

Imaging Culture: Photography in Mali, West Africa
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Digital Appendix
Photographers' Biographies

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This collection of photographers' biographies is by no means complete. It includes African, Lebanese, and French professional photographers who practiced in Mali during the 20th century. It derives from previously published accounts as well as interviews and information gathered over the course of my research in Mali since 2002, which followed mentor-apprentice relationships to gain, at the very least, a rudimentary understanding of the dynamic photographic community in Mali and its networks. As a result, some entries are quite substantial, while others merely consist of a sentence or two describing some aspect of an individual's professional significance.

This collection was compiled with three primary goals in mind:

1. To streamline the historical overview and ideas provided in Part I of my book, *Imaging Culture*, serving as a quick reference for interested readers.
2. To honor individual photographers by relaying the aspects of their stories that they expressedly want public, and by directly acknowledging their contributions to the historical practice of photography in Mali.
3. To assist future research projects by providing, to date, the most complete historical list of photographers who have worked in Mali. I will update this list periodically as new information comes to light.

This collection is divided into two sections: "French and Lebanese Photographers in Mali" and "African Photographers and Photographic Institutions in Mali." Alphabetically arranged, each biographical entry is headed by the photographer's name, with the date of birth and/or death (when known) provided in parentheses. Names that appear in brackets indicate an alternative spelling or other name/s by which an individual is known. Nicknames are featured in quotation marks. In the "French and Lebanese" section, each photographer's nationality is presented within parentheses. In both sections of this digital appendix, the Malian city or town/s in which a given photographer worked is listed at the end of the header, in bold type. Parenthetical references refer to sources cited in the book's bibliography.

While I compiled and wrote the initial text, it was improved by the editorial review of Sory Ibrahim Kouyaté, Hannah Morse, Érika Nimis, Youssouf Sakaly, and Malick Sitou in July 2021.

French and Lebanese Photographers in Mali

Monsieur Andréef (French) – Bamako

According to Pierre Garnier, Mr. Andréef was one of Bamako's earliest photographers. He worked downtown for the French colonial police taking pictures for the Sûreté Soudan, which was created by 1925, and after independence became the Sûreté National (Nimis 1996: 16; Konaré and Konaré 1981: 117).

Michel Aris [Arys] (d. 1955) and Mme. Aris (French) - Bamako

By 1951, Michel Aris operated the photography store La Croix du Sud in Bamako, which opened sometime between 1939 and 1945. After his death in 1955, his widow hired Gérard Guillat-Guignard to manage the shop. However, it was Michel Thuillier (hired in 1958) who ended up buying La Croix du Sud in 1960. Thuillier finally sold the business to Express Photo, a chain of color laboratories, in 1993, when he returned to France. According to Lalou Camara, in that early period, Mohammed (Mamadou) Coulibaly served as the head of Express Photo. The current owner is Salif Diarra (Camara interview at La Croix du Sud/Express Photo, Bamako, 24 February 2004).

Jean Assoune (Lebanese) - Bamako

Jean Assoune owned and operated a studio named Photo Club in the commercial center of Bamako during the 1950s and 1960s. One of Assoune's photographic apprentices was Baba Traoré, who now runs his own studio Photo Royale in the capital city (B. Traoré 2004).

Assad Jean Bittar (Lebanese) - Bamako

After Gérard Guillat-Guignard, Jean Perini, the Touverons, and Mr. Magné, Assad Jean Bittar managed Photo Service and purchased the business circa 1962. He later liquidated the company and, in 1970, Abdourhamane Sakaly acquired all of its materials (Sidibé 2003).

François-Edmond Fortier (1862-1928) (French) - Mali

François-Edmond Fortier is among the most prolific and internationally renowned colonial postcard photographers whose oeuvre concentrates on images of West Africa. Born in Celles sur Pleine (Vosages) France, Fortier had emigrated to Africa by the end of the nineteenth century. For several years he lived in Senegal: first in St. Louis and then, by 1900, in Dakar, where he resided on the corner of Pinet-Laprade Boulevard and Dagonne Street. Based in Dakar, in 1905-6, Fortier traveled throughout Mali photographing touristic subjects: landscapes; local people, flora and fauna; colonial construction projects; and architectural structures, such as the train station and post office in Bamako, the market and central mosque in Ségu, and a butcher's shop in Timbuktu. As part of his "scènes et types" collection, he took pictures of mundane activities, such as a salt caravan in Timbuktu, and images of scantily clad, seductively portrayed women. Purportedly, he was the first photographer to visit Timbuktu (January 1906) as well as the Bandiagara escarpment (1905) in Mali. He retired shortly thereafter, in 1910. During the course of his career, he created more than 3,300 images and published several thousand reprints--appearing, with or without his permission, in more than ten books. Today, his postcards are readily

available for sale online, or by antique print vendors at flea markets and fairs, and can be found in numerous international collections, such as those of Georges Meurillon in France and the Elisofon Archives at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. After Fortier's death on February 24, 1928, little is known about his surviving family members or his vast negative archives. However, according to David, more than two-hundred of his negatives are known to exist (David 1988).

Jules Garnier (d. 1934) (French) – Bamako

Jules Garnier was a botanist, chemist, researcher, and experienced photographer who lived and worked in Bamako collecting, cultivating, photographing, and studying local species of medicinal plants for the colonial administration from about 1931 until 1934, when he expired at the capital's Point G hospital on September 9th. In addition to the medicinal services he provided for the colonial government, Captain Garnier was also politically active. As part of his duties, he regularly assisted the meetings of the Cours de Perfectionnement des Officiers de Réserve in Bamako (Centre des Archives d'Oure-Mer, 14 Miom/2275 <15G/24>). Just prior to his death he published, but never distributed, a treatise on photography entitled "Cours Pratique de Photographie" (Practical Lessons in Photography) in France. His son Pierre, who was raised in Bamako, continued his work on botany and, in 1935, opened a photography supplies store and studio called Photo-Hall-Soudanais, which Pierre operated with his mother.

According to Mountaga Dembélé, who was interviewed by Érika Nimis in 1996, Jules Garnier was the first pharmacist and founder of the premiere pharmacy in Bamako (Nimis 1998: 16).¹ He was also among the first sedentary French colonial photographers in the Malian capital. Practicing photography alongside his primary profession, Garnier instructed Malians, such as Mountaga Dembélé and Baru Koné, about the medium and its technologies. Today, he has been well-remembered and is respected by Malians who knew him, including Baru Koné (Koné 2004).

Pierre Garnier (b. 1919) (French) - Bamako

According to most of the older generation of photographers today, Pierre Garnier was the first studio photographer in Mali. Malick Sidibé has stated that Garnier was the "first photographer with a darkroom. All of Mali was covered by him. Photographers in Gao, Timbuktu, etc., sent their films to him" (Sidibé 2003). Nabi Doumbia recalls that "civil servants from the former French West Africa, Burkina, Niger and Guinea would send their film to be developed at Pierre Garnier's shop" (Nimis 1998: 16). Adama Kouyaté confirms his account, attesting that Photo-Hall Soudanais had clients all the way to Côte d'Ivoire, Benin, and Togo (Kouyaté 2004).

¹ Seydou Keïta's uncle, Tièmòkò Keïta, corroborates Nimis' account, stating that he purchased a roll of eight-exposure film from "Dr. Jules Garnier, the owner of a pharmacy in Bamako" (Magnin 1996: 16-17). To provide some additional contextual information concerning Garnier's work as a botanist in Mali: At his funeral, Doctor Colonel Bernard, Head of the Health Service, outlined Jules Garnier's career in a speech that suggested that Garnier developed a close rapport with the local population, having learned some of their medicinal secrets and having pledged to protect them (Centre des Archives d'Oure-Mer, 14 Miom/2275 <15G/24>).

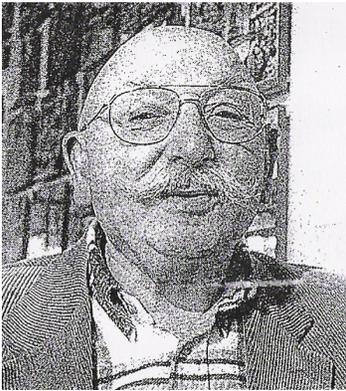
The son of French colonial pharmacist Jules Garnier, Pierre was born in Nancy, France, in 1919. In 1931, he accompanied his parents to Mali, where they took a post in Bamako. As a young boy, he studied the medicinal properties of local flora with his father, who was also an experienced photographer, and pursued his formal education by post. In 1935, after the death of his father, when he was just fifteen, Garnier (along with his mother) opened the city's first photography boutique Photo-Hall Soudanais. Around this time, Garnier began taking numerous postcard photographs, documenting colonial construction projects and architectural structures in and around Bamako—a few of which have been featured in publications by Érika Nimis (Nimis 1998: 16-25).² Unlike many other French expatriots in the country, Garnier learned to speak Bamanankan and Malinké and, thus, was able to form a more intimate relationship with his Malian clientele and neighbors (Garnier 1942: 13). In the early 1930s, he and his father taught Mountaga Dembélé about photography and, by the end of the decade, Garnier had begun employing Malian assistants to work in his shop, including: Youssouf Traoré, Mountaga Dembélé, Seydou Keïta, Bogoba Coulibaly, Baru Diallo (mail), Cékura Samaké (developing and printing), Nabi Doumbia (bookstore), Adama Kouyaté (enlargements, 1946-52) and Félix Diallo (enlargements, 1952-5).³ Experiencing little competition, Photo-Hall Soudanais became quite successful; processing passport photographs, portraits, postcards, and mail-order film, alongside selling photographic materials and equipment to European and African customers. In fact, between 1935 and 1954, the only time the shop ceased to operate was during World War II due to a lack of available materials (Nimis 1998: 16-25).

In 1954, after he had already left Mali for Senegal, Garnier transferred the management of Photo-Hall Soudanais over to Mr. and Mrs. Vanetti via a “free management contract.” During this period, Garnier—accompanied by his wife Berthe Pagot and his child—traveled throughout West Africa, moving from Dakar, Senegal (1954-6), to Mamou, Guinea (1957-8), and to Bouaké, Côte d’Ivoire (1959-65), returning to Mali only briefly (1958-9) to direct the botanical park in Bamako. To sustain a living, in each of these cities, Garnier operated a photography business much as he had in Bamako. In 1962, Garnier finally closed Photo-Hall Soudanais and sold the property. Shortly thereafter, around 1965, he and his family returned to France, where he opened and operated a photography business until his retirement in 1986.

² Garnier also published articles on Malian botanicals, such as his “A propos des noms de plantes en bambara” [sic] and “Aliments Crus” in *Notes Africaines* 13 (January 1942): 13-14 and 18-19, respectively. In addition, he wrote a brief text, “Quelques mesures de luminosité à Bamako,” in which his analysis applies equipment designed for photography (a light meter) to measure sunlight amounts certain plants thrive by in and around the capital city. This essay was published in *Notes Africaines* 61 (January 1954): 2-4. Garnier also authored curt essays on agricultural, climactic, historical, and cultural realities in Mali, including: “Le Bambara le Plus pur Est-il lui de Segou?” *Notes Africaines* 63 (July 1954): 89 ; “Périodicité des crues du Niger” *Notes Africaines* 38 (April 1948): 29-20; and “Javanais oust-Africain d) Pays bambara” *Notes Africaines* 24 (October 1944): 10.

³ Pierre Garnier was also politically active in Bamako. In 1946, he ran as a candidate for office in Bamako's “general [verbal] elections,” affiliated with the Union Economique et Sociale (U.E.S.) branch of the Union Franco-Africain (U.F.A.) party. He received zero votes (Archives Nationales, Kuluba. 7-D-90/2, “1946 elections au conseil”).

Old Studio Contact: Photo-Hall Soudanais, Boulevard du Maréchal Poch (next to the pharmacy) R.C. 460, Bamako; C.C.P. 925, Bamako.



**Gérard Guillet-Guignard, “Gé-Gé, La Pellicule”
(b.1929) (French) - Bamako**

Gérard Guillet-Guignard, affectionately known in Mali as “Gé-Gé, La Pellicule,” was born in France in 1929. As a young man, he practiced portrait photography at Studio Harcourt (founded in 1934 at 10 Rue Jean-Goujon), the internationally renowned “Hollywood” style portrait studio frequented by celebrities and other elites in Paris. During France’s first war in Indochina (1945-54), Guillet-Guignard served as a photographer for the French Air Force. In 1948, he worked at the successful photography business of the Arts Associés (Rue d’Arzeru) in the capital of Algeria after France’s “demobilization” of the country. Guillet-Guignard left Algeria for Morocco in 1950, where he worked as a photographer first in Casablanca and then in Marrakech. In 1955 he traveled from Morocco to Mali (then the Soudan Français) where he was employed by Mrs. Aris at La Croix du Sud. That same year, Guillet-Guignard opened his own photographic enterprise, Photo Service, on Docteur-Quentin Road in Bamako.⁴ According to Malick Sidibé, he was the second person in Bamako to open a photography studio. Guillet-Guignard also opened another studio in Ségu where Sidibé worked for a brief period as a cashier. In fact, “Gé-Gé” opened three Photo Service boutiques in Mali: one in Bamako, one in Ségu, and another in Kayes.⁵ From 1955 to 1957, like Pierre Garnier before him, Guillet-Guignard made several photographs of the railroad and architectural structures in Bamako and Kati for the French colonial government.⁶ Like Garnier, Guillet-Guignard employed Malian assistants to work with him at Photo Service. Two such employees were Malick Sidibé (cash register, deliveries, and eventually reportage photography and darkroom) and Mamadou Berthé (studio and darkroom).⁷ According to Sidibé, “Gé-Gé” was responsible for the studio portraits and reportage photographs of *tubabuw* (“white” people) from Europe, Madagascar, the Indian Ocean area and South Africa, while Berthé (and later Sidibé) was in charge of photographing West Africans in similar contexts

⁴ Historian Érika Nimis cites Place Chichignoud as the address of Guillet-Guignard’s Photo Service. However, Photo Service stationary reads: “Photo Service, Rue du Docteur-Quentin, B.P. #526, C.C.P. 2145, (tel) 223” (Nimis 1998: 16-25). It is likely that the name of the street has changed over the years, particularly after Mali’s independence.

⁵ Supporting this, Photo Service stationary that Guillet-Guignard used to mail a letter to Sidibé at his studio address November 29, 2003, reads at the bottom: “Prises de vue: Studio, Industrielle, Documentaire – Reproductions – Tirages – Agrandissements. Spécialiste Petit Format – Retouches – Photomontage – Travaux Noir et Couleur. BAMAKO – SEGOU – KAYES.”

⁶ Malick Sidibé said that he retained the negatives documenting the construction of the railroads and highways, etc., that Guillet-Guignard took from 1955-7, illustrating for example the train station in Kati, which he referred to as “Cherek et Bouquet” and “Garage Visage” (Sidibé 2003).

⁷ Malim Coulibaly said that he also worked for a brief period alongside Malick Sidibé at Photo Service in 1958 (Coulibaly 2004; Sidibé 2003). It was not clear to me whether that was before or after Guillet-Guignard left for Nouméa and put Jean Perini in charge.

(Sidibé 2003).⁸ In competition with Abdourahmane Sakaly, Guillet-Guignard enjoyed the patronage of military officers, police officers, and other governmental officials, and was regularly commissioned to photograph their administrative functions and private receptions, which were often held at Le Grand Hôtel in Bamako (which housed the U.S. Embassy at the time) and the governmental palace at Kuluba.

In 1958, Guillet-Guignard married Françoise Jagu-Rôche (daughter of French administrator Jacques Jagu-Rôche who was stationed in Mali) at Le Grand Hôtel in Bamako. That same year he left for Nouméa,⁹ the capital of New Calcedonia, to work as the “photographer of the High Commissioner of the [French colonial] government” and as the correspondent for the journal *La France-Australe*, which, according to Jean-Pierre Aren, vaunted the merits of those who represented France in the Pacific.¹⁰ When Guillet-Guignard left Bamako, he put Jean Perini in charge of his studio, with Malick Sidibé and Mamadou Berthé remaining as its central photographers. However, due to business complications, Perini returned to France shortly thereafter, and “Gé-Gé” passed the management of Photo Service over to Mr. and Mrs. Touveron.¹¹ Eventually the shop was purchased by Assad Jean Bittar, who liquidated it in 1970, and its materials became the property of Abdourahmane Sakaly.

⁸ However, gauging by some of the photographs that Guillet-Guignard mailed to Malick Sidibé in December 2003, Mamadou Berthé—one of Gé-Gé’s African assistants—also took portraits of Westerners.

⁹ The last time that Malick Sidibé saw Guillet-Guignard was in 1958, before he left for New Calcedonia. Sidibé began to think that he might never see or hear from him again. However, after forty-five years of silence, “Gé-Gé” sent a letter to Studio Malick in Bamako (November 29, 2003) thanking Sidibé for all of his good work, reminiscing about their younger days at Photo Service with Berthé, and congratulating Sidibé on his success—expressing his deep admiration, respect, and pride. To my great honor, I was present when the letter arrived, and it was shared with me. Thus, it was through this act by Guillet-Guignard that many of the details of this history have been recounted, recalled, realized, and preserved today by the Sidibé family and within the brief account represented here. Since that moment in 2003, I have communicated with Guillet-Guignard several times via email and telephone between 2017-19.

¹⁰ In Jean-Pierre Aren’s account of this history, Guillet-Guignard answered an advertisement that he found at the office of the journal *Le Photographe* in 1958 and moved to New Calcedonia to work for the French colonial administration in the capacities listed above (Aren 2001: H).

