Comparative Studies in Society and History 2013;55(1):92–119.
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doi:10.1017/S001041751200059X

Anti-Colonialism and Social Science: Georges Balandier, Madeira Keita, and "the Colonial Situation" in French Africa

GREGORY MANN

History Department, Columbia University

Two young men met on a quay at the port in Conakry, Guinea in 1946.[1] One, waiting dockside, was Mamadou Madeira Keita, a low-level civil servant and archivist. Years later, when he was a political prisoner in the Malian Sahara, some would argue that he was "the first francophone African ethnographer."[2] The other, descending the gangplank, was the Frenchman Keita had come to meet. Georges Balandier was unknown then, and Conakry was his second African port of call. The work with which he would make his name remained literally over the horizon, in Brazzaville. Yet the encounter between Keita and Balandier was foundational for both men. Conakry incubated a canonical intervention—Balandier's 1951 article on "La Situation Coloniale" (The colonial situation)—one to which some attribute an ancestral role in a particular francophone tradition of postcolonial thought. Conakry, and Guinea at large, was also the crucible in which Madeira Keita and his allies were to forge a powerful anti-colonial politics. In this particular corner of West Africa, that politics and an emergent, engaged social science conditioned each other, like the two strands of a double helix, each a necessary yet ultimately contingent element of the other's structure. Those links were short-lived; indeed they proved nearly as ephemeral as the conjuncture that enabled them. Still, they were not without effect. Diverging from a well-established literature on the connections between the social sciences—notably anthropology—and European

Acknowledgments: For their comments on this paper, the author wishes to thank the *CSSH* editors and their anonymous reviewers, Frederick Cooper and Dr. Daouda Gary-Tounkara, as well as hosts and interlocutors at the Université de Bamako, Université Paris-8, Sciences Po-Bordeaux, Sciences Po-Paris, Northwestern University, and the University of Florida. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

[1] Georges Balandier, *Ambiguous Africa: Cultures in Collision*, Helen Weaver, trans. (New York: Pantheon, 1966), 228.

[2] Jean Guiart, "A Propos de 'Critiques et Politiques de l'Anthropologie,'" *l'Homme* 41, 1 (1976): 151–55, see 153.

colonial rule,[3] in this article I privilege the political, arguing that anti-colonial activism both effected and was affected by a shift more profoundly epistemological than methodological in the practice of the social sciences (more precisely, sociology and ethnography) in West Africa.[4] One forgotten place where the two began to come together was on the quay in Conakry.

THE "ANTE-POSTCOLONIALIST"[5]

George Balandier's name is now well known. Over the last decade, his sixth as a leading figure in the social sciences, he has loomed ever larger. Those who engage in postcolonial scholarship can hardly avoid his work, particularly if they cross the francophone frontier.[6] One article in particular is a landmark; first published in 1951, "La Situation Coloniale: Approche Théorique" is the rare academic article to have sparked (and merited) sustained engagement on the fiftieth anniversary of its publication, as it has continued to do in the years since.[7] It is no accident that this article should return to such intellectual

[3] Recent contributions to that discussion include Helen Tilley, *Africa as Living Laboratory: Empire, Development and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); Emmanuelle Sibeud, ed., "Décolonisation et Sciences Humaines," special issue of *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 24 (2011).

[4] This finding complements that of Lynn Schumaker in *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), and echoes to some degree that of Omnia el Shakry in *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), in which the focus extends to human geography and demography, in addition to anthropology. My approach differs from that of Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, who concentrates on the "social history of agents and institutions of research"; see Jézéquel, "Les Professionels Africains de la Recherche dans l'Etat Colonial Tardif: Le Personnel Local de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire entre 1938 et 1960," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 24 (2011): 35–60, see 53.

[5] Balandier refers to himself as "pré-post" in "Préface," M-C. Smouts, ed., *La Situation Postcoloniale: Les* Postcolonial Studies *dans le Débat Français* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2007), 17.

[6] I use language referents here somewhat heuristically. Postcolonial scholarship and literature, like the intellectual project of *Présence Africaine*, have long been bilingual; Brent Edward Hayes, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Dawn Fulton, *Signs of Dissent: Maryse Condé and Postcolonial Criticism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), Conclusion. Balandier himself rejects the idea that this intellectual genealogy can be contained in a national, and implicitly linguistic, frame ("Préface," 18). Nonetheless, the recent body of work that has been dubbed "postcolonial studies" in France is often considered an Anglophone phenomenon, and its reception has clearly been affected by the timing, sequence, and selection of translations.

[7] G. Balandier, "La Situation Coloniale: Approche Théorique," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 9 (1951): 44–79. On the article's canonical status, see Jean Copans, ed., "Georges Balandier, Lecture et Re-lecture," special issue of *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 110 (2001); Smouts, ed., *La Situation Postcoloniale*; Emmanuelle Saada, ed., "*Regards croisés:* Transatlantic Perspectives on the Colonial Situation," special issue of *French Politics, Culture and Society* 20, 2 (2002), which includes Georges Balandier's "La Situation Coloniale: Ancien Concept, Nouvelle Réalité" (pp. 4–10); Alice Conklin, "The New 'Ethnology' and 'La Situation Coloniale' in Interwar France," *French Politics, Culture and Society* 20, 2 (2002): 29–46; and Frederick Cooper, "Decolonizing Situations: The Rise, Fall, and Rise of Colonial Studies, 1951–2001," pp. 47–76, republished as chapter two of *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 33–55. On Balandier and his influence, a sample of work

prominence at a moment when tools for understanding the relationship of colonial history to present-day inequality are so urgently needed, particularly in France itself. The decade between the article's fiftieth anniversary and its sixtieth was punctuated by insurgency unknown in France since the Algerian war, as well as by ever-sharpening debate over what postcolonial thought, broadly construed, might have to offer to French intellectual and political life.[8] In such a context, how can a work emerging from a distant moment of moderate imperial reform possibly be relevant? In invoking Balandier, what are his champions claiming?

For some, Balandier's article is a predecessor, if not the progenitor, of a particularly francophone postcolonial tradition.[9] Others, notably Achille Mbembe, accord no place to Balandier, claiming as ancestors Aimé Césaire,

representative of different decades and approaches might include Alfred Adler and Georges Balandier, eds., *Afrique Plurielle, Afrique Actuelle: Hommage à Georges Balandier* (Paris: Karthala, 1986); Michel Maffesoli and Claude Rivière, eds., *Une Anthropologie des Turbulences: Hommage à Georges Balandier* (Paris: Berg International, 1985); Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal, and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), Preface; Sally Falk Moore, *Anthropology and Africa: Changing Perspectives on a Changing Scene* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), 99–104; J. Copans, ed., "Georges Balandier"; Georges Balandier, George Steinmetz, and Gisèle Sapiro, "Tout parcours scientifique comporte des moments autobiographiques," *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales* 185 (2010): 44–61. The article also inspired "in part" the joint project that became Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); see Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France," in Janet Roitman, ed., "Racial France," a special issue of *Public Culture* 23, 1 (2011): 121–56, see 134–35.

[8] Charles Tshimanga, Didier Gondola, and Peter J. Bloom, eds., *Frenchness and the African Diaspora: Identity and Uprising in Contemporary France* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009). In addition to the works cited in the pages to follow, two other significant interventions are Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, and Sandrine Lemaire, eds., *La Fracture Coloniale: La Société Française au Prisme de l'Héritage Colonial* (Paris: la Découverte, 2005); and Achille Mbembe, Françoise Vergès, Florence Bernault, Ahmed Boubeker, Nicolas Bancel, and Pascal Blanchard, eds., *Ruptures Postcoloniales: Les Nouveaux Visages de la Société Française* (Paris: la Decouverte, 2010).

[9] Emmanuelle Sibeud, "Post-Colonial et Colonial Studies: Enjeux et Débats," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 2004 (51, 4): 87–95; Jean-François Bayart, *Les Etudes Postcoloniales: Un Carnaval Académique* (Paris: Karthala, 2011), see esp. 7–8, 26–31; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *Enjeux Politiques de l'Histoire Coloniale* (Marseille: Agone, 2009), 17–18; Cooper, "Decolonizing Situations"; Smouts, ed., *La Situation Postcoloniale.* Scholars have produced a considerable number of reflections on postcolonial studies in France in recent years; those discussions have been consistently political, often polemical, sometimes parochial, and occasionally insightful. Excellent reviews are offered by Sibeud, "Post-Colonial"; and Smouts, ed., *La Situation Postcoloniale*. See, most recently, Roitman, ed., "Racial France." For a bracing critique of this debate as a whole, see Achille Mbembe, *Sortir de la Grande Nuit: Essai sur l'Afrique Décolonisée* (Paris: la Découverte, 2010), ch. 4., an abridged version of which has been published as "Provincializing France?" in Roitman, ed., "Racial France," 85–120. It bears mentioning that in francophone scholarship, the term "postcolonial" generally refers less to a critique of the nationalist, progressivist, modernist project as such than to the hypothesis that modern European imperialism played an important role in molding contemporary societies and that its ramifications continue to be felt.

Frantz Fanon, and other "volcanic thinkers."[10] Mbembe excoriates a willful "provincialization" of French thought following a long, enclosed "imperial winter" that coincided with the period when foundational work in postcolonial scholarship seemed to be sending up shoots across the Anglophone academy.[11] Jean-François Bayart and Romain Bertrand profoundly disagree with this position, insisting that French intellectuals have been attuned to developments in postcolonial studies, and more importantly, that they have already elaborated a social science cognizant and critical of the colonial situation.[12] Here Balandier represents a cardinal reference. In their different fashions, Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler recognize "La Situation Coloniale" as a particular kind of opening, one that, both argue, scholars including Balandier himself allowed to close.[13] Going further, Stoler diagnoses a "colonial aphasia" in contemporary France, a metaphorical disorder that captures a collective inability to recognize and name a known phenomenon—race—and its place in French history.[14] Whether or not the diagnosis is entirely apt, it is historically contingent, as are Mbembe's winter, the current spring in which Balandier seems to play an important, if distant role, and the circumstances of his original intervention.

That intervention and the context in which it arose represent a distinct opening, a moment when an anti-colonial social science began to be elaborated under the very real constraints imposed by an embattled and aggressive colonial administration. Balandier's own colonial situation was simultaneously concrete and comparative, nomadic and precisely located. It is also African. His best-known work from this period is largely grounded in Brazzaville, but his analysis had been developed, at least in part, while working with Madeira Keita in Conakry in 1946–1947. For him, Guinea, like postwar French Africa, was more than a laboratory. It was a workshop,[15] and he was

[10] Mbembe, *Sortir*. Balandier himself underscores the contributions of Césaire, Senghor, and Sartre; *Situation Postcoloniale*, 267–68.

