

PREREADING

from *Sundiata: An Epic of Old Mali*

Reading the Epic in a Cultural Context

To this day in the villages of the Western Sudan, magical legends of Sundiata Keita are told when villagers gather for traditional storytelling. Sundiata, a 13th-century West African leader, established the empire of Mali in 1240. After winning a great battle at Kirina, he consolidated the 12 small kingdoms that, at that time, formed Mali. During the 20 years of his reign, Sundiata began the expansion that would extend Mali rule from the Atlantic coast to—and including—Timbuktu.

The traditional legendary epic tells that Sundiata succeeded because of his vigor, strength, and skill. Undoubtedly that is true, say contemporary African historians. However, the experts point out, Sundiata was also a skillful politician who could “play a crowd.” He convinced the citizens that he was a powerful man of magic and enchantment.

The historical legend of Sundiata is one of more than a quarter million African myths, legends, and folktales. Little distinction is made between myths, legends, and history because oral traditions play such a strong, vigorous part in the literary culture. An African audience would regard this legend, then, as a true historical narrative. In oral tradition, such historical legends are quite different from folktales, which are known to be fiction.

Historical legends and myths have always been—and still quite often are—performed by a master griot (GREE-oh), or storyteller. Storytelling is one of the fine arts in Africa. It is so highly regarded and appreciated that some culture groups designate it a profession. Historically, in pre-colonial Africa, griots played a very important role in many cultures, for they were “speaking documents,” historians who worked from memory alone. Since there were no written historical records, the griots memorized the customs, traditions, constitutions, and other governing principles of the kings. They also occupied the “chair of history” in a village or kingdom. They performed the highly honored task of memorizing and retelling the songs, stories, proverbs, and histories. To become counsellors to kings and first in the art of historical storytelling, young griots spent many years touring the kingdom’s villages and listening to the teachings of the master griots.

Focusing on the Selection

As you read, be aware of the several purposes of the selection. How does the griot establish his own reputation as a master storyteller? What is the griot’s aim in performing the Sundiata? How does he characterize Sundiata the hero? What parts of the tale might be based on legend? What parts of the tale might be based on history?

from *Sundiata:* *An Epic of Old Mali*

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The Words of the Griot Mamadou Kouyaté

I am a griot.¹ It is I, Djeli Mamadou Kouyaté, son of Bintou Kouyaté and Djeli Kedian Kouyaté, master in the art of eloquence.² Since time immemorial³ the Kouyatés have been in the service of the Keita princes of Mali; we are vessels of speech, we are the repositories⁴ which harbour secrets many centuries old. The art of eloquence has no secrets for us; without us the names of kings would vanish into oblivion,⁵ we are the memory of mankind; by the spoken word we bring to life the deeds and exploits of kings for younger generations.

I derive my knowledge from my father Djeli Kedian, who also got it from his father; history holds no mystery for us; we teach to the vulgar⁶ just as much as we want to teach them, for it is we who keep the keys to the twelve doors of Mali.

I know the list of all the sovereigns⁷ who succeeded to the throne of Mali. I know how the black people divided into tribes, for my father bequeathed⁸

¹ griot (GREE-oh) *n.* African oral historian

² eloquence (EHL-uh-kwuhns) *n.* fluent, expressive, and persuasive speaking

³ immemorial (ihm-uh-MAWR-ee-uhl) *adj.* reaching beyond the limits of memory or recorded history

⁴ repositories (rih-PAHZ-ih-tor-eez) *n. pl.* vessels

⁵ oblivion (uh-BLIHV-ee-uhn) *n.* the condition of being completely forgotten

⁶ vulgar (VUL-guhr) *n.* the common people

⁷ sovereigns (SAWV-er-ihns) *n. pl.* kings

⁸ bequeathed (bih-KWEETHD) *v.* passed on or handed down

to me all his learning; I know why such and such is called Kamara, another Keita, and yet another Sibibé or Traoré; every name has a meaning, a secret import.⁹

I teach kings the history of their ancestors so that the lives of the ancients might serve them as an example, for the world is old, but the future springs from the past.