¹¹ The accounts of Malick Sidibé and Érika Nimis differ in terms of who was in charge of Photo Service after Guillet-Guignard’s departure for Nouméa. According to Sidibé, Perini was the first manager (after Sidibé himself had turned down the position), working at the studio for a short time alongside Sidibé, Berthé and a man named Magan Magasar. Shortly thereafter, he says, the management of Photo Service was handed to a man employed at Perissac (a car company) in Bamako (who may have been Mr. Touveron, but Sidibé felt that his name might have been something else). Afterward, Guillet-Guignard sold the enterprise to Mr. Magné (a Lebanese businessman) who was in charge when Sidibé left in 1962. Eventually, Magné transferred ownership to Assad Jean Bittar who later liquidated the business and at some point its materials were sold to Abderramane Sakaly (Sidibé 2003). Alternatively, Nimis holds that when Guillet-Guignard left in 1958, Mr. Touveron took over the business, which later was passed to Assad Jean Bittar and then “another Frenchman” before it finally ended up in the hands of Sakaly who took possession of its materials “in the 1970s” (Nimis 1998: 16-25). In an attempt to be as historically accurate as possible, and to maintain a certain level of consistency, I have merged the accounts of Sidibé and Nimis in this section. As a direct participant in this history, Sidibé’s account has taken precedence. The information that he was able to clearly recall has been faithfully represented here. Where his memory got fuzzy, however, Nimis’ account of Mr. and Mrs. Touveron has been included to complete the picture, as Touveron may represent the Photo Service manager Sidibé was unable to name.

In 1960, Guillat-Guignard founded the enterprise Image Contemporaine (Contemporary Image) for which he photographed architectural projects, including the construction and the finished products of houses and their interiors, which have since appeared in several magazines. Today he has retired from photography and resides along the Basque coast in Bayonne, France, where he plans to spend the rest of his days.

Old Studio Contact: Photo Service, Rue du Docteur-Quentin, B.P. #526, C.C.P. 2145.

Georges Gizycki [Jesiki] (French) - Bamako

From 1928 to 1931, French photo-journalist Georges Gizycki was employed by the colonial administration in West Africa, working for the Agence Economique de l'A.O.F. (the Financial Agency of French West Africa) and the Inspecteur du Service General des Textiles (Inspector of the General Textile Service) under governors Fousset and Terrasson. In 1928, he hired a local assistant, André Touré, to help him photograph agricultural and textile production as well as topographical and geographical scenes in the regions of Buguni, Sikasso, Kutiala, Ségu, and Bamako in present-day Mali (Archives Nationales, Kuluba. "Repertoire des Dossiers des Personnels," *Fonds Recent Serie 1C 1918-60* (1989), 1C5.17).



Guy Hersant (b. 1949) (French) - Bamako

Guy Hersant was born in 1949 in Fercé (between Rennes and Nantes), France, where he attended school until the sixth grade. His first camera was a Kodak Brownie Flash, which he used to take pictures of his relatives. At the age of sixteen, he began studying photography more formally in studios in Paris, Provence, Normandy, and Brittany.

While in France, he read an advertisement in *Le Photographe* in which Marcel Rolde at Optique Photo in Bamako (near La Croix du Sud) was looking for an apprentice. Thus, after responding to the announcement, he made his first journey outside of France and arrived in Bamako at the age of twenty-two. Hersant worked as Rolde's assistant for six months from September 1971 to

March 1972.¹² During his employment, he became acquainted with many professional Malian photographers and has remained in close contact with several of them—namely, Malick Sidibé. In 1975, Hersant returned to France and opened his own studio in Lorient (Brittany), from which he eventually retired around 1990 when he relocated to Paris and continued his photographic activities taking architectural pictures.

In 1979, Guy Hersant co-founded the photographers' collective in Brittany entitled "Sellit." In 1982, he created the *Rencontres de la photographie* (Photography Meetings) in Brittany, which he directed until 1989. He then went on to manage Le Lieu gallery in Lorient. From 1994 to 2001, he participated in the production of the *Rencontres de la*

¹² According to Érika Nimis, Hersant left Optique Photo to work for seven months with Michel Thuillier at La Croix du Sud (Nimis 1998: 16-25). In a personal communication on May 14, 2007, however, Hersant said that this is incorrect; he is acquainted with Thuillier, but he has never worked with him.

Photographie Africaine (African Photography Meetings) in Bamako. Since 1995, he had been working on a series of group portraits taken in West Africa and various regions of France that is both documentary and humanitarian in nature.

Through the early 2000s, Hersant made regular visits to Mali and continued to work with photographers in Bamako and Kayes, occasionally curating exhibitions and publishing accounts of their photographic creations. He has also conducted research on, and worked with, photographers in other West African countries, such as Guinea, Togo, and Nigeria. Active in the proliferation of African photography in the international art market, Hersant published an exhibition catalogue *L'Africaine* in 1993, and, in 2005, a small booklet entitled *Malick Sidibé*, which features some portraits made by the renowned Malian photographer from the 1960s to the 1980s.¹³ In addition to his written work, Hersant also authored a documentary film in 1994 on photography in Guinea entitled *Photographes Guinéens* (Hersant 2003 & 2007).¹⁴

Roland La Salle (d. late 1950s) (French) - Ségu

Retired French army officer Roland La Salle opened Studio Etoile in Ségu during the late 1940s. From 1947 until La Salle's death in the late 1950s, his young assistant Salif Camara worked with him in the studio. In 1952, Malim Coulibaly began working with La Salle, taking studio portraits and reportage photographs of dances and festivals at the Centre Culturel until 1958. After La Salle's untimely death, Camara abandoned photography and began repairing radios, while Coulibaly was employed in the photography department of A.N.I.M., the Agence de l'Information Malienne (Coulibaly 2004; Sidibé 2003).

Marcasan Jr. (Lebanese) - Mopti

According to Tanya Elder, Marcasan Jr. was a trader in Mopti and practiced photography on the side during the 1920s-50s (Elder 1997).

Monsieur Merle (French) - Bamako

According to Pierre Garnier, Mr. Merle was Bamako's first professional photographer. He lived near the European cemetery in Bamako-Kura (Nimis 1996 & 1998).

Rahaël Moukarzel (d. 2003) (Lebanese) - Mopti

According to the Sitou and Bocoum families, Rahaël Moukarzel was the first photographer in Mopti.¹⁵ Moukarzel was a businessman who ran a convenience store in the city and practiced amateur photography. Over the years he taught many local photographers in Mopti, such as the Traoré brothers Hassan and Hussein, how to develop

¹³ The subtitle of the 2005 booklet derives from a statement often made by Malick Sidibé, "Le photographe doit être gai" ("The Photographer Must Be Jovial"). Other Hersant publications include: *Studio Malick*. Paris: Edition Autrement, 2004; "A Vignette from Lomé: The Street Photographer's Blues," *Visual Anthropology, Photographies and Modernities in Africa* 14, 3 (2001); "36 ans de photographies en Guinée," *Le Photographe* (Dec 1994-Jan 1995); and several others.

¹⁴ Hersant believes the film is available for consultation at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in France (Hersant 2007).

¹⁵ According to Tanya Elder, however, another part-time photographer, Marcasan Jr., preceded Moukarzel working in the 1920s-50s (Elder 1997).

and print film, and invited them use his darkroom facilities. Furthermore, he often generously dispersed photographic equipment to help young men in the neighborhood embark on a career in photography. Moukarzel passed away in 2003. His wife and children continue to live in Mopti, where they operate a store near the fish market (Bocoum and Sitou 2004).

Rojer Obrir (French) - Ségu

Malian photographer, Adama Kouyaté, holds that Rojer Obrir was the first photographer in Ségu (Kouyaté 2004).

Marcel Rolde (French) - Bamako

Marcel Rolde opened Optique Photo (also called Photo Optique Rolde) near Malimag in Bamako, where he worked over the years with photographers such as Malick Sidibé, Amadou Fané, Guy Hersant, and others. For example, in September 1971, Hersant answered an advertisement for a photographic assistant that Rolde had posted in the journal *Le Photographe*, and worked with him until March 1972. In 1962-3 Rolde and his wife Veuve, Touveron's widow, opened and ran a second studio, Photo Ciné (Sidibé 2003; Hersant 2004; Coulibaly 2004; Fané 2004; Nimis 1996 & 1998).¹⁶

Claude Rollin (French) - Bamako

According to Malick Sidibé, Claude Rollin was a young French artist living in Bamako during the 1950s, responsible for introducing Abdourahmane Sakaly to photography (Sidibé & Njami 2001: 94).

Monsieur Thierry (French) - Bamako

Mr. Thierry was employed at the Commissariat de l'Information (which became l'Agence Nationale de l'Information Malienne after independence and today is known as l'Agence Malienne de Presse et de Publicité) in Bamako, where he worked as a photographer alongside Malim Coulibaly. Thierry did reportage and laboratory work for the agency from 1959 until he returned to France (shortly after Mali gained its political independence) in 1961 (Coulibaly 2004).



Michel Thuillier (b.1932) (French) - Bamako

According to Guy Hersant, Michel Thuillier was the last French photographer in Mali, finally leaving Bamako for Nice in 1993 (Hersant 2003).

Thuillier was born in Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, just outside Paris, in 1932. His interest in photography began at an early age when he was exposed to the medium by his father, who owned a great deal of photographic equipment and installed a darkroom at home. In 1951, still a teenager,

¹⁶ Previously, Rolde's wife (formerly Mrs. Touveron) and her first husband (Mr. Touveron) operated Photo Service shortly after Jean Perini (who took control after Gérard Guillat-Guignard left for New Calcedonia in 1958) until 1962 when Mr. Touveron passed away and the management of the studio was handed to Mr. Magné.

Thuillier became a member of the Bata photography club in Vernon, France, where he was a practicing accountant. The following year, he began working as a cinematographer for the French army in France and Morocco—a position he held until 1954. A year later, he was employed as a studio photographer in London and, shortly thereafter, at studio Bernheim in Paris. In the summer of 1955, Thuillier left studio work for the shores of Brittany, where he took souvenir pictures for tourists alongside Jean Stoll. Later, he took a job with Jean Lefevre in Paris, spending his evenings in the city at “La Société Française de Photographie” (The French Society of Photography).

In 1956, Thuillier left France to open a photography studio at the Thivolle store in Libreville, Gabon, which he operated until 1958. That year, he left Libreville for Bamako, Mali, where he managed Mrs. Aris’ photography boutique La Croix du Sud until 1960, when he finally purchased the establishment that he would oversee for over thirty years.¹⁷ From 1968 to 1993, Thuillier’s shop imported a variety of photographic materials, serving as the exclusive distributor in Mali of certain brands, such as Polaroid. According to the photographer, over the years, he supplied more than one-hundred Malian photographers, as well as Malian and foreign governmental administrations and embassies, with photographic products. His operation also incorporated a portrait studio and darkroom, in which he “practiced all of the photographic disciplines in black and white” (Thuillier 2007). Thuillier’s influence on local photographic production from the 1960s to the 1980s cannot be over-emphasized. As Nimis has rightly pointed out, La Croix du Sud functioned for second generation photographers in Bamako as Photo-Hall Soudanais did for the first generation (Nimis 1996).

Thuillier was a prolific photographer. In addition to the aforementioned projects, he took reportage photographs as a correspondent for United Press and provided photographic illustrations for several journals and books. Furthermore, during the 1970s, he started making color postcards, and served as a postcard editor for the Iris society based in Chilly-Mazarin, twenty kilometers from Paris (Cissé 2004 and Thuillier 2007).¹⁸ While in Mali, Thuillier composed hundreds of scenic photographs and pictures documenting the visitations of foreign Heads of State, such as that of U.S. President George Bush. Several large-scale versions of these were exhibited along the walls of Hôtel de l’Amitié in Bamako, where, Elder reports, they remained on view during the 1990s (Thuillier 2007; Elder 1997). In addition, Thuillier claims that many of his photographs can be seen in poster format in most of the foreign embassies and governmental offices in Mali. (However, his authorship of the images is not readily detectible because the photographs do not bear his signature.) As a result of his highly productive career, the public prominence of his work in the capital city, and the central position of his shop La Croix du Sud in the local photographic community, Thuillier opined that he was the most well-known photographer in Mali from 1960 to 1986—a period in which he was chosen to take “official photos of Modibo Keïta and Moussa Traoré” (Thuillier 2007). However, he humbly adds, “the most

¹⁷ In 1958, Thuillier responded to an advertisement that Mrs. Aris placed in the journal *Le Photographe* which was published in Paris by Montel. Two years later he purchased the store from Mrs. Aris, who wished to retire from the business and return to France (Thuillier 2007).

¹⁸ Malian photographer Diango Cissé took postcard photographs for the same society during the 1980s and 1990s (Cissé 2004).

well-known does not necessarily indicate ‘the best’, because I consider, for example, Guy Hersant better than me in reportage and Malick Sidibé better than me in portraiture” (Thuillier 2007).

In 1993, Thuillier left Mali for France and sold La Croix du Sud to Photo Express, a chain of color laboratories. He currently resides in Nice.

M. Touveron (d. 1962) and Mme. Veuve Touveron (French) - Bamako

Shortly after Gérard Guillat-Guignard left Photo Service in 1958, it was taken over for a brief period by Jean Perini and then by Mr. and Mrs. Touveron (Nimis 1998). According to the research of Érika Nimis, Mr. Touveron was an excellent photographer. He was also a former P.O.W. in Germany, and worked as a photographer in Casablanca before he settled in Bamako. In Mali, Touveron taught photography to his wife, who worked predominantly in the darkroom developing, printing, and retouching negatives. When Mr. Touveron died in 1962, his widow married Marcel Rolde (who operated Optique Photo) and together they founded Photo Ciné in 1962-3, near La Croix du Sud.¹⁹ Not long afterward, the two businesses were engaged in serious competition. From the time of Rolde’s death until the mid-1980s, Veuve continued to run the enterprise alone. According to Nimis, in the late 1990s, the sign on the storefront still read: “Société Mme. Veuve Rolde & Cie” (Nimis 1998).

Monsieur Vanetti (French) - Bamako

French photographer Mr. Vanetti worked for the Sûreté Soudan (which was created by 1925, and became the Sûreté Nationale after independence)—police headquarters in Mali—during the late colonial period (Konaré and Konaré 1981: 117; Nimis 1996: 16; Sidibé 2003).²⁰ After signing a “free management” contract with Pierre Garnier in 1954, Mr. Vanetti and his partner (who had worked at the Dakar-Niger railroad) ultimately acquired control of Photo-Hall Soudanais from Garnier in 1962. According to the latter, Vanetti was among Bamako’s earliest French photographers.

Emile Zeydan (Lebanese) - Ségu

According to Tanya Elder, Emile Zeydan operated Ségu’s first photography studio. Zeydan was a Lebanese businessman who in the 1930s opened a studio downtown, nearby his shop. Though he never worked with Malian apprentices, he used to process Malian photographers’ film (Elder 1997).

¹⁹ Around this time, circa 1962, the management of Photo Service was passed to Mr. Magné, who was in charge when Malick Sidibé left that same year (Sidibé 2003).

²⁰ Nimis refers to the Sûreté Soudan as the *Service Spécial de la Sûreté*. Alpha Oumar and Adama Bâ Konaré report that the Sûreté Soudan was created prior to 1925 (Konaré and Konaré 1981: 117).

African Photographers and Photographic Institutions in Mali

A.N.I.M. (A.M.A.P.)

Agence Nationale de l'Information Malienne (A.N.I.M.) developed from a photographic archive service founded by Frenchmen Haberlin and Roche in 1956 (Nimis 1998).²¹ Nearly a year after Mali's independence, on August 3, 1961, A.N.I.M. was created (Konaré and Konaré 1981: 167). Due to Modibo Keïta's socialist program, the majority of the agency's early photographers were trained in East Germany. For example, Malim Coulibaly, who was the institution's first African photographer (when it was the Commissariat de l'Information in 1959) and was head of the photography department in the early 1960s, and again from 1978-1988, studied darkroom and negative archival processes in East Germany (Coulibaly 2004).²² Likewise, Oumar [Diallo] Siby, the director of A.N.I.M.'s photography department from 1968 to 1978, studied photography at an institution in East Germany and then later at the advertising agency "A.N.D." (Keïta 2004). Testament to this history, Abdoullaye Traoré, whom Siby referred to as one of the service's "great photographers" (who is now deceased), was nicknamed "Berlin" after his stay in the former East German capital (Keïta 2004). According to Siby, the A.N.D. agency (which is still in operation in Germany), not only trained some of the photographers at A.N.I.M., but also supplied its equipment, which enabled the institution to open studios in: Kayes, Bamako, Ségu, Sikasso, Mopti, and Gao. In 1992, A.N.I.M. became A.M.A.P., the Agence Malienne de Presse et de Publicité (A.M.A.P. 2002 ; Samaké 2004).

Moustaphe Akee - Mopti

Moustaphe Akee was born in Sakí, Nigeria. In the 1970s, he became a famous Yorùbá photographer in Mopti, where his studio was located near Bar Mali. Akee's elder brother, Ganeyake, was the president of *Sakí Parapo* ("Sakí United"), the predominant Yorùbá association in Mopti (Sitou 2004).



Mahaman Awani, "Juppau" (b. 1933) - Gao

Mahaman Awani, more commonly known as Juppau,²³ was born in Gao in 1933 to a Hausa family, which was originally from Niger. Around 1955, Awani began learning photography with his friend, Idrissa Keïta, who had recently arrived in Gao from Bamako. In 1958, he opened his studio Photo Esport Gao (Sport Photo Gao) in his hometown, where he worked taking black-and-white portrait and identification photographs until sometime between 1970 and 1972, when he retired because of his failing eyesight. As of 2004, his negative archives were in the care of fellow photographer Siriman

Dembélé in Bamako (Awani 2004; Lawal 2004).

²¹ During the late colonial period, the service was called the Commissariat de l'Information. From 1959 to 1961, both Mr. Thierry and Malim Coulibaly worked as reportage photographers for the news agency.

²² Ousmane Keïta claimed that he was the photography department head from 1985 to 1994 (Keïta 2004).

²³ Mahaman Awani told me that he is called "Juppau," the name of the protagonist in a German cowboy film, because of his height. Apparently, both men are tall (Awani 2004).

Apprentices: Awani's most noteworthy apprentice is perhaps El Hadj Tijani Àdìgún Sítou, who studied with him at his studio for about four years, beginning around 1966. A heart-shaped cut-out frame is one of the characteristics of Awani's portrait style that Sítou applied within his own studio business in Mopti.

