$th\partial\eta$, specific
revelation of hidden truth, would be expected. Public
diviners are called in when social relationships are already
badly disrupted and this conflict has been brought into
the open; no $h\check{a}k\grave{\varepsilon}$ accrues to the diviner since he is not
introducing conflict but resolving it by revealing indi-
vidual wrongdoers.

Specific individual accusations which are not obviously
likely to cause family conflict - because they are not
very serious, or because they are kept secret, for instance -

can be made in private divination, however, without *à-hakɛ*
falling on the diviner. The accusation made by Mami Yeno
in case 15 above (case 3 in Ch. 5), in which a man's
unemployment was ascribed to his mother cursing him for
his ingratitude, was clearly not as serious as an accusation
of witchcraft, for instance. It was, moreover, perceived
as leading to a restoration of the proper mother-son
relationship rather than to a disruption of it. The man
in question, Abdulai, did not attempt to give a competing
explanation. Like the family in the previous case, he would
have been in a weak position had he tried to do so, since
the medium and diviner (Mami Yeno and Pa Koroma) were
leading the consensus of the people present. This was
because, firstly, the real revelatory agent was the spirit
aŋ-yina Musa who gave suprahuman authority to the medium's
utterances. Secondly, the divination session was dramatic,
as the medium trembled violently and often shrieked under
the cover of the white cloth; this gave additional weight
to her words.[13] Thirdly, the moral norm of filial respect
given expression by the medium's diagnosis commanded very
powerful agreement. Other people were moved to interject
their own versions of this norm:

> The case we talk about is this. The
> father, the mother, do not treat them
> carelessly.
> (Pa Santigi Koroma, Pa Alfa Koroma's
> father)

> The heart, if it is in pain, she (the
> mother) curses.
> (Adama Tarawali, Pa Alfa Koroma's wife)

In most cases of private and *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divination,
however, the negotiation of the diagnosis takes the form
of implicit collusion between diviner and client(s). A
significant factor here is the relationship between the
diviner and the client. Many clients are relatives of the
diviner or neighbours in the same village as the diviner,
and under these circumstances there is likely to be collu-
sion rather than competition between diviners and clients.
In seven out of the fifteen cases brought to Pa Koroma
listed above, the client or clients were relatives of his
(nos. 3,7,8,10,11,12 and 13), and in one case (no. 9) the
client was the *kapàr* chief in Petbana. Of the relatives
who came as clients, only one was an affine (the wife of
Pa Koroma's wife's brother in case no. 11) and the remaining
seven were kin. Of the latter, three were Pa Koroma's
brothers' daughters, and in the Temne kinship system one's
brother's child is one's classificatory child (*w-àn*).
In case 3, involving a child with a swollen stomach, the
child's mother stressed this, telling me that she had
brought her daughter to Pa Koroma because he is the child's
father's brother and is therefore 'really a father' to the
child.

In none of these eight cases was a diagnosis given
which made the client responsible for the problems they
brought. Case 8, for example, concerned the marital prob-
lems of another of Pa Koroma's brother's daughters. The
diagnosis of Mami Yeno (who is herself an affinal relative
of Pa Koroma) blamed the elder brother of the girl's husband
and announced that: 'in her husband's home, the woman has

done nothing wrong'.

Since women are commonly blamed for misfortune, parti-
cularly concerning that of their children, the motivation
for a woman to consult a diviner to whom she is related
through her natal family is clear. A diviner who is a
blood relative is likely to have affective links with her
(especially if she is his brother's daughter) and to be
able to sympathise with problems she may have in her rela-
tionship with her husband's family and co-wives, and with
her concern over children. He is correspondingly less
likely to give diagnoses which blame her. It should be
remembered, however, that the diagnosis of a diviner to
whom one is related is generally not rated very highly
precisely because it is likely to be partial.

The witch-finding ritual of *ka-gbàk*, by contrast, is
rated as one of the most 'objective' techniques since the
ra-Gbeŋle society called is that of another chiefdom;
ordinary diviners are also called from another chiefdom if
they are to carry out a public divination. Only a 'stranger'
outside the whole situation is thought to be unbiased,
and it is important that *ma-thəŋ* should be seen to be the
revelation of 'truth'. However, public divinations are
likely to be just as partial as the private divination of
a relative in practice, since they are called by the head
of the household or of the village, who gives the diviner
or the head of *ra-Gbeŋle* his own perceptions of the
situation.