[11] Mbembe, *Sortir*, ch. 4. See also the introduction to Mbembe et al., *Ruptures*, which is more nuanced.

[12] See Bayart, *Etudes Postcoloniales*, much of the argument of which is represented in translation as "Postcolonial Studies: A Political Invention of Tradition?" in Roitman, ed., "Racial France," 55–84; and Romain Bertrand, "Faire Parler les Subalternes ou le Mythe de Dévoilement," in M-C. Smouts, ed., *La Situation Postcoloniale: Les* Postcolonial Studies *dans le Débat Français* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2007), esp. 278. Read also the much more measured reply of Vincent Foucher, "Achille Mbembe et l'Hiver Impérial Français: Politiques de la Différence et Sciences du Fragment," *Politique Africaine* 120 (2010): 209–21.

[13] Cooper, "Decolonizing Situations"; Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia."

[14] Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia," 125.

[15] I draw the workshop analogy from Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology*. The distinction between Africa as a site for the working out of scientific models developed elsewhere and as a site of scientific production in, of, and for itself merits further reflection; see Florence Bernault, "l'Afrique et la Modernité des Sciences Sociales," *Vingtième Siècle* 70 (2001): 127–38; Cooper, *Colonialism*; Achille Mbeme, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); and Tilley, *Africa as Living Laboratory*.

one of its creations. I argue that Balandier's experiences there framed the political and theoretical approach to the colonial situation that he elaborated in equatorial Africa, and they paved the way for his path-breaking work on youth, modernity, and sociability in Brazzaville in the early 1950s.[16] I pursue these arguments by focusing on two individuals in order to apprehend both the structural reasons for and the contingencies that anchored a critical challenge to the social sciences in a precise but little-known moment of African history. That moment begins at the foot of the gangplank, with Madeira Keita.

THE ANTI-COLONIALIST

The young archivist who awaited Balandier in Conakry was an exceptional figure, one of the architects of a new form of radical anti-colonial politics in francophone West Africa that is now largely obscured. Mamadou Madeira Keita was an agent of the West African social science research institute, l'Institut Français de l'Afrique Noire (IFAN). He was also a founding figure of the inter-territorial, anti-colonial political party known as the RDA (Rassemblement Démocratique Africaine), and of its Guinean chapter. Born in Kourounikoto in the Soudanese (later Malian) *cercle* of Kita around 1917 and educated at French West Africa's highest institution of learning, the Ecole Normale de Gorée (later the Ecole William Ponty), Keita had trained as a librarian and archivist in the office of the governor general in Dakar and in Conakry before the Second World War. Mobilized from October 1938 to October 1940, he served in Dakar and left the ranks of the colonial military (the *tirailleurs Sénégalais*) as a staff sergeant (*sergent-chef*). Keita then worked as an archivist and librarian for the Government of Guinea in Conakry and Kouroussa. In 1944, he established the IFAN center in Guinea, which grew out of the archive and which Balandier would be sent to take over. Keita remained there, periodically serving as interim director, until 1950.[17]

While at IFAN-Conakry, in April 1946, Madeira Keita stepped into a pivotal role in the city's emerging Communist Study Group (*Groupe d'études communistes*, or GEC), which had been driven by French Communists until Keita, Sékou Touré, and a few other West Africans became

[16] G. Balandier, *Conjugaisons* (Paris: Fayard, 1997), 254–55, 257–61. Studies on Balandier generally overlook his Guinean sojourn and Keita's role in it. However, two articles touch briefly on that: Marie-Albaine de Suremaine, "Faire du Terrain en AOF dans les Années Cinquante," *Ethnologie Française* 34, 4 (2004): 651–59; Jézéquel, "Les Professionels Africains," 57.

[17] *Notice de Renseignement Concernant Madeira Keita*, 1960, Numérique 3, 1C1542, ANM; "Activités du Centre IFAN," *Etudes Guinéennes* 7 (1951); Mamadou Traoré Ray Autra [hereafter Ray Autra], "L'Institut National de Recherches et de Documentation de la République de Guinée," *Recherches Africaines* [formerly *Etudes Guinéennes*] 1–4 (1964): 5–35, see 14–16. "Ray Autra" is a moniker based on reversing the syllables of Traoré's family name in the French slang style known as *verlane*. Since he appeared in archival records and signed his own publications as Ray Autra, I use that name here.

involved.[18] When he met Balandier, Keita was working with Touré, Ray Autra, and others to found the Guinean branch of the RDA, the party that later evolved into the Parti Démocratique de la Guinée (PDG). Autra will play an important supporting role in our narrative; Touré, of course, became Guinea's first president at independence in 1958 and ruled autocratically through the PDG until his death in 1984. Touré and Keita had represented Guinea at the founding congress of the RDA in Bamako in October 1946, and by March 1947 Keita was holding meetings at Conakry's Rialto cinema to establish the party's Guinean chapter.[19] Keita quickly folded one of the colony's fledgling political parties, the Parti Progressiste Africain de Guinée, into the inter-territorial initiative, and in years to come he and Touré struggled to integrate the other, ethnically or regionally based parties. Police reports echoed the press in referring to Keita as the Guinean RDA's chief organizer (*responsable*), and he was elected its first secretary-general.[20] His wife, the schoolteacher Mme. Keita Nankoria Kourouma, was a leader and co-founder of the women's wing of the movement in Guinea, and their house served as a meeting ground for anti-colonial activists.[21] Madeira Keita's importance in anti-colonial politics is less often underestimated than overlooked entirely by historians hypnotized by Touré,[22] yet a 1948 report from the head

[18] Jean Suret-Canale, *Les Groupes d'Etudes Communistes (G.E.C.) en Afrique Noire* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1994), 57–59. Letter of Madeira Keita to Jean Suret-Canale, 17 Apr. 1987, Fonds Suret-Canale, 229J65, Archives Départmentales de la Seine-Saint Denis (ADSSD).

[19] Announcement, *La Guinée Française*, 6 Mar. 1947, #3014.

[20] *Renseignement, Conakry, Destinataire: Haut-Commissaire de la République, Gouverneur Général de l'AOF (Direction des Affaires Politiques et Administratives*, 10 Mar. 1947, 17G573v152, Archives Nationales du Senegal (henceforth ANS); Madeira Keita, Secretary-General, "la Vie de la Section," *Phare de Guinée* 1, 1 (27 Sept. 1947), 2. The RDA in Guinea became the PDG in 1950, although it is frequently referred to as the RDA through Guinea's independence in 1958; *Rapport politique, Guinée 1950*, 17G573v152, ANS; R. S. Morgenthau, *Political Parties in French-Speaking West Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), 234.

[21] On the women's movement, see Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939–1958* (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005), ch. 5; Céline Pauthier, "Tous Derrière, les Femmes Devant! Femmes, Représentations Sociales et Mobilisation Politique en Guinée (1945–2006)," in Odile Goerg, ed., *Perspectives Historiques sur le Genre en Afrique* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2007), 219–38. An image of Madame Madeira Keita's *carte d'electeur* can be found in Sidiki Kobele Keita, *Le PDG: Artisan de l'Indépendance Nationale en Guinée (1946–1958)*, 2 vols. (Conakry: I.N.R.D.G. et Bibliothèque nationale, 1978). Her status as a teacher apparently gave her the right to vote several years before other West African women obtained it. Mme Keita was a leader of the RDA women's wing in Guinea and Mali, which sent her as a delegate to many international meetings and conferences through the mid-1960s. According to one of her sons, the demands of her family eventually took precedence over her international activism; interview with Papa Madeira Keita, Bamako, 21 June 2008.

[22] E. Schmidt's work is symptomatic, according Keita a minor role, occluded by that of Sékou Touré, and failing to recognize the inter-territorial basis of French West African politics. Schmidt's focus on "the masses" and Sékou Touré tends to obscure the collective leadership of the PDG-RDA and the role of leaders other than Touré; see *Mobilizing the Masses*; "Cold War in Guinea: The Rassemblement Démocratique Africain and the Struggle over Communism, 1950–1958," *Journal of African History* 48, 1 (2007): 95–122. Schmidt's *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–58* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007) recognizes Keita's role more systematically, but

of security in Guinea makes his importance clear: "Very intelligent, subtle, and an ardent partisan of the Communist doctrine, Madeira is indisputably the soul and the brains of the group (i.e., the RDA), and it seems certain that, if he was transferred to another territory in the Federation…, the RDA could not easily find in Guinea a leader and a coordinator who would be his equal."[23]

In years to come, Touré became that man, and more. But in 1948, his alliance with Keita seems to have been based on a loose division of tasks. Keita, the intellectual, led the party (albeit in close collaboration with others), served as its spokesperson, and later edited one of its short-lived newspapers, *Coup de Bambou* (1950–1951).[24] Touré was the secretary-general of the Guinean chapter of the powerful French Communist trade union, the Confédération Général du Travail, and in 1948 he exchanged a position in the Guinean postal service, in which he had led early postwar strikes, for one as an accountant in the federation-wide colonial civil service.[25] Touré's strong allies in the labor movement in West Africa and Europe helped to protect him to some degree from persecution by the colonial administration, but on the other hand his status as a civil servant—a status long held by Keita—made him vulnerable to punitive transfers from one territory to another. This was a delicate balance to maintain, and it tipped in June 1950 when Touré led a general strike in Conakry over the minimum wage.[26] The administration refused his request for a leave of absence from the civil service, posting him instead to Niger. Touré refused to go, and after a voyage to Warsaw that raised his international profile, he was dismissed from the civil service early in 1951. He left almost immediately for a long sojourn in France, and returned to contest unsuccessfully a seat in the territorial assembly. Touré finally came out of the political wilderness in July 1952, when he succeeded Keita as secretary general of the Guinean RDA, and in 1953, when he won both a seat in the assembly and, following a sixty-seven-day strike, a territory-wide increase in the minimum wage.[27]

sends him offstage after his 1952 transfer to Dahomey, which merely marked the end of his Guinean sojourn (pp. 38, 64). It is no surprise that work published in Conakry while Touré was in power also diminishes Keita's role: Sikhe Camara, *La Guinée vers la Socialisme: De l'Empire au Referendum Gaulliste de 1958*, 2 vols. (Conakry: n.p., 1973); Keita, *Artisan*.

[23] Pierre Ottavy, Chef de Service de la Sûreté de la Guinée Française to M. l'Inspecteur Général de la Sûreté en AOF, 5 Nov. 1948, #1176/PS, 17G573v152, ANS.