Abdoulaye Latif Aziz [Lateef Aziz] (b. 1958) - Gao

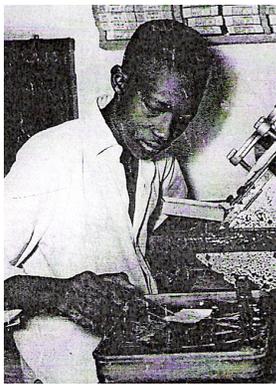
Another Yorùbá man, Abdoulaye Latif Aziz (commonly known by his middle name), was also born in Sakí, Nigeria in 1958. In the 1970s, he returned to Niamey, Niger, where he spent two years at a *madrasa* (Muslim school). Around 1977, he left Niamey with his maternal uncle, a trader, to look for work in Gao, Mali. There, in 1979, he began apprenticing to fellow Yorùbá photographer, Azeem Lawal. Aziz left Lawal's studio in 1981 and began working at Photo Lucky, a studio owned by his uncle. He later purchased the studio, renamed it Studio Fototek, and in 1990 began taking photographs in color. Throughout his career Aziz has acquired his photographic materials from his friend at Adex Photo Couleur in Niamey (Lawal 2004; Nimis 2005).

Samba Bâ (b. before 1920) - Bamako

According to Adama Kouyaté, Samba Bâ worked as a teacher in the Medina-Kura neighborhood of Bamako (Kouyaté 2004). Like his contemporary, Mountaga Dembélé, he practiced photography alongside his primary profession. In the 21st century, several older photographers, such as Malick Sidibé and Adama Kouyaté, often mentioned his name (stating that he is deceased and older than Seydou Keïta), but it is believed that no examples of his work remain (Sidibé 2004; Kouyaté 2004).

Robert Bangoura (Guinean) - Mopti

Originally from Guinea, Robert Bangoura worked as a photographer in Mopti, where, in 1949, he taught the practice to Malian photographer Mamadou Cissé Nimis 1996 & 1998; Elder 1997).



Mamadou Berthé - Bamako

Mamadou Berthé was employed at Gérard Guillat-Guignard's studio Photo Service along with Malick Sidibé in the 1950s and early 1960s. While Sidibé initially functioned as the studio's cashier, Berthé worked in the laboratory developing and printing negatives. Eventually, both men became photographers for Photo Service: Berthé composed studio portraits for African clientele, and Sidibé was in charge of their reportage photographs. After Photo Service, Berthé worked at the French and United States embassies in Bamako, and eventually married an American woman. According to Malick Sidibé, Berthé is no longer living.

Berthé's father, M. Berthé, was a famous marabout in Sikasso (Sidibé 2003).²⁴

²⁴ Some of the details in this biography also derive from photographs and information that were contained in a letter that Guillat-Guignard mailed to Malick Sidibé in 2003 and in subsequent conversations I have held with Guillat-Guignard via phone and email (Guillat-Guignard 2016 & 2018).



Hamadou Bocoum (1930-1992) - Mopti

Hamadou Bocoum was born to a Fulani family of griots in Koreuntze, Mali (about 120 kilometers from Mopti) in 1930. Sometime around 1955, Bocoum began learning photography from an unnamed mentor in Bamako, where he had recently moved to work as a teacher at an elementary school. In 1956, he was sent to Mopti to teach and, while there, opened studio Photo Eclairé near the fish market. From that period on, Bocoum worked at his studio and taught elementary school until 1982, when he retired. His extant archives consist of several black-and-white studio portraits, often featuring a variety of painted backdrops. According to his son, Ali Bocoum, throughout his

lifetime Hamadou regularly traveled to Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana, and Mauritania, which contributed to the expansion of his practice and provided him with new ideas. In 1997, Hamadou Bocoum was posthumously awarded the "Oeil d'argent" prize by the international photography jury at the *19èmes Festival des Trois Continents*, Nantes refrigerator (Bocoum 2004; Sokkelund & Elder 1996). These days, Ali continues to work at his father's studio taking identification pictures and portraits, selling photographic materials and beverages out of the establishment's refrigerator.

Salif Camara (b. early 1920s) - Ségu

Salif Camara was born in Senegal around the early 1920s. According to Elder, he was trained in photography by one of Dakar's "best known photographers," Sada Casset, during the 1930s. Camara left the trade for a period and took a position as a driver for a Lebanese kola nut trader, transporting goods between Côte d'Ivoire and Bamako. In 1947, he was offered a job working with retired French officer Roland La Salle at Studio Etoile in Ségu, which catered mainly to an African clientele. Camara was employed at the studio until La Salle's passing in the 1950s, when he found work as a radio repairman (Elder 1997).



Diango [Django] Cissé (b. 1945) - Bamako

Diango Cissé was born in the Malian town of Kita in 1945. Along with his mother and his maternal uncle, the renowned political figure Fily Dabo Sissoko, Cissé arrived in Bamako in 1952. From 1960 to 1964, he attended school in Kita, and, from 1964 to 1967, he studied design and drawing as a Fine Art student at l'Ecole des Artisans Soudanais (School of Sudanese Craftsmen), which is now the Institut National des Arts (I.N.A.).

Cissé said that he began learning black-and-white photography "by accident" around 1972 (Cissé 2004). He was working as an art teacher at a school in the Daudabugu neighborhood of Bamako when a student sold him a Zorky (35mm Soviet) camera for 2,000 CFA (\$4).²⁵ He took the camera to professional

²⁵ In an interview at his home in Bamako in 2004, Cissé told me that he was working as an art teacher at a school in Daoudabougou. However, in an article written on the first *Rencontres* in Bamako, Cissé states that he taught at the "Lycée de Badala" from 1967 to 1980 (*Le Démocrate Malien* 1994: 3-6).

photographer Malick Sidibé, whom he asked to inspect it and to show him how it worked. The following day, after he bought a roll of film, Malick Sidibé taught Cissé how to take pictures. A few days later, Cissé returned to Studio Malick to develop his first black-and-white negatives. Sidibé complimented him on the resulting images, which inspired Cissé to purchase more film. As such, he was indoctrinated into the field of photography. As Cissé conceived it, photography was a progression of drawing and painting, so he “traded the pencil and brush for the camera,” which, he said, “is cleaner” (Cissé 2004).²⁶ Combining his two professions, he began taking class photos for fifth and sixth grade students, charging 100 CFA per print, which he split with Sidibé for his private mentoring and the use of his darkroom. Circa 1973 or 1974, Cissé began taking color postcard photographs, sending his exposed color negatives to Odeon Photo in Paris for processing.²⁷ However, he says, it was not until 1980 that his photographic career “really began” and he stopped teaching (Cissé 2004).

Diango Cissé claims to be the first ambulant color photographer in Mali—a position substantiated by professional photographer and cinematographer Harouna Racine Keïta, who stated that “Diango Cissé was the first Malian photographer to work in color in the 1970s” (Keïta 2004). As an itinerant photographer, Cissé takes postcard pictures of landscapes, cultural events, monuments, and people throughout Mali and West Africa and, as a result, he has never owned a studio. The color postcards he creates are largely for tourists—a market in which he dominates. Cissé’s postcards, which are published in France (by Pierron and the National Institute of Art), and in Spain (by Sabir and Fesa), are sold in bookstores, hotel boutiques, and in front of the post office in Bamako. However, Cissé explained that his postcards are purchased and used locally by Malians as well: “On New Year’s Eve, people buy postcards to send ‘Thank You’s’ and well-wishes to people at the end of the year. They send them abroad also” (Cissé 2004).²⁸ Today, Cissé’s postcards comprise the majority of those available in Malian markets and appear for sale all over West Africa in countries such as Burkina Faso, Togo, and Guinea. More globally, for example, they are also sold in Malian-operated stores in Harlem, New York. In 2004, Cissé estimated that he made 150-200,000 postcards annually.

Mamadou [Mohammed] Cissé (1930-2003) - Mopti, Ségu, Bamako

Mamadou Cissé was born around 1930 in Kita, a small town about 180 kilometers northwest of Bamako. According to Nimis, Cissé spent part of his youth in England, where he received an education under a man he called “Mister Johnny” (Nimis 1998). In 1947-8, at the age of eighteen, he returned to Mali. The following year, when his “nephew” Robert Cissé was the Vice President of the National Assembly in the French Sudan, Mamadou Cissé went to live with his uncle in Mopti. There, at the age of nineteen, he began learning photography from Guinean photographer Robert Bangoura, and continued working as a photographer in the region until 1952. That year, Cissé joined

²⁶ Malick Sidibé used similar words to describe his conception of the relationship between drawing and photography; preferring photography because it is cleaner and more efficient (Sidibé 2003).

²⁷ Before Cissé, around 1970, French photographer Michel Thuillier at La Croix du Sud made color postcards in Mali. Cissé admits that it was Thuillier who first suggested the idea to him (Cissé 2004).

²⁸ In support of Cissé’s point, Malick Sidibé explained that he used to purchase postcards to disseminate to friends, family, and neighbors for “sambe sambe” (as gifts) at the end of Ramadan (Sidibé 2004).

the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* (French colonial army) which sent him to Senegal, Vietnam, Laos (today Laos People's Democratic Republic) and Algeria between 1952 and 1959. While in the military, Cissé took portraits and identification photographs for the military, at times, working with local photographers in each locale (Nimis 1998). In 1957, he purchased a large sum of photographic materials from French photographer Michel Laffont in Algeria. When he returned to Mali in 1959, that equipment accompanied him and quickly proved useful to his photographic career working for the Malian army after independence in 1960, and for the Agence National de l'Information Malien (A.N.I.M.) in 1962, which sent Cissé to Ségu to open and direct a studio. Alongside his "official" photographic engagements, Cissé founded a private studio of his own in the Bankoni neighborhood of Bamako, named Damozon, where he employed his first assistant Djankin Traoré. When A.N.I.M. (today A.M.A.P.) closed its operations in Ségu during the 1980s, Cissé returned to Bamako to work at the agency's headquarters (Cissé 2004; Coulibaly 2004). He remained there until 1986, when he retired two years after opening Studio Cissé in the Bagadadji neighborhood of Bamako, which, until 2009, was run by his son Oumar.

Mamadou Cissé was well-known by his colleagues in Mali. In fact, according to Malick Sidibé, "he was famous" (Sidibé 2004). After his death on December 8, 2003, the members of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.) rallied together, under the leadership of his friend Malick Sidibé, to honor him and pay their respect and support to his family.²⁹

Apprentices: According to his son Oumar, Mamadou Cissé's first assistant was Djankin Traoré in Bankoni. Traoré worked at Cissé's Damozon studio when the latter was stationed in Ségu as an A.N.I.M. employee. Moussa Kanté (now deceased) was his second assistant, while his sons Kadar and Oumar were his last. Kadar Cissé left the studio in 1986 and has since become a small businessman. Oumar Cissé began learning photography and working at the studio in 1984, when he was sixteen years old (Cissé 2004).

Bogoba Coulibaly (1920-1960) - Bamako, Ségu

Bogoba Coulibaly was born and educated in Ségu. In 1938 he moved to Bamako, where he learned photography under Pierre Garnier at Photo-Hall Soudanais until 1940. In 1941, he returned to Ségu and ran a portraiture business out of his domestic outdoor courtyard.

In addition to photography, Coulibaly was employed at the post office and then at the mayor's office in Ségu. He also worked as a soccer trainer—a position that, at one point, brought him to Moscow.

After his passing in 1960, Coulibaly's photographic materials were given away. According to Elder, the only known examples of his work are retained in the personal photo albums of his brother Zanké Coulibaly (Elder 1997).

²⁹ The G.N.P.P.M. did the same for Abderramane Sakaly after he passed away in 1988, and its members continue to pay similar respects to their colleagues today (Sidibé 2004; Sakaly 2016).



Daoudi [David] Coulibaly (b. 1955) - Sikasso, Bamako

Daoudi Coulibaly was born in Sikasso, in the southeastern region of Mali, in 1955. Though he is Muslim, in 1976-7, he began learning photography after school in the Culture et Lerrivage Sénufo program at the (Christian) Sikasso Mission. After several years, he traveled to Bamako and apprenticed himself to Gauso Kiasu Daou at Photo Kyassou. In September of 1981, he opened his own studio, Studio David, in Bamako. Coulibaly has worked with both black-and-white and color technology, developing and printing black-and-white film himself and processing color film at Tokyo Color (a color laboratory in Bamako). His oeuvre consists of portrait, identification, and reportage photographs. Coulibaly's

cousin, Issa Traoré, is also a photographer and owns a studio in Misira near the restaurant Santoro. Daoudi Coulibaly used to belong to the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.) but does not any longer (D. Coulibaly 2004).

Apprentices: Soumaila Coulibaly (Studio Tata in Manyanbougu) worked as Daouda's apprentice for eight years. Today, Daoudi Coulibaly works alone at his studio.



Malim Coulibaly (b. 1934) - Ségu, Bamako

Malim Coulibaly was born in Sokolo, a small town in the region of Ségu in 1934.³⁰ In 1952, he began learning photography with French photographer Roland La Salle in his hometown, working at Studio Etoile until 1958, when he left to visit his older brother Sory Coulibaly in Bamako. While in the capital, Malim Coulibaly worked for a few months alongside Malick Sidibé at Photo Service.³¹ Then, after learning of an opening in the photographic department of the Commissariat de l'Information, (an advertisement Sory heard on Radio Soudan), in September 1959, he was hired by the agency's director (Minister of Information) Dr. Mamadou El

Béchir Gologo (Coulibaly 2004; Gologo 2004).³² Thus, he became the first African photographer to work for the Commissariat de l'Information, where he joined French photographer Mr. Thierry. The two photographers worked together until 1961, when Thierry returned to France, leaving Coulibaly alone in the department. In 1962, at what was then the Agence Nationale de l'Information Malienne (A.N.I.M.), he was joined by Moumouni Koné (who stayed with the department until 1970) and Oumar [Diallo] Siby

³⁰ Although he was born in 1934, his official identification documentation lists 1932 as the year of his birth. In an interview, he explained that the date on his I.D. was actually the birth date of a friend, but he never bothered to have it corrected in his official documents (Coulibaly 2004).

³¹ It was not clear to me whether this was before or after Guillat-Guignard left Bamako for Nouméa in 1958, placing Jean Perini in charge of Photo Service.

³² Before 1959, the Commissariat de l'Information was called Le Service de l'Information. Malim Coulibaly was hired by Mamadou El Béchir Gologo shortly after he was appointed director of the agency in 1958. Two years after independence, it became the Agence Nationale de l'Information Malienne (Gologo 2004).

(who retired in 1978).³³ Shortly thereafter, by 1963, Coulibaly's longtime acquaintance and friend Ousmane Keïta was also admitted to the crew as his apprentice. Malim Coulibaly served as head of the photography department at A.N.I.M. during the early 1960s and again from 1978 to 1988 (Coulibaly 2004).³⁴

Throughout the 1960s, Malim Coulibaly traveled with Mali's first President Modibo Keïta on his official visits. Together, they went to the Soviet Union, East Germany (where he received archival and laboratory training), Czechoslovakia, and other communist countries, such as Vietnam and China, as well as then socialist African nations, such as Ghana and Tanzania. During this period, he also owned a private enterprise named Studio Etoile (after La Salle's business in Ségu) in the Hamdallaye neighborhood of Bamako. Until 1970, he spent his days working for the agency, and in the evenings he labored at his studio. That year, he was forced, like so many of his colleagues at the Ministry, to abandon his private practice by the Commander of Information, Youssouf Cissé. Throughout the course of his nearly thirty-year career at A.N.I.M. (he retired in 1988), he took numerous political photographs, such as those of the 1968 coup d'état and the second Organization for African Unity (O.U.A.) conference in Cairo in 1964. These images were regularly published in the institution's affiliated newspaper, *L'Essor*, from 1959 to 1988 (Coulibaly 2004).

Apprentices: In addition to Keïta at A.N.I.M., Coulibaly taught his sons Mamadou, who operated Studio Etoile on his father's behalf before it was closed in 1970, and Seydou, who worked with Nouhoum Samaké at A.M.A.P. (formerly A.N.I.M.) from 1989-2002, before leaving for Boston where he now works at a hotel as an audio-visual technician.



Mountaga Dembélé [Kouyaté] (c.1919-2003) - Bamako

Mountaga Dembélé was one of the earliest Malian photographers working commercially in Bamako. In fact, he considered himself to be the first African photographer in Mali. Dembélé was born (around 1919)³⁵ and schooled in Bamako. His father was a Bobo griot from San, and his paternal uncle, El Hadj Adama Dembélé, more commonly known as “Koula Ladji” (according to Youssouf Cissé), was a famous marabout who encouraged fellow Bobo in San to fight against French colonials in 1916 (Cissé 1995). Each of these histories have been interpreted as the reason the Dembélé family adopted the name Kouyaté before they arrived in Bamako, and have since been known (somewhat confusingly for some), by each of these last names. According to Bouya Dembélé Kouyaté, the second son of Mountaga, the Dembélé family changed their name to Kouyaté because, though the Dembélé are griots in San, in Bamako they are nobles and Kouyaté is the name of the preminent griot family (Dembélé

³³ Malim Coulibaly referred to Oumar as “Diallo.” This is the same Oumar Siby Nimis interviewed in 1996, whose biography is provided in alphabetical order within this appendix.

³⁴ Contrarily, Coulibaly's colleague Ousmane Keïta claims to have been the head of the photography department from 1985 to 1994 (Keïta 2004).

³⁵ Most sources cite 1919 as the year of Mountaga Dembélé's birth (Nimis 1998; Elder 1997). However, in the *Revue Noire* catalogue, *Anthologie de la Photographie Africaine et de l'Océan Indien*, his birthdate is given as 1919 on page 107 and as 1920 on page 106.

Kouyaté & Traoré 2004). Alternatively, Malian scholar Youssouf Cissé holds that Mountaga's father adopted the Kouyaté name in 1917 as a means to hide from the French colonial administration after the Bobo revolt in San the previous year (Nimis 1998).