My word is pure and free of all untruth; it is the word of my father; it is the word of my father's father. I will give you my father's words just as I received them; royal griots do not know what lying is. When a quarrel breaks out between tribes it is we who settle the difference, for we are the depositories of oaths which the ancestors swore.

Listen to my word, you who want to know; by my mouth you will learn the history of Mali.

By my mouth you will get to know the story of the ancestor of great Mali, the story of him who, by his exploits, surpassed even Alexander the Great;¹⁰ he who, from the East, shed his rays upon all the countries of the West.

Listen to the story of the son of the Buffalo, the son of the Lion. I am going to tell you of Maghan Sundiata, of Mari-Djata, of Sogolon Djata, of Naré Maghan Djata; the man of many names against whom sorcery could avail nothing.

The Characters

Maghan Kon Fatta, (Also **Naré Maghan**) King of Mali and father of Sundiata

Sogolon Kedjou, the buffalo woman, wife of Maghan Kon Fatta and mother of Sundiata

Sogolon Djata, (also **Mari-Djata**) or Sundiata

Kolonkan, daughter of Maghan Kon Fatta and Sogolon, and sister of Sundiata

Sassouma Béréte, the king's first wife

Dankaran Touman, son of Maghan Kon Fatta and Sassouma Béréte

Balla Fasséké, son of Knankouman Doua, Sundiata's griot

Farakourou, the master smith

Manding Bory, son of Maghan Kon Fatta and Namandje

Gnankouman Doua, Maghan Kon Fatta's griot

⁹ import (IHIM-pawrt) *n.* meaning or importance

¹⁰ Alexander the Great king of Macedonia from 336–323 B.C.; conqueror of Greek city-states and of the Persian empire from Asia Minor and Egypt to India

Childhood

God has his mysteries which none can fathom. You, perhaps, will be a king. You can do nothing about it. You, on the other hand, will be unlucky, but you can do nothing about that either. Each man finds his way already marked out for him and he can change nothing of it.

Sogolon's son had a slow and difficult childhood. At the age of three he still crawled along on all-fours while children of the same age were already walking. He had nothing of the great beauty of his father Naré Maghan. He had a head so big that he seemed unable to support it; he also had large eyes which would open wide whenever anyone entered his mother's house. He was taciturn¹¹ and used to spend the whole day just sitting in the middle of the house. Whenever his mother went out he would crawl on all fours to rummage about in the calabashes¹² in search of food, for he was very greedy.

Malicious¹³ tongues began to blab. What three-year-old has not yet taken his first steps? What three-year-old is not the despair of his parents through his whims and shifts of mood? What three-year-old is not the joy of his circle through his backwardness in talking? Sogolon Djata (for it was thus that they called him, prefixing his mother's name to his), Sogolon Djata, then, was very different from others of his own age. He spoke little and his severe face never relaxed into a smile. You would have thought that he was already thinking, and what amused children of his age bored him. Often Sogolon would make some of them come to him to keep him company. These children were already walking and she hoped that Djata, seeing his companions walking, would be tempted to do likewise. But nothing came of it. Besides, Sogolon Djata would brain the poor little things with his already strong arms and none of them would come near him any more.

The king's first wife was the first to rejoice at Sogolon Djata's infirmity.¹⁴ Her own son, Dankaran Toman, was already eleven. He was a fine and lively boy, who spent the day running about the village with those of his own age. He had even begun his initiation¹⁵ in the bush. The king had had a bow made for him and he used to go behind the town to practise archery with his companions. Sassouma was quite happy and snapped her fingers at Sogolon, whose child was still crawling on the ground. Whenever