In *ka-gbàk* there is typically a competition over the
diagnosis, but in the fairly simple form of the accusation
of individuals and the latters' denial. Some of the dialogue
between *ma-nɛkɛ* and a man accused of witchcraft in a session
of *ka-gbàk* in Magburaka[14] was quoted in Chapter Five (case
4). *Ma-nɛkɛ* directly accused the man of being a witch,
and when he denied this they cursed him by saying 'your
foreskin'. When the man again denied his guilt, *ma-nɛkɛ*
challenged him to put down twenty pounds as *ka-bəktə,* the
deposit paid by each party prior to an ordeal which would
settle the case. The ordeal would have consisted of the
accused touching the mat between him and *ma-nɛkɛ*; guilt is
proved by involuntary defecation upon doing so. The man
replied that he did not have twenty pounds, however. *Ma-
nɛkɛ* continued by recalling an incident in the past in which
the man's rice crop failed, and asked whether the crop had
not been spoiled by him and his fellow-witches. The man
agreed.

The process was more or less repeated with the man's
wife. She was asked how many children she had had who were
now dead, and was accused of having killed them by witch-
craft; then she was asked whether she remembered having a
boil on her left jaw, and was accused of having used this
as a hiding-place for witch-meat. She denied all this.
Ma- nɛkɛ then cursed her, saying 'your clitoris', at which
she was greatly shamed and agreed that she was a witch.

Ma-nɛkɛ had a clear advantage in their management of
the consensus of the divination. Their classification as

spirits meant that by definition they had access to 'truths' unknown to man. All *ma-nɛkɛ* are regarded as having powerful vision, expert knowledge of *ro-serɔ̀ŋ* and its inhabitants, and an ability to reveal hidden truths surpassing that of human diviners. They used considerable drama in their eerie singing, their concealment from the audience, their descriptions of the deeds of those they accused, and their challenge to the accused man. Finally, they used accusations and curses as verbal weapons, as performative utterances whose re-definition of individuals as witches can only be reversed by means of an ordeal, which only those who can afford to pay *kà-bɔktā* can undergo.

Even in *ka-gbàk*, the negotiation of divinatory consensus may take the form of collusion rather than competition, however. The above case had been precipitated by the death of a three year-old child from malaria. A boy in the household claimed to have had a dream in which his uncle and his uncle's two wives had killed and cooked the child and had given their own son and this boy some of the meat to eat. The boy told the household head, who was the half-brother of the man in the dream. A big fight ensued between the two men, after which the household head called in the *ra-Gbeŋle* society of the next-but-one chiefdom of Malal and told them the background to the case. In the *ka-gbàk* session, the two boys colluded with *ma-nɛkɛ* in creating a vivid picture of the miraculous and extraordinary secret activities of the boys and of the man and his two wives. Both boys readily replied, 'Yes, it is true' when *ma-nɛkɛ* accused them of being witches. *Ma-nɛkɛ* announced that one of the boys had been

a witch for three years and was corrected by the boy him-
self, who boasted 'It is more than that.' *Ma-nɛkɛ* described
the boys' powers to the audience:

> This boy is a friend of the other boy.
> Together, they have a witch-gun. When
> they shoot, they never miss. These boys
> are only small in *nɔ-rù*, but they are
> very powerful, and both always work
> together. Is this not so?

The boys agreed, and described a witch-plane they had, shaped
like a chameleon, but added:

> It is true, but it is this man and this
> woman[15] who are teaching us all these
> things. And this woman heard that *ka-gbɔ̀k*
> was going to take place here. The instru-
> ments like the witch-gun, she has carried
> to another town for safe-keeping.

The boys seemed to be expressing pride in these marvellous
but nefarious powers. If one probes beyond the immediate
response that most Temne give of condemning witches, many
express wonder and admiration at these people who are
believed to be able to go beyond the boundaries of the ordi-
nary world.[16]

Divination and the Definition of Reality

Together, the boys and *ma-nɛkɛ* created the reality of
the situation they described in the same way that the ideal
social situation is created by the speeches, invocations
and symbolic actions in Dinka sacrifice.[17] This seems to
have been the case even in the dialogue between *ma-nɛkɛ*
and the man and woman who initially denied their guilt.
Ma-nɛkɛ took seemingly unconnected past incidents which

the household head had told them of - the man's crop

failure, the woman's dead children and the woman's boil -

and reconstructed them in accordance with aspects of the

Temne *weltanschauung* concerning witchcraft. They thus

turned cosmological beliefs into experience. Through their

re-interpretation of events, through their use of drama

and performative utterances and through their status as

ra-Gbeɲle spirits they were able to manage the agreement

and modify the experience of most of the participants.[18]