In the early 1930s, while a student, Mountaga Dembélé had began learning photography from Jules Garnier and his son Pierre, who was the same age as Dembélé. Before he was conscripted into the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais* (the French colonial army) during World War II in January 1940, Dembélé had already taken numerous photographs and was employed by the French administration as an elementary school teacher. For example, in the 1930s, he photographed Muslim leader Cheick Hamallah in Bamako before his arrest and exile by the French government. According to Dembélé's son Bouya, during the war, Mountaga worked as a military mechanic and electrician in Paris and Marseille, France, as well as in Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, and took personal photographs for fellow servicemen using a view camera (Dembélé Kouyaté & Traoré 2004).³⁶ While in Paris, Dembélé purchased photographic equipment, such as a Rolleiflex (9x12cm) camera, and had the opportunity to meet Professor Houppé, the photographer who invented the Impérotor enlarger and wrote a book called *Les secrets de la photographie dévoilés* (*The Secrets of Photography Unveiled*). In 1945, released from military service, Dembélé returned to Bamako, where he resumed teaching elementary school, which sent him traveling all over Mali to the regions of Kati, Mopti, Timbuktu, Gao, Sikasso, Koutiala, and Niafunké. In each of these locales, alongside his primary profession, he made and sold photographs professionally on Thursdays and Saturdays (auspicious days, for example, on which people commonly marry).

In 1947, Dembélé received the Impérotor enlarger that he had previously ordered in France, and likely became the first African photographer in Mali to possess such equipment.³⁷ Like his colleagues, he purchased his materials at Photo-Hall Soudanais and La Croix du Sud. He produced sepia-toned pictures, black-and-white photographs, hand-tinted prints (using pencils and watercolors), and double-exposure images, which contained writing on one side and a picture on the other. He also made "night photos" using his Petromax lamp, which, he says, he was the first "in all the towns" of Mali to create (Nimis 1998). For these images, he turned his bedroom into a studio and for illumination used electricity (if it was available) or his Karosene Petromax lamp.

In Bamako, Dembélé operated a studio in Bamako-Kura, near the prison, where he took pictures of clients in the outdoor courtyard of the Doumbia family's home (where he and

³⁶ To be clear, Dembélé did not create photographs for the military in any official capacity.

³⁷ Nimis suspects that the only establishments in Bamako, for example, to have this type of machinery at the time was Photo-Hall Soudanais, owned by Pierre Garnier (Nimis 1998). Before the war, Dembélé had produced photographs through direct printing using sunlight during the day and kerosene lamps at night, much as his Malian contemporaries continued to do after the war. With the Impérotor, however, which was both battery and electrically powered, he was able to print with greater ease (and in enlarged formats, up to 30x40cm) any time of the day or night in the privacy of his bedroom. Today, Dembélé's Impérotor printer-enlarger is owned by the Maison de la Photographie Africain (House of African Photography), affiliated with the *Rencontres* office which, until 2018, was headed by Moussa Konaté and is managed by photographer Amadou Sow in Bamako.

Seydou Keïta's family rented rooms), using his bedroom as a darkroom.³⁸ During the late 1940s to the early 1950s, Seydou Keïta worked as an apprentice to Dembélé, learning how to compose portraits, develop negatives, and print photographs. When Dembélé went to Sikasso to teach, Keïta stayed in Bamako-Kura and ran his own studio practice out of the same outdoor courtyard (owned by the Doumbia family). According to Dembélé, Keïta retained some of his materials, many of which disappeared long ago. As a result, only three images by Dembélé have been publicly reproduced.³⁹

Throughout his lifetime, Mountaga Dembélé considered himself to be “a retired teaching inspector” first and a photographer second (Dembélé Kouyaté 2004; Nimis 1998). In Bamako today, most people who know of him, speak of Dembélé first as a teacher and, second, as the photographic mentor of Seydou Keïta. Dembélé passed away in late 2003, at the age of eighty-four.

Apprentices: In addition to Seydou Keïta, Mountaga Dembélé said that he taught many other “well-known” (yet unidentified) photographers. The only assistant his son Bouya Dembélé Kouyaté named was Tamba Keïta, who was younger than Seydou Keïta (no relation) and who later opened a studio in the neighborhood of Niaréla in Bamako.

Siriman Dembélé (b. 1947) - Bamako

Siriman Dembélé was born in 1947 in Gunguineo, Senegal, where his father found work and quickly settled. In 1952, preceding his family, Dembélé arrived in Bamako in the neighborhood of Badilabugu. In 1965, he began learning how to develop and print film in Bauscher, Poland, where he was sent to study civil engineering. After receiving his “diplome du general,” he began to study photography under Andzej Piwowartzik at “C.R.P.,” which Dembélé described as “a university of photography in Poland.” From there, he enrolled in a photography program at the École National Superior du Paris in France. After receiving his degree, circa 1969-70, he returned to Mali where he sought out Malick Sidibé for “consultation and technical assistance.” Two years later, he returned to Europe, where he worked at Central Couleur, a large photographic laboratory in France, and at Technician Alpha Aluminique (A.G.F.A.) in Germany. Later, he worked for A.G.P. Photo Safare Abarake in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, and Photo Sefagin in Dukai, Gambia. Finally, beginning in 1982, along with some partners, Dembélé opened Mali’s first color photography laboratory, Photo Kola, in Bamako. The equipment for which he acquired from the German A.G.F.A. corporation. In its early stages, Photo Kola was highly successful, processing approximately 150 rolls of film per day. However, underprepared for the high demand it experienced, the business was unable to satisfy the needs of its clientele, regularly taking a month to furnish processed photographs. After a year, Dembélé left Photo Kola to manage a photo laboratory in Burkina Faso. Shortly

³⁸ According to Dembélé’s son Bouya, Mountaga’s studio was called Studio African and, in 1958, he hired a *tubab* (Euro-American or “white” person) he knew through Kodak to make a sign displaying the studio’s name. This is the only account in which a studio name is suggested for Dembélé’s commercial photographic practice.

³⁹ Bouya Dembélé said that he has kept some of his father’s photographs (of family members). However, I was never able to view them as I never saw him again. The other Dembélé family members insist that they have none of his negative or photographic archives.

thereafter, in 1985, Photo Kola was put out of business by the success of a new color lab, Tokyo Color (Dembélé 2004).

In addition to his laboratory work, Dembélé was one of the few photographers who participated in the official portrait competitions for presidents Moussa Traoré and Alpha Oumar Konaté. In the spring of 1984, he took President Moussa Traoré's picture when he was "promoted to General in the army and to Commander of the entire National Defense Forces" (Sidibé 2006). Under similar circumstances, he created portraits of President Alpha Oumar Konaré in 1992.

Over the years, Dembélé has specialized in darkroom or "laboratory" work, creating large-scale prints for fellow professional photographers, particularly for art exhibitions or for the sale of individual photographs to clients. For example, he printed the negatives of every photographer from Mali, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, and Guinea whose works were represented in the Bamako-hosted *Rencontres* exhibitions from the festival's inception in 1994-2019. In the past, he also made all of the prints displayed in Mali's first art gallery, Galerie Chab. As of 2010, he created all of Malick Sidibé's large-format prints designated to be sold or exhibited in Bamako—a responsibility he held for over a decade. In 2004, he was the Malian consultant for the Fonds Apres le Fondation Professional Apprentissage (F.A.F.P.A.) and was formerly the consultant for the Swiss organization Helvetas (currently the C.F.P.) in Bamako, a position now held by Youssouf Sogodógó. In addition, Dembélé serves as a consultant for Color Bank Formation in Bamako, providing workshops for professional photographers on the theoretical foundations, technologies, and practical applications of photography and video. He has worked with Color Bank (which is owned by Baba Traoré at Photo Royale) since 1992. Today, he also operates his own business Technic Photofinishing.



Félix Diallo (1931-1997) - Kita

Félix Diallo was born (June 12, 1931) and educated at the Catholic Mission in Kita, where, at an early age, he was introduced to photography. After the death of his father in 1947, he stopped his studies and began working as a tailor. In 1951, at the age of twenty, he left Kita for the Dar-es-Salam neighborhood of Bamako, where in 1952 he found employment with Pierre Garnier at Photo-Hall Soudanais, replacing Tiékoura Samaké who worked as a printer in the darkroom. While at Photo-Hall Soudanais, Diallo obtained his first camera, a "Scoutbox," and eventually he learned to use it by listening to the advice Garnier provided his clients. Diallo stopped working at Photo-Hall Soudanais in 1954, after Garnier left Bamako for Dakar. The following year, Diallo returned to Kita and opened a studio in the market on the west side of town, becoming Kita's first professional photographer. In addition to studio work, he operated itinerantly with his (13x 8cm) box camera, taking identification photos, portraits, and class pictures at local schools, neighboring rural markets, and nearby towns. Within two years, in 1957, Diallo founded a second studio Photo Bar in the Ségubuguni neighborhood of Kita. His photographic activities further increased after independence, in 1960, when he was asked to photograph

regional accidents for the national police. During this period, around 1963, he renamed his studio Photo Lux, and acquired a soviet-fabricated Krokus enlarger and began working with a more manageable and higher quality (6x6cm) medium-format camera in 1970 (Nimis 2003).

Like many of his colleagues, by 1977, under the difficult economy of Moussa Traoré, business became increasingly challenging for Diallo, who often found it impossible to obtain photographic supplies, such as film. The introduction of color technology as well as the increase in amateur and “street” photographers in the 1980s presented him, and many of his colleagues, with additional challenges. However, he persevered until his retirement in 1988 (since then he turned to work in his orchard and totally abandoned his studio). On September 5, 1997, Diallo passed away in his hometown (Nimis 2003).

Unfortunately, the majority of Diallo’s photographic archives have been destroyed. However, approximately nine-hundred negatives were in his possession when Érika Nimis interviewed the photographer in 1996. In 2003, she published a small collection of those images in booklet entitled *Félix Diallo: Photographe de Kita*. With the partnership of Diallo’s family, in 2017, she joined the Archive of Malian Photography (amp.matrix.msu.edu) to digitize, preserve, and render accessible online Diallo’s entire photographic collection, which is housed at the Municipal Archives in Toulouse (Nimis 2021).

Issac Diallo - Bamako

According to Malim Coulibaly, Issac Diallo was the first video cameraman to tour with President Modibo Keita and is still a reporter in Bamako (Coulibaly 2004).⁴⁰

Mamadou Wellé Diallo - Bamako

Mamadou Wellé Diallo was trained in journalism in Bulgaria. Along with Siriman Dembélé, he opened Photo Kola—the first color laboratory in Mali. According to Érika Nimis, he worked as “Moussa Traore’s personal photographer” from 1978 to 1984 and, in this capacity, in 1981, toured with the imam of Mecca during his first stay in Mali. The latter convinced Diallo to end his photographic career due to religious convictions. However, he did not abandon photography all together, as he regularly employs video for his work as a project director for a non-governmental organization (Nimis 1998).

Sadio Diakité (b.1929) - Kayes

Sadio Diakité was born in Kayes, a small city in western Mali near the Senegalese border. Like many of his contemporaries, Diakité was sent to France with the military, where he received technical training in mechanics. In this context, one of his colleagues taught him darkroom processes, and thereafter Diakité pursued photography as a vocation. Shortly after he returned to Mali, he opened a studio in Kayes, which readily became one of the town’s most popular. He continued working as a professional photographer until the late 1970s, when color technology, 35 mm cameras, and amateur

⁴⁰ Unfortunately, thus far, I have not been able to meet and interview Issac Diallo during any of my stays in Mali.

photographers put several black-and-white studios out of business (Touré & Njami 2001: 92-5).

Toumani Diakité - Ségu

According to Adama Kouyaté, Toumani Diakité was the second professional and first African photographer in Ségu. He worked at the city's post office (Kouyaté 2004).

Bakary Diarra (deceased) - Ségu

Bakary Diarra was one of the first photographers in Ségu, according to Adama Kouyaté (Kouyaté 2004).



Moussa Diarra (b. 1938) - Buguni

Moussa Diarra was born in Diba in 1938. In 1959, he traveled to Côte d'Ivoire, where he lived in various places, such as Abidjan, Daoukoro, Tengerela, and Masigi, until 1970. After working for some years as a barber and a tailor, Diarra began learning photography in 1963 under the tutelage of Ivoirian photographer Brehima Doumbia in Daoukoro. His first camera was a medium-format (6x6cm) Yashika, which he bought in Bouaké, and in 1965, he purchased his own enlarger.

In 1971, Diarra opened his studio Photo Elegance in Buguni, Mali, along the roadside next to a pharmacy. Operating as his teacher Doumbia had done, he used black-and-white technology, without electricity, taking outdoor portrait, identification, and reportage photos during the day. To provide his enlarger with the necessary natural light to print his negative enlargements, Diarra cut a hole in the wall of his darkroom. Every week, to purchase his photographic materials, he traveled to Bamako, where he regularly consulted with Malick Sidibé, who became “the great photographer” he had been searching to find since he departed Côte d'Ivoire. The two remained friends until Sidibé's death in 2016.⁴¹

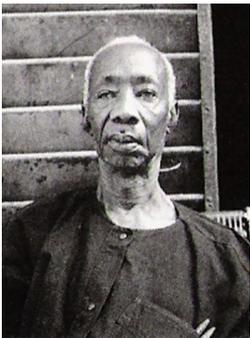
In 2002, Diarra retired from studio work and left Photo Elegance due to dwindling business. However, as of 2008, alongside his farming activities, he continued to take black-and-white and color identification photographs, as well as “class” portraits at schools, in Buguni with his Zenit (35mm) camera. Unfortunately, by the time I first spoke with him in 2004, Diarra's negative archives had been destroyed by locusts at his home. Luckily, however, a few of his original prints remain as examples of his photographic oeuvre. To protect the rights of his clients, however, he has declined to publicly release these images.

Apprentices: Diarra's apprentices include Soumela Coulibaly in Tengerela, Côte d'Ivoire; Youssouf Coulibaly in Buguni; Adama Diarra in Buguni; and his son Adama Diarra in Bamako.

⁴¹ In fact, I initially met Diarra when he visited Studio Malick in January 2004, and later interviewed him at his home in Buguni in October 2004.

Bakary Doumbia (b. circa 1920) - Bamako

Born sometime around 1920, both Bakary Doumbia and his younger brother Nabi worked as professional photographers in Bamako during the colonial era. According to Baru Koné, Doumbia worked with him at Makan Macoumba Diabaté's⁴² house making identification photographs in the early 1950s (Koné 2004). Together, Bakary and his brother Nabi directed Adama Kouyaté toward a career in photography, introducing him to Pierre Garnier at Photo-Hall Soudanais (Kouyaté 2004). Bakary's involvement with photography seems to have been less extensive than Nabi's, however, and, according to Malick Sidibé, he eventually abandoned the trade altogether to work full-time as a farmer (Sidibé 2003).



Nabi Doumbia (b.1920s, d. after 1996) - Bamako

Bakary Doumbia's younger brother, Nabi, began his professional life in education, specializing in agricultural work at the École Normale in Katibugu. Sometime in the late 1930s, he was introduced to Pierre Garnier by his "cousin" Makan Macoumba Diabaté, a well-known "business agent" and government official in Bamako during Modibo Keïta's regime.⁴³ In 1942, with the assistance of Diabaté, Doumbia left Photo-Hall Soudanais to become the Sûreté Soudan's (French Sudan Police Department's) first African photographer (Nimis 1998).⁴⁴ In 1955, Doumbia trained Abdourahmane Sakaly in photography.⁴⁵ That same year, to honor his mentor, Sakaly named his newborn son Naby.⁴⁶ Doumbia also introduced other Malians to the medium, such as Adama Kouyaté and some members of the *Tirailleurs Sénégalais*, or French colonial army (Kouyaté 2004). After Doumbia's employment at the Sûreté, he worked as a clerk for the court in Bamako. When Nimis interviewed him in 1996, he lived in the Bagadadji neighborhood of Bamako. He has since passed.



El Hadj Amadou Fané (b. 1949) - Bamako

El Hadj Amadou Fané was born in the Koulikoro region of Mali, in Nyamina, in 1949. He began learning photography in Bamako during the student strikes of the Modibo Keïta period, when, in 1967, he bought a Kodak camera from an amateur photographer in Medina-Kura for 5,000 Francs. Malick Sidibé was his first teacher, and he was Sidibé's second apprentice (after Sidiki Sidibé), from 1968 to 1974 (Fané 2004; Sidibé 2003). In 1974, Fané opened Studio Jeunne Chez Fané in Niaréla, which he abandoned in 1985. The following year, he opened Studio Zoom in the Wolofobugu

⁴² The only source to feature Makan Macoumba's last name, Diabaté, that I have found is Alpha Oumar Konaré and Adama Bâ Konaré's *Grandes Dates du Mali* (Bamako: Editions-Imprimeries du Mali, 1981).

⁴³ It was Makan Macoumba Diabaté's house in which Baru Koné worked making identification photos—including, for example, Malick Sidibé's first "souvenir" portrait in the 1950s (Koné 2004; Sidibé 2004).

⁴⁴ The Sûreté Soudan became the Sûreté Nationale with independence in 1960.

⁴⁵ Baru Koné also claims to have mentored Sakaly in photography at this time (Koné 2004).

⁴⁶ As discussed in chapter three of the book, namesake (*togoma*) relationships in Mali are serious friendship or kinship bonds that are sustained throughout the lives of the individuals, often carrying over to their offspring.

neighborhood, near the Soudan Cinéma. French photographer Marcel Rolde (at Optique Photo) gave Fané a list of possible studio names, and he liked the name Zoom—like the zoom function of the camera—so he chose it for the title of his new studio. Over the years, Fané has made the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) three times, earning him the revered title “El Hadj” (Fané 2004).

Amadou Fané does not belong to a photographers’ association and has never participated in the *Rencontres* biennial in Bamako.⁴⁷ Today, because of a dearth of studio work, he practices video more regularly than photography, making documentaries and publicity films.⁴⁸ Before O.R.T.M. began in 1983, Fané taught himself how to work with video (in 1975), using a Makaji video camera that he had ordered from France. The last film he created documented his pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) for a German client. Fané’s studio is among the first in Bamako to incorporate digital technology, which will likely grow in popularity during the years ahead (Fané 2004). All negatives from Studio Jeune Chez Fané in Niaréla were lost during a move. His remaining archives, all of which are in color, are from Studio Zoom (Fané 2004).