[24] The phrase "stroke of bamboo" refers to the fatal sunstroke the French believed might befall those who went without a pith helmet; Pascal Bianchini, *Jean-Suret Canale, de la Résistance à l'Anticolonialisme* (Paris: l'Esprit Frappeur, 2011), 32–33. The newspaper redefined it as a fatal blow to colonialism; *Coup de Bambou* 1 (5 Apr. 1950), 1.

[25] André Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré (1922–1984), Président de la Guinée. Vol. 1. (1922–fév. 1955)* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2009), 76, 157.

[26] Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré*, 159–60; Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses*, 69–73.

[27] Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré*, 143–44, 160–63, 185; Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 308–10.

In the wake of the 1950 general strike, Keita too was on the ropes. Guinea's governor had already banned meetings of the RDA. In August, after years of harassment from the colonial administration (this at least was mutual), Keita was suspended from his duties and his salary cut off after he refused a transfer out of Guinea.[28] In November, a court fined him 100,000 francs for libel in a case brought by Iréncé Montout, a colonial administrator from the Antilles, against *Coup de Bambou*.[29] A six-month suspended sentence hung over his head after that case, and other judgments had already gone against him, leaving him with heavy fines to pay and the prospect of multiple months' imprisonment.[30] Ironically, the article that provoked Montout's lawsuit may have been written by Touré, under the pseudonym Erdéa (phonetically, RDA).[31] Whoever the author was, Keita was the defendant. He was silenced, and *Coup de Bambou* swept from the table. This was check, but not yet checkmate.

That year, politics was souring all around. Keita found himself on the wrong side of a battle to maintain the parliamentary alliance between the French Communist Party and the RDA. Led by the Ivoirian Félix Houphuët-Boigny, the RDA had decided on a complete break with the communists. Keita disagreed strongly, but his dedication to party discipline obliged him to accept a maneuver designed to make the party less threatening to the colonial state and more effective in its metropolitan legislative coalition.[32] Touré had been persuaded to follow the new party line, and over the next few years worked to keep his Conféderation Général du Travail and his RDA activities distinct.[33] For Keita, this compromise must have been especially galling; unlike Touré or Houphouet-Boigny, he never enjoyed parliamentary immunity or the relative protection from the colonial administration that presence in France or a high profile in the labor movement could provide.[34] He was more vulnerable than his peers, and suffered accordingly. Nonetheless, Keita

[28] *Notice de Renseignement Concernant Madeira Keita*, 1960, N3, 1C1542, ANM; *Premier Congrès Territorial du PDG (Section Guinéen du RDA), Rapport Général d'Activité 1947–1950, Présenté au Nom du Comité Directeur par Mamadou Madeira Keita, Secretaire-Général*, 17G573v152, ANS; Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré*, 160, n. 308.

[29] *Semaine Politique et Sociale en Guinée,* 13–20 Nov. 1950, 17G573v152, ANS. The article in question appears to have been Erdéa, "Montout, Colonialist Nègre,' *Coup de Bambou* 6, 14 (Apr. 1950).

[30] "En Correctionelle," *la Voix de la Guinée* 29 (10–17 Aug. 1950); 32 (24 Aug.–7 Sept. 1950); also, Lewin, *Ahmed Sékou Touré*, 142–43.

[31] Lewin states that Touré signed articles under that name; *Ahmed Sékou Touré*, 142–43.

[32] After the PDG broke its ties with the French Communist Party on the orders of the inter-territorial RDA and of Félix Houphuët-Boigny, in 1950, Keita contested Touré's accommodationist alliance with Houphuët-Boigny; *Note sur la Position Politique Actuelle de Madeira Keita*, n.d. (13 Dec. 1951), 17G573v152, ANS. The maneuvering behind this disaffiliation is detailed most recently in Schmidt, *Cold War*, ch. 2.

[33] Cooper, *Decolonization*, 311, 412–13.

[34] Ruth Morgenthau notes that "in French law, trade unionists had special legal protection"; *Political Parties*, 227.

maintained his position as secretary general of the Guinean RDA affiliate (now renamed the Parti Démocratique de la Guinée) until 1952, when he was reintegrated into the ranks of the civil service and transferred to Dahomey.[35] His transfer was meant to neutralize him politically and to decapitate the RDA, just as Guinea's security chief had proposed four years earlier. This seems to have worked for a short time, but Keita's political career was far from over, and Sékou Touré soon filled the void opened by his absence. Six years later, Guinea became the only territory to refuse to join the French Community under the constitution of the Fifth Republic, and by rejecting that constitution in a referendum, gain immediate independence.

Scholars have overlooked the politics of Keita and his allies. This has contributed to the misapprehension that francophone Africa was "always" neocolonial, and has occluded the region's tradition of political radicalism. What it meant to be anti-colonial changed over time. In the 1940s, it meant contesting the dual authority of French administrators and canton chiefs in the countryside, demanding equal pay for equal work in the formal sector, and struggling to give content to the promise of colonial citizenship held out by the Fourth Republic and its French Union. By 1960, it meant asserting autonomy from France in three key sectors preserved for Paris in the constitution of the Fifth Republic: diplomacy, defense, and monetary policy. Concretely, it was expressed through support for the Algerian revolution and non-alignment, attempts to establish multi-territorial political units such as the Mali Federation or the Ghana-Guinea-Mali union, the expulsion of French military bases, and the creation of national currencies. Abolition of the chieftaincy represented an important fourth element. In different ways, Mali and Guinea pursued each of those objectives, but at its heart this was a trans-territorial politics, just as the RDA was a trans-territorial party, and focusing on one territory alone renders a fluid and potentially federal or pan-African political scenario artificially stable.

Inversely, recognizing Keita's political commitments and establishing the weight of his influence are necessary steps to understanding the context in which Balandier diagnosed "the colonial situation." Keita's career as a militant and party leader was intertwined with his work as a researcher and archivist. Other leading RDA militants also worked for IFAN, but Keita became the most politically powerful of them.[36] His exposure to the social sciences

[35] On his position within the PDG, see Territoire du Niger, *Renseignements a/s Copie Document PDG*, 3 July 1952, #530/C/355/PS, 17G573v152, ANS. On the transfer to Dahomey, see *Notes Africaines* (Dakar) 57 (1953): 32. Riven by regionalism and skeptical of federation (the *raison d'être* of the RDA), Dahomey lacked a strong RDA affiliate party; Morgenthau, *Political Parties*, 315–16. I have found no trace of political activities on Keita's part while in Dahomey, but this question requires further research.

[36] Other Soudanese active in both the RDA and IFAN were Mamby Sidibe and Dominique Traoré. Sidibe established IFAN in Niamey in 1944, and Traoré became "head of the ethnography

colored the ways in which he thought about two of the key social issues in post-colonial politics—youth and urbanization—and it informed his vision of a closely related problem that would provoke great controversy in Mali, namely, the reform of marriage and marriage payments.[37] In short, examination of the political commitments Keita brought to the intellectual project in which he was engaged reveals a complex, shared lineage of particular, historically situated forms of anti-colonial politics and social science.

THE SOCIOLOGIST'S ASSISTANT

It is hard to imagine that Keita's years with IFAN had no effect on his approach to political problems. The nature of that effect cannot be assumed, however; the traditionalist intellectual Amadou Hampaté Bâ, then the sole African to hold the same rank at IFAN, was closely allied with an officer in French military intelligence, Commandant Marcel Cardaire, who in his scientific endeavors was in turn a protégé of Marcel Griaule.[38] Together, Bâ and Cardaire sought

laboratory" in Bamako; Jean-Hervé Jézéquel, "Voices of Their Own? African Participation in the Production of Colonial Knowledge in French West Africa, 1910–1950," in Helen Tilley with Robert Gordon, eds., *Ordering Africa: Anthropology, European Imperialism, and the Politics of Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 145–72, see 161. Sidibe was an early, leading member of the RDA in Niger and Soudan and the doyen of Soudan's Territorial Assembly, an important point in West African politics; *Assemblée Territorial, Soudan Français —Procés-Verbaux, Session Ordinaire*, Mar.–Apr. 1953. He was also a proponent of reforming the chieftaincy by marginalizing the powerful canton chiefs and submitting the village chiefs to elections. This policy was in keeping with US-RDA's drive towards the gradual abolition of the chieftaincy. See Mamby Sidibé, "Soudan: Justice ou Bon Plaisir?" *Afrique Noire* (Dakar) 7 (17 Jan. 1952); Frank Gregory Snyder, *One-Party Government in Mali: Transition toward Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 11–13, 40–41. Belonging to an older generation, Traoré's political career was more limited. However, at the founding RDA congress in 1946, he served as president of the Commission on Social Issues, for which Madeira Keita served as secretary; Gabriel Lisette, *Le Combat du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1983), 36–41. Another important figure in the early RDA, the Dahomeyan S. A. Adande, worked for IFAN in Dakar, and became Minister of Justice in independent Dahomey (later Benin); Agbenyega Adedze, "In the Pursuit of Knowledge and Power: French Scientific Research in West Africa, 1938–65," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 23, 1–2 (2003): 335–44, see 338–39.

[37] The best work on youth and urbanization in this period remains Claude Meillassoux, *Urbanization of an African Community: Voluntary Associations in Bamako* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968). Marriage reform under the US-RDA was immensely important politically; see Emily Burrill, "'*Il a dit qu'on fasse le mariage [à la manière des] blanc[s]*': Gendered and Generational Struggles over Labor, Marriage, and Autonomy in Sikasso, 1938–1960," paper presented at the Seventh International Conference on Mande Studies, MANSA, Lisbon, 26 June 2008. Here mention should be made of two of Keita's early publications: "La Famille et le Marriage chez lez Tyapi," *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947): 63–66; and "Aperçu Sommaire sur les Raisons de la Polygamie chez les Malinké," *Etudes Guinéennes* 4 (1950): 49–55.

[38] Only one African in French West Africa held a higher rank than Bâ and Keita. On IFAN's hierarchy, see *Décision Constatant les Passages d'Echelon des Fonctionnaires du Cadre Superieur de l'IFAN*, 17 Apr. 1958, N3 2G1317, ANM. On Cardaire and Bâ, see L. Brenner, *Controlling Knowledge: Religion, Power, and Schooling in a West African Muslim Society* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); and "Amadou Hampâté Bâ: Tijânî Francophone," in J.-L.

to protect what they saw as a distinctly African Sufi tradition from West African, Egyptian, and Saudi reformers. Keita, on the other hand, participated in studies of emerging urban societies undertaken from a theoretical perspective attentive to relations of power and committed to engaging with the dynamism of the objects of study. He was engaged with one of the most innovative of the social science research agendas then at work in francophone Africa, one that tried to take the measure of contemporary African social life *as it was lived*, while recognizing that political struggle loomed large within it.