When the accused man and woman subsequently confessed, the

diagnosis of *ma-nɛkɛ* became 'what *really* happened'. *Ma-nɛkɛ*

effected *ma-thəɲ*, the transformation from 'hidden truths'

- the illicit secret knowledge of witches - to the open

'public truth' of community consensus. This 'public truth'

was a synthesis of the perceptions of the household head,

the boys and *ma-nɛkɛ*. Those who confessed to witchcraft

were subsequently beaten and/or fined, and their invisible

eyes were blinded by *ra-Gbeɲle* medicine, while the position

of the household head was greatly strengthened.

The process is different in *aɲ-yinà Musà* divination

and private divination. In private divination, as we have

seen, diviners are not subject to *à-hàkɛ̀* if they make serious

individual accusations as long as these are kept secret and

open family conflict is avoided. Such diagnoses cannot

therefore bring about the communal re-definition of reality

which is accomplished in public divination. In case 10

above, for instance, Pa Koroma diagnosed that his brother's

daughter's stomach pains were due to her jealous co-wife

hiring a diviner to make her ill. He told his niece not to

tell her husband but to privately curse the wrongdoer. A
similar instruction to keep the diagnosis secret was given
by Mami Yeno in case 8, in which the marital problems of
another niece of Pa Koroma were blamed upon the secret male-
volence of her husband's brother. The niece was told not
to mention the diagnosis in her husband's household, or her
husband's father would be very angry; instead she must drive
off the spirit sent by her husband's brother by making a
sacrifice to it.

In neither of these cases was there an attempt to create
a publicly constituted truth or to 'manage' the experience
and the agreement of the groups to whom the women legally
belonged. Such an attempt would certainly not have been
well received by the families in question. Instead, the
diagnoses presumably aided the women in each case to achieve
their own modification of experience, in which someone other
than themselves was now known to be responsible for their
suffering, and the rituals prescribed enabled them to do
something to determine their own situation.[19]

Not all diagnoses from private and *aŋ-yìnà Musà* divina-
tion are kept secret, of course, only serious individual
accusations which would be unacceptable to the client's
social group when the client has a subordinate position in
that group. A man who is told in private divination to
'look at the behaviour of your wife', for instance, can go
on to give his wife an ordeal or to publicly swear her lover.

Thus whereas men have recourse to both public and pri-
vate divination, women typically have recourse only to

private divination. Those who carry out public divination
are outsiders from another chiefdom whose diagnoses are
regarded as objective, while the private diviners consulted
by women are often relatives whose diagnoses have less
credibility. In public divination the experience of the
participating community is modified, the situation is
conceptually reconstructed and individuals are re-defined
through the management of consensus and the use of perfor-
mative utterances. Secret truth is transformed into public
truth, and the position of the person who called the public
divination and gave the diviner or secret society officials
his version of the situation is thereby validated. In
private divination, often only the experience of the client
is modified (especially if the diagnosis is kept secret)
and no re-definition of other individuals takes place unless
the client is in a strong position in his or her social
group and decides to take further publicised action. In
the majority of cases, in which the clients are women, the
'truth' revealed by the diviner remains secret.

The net effect of this is that men's views and construals
are in general publicised, legitimized, objectified and made
'real', while women's views by comparison remain private
and subjective. Both men and women use divination to
arrive at a construal of the 'liminal' situation prompting
their consultation of a diviner, but only the construals
of male clients are normally likely to achieve public expre-
ssion and to become 'objective reality'. Men and women
alike are categorisers, but whereas men's perceptions of
everyday crises can be 'objectified' through divination,

women can achieve full self-expression only in 'bracketed' secret society rituals in which 'people are disengaged from everyday roles and... bring into focus an abstract image of their social ideology',[20] and by spontaneous confession in which, as Jackson has pointed out, they actively define themselves with the negative categories with which men have defined them.[21]

Divination and Social Function

It is interesting to consider Temne divinatory diagnosis in the light of Turner's analysis[22] of Ndembu divination as a means of social redress. In the latter, the Ndembu diviner carries out an intuitive 'social analysis' in terms of Ndembu stereotypes of fraudulent and malevolent behaviour. He is thereby able to expose the social conflicts which are believed to underly misfortune, and to reaffirm Ndembu moral values by accusing or exonerating individuals in terms of them. Finally, he prescribes the appropriate remedial ritual in which social breaches are healed.

