On Souleymane Kanté's Translation of the Quran into the Maninka language[1]

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The Quran was first translated from Arabic into Maninka by a Guinean self-taught scholar Souleymane Kanté (1922-1987), the inventor of the N'ko script and the founder of the N'ko literary tradition. The exact dates of the beginning and the completion of the translation are unknown. According to Oyler [2005, 92-93] whose data are based on interviews with N'ko activists, the translation of the Quran was Kanté's first work. Therefore, his first essays of the Maninka Quran translation date back to the late 1940s or the early 1950s. There is evidence that the translation was finished not earlier than in the late 1960's, since in his letter to a French Africanist Mauice Houis dated March 5, 1964, Kanté stated that his translation was not yet finished [Vydrine 2001]. For decades handwritten copies and, later, photocopies of Kanté's translation circulated among readers. The first official publications appeared only after the translator's death. As Oyler [2005, 189] indicates, there were at least three editions. The first edition took place in 1994 (1000 copies printed), the second one in 1998 (also 1000 copies). The third edition [Kùrana… 1999] was published in Saudi Arabia in 1999 (50,000 copies). In the present article I rely on the text of the latter edition. According to Ibrahima Sory Condé's oral report (September 2011), this edition was ready to be published by 1988, but printing was delayed due to disagreements between the heirs of Souleymane Kanté and publishers in Saudi Arabia. Particularly, Kanté's original manuscript included a postface, but the publisher insisted that the text of the Quran is sacral and self-sufficient and, therefore, does not require one. Thus, the Kanté postface was relocated to the beginning of the book.

The full title of the book, as represented on its front page, is as follows: *Kùrana kálanke n'à kɔ́dɔ` dálamìdanɛ́n màndén fòdoba kán` dɔ́ nálìmun ńkɔ́` dí Kántɛ Sùlemáana bólo* 'The Holy Quran and its sense translated into the common Manding language, or N'ko, by Souleymane Kanté'. It is commonly known that translation of the Quran from Arabic into other languages has always been a controversial issue in Islamic theology. Although the first translations appeared very early, a more frequent practice was to publish the Quran with comments in other languages or even with word-to-word glosses [Paret, 1986; Mérad, 1998]. According to a more liberal modern Islamic theology, translations of the Quran are possible under two conditions. First, they should be considered as "interpretations", rather than translations. Second, the Quran should only be recited in the Arabic language. However, "Kanté is reported to have argued that Quran is not written by Allah, but by man, and, therefore, those restrictions did not apply" [Oyler 2005, 92].

There is no doubt that for the majority of the Maninka Muslims the translation of the Quran into their mother tongue is the only way to get acquainted with the content of this book. Quranic schooling, widespread in Guinea and in neighboring countries, usually only gives an individual an ability to read Quranic scripts aloud, but not to understand their meanings.[2] Under these circumstances the translation seems to acquire a sacred status of its own, which seems not to have been implied by the translator. For instance, Kanté's translation was published in Guinea as an audiobook.[3] The reciter, the imam of one of the mosques in Conakry, accurately imitates the manner of reciting the Quran in Arabic, though it is difficult to say what exact style of recital he follows. Of course, audio editions of Quran are widespread all over the Muslim world. However, two aspects should be mentioned: first, the text of a translation is always *read aloud,* but not *chanted.* Second, it only serves as a commentary to the original Arabic text which is usually also present in audio editions.

As stated above, the Quran translation seems to be the first book in N'ko. It is likely that Kanté established the literary N'ko language and developed his theory of

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[2] This is not true for advanced traditional Islamic education in Manding-speaking areas. The role of oral explanations of the Quran in Manding languages has been discussed in several articles by Tal Tamari [1996; 2002; 2006].

[3] This fact undoubtedly increases the potential audience of the translation. The Manding "cassette literature" is discussed in detail in the following publications: [Launay 1997; Newton 1999; Shultz 2003; 2006].

linguistic purism while working on this translation. The present article is devoted to the analysis of some of its linguistic (primarily, lexical) features.

Some other translations of the Quran into Manding languages are also available. There are several Mandinka translations; some of them are only available as audiobooks on the Internet, some others are printed, e.g. [Aaya… 1989]. The whole Bamana translation has been recently published, cf. [Jara 2011].[4] However, Kanté's translation is likely to be the first full one.