In IFAN-Conakry, that innovative agenda was in its infancy. Nonetheless, it is worth lingering there, while considering the research center as a kind of workshop in which the spheres of social science and politics (understood narrowly in terms of activism, and broadly as an ethics) were not entirely distinct.[39] In the last years of the Second World War, just before he began to build the Guinean RDA, Keita worked to establish the new IFAN center in Conakry and to organize the colony's archives. On a peninsula jutting from Guinea's coast into the Atlantic, Keita labored alongside Ray Autra in a recently abandoned leprosarium that lay at the end of the road dividing the city's European and African cemeteries. In another part of the former leprosarium, which served as an antechamber to the burial ground, the bodies of Africans lingered before burial, the cemetery reserved for them being so crowded that still decomposing corpses often had to be to be displaced to make room for new ones.[40] Here, in the intermittent absence of a European director, Keita remained a librarian-archivist "responsible for day-to-day administration and financial management."[41] Mere days after returning to Conakry from the

Triaud and D. Robinson, eds., *La Tijâniyya: Une Confrérie Musulmane à la conquête de l'Afrique* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), 289–326. Bâ went on to direct Mali's Institut des Sciences Humaines, which succeeded IFAN-Soudan, before serving as ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire and dedicating himself to his literary career.

[39] Here my interpretation of IFAN-Conakry diverges sharply from those of Benoît de l'Estoile and Agbenyega Adedze, who see the IFAN organization as a whole as an instrument centralized in Dakar to practice a social science designed to further colonial rule; see de l'Estoile, "Rationalizing Colonial Domination: Anthropology and Native Policy in French-Ruled Africa," in Benoît de l'Estoile, Frederico Neiburg, and Lygia Sigaud, eds., *Empires, Nations, and Natives: Anthropology and State-Making* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 30–57; Adedze, "In the Pursuit of Knowledge."

[40] Moving the African cemetery to a more accommodating site was one of the RDA's first successful initiatives; Autra, "L'Institut National de Recherches," 14, n. 18; Balandier, "Erreurs Noires," *Présence Africaine* 1, 3 (1948): 392–404, see 401.

[41] *Notes Africaines* 37 (Jan. 1948). Keita appears to have been acting director of the institute from its founding early in 1944 until the botanist Raymond Schnell arrived that November. Schnell served as director for one year. A three-month interval separated Schnell's departure and the arrival of his replacement, Jean Joire, who served from February to July 1946. Balandier arrived in November 1946; he left the following August. Keita appears to have served as acting director during each moment of transition until Balandier's arrival, even if he did not hold that title. The best account of IFAN-Guinea in these years is Autra, "L'Institut National de Recherches."

founding Congress of the RDA in Bamako in October 1946, he went to the port to welcome the center's new director, who was arriving from Dakar.[42] Relations that Balandier later described as "affectionate, friendly" and "not very hierarchical" began there, in a situation that could hardly have been more colonial, as the Frenchman assumed the leadership of IFAN-Conakry. For Balandier, Conakry would represent a transformative episode in his political awakening. When he left Guinea in August 1947, Keita was "the only person who came to see [him] off … standing helpless in the rain … in that primitive and sinister Conakry airport."[43] After his departure, it appears that Keita once again took over the day-to-day running of the Institute under the supervision of Jean Poujade, a jurist presiding over the city's court.[44]

As the publications emerging from this place, and more broadly this moment, make clear, in the brief period that Balandier and Keita worked together, IFAN-Conakry began to incubate a critical, politically engaged social science. At the time, the IFAN centers of the different colonies of the AOF (l'Afrique Occidentale Française, French West Africa) were establishing their own journals; in Conakry Balandier launched *Etudes Guinéennes*, asserting in an editorial foreword, "We have to go beyond the stage of picturesque relations and colonial novels. There is more here than those childish surroundings. There are men who are neither as simple—you know the classic assimilation of the Black man to a child—nor as strange—when the observer relied on superficial impressions—as it was customary to say. In this domain," he wrote, "everything remains to be done (*nous avons tout à faire*)" in order to understand what Guinea had been historically and to attempt "a thorough and objective analysis" of what it was becoming.[45] In the pages that followed, both men wrote on issues that would retain their interest in the years to come. Balandier, in an article on "Ethnologie et Psychologie" in the new journal's very first number, embarked on an exploration of the relationship between the two fields of inquiry that later anchored "La Situation Coloniale."[46] In it, he rejected

See also IFAN-Guinea A1/17, Collection IFAN-Dakar. I thank Dr. Jean-Hervé Jézéquel for sharing his photographs of this collection with me.

[42] Mamadou Madeira Keita to M. le Directeur de l'IFAN-Dakar (Théodore Monod), 15 Nov. 1946, IFAN-Guinea A1/17, Collection IFAN-Dakar.

[43] Balandier, *Ambiguous Africa*, 230; Balandier, Steinmetz, and Sapiro, "Tout parcours," 53.

[44] "Activités du Centre (2' semestre 1947)," *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947): 77; "CentrIFAN 'Guinée,'" *Notes Africaines* 37 (1948): 12, 16.

[45] Balandier, "les Etudes Guinéennes," *Etudes Guinéennes* 1 (1947): 5–6, see 5; Balandier, *Histoire d'Autres* (Paris: Stock, 1977), 64. Adedze misapprehends this journal and its stance, assuming, like de l'Estoile, that its financing and institutional structure entirely predicated its politics. He fails to note the evolution of *Etudes Guinéennes* after the departure of Balandier and Keita, when it became much weaker; Adedze, "In the Pursuit of Knowledge," 342.

[46] The pairing was a crucial element of the original argument. The perspective behind it can be seen in "Le Noir Est un Homme." It juxtaposes rather sharply with a contemporary concern to reassert the historicity of diverse "colonial situations," both in their particularity and in their broadly

the ethnographic impulse to offer totalizing portraits of "pure" or traditional collectivities, and insisted instead on the study of "societies *as they are now*."[47] Based on concrete examples, such studies needed to focus on individuals, not groups. That is where psychology came in, as a necessary tool for ethnographers committed to analyzing in a rigorous and concrete fashion life as it was lived by individual people.

Madeira Keita's article in the same number illustrated just how difficult that task was, even as it seemed to ignore Balandier's advice. Qualified by an editorial footnote—surely Balandier's—specifying that Keita drew his own examples from "the Malinké of the regions of Kouroussa and Kankan," "le Noir et le secret" suggested a paradox between the rapidity with which news traveled in rural Africa and the high value African societies placed on discretion, secrecy, and "esotericism." In it, Keita noted that, faced with "metropolitan and even native researchers … informants are reticent … they lead the interviewer astray. They are perfectly aware that 'paper' is very indiscreet."[48] He went on to note that a *griot* (traditionalist) had told him as much when his questions on the history of the Mali empire (thirteenth to sixteenth century) had gone too far: "We cannot give you the information that you want. You will write it down for the schools, and we will lose a source of income."[49] No native informant, Keita had gone beyond transcription and translation to lay bare the material conditions in which knowledge was produced and exchanged.

Given his political activities at the time, it is perhaps understandable that in the pages of *Etudes Guinéennes* Keita was as discreet as his informants.

comparative dimensions, including across the *longue durée*. In other words, in a strand of work conversant with avowedly postcolonial work but skeptical of both its novelty and the ambition of some of its claims, historical reasoning is now assigned a task similar to that once given to psychology. See Bayart, *Etudes Postcoloniales*; Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, "Empire, Droits et Citoyenneté, de 212 à 1946," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63, 3 (2008): 495–531; Cooper, *Colonialism*; Jean-Frédéric Schaub, "La Catégorie 'Etudes Coloniales' est-Elle Indispensable?" *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 63, 3 (2008): 625–46; and Benjamin Stora, "Un Besoin d'Histoire," in M-C. Smouts, Postcolonial Studies *dans le Débat Français* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2007), 293–97. As Emmanuelle Sibeud has observed, the preeminent role accorded to history, rather than to literature, distinguishes a predominantly francophone conversation around postcolonial scholarship from a predominantly Anglophone one; "Du Postcolonialisme au Questionnement Postcolonial: Pour un Transfert Critique," *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 54, 4 (2007): 142–55; Smouts, *La Situation Postcoloniale*. The volume edited by Patrick Weil and Stéphane Dufoix represents a significant and relatively early intervention in this regard; *L'Esclavage, la Colonisation, et après…: France, Etats-Unis, Grande Bretagne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de la France, 2005).

[47] Balandier, "Ethnologie et Psychologie," *Etudes Guinéennes* 1 (1947): 47–54 (original emphasis).

[48] Madeira Keita, "Le Noir et le Secret," *Etudes Guinéennes* 1 (1947): 69–78, see 77.

[49] Keita, "Le Noir," 78. Part of Keita's duties at IFAN included transcribing the discourse of griots; "Activité du Centre (1'semestre 1948)," *Etudes Guinéennes* 3 (1949): 84.

Nonetheless, in a review dominated by European authors, he published two other articles. They are notable less for the richness of their exposition—very brief pieces were the norm at the time—than for their author and their subject matter. The first, "la Famille et le mariage chez les Tyapi," comments favorably on marriage practices among a very small ethnic group that favored "the liberty of the individual, and especially of women," emphasized a bride's consent, and kept marriage payments modest.[50] The article, however, seems to have been drawn from the archive rather than the field. Based, as a footnote to the title explains, on an administrator's 1910 response to a questionnaire from the Société anti-esclavagiste de la France, this short piece is evidence of Balandier's policy of publishing the rich material on Guinea that could be found in the colony's archives, which Keita managed.[51] In the second article, about his own ethnic group the Malinké, Keita broached the questions of polygyny, bride wealth, and levirate marriage. With a mild critique of previous ethnographic work on these topics, which had poorly understood the economic motives of polygyny and tended to regard the widow in a levirate marriage as "movable goods" (*un bien mobilier*), Keita suggested that economic and political forces had begun to change these family structures in fundamental ways. Levirate marriage was on the way out, the family itself had lost its cohesion, and women of all social classes were waging a "patient, stubborn" campaign against polygyny. That campaign, he wagered presciently, would be a long one.[52]

These were observations made without real method. Still, as had Keita's first published work in 1938,[53] they testified to a particular way of seeing the world and their subject matter was to prove more than pertinent to Keita's political and administrative career. In the absence of direct evidence, one can only wonder if he found the time to revisit his notes on secrecy when, a few years later, he became minister of information for the République Soudanaise. By the same token, if it seems unlikely that his mind turned toward the pages of *Etudes Guinéennes* when the Union Soudanaise-RDA (US-RDA, Soudan's branch of the inter-territorial party) debated its new marriage code a decade later, he would have been one of the few people in the room to have thought systematically about the issue from both within and beyond a social

[50] Keita, "La Famille," 66.