Temne diviners likewise perceive and 'analyse' their cases in terms of social stereotypes: for instance the 'weak' adulterous woman, the jealous co-wife, and the malevolent outsider who pretends to be an insider, the witch. Diviners' statements also reaffirm important Temne moral values such as filial respect, obedience to one's husband, and family harmony. However, since diviners are themselves ambivalent figures in terms of Temne moral values, this aspect of divination is not so simple. In *ka-gbʌk*, *ma-nɛkɛ* accuse individuals of secretly being witches, but it is

known that *ma-nɛkɛ* are very powerful witches and use secrecy
and concealment themselves. The difference is that *ma-nɛkɛ*
publicise their secrecy and use it for collective purposes
whereas ordinary witches conceal it and use it for indivi-
dual ends. In private divination, a diviner who diagnoses
a client's problem as being due to a jealous relative hiring
another diviner to use bad medicine, for instance, may be
using bad medicine himself on behalf of another client.

Temne divination undoubtedly can be, however, a means of
social redress in Turner's sense when the diagnosis is not
kept secret. In *ka-gbàk*, divinatory diagnoses are public
and lead to remedial action: the payment of fines, the
beating and the blinding of the invisible eyes of those
accused as witches, and the head of the household or village's
'pouring water' for these individuals to reincorporate them
into the family or the village. In the case of filial
ingratitude (case 15 or case 3, Ch. 5), the client was
instructed to heal the breach between his mother and himself
by 'begging' her and giving her a gift of cloth.

On the other hand, where the accusations in private
divination remain vague and veiled, as when Pa Koroma accused
the sick child's family as a whole of having sold the child
to a spirit, it is hard to see how social harmony could
be restored unless the case were taken further, to a public
divination. Moreover, where accusations made in divinatory
diagnoses are kept secret, it could be argued that this
might exacerbate the relationships in question. In cases
8 and 10, the women told that their husband's brother or

co-wife was responsible for their suffering would be likely
to hold an even stronger grudge against these individuals,
whereas previously such suspicions might have been only
vague and ill-formed.

This moral ambivalence of diviners and of their diagno-
ses can be traced to the ambivalence of the principle of
secrecy in Temne society and Temne thought. Secrecy, it
will be remembered, is an attribute of the most powerful
kind of 'truth', which originates from outside society.
However, only what is public is morally 'good' and trust-
worthy. Secrecy defines and maintains structure if its
existence - though not its content - is publicised for the
benefit of the community, but threatens it if its existence
is concealed for the benefit of the individual. Thus
because Temne social relationships are structured through
secrecy, the diviner's management of what is revealed and
what is concealed in divination will either threaten or
maintain the structure of relationships. By telling a man
to 'look at the behaviour of your wife', the diviner is
starting a process which theoretically leads to the wife's
confession, bringing illicit secret adultery into the open
and thereby removing its danger for the husband, whose know-
ledge of and authority over his wife will thereby be
strengthened. By giving a woman client a diagnosis which
she is told not to mention to her husband, on the other
hand, the diviner is threatening the superordinate/subordi-
nate structure of the relationship between man and wife.

To conclude, it is clear that no 'explanation' of Temne
divination in terms of a single 'social function' would be

adequate, since it serves many such functions. It some-
times serves to legitimize decisions and re-alignments
within society,[23] it sometimes strengthens the position of
authority-holders and it sometimes acts as a mechanism of
social redress.[24] In a great many instances, however, it
serves the interests of the individual client alone. Public
divination tends to reaffirm structure, while private
divination tends to subvert it.

Since the above 'social functions' of divination-
legitimation, authority-strengthening and social redress -
are all dependent upon the definition and re-definition
of situations, people and groups, it is valuable to consider
Crick's point that:

> ...the conceptual nature of human action
> means that the social structure *is* a
> conceptual structure.[25]

In all cases, Temne divinatory diagnosis serves the broader
conceptual function of defining, redefining or deliberately
leaving undefined the social and cosmological 'reality' of
a situation. Through its power to do either of these,
divination has the capacity to either confirm the *status quo*
or to undermine it. The 'social functions' of Temne divi-
nation thus emerge as certain possibilities amongst others,
generated by the definitional potential of divination.