All excerpts from the N'ko Quran cited in this article are glossed and given in Roman transliteration which follows the rules described in [Vydrine 1999, 13]. Word-spacing corresponds to that of the original. After each N'ko example the corresponding Arabic excerpt and its English translation by Arthur John Arberry are given.

Terminology of the Quran

A Russian Arabist, Kashtaleva [1928, 7], wrote: "The terminology is not something random. Each term, as it appears in the source, represents a big work which is hidden behind it. It stands for a phenomenon developed and reflected in this term. The terminology of the Quran could not have been created instantly and cannot reflect random phenomena. Every new term, as it appears in the Quran, should have its history and should fix a certain phase of development of a certain phenomenon" (translation mine).

As the terminology of the Quran reflects the history of the rise of a monotheistic religion in Arabia, the terminology of its translation into Maninka reflects (besides the translator's work) the long history of islamization of the Manding-speaking peoples. In the chapter *Kùraná` yɔ́rɔ` dó lú fàsari kúda`* 'The new interpretation of some places of the Quran' of the preface to the N'ko Quran, Kanté writes: "We are used to interpretations (translations) of some places of the Quran in Soninke or in Arabic, but now is the time to translate all of them into the common Manding language" (translation mine). Indeed, the Islamic and Quranic lexicon in Maninka and in other Manding languages is mostly borrowed from Arabic and, to a lesser degree, from Soninke. The Soninke people were the ethnic base of the Ancient Ghana Empire (or Wagadu), which existed in the 9th to 11th centuries in the territories of present-day Mali, Mauritania and Senegal. According to an 11th century Arabic historian, al-Bakri, the population of Ghana, including the upper classes, stuck to traditional religions, though Muslims (mostly from North Africa) were also present [Kubbel 1990, 52]. In any case, the Islamization of Soninke dates back to an earlier

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[4] On previously published partial versions of this translation, see [Zappa 2004; 2009].

period than that of the Manding-speaking peoples. The spread of Islam in West Africa is strongly connected with the activities of Soninke Muslim merchants. This explains the high quantity of Soninke loanwords in Manding. In particular, as shown by Vydrin [2008], a significant part of the Manding honorific lexicon (a special register to address respected people) traces back to Soninke words. Besides, Arabic words often came to Manding languages through Soninke.

Souleymane Kanté was a descendant of a marabout family *(móri* 'Muslim cleric'). That means that he was familiar with the tradition of commentary on the Quran in Manding languages. Of course, this tradition is far from unified, however, there seems to be a kind of agreement among Manding marabouts about translation of certain parts of the Quran. In his translation Kanté often argues with this tradition.[5]

Kanté opposes to this tradition his own concept of language purism most fully represented in his Explanatory Dictionary of N'ko [Kántɛ 1998].[6] This dictionary, which is still the most complete lexicographic study of Maninka, includes not only words which really exist in the spoken language, but also numerous neologisms created by Kanté and his followers. It is important that neologisms are created not only to denote new concepts or objects (TV, computer, airplane, etc.) but also to replace loanwords deeply rooted in the language. In written N'ko texts these neologisms are used very widely, the translation of the Quran not being an exception. As any other purist though, Kanté was not perfectly consistent in the application of his concepts. As a result, numerous loanwords still appear in the Maninka translation of the Quran.

Three approaches can be singled out with relation to the borrowing:

– retention of a loanword;

– terminologization of a common Manding word in order to avoid an existing Arabic loanword;

– creation of neologisms as an alternative to existing Arabic loanwords.

These approaches will be discussed below. All examples are chosen randomly from the most frequent Quranic vocabulary. I do not intend to give a comprehensive

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[5] It is noteworthy that Souleymane Kanté's father was famous among the marabouts as a foremost educator. Thus, he reduced the time it took to learn Arabic at his school from seven to three years [Oyler 2005, 93]. Undoubtedly, this was reached by using more advanced teaching techniques.

[6] Later editions of the dictionary are also available. In the second edition [Jàanɛ 2003], Mamadi Baba Diané is mentioned as the editor.

description of the Maninka Quranic terminology in comparison with the Arabic one, for which a far more voluminous study would be required.