[51] Indeed, two other articles in the same number were the work of a colonial administrator, A. Delacour, who had written them in 1910. Keita and Balandier drew them from the archives, and Balandier made minor adjustments to "Sociétés Secrètes." See Delacour, "La Propriété et ses Modes de Transmission chez les Coniagui et les Bassari," *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947): 53–56; and "Sociétés Secrètes chez les Tenda," *Etudes Guinéennes* 2 (1947): 37–52.

[52] Keita, "Aperçu Sommaire."

[53] Madeira Keita, "Tombouctou: notes de voyage (septembre–octobre 1937)," *Bulletin d'Information et de Renseignments du GGAOF* 192 (9 May 1938): 142–44.

scientific frame of analysis still then moving beyond the frames of ethnicity and custom.

Another journal was just beginning to appear at the same time. *Présence Africaine* is rather better known than *Etudes Guinéennes*, but Balandier had a role in creating both.[54] Both he and Keita published in its pages, although the latter not until 1960.[55] In addition to holding a place on the editorial committee of the new review, Balandier published a set of quite distinct articles in its first numbers. "Femmes possédées et leurs chants" would have been at home in *Etudes Guinéennes*, were it not for its setting in the Lébu villages between Dakar and Rufisque, where Balandier had conducted his first research on the continent. However, "l'Or de la Guinée Française," "Erreurs noires," and "Le Noir est un homme" reveal another side of Balandier's emerging perspective.[56] They both echo and go beyond what Balandier had published in *Etudes Guinéenes*—not for the last time, his work published in France reassembled and refined his work published in Africa. "Erreurs noires" and "Le Noir est un homme" argue for what might now be termed a critical anti-racialism, and the latter article, which appeared in the first number of *Présence Africaine*, resonates strongly with Balandier's editorial foreword to the first number of *Etudes Guinéennes*. "Erreurs noires" is even more striking, since Balandier states bluntly the anti-colonialists' antagonism towards the canton chiefs, yet dissimulates the identity of his interlocutor, who is clearly Keita. Keita accuses the chiefs of "collaboration," and Balandier ponders this word, still a powerful one in the wake of the war, coming to it as an existentialist. "On whom do scorn and the blow of the whip fall," the article asks? "On the Negro (*nègre*), on the Jew, on you who accept it."[57] Even if Keita's name was obscured, the links between a specific anti-colonial politics and the intellectual world of the new journal could not have been more evident.

Following Balandier's own injunction, let us continue to privilege the concrete. A brief, empirical article, "l'Or de la Guinée Française," offers a tantalizing hint of the links between fieldwork and political activism.[58] A study of "artisanal" gold mining around Siguiri—the region bordering those Keita

[54] Guinean anti-colonialism also played a role in their creation. After Balandier's departure from the editorial board of *Présence Africaine*, Ray Autra joined it, beginning with the new series in 1955. Autra became *directeur adjoint* of IFAN-Conakry, and in 1965, director of the renamed Institut National de Recherches et de Documentation. In 1960, he re-launched *Etudes Guinéennes* as *Recherches Africaines*; Autra, "L'Institut National de Recherches." In 1961, he was imprisoned by Sékou Touré. On his release he returned to the institute before being named ambassador to Algeria.

[55] Madeira Keita, "Le Parti Unique en Afrique," *Présence Africaine* 30 (1960): 3–24.

[56] Here my reading differs from that of Salah D. Hassan, "Inaugural Issues: The Cultural Politics of the Early *Présence Africaine*, 1947–55," *Research in African Literatures* 30, 2 (1999): 194–221.

[57] Keita is identified elsewhere by name, but here by his initials; Balandier, "Erreurs Noires," 400, 403–4.

[58] Balandier returned to this theme and this research in *Ambiguous Africa*, 65–75.

studied in "Aperçu sommaire…" and "le Noir et le secret"—"l'Or" is the product of fieldwork possibly conducted with Madeira Keita, including translations of several terms from Malinké into French.[59] In the article, Balandier reports visiting a site along the road to Bamako where as many as ten thousand people were at work; he notes that other sites supported populations twice as large.[60] These were not industrial sites; they were smallholdings worked by hand. The limited roles industrial technology and capital played in the process of mining, as well as the diminished presence of political institutions, rendered the mines a productive yet inchoate space, one in which "the ethnic community … breaks apart in favor of the cosmopolitan society that is established at the placer mine. This becomes, for a good half of the year, the real living [social] unit, to the detriment of the village. It demonstrates, in its political and ritual aspects, flexibility and eclecticism."[61] In short, social life was regenerated beyond the confines of the village in innovative and improvised sites that resembled cities less than they did camps, but in which markets structured social relations.

While for Balandier the mines were dynamic sites to be analyzed scientifically, Keita and his comrades sought to mobilize Siguiri politically. In other words, what Balandier saw—a new, non-ethnically bound community coming into being—the RDA sought to realize as a political party organized around a common cause, rather than ethnic or regional affinities. Keita's own traces in Siguiri are unclear, but the sequence is suggestive. In the first number of *Etudes Guinéennes* in 1947, Keita reported that Balandier had undertaken fieldwork there; this was clearly the trip from which the *Présence Africaine* article was drawn.[62] A year later, in *Phare de Guinée*, an RDA newspaper that both Touré and Keita helped to edit, one of the party's allies, the ethnic and regionalist Union du Mandé, published an editorial opposing plans by the colonial administration to establish a cooperative structure in the gold mines.[63] The administration's move was portrayed as a naked

[59] It is also possible that this fieldwork was conducted with Ray Autra or another Malinké-speaking IFAN research assistant. However, Traoré does not figure prominently in Balandier's memoirs. By contrast, Keita does, and the publications of Keita and Balandier suggest very strongly that they conducted their research in the same places and times, as do Keita's other activities.

[60] Georges Balandier, "L'Or de la Guinée Françaises [*sic*]," *Présence Africaine* 1, 4 (1948): 539–48, see 543.

[61] Ibid., 547.

[62] M. K. [*sic*; Madeira Keita], "Notes," *Etudes Guinéennes* 1, 1 (1947). The mines were then producing only a small fraction of what they had before the war; "Siguiri: Reprise de l'Activitié des Mines d'Or," *la Guinée Française*, 11 Feb. 1947, #2094; Balandier, "L'Or de la Guinée Françaises," 539.

[63] Union du Mandé, "A Propos de la Coopérative de l'Orpaillage," *La Phare de Guinée*, #7, Feb. 1948 (article dated 2 Jan. 1948). Keita had briefly succeeded in incorporating this regionalist party, of which Sékou Touré had been an early member, into the Guinean RDA; Renseignements, Origine: Conakry, 13 July 1947, 17G573v152, ANS. The party soon joined an anti-RDA coalition; *Voix de la Guinée*, #1, 7 Aug. 1949; *Coup de Bambou*, #5, 12 Apr. 1950.

attempt to stabilize the mines and control the market in gold while keeping prices artificially low. Itinerant miners would thereby be pushed out of a market that they had created and away from sites that they had opened up. Meanwhile, implied the article, African gold traders and middlemen would be cut out of the formal sector and forced into smuggling. Better to invest in modern methods of production and regulate conditions of labor than to regulate the market itself, it was argued.[64] The Union's actions had echoes in Paris, where Guinea's Mamba Sano and other RDA representatives proposed legislation liberalizing the West African gold market.[65] In doing so, the party hoped to secure the patronage of Dioula traders and the support of the Union du Mandé. In the end, it lost the latter.

In any case, the article is not Keita's. His traces can be found elsewhere. He and his long-time ally Dr. Koniba Pléah, who was stationed in Siguiri, established an RDA section in the town in November 1948, thereby bringing competition between the Union du Mandé and the RDA into the open.[66] Originally from Soudan, Pléah had only arrived in Guinea the year before. He had quickly fallen into the orbit of Keita—his "*koro*" or elder—lodging with him in Conakry and following his evening courses on Marxism.[67] Pléah was posted to Siguiri by the colonial medical service in June 1948, but only lasted six months there, having incurred the enmity of both the colonial administrator, a strong Gaullist with whom Keita had clashed, and the Union du Mandé.[68] By the time he was transferred elsewhere, Pléah's organizational work had already been done, but the biggest political question remained the mines: who had the right to work them, who set the prices, and to whom did the subsoil belong? With Pléah gone, and the alliance between the RDA and the Union du Mandé broken—but before the RDA split with the French Communist Party—the administration was to give the Union what it sought: a free market in gold and assurance that the mineral wealth of the Siguiri region would constitute a "*reserve indigène*" closed to European mining companies.[69]

From the mines around Siguiri, questions emerge. Was the kind of political work Keita engaged in merely incidental to the work of social scientific research? Did this climate of anti-colonial activism and political maneuvering influence Balandier's study of Guinea's gold fields, or his later diagnosis of the "Colonial Situation"? Did anti-colonial politics and engaged social science go

[64] Here Balandier would have disagreed. Capital-intensive, industrial mining had never proven profitable in the area; "L'Or de la Guinée Françaises," 542, 545.

[65] Lisette, *Combat*, 175.

[66] In a letter, Pléah characterized the Union du Mandé as a regionalist party holding contradictory positions; Pléah to Doudou Guèye, 12 Oct. 1948, BPN 136d528, ANM.

[67] Pléah to Doudou Guèye, 12 Oct. 1948; Pléah to S.-G. du Symepharsa [*sic*, union of medical workers], 7 Mar. 1949, BPN 136d528, ANM.

[68] Renseignements, Origine Kankan, a/s Activités du Médecin Africain Koniba Pléah, en Service à Siguri, 19 Dec. 1948, 17G573v152, ANS.