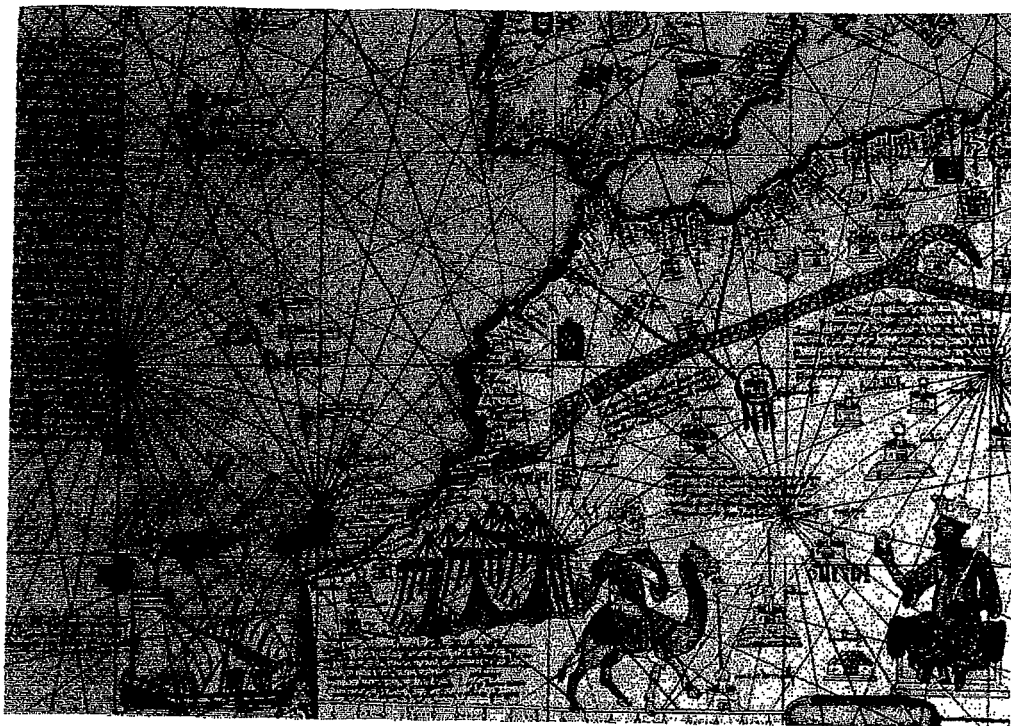
¹¹ **taciturn** (TAS-ih-turn) *adj.* almost always silent

¹² **calabashes** (KAL-uh-bash-uhz) *n. pl.* large, gourd-like fruit with a tough shell

¹³ **malicious** (muh-LIHSH-uhs) *adj.* spiteful

¹⁴ **infirmity** (ihn-FER-mih-tee) *n.* a disease or disorder that causes bodily weakness

¹⁵ **initiation** (ih-nihsh-ee-AY-shuhn) *n.* a ceremony or ritual with which a new member is admitted



This detail of a map shows Western Africa in 1375. Notice the depiction of Mansa Musa, the King of Mali in the bottom right corner of the map. Musa ruled Mali 100 years after Sundiata.

the latter happened to pass by her house, she would say, "Come, my son, walk, jump, leap about. The jinn didn't promise you anything out of the ordinary, but I prefer a son who walks on his two legs to a lion that crawls on the ground." She spoke thus whenever Sogolon went by her door. The innuendo¹⁶ would go straight home and then she would burst into laughter, that diabolical¹⁷ laughter which a jealous woman knows how to use so well.

Her son's infirmity weighed heavily upon Sogolon Kedjou; she had resorted to all her talent as a sorceress to give strength to her son's legs, but the rarest herbs had been useless. The king himself lost hope.

How impatient man is! Naré Maghan became imperceptibly¹⁸ estranged¹⁹ but Gnankouman Doua never ceased reminding him of the hunter's words.²⁰ Sogolon became pregnant again. The king hoped for a son, but it was a daughter called Kolonkan. She resembled her mother and had nothing of her father's beauty. The disheartened²¹ king debarred²² Sogolon from his house and she lived in semi-disgrace for a while. Naré Maghan married the daughter of one of his allies, the king of the Kamaras.

¹⁶ **innuendo** (ihn-yoo-EHN-doh) *n.* a subtle, often spiteful reference to someone not named

¹⁷ **diabolical** (dy-uh-BAHL-ih-kuhl) *adj.* extremely wicked

¹⁸ **imperceptibly** (ihm-puhr-SEHP-tuh-blee) *adv.* gradually

¹⁹ **estranged** (ih-STRAYNJJD) *v.* showing no interest; becoming withdrawn

²⁰ **hunter's words** the hunter had told Naré Maghan that Sogolon Djata would one day be the king of Mali's greatest empire.