CHAPTER SEVEN: NOTES

1. 1977, p. 123; 1978, p. 132.

2. See Dawson, 1966, pp. 20 and 21.

3. White is associated with peace, prosperity and the ancestors, and counteracts malevolent forces. Red, associated with fire, blood and danger, actively attacks these forces. Black, associated with darkness and what is hidden, keeps a 'darkness' between the child and the witch or spirit.

4. See Littlejohn, 1960b, p. 73.

5. This case was described in Ch. 5 (case 2).

6. This case was described in Ch. 5 (case 1).

7. This case was described in Ch. 5 (case 3).

8. See Park, 1966.

9. See, e.g., Beattie, 1967, pp. 217 and 231; Evans-Pritchard, 1937, p. 170; Middleton, 1960, p. 129; Turner, 1968, pp. 31-32 and 46-50.

10. For example, Jackson, 1978, p. 130; Park, 1963, p. 199; Parkin, 1979, p. 157; Werbner, 1973.

11. 1961, 1968 and 1975.

12. See Ch. 5.

13. See Beattie, 1967.

14. Although I did not personally witness this, my research assistant did. My information comes from his detailed account and from conversations with the household head who had called *ma-nɛkɛ*.

15. Only one of the wives in the boy's dream was present; the second wife had left when she heard *ma-nɛkɛ* were being called.

16. See Ch. 2.

17. Lienhardt, 1961, p. 236.

18. They might also have modified the experience of the accused individuals, particularly the boys. See Jackson, 1975, on the self-categorisation of the confessing witch.

19. Jackson, 1978, p. 130.

20. Jackson, 1977, p. 201.

21. 1975, p. 400.

22. 1968.

23. Park, 1966.

24. Turner, 1961, 1968 and 1975.

25. 1976, p. 6.

CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Tonkin has written of masking events that:

> The Mask is the exponent of power, which is manifested in all its actions - not just those which may be deemed instrumental...[1]

Similarly, it has been my intention in this study to show that the same principles underly not only the problems of 'social control' associated with divination but all the powers seen to inhere in diviners and their methods.

These principles - of concealment from and openness to the community - reverberate throughout Temne life, assuming different forms in different areas. As the visible and the invisible they distinguish the spirits, ancestors and witches and their realms from ordinary human beings and this world. As town and bush and as day and night, they mark out qualitatively different sections of space and time.[2] As left and right they are primary meanings of lateral symbolism,[3] and as black and white they are important significations in the more complex field of colour symbolism. As verbal specificity and ambiguity they determine the power of language in different contexts. As areas of secrecy and publicness they define and maintain the social structure, separating the domains of men and women, chiefs and commoners, initiates and non-initiates, and emphasize hierarchical distinctions within and between these categories. They are fundamental elements in Temne epistemology and morality. In the former, what is hidden from the community is evaluated positively, since the most powerful truths are secret ones, while in the latter it is

evaluated negatively as potentially inimical to the community. A tension thus exists between the opposite claims of epistemology and morality. Concealment and openness, to sum up, are primary units of meaning and definition in Temne systems of classification.

The significance and implications of Temne divination derive from its power to bring about a transition from one state (that of concealment) to the other (that of openness). Diviners, like secret society officials, herbalists, hunters, blacksmiths and chiefs, mediate between spirits and ordinary human beings, the invisible and the visible, due to their secret knowledge and four-eyed vision. What is particularly interesting about these mediatory figures is the way that they attempt to resolve the competing claims of Temne epistemology (in which secrecy is valuable and powerful) and morality (in which secrecy is suspect). All these categories of people use the power of secret knowledge, but in all of them this is balanced (with varying degrees of success) by their publicizing the fact that they have access to hidden powers and truths, and by their use of these for the community's benefit.

However, this balance is a precarious one due to the intangible nature of secrecy itself. It is impossible to know whether or not even those who have legitimate access to secret powers are not in fact using them illicitly for their own individual ends against other members of the community: hence the morally ambivalent status of these mediators who, usually with the exception of the chief,

are all generally suspected of being witches.