1) **Retention of a loanword** is rare. In fact, it is only seldom that the translator yields to tradition and keeps a borrowed term in its current meaning. The most evident examples of this approach are the names of God *Ála* (from Ar. *'allah*) and of the Quran *kùraná* (Ar. *qur'ān*). Even in the latter example one can see an attempt to establish a language norm, as in spoken Maninka the word 'Quran' is also attested in the forms *àlikúrana, àlkúrana* (coming back to the Arabic forms with the definite article)*.* These two examples are quite predictable, though.

Two types of borrowings can be distinguished, conscious (like those cited above) and unconscious. The latter do not seem to have been identified as words of foreign origin by the translator. Unconscious loanwords include, first, words of Soninke origin (as, apparently, Kanté was not fluent in this language) and, second, some Arabic words which have undergone significant phonological changes. Needless to say, one may judge as to the (un)concsiousness of loanwords only through relying on indirect evidence.

Here is an example illustrating the use of conscious loanwords:

(15:30-31) *Mèlɛká`*  *bɛ́ɛ* *kà*  *tínbidin`* *ò* *kɛ́* *kɔ́dɛ,*
     angel-ART all PFV bow-ART this do completely

fó *Bìrisí.*
but Iblis

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَآئِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ إِلاَّ إِبْلِيسَ 'Then the angels bowed themselves all together, save Iblis'.

This sentence is rather atypical, for it contains two conscious loans: *mèlɛká* 'angel' is a borrowing from Ar. *malak* 'angel', and *bìrisí* 'Iblis' is a borrowing from Ar. *iblīs* 'Iblis, devil'. In the spoken Maninka the latter word also occurs in the form *íbulisa.* In his choice between more and less adapted word forms, the translator gives his preference to the more adapted one. Borrowing vocabulary denoting supernatural creatures may seem inevitable, however, as it will be shown below, in some cases Kanté manages to avoid it.

Quite often a Manding word and a loanword with a close meaning coexist in the translation. Their distribution is never random, though. The parallel use of *díina* 'religion' (from Ar. *dīn*) and *námun* 'tradition, habit' can serve as an example. *Díina*

regularly appears as an equivalent of Ar. *dīn* 'religion, faith', while *námun* serves an equivalent of Ar. *milla* 'religion, faith, teaching', e.g.:

(109:6) *Álu   tá   díina`   y'   álu   bólo,*
      2PL   POS   religion-ART   COP   2PL   LOC

ń   fána tá   díina`   yé   ń   bólo.
1.SG too   POS   religion-ART   COP   1SG   LOC

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينٍ 'To you your religion, and to me my religion!'

(2:120) *Yàhúudu`  lù   ní    nàsáara`   lù   sí   ténà   díɲɛ*
      Jew-ART PL   and   Christian-ART   PL   any   FUT:NEG   be.pleased

l'   î   mà   fó   n'   î   k'   àlu   lá   námun`
PP   2SG   PP   until   if   2SG   PFV   3PL   POS   religion-ART

ná-bàto.
CAUS-honour

وَلَن تَرْضَى عَنكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلاَ النَّصَارَى حَتَّى تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ 'Never will the Jews be satisfied with thee, neither the Christians, not till thou followest their religion'.

In the ayat 2:120 two conscious Arabic loans occur: *yàhúudu* 'Jew' and *nàsáara* 'Christian'. It is interesting that in both cases, plural forms of Arabic nouns were borrowed: *yahūdu* 'Jews' and *naṣārā* 'Christians'. In Maninka these forms are singular and can add a plural marker *lu,* as in the examples above.

2) **Terminologization**: the translator uses an original Manding word in the meaning which is close to its meaning in the everyday language or coincides with it. For instance, the verb *pálanka* has meanings 'to quit the community' and 'to divorce'. In the Quranic context it acquires the meaning 'to renounce the Islamic faith', hence *pálankabaa* 'apostate'. It should be noted that an Arabic loanword *múruti* 'to rebel' (Ar. *murtadd* 'rebel, apostate') could be possible here.