²¹ **disheartened** (dihs-HART-uhnd) *adj.* discouraged

²² **debarred** (dee-BAHRD) *v.* excluded

She was called Namandjé and her beauty was legendary. A year later she brought a boy into the world. When the king consulted soothsayers²³ on the destiny of this son he received the reply that Namandjé's child would be the right hand of some mighty king. The king gave the newly-born the name of Boukari. He was to be called Manding Boukari or Manding Bory later on.

Naré Maghan was very perplexed. Could it be that the stiff-jointed son of Sogolon was the one the hunter soothsayer had foretold?

"The Almighty has his mysteries," Gnankouman Doua would say and, taking up the hunter's words, added, "The silk-cotton tree emerges from a tiny seed."

One day Naré Maghan came along to the house of Nounfaïri, the blacksmith seer²⁴ of Niani. He was an old, blind man. He received the king in the anteroom which served as his workshop. To the king's question he replied, "When the seed germinates²⁵ growth is not always easy; great trees grow slowly but they plunge their roots deep into the ground."

"But has the seed really germinated?" said the king.

"Of course," replied the blind seer. "Only the growth is not as quick as you would like it; how impatient man is."

This interview and Doua's confidence gave the king some assurance. To the great displeasure of Sassouma Béréte the king restored Sogolon to favour and soon another daughter was born to her. She was given the name of Djamarou.

However, all Niani²⁶ talked of nothing else but the stiff-legged son of Sogolon. He was now seven and he still crawled to get about. In spite of all the king's affection, Sogolon was in despair. Naré Maghan aged and he felt his time coming to an end. Dankaran Touman, the son of Sassouma Béréte, was now a fine youth.

One day Naré Maghan made Mari Djata come to him and he spoke to the child as one speaks to an adult. "Mari Djata, I am growing old and soon I shall be no more among you, but before death takes me off I am going to give you the present each king gives his successor. In Mali every prince has his own griot. Doua's father was my father's griot, Doua is mine and the son of Doua, Balla Fasséké here, will be your griot. Be inseparable friends from this day forward. From his mouth you will hear the history of your ancestors, you will learn the art of governing Mali according

²³ soothsayers (SOOTH-say-uhrz) *n. pl.* people who claim to be able to predict the future

²⁴ seer (seer) *n.* a soothsayer

²⁵ germinates (JER-muh-nayts) *v.* causes to begin to grow; sprouts

²⁶ Niani capital city of Mali

to the principles which our ancestors have bequeathed²⁷ to us. I have served my term and done my duty too. I have done everything which a king of Mali ought to do. I am handing an enlarged kingdom over to you and I leave you sure allies. May your destiny be accomplished, but never forget that Niani is your capital and Mali the cradle of your ancestors.”

The child, as if he had understood the whole meaning of the king's words, beckoned Balla Fasséké to approach. He made room for him on the hide he was sitting on and then said, “Balla, you will be my griot.”

“Yes, son of Sogolon, if it pleases God,” replied Balla Fasséké.

The king and Doua exchanged glances that radiated²⁸ confidence.

The Lion's Awakening

A short while after this interview between Naré Maghan and his son, the king died. Sogolon's son was no more than seven years old. The council of elders met in the king's palace. It was no use Doua's defending the king's will which reserved the throne for Mari Djata, for the council took no account of Naré Maghan's wish. With the help of Sassouma Béréte's intrigues, Dankaran Touman was proclaimed king and a regency council²⁹ was formed in which the queen mother was all-powerful. A short time after, Doua died.

As men have short memories, Sogolon's son was spoken of with nothing but irony³⁰ and scorn. People had seen one-eyed kings, one-armed kings, and lame kings, but a stiff-legged king had never been heard tell of. No matter how great the destiny promised for Mari Djata might be, the throne could not be given to someone who had no power in his legs; if the jinn loved him, let them begin by giving him the use of his legs. Such were the remarks that Sogolon heard every day. The queen mother, Sassouma Béréte, was the source of all this gossip.