As an apprentice of Malick Sidibé at Studio Malick in the late 1960s and early 1970s, some of Fané’s photographs have been unwittingly published in catalogs and displayed in exhibitions dedicated to the work of Sidibé. For example, Fané claims that *all* of the photographs taken of picnics along the Niger in the early 1970s (that have been attributed to Sidibé since Magnin’s catalogue in 1998) are his.⁴⁹ However, in Mali, like in Europe during the Renaissance, negatives made by an apprentice at a photographer’s studio are the property of the mentor-photographer, and, like an artist’s workshop, the attribution of those works goes to the “master” photographer. Fané disagrees with this practice and has voiced his opinion to Sidibé as well as to an unnamed French journalist who, Fané said was making a documentary film on the subject in 2004. To date, Fané’s other photographs have not been formally exhibited.

Apprentices: Over the years, Fané has trained several unnamed apprentices in photography. However, today, like his first mentor Malick Sidibé, he has resigned to work only with his children. One of Fané’s sons, Abramane, has a studio in Niaréla called Fané Vision. His other son, Moctar, was a videographer for President Amadou Toumani Touré (more commonly called A.T.T.). Moctar, nicknamed “Papoo,” also works in photography (including digital) with his father at Studio Zoom. Fané’s daughter Mariama

⁴⁷ Fané says he is not interested in the *Rencontres*, finding it “colonial and unclear” (Fané 2004).

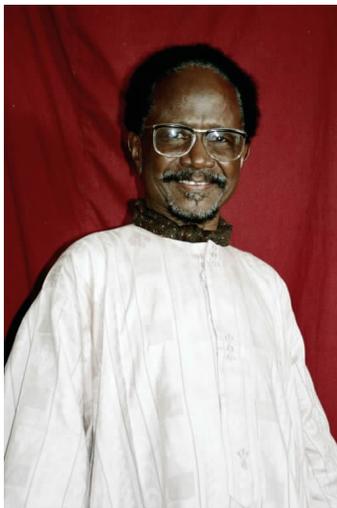
⁴⁸ Describing the challenging commercial situation studio photographers faced in Bamako, Fané stated that, “In each neighborhood there are fifteen to twenty studios now when there used to be one or two in the past. It used to be that clients solicited photographers, now it is photographers soliciting clients” (Fané 2004).

⁴⁹ Fané said that he frequently went to the beach during the hot season with “a lot of his Bozo friends.” In 2004, he was upset with Sidibé because a friend of his saw André Magnin’s catalogue on the work of the now internationally-renowned photographer (1998), featuring what Fané describes as his beach photos. As is customary in Mali, when Fané left Studio Malick, all the negatives he created for the establishment remained the property of Sidibé, the studio’s proprietor. Fané has been frustrated by Sidibé because he earned money from the sale of the photos, and simultaneously gained all recognition, while Fané has received nothing. Fané says that he expressed his opinions to Sidibé. However, the latter chose not to present Fané with any compensation. In 2004, Fané also mentioned that a French journalist was making a documentary on the situation (Fané 2004).

also works as a photographer at the studio. Unlike many of his colleagues, Fané does not find it unusual or rare for a woman to practice photography professionally and cites l'École Promo Femme (a photo school for women that operated in Bamako during the first decade of the 21st century) as evidence of this.⁵⁰

Ahmed Macky Kanté (b.1945) - Bamba, Nouakchott

Ahmed Macky Kanté was born in Bamba, a town located along the Niger River in the Bourem region of Gao (eastern Mali). After fifteen years of teaching, Kanté started a career in photography. He worked as a reportage photographer for the American Embassy in Nouakchott, Mauritania, where he also represented C.I.P.A. Press. Since 1980, Kanté has worked as a “free lance” photographer in Mali. At the time of the first *Rencontres de la Photographie Africaine* biennial in Bamako, he was the acting president of an unnamed photographers’ association, and secretary of the Information de la Fédération Nationale des Artisans du Mali (Rencontres 1994: 3-6).



Mamadou Kanté, “Papa” (b. 1930) - Bamako

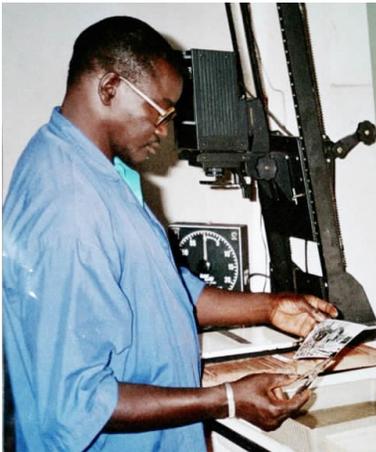
Mamadou Kanté, more commonly known as “Papa,” is Bamana and was born in the Medina-Kura neighborhood of Bamako (in the same house that he lives in today) in 1930. He began learning photography in 1945 under the tutelage of his friend Kélétigi Traoré in Kayes, and later under that of Fasiné Ponkura, a Guinean photographer with whom he lived in Moscow in 1962. After he was awarded a U.S.-R.D.A. grant in 1960, Kanté spent much of the decade studying to be a pharmacist in former East Germany and the Soviet Union. While in Moscow, with his grant, he became increasingly familiar with photography and bought a Zenit camera, which he brought back with him to Bamako. During his career, Kanté worked predominantly in black and white, first with medium format (6x6cm) and later 35mm cameras taking portraiture, identification, and reportage photographs. In 1972, he opened his Studio Photo Kanté close to home (where it remains today) in Medina-Kura, which has been operated by his sons Abdoulaye and Adama since he retired in the 1990s.⁵¹ Toward the end of his career, alongside his studio work, from 1984-1988, he taught at the Soviet Cultural Center’s Institute of Photography in Bamako (Kanté 2004; A. Kanté 2004; Nimis 1998).

⁵⁰ Refer to chapter seven in the book for more on l'École Promo Femme.

⁵¹ There are some significant discrepancies between the published account of Érika Nimis (1998) and the verbal account of Kanté during an interview in Bamako in 2004. I have tried to reconcile these as best as possible, and, when in doubt, I have erred on the side of Kanté’s personal recollections. According to Kanté, he returned to Bamako in 1972. Nimis has written that he returned to the city in 1964. In each case, the year that his studio was opened coincides with the date of his return. However, Nimis also states that Kanté “studied pharmacy for seven years” in the U.S.S.R. Thus, if one factors in the time that Kanté spent in East Germany, the years that he studied in the Soviet Union, and the fact that he received his grant in 1960, it seems most likely that he returned to Bamako in the early 1970s, as he recalled to me, as opposed to 1964 (Kanté 2004).

“Papa” Kanté serves as the President of the Groupement National des Artistes Photographes du Mali, which he founded in 1998, and is also the Secretary of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.), which was founded ten years earlier (Kanté 2004). Both associations are centered in Bamako.

Apprentices: Kanté’s apprentices have consisted predominantly of his sons Moussa Kanté (reportage; now a doctor in agronomy), Seydou Kanté (deceased), Abdoulaye Kanté, and Adama Kanté. Abdoulaye and Adama both work in studio, reportage, and “art” photography. However, Kanté also instructed other young aspiring photographers, such as Fousseini Sidibé, the son of his colleague Malick Sidibé.



Harouna Racine Keïta (b. 1948) - Kangaba, Bamako

Harouna Racine Keïta, who commonly goes by his middle name, was born October 1948 in the Bagadadji neighborhood of Bamako. Eventually, he moved to Kangaba, a village some 90 kilometers west of Bamako, to work as an elementary school teacher. At the time, according to Keïta, not a single photographer inhabited the town. Originally, a French doctor at Point G hospital in Bamako, Eric Dall, journeyed there to make necessary identification photos for its citizens who found it difficult to travel to the capital city for the service. Thus, recognizing the need for a local photographer, in 1974, Keïta obtained his first camera—a Zenit (35mm)—from

Malick Sidibé in Bagadadji, who also taught him to process film and print photographs in the darkroom. A year later, in Kangaba, a man named Azar Dall helped him learn various aspects of the art form. To further his training, Keïta traveled to France in 1987 to study photography for one year at a program offered at the National Art Institute (directed by Vava Ivanov) where, in addition to photography, he learned videography. A few years later, in 1992, he founded Studio Espace Images (today Studio Black & White) in Bamako. In 1994, Keïta went to work for the Centre National de Production Cinématographique (C.N.P.C.) in the capital, where he is now the Director of Photo-Cinematography and the Head of the Montage Section. Traveling throughout Africa, Europe, and Asia, Keïta has made several documentary films on myriad topics for C.N.P.C., E.S.P.A., and the National Museum in Bamako, as well as for international and American organizations such as U.N.I.C.E.F. and Peace Corps, respectively (Keïta 2004).

Over the years, Keïta says, he has had many teachers of photography, both formal and informal. Unable to name them all, he cites Azar Dall, Malick Sidibé, Vava Ivanov and Diango Cissé as the most significant (Keïta 2004).

Apprentices: Keïta’s apprentices have included Alpha Diarra (deceased), Seydou Koné (a videographer at C.N.P.C.), and his sons Koné and Mohammed Keïta who are currently employed at his studio. In less official capacities, Keïta regularly shares his knowledge and expertise with young aspiring photographers and professional colleagues. In fact, he

likens his studio to “a school.” He has also instructed photographic courses for various organizations in Bamako over the years, such as l’Ecole Promo Femme.

Mamadou Keïta - Keniéba

According to an article in *Le Démocrate Malien* (1994), Mamadou Keïta was born in Keniéba. Like many photographers in Mali, he began his career as a teacher at a secondary school, where, Keïta has stated, he began to take “amateur” photos at the Lycée Askia. Over the years, he made photographs in nearly all of Mali’s villages, at times traveling thousands of kilometers to do so. Keïta worked in black and white photography until 1973, when he began to ship his color negatives to France for processing (Rencontres 1994: 3-6).



Ousmane Keïta (b. circa 1938-2016) - Ségu, Bamako

Ousmane Keïta was born in Ségu in the late 1930s. Always interested in photography, he was employed by retired French army photographer Roland La Salle at his studio, Studio Etoile, in his hometown. In La Salle’s darkroom, Keïta learned film development and was later taught how to print negatives using La Salle’s enlarger. He also accompanied his mentor during reportage assignments and observed La Salle’s methods of taking pictures. In 1956, Keïta arrived in Bamako and opened his own studio, Photo Mali, in the Bagadadji neighborhood across from the National Assembly. He began working at la Commissariat de l’Information under the French government before it became the Agence Nationale de l’Information Malienne (A.N.I.M.) in 1962, when Dr. Mamadou El Béchir Gologo was the Minister of Information under President Modibo Keïta. Ousmane Keïta had been acquainted with Gologo since his time working with La Salle in Ségu. According to Keïta, Malim Coulibaly, Moumouni Koné, and Mr. Thierry were working for the agency when he arrived, while Mamadou Cissé arrived later.⁵² He also recalled that there were no more than three Rolleiflex cameras (“the best of the epoc”) available at the agency at the time. Keïta left A.N.I.M. in 1974, when Youssouf Traoré “sent [him] away” because he owned his own studio. At the time, his assistant, Moussa Sogodogo (now deceased), worked at the studio during the day (when Keïta was occupied at the agency) and he worked there at night. Around 1984-5 he closed the studio and returned to A.N.I.M., as the Head of the Photography Department, until he retired in 1994. During his career, Keïta participated in the presidential portrait competitions and took “apolitical” personal, family photographs of every Malian president. For his reportage work over the years, he

⁵² Malick Sidibé believed Ousmane Keïta was the first Malian photographer to work at A.N.I.M. and confirmed that he had previously worked in Ségu with Roland La Salle (Sidibé 2003). However, the specific dates in Malim Coulibaly’s account of Keïta’s involvement at A.N.I.M. (Coulibaly 2004) differ remarkably from those in Keïta’s. Respecting the personal recollections of each individual within each of their biographies, I have decided to include the dates provided by the photographer under focus. As a result, these discrepancies remain evident and unabashedly contradictory within the context of the biographical histories as a whole. Oumar Siby was also employed at A.N.I.M. as the director of the photography department from 1968 to 1978. However, unlike Malim Coulibaly, Ousmane Keïta did not mention him during our conversation (Keïta 2004).

traveled to the United States on three occasions, to Poland, to Moscow, and to several African nations and France multiple times (Keïta 2004).

Apprentices: Ousmane Keïta has trained several apprentices in the practice of photography throughout his career. However, the only one he named was Moussa Sogodogo.



Seydou Keïta (c.1921-2001) - Bamako

Seydou Keïta was born sometime between 1921 and 1923 in the neighborhood of Bamako-Kura in Bamako.⁵³ He worked as a carpenter (furniture/cabinet-maker) following the profession of his father Bâ Tièkoro.⁵⁴ In 1935, his uncle Tièmòkò Keïta returned from Senegal with a (6 x 9 cm) Kodak Brownie (wooden box) camera, which he gave to Seydou as a gift.⁵⁵ Experimenting with photography, Keïta used this—his first camera—to take pictures of family, neighbors, friends, and clients at his father’s workshop. Around 1945, he bought another (6 x 9 in) box camera (with glass plates) and later used a similar (9 x 12 in) camera. Between 1948 and 1949, he started making photographs professionally under the guidance and tutelage of his neighbor Mountaga Dembélé, whom he called “Papa Mountaga,” using his darkroom and equipment to process the negatives that he and Dembélé created (Keïta 2004). Like his mentor, Keïta set up an outdoor studio in the courtyard of the Doumbia family compound in Bamako-Kura, where both the Keïta and Dembélé families rented rooms.⁵⁶ Around this time, Seydou Keïta purchased a (13 x 18 in) view camera with a broken shutter from Pierre

⁵³ Some written sources list 1921 (Magnin 1997 and Lamunière 2001), while others state 1923 (Nimis 1998, Elder 1997, Revue Noire 1998, and Cissé 1995) as his date of birth. Still, others cite 1920 (Kelly 2006). In an interview at Fondation Seydou Keïta in Bamako in 2004, his brother Kadar Keïta said he was born in 1923. Thus, there is some confusion over the exact year of Keïta’s birth and, as a result, I have decided to include the range of dates. As a peripheral biographical note: according to Youssouf Tata Cissé, the Keïta family was placed in Bamako under “surveilled residence” by the French colonial administration because Seydou Keïta’s grandfather, Bakary Keïta, was a relative of Kaba Mamby (Cissé 1995).

⁵⁴ The spelling of Keïta’s father’s and uncle’s names in this paragraph are French and have appeared previously in texts such as the monograph written by André Magnin and Youssouf Tata Cissé, *Seydou Keïta* (Zurich: Scalo, 1997). However, in Bamanankan they are spelled as such: Bâ Cèkoro and Cèmògò Keïta. I have retained the French spelling in this account as it seems to have been the one used by the men themselves.

⁵⁵ Tièmòkò Keïta received the German-made Kodak camera as a gift from his cousin Cheikh Touré during his short sojourn in Senegal and, upon his return to Bamako, gifted it to his nephew Seydou Keïta. In addition, Tièmòkò says, he furnished Seydou with a roll of eight-exposure film, which he purchased from “Dr. Jules Garnier” (Magnin 1996: 16). However, Jules Garnier passed away in 1934. Thus, either Tièmòkò made his travels to Senegal and purchased the film for Seydou sometime during or prior to 1934, or perhaps he purchased the film from Dr. Garnier’s son, Pierre Garnier, at his store Photo-Hall-Soudanais, which opened in 1935.

⁵⁶ Keïta’s home studio was unnamed. However, his brother Kadar Keïta referred to it as “Studio Elegance,” and later as “Studio Seydou Keïta.” On another occasion, he stated that it “did not have a name” (Keïta 2004).

Garnier at Photo-Hall Soudanais.⁵⁷ All of his portraits from 1949 to 1964 were taken with this camera, which required a good deal of trial and error to master, as Keïta had to remove the lens cap for a precise period of time to properly expose the film held within. As a marketing strategy, on the back of these images he stamped “Photo Keïta Seydou.” Furthermore, two apprentices from his carpentry days, Malamine Doumbia and Birama Fané, helped him find clients at the market and railroad station. Alongside his studio business, Keïta also traveled to rural towns to take identification photographs and visited people’s homes to take their portraits (Magnin 1997). The majority of Keïta’s commissioned images were printed in relatively small, standardized formats in accordance with their intended use in albums, frames, postcards, and official forms of identification. On rare occasions, when large-format images were requested, Keïta had them printed in Pierre Garnier’s darkroom at Photo-Hall Soudanais.

In 1962, Keïta began working for the Sûreté Nationale taking “mug shot” photographs of prisoners at police headquarters downtown, like his elder colleague Nabi Doumbia before him (Keïta 2010).⁵⁸ These images were purportedly destroyed in the fires set during the riots associated with the 1991 coup d’état (Keïta 2004; Sangaré 2005). From 1962-1977, his brother Lassina and his son “Gomez” (Mamadou Keïta) ran the studio business.⁵⁹ During a period of internal conflict, Seydou Keïta retired from the Sûreté Nationale in 1977.⁶⁰ When he returned to his studio, he found that his equipment had been stolen and thus transformed his shop into a mechanic’s garage. In fact, he was repairing a motorcycle when Françoise Huguier, André Magnin, and Bernard Descamps arrived looking for the photographer (Keïta) who created three portraits that had been exhibited in the *Africa Explores* show at the then Center for African Art in New York City (1991), attributed to an anonymous photographer. After the subsequent international success of his images, in catalogues and exhibitions during and since the 1990s,⁶¹ Keïta did not

⁵⁷ Keïta has also cited Pierre Garnier as one of his photographic mentors/teachers, as well as the person from whom he obtained his photographic materials (Magnin 1997).

⁵⁸ This is the official capacity in which Keïta created photographs for the government, although some sources have claimed that he was employed as *the* official photographer for Malian presidents Modibo Keïta and Moussa Traoré (Magnin 1997; Lamunière 2001). The fact that Keïta worked for the national police has been corroborated by several professional photographers in Bamako, such as Baru Koné, who said that Seydou Keïta was busy taking “police photographs of prisoners...He didn’t take pictures of political leaders” (Koné 2004). Keïta’s brother, Kadar Keïta, similarly stated that Seydou “worked with the Commissariat de Police in Bamako” and “...at the time of Cekoro Bagayogo, Director of Security with Moussa Traoré after the coup in 1968, Seydou Keïta worked with the police” (Keïta 2004). Furthermore, Michel Guerrin wrote that “Keïta’s work for the state during the socialist regime is an obscure period...but it is known that he took portraits of prisoners” (Guerrin 2001). Likewise, in *Le Monde*, Pompey Fabienne stated that Keïta “...printed the portraits of detainees [prisoners] as photographer for the Surete” (Fabienne 1993).