[69] *Voix de la Guinée*, #24, 6–13 July 1950; #27, 27 July–3 Aug. 1950; #31, 24–31 Aug. 1950.

hand-in-hand, or did they simply happen to run on parallel tracks? In any case, even before Siguiri, the paths of Keita and Balandier had already diverged. Keita was soon to endure persecution, repression, and unemployment. Balandier, having in his telling been hustled out of Guinea in August 1947, had been reassigned to French Equatorial Africa, a posting considered one of the least desirable in the empire.[70]

THE "COLONIAL SITUATION" IN WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Marie Albert de Suremain refers to Balandier's experience in Conakry with Keita, and particularly earlier in Dakar with the intellectual-political milieu of Alioune Diop, Léopold Sedar Senghor, and Lamine Guèye, as "a moment of intellectual conversion."[71] In such dynamic company, it must have been so. Balandier's pre-departure memoir, published as a novel, makes it clear that such a moment was ripe. In the immediate wake of the Liberation, Balandier, inspired in part by a film about the abolitionist martyr Reverend Père Charles de Foucauld, studied ethnography in Paris. There he worked at the Musée de l'Homme under Michel Leiris, who had great influence on him.[72] Balandier wrote the first of several autobiographical tomes—but the only one thinly veiled as a novel—as he prepared to leave for Africa with the ambition to help "the Blacks—the poor Blacks—to assert themselves next to (or if necessary, against) the Whites—the great wicked Whites."[73] Although he has recently referred to the text as an "*autobiographie arrangée [et] cachée*," his contemporary reflection on it was perhaps more revealing; he referred to the book as a "*monographie*" based on an explicitly scientific study of himself.[74] Over the course of the next year, the political possibilities of such "scientific" self-reflection began to emerge in *Présence Africaine*. Later still, after his encounters with the rich intellectual life of Dakar, the political world of Conakry, and the embattled hinterlands of Guinea and Gabon—rather than with "the poor Blacks" of his metropolitan imagination—Balandier published "La Situation Coloniale." In short, the article represents a substantial intellectual and political conversion, signposted by "Erreurs Noires" and "Le Noir est un homme."

In "La Situation Coloniale," Balandier argued that contemporary Africa represented a particular situation in which colonized society—African

[70] Balandier, Steinmetz, and Sapiro, "Tout parcours," 53.

[71] Suremain, "Faire du Terrain," 654–55. Diop, Balandier's host, was a founder and long-time editor of *Présence Africaine*. Senghor later elaborated the theory of *negritude* partly in its pages and dominated Senegal's political life for decades, inheriting a mantle briefly worn by Guèye, who represented Senegal in the French Assembly and in the Constituent Assembly of 1946.

[72] On the context of Balandier's training, see Conklin, "The New 'Ethnology.'"

[73] Georges Balandier, *Tous Comptes Faits* (Paris: Pavois, 1947), 154–55, 234–35. This text is dated March 1946, before Balandier's first departure for Africa, which marks its climax.

[74] Balandier, Steinmetz, and Saprio, "Tout parcours," 48–49; Balandier, *Tous Comptes Faits*, 9.

societies— and colonial society—that for which empire was a condition of its existence and reproduction—formed an ensemble or system that had to be studied in its concrete manifestations and as a totality ("*en tant que totalité… [ou] un complexe*").[75] Anthropology had failed to capture the dynamism of colonized societies because it was caught between theorists in search of purity and applied anthropologists slavishly devoted to empiricism.[76] Sociology was the best instrument for such a study, he argued. Yet Balandier's eschewal of anthropology for sociology was both tactical and strategic. Quite apart from his intellectual motivations lay an emergent competition with Claude Lévi-Strauss.[77] Anthropology, American-style, was then associated with Lévi-Strauss, who had just returned from the United States after the war. If Lévi-Strauss' anthropology was structuralist, Balandier's sociology would be "dynamist," a discipline suited to a "new Africa."[78] Balandier

[75] It has been argued that Balandier adopted the concept of the "situation" from Max Gluckman while being informed by the sociology of Marcel Mauss; Michael Naepels, "l'Anthropologie Face aux Temps," *Annales* 65, 4 (2010): 873–84; Cooper, *Colonialism*, 35–36. See Gluckman, *Analysis of a Social Situation in Modern Zululand*, originally published in *Bantu Studies* 14, 1 (March 1940), and 14, 2 (June 1940), and *African Studies* 1, 4 (Dec. 1942), and only later republished in book form (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1958). However, Balandier's sources for the phrase and the concept were multiple, and Gluckman does not seem to be the most important of them. In both the eponymous article and in a forerunner to it published in the same journal one year earlier, Balandier cites the psychologist Octave Mannoni as his source for the phrase "*la situation coloniale*," while tracing it back to Louis Wirth; "La Situation Coloniale," 46; "Aspects de l'Évolution Sociale chez les Fang du Gabon (Afrique Équatoriale Française)," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 9 (1950): 76–106, see 77. Indeed, one section of Mannoni's *Psychologie de la Colonisation* (Paris: Seuil, 1950) is entitled "La Situation Coloniale et le Racisme" (pp. 108–20, see also 10–11). Balandier was originally less hostile to Mannoni's project than some readings of "La Situation Coloniale" suggest; Cooper, *Colonialism*, 41. In a review of the book, he proclaimed it "brilliant" if deeply flawed and lacking specificity and methodological rigor, and it inspired a second article by him as well; see his review, "O. Mannoni: *Psychologie de la Colonisation*, " *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 9 (1950): 183–86; and Balandier, "Contribution à une Sociologie de la Dépendance," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 12 (1952): 47–69. Finally, the concept of the "situation" played an important role in the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, who published the first of a series of collected writings under the title *Situations* in 1947 (Paris: Gallimard). Sartre's influence on Balandier's writing is apparent in the young social scientist's first articles in *Présence Africaine*, for which both men sat on the editorial board. Balandier discusses the existentialist influence in "La Situation Coloniale: Ancien Concept, Nouvelle Réalité" and in *Civilisés, Dit-On* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de la France, 2003), 25–26.

[76] Balandier, "La Situation Coloniale: Approche Théorique," 45–46, 76. For astounding evidence of this impasse, see "la Parenté et l'Histoire: Entretien avec Maurice Godelier," *Afrique et histoire* 4, 2 (2005): 247–81, see 252.

[77] De l'Estoile, "Rationalizing Colonial Domination," 51–53. De l'Estoile's analysis of the competition between the two men reduces politics to *academic* politics, to the question of why Lévi-Strauss defeated Balandier to be elected to the Collège de France. He also argues that Balandier's work was both "applied" and "colonial." I argue that it was in some respects *anti*-colonial, and that Balandier's position working for the colonial administration was no more isomorphic with his politics than was that of Keita, Touré, Autra, Pléah, or any of the other West African activists who were also employees of the colonial state.

[78] G. Balandier, *Sociologie des Brazzavilles Noires* (Paris: A. Colin, 1955 [2d ed., 1985]), ix. See also Balandier, *Sociologie Actuelle de l'Afrique Noire: Dynamique Sociale en Afrique Centrale* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de la France, 1955); and "Problématique des Classes Sociales en

retained an attachment to "sociology" for several years, until, chafing under the methodological constraints the discipline imposed, he reconciled himself with anthropology once again.[79] Whatever his motivations, the fact is that Balandier's preference for sociology harmonized with that of a nascent African intelligentsia which rejected with increasing vehemence the traditionalist, even "folkloric," ethnographic approach that seemed to them, and to him, to characterize the discipline of anthropology.[80]

Yet Balandier's early sociological work in equatorial Africa is precisely the work that most represents an applied, even colonial social scientific inquiry.[81] Balandier himself trumpeted the fact that his work was applied, although he preferred the term "engaged." For him, that was part of its value. Although he had begun to express these ideas in Guinea, he made them concrete in Gabon.[82] From January to March 1949, and in the company of Jean-Claude Pauvert over the same period in 1950, Balandier studied Fang villages in the northern Gabonese region of Woleu-N'Tem.[83] The article he drew from his first period of research both suggested concrete policies towards the Fang population and provided some of the material that later informed his analysis of the colonial situation.[84] Fang communities were small, mobile, and widely dispersed, he observed. Labor recruitment for colonial enterprises in interwar years had fractured them even further, leaving an imbalance between the sexes, particularly among active adults. The entire economy of Woleu-N'Tem had been "turned upside down by colonization," new monetized systems of exchange, and the fact that the region was "literally pulled apart: oriented naturally towards Cameroun, accidentally

Afrique Noire," *Cahiers Internationaux de la Sociologie* 38 (1965): 131–42; Jean Copans, *Un Demi-siècle d'Africanisme Africain: Terrains, Acteurs et Enjeux des Sciences Sociales en Afrique Indépendante* (Paris: Karthala, 2010), 88–89.

[79] Balandier, Steinmetz, and Sapiro, "Tout parcours," 57.

[80] Copans, *Un Demi-siècle*. Ironically, Balandier made precisely this point in a note on a 1949 conference of Africanists in Ibadan, Nigeria, the AEF delegation to which included no Africans; Georges Balandier, "La Participation de l'AEF à la Conférence Internationale des Africanistes de l'Ouest," *Bulletin: Institut d'Etudes Centrafricaines, Nouvelle Série* 1 (1950): 79–80, see 80. For a defense of the ethnographic approach, see Marcel Griaule, "l'Action Sociologique en Afrique Noire," *Présence Africaine* 30 (1948), 388–91.

[81] The term "colonial" means little here, since on some level a state-funded study in an imperial context is inherently colonial.

[82] Georges Balandier, "Chronique de l'IFAN: l'Ethnologie, Science Utile," *la Guinée Française*, 22 Feb. 1947, #3004.

[83] "Rapport d'Activité: Sous-section Sociologie Appliquée et Démographie," *Bulletin: Institut d'Etudes Centrafricaines, Nouvelle Série* 3 (1952): 19–20. Emphasizing the issue of "tribal" unity, Balandier also reflects on this fieldwork in *Ambiguous Africa*, 158–67. One of its products was G. Balandier and Jean-Claude Pauvert, *Les Villages Gabonais: Aspects Démographiques, Economiques, Sociologiques, Projets de Modernisation* (Brazzaville: IFAN, 1952).