Having become all-powerful, Sassouma Béréte persecuted Sogolon because the late Naré Maghan had preferred her. She banished Sogolon and her son to a back yard of the palace. Mari Djata's mother now occupied an old hut which had served as a lumber-room of Sassouma's.

The wicked queen allowed free passage to all those inquisitive³¹ people who wanted to see the child that still crawled at the age of seven. Nearly all the inhabitants of Niani filed into the palace and the poor Sogolon wept to

²⁷ bequeathed (bih-KWEETHD) *v.* passed down

²⁸ radiated (RAY-dee-ay-tuhd) *v.* showed

²⁹ regency council a group of people to rule for a child king

³⁰ irony (EYE-ruh-nee) *n.* a wry, mocking way of using words to suggest the opposite of what they literally mean

³¹ inquisitive (ihh-KWIHZ-ih-tihv) *adj.* curious; prying

see herself thus given over to public ridicule. Mari Djata took on a ferocious look in front of the crowd of sightseers. Sogolon found a little consolation only in the love of her eldest daughter, Kolonkan. She was four and she could walk. She seemed to understand all her mother's miseries and already she helped her with the housework. Sometimes, when Sogolon was attending to the chores, it was she who stayed beside her sister Djamarou, quite small as yet.

Sogolon Kedjou and her children lived on the queen mother's leftovers, but she kept a little garden in the open ground behind the village. It was there that she passed her brightest moments looking after her onions and gnougous.³² One day she happened to be short of condiments³³ and went to the queen mother to beg a little baobab³⁴ leaf.

"Look you," said the malicious Sassouma, "I have a calabash full. Help yourself, you poor woman. As for me, my son knew how to walk at seven and it was he who went and picked these baobab leaves. Take them then, since your son is unequal to mine." Then she laughed derisively³⁵ with that fierce laughter which cuts through your flesh and penetrates right to the bone.

Sogolon Kedjou was dumbfounded. She had never imagined that hate could be so strong in a human being. With a lump in her throat she left Sassouma's. Outside her hut Mari Djata, sitting on his useless legs, was blandly³⁶ eating out of a calabash. Unable to contain herself any longer, Sogolon burst into sobs and seizing a piece of wood, hit her son.

"Oh son of misfortune, will you never walk? Through your fault I have just suffered the greatest affront³⁷ of my life! What have I done, God, for you to punish me in this way?"

Mari Djata seized the piece of wood and, looking at his mother, said, "Mother, what's the matter?"

"Shut up, nothing can ever wash me clean of this insult."

"But what then?"

"Sassouma has just humiliated³⁸ me over a matter of a baobab leaf. At your age her own son could walk and used to bring his mother baobab leaves."

"Cheer up, Mother, cheer up."

"No. It's too much. I can't."

"Very well then, I am going to walk today," said Mari Djata. "Go and tell my father's smiths to make me the heaviest possible iron rod. Mother, do

³² gnougous (guh-NOO-goos) a food plant

³³ condiments (KON-duh-muhnts) *n. pl.* sauces or spices used as seasonings for food

³⁴ baobab (BAY-oh-bab) *n.* an African tree with a thick trunk and large, hard-shelled, hanging fruit

³⁵ derisively (dih-REYE-sihv-lee) *adv.* mockingly; with ridicule

³⁶ blandly (BLAND-lee) *adv.* pleasantly; gently

³⁷ affront (uh-FRUNT) *n.* insult

³⁸ humiliated (hyoo-MIHL-ee-ayt-ihd) *v.* disgraced

you want just the leaves of the baobab or would you rather I brought you the whole tree?"

"Ah, my son, to wipe out this insult I want the tree and its roots at my feet outside my hut."

Balla Fasséké, who was present, ran to the master smith, Farakourou, to order an iron rod.