The translator uses newly created terms to replace Arabic words which one would expect in the translation. For example, instead of widely used in the spoken Maninka loanword *mùnafóyi* 'hypocrite, pharisee' (from Ar. *munāfiq* 'hypocrite', which would mean in the religious context 'one who does not believe but pretends to be a pious Muslim') we encounter the word *fìlankáfo* 'hypocrite' (from *fìlá(n)* 'two' + *kàfó* 'to unite'):

(4:61) …*í   dí   fìlankáfo   lù   kɔ́dòn-nén   y'   ò   lá   pón.*
      2SG FUT hypocrite PL turn.away-RES see it in quickly

رَأَيْتَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يَصُدُّونَ عَنكَ صُدُودًا ' …then thou seest the hypocrites barring the way to thee'.

Náfula 'smth. additional, not obligatory' (in the religious context, 'an additional Muslim prayer, besides the five basic ones', from Ar. *nāfila* 'smth. done in addition') is replaced by *díyadiya*, whose original meaning is 'voluntary work':

(17:79) *Sú`       fána dɔ́,  í    yé    sì-ń-ɲá-na`   kɛ́*
      night-ART too in   2SG OPT spend.night-1SG-eye-PP-ART do

à   lá   í   jèdɛ   yé   díyadiya`   dí.
3SG LOC 2SG oneself OPT additional-ART PP

وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَتَهَجَّدْ بِهِ نَافِلَةً لَّكَ 'And as for the night, keep vigil a part of it, as a work of supererogation for thee'.

The translator often resorts to the terminologization when dealing with names of supernatural creatures. Pre-islamic Manding religious vocabulary is preferred to Arabic loanwords. For example, instead of *sètána* 'Satan' (from Ar. *shayṭān*) we find *gbèdɛ́*, whose original meaning is 'one of the deities of the Manding preislamic pantheon':

(15:17) *À   ní   k'   ò   lù   kɛ́   k'   à   tànká   gbèdɛ́*
      3SG and INF 3SG PL do INF 3SG protect devil

kùru-la-bon-tá   dàmá`   mà.
stone-CAUS-throw-PTCP.POT   any-ART   PP

وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِن كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَّجِيمٍ ' …and guarded them from every accursed Satan'.

Instead of *jìná* 'jinn' (from Ar. *jinn*), the word *wɔkúlɔ* 'a bush spirit' is used:

(6:100) *Àlu   báda   gbàra-ɲɔ́ɔn`   dó   kɛ́   Àla   lá*
      3PL PRF collect-together-ART some do God PP

wɔkúlɔ`   lù   dí.
spirit-ART   PL   PP

وَجَعَلُواْ لِلّهِ شُرَكَاء الْجِنَّ 'Yet they ascribe to God, as associates, the jinn'.

3) **Creating neologisms.** A borrowed term is replaced with a new one created using only original Manding vocabulary (or, at least, words considered by the translator as such). Most often, the neologisms are of rather transparent structure and should be easily understood by native speakers of Maninka. However, it is difficult to say how big is their terminological potential.

This group of words includes, in particular, names of structural units of the Quran:

fɔ́da 'sura', from *fɔ́* 'to say' and *dá* 'number', literally, 'the number of the speech', cf. the loanword *súra(n)* from Ar. *sūra*.

láfaari 'ayat', from a rare verb *láfaari*, which is attested only in the N'ko Dictionary, where it is interpreted as follows: *fɛ́n kɛ́ jènkɛnɛ́n` dí k'à bɔ́ cágbaya` lá* 'to incline a thing and make it lose its balance'.[7] The verb *lájènkɛ́* 'to incline, to open' is mentioned as a synonym. Cf. the loanword *háya* from Ar. *āya* (also attested in [Ellenberger et al., Ms.]; an identical Bamana form is mentioned in [Bailleul 2007]; the N'ko Dictionary [Jàanɛ 2003] gives the form *háaya*).