I have shown that the principles of concealment and openness form the basis of the important distinction between private and public divination, and are implied in many of the divinatory objects used. Most of the objects used in private divination are associated with the invisible beings through whom diviners have access to hidden truths: the pebbles of *aŋ-bɛrɛ*, the cowrie shells of *ta-faŋt*, and the Muslim rosary (*aŋ-thàsàbiyà*) and slate (*aŋ-wàlkà*), for instance. Most of the objects used in public 'moving vehicle' techniques and ordeals, on the other hand, are domestic objects (for example, the broom, the axe, the pot and the pestle) associated with the social world of humans, to whom the public diviner reveals these hidden truths. I have also shown that the relative secrecy of private divination and openness of public divination are manifested in different kinds of divinatory speech. Public divination is characterized by explicit, 'performative' speech with specific individual accusations and often a rich dialogue, while private divination is characterized by either minimal dialogue, vague innuendos or accusations which are deliberately kept secret and therefore do not bring about a communal redefinition of the situation.

Public divination is in general positively evaluated because in it a compromise is reached between morality and epistemology: the secret power and knowledge of the diviner or masked spirits are balanced by the public exposure of illicit secrets for what is perceived to be the community's

benefit. Through what they reveal in divination, public diviners or masked spirits, in collusion with the authority-holders who call public divinations, manage the experience of the participants and create the reality of the situation. The views of the authority-holders (i.e., heads of households and towns) thus become 'objective' reality, and the illicit secrecy of those who are seen as subverting the social structure (witches, adulterers, thieves) is split open.

In private divination, by comparison, no such balance is achieved. Firstly, another central principle of Temne morality - family harmony - comes into conflict with the value of making illicit truths public. Secondly, private divination is used mainly by women clients, whose interests and construals are often at variance with those of the male agnatic ideology of Temne society. Private diviners and their female clients also implicitly collude in their construal of the situation. However, since what diviners reveal to women is often kept secret, these construals remain merely the subjective reality of women clients, and by being secrets which women keep from their husbands, they subvert the hierarchical structure of husband-wife relationships.

Divination among the Temne thus has very different conceptual and social implications from those it has in other societies in which concealment and openness are construed differently. Among the Ndembu,[4] for instance, secrecy seems to be given an unambiguously negative evaluation, which means that by bringing the hidden into the open,

divination is regarded as unambiguously 'good', and brings about social redress. Because, however, secrecy among the Temne is so important in defining the social structure and is given such a high epistemological status, divination has a much more complex significance and diviners play a much more ambivalent role in Temne society.

CHAPTER EIGHT: NOTES

1. 1979, p. 243.
2. See Littlejohn, 1963 and 1978.
3. Littlejohn, 1973.
4. Turner, 1961, 1968 and 1975.

APPENDIX: TWO STORIES OF PA LULU, THE DIVINING BIRD.

Narrator: Mrs. Kadiatu Tejan-Kamara

1.   I have come to talk about the problems of the world
so that one should not do wrong to other people. The ani-
mals of the world sat together. The chief had a daughter.
This daughter was very beautiful. The people went to marry
this girl, and among the animals that went, it was Pa Roto
(Father Toad) that succeeded in getting the woman, and he
went away with her. When he went with his wife, Pa Roto
became greedy. Then his father-in-law died. When this
happened, the animals sat together again and said: 'Well,
today the chief has died, and since most of us married his
daughters let us all go there (to his funeral) and find out
who is the animal with the finest voice'. Then they said:
'Allright'.

When they went there, Pa Roto went to Pa Lulu and said
to him: 'Pa Lulu, help me. What should I do, so that I
will have a fine voice to go and cry at my father-in-law's
funeral?' Then Pa Lulu said: 'Kake, gbətə̂r gbətə̂r (lit.
'Now, shakehand shakehand'), when you go, go and find frogs,
plenty of frogs. Take them and put them all round the
house. When these frogs are all round the house, you just
sing now and say "aŋ-pə̀, à pɔ̀ŋ" ("The case/palaver is
finished").'

(Pa Roto does this, and at his father-in-law's funeral,
he sings:)

aŋ-pà, à pòŋ-o,
aŋ-pà, à pòŋ-o,
Nes Bàngu¹,
aŋ-pà à pòŋ-o, sàŋdenkà (?), ɔwɛɛɛ,
(The chorus of
frogs replies)   *e, sandenka, ɔwɛɛɛ.*

This is the frogs answering now. So the other toad was there, and he said: 'Why are you calling Pa Nes (Father Spider)?' And then, Pa Roto said: 'It was Pa Nes who told me that his friend is Pa Lulu, the bird who divines about the country's cases. It was the spider who showed me.'