Sogolon had sat down in front of her hut. She was weeping softly and holding her head between her two hands. Mari Djata went calmly back to his calabash of rice and began eating again as if nothing had happened. From time to time he looked up discreetly³⁹ at his mother who was murmuring in a low voice, "I want the whole tree, in front of my hut, the whole tree."

All of a sudden a voice burst into laughter behind the hut. It was the wicked Sassouma telling one of her serving women about the scene of humiliation and she was laughing loudly so that Sogolon could hear. Sogolon fled into the hut and hid her face under the blankets so as not to have before her eyes this heedless boy, who was more preoccupied⁴⁰ with eating than with anything else. With her head buried in the bed-clothes Sogolon wept and her body shook violently. Her daughter, Sogolon Djamarou, had come and sat down beside her and she said, "Mother, Mother, don't cry. Why are you crying?"

Mari Djata had finished eating and, dragging himself along on his legs, he came and sat under the wall of the hut for the sun was scorching. What was he thinking about? He alone knew.

The royal forges⁴¹ were situated outside the walls and over a hundred smiths worked there. The bows, spears, arrows and shields of Niani's warriors came from there. When Balla Fasséké came to order the iron rod, Farakourou said to him, "The great day has arrived then?"

"Yes. Today is a day like any other, but it will see what no other day has seen."

The master of the forge, Farakourou, was the son of the old Nounfaïri. Everybody wondered what this bar was destined to be used for. Farakourou called six of his apprentices⁴² and told them to carry the iron bar to Sogolon's house.

When the smiths put the gigantic iron bar down in front of the hut the noise was so frightening that Sogolon, who was lying down, jumped up with a start. Then Balla Fasséké, son of Gnankouman Doua, spoke.

³⁹ discreetly (di-SKREET-lee) *adv.* modestly; shyly

⁴⁰ preoccupied (pree-AWK-yoo-peyed) *v.* absorbed

⁴¹ forges (FOR-jihz) *n. pl.* furnaces for heating metal

⁴² apprentices (uh-PREHN-tihz-ehz) *n. pl.* persons who are learning a trade or craft

“Here is the great day, Mari Djata. I am speaking to you, Maghan, son of Sogolon. The waters of the Niger⁴³ can efface⁴⁴ the stain from the body, but they cannot wipe out an insult. Arise, young lion, roar, and may the bush know that from henceforth it has a master.”

The apprentice smiths were still there, Sogolon had come out and everyone was watching Mari Djata. He crept on all-fours and came to the iron bar. Supporting himself on his knees and one hand, with the other hand he picked up the iron bar without any effort and stood it up vertically. Now he was resting on nothing but his knees and held the bar with both his hands. A deathly silence had gripped all those present. Sogolon Djata closed his eyes, held tight, the muscles in his arms tensed. With a violent jerk he threw his weight on to it and his knees left the ground. Sogolon Kedjou was all eyes and watched her son's legs which were trembling as though from an electric shock. Djata was sweating and the sweat ran from his brow. In a great effort he straightened up and was on his feet at one go—but the great bar of iron was twisted and had taken the form of a bow!

Then Balla Fasséké sang out the “Hymn to the Bow,” striking up with his powerful voice:

“Take your bow, Simbon,
Take your bow and let us go.
Take your bow, Sogolon Djata.”

When Sogolon saw her son standing she stood dumb for a moment, then suddenly she sang these words of thanks to God who had given her son the use of his legs:

“Oh day, what a beautiful day,
Oh day, day of joy;
Allah Almighty, you never created a finer day.
So my son is going to walk!”

Standing in the position of a soldier at ease, Sogolon Djata, supported by his enormous rod, was sweating great beads of sweat. Balla Fasséké's song had alerted the whole palace and people came running from all over to see what had happened, and each stood bewildered before Sogolon's son. The queen mother had rushed there and when she saw Mari Djata standing up she trembled from head to foot. After recovering his breath Sogolon's son dropped the bar and the crowd stood to one side. His first steps were those of a giant. Balla Fasséké fell into step and pointing his finger at Djata, he cried:

⁴³ Niger (NEYE-juhr) *n.* a river in Africa, flowing through Mali, Niger, and Nigeria into the Atlantic

⁴⁴ efface (ih-FAYS) *v.* remove by rubbing out; erase

“Room, room, make room!
The lion has walked;
Hide antelopes,
Get out of his way.”