⁵⁹ Keïta stated that “...in 1963 they put pressure on me to close down my studio completely” (Magnin 1997). According to Tanya Elder, Keïta’s outdoor studio was closed in 1964, two years after he began working for the government (Elder 1997).

⁶⁰ In an interview with André Magnin, Keïta stated that “By 1977 they [Sûreté Nationale] had acquired a bunch of different machines, the most ‘high tech’ ones you could get at that time...Around that time I had a misunderstanding with some of the military people, and I decided that I was tired of the job. They agreed to let me take retirement...” (Magnin 1997).

⁶¹ Malick Sidibé commented that Keïta was already famous in 1952, and that he was familiar with Keïta’s name while a student at l’Ecole des Artisans Soudanais (today, the Institut National des Arts) before he

resume his photographic work, other than to undertake commissions for fashion shoots by magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and designers such as agnès b., due to his deteriorating eyesight. Keïta passed away in Paris on November 22, 2001, while preparations were underway for a solo exhibition of his portraits at Sean Kelly Gallery in New York City.

Currently, Keïta's archives are the prerogative of collector Jean-Pigozzi in Geneva (the CAAC—Pigozzi Collection) copyrighted to Seydou Keïta/SKPEAC.

Apprentices: Seydou Keïta's apprentices include a man he identified as "Abdoulaye" as well as his younger brother, Lassina (Lacina) Keïta, who worked at Seydou's outdoor studio while he was employed at the Sûreté Nationale and who currently resides in Paris, and his older brother Lamine Keïta. Two of his sons also served as his apprentices over the years, including: Baba Keïta, who presently owns and operates "Studio Seydou Keïta" in the Manyanbugu neighborhood of Bamako, and Mamadou Keïta who is known as "Gomez."



Baru Koné [Keïta], "Oumar" (b. 1920-2009) - Bamako

Baru Koné is among the earliest photographers to work in Bamako, born in 1920 in the Medina-Kura neighborhood of the city. As a young teenager, he trained as a plumber, electrician, and blacksmith under Moustafa Kanté in the Bagadadji neighborhood of Bamako. In the mid-1930s, he lived in Kati with his brother-in-law, Jean Abourazini, who was in the army, working as an airplane mechanic for the Service Materials Batimats. Several military men smoked cigarettes at that time, and Jean was among them. During the époque, popular cigarette brands like Camel, Job, Méliá, and Gauloise advertised prize give-a-ways: customers could send a certain number of collector-cards to companies like Fabrique Job

in France, and choose one of the offered prizes, including a bicycle, a camera, or a cash award. Jean and Baru used to collect these cigarette cards from soldiers at the military base in Kati. The first promotional prize Koné received was a bicycle, in 1935. According to him, he was the first person in Kati to own a bicycle, and, until 1937 he was the only inhabitant of the town to possess one. Jean, who was already engaged in photography (after having learnt it in the French military), suggested that Baru select a camera for his next prize, which is how Koné obtained his first camera—a (6.5x11cm) wooden box camera from the Melia cigarette company, around 1936. Along with the camera, the mail-order prize included darkroom chemicals (developer and fixative) and three rolls of film. Jean was the first to put the film in the camera, and he took Baru's picture. After that, Koné said, he took his camera with him everywhere, especially while fishing (Koné 2004).

ever met him. Sidibé finally met Keita a few years later at a wedding in Buguni. In a 2004 interview, Sidibé recalled that Keita "was rich already [and] even had a car. He repaired film projectors and worked for the police department. He closed his studio because of it." In the 1980s, Sidibé said, the two photographers became friends and he attended the latter's funeral (Sidibé 2004).

In addition to teaching him how to fish and hunt, Abourazini taught Koné “everything” about photography, including how to make sepia-toned prints outside using the sun. Koné also cited a man named Fasily Traoré as an early tutor in photography. Eventually, Koné began making photographs professionally, working predominantly in portraiture out of his friend Alou Diallo’s house in the Bagadadji neighborhood of Bamako (a locale which is now occupied by the National Assembly). About his practice, Koné said “everyone at that time used to work at home” in their courtyards, such as Mountaga Dembélé and Seydou Keïta, unlike French colonial photographers who had “proper studio spaces.” In addition to studio work, in 1944, he began doing some reportage photography, taking pictures of people in villages along the railroad from Bamako to Tukoto on the way to Kayes. He would then develop and print his black-and-white film back at home in Bamako, wrap the prints up in tire inner tubes, and pass them over to the railroad crew leader, who would deliver them to their final destinations. This practice was likely facilitated by the fact that he lived with Alou Diallo, who was the head of the railroad workers in Bamako. Koné said that there were several photographers in Bamako during this era, but few traveled on the railroad to take pictures. Taking reportage photographs when he was young was socially appropriate. Koné stated, “Older people did studio work...Kids did reportage.” However, he stopped taking reportage photographs “at the time of the Trois Caimans nightclub near the old bridge,” once he became too old. From Alou Diallo’s house, Koné moved his photographic practice to the home of Makan Macoumba Diabaté because “his house had electricity and Alou’s did not.” During this period, at Diabaté’s, Koné made identification photographs together with Bakary Doumbia. The business was such that each night the partners were able to fill a pail full of identification photos. Around this time, in 1954, Baru Koné took Malick Sidibé’s first portrait, when he was a student at the École des Artisans Soudanais (today the National Art Institute).⁶² The two photographers remained friends ever since, and, over the years, they shared equipment and ideas. According to Sidibé, Koné (whom he referred to as Baru Keïta) was the first person to teach him anything about photography.

Like his contemporaries, Koné bought his equipment and materials from Pierre Garnier’s shop Photo-Hall Soudanais in the *sugubala* (“big market,” or commercial center) of Bamako.⁶³ In addition to taking pictures, in the 1950s, Koné also repaired cameras,⁶⁴ which is how he came to meet and work with Abdourahmane Sakaly (who was a trader when he first arrived in Bamako from Senegal in 1954, before he became a photographer).⁶⁵ When Sakaly closed his trading shops and began working in photography professionally (when he opened Studio Sakaly in 1956), Koné was the first to come on board.⁶⁶ In fact, he said that Sakaly learned photography from himself, Nabi Doumbia (who worked at Garnier’s shop Photo-Hall Soudanais), and his brother Bakary.

⁶² Malick Sidibé said that he commissioned the portrait as a souvenir for his family (Sidibé 2004).

⁶³ Baru Koné said that he was well-acquainted with the Garnier family, including Pierre’s father Jules (Koné 2004).

⁶⁴ In this vein, Koné called himself a “modern blacksmith” who fixed cameras, did plumbing and worked as an electrician (Koné 2004).

⁶⁵ He later said that he met Sakaly through Baladji Cissé, the head of the boxing federation in Bamako, as Baru Koné was an accomplished boxer (Koné 2004).

⁶⁶ Adama Kouyaté also stated that “Oumar” Keita (Baru Keita) worked with Sakaly after he came to Bamako from Senegal in 1954 (Kouyaté 2004).

At Studio Sakaly, Koné was employed as a darkroom technician, a cashier, a supervisor, and an accountant.⁶⁷ According to him, Sakaly was the first, and most famous, studio photographer in Bamako in charge of taking political photographs. He said, political figures, such as Fily Dabo Sissoko (leader of the P.S.P. political party), Modibo Keïta (U.S.-R.D.A. political leader and eventual president of the Malian Republic), and Moussa Traoré (Malian president affiliated with the U.D.P.M. party), used to come looking for Sakaly to take their pictures (Koné 2004).

In 1960, the government forced Koné to relocate his residence from Bagadadji (where the National Assembly stands today as a result) to Bakaribugu, where he was compensationally provided with a small plot of land.⁶⁸ At this time, during the 1960s, Koné's life was very active: He was a boxer and belonged to boxing associations in the Niaréla and Bagadadji neighborhoods of Bamako while he was employed at Studio Sakaly and worked as a farmer planting mango trees. He continued his photographic and farming activities side-by-side until sometime in the late 1980s to early 1990s, when he suffered an accident that injured his eyesight, requiring that he undergo eye surgery in 1991 and cease taking pictures.⁶⁹ Until his death in 2009, he was almost totally blind.

Koné stated that he meticulously preserved his photographic archives in *nègèkésow* (locally made metal trunks). However, they were either destroyed when part of his home collapsed during the rainy season of 2001 or, shortly thereafter, when most of his belongings were stolen, including “all” of his remaining film, negatives, and personal photo albums.⁷⁰ Otherwise, he says, he would have “a lot of interesting things to show: photos of daily life, such as fishing, hunting, and so on” (Koné 2004).

⁶⁷ The dates cited in the accounts of Baru Koné, Malick Sidibé, and Adama Kouyaté differ somewhat from those in that of Érika Nimis. Nimis writes that Koné “became a printer for Sakaly in the 1960s, when he was in his forties” (Nimis 1998).

⁶⁸ This part of Koné's history is a bit confusing. It is unclear whether he was still living with Alou Diallo at this point, or whether he was living in Bagadadji near Alou Diallo and was relocated. Furthermore, although during one part of an interview he said that he left Bagadadji when he got the land in Bakaribugu (which once he said he received from the government when he was relocated, and another time he indicated that he had purchased), in a later moment he said that “not more than three years ago” (2001) his photographic archives were lost in a disaster at his home in Seranbugu, behind Hippodrome and Bankoni. Thus, it is not clear whether at one point he owned two homes (perhaps for a second wife) or if the timeline of events is a little convoluted. Moreover, the government may have affected his property more than once. Speaking about his then current home in Bakaribugu, in 2004, he said that “[the government] changed the area during a rebuilding project...the government measured the land and gave everyone land according to the law. This way I lost eighty meters of land on the east and two meters on the west and they took my house from me. That is why my house is so small in Bakaribugu today” (Koné 2004). Regretably, the confusion is no doubt due to my abbreviated notetaking and the fact that the tape-recording of the interview is largely inaudible. It may also stem from the fact that human memory is nuanced and imperfect. Nevertheless, I have decided to include information that at times is incomplete and contradictory because of its relevance for understanding the complexities of Bamako's history and the life of Baru Koné.

⁶⁹ Koné stated that he never officially resigned from the mango-planting job and continued to receive a pension from the company. Thus, it seems that his injuries were work-related and were such that, afterward, it was necessary for him to stop working on both fronts (Koné 2004).

⁷⁰ Koné said that his archives were lost in a disaster, “not more than three years ago [2001],” at his home in Seranbugu, during which he lost everything when his house was destroyed by water and later looted. Later he indicated that the event happened at his current home in Bakaribugu (Koné 2004).

Apprentices: Baru Koné stated that he had numerous apprentices, though he did not name any of them aside from Abdourahmane Sakaly. However, Malick Sidibé cited Koné as the first person to teach him about photography.



Moumouni Koné (1928-2007) - Bamako

In 1928, Moumouni Koné was born in Bamako-Kura in a house he occupied his entire life. In 1947, he began learning photography with an old box camera in Bamako under the tutelage of Youssouf Traoré, who was “a friend of a friend.” At some point in the early 1960s, he began working alongside Malim Coulibaly at Agence Nationale de l’Information Malienne (A.N.I.M.) in Bamako taking reportage photographs for the government.⁷¹ After Independence, he opened his own studio in front of his home in Bamako-Kura which, in 2004, continued to house his archives but was no longer open for business. At his domestic studio, he took portrait photographs. He also

traveled to neighboring schools to take class photos. Over the years, he shared materials with Mountaga Dembélé and Seydou Keïta, who were based nearby in the same neighborhood. During our interview, in 2004, Koné said that people would still arrive at his door, on occasion, seeking reprints of old negatives held in his archive to prolong the visual memories of their friends and relatives (Koné 2004). Moumouni Koné passed away in early 2007. Presently, his archives are in the care of his son Lassana Moumouni Koné.

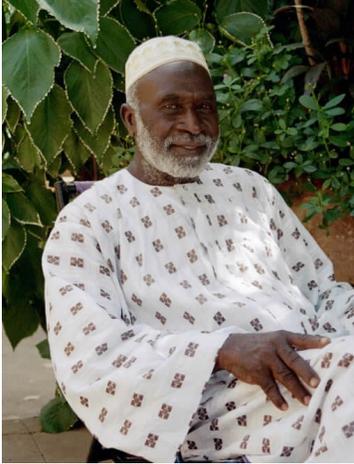
Bernard “Ben” Koudemedo - Bamako

Fleeing the regime of Mathieu Kérékou, Bernard Koudemedo left his homeland of Benin and arrived in Mali in 1975. That year, he opened his first studio, Photo Ben, in the commercial center of Bamako. According to several professional photographers in Mali, and the account of Érika Nimis, though he was a foreigner, “Ben” Koudemedo quickly became a leading photographer in Mali’s capital city (Sidibé 2003; Nimis 1998). Evidence of his popularity, Koudemedo was elected General Secretary of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.) in 1988, when the organization was founded.

According to Nimis, “Ben” disappeared in July 1996 (Nimis 1998). During my stay in Mali, I was never able to confirm whether he is alive or deceased. Although I was given a contact number for him by one of his colleagues, I have been unable to reach him.⁷²

⁷¹ During our interview, Koné said that he started working at the service in the late 1950s when it was called the Commissariat de l’Information, in the colonial era (until August 3, 1961, when it became the Agence Nationale de l’Information Malienne [A.N.I.M.]). However, according to Malim Coulibaly, the first Malian photographer employed at the agency in 1958, Koné was hired in 1962, after it was re-named A.N.I.M. (Coulibaly 2004). In the period between 2003 and 2005, when I spoke with Moumouni Koné on numerous occasions, he was unwell. His memory was not always clear in terms of dates and chronologies. Thus, I have decided to present the time frame provided by Mr. Coulibaly in this brief biography.

⁷² No one is certain whether or not Koudemedo is still living. I was never able to contact him during any of my stays in Mali (2002-17), although I was given a telephone number that supposedly belonged to him.



Adama Kouyaté (1927-2020) - Ségu

Adama Kouyaté was born in 1927 in Buguni, 165 kilometers southwest of Bamako. From his youth, until 1946, he practiced leatherwork and shoe repairing under the tutelage of his father and, later, Issa N'Diaye and El Hadj Mohamed Lamine Soumbounou. In 1946, his friend Bakary Doumbia and his brother Nabi Doumbia “guided him toward photography” (Kouyaté 2004). That year, he began working with Nabi in Pierre Garnier’s studio Photo-Hall Soudanais, where he was put in charge of the enlarger. It was Garnier who gave Kouyaté his first camera—a Rolleiflex (6x6cm)—which was carefully stored today in Kouyaté’s meticulously organized home workroom when I visited in 2004.⁷³ In 1952,

when Garnier left for Senegal, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire, Kouyaté began working as a chauffeur for the population’s elite, including Mamadou Konaté (U.S.-R.D.A. leader), whose car Kouyaté drove during Konaté’s political campaign in December 1955.⁷⁴ A decade later, in 1965, Kouyaté returned to photography “because he wanted a more sedentary lifestyle” (Elder 1997). Lacking the necessary materials (due to the socialist policies of Modibo Keita’s regime which rendered materials expensive and difficult to find), Kouyaté left Mali⁷⁵ and traveled to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, where he worked as a studio photographer at Photo Halls Voltaic until the military coup in Ouagadougou in 1966.⁷⁶ In that year, Kouyaté moved to Bouaké, Côte d’Ivoire, where he opened another studio. He remained in Bouaké working as a studio photographer until after the Malian coup d’état in November of 1968. Kouyaté returned to Mali in 1969 and opened a studio in Ségu, Photo Hall d’Union, where he had the support of family and an available room. Until around 2009, Kouyaté would travel to Bamako to visit Malick Sidibé (whom he considered family) to obtain his supplies.

Kouyaté’s specialty was the portraiture of infants. For these images, he positioned a mother behind her child, covered with a decorative cloth, as a disguised prop against which the infant would rest upright. In this way, the child is presented as a “grand person,” using Kouyaté’s words, (Kouyaté 2004). Alongside studio portraiture, like many of his colleagues, Kouyaté practiced reportage photography, taking pictures during marriages, dances, and baptisms.

⁷³ According to Elder, in 1950, Kouyaté opened his own studio, but abandoned the practice after five months because of his mother’s disapproval of the profession due to her religious convictions (Elder 1997).

⁷⁴ Of this period, Elder has written: “The material that he had purchased over the years (from Garnier) was packed away for fifteen years during which he was a truck driver between Guinea, Cote d’Ivoire and Mali” (Elder 1997).

⁷⁵ Kouyaté stated that he purposefully stayed away from Mali until after the coup d’état in 1968. During this period, Kouyaté had an arrangement with Abderramane Sakaly (who had arrived in Bamako from Senegal around 1954) in which he supplied Sakaly with paper from Ouagadougou and Sakaly sent money to Kouyaté’s mom in Buguni (Kouyaté 2004).

⁷⁶ According to Elder, Kouyaté found his time in Ouagadougou difficult. “He was treated like an outsider and ostracized by the local authorities” (Elder 1997).

After 1991, when Moussa Traore’s regime was overthrown and a multiparty political system was instated in the country, Adama Kouyaté became increasingly politically active. From 1992 to 1997, he was elected advisor to the mayor of Ségu, and served as the head of two political parties in the region, while continuing his commercial photographic practice. In 2004, Kouyaté was the honorary President of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.) in Ségu, while Malick Sidibé was the official president of the national association in Bamako. Today, some of Kouyaté’s archives are accessible online, as he began digitizing them in collaboration with Afrique en Création in Paris, Eugène C. Ormsby with Patrimoine du Ségou in Angoulême, and as part of the Archive of Malian Photography in the 21st century. Kouyaté passed away February 14, 2020.

Apprentices: By his own account, and those of several of his colleagues, “all of the photographers in Ségu” were Kouyaté’s apprentices, including his sons “Sori” Brehima Kouyaté and Dauda Kouyaté. He has also had apprentices in Côte d’Ivoire, such as Mamadou Keïta (deceased) and Moussa Yalkuye (today in Ségu).