Certain neologisms seem semantically unjustified, as the translator creates them to replace loanwords deeply rooted in the language. For instance, instead of *káfiri* 'disbeliever, pagan', everywhere in the translation the word *bànbáa* is used, from *bàn* 'to refuse' + agentive suffix *-baa*, literally, 'one who refuses'. Example:

(109:1)   *À*   *fɔ́*   *kó*   *hèn*   *álù*   *bànbáa*   *lù.*
          3SG   say   QUOT   o!   2PL   disbeliever   PL

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ،'Say: "O unbelievers…"'

Instead of *dòndóri* 'tyrant; boaster' (from Soninke *dundere* 'boaster'[8]) the word *jèdɛsaanayalá* is used in the translation, from *jèdɛ* 'self' + *sáana* 'enormous' + dynamic verbs suffix *-ya* + agentive noun suffix *-lá:*

(28:19) *Íle`*   *tɛ́*   *fóyi*   *fɛ̀*   *lè*   *fɔ́*   *k'*   *í*   *kɛ́*
          2SG   COP:NEG   nothing   PP   FOC   but   INF   2SG   do
jèdɛsaanayalá`*    *dí*   *jàmaná`   *kɔ́nɔ…*
tyrant-ART   PP   country-ART   in

أَن تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ ،'Thou only desirest to be a tyrant in the land'.

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[7] The semantic link of this word with the corresponding Arabic word is unclear to me.

[8] All Soninke data are taken from [Smeltzer & Smeltzer 2001].

Derivation by conversion

To create neologisms the translator often uses rare vocabulary and peripheral derivational models. Thus, the noun *páki* which is used by Kanté as an equivalent of Ar. *bayyina* 'clear evidence' (for instance, in the name of the sura 98 "The Clear Evidence", Ar. *sūrat al-bayyina)*. The word *páki* does not appear in any available Maninka dictionary, including [Ellenberger, Ms.] and [Kántɛ 1998; Jàanɛ 2003]. Bailleul's Bamana dictionary [2007] contains an expressive adverb *páki* which denotes the sound of a stroke. Most probably, the neologism *páki* is derived from the expressive adverb *pákisa* 'very clear', whose second component may come back to the emphatic particle *sá*.[9]

Conversion (morphologically unmarked derivation from a lexeme belonging to another part of speech) is common in Manding, but it is applied relatively rarely to expressive adverbs. As shown by Dumestre [1998, 330-332], in Bamana certain expressive adverbs can function as diverse categories. It should be noted, at the same time, that this phenomenon rather belongs to the oral register. In written Bamana texts expressive adverbs derived through conversion are, from my experience, very infrequent.

Kanté extends this derivational model, and we find in his works numerous adjectives and, more rarely, nouns coined by conversion of expressive adverbs, as in the example cited. He uses this method not only in the translation of the Quran, but also in his other writings. Here are some more examples of adjectives derived from expressive adverbs by conversion taken from different N'ko texts: *bɔ́rrɔ* 'very straight', *fíísɛ* 'snow white', *páyipayi* 'very hot', *pákisa* 'very clear', *pónkin* 'very high'.

The adjectivization of the agentive noun with the suffix -*la* is another example of conversion:

[Í dòn kánà kàlililabá fúufâafú dàmáˋ kánˋ mìda féu.]

(68:10-11) *Léebu*[10]-la   *mèndɛ-ya-taama-la-báˋ*   *kànín*
            backbite-AG   slander-DEQU-go-AG-AUG-ART   EMPH

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[10] It should be noted that in the fragment cited the translator uses a loanword *léebu* (most likely, an unconscious borrowing), from Soninke *leebu* 'to abuse', which is, in its turn, borrowed from Ar. *'al-`aib* 'vice, shortcoming'.

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِينٍ] هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّاء بِنَمِيمٍ] ‘[And obey thou not every mean swearer,] backbiter, going about with slander…’

In this excerpt the word *mèndɛyataamalabá* ‘going about with slander’ serves as a definition to *léebula* ‘backbiter’. Similar examples of adjectivization[11] are attested in the closely related Bamana language : *fàli báara-kɛ-la* donkey work-do-AG ‘working donkey’, *bìlakoro bín-kan-na-w* uncircumcised.boy grass-cut-AG-PL ‘uncircumcised boy cutting grass’ [Dumestre 2003, 72]. This kind of conversion is relatively infrequent in Bamana. However, in written N’ko texts and, particularly, in the Quran, it is widely used.