[84] Georges Balandier, "Problèmes Economiques et Problèmes Politiques au Niveau du Village Fang," *Bulletin: Institut d'Etudes Centrafricaines, Nouvelle Série* 1 (1950): 49–64.

towards Spanish Guinea, and administratively towards Libreville."[85] Fang society was in crisis, and the biggest problem for both the colony and the colonized society was labor. Even though colonial administrators had opposed the initiative, Balandier argued that a Fang experiment in creating "work societies" (*sociétés de travail*) to parallel the administration's inefficient "provident societies" (*sociétés de prévoyance*) should be supported.[86] African-organized collective labor, performed locally, represented a vast improvement over forced labor on state projects and private concessions, the disastrous long-term effects of which his analysis revealed. Such labor had been banned across the French empire in 1946, but the program itself was still being phased out in 1950. Drawing on the ideas of the colonial thinker Robert Delavignette, who was considered a progressive, Balandier forecast the development of a "true Fang peasantry."[87] More revealing than the article itself was its postscript. Noting that the text, written in 1949, was some eighteen months old by the time of its publication, Balandier pointed out that the High Commissioner for the AEF (Afrique Equatoriale Francaise, French Equatorial Africa), Bernard Cornut-Gentille, had taken on the social and economic problems of Gabon. A conference had been held, and Pauvert was leading a team to develop a "villagization" program.[88] This, Balandier wrote, demonstrated the effectiveness of "a sociology that is resolutely 'engaged' (*engagée*)."[89]

"Engaged in what?" one might ask. Was this work complicit with the colonial administration? Yes, in a sense, but this question is badly posed. The work echoes the assertions of the leaders of Gabon's emerging political opposition. Three broad concerns framed the colony's politics: centralizing disparate villages, establishing a stable (if subordinate) political structure, and making the transition from an economy based on forced labor and migration to one grounded in peasant production, notably of coffee and cocoa.[90] Balandier's approach was to herald the possibilities of the peasantry. He promoted a moderate villagization policy intended to group existing communities into cooperative units buttressed by work and provident societies; such a policy would

[85] Ibid., 58.

[86] On Gabon's *sociétés de prévoyance* during this period, see Jeremy Rich, *A Workman Is Worthy of His Meat: Food and Colonialism in the Gabon Estuary* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 115–18.

[87] Balandier, "Problèmes Economiques," 60–63.

[88] Such programs had a complicated history in Gabon. See Christopher Gray, "Territoriality and Colonial Enclosure in Southern Gabon," in Florence Bernault, ed., *Enfermement, Prison, et Châtiments en Afrique du 19 Siècle à Nos Jours* (Paris: Karthala, 1999), 101–32, see 125–28. See also Florence Bernault, *Démocraties Ambiguës en Afrique Centrale: Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon, 1940–1965* (Paris: Karthala, 1996), 111–13.

[89] Balandier, "Problèmes Economiques," 63–64.

[90] Such production increased considerably in this period; Léon Modeste Nnang Ndong, "La France et le Développement Agricole au Gabon: Histoire d'une Politique de Mise en Valeur (1946–1956)," in Fabrice Nguiabama-Makaya, ed., *Colonisation et Colonisés au Gabon* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2007), 127–41.

allow greater integration of the "European economy and the rural native economy … two elements which colonization had created (*mis en presence*)."[91]

This may have been a tepid, reformist politics, but it was a politics in keeping with the tenor of the times. And it was not far removed from proposals the Fang elite had proposed at a "Fang [Pahouin] Congress" which the administration had convened in 1947 in the town of Mitzic, in Woleu-N'Tem. Indeed, Balandier had pushed these proposals in an early report destined for the colonial administration, and he went on to reproduce them in his article as evidence of a Fang political awakening.[92] Yet Mitzic was not Siguiri. This was politics at one step's remove. The Mitzic conference had fallen under the informal and unexpected leadership of Léon M'ba, a French-educated man from Libreville with an exceptionally complex and contradictory character.[93] Like Keita, M'ba was deeply engaged in political life, and he was a sometime ethnographer, having published an important text on Fang customary law.[94] Nonetheless, he and Balandier kept their distance. Had the young Frenchman drawn a lesson from his precipitous ejection from Conakry? Whatever the case may be, Balandier's work in Gabon consciously wove together the political programs of M'ba and Jean Aubame, the colony's two primary African politicians, and presented them to the government as conclusions reached scientifically. Rivals in spite of a close family connection, M'ba and Aubame both argued for greater integration of the "European" and "Native" economies,[95] and Balandier concurred. If Fang society was in crisis, that crisis was produced by the colonial situation. In 1950, that argument had moved from embryonic form in the *Bulletin* of the Institut d'Etudes Centrafricains in Brazzaville to an article on "Aspects de l'évolution sociale chez les Fang du Gabon" in *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*. The next year it achieved its mature expression in the same pages as "La Situation Coloniale." It would also animate his work in the years to come, including his 1955 *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires* (note the plural). There, Balandier insisted that the city and the

[91] Balandier, "Problèmes Economiques," 62–63. See also "Un Essai de Regroupement des Populations Rurales au Gabon," *La Guinée Française*, 25 Nov. 1950, #4202.

[92] Balandier and Pauvert, *Les Villages Gabonais*, 5, 11.

[93] Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The Emerging States of French Equatorial Africa* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 347; Bernault, *Démocraties*, 220–21. Balandier offers a sketch of M'ba, whom he dubs "M" in *Ambiguous Africa*, 235–37. An early victim of persecution by the colonial state, as president of Gabon (1960–1967) M'ba became one of France's most faithful allies on the continent. See Bernault, *Démocraties*, 215–34; A. Keese, "L'Evolution du 'Leader Indigène' aux Yeux des Administrateurs Français: Léon M'ba et le Changement des Modalités de Participation au Pouvoir Local au Gabon, 1922–1967," *Afrique et Histoire* 2, 1 (2004): 141–70.

[94] Leon M'Ba, "Essai de Droit Coutumier Pahouin," *Bulletin de la Société des Recherches Congolaises* 25 (1938): 5–51.

[95] Aubame was a particularly vocal proponent of "villagization," a platform on which he built his electoral success; Bernault, *Démocraties*, 113; Balandier and Pauvert, *Les Villages Gabonais*, 11–14; Thompson and Adloff, *Emerging States*, 349.

rural areas were interdependent, a relationship in which the role of the colonial state could not be discounted.[96] Among francophone social scientists, Balandier's work was innovative in that he significantly modified the long-prevalent thesis that Africans experienced urbanization as a form of "uprootedness" (*déracinement*) in which their static or primitive societies were transformed.[97] He recognized that the future of the city in Africa was neither colonial nor "White," and he never ignored the intensity or rapidity of the transformations that mid-twentieth century African societies were experiencing.

SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT AND "SOCIOLOGY"

Keita and Balandier would not experience that transformation together. While Balandier observed it, Keita attempted to master it. In 1956, in the wake of the *loi cadre* (framework law) that established territorial autonomy by dissolving the federal government in Dakar, Keita returned from his political exile in Dahomey to his home territory of Soudan Français. There he worked as an archivist and served as interim director of the IFAN center.[98] As that colony became an internally governed territory, and then a Republic within the French Community, he rose in the ranks of government as well as within the US-RDA.[99] Keita's roots in Guinea's radical politics, the *Groupe d'études communistes*, and the trans-territorial RDA meant that his presence in Soudan strengthened the hand of the US-RDA's more militant wing—figures like Awa Keita, Seydou Badian Kouyate, and Mamadou Gologo—against the more moderate party leader Mamadou Konaté and his allies, such as Jean-Marie Kone. In fact, Madeira Keita almost certainly served to stiffen the politics of the US-RDA in the wake of Konaté's sudden death from hepatitis in 1956. In May 1957, Keita was named minister of the interior of the Territory of Soudan. It was his signature as minister—not that of Modibo Keita, head of government, US-RDA secretary general, and future president (1960–1968)—that authorized the strongest single move against the colonial system

[96] Balandier, *Brazzavilles Noires*, 32–45.

[97] For a rich and relevant attempt to think through such social developments, see Meillassoux, *Urbanization of an African Community*. Meillassoux was a student and something of an acolyte of Balandier. He was also attentive to Madeira Keita's status as an anti-colonial social scientist who had become a powerful minister. Meillassoux pays homage to Keita in the book's preface, but in his fieldnotes he rues the suspicion he encountered from Keita in his role as minister of the interior. Keita's attitude may have been conditioned by the fact that before training under Balandier, Meillassoux had worked as a translator in the United States. Indeed, *Urbanization*, Meillassoux's major study of Bamako in the 1960s, was written in English and still awaits publication in French.

[98] *Notes Africaines* 72 (1956); Rapport Annuel de l'IFAN, 1956, 2G56-6, ANS; Rapport Annuel de l'IFAN, 1957, 2G57-20, ANS.

[99] At independence, Keita became minister of defense and security, later serving as minister of information, of labor, and of justice. Notice de Renseignement Concernant Madeira Keita, n.d. (1960), N3 1C1542, ANM; Pascal James and Gavin H. Imperato, *Historical Dictionary of Mali*, 4th ed. (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2008), 169; *Livre d'Or de la République du Mali* (Paris: l'Afrique Nouvelle, 1963); and interview with Papa Madeira Keita, Bamako, 21 June 2008.

made before independence, namely the dismantling of the chieftaincy and the gradual dismissal of the *chefs de canton*, beginning late in 1957.[100] He remained in government through independence in 1960, acting as a leader of the delegation that negotiated the Mali Federation's emergence within the French Community and as a key figure in establishing the Republic of Mali in the wake of the Federation's collapse in August.[101] That same year, the editors of *Présence Africaine* claimed that Keita was "as popular in Guinea as Sékou Touré himself," even though he had left the country nearly a decade earlier.[102]

In Mali, Madeira Keita was more powerful than popular.[103] Under the socialist government of Modibo Keita from 1960 to 1968, he occupied various ministerial posts, changing one portfolio for another, but never leaving the government. Madeira Keita's political influence waxed and waned, but his ministerial positions served as a barometer or bellwether of "radical" influence within the politburo, or Bureau Politique Nationale.[104] A well-informed French ambassador considered him both the most pro-Soviet and the most "xenophobic," meaning anti-Western, of the Malian leadership.[105] Keita consistently held hard-line positions. For instance, in the wake of a high profile treason case in 1962, he argued that, were it up to him, death sentences handed down by Popular Tribunals would be carried out expeditiously.[106] Although he lost that particular battle, the CIA recognized him as a leader of the "younger militants" within the Party and one of the most powerful voices

[100] See Minister of the Interior, Soudan Français, Circular to Commandants de cercle, 18 Dec. 1957, no. 292/DI/2; Minister of the Interior, Soudan Français, Circular to all *cercles* and subdivisions, 31 Dec. 1957, 198/DI, both in N1 ID2940, ANM; "Les Chefferies de canton déclarées vacantes en quasi-totalité," *l'Essor*, 19 Dec. 1958: 1–2; Madeira Keita, "Les Reformes de structure dans la République Soudanaise," *l'Essor*, 1 June 1960: 1–2. See also K. Ernst, *Tradition and Progress in an African Village: Non-Capitalist Transformation of Rural Communities in Mali* (New York: Praeger, 1976), 94–95; C. A. Danioko, *Contribution à l'Etude des Partis Politiques au Mali de 1945 à 1960*, thesis, Université de Paris-VII (1984), 152. Reform of the chieftaincy had been a key element of Madeira Keita's political activism for a decade; Madeira Keita, "Rapport sur le Problème des Chefs Africains, Présenté au II' Congrès du RDA," Jan. 1949, Abidjan, repr. in Danioko, *Contribution à l'Etude*, app. 33 (n.p.); Balandier, "Erreurs Noires," 403–4. It is very commonly argued, in error, that only Guinea abolished the chieftaincy; Schmidt, *Cold War*; J. Suret-Canale, "The End of the Chieftaincy in Guinea," Christopher Hurst, trans., in *Essays on African History: From the Slave Trade to Neo-Colonialism* (London: Hurst, 1988).