Boundiala [Boudjala] Kouyaté, “N’Boudiala” (b. before 1920) - Bamako

Boundiala Kouyaté, known more commonly as “N’Boudiala,” moved from his hometown Kankan, Guinea to Bamako, where he worked in the neighborhood of Bamako-Kura taking photographs with a (9 x 12 cm) box camera during the 1940s and 1950s. Although little is known about Kouyaté’s life and oeuvre today, several of Mali’s oldest photographers, such as Moumouni Koné, Seydou Keïta, and Adama Kouyaté, have cited him as “one of the oldest and most well-known African photographers” in Bamako (Koné 2004; Magnin 1995). According to Adama Kouyaté, “N’Boudiala” died in Guinea “a long time ago” (Kouyaté 2004). It remains unclear whether his photographic archives have been preserved. However, in those of his colleague Malick Sidibé, three negatives by “N’Boudiala” were found: a portrait of Kalilou Fofana (a teacher in Buguni), one of Yala Sidibé (Malick Sidibé’s brother, a doctor, with whom he lived in Bamako), and another of Tokotan Coulibaly (who was perhaps a blacksmith)—all of whom are now deceased (Sidibé 2003).⁷⁷

⁷⁷ I hoped to have prints made from the negatives, and, if able, I would have included them in *Imaging Culture* (2021). However, with the demands of his own work schedule, coupled by the vast amount of personal time and effort he donated to this research project, and his death in 2016, unfortunately, Malick Sidibé and I were unable to accomplish this goal. In addition to the three negatives in Sidibé’s possession, a photograph was discovered in the personal photographic collection of Sidibé’s neighbor, framemaker Cheikna Touré, with a stamp on the back indicating that it was taken by “N’Boudiala, Photographe, Bamako-Kura, October 23, 1955” (Touré 2009). Regrettably, I am unable to provide an illustration of this image as well.



Azeem Oladejo Lawal⁷⁸ (b. 1948) - Gao

Azeem Oladejo Lawal was born Yorùbá in 1948 in Sakí, Nigeria. In 1964, he began learning photography in Niamey, Niger under the tutelage of another Yorùbá man he called Lemosé.⁷⁹ Following a geographical route and trade network that brought several Yorùbá from Sakí to Mali, Lawal eventually settled in Gao where, in 1969, he opened his studio Photo Hall. In 1972, he changed the studio's name to Oduduwa Photo Studio (Oduduwa is the name of the Yorùbá creator god) after he saw it in a book.⁸⁰ Lawal said that he had the opportunity to move to Bamako in the 1970s. However, he decided to remain in Gao due to its lower cost of living, more relaxed pace of life, and less professional competition (Lawal 2004).

In 2004, Lawal was the president of the professional photographers' association Groupement des Photographes Professionnelles de Gao. At this time, he had plans to open a school of photography in Gao called "Azeem Communication: Centre Audio Visuel," and was in the process of obtaining the necessary funds for the project. The present status of this project and Lawal's studio remains unclear. My attempts to reach him after the Islamist insurgency and occupation of Gao in 2012 have been unsuccessful.

Apprentices: Lawal has had at least twelve apprentices at his studio, including two of his sons. Several of whom have been Yorùbá and Songhai, with some continuing to practice the trade in Gao. These include: Abdoulaye Latif Aziz, Mauritala Salaw, Wahid Stanley, Sidi Maïga, Mukaila Popson, Latif Youssouf, Joakim Abutar, Aliou Maïga, Mathew Amao Olaiya, Jimeaux Amirsa, Rachidi Lawal (son), Abdoulrazaki Oyesede, and Abdul Djefar (son). According to Nimis, two of Lawal's apprentices have since returned home to Sakí (Nimis 2005).



El Hadj Hamidou Maïga (b. 1935) - Timbuktu, Bamako

The exact year of Hamidou Maïga's birth remains unclear. His identification card reads 1932, but he believes that 1935 is closer to the truth.⁸¹ Born in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, when he was a young child, his family moved back to Timbuktu so that he and his siblings would "know their [Songhai] origins" and grow up among their paternal relatives. Like many during this period, Maïga did not attend school. Rather, he learned masonry or brick building, the family trade, alongside his father. Over the years, he also became a well-known musician in Timbuktu, where he often composed and

⁷⁸ Nimis spells his name "Ashimi O. Lawal" (Nimis 2005). However, when I met with him at his studio in Gao in 2004, he spelled his name "Azeem Oladejo Lawal" (Lawal 2004).

⁷⁹ Lemosé may be the nickname for Amosa Kelani who operated "Studio Photo Nationale" in Niamey and whom Nimis states was Lawal's first teacher (Nimis 2005).

⁸⁰ Nimis holds that he opened "Photo Hall Studio" and renamed it "Photo Oduduwa" in 1985—presenting a discrepancy in terms of the dates (Nimis 2005). As an additional note, although the Yorùbá diety Oduduwa is commonly spelled thusly, Lawal's studio is spelled "Photo Oduduwa."

⁸¹ Maïga's identification card, and a small booklet written by Chab Touré (2000), indicate that he was born in 1932. However, in an interview in 2004, Maïga cited 1935 as the year of his birth.

performed “classical Songhai music,” playing the guitar and harmonica for various audiences. Eventually, he moved to Mopti where he continued to work as a mason and, after being inspired by a traveling circus, began performing acrobatic tricks on his bicycle for adoring crowds. To further publicize his performances, he decided to hire an itinerant Ghanaian photographer to take photographs of himself in action. Finding architectural construction in Mopti more challenging than in Timbuktu (due to the different methods of fabrication), and encouraged by his experience with photography, like his uncle Mahouloune Nyinnamba before him, Maïga resigned to pursue a career in the medium. Thus, around 1958-9, he purchased a (6x6cm) Senflex camera from a gendarme in Mopti, who taught him the fundamentals of taking photographs. After this brief introduction, he moved north to Konna, a town between Mopti and Niafunké along the Niger River, to begin working as a photographer. To print his negatives, he sent his exposed film to Hussein and Hassan Traoré (often referred to as “The Twins”) in Mopti—the few photographers in the region who possessed an enlarger.⁸² Shortly thereafter, in 1959, the Traoré brothers helped Maïga purchase an enlarger of his own and taught him fundamental darkroom processes in the span of one week. From Konna, Maïga moved north along the Niger River to Niafunké and then to Diré. By 1960, he was back in Timbuktu working as a photographer (Maïga 2004).⁸³

Maïga never opened a studio in Timbuktu. Rather, to have portraits and identification photos taken, people would come to his home, or he would travel to theirs. In either case, his pictures were composed in an outdoor courtyard, using a decoratively textured wall or draped a patterned cloth over it as a backdrop. This was during the regime of Modibo Keita and his socialist program, when the country faced serious economic crises and many of its citizens found it increasingly difficult to access material goods, including photographic equipment. Thus, throughout the 1960s until the coup of 1968, to purchase his materials Maïga regularly traveled to Niamey, Niger. Finally, to escape the especially high taxes in Timbuktu imposed by Keita’s successor, Moussa Traoré, and to find a locale with a greater demand for his business, in 1973, he moved to Bamako.⁸⁴ Toward the end of the year, he opened his first studio Photo Mystère in the neighborhood of Lafiabugu.⁸⁵ Between then and 1984, Maïga opened three more studios in the city: Photo Tabakoro, in Lafiabugu; Studio Débo, also in Lafiabugu, which he gave to his younger brother; and Sankoré in Sogoninko, named after a neighborhood in Timbuktu, where he could still be found in 2004. (At one point, Maïga opened another studio with a Guinean named Alpha but it did not work and is now closed.)

In Bamako, Maïga obtained all of his supplies from Malick Sidibé and La Croix du Sud, and had his cameras repaired at Studio Malick.⁸⁶ Maïga shared that Sidibé had given him a lot of useful advice over the years: helping him fix problems, make improvements, and

⁸² Incidentally, Maïga had previously helped construct their studio.

⁸³ According to Chab Touré and Mahamane Maïga, Professor of Letters at l’Institut National des Arts, Hamidou Maïga was the first photographer in Timbuktu (Touré 2000).

⁸⁴ Maïga stated that at the time, annual studio taxes in Timbuktu were 40,500 francs (Maïga 2004).

⁸⁵ In his book, Chab Touré posits Photo Mystère in the neighborhood of Hamdallaye in Bamako. However, Maïga said that it was located in Lafiabugu (Maïga 2004; Touré 2000).

⁸⁶ The two enlargers housed at his studio today, for example, were purchased from Malick Sidibé, and Maïga says that, even now, he works with products from La Croix du Sud (Maïga 2004).

learn new photographic processes. Like many professional photographers of his generation in Mali, Maïga worked predominantly in black and white. However, when color started to become fashionable in the late 1970s (before color laboratories arrived in Bamako), he used to send his film off to Photo Rush in France. Since the 1980s, his studio portrait and reportage commissions were in color.⁸⁷ Due to the saturated market and proliferation of “amateur” cameras and “street” photographers (who can undersell studio prices by nearly one-third) in Bamako, Hamidou Maïga admitted that he currently had few clients (in 2004) and the ones who arrived at Sankoré predominantly requested identification photos (Maïga 2004).

Maïga formerly served as Secretary of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.). In 2003 he made the pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*), and, thus, earned the distinction “El Hadj.” Along with Sidiki Sidibé, Maïga was one of the few remaining elder photographers present to participate in the launch of the Archive of Malian Photography at the National Museum in Bamako in May 2017.

Apprentices: Maïga had several apprentices. Most of whom have been relatives, including each of his sons. Those he named included: his son Abdoulaye Maïga (at Studio Konina in Hippodrome), his younger brother “El Hadji” (at Photo-Tabakoro in Lafiabugu), his older brother Issa Maïga, and a man he called “Alpha” who was from Guinea.

Matthew Amao Olaiya (b. 1952) - Gao

Matthew Amao Olaiya was born Yorùbá in Ghana in 1952. In 1969, he left Ghana with his family, when they, like Tijani Sitou, were expelled from the country with many other foreigners after the passing of the Deportation Act of 1957. From Ghana, Olaiya went to Gao, where his parents worked as traders from 1970 to 1972. During this period, Olaiya learned photography as an apprentice to Azeem Lawal, until the family left for Burkina Faso. In 1997, they returned to Sakí, the town of their collective origin, where Olaiya practiced photography professionally as of 2005 (Nimis 2005).

Alhaji Hamid Olaniye (b. circa 1946) - Bamako

Alhaji Hamid Olaniye was born in Ejigbo, Nigeria circa 1946. As a young man, he was trained in the art of masonry, a trade in which he worked until he left Nigeria during the civil war in 1968. Olaniye soon became a well-seasoned traveler, moving throughout West Africa to Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Togo, Ghana, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. From 1971-3, he worked as a barber, and, shortly thereafter, began learning photography from his elder brother in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire. Finally, in 1974, Olaniye arrived in Bamako, where he found work with an unnamed Guinean photographer. The following year, he opened his own enterprise Studio Unity. According to Nimis, “Olaniye was one of two Yorùbá men to maintain a photography studio in Bamako in 2000” (Nimis 2005).

⁸⁷ Over the years, Maïga has taken studio and reportage pictures of Malians from all walks of life. Among the most famous of whom was soccer player Salif Keita (Maïga 2004).

Madou Pompier - Bamako

According to Malick Sidibé, in 2004, Madou Pompier was a retired reportage photographer in Daoudabugu (Sidibé 2004).



Abdourahmane [Abderramane; Abdramane; Abdrahamane] Abou Sakaly (1926-1988) - Bamako⁸⁸

Of Moroccan heritage, Abdourahmane Abou Sakaly was born in St. Louis, Senegal in 1926. According to Nimis, he began working as a chauffeur and later as a textile and jewelry trader in his hometown, where he also married his first wife (Nimis 1998). Around 1946, Sakaly first traveled to Bamako. Until 1955, when he settled in Bamako more permanently, he continued to travel between Senegal and Mali, maintaining his trading business and, eventually, marrying his second wife in Bamako (Sakaly 2010). It remains unclear when and how Sakaly first became familiar with photography. Although

some authors have claimed that he apprenticed under renowned Senegalese photographers Meïssa Gaye and Amadou “Mix” Gueye,⁸⁹ it is likely that he did not take a professional interest in photography until he settled in the Malian capital. It is known that, by 1955, he was mentored in darkroom processes by Nabi Doumbia (a former assistant to Pierre Garnier at Photo-Hall Soudanais) and his brother Bakary Doumbia, as well as Baru Koné.⁹⁰ In fact, to honor his primary tutor, Sakaly named his son (who was the first born after his apprenticeship in Bamako) “Naby” after Doumbia (Nimis 1998; Morse 2020).

Along with his brothers, Hamid and Magid, Abdourahmane opened a studio in the Bagadadji neighborhood of Bamako in 1955. The following year, he opened Studio Sakaly in the neighborhood of Medina-Kura along the road to Koulikoro. In addition to portraiture, Sakaly created reportage photographs of social events and private functions at places like the Grand Hotel for military officers, police officers, other dignitaries, and elites in the city. During these early years, according to Malick Sidibé, Sakaly was in competition with French photographer Gérard Guillat-Guignard, as the two professionals shared similar patronage. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Sakaly became famous and

⁸⁸ In 2021, Sakaly’s biographical entry was reviewed and updated by his son, Youssouf Sakaly, and Hannah Morse, who completed her Master’s thesis on Abdourahmane Sakaly at Columbia University in 2020.

⁸⁹ Several authors have claimed that Sakaly apprenticed to Meïssa Gaye and Amadou “Mix” Gueye in St. Louis, Senegal, before arriving in Bamako (Nimis 1998; Elder 1997; Saint Léon 1998). They remain unsubstantiated by my research and that of Hanna Morse. Certainly, the challenge of ascertaining the details of this particular history is exacerbated by the fact that Sakaly passed away in 1988, well before research on the history of photography in Mali or in Senegal was academically pursued, and the fact that he traveled often between Senegal and Mali in the early days of his career. Thus, it seems prudent to consider this history with caution and, as a result, such claims have not been perpetuated in this account.

⁹⁰ During a conversation with Simon Njami, for example, Malick Sidibé stated that, “Sakaly...dandy and star of the 1960s, was a driver and seller of fabrics and jewels before he discovered photography in the 1950s thanks to his acquaintanceship with Claude Rollin, a young French artist recently arrived in Bamako, and the untiring instruction of Nabi Doumbia, another pioneer of photography in Mali...Sakaly opened his studio in 1957” (Njami 2001: 94).

Studio Sakaly experienced great success. According to Baru Koné, Sakaly's studio was constantly bustling with business, which may have resulted from the fact that Sakaly and his assistants worked in nearly every photographic genre imaginable (Koné 2004) and because Sakaly was so sociable and well connected (Morse 2020). In addition to reportage, identification, and portrait photographs, Sakaly created "class photos" for school children, advertisement prints, and images that documented accidents for the police.⁹¹ According to many Bamakois today, including Amadou Baba Cissé, Baru Koné, and Bakary Sidibé, Sakaly was the most renowned photographer in Bamako during this period. Thus, it is not surprising that when the photographers' association Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.) was formed in the city in 1988, Sakaly was its first president. That same year, Sakaly passed away, and the members of G.N.P.P.M., and its new president Malick Sidibé, paid tribute to him and his family. Today, thanks to the work of Sakaly's son Youssouf, over 48,000 digitized negatives from Sakaly's collection (of circa 500,000 negatives and prints) are publicly accessible via the Archive of Malian Photography.

Apprentices: Several younger generation photographers in Mali were trained by Abdourahmane Sakaly, including most of those who were employed at Studio Africa Photo in Bamako, such as Amadou Baba Cissé (Cissé 2004).⁹² Sakaly also taught photography to his daughter, Zohra, and his sons Jamal, Mohammed "Naby" (now deceased), and Wahab who continue to operate (a much smaller version of) the studio today (Morse 2020). In addition, Sakaly employed older, experienced photographers at his studio, such as Timote Pinteau and Baru Koné who began working at Studio Sakaly when it opened in 1956 (Koné 2004; Morse 2020). According to Érika Nimis, Sakaly also trained M'Barakou Touré in Bamako in 1947, eight years before Sakaly opened his first studio (Nimis 1998). Thus, Sakaly's impact on the photographic community in Mali, particularly in Bamako, has been vast and enduring.

Mauritala Salaw [Muritala Salau] (b. 1957) - Gao

Mauritala Salaw, a Yorùbá man, was born around 1957 in Sakí, Nigeria. In 1968, he left his hometown for Niamey, Niger. According to Nimis, his "older brother" Azeem Lawal, who taught him photography, "called" Salaw to work with him in Gao in 1972 (Nimis 1998). Freed by Lawal to work for himself in 1981, Salaw opened his business Studio Photo Kodak in the city in 1982. To perpetuate the family venture, he has selected one of his sons to run the studio after he retires (Lawal 2004).

⁹¹ In this vien, Nimis states that Sakaly also created official portraits of Malian presidents Modibo Keita and Moussa Traoré, claiming that "Official reportage remained one of Sakaly's monopolies for a long time," and suggests (as in the account of Baru Koné) that Sakaly trained a lot of the photographers who were employed at A.N.I.M. (Nimis 1998: 60, 62-63; Koné 2004). It is undoubtedly true that Sakaly took reportage photographs of dignitaries and leaders during social and political functions. However, the earliest photographers at A.N.I.M., with the exception of Mamadou Cissé (who learned photography from Guinean photographer Robert Bangoura in Mopti and during his service in the military), such as Malim Coulibaly, Oumar Siby, Abdoulaye Traoré, and Ousmane Keita, largely claim to have been trained by European photographers in or outside of Mali. This is particularly true during the socialist era, when A.N.I.M. was funded by communist nations such as East Germany, and its employees were sent to East Germany, Poland, U.S.S.R., Hungary, and Czechoslovakia for training.

⁹² According to Nimis, Sakaly also trained M'Baraku Touré in photography in 1947 (Nimis 1998).

Boubacar Garba Samounou (b. circa 1958) - Jenné

Boubacar Samounou was born in Mali in the late 1950s. In 1977, he came to Jenné to teach at a secondary school. Alongside his primary profession, Samounou began practicing studio photography during his evening and weekend hours. In 1992, he retired from teaching in order to work full-time as a studio photographer in Jenné, where he continues to live and work today (Charton 1995; Nimis 1998).