It should be also noted that the verb *táama* ‘go’ is only used as intransitive in spoken Maninka, but in the noun phrase *léebula mèndɛyataamalabá* it can only be interpreted as transitive, similarly to verbs in the cited Bamana examples. This can be explained, perhaps, by calquing the Arabic prepositional phrase *mashāin binamīmin* ‘going about with malicious gossip’.

Syntax

Despite the translator’s highly puristic stance, in the syntax of the translation one may find many syntactic calques from Arabic. The most frequent and, perhaps, the most interesting of them is the emergence of a construction very similar to Arabic verbal noun constructions, where the verb is followed by a paronymous verbal noun (masdar) in accusative case. For example, in the translation of the ayat 26:118 the Arabic verbal noun construction *if'taḥ … fatḥan* ‘judge by judgement’ is calqued:

(26:118) *Ǹbà   kíti   né`   n'   àlu   té   kíti*
          INTRJ judge 1SG and 3PL between judgement

tɛ́ɛ`   lá   fǎnsan.
cutting-ART INSTR EMPH

فَافْتَحْ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ فَتْحًا ‘So give true deliverance between me and them…’ (Literally from Maninka: “Judge between us by cutting a judgment”.)

A similar case (a literal rendering of Arabic verbal noun construction) was observed by Zappa [2004, 83] in Modibo Jara’s Bamana translation of the Qur’an, although for a different verse.

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[11] Under adjective I understand any word which can occupy the position of a second component of an attributive noun phrase.

There is another syntactic calque in the ayat 26:118 cited above, that of verbal government. The verb *kíti* is used as intransitive, the 3PL pronoun *àlu* with the postposition *té* being an indirect object. Such a translation could only have occurred under the influence of the Arabic wordform *baynahum* 'between them', whereas in spoken Maninka the verb *kíti* is only used as a transitive.

In the corpus of the translation, calqued "absolute accusative" constructions occur under the influence of the Arabic original text. At the same time, they are frequent in original N'ko texts written by Kanté and his followers. This syntactic innovation, therefore, has already become well-settled in the written N'ko language.

Here are some more examples of "absolute accusative case" in the Maninka Quran:

(4:164) *Ála`    kònín`   kúma   dá   Músa   fɛ̀   lɛ̀*
       God   however   speak   PFV   Moses   pp   FOC

kúma-ɲɔɔn-ya`   *pákisa[12]   lá*
speech-RECP-ABSTR-ART   clear   pp

وَكَلَّمَ اللَّهُ مُوسَىٰ تَكْلِيمًا Arberry: '…and unto Moses God spoke directly.' Sahih International version: 'And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech.'

    [Ò lá kà ń` ná màntinin` bɛ́ɛ másɔsɔ.]
(54:42) *Ò   kɛ́   án`   k'   àlu   tɛ́ɛtà   nìni-la*
       ANAPH   do   1PL   PFV   3PL   seize   be.omnipotent-AG

sé-baa`*                *lá    tɛ́ɛta-li`   *lá   ɲá`   mà*
be.mighty-AG-ART   pp   seize-NMLZ-ART   pp   way-ART   pp

فَأَخَذْنَاهُمْ أَخْذَ عَزِيزٍ مُقْتَدِرٍ [كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا كُلِّهَا] '[They cried lies to Our signs, all of them,] so We seized them with the seizing of One mighty, omnipotent.'

    [À ní kà dǔu` ní kùrú` lú ta ɲénkɛdɛn]
(69:14) *k'   àlu   móɲɔnkɔ   móɲɔnkɔ-li   kélen   pé   dí*
       INF   3PL   crush   crush-NMLZ   one   single   pp

فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَاحِدَةً [وَحُمِلَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ] '[and the earth and the mountains are lifted up] and crushed with a single blow'

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[12] It should be noted that the expressive *pákisa* 'clear' is used in this example as an adjective.