Well, they have cooked now. After they have cooked, it is time to eat. Pa Roto did not call the frogs around the house; he just ate. The whole night passed, the whole day passed; the frogs are hungry. So they (the other relatives) said, let them sing again, so that they will know the son-in-law who has the fine voice. Pa Roto sang again, and said:

aŋ-pà, à pòŋ-o,
aŋ-pà, à pòŋ-o, sàŋdenkà, ɔwɛɛɛ,
e, sàŋdenkà, ɔwɛɛɛ.

His voice has filled the air. He has a fine voice. Plenty of people are praising his voice, not knowing that it is these frogs who are singing.

He was greedy again. So the frogs said, well, we have been here the whole day and we don't get food. He sang this morning and we answered him, but we didn't get food. When night passes again, in the morning, let us go away from this place without his knowledge. When this happened, they said: 'We have nothing to say to him. Let us just go.

Let us not say goodbye to him.'

All the other people at this funeral said: 'Let us
make a final goodbye'. Well, the other animals and the
birds had cried there, but it is only the voice of the toad
that they have heard to be fine to hear. So when he came
and sang again:

> *aŋ-pà à pòŋ-o,*
> *aŋ-pà à poŋ-o,*
> *yɛŋ.* (There was no answer.)

He did not hear anyone. He was surprised. He sat down and
was ashamed. Then he went again and met Pa Lulu and said:
'My friend, Pa Lulu, the people sang for me just as you told
me. But when I was ready to go back, when I said goodbye,
I didn't hear them again, so it was on back roads that I
passed and came to you.' Pa Lulu asked him: 'When the
people went, did you give them food?' He said: 'No.' Then
he replied: 'Well, you know, if you do kindness to people,
they will know you. They know kindness, whether they are
animals or human beings. If you don't give kindness, well,
they will run away and go. This was why these frogs have
run away from you.'

2. All the animals in this world sat together. They had
a meeting and said, since we are making farms, let us make
friends so that we help each other in our ploughing. They
said: 'Allright.' When these animals made this friendship,
Pa Sɔyila (Father Lion), Pa Thɔlu (Father Hyena) and Pa
Sip (Father Leopard) were the chiefs of this meeting.

When they all went to plough and they ploughed the
whole day, when they looked among themselves the next day,
about two or three animals had disappeared. It was this
problem that was pressing. Every day they went and worked;
animals disappeared. Then Pa Lɛm[2] (Father Antelope) went
to Pa Lulu and said to him: 'Pa Lulu, please come and divine
for me. We made a 'compin' (à-kuŋp, a mutual self-help
society) last week. We were plenty. But every day, animals
disappear when we go to work. It is this case I want you
to tell me about: why these animals are disappearing.' Then
Pa Lulu said: 'Gbətə̂r, gbətə̂r; when you reach home, make a
sacrifice. When the time comes for everyone to eat, you go
and climb a tree and whistle (it is Pa Lɛm's job to do this).
When they have gathered together, you whistle again and sing:

> *The, the the, kayina the the,*
> *à the kayina the,*
> *the the, kayina the the,*
> *aŋ-kuŋp ŋà Pà Sipà n yi i?*
> *kayina the the,*
> *nə̀ yɛ rɔ kuthà, i nə̀ŋ gbo kə-ponànɛ!*
>
> ('Are you Father Leopard's compin?')
> ('You are not ploughing, you are just
> finishing yourselves!')

This is what you do. Because if you do this, the animals
will hear that the chiefs are finishing them in this work
that they are doing. And then you whistle again, and sing
the same song for Pa Thɔlu's compin:

> (Repeat the song, replacing Pa Sip with Pa Thɔlu.)

These two animals, their minds will run to what they are
doing. Then you keep quiet for a while. After some time
you start again:

> (Repeat the song, replacing Pa Thɔlu with Pa Sɔyila.)

These three people, if you have done this, their minds will
dwell on it. This compin, it will not be big any more.
The compin will break up, so that they stop eating these
animals.' It is Pa Lulu that showed Pa Lɛm, because it is
Pa Lɛm that is clever among the animals and Pa Lulu is the
diviner.

APPENDIX: NOTES

1. This seems to mean 'Spider Bangura', 'Bangu' being a diminutive form of the clan name of Bangura.

2. Λ-$l\varepsilon m$, Royal Antelope, reputed to be very cunning; popularly known as 'cunny rabbit'. (See Dalby, 1972, p. L 14).

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