[101] FPR 230; and dossier "Négociations, 1959–60," FPR 233, Archives Nationales, France.

[102] Editorial footnote to Keita, "Le Parti unique," 3.

[103] For instance, Keita lived in a protected villa on the edge of Bamako, in what is now Korofina Nord, rather than in a popular neighborhood; Pierre Campmas, *l'Union Soudanaise, Section Soudanaise du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, 1946–1968*, thesis, Université de Toulouse-le Mirail, 2 vols. (1976), 470; author's fieldnotes, 21 June 2008.

[104] Ambassador France to S.E.M. Couve de Murville, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE, France), 18 Sept. 1962, #258, 2522, MAE.

[105] Pierre Pelen, Ambassador of France to Mali to MAE, DAAM, 28 Apr. 1965, #70, 2522, MAE.

[106] *Procés-Verbaux des reunions du BPN, 1962,* Fonds du BPN, du CMLN, et de l'UDPM, 77, ANM.

in the Bureau Politique Nationale, which was the heart of government under the US-RDA.[107] Within what had become a single-party state,[108] Keita served as a member of the party's ruling bodies, the Bureau, and the Comité National pour la Défense de la Révolution (CNDR) that superseded it until the coup d'état of 19 November 1968. Along with the US-RDA leadership and a few stalwarts like Pléah, he was then imprisoned in infamously poor conditions in the Sahara.[109] In November 1977, after the death of Modibo Keita, he was the last surviving member of the US-RDA government to be released. He went to Guinea to recuperate, where Sékou Touré welcomed him.[110] An active behind-the-scenes figure in Mali's tumultuous move from thinly veiled military rule towards multi-party democracy in the early 1990s, Madeira Keita died in 1997.[111]

Keita's politics had influenced Balandier greatly at a key moment in his "intellectual conversion." Did Balandier's analyses of African social life influence Keita's vision of the societies he came to play such an important role in governing? I argue that they did, but the line is no more taut than that which ties "La Situation Coloniale" to postcolonial studies. After independence, social scientific knowledge was both produced and consumed in West African capitals like Conakry and Bamako. However, Guinea and Mali never developed social scientific traditions that were as simultaneously "nationalist" and programmatic as was the case in, for example, Nasser's Egypt.[112] Still, echoes of the type of social scientific discourse and analyses that emerged from the work Balandier and Keita conducted together can be found in the governing rhetoric of the US-RDA and in the party's theoretical debates on the structure of Malian society. Furthermore, as the "theoretician" of the US-RDA regime, Madeira Keita seemed to draw on sociology to define an African socialism.[113] Like that of other newly independent African governments, and perhaps more directly, the US-RDA leadership looked to sociology

[107] Central Intelligence Agency, "Ghana and Mali as Exemplars of African Radicalism," National Intelligence Estimate, 11 July 1962, NSF, box 8, folder 60, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, Texas.

[108] Keita, "Le Parti Unique."

[109] See, for example, Amnesty International (UK) archival documents, 1974–1977, including "Prisoners Suffering from Ill Health," External document, AFR/37/03/77. Documents in author's possession. This episode is a chapter in my book manuscript in progress.

[110] Amadou Seydou Traore, *Le Salaire des Liberateurs du Mali* (Bamako: La Ruche à Livres, 2008), 157–60.

[111] Interview, Papa Madeira Keita, Bamako, 21 June 2008; Seydou Mamadou Diarrah, *Le Mouvement Démocratique Malien, l'Intineraire de l'ADEMA-PASJ, Origine et Parcours* (Bamako: Graphique Industries, 1996), 36.

[112] This in spite of the urging of Autra, "L'Institut National de Recherches." For Egypt, see el Shakry, *Great Social Laboratory*, 218.

[113] See, for example, *Rapport de Synthèse sur le Problème de la Moralité et la Licence chez la Jeunesse, 1967*, BPN 110d420, ANM; Pelen to MAE, 8 May 1968, #58/DAM, Bamako 57, CADN; Pelen to MAE, DAAM, 8 Apr. 1967, #27, *A/s Conférence de M. Madeira Keita sur l'Idéologie et la Formation Idéologique des Cadres*, 2522, MAE.

to provide the tools of analysis for a society experiencing rapid urban and demographic change. Yet even as newly independent African governments considered the social sciences necessary tools for controlled social transformation, in practice reference to them was often simply rhetorical.[114] Sociology, in particular, served a kind of talismanic function as the inverse of anthropology, that sometime tool of colonial governance premised on difference. If anthropology seemed to look to the past,[115] sociology emphasized the possibility of a transformative future, one in which the US-RDA leadership was deeply invested.

In the 1960s, that future seemed imminent, and "the Colonial Situation" no longer captured it. By the time Madeira Keita and his colleagues were coming into power—or at least into government—in 1956, the moment that inspired it was already fading. The situation then in question was Algerian. There, studying colonial society as a totality or complex entailed the recognition that it was a system bound by violence.[116] Mali's independence in 1960 was framed differently. In Bamako the "key idea of the era,"[117] modernization, was influential, although not consensual, as the territory proudly left the fold of the empire for the ranks of "the Third World." The latter phrase, too, was tied to Balandier, who had not invented it but had promoted it, thereby providing at least part of the intellectual scaffolding for constructing a new world of independent nation-states and dismantling empires.[118] The flaw laid not so much with the scaffolding, but with the blueprint. Modernization theory seemed to provide either a plan of action for the new nation-states or a means to measure their progress. Unlike the colonial situation, however—rooted and concrete as it was—modernization described not a present moment but a distant horizon. Its value was diminished less by its optimism than by its universalism. Easily lost in this new analytic language was attention to the historically specific workings of particular forms of oppression, above all the colonial racism that had been front and center in the colonial situation. The rhetoric of modernization "occluded the colonial."[119] Race was nowhere in the mix. This moment coincides

[114] The work of African social scientists since the 1950s is beyond my ken and the brief of this paper, but is the focus of Copans, *Un Demi-siècle*; see esp. p. 77. Copans and I agree on the role that social scientific language played in postcolonial African governance; he cites the rhetoric of such figures as Jomo Kenyatta, who studied under Bronislaw Malinowski at the London School of Economics and went on to become Kenya's first president.

[115] See Griaule, "L'Action Sociologique."

[116] Jean-Paul Sartre, "Colonialism Is a System," in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 2006 [1956]), 36–55.

[117] Frederick Cooper, "Development, Modernization, and the Social Sciences in the Era of Decolonization: The Examples of British and French Africa," *Revue d'Histoire des Sciences Humaines* 10 (2004): 9–38, see 10.

[118] G. Balandier, ed., *Le Tiers-monde: Sous-Développement et Développement*, Alfred Sauvy, Preface (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956); Balandier, Steinmetz, and Sapiro, "Tout parcours," 57.

[119] Cooper, "Decolonizing Situations," 67.

roughly with the beginning of Mbembe's "long, imperial winter," a period during which, he argues, French thought, apart from "the export of intellectual luxury items," became provincial, bound to the Hexagon and its place in the world, and limited by a feigned ignorance of the imperial past.[120] It may be, as Foucher and others argue, that such a winter never began. Yet accepting only the last charge as accurate—that the imperial became marginal—I suggest that if that winter did begin, its arrival coincided with that of the green shoots of African independence, in a season that looked like spring.

CONCLUSION

By that time, years after George Balandier and Madeira Keita had met at the foot of the gangplank, and nearly a decade after the publication of Balandier's canonical article, the link between the two men had long waned through force of circumstance. In 1968, on one of his last official trips to Paris, Keita visited Balandier briefly, but the two men lost touch entirely after Keita was imprisoned.[121] Balandier suggests that his old friend died in prison, while in fact Keita lived another twenty years after his release.[122] The relationship between a particular anti-colonial politics and an engaged sociology had waned as well, and eventually took other forms. Yet it is much easier to recognize what happened to the political vision of Keita and the US-RDA than it is to capture the process by which a social science attuned to colonial difference, and to racism in particular, faded. That process was aleatory and conditioned by political struggle. It was, above all, historical, and that history is one of broken ties. Keita and Balandier, West Africa and France, engaged social science and emancipatory politics: in every pair, one conditioned the other. All their histories are histories of divergence, only one of which was absolute.

Abstract: Two young men met on a quay at the port in Conakry, Guinea in 1946. One, waiting dockside, was Mamadou Madeira Keita, a low-level civil servant and archivist. Years later, when he was a political prisoner in the Malian Sahara, some would argue that he was "the first francophone African ethnographer." The other, descending the gangplank, was the Frenchman Keita had come to meet. Georges Balandier was unknown then, but would soon become a leading figure in the fields of sociology and anthropology. The encounter between Keita and Balandier was foundational for both men. Conakry incubated a canonical intervention—Balandier's 1951 article "La Situation Coloniale"—that some attribute an ancestral role in a particular francophone tradition of postcolonial thought. Conakry, and Guinea at large, was also the crucible in which a

[120] Mbembe, *Sortir*, 123–24.
[121] G. Balandier, *Conjugaisons*, 260.
[122] Balandier, Steinmetz, and Sapiro, "Tout parcours," 53.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S001041751200059X Published online by Cambridge University Press

powerful anti-colonial politics were forged by Madeira Keita and his allies. In this particular corner of West Africa, anti-colonial politics and an emergent, politically engaged social science conditioned each other, like the two strands of a double helix, each a necessary yet ultimately contingent element of the other's structure. Though these links did not last long, they had important effects. This article, by emphasizing the contingencies of the two men's intertwined biographies, seeks to carry out Balandier's dictate to emphasize the "concrete" nature of this particular situation in order to understand how and why anti-colonial politics and an innovative sociology converged and ultimately diverged.