I found only one example where an Arabic absolute accusative case construction is not calqued in the translation. An expressive adverb *pídopido* which denotes a chopping sound is used instead:

[*Àlú dòn dánkanɛn nè.*]

(33:61)	*Àlú*	*báa*	*sɔ̀dɔn*	*fân-á-fân*	*àlu*
	3PL	COND.AFF	find	side-DISTR-side	3PL

yé	*mìda*	*k'*	*àlú*	*fâa*	*pídopido*
IPFV	catch	INF	3PL	kill	chopping.sound

[مَلْعُونِينَ] أَيْنَمَا ثُقِفُوا أُخِذُوا وَقُتِّلُوا تَقْتِيلًا '[cursed they shalt be,] and wheresoever they are come upon they shall be seized and slaughtered all'

Text analysis: sura Al-Fatiha

How does the translator deal with larger structural units of the text? This issue will be illustrated by the example the first surah of the Quran, Al-Fatiha. The full Maninka glossed text is given below.

Dá-laka-lan`	*fɔ́-da`*
door-open-INSTR-ART	say-side-ART

(1:1)	*Ála*	*tɔ́ɔ`*	*lá,*	*mà-hina-lá*	*lè*	*hína-la*	*lè*
	God	name	PP	SUPER-pity-AG.PRM	FOC	pity-PRM	FOC

(1:2)	*Tàndó`*	*Ála*	*yé,*	*jáaba`*	*(dònkó`)*	*lú*	*màarî*	*lè*
	praise-ART	God	PP	world-ART	world-ART	PL	lord-ART	FOC

(1:3)	*Mà-hina-lá*	*lè*	*hína-la*	*lè*
	SUPER-pity-AG.PRM	FOC	pity-AG.PRM	FOC

(1:4)	*Sàra-lî*	*lón`*	*mànsá`*	*lè*
	pay-NMLZ-ART	day-ART	lord-ART	FOC

(1:5)	*Án`*	*y'*	*íle`*	*lè*	*bàto*	*lá,*
	1PL	IPFV	2SG	FOC	honour	PP

án`	*y'*	*íle`*	*lè*	*má-tara*	*lá*
1PL	IPFV	2SG	FOC	SUPER-pray	PP

(1:6)	*Jàanin*	*án`*	*kánda*	*síla*	*télen-nɛn*	*bɔ́rrɔ`*	*kàn*
	please	1PL	protect	way	be.straight-RES	very.straight-ART	on

(1:7)	*Í*	*néma-nɛn*	*mén`*	*nù*	*mà*	*ò*	*lù*	*lá*
	2SG	be.righteous-RES	REL-ART	PL	PP	3SG	PL	POS

síla`	*lè*	*kó*	*yé.*	*Mɔ́nɛ*	*ké-nen*	*mɛ́n`*	*nù*	*mà,*
way-ART	FOC	matter	COP	anger	do-RES	REL-ART	PL	PP

ò	*lù*	*tá*	*kó*	*té*	*fìli-baa-nté`*
3SG	PL	POS	matter	COP:NEG	make.mistake-AG.OCC-AG.EX-ART

lù	*fána*	*tá*	*kó*	*té*
PL	too	POS	matter	COP:NEG

<div dir="rtl">

(1:1) بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(1:2) الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

(1:3) الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(1:4) مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

(1:5) إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ

(1:6) اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ

(1:7) صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

</div>

'(1:1) In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

(1:2) Praise belongs to God, the Lord of all Being,

(1:3) the All-merciful, the All-compassionate,

(1:4) the Master of the Day of Doom.

(1:5) Thee only we serve; to Thee alone we pray for succour.

(1:6) Guide us in the straight path,

(1:7) the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those against whom Thou art wrathful, nor of those who are astray.'

The first ayat of Al-Fatiha includes the Basmala (Ar. *bis'mi l-lahi r-raḥmāni r-raḥīmi* 'In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful'), the formula by which all subsequent suras (with the exception of the 9th) are opened. In other suras, however, the Basmala is not counted as an independent ayat. Paronymous Arabic adjectives *raḥmānu* 'gracious' and *raḥīmu* 'merciful' (represented by forms of the genitive case: *raḥmāni*, *raḥīmi*) are translated by the adjectives *mà-hina-lá* and *hína-la*, which are paronymous as well. The suffixed Arabic form *raḥmāni* corresponds to the prefixed Maninka form *mà-hina-lá*, while the unsuffixed Arabic form *raḥīmu* is translated by the unprefixed Maninka form *hína-la*. It should be noted that the Maninka stem *hína* 'pity; to pity' used in the translation is borrowed from Ar. *ḥanna* 'to pity', so Kanté translates one Arabic stem by another which is also Arabic by origin. The use of an obvious loanword contradicts puristic stance of the translator, but the closest synonym of *hína* in Maninka is another Arabic loanword: *màkadí*

(màkarí) 'to pity', from Ar. *makara* 'to deceive; to plot against smb'.[13] In all other suras, the translation of the Basmala is the same.

