

son but a nephew who inherits the widows. On the other hand, the Gouin know a type of preferential marriage: according to its rule the granddaughter (daughter of the daughter) should be returned to the family of her grandfather as a wife. In the past the Gouin also married their slaves. The slave was automatically accepted in the matrilineage of its possessor. The children born of the union with a slave were members of the matrilineage of their fathers. In effect, they had as heirs a double affinity, with fathers and their matrilineages.

The third part of the book concentrates on the generation of grandchildren of the founder. The representative of this generation is a young man named Diëllon who is one of the main informants of the author. His life is presented in close detail. He represents the generation of people who have to live in a partly destroyed traditional structure, on the shaken foundations of economical, political, and social relationships. The agricultural goods controlled by the elders of the village are replaced by earned money. In fact, at the end of the 20th century the people emigrated in masses to the Ivory Coast in search of wage-work. The villagers are open to new relationships. The old matrimonial unions, hitherto arranged and strictly controlled according to cultural rules, shifted to a free choice of spouses. But, sensitive to social affiliations, every Gouin, for the sake of respect, tries to legitimize his unions through traditional procedures, especially by paying the bridewealth.

The book of M. Daché is not the saga of the clan of Kamon, but is a detailed study of the life of the Gouin family. First of all, the reader can learn much about matrimonial policy, on which wealth and success depend. For Gouin, like for most peoples of Africa, the model of life is health understood not only as an absence of pain, but especially as a force of relationships between the visible and the invisible world of nature, people, and spirits. A good matrimonial policy increases the number of wives and children, that results in the augmentation of the force of production and, subsequently, of income which permits to get more wives. The circle is then closed. The big, strong family ensures the future of the lineage. But, to guarantee the success of the family, it is not enough to be a skillful negotiator and to have money. Every traditional African peasant tries to find the protection and support of the invisible forces. Being conscious of that, the author presents a valuable description of the forces, which are in possession of the family of Kamon.

The text of the book excels because of its precision of description in a vivid imagery and flowing style. When the narration seems to be complicated, Daché presents the necessary explanations showing her excellent ethnographic knowledge. From time to time she cuts the impersonal narration including more personal excursions of related facts. She presents the members of the family with whom she spent a long time, who are both informants and actors of this ethnological story. "Cent ans au village" is not just a chronicle of a family, as marked in the title, but is a profound analysis of peasant life which links the biographical method with methods usually used

by anthropologists. The reader will be enriched not only by learning the joys, loves, desires, intrigues, conflicts, and hates of an African family, but also by the basic knowledge of the actual functioning of its matrimonial and familial relations. The book constitutes an important study of the matrilineal family and is supported by clear tables and diagrams. The long-term research periods allowed the author to study the transformations in the matrimonial policy which occur through the opening of the lineage society under the pressure of economic and social changes. The reader can be intimidated by the size of the book, but once the reading begins, it is hard to stop it.

Jacek Jan Pawlik

**Delarozière, Marie-Françoise:** *L'art du cuir en Mauritanie, ou le raffinement nomade.* Aix-en-Provence: Éditions Édisud, 2005. 95 pp. ISBN 2-7449-0554-2. Prix : € 15.00

Voici un livre qui, certes, réjouira les amateurs d'un authentique artisanat traditionnel aussi flamboyant que celui de l'art du cuir mauritanien. L'ouvrage, de dimension modeste, ne cherche nullement à faire le tour de la question, mais plutôt à susciter un nouveau regard sur une tradition exceptionnelle, malheureusement en voie de disparition. Comme le souligne l'auteur, qui s'est attaché davantage aux aspects esthétiques de cet artisanat qu'à sa valeur sociologique ou symbolique, l'art du cuir en Mauritanie plonge ses racines dans la nature environnante, même et surtout si celle-ci s'avère souvent âpre et difficile comme peut l'être le Sahara mauritanien, une des régions parmi les plus arides de l'Afrique de l'Ouest aux dires de Théodore Monod.

On notera tout spécialement dans cet ouvrage la qualité des dessins et les superbes illustrations de sacs de voyage, sacs à grains, sacs à thé et à sucre, coussins, nattes et tapis de tentes, selles de dromadaire ou de cheval, tabatières à nombreux rabats, sandales et ceintures, etc., tous ces objets faisant partie de l'univers quotidien du nomade, sans oublier l'outillage et la technique du travail des peaux et de leurs savants décors très colorés.

Il y a quelque chose ici qui rappelle les travaux de Jean Gabus, lequel avait accompli de nombreuses recherches dans le domaine de l'artisanat saharien, notamment dans la région de Boutilimit en Mauritanie. Il avait eu à cette époque l'idée d'inviter à l'accompagner sur le terrain un peintre suisse, Hans Erni. Le résultat avait donné lieu à une remarquable exposition au Musée d'ethnographie de Neuchâtel en 1957, ainsi qu'à de très beaux livres aujourd'hui épuisés. Aussi, on ne peut que se féliciter d'avoir en main celui de Marie-Françoise Delarozière, à qui l'on doit déjà d'autres publications très spécialisées, en particulier sur les perles de Mauritanie et celles de l'Afrique de l'Ouest.

Claude Savary

**Dening, Greg:** *Beach Crossings. Voyaging across Times, Cultures, and Self.* Philadelphia: University of