Karim Sangaré (b. 1950s) - Bamako, Kidal

Karim Sangaré was one of Malick Sidibé's apprentices in the 1970s. He currently works as a photographer in Kidal (for Agence Commerciale) and runs his own business Studio Jeune, where he makes studio and reportage photographs. In an interview, Sangaré said that he has opened three studios by the same name in Mali: One is in Niaréla, which he calls studio "A"; another, somewhere else, he refers to as studio "B"; and his studio in Kidal is studio "C." Alongside his photographic career, Sangaré also works for O.P.A.M. (Office de Produit Agriculture du Mali) selling chickens (K. Sangaré 2004).



El Hadj Bassirou Sanni (c.1937-2000) - Mopti

Bassirou Sanni was born Yorùbá in Sakí, Nigeria around 1937.⁹³ From 1960 to 1962, he studied photography in Lagos, and in 1962 he arrived in Mopti with a Japanese mahogany wooden box camera that he had purchased in Nigeria. Sanni's younger brother Latifu later joined him in Mopti, where he learned photography under Bassirou's tutelage. Both Bassirou and Latifu operated studios in Mopti before fellow Yorùbá and Sakí native Tijani Sitou. In 1971, Bassirou helped Sitou find his studio, and over the years the two colleagues became close friends and eventually in-laws. At some point, before his passing in 2000, Sanni completed the *hajj* (the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca) and thus earned the revered title "El Hadj" (Sitou 2004).

Latifu Sanni (b. 1940s) - Mopti

The younger brother of Bassirou Sanni, Latifu Sanni, was born Yorùbá in Saki, Nigeria in the 1940s. After apprenticing to Bassirou at his studio during the 1960s, Latifu Sanni continued to work as a professional photographer in Mopti as of 2004 (Sitou 2004).

Oumar [Diallo] Siby - Bamako

From 1968 to 1978, according to Érika Nimis, Oumar Siby was the director of the photography department at the Agence Nationale de l'Information Malienne (A.N.I.M., which as of 1992 has become the Agence Malienne de Presse et de Publicité [A.M.A.P.]). At the agency, Siby worked alongside photographers, such as Malim Coulibaly, Moumouni Koné and Ousmane Keïta (Coulibaly 2004). Like many of his colleagues, Siby received his photographic training in former East Germany, where he was sent by the socialist regime of Modibo Keïta during the 1960s: first, at a school of photography

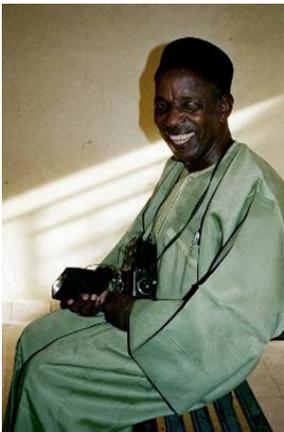
⁹³ The 1937 date of Bassirou Sanni's birth is provided on a website managed by Svend Erik Sokkelund: <http://www.african-collection.dk/>. However, in 2004, Malick Sitou speculated that Sanni was born closer to 1934 (Sitou 2004).

and later at the “A.N.D.” advertising agency, which remains operational in Germany today (Nimis 1998).



Issa Sidibé (1956-2004) - Bamako

Issa Sidibé was born in 1956 in Soloba, a small town in the Wasulu (southwestern) region of Mali. Like his cousin, Malick Sidibé, he attended school in Buguni. During school in 1974, he traveled to Bamako to visit his older brother Sidiki Sidibé who asked him to stay and work at his studio. Thus, in 1975, he began studying photography with Sidiki Sidibé at Studio Sidiki in the Bolibana neighborhood of Bamako. In 1980, Sidiki opened a second studio, Photogenic, in Lafiabugu and gave Studio Sidiki to Issa.⁹⁴ Aside from some visits to Guinea and Senegal over the years, Issa served as the studio’s central operator since he took over the business. In 2004, the studio was recouperated by Sidiki, who took responsibility for the enterprise after Issa’s death (I. Sidibé 2004; S. Sidibé 2004; M. Sidibé 2004). Issa Sidibé was formerly a member of the amateur and professional photographers’ association *Ja Ton* (“Image Association”), the directors of of which were Lamine (“a Nigerian”) and Baba Traoré (Photo Royale).



Malick Sidibé (1936-2016) - Bamako

Malick Sidibé was born in Soloba, a small town in the Wasulu region (southwestern portion) of Mali.⁹⁵ After attending elementary school in Yanfolila (37km from his hometown), he went to a *tubab* (French) school in Buguni where his teacher Séraphin and French administrator Maurice Méker recognized his talent for drawing and illustration (Sidibé 2004, 2003: 75).⁹⁶ During a visit from Emile Louveau, the then Governor of the French Sudan, Méker advised Sidibé to provide Louveau with three examples of his work: “the Bamako sports ground, a general view of Buguni and a local landscape” (Magnin 1998: 35). Impressed with his artistic abilities, Governor Louveau

⁹⁴ Sidiki’s and Issa’s accounts differ a bit in terms of dates. According to Sidiki, Studio Sidiki was left to Issa in 1988 when Sidiki left for the Ivory Coast (S. Sidibé 2004).

⁹⁵ Along with his curriculum vitae, several written sources have erroneously listed 1935 as the year of Sidibé’s birth. However, Sidibé held 1936 as his accurate birth year, though he never attempted to correct the mistake due to the great popularity of the Hasselblad catalogue and the monograph authored by André Magnin (Sidibé 2003). Yanfolila is the capital of the Wasulu region of southwestern Mali where, before the time of Samory Touré and French colonialism, Fulani herders from the Futa Jallon area of Guinea settled and gradually merged, socially, culturally, and linguistically, with local Bamana farmers. Thus, Malick Sidibé refers to himself and other *Wasulunkaw* (people from the Wasulu area) as “Bambara-Peulhs,” in French, or “Fula-Bamana,” in Bamanankan (Sidibé 2004).

⁹⁶ In Magnin’s catalogue, Malick Sidibé is quoted discussing the significance Mr. Méker (whose name is misspelled in the text) had in his life. Sidibé stated, “Maurice Necker was really important for me. He even wanted to personally pay for half the cost of my studies” (Magnin 1998: 35). The precise history regarding M. Séraphin is less clear. In interviews, Sidibé suggests that he was an influential teacher during his youth, prior to his move to Bamako. However, records at the Institute Nationale des Arts indicate that M. Séraphin was a drawing professor at the school in 1955 when it was called l’ École des Artisans Soudanais.

enrolled Sidibé in the jewelry program at the École des Artisans Soudanais (School of Sudanese Craftsmen), now named l'Institut National des Arts (National Art Institute) in Bamako in 1952.⁹⁷ Thus, as a teenager, Malick Sidibé was honored for his artistic talent and throughout his lifetime has considered himself to be an artist. In fact, during a visit home in 1945, at the age of nine, while on vacation from his studies in Buguni, his mother told him about a powerful dream she had in which her entire room was decorated with his images. This moment has remained significant for him throughout his life. At the time, he interpreted it to mean that his drawings had ornamented her room. Today he believes that she was actually referring to his photographs, which underscores his belief that photography has always been his destiny.

During his time at the École des Artisans Soudanais, Malick Sidibé had his first portrait made at Makan Macoumba Diabaté's house (circa 1954) by Baru Koné, who also taught him "some things about how to take a picture."⁹⁸ In 1955, Sidibé graduated from the college with a degree in jewelry-making.⁹⁹ That same year, French photographer Gérard Guillat-Guignard arrived at the school seeking the aid of a student to paint the interior of his studio and photographic supply store Photo Service. Malick Sidibé was selected for the job.¹⁰⁰ Happy with his work (and likely his positive character and diligent work ethic) Guillat-Guignard asked Sidibé to continue his employment at Photo Service as a cashier and photographic assistant. His tasks included selling products, numbering and drying negatives, glazing prints, and delivering finished photographs to customers. At the time, Mamadou Berthé, another Malian assistant employed at Photo Service, worked in the darkroom printing photos and in the studio taking portraits of African patrons. Over the years, Malick Sidibé learned the different aspects of photographic production by

⁹⁷ While in Bamako, Sidibé resided with his paternal uncle Dioumé Sidibé. Unfortunately, his father had passed away five years prior, in 1947 (Sidibé 2003).

⁹⁸ Sidibé added that he had his first portrait made as a souvenir for his family (Sidibé 2003).

⁹⁹ Jewelry-making was thrust upon Malick Sidibé by Mr. Couré (the director of the school during the époque), Governor Louveau, and Maurice Méker. It was not Sidibé who chose the field of study. Rather, given his heritage, he found the focus inappropriate. Sidibé was born in a Fulani family, who are herders by tradition. Alternatively, jewelry smithing is closely aligned with the work of blacksmiths. In the region, blacksmiths are commonly Bamana farmers—a group or caste with whom the Fulani customarily engage in a "joking cousin relationship" called *senankuya*. These two groups are historically endogamous and teasingly berate each other for their line of work, with each holding their own profession as the highest and most respected. For example, in an interview, Malick Sidibé explained, *fula te bijouterie ke, o ye numuw ta ye*, "A Fulani person is not a jeweler, that is blacksmiths' work" (Sidibé 2003). Thus, the act of enrolling Sidibé in a jewelry program was a form of taboo-breaking, and, more personally, an insult. In fact, Sidibé said that during those early days the students did not like the school; they didn't like the bureaucracy (Sidibé 2003). However, Sidibé felt fortunate for the opportunity and did not complain. Furthermore, labor divisions, and/or restrictions, based on caste or ethnicity had already begun to relax in the capital city. Likewise, "modern" vocations such as urban tailoring, barbering, sign painting, popular music recording, and photography are practiced by and open to nearly anyone with the interest, ability, and opportunity. Sidibé ultimately sees this history as a step along the path that eventually led him to his destined career in photography (Sidibé 2003).

¹⁰⁰ Extant literature regarding this situation is regularly misleading, implying that Sidibé painted decorative or artistic designs on the studio's interior walls. To be perfectly clear, Sidibé says that he simply painted the inside of the store, as a commercial painter would, with one solid color (Sidibé 2003). However, is not difficult to appreciate the misunderstanding, given that in an interview published in *Flash Afrique!* in 2001, Sidibé himself is quoted saying, "I was meant to paint the decorations [at GG's studio] but became a jack-of-all-trades and also took care of the accounts [cashier]" (Njami 2001: 95).

watching Guillat-Guignard and Berthé as they worked, though he stresses that they did not teach him per se. Rather, he feels that he taught himself how to develop and print negatives over time through observation and trial and error, and began “learning how to take pictures from the Africans who came to Photo Service with their cameras” (Sidibé 2004).¹⁰¹ Eventually, Guillat-Guignard allowed Sidibé to practice photography himself, making reportage photographs for his West African clientele (Sidibé 2004).¹⁰² In other words, Guillat-Guignard took studio and reportage pictures of *tubabuw* (“whites”) including Europeans as well as people from Madagascar, the Indian Ocean area, and South Africa, while Malick Sidibé was responsible for the photos of West Africans (Sidibé 2003). In 1956, Sidibé bought his first camera, a Brownie Flash, which he referred to as an “amateur camera” that he used for reportage but never for studio photos.¹⁰³ While working for Gérard Guillat-Guignard, he also began taking on his own reportage commissions, and by 1957 had become a “full-time” photographer (Sidibé 2004). During this year, he also started repairing cameras—a trade for which he became well-known throughout Mali and neighboring countries.¹⁰⁴ As Guillat-Guignard’s employee, Sidibé was also sent to Ségu for a while to help run another of his Photo Service shops.¹⁰⁵

When Guillat-Guignard left for Nouméa, New Caledonia, in 1958, he asked Malick Sidibé to manage Photo Service. However, Sidibé declined. Rather, he continued to work at the store under the management of Jean Perini, Mr. and Mrs. Touveron, and later Mr. Magné, who purchased the business from Guillat-Guignard and eventually handed it over to Assad Jean Bittar. Sidibé finally left Photo Service in 1962-3, when Mr. Magné was

¹⁰¹ However, some of the photographs that Guillat-Guignard mailed to Malick Sidibé in December 2003, indicate that Mamadou Berthé—one of Gé-Gé’s African assistants—also took portraits of Westerners.

¹⁰² In an interview with Simon Njami, Sidibé added: “Gérard gradually allowed me to work in the laboratory and finally to take photos of my own—although only of African customers, since Europeans would not have wanted to be photographed by an African” (Sidibé 2003).

¹⁰³ This same year, Sidibé was called for military duty, but was turned away due to his imperfect vision. He recognizes this event as “paradoxical,” since he has spent his life working as a photographe—a profession that relies heavily on one’s eyesight (Sidibé and Magnin 2003: 75).

¹⁰⁴ In an interview with André Magnin, Sidibé described how he began repairing cameras in 1957. He said, “I sent a ‘damaged’ camera to France to be repaired. But the estimate was too high so they sent it back... So, I took the camera apart and mended it myself. From that point on I got to be known as the only mechanical camera repairer. It helped people, and it became a passion for me. It made me even fonder of pictures” (Magnin 1998:40). To provide a sense of his engagement with this activity, and the number of cameras he amassed in his studio collection, here is a list of some of the camera brands and models that were on view on his studio shelves in November 2005 (most of which are 6x6 cm format Twin Lens Reflex cameras, popular among professional photographers who work in black and white): Hasselblad (Sweden), Rolleiflex (Germany), Zenit 35mm (Russia), Rollop (Germany), Weltaflex (Germany), Sem (France), Yashica (Japan), Kid-Box (France), Brownie Flash II (USA), Konica 35mm (Japan), Pentax 35mm (USA), Polaroid (USA), Exakta Varex 35mm (Dresden), Bioflex (Germany), Flexarel (Germany), Любитель 166 (Russia), Lubitel 166B (Russia), Rollei 355 35mm (France), КИЕВ (Russia), Zenit-C (Russia), Zehmm 5 (Russia), Mamiya (Japan), Kodak (USA), Gap (France), Comet III (Italy), Interflex (Japan), Agfa Optima (Germany), and Polaroid (Holland) cameras for identification cards.

¹⁰⁵ Gérard Guillat-Guignard owned three Photo Service businesses in Mali: one in Bamako, one in Kayes, and another in Ségu. Supporting this, his stationary read: “Photo Service: Portraits, Amateurs, Photocopie. Application à la Publicité, Commerce et Industrie. Prises de vue: Studio, Industrielle, Documentaire – Reproductions – Tirages – Agrandissements. Spécialiste Petit Format – Retouches – Photomontage – Travaux Noir et Couleur. BAMAKO – SEGOU – KAYES.”

the proprietor, he said, because his wife fell ill. By this time, he had already been working for himself on the side and had opened his own business Studio Malick in the neighborhood of Bagadadji in 1962. In 1960, with the financial assistance of his uncle Dioumé, he was able to purchase all of his laboratory equipment as well as a Senflex 6x6 cm Twin Lens Reflex camera from a French soldier by the name of Roger who was returning home. By 1961, Sidibé already had his first apprentice, his cousin Sidiki Sidibé (Sidibé 2004; Sidibé and Magnin 2003: 76). Shortly thereafter, with the financial support of his paternal uncle Hawa Dumen Sidibé, a businessman and trader in the Wasulu region of Mali, Sidibé was able to open his studio at a locale he rented from the father of his friend Karamogo Touré.¹⁰⁶ When he left to work for himself in 1962, he took most of Photo Service's African clientele with him. His commissions included studio portraits, reportage photos of weddings, baptisms, surprise parties, picnics, and "industrial photos" depicting the construction of railroads, highways, and architectural structures (Sidibé 2004). Sidibé also traveled to people's workplaces and homes to take their pictures. A large number of Sidibé's archives depict young people celebrating during neighborhood "surprise parties" hosted by "clubs" or *grins*. Others illustrate youths enjoying themselves at picnics on "The Egret's Rock" along the Niger River.¹⁰⁷

To advertise his business, Sidibé installed a large (6x3ft), neon sign that read Studio Malick, which he says was the only "lit place" outside in the street and was excellent publicity though it was expensive (Magnin 1998: 38). He also stamped each of his photographs with his insignia. During its heyday, in the 1960s and 1970s, his studio was always bustling with business, particularly in the evenings, and his busiest occasions were weekends and holidays. With his assistants, he often worked long hours at the studio (and, in the earlier years, doing reportage photography), as well as at his darkroom laboratory at home, where he was often active until well-past midnight.

Alongside his private commissions, Sidibé also photographed national, cultural, political and artistic events.¹⁰⁸ For example, he stated that he worked with almost all of the musicians who participated in the Semaine Nationale de la Jeunesse (National Youth

¹⁰⁶ Sidibé's family continues to rent a slightly smaller version of the same space from the Touré family today. To bolster his rapport with the family and to ensure his stability there, he took pictures of the family members free of charge (Sidibé 2004).

¹⁰⁷ A couple of Sidibé's former apprentices, such as Amadou Fané, have contested his authorship of these images, stating that they were the ones who actually took the pictures. Such claims make sense given the significance of generational ties and trust between a photographer and his clients—the primary reason for a professional photographer, particularly as he matures (marries, has children, so on), to acquire young apprentices in the first place. However, photographers' studios are conceived in Mali much as the workshops of Renaissance artists continue to be in that it is the "master" photographer who owns the negative and who receives credit for the image, although he may not have been the one who physically took the photograph. This is a sensitive issue for photographers and their assistants, particularly in the context of the international exhibition and publication of older negatives, and the fame, fortune, and opportunities that come along with it. To protect the photographers (who wish their claims to remain anonymous) from any possible negative consequences, the names of these individuals have been withheld. However, for an example of a deliberately public case, consult the biographical entry for Amadou Fané.

¹⁰⁸ In addition to his commissioned work, throughout his career, Sidibé took photographs for more personal reasons, such as family celebrations and the documentation of rural events and scenes, particularly in the region of his hometown, Soloba, in the Wasulu countryside of southwestern Mali.

Week) festivals every year since 1962. Likewise, he took pictures of Salif Keïta and the Rail Band since 1971 and throughout the 1970s at parties or concerts at the Buffet-Hôtel de la Gare and Tele-Rama. He photographed Kar Kar in Mopti in 1999 (with Barbier Mueller