According to the classical Nöldeke's [1909-1919] chronology of the Quran, the surah Al-Fatiha belongs to the first Meccan period. The style of suras of that period is especially close to *saj'*, the archaic Arabic form of rhythmic prose originally practiced by diviners in pre-Islamic Arabia. The *saj'* is characterized by the following traits: brevity, the great number of short lines, parallelism and rhyme [Frolov 1995, 186].

The translator does justice to these characteristics of the original. He reproduces the rhyme by repeating the same auxiliaries from line to line: *lè* FOC, *lá* PP. In the ayat 1:7 he even strengthens the parallelism of the original by repeating the locative construction with the negative copula *tɛ́*.

Conclusions

The language of the translation of the Quran significantly differs from the spoken Maninka. The differences are conditioned, first, by Kanté's coinage and, second, by the influence of the original Arabic text. The translator is rather strict in applying his puristic views and he fills his work with numerous neologisms, but sometimes yielding to tradition and using loanwords. Under the influence of the Arabic syntax, the translator sometimes violates (or, to put it more mildly, modifies) syntactic rules of his mother tongue. These modifications, however, never infringe the foundations of the grammar, such as the basic word order. Arabic calques appear in less central segments of grammar, such as verbal government or phraseology. A very special style of Quranic translation emerges as a result which can be compared, for instance, with the styles of translations of the Bible into various European languages, often influenced by Ancient Greek and Hebrew.

Abbreviations

Ar. – Arabic

AG.OCC – occasional agentive noun suffix *(-baa)*

AG.EX – excessive agentive noun suffix *(-ntɛ)*

AG.PRM – primary agentive noun suffix *(-la)*

ANAPH – anaphoric pronoun *(ɔ̌)*

ART – definite article *(ˋ)*

AUG – augmentative suffix *(-ba)*

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[13] The semantic shift becomes more understandable when the data of a closely related Mandinka language are taken into account, where the noun *màkata (màkati)* has the meaning 'contempt, disgrace'.

CAUS – causative prefix *(la-)*

COND.AFF – affirmative marker of conditional clause *(báa)*

COP – locative copula

DEQU – dynamic verb suffix *(-ya)*

EMPH – emphatic particle

FOC – focus marker *(lè)*

FUT – future

INF – infinitive marker *(kà)*

INSTR – instrumental postposition

INTRJ – interjection

IPFV – imperfective *(yé)*

LOC – locative postposition

NEG – negative

NMLZ – nominalizing suffix *(-li/-ni)*

OPT – optative marker *(yé)*

PL – plural *(lù/lú)*

POS – possessive marker *(lá/ná)*

PP – postpositon

PFV – perfective marker *(kà, -da)*

PRF – perfect marker *(báda)*

PTCP.POT – potential participle suffix *(-ta)*

QUOT – quotation marker *(kó)*

REL – relative marker *(mɛ́n`)*

RES – resultative marker *(-nɛn)*

SG – singular

SUPER – superessive verbal prefix *(má-)*

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Résumé :

Sur la traduction de Quran en maninka par Souleymane Kantè

L'article traite de la traduction de Quran en maninka par Souleymane Kantè, le créateur de la tradition écrite du N'ko. Les approches du traducteur sont analysées par rapport à la transmission du vocabulaire coranique : les emprunts, la néologie, la transformation des mots quotidiens en termes. Quelques particularités syntaxiques de la traduction révélant une influence de l'original arabe sont détectées. La traduction de la première sourat « Fatiha » est analysée plus en détail.

Key words : Maninka, Malinké, N'ko, Souleyman Kantè, Coran, translation.