Behind Niani there was a young baobab tree and it was there that the children of the town came to pick leaves for their mothers. With all his might the son of Sogolon tore up the tree and put it on his shoulders and went back to his mother. He threw the tree in front of the hut and said, “Mother, here are some baobab leaves for you. From henceforth it will be outside your hut that the women of Niani will come to stock up.”

Sogolon Djata walked. From that day forward the queen mother had no more peace of mind. But what can one do against destiny? Nothing. Man, under the influence of certain illusions,⁴⁵ thinks he can alter the course which God has mapped out, but everything he does falls into a higher order which he barely understands. That is why Sassouma's efforts were vain against Sogolon's son, everything she did lay in the child's destiny. Scorned the day before and the object of public ridicule, now Sogolon's son was as popular as he had been despised. The multitude loves and fears strength. All Niani talked of nothing but Djata; the mothers urged their sons to become hunting companions of Djata and to share his games, as if they wanted their offspring to profit from the nascent⁴⁶ glory of the buffalo-woman's son. The words of Doua on the name-giving day came back to men's minds and Sogolon was now surrounded with much respect; in conversation people were fond of contrasting Sogolon's modesty with the pride and malice of Sassouma Béréte. It was because the former had been an exemplary⁴⁷ wife and mother that God had granted strength to her son's legs for, it was said, the more a wife loves and respects her husband and the more she suffers for her child, the more valorous⁴⁸ will the child be one day. Each is the child of his mother; the child is worth no more than the mother is worth. It was not astonishing that the king Dankaran Touman was so colorless, for his mother had never shown the slightest respect to her husband and never, in the presence of the late king, did she show that humility which every wife should show before her husband. People recalled her scenes of jealousy and the spiteful remarks she circulated about her co-wife and her child. And people would conclude gravely, “Nobody knows God's mystery. The snake has no legs yet it is as swift as any other animal that has four.”

⁴⁵ **illusions** (ih-LOO-zhuhnz) *n. pl.* mistaken notions or beliefs

⁴⁶ **nascent** (NAS-uhnt) *adj.* having recently come into existence

⁴⁷ **exemplary** (ihg-ZEHM-pluh-ree) *adj.* model; commendable

⁴⁸ **valorous** (VAL-uh-uh) *adj.* courageous; bold

Critical Thinking

1. Why does most of the selection dwell on Sundiata's inability to walk as a child and the effects of that inability on those around him?
2. What attitudes and qualities does the story put forth as desirable?
3. What historical legends exist in your culture that mix legend and history about a leader or leaders from the past? What events in the leader's life are recounted? For what purpose is that particular event recounted? What characteristics does the leader display?

Writing Your Response to "Sundiata"

What aspect of the selection do you find most interesting or satisfying? Why does that particular aspect appeal to you? In your journal, identify your choice, and share the reasons for your choice.

Going Back Into the Text: Author's Craft

An **epic** is a long narrative that recalls a great hero's deeds and reflects the values of the society where it began. Most epics are part of an oral tradition and were told from generation to

generation through song and recitation before someone wrote them down.

The Sundiata epic is a form of African folklore that, in its original language, is neither prose nor poetry. This unique African form is elaborate. It contains poetry, song, and proverbs. The African epic, like epics from other cultures, usually concerns the heroic exploits of ancestors. It also celebrates those qualities for which the society has a high regard.

As you review the selection, use these questions as guidelines:

1. What proverbs appear in the selection?
2. What poetic language, particularly similes and metaphors, describes the characters?
3. How does the poetic language help to portray Sundiata as "larger than life?"
4. When is it apparent that Sundiata is a powerful man of magic and enchantment?
5. What qualities does Sundiata display that are important to the culture? What other characters portray desirable qualities? What undesirable qualities are portrayed?
6. Although this selection presents only a short portion of the entire Sundiata epic, how do you know that Sundiata will go on to perform deeds of exceptional valor, strength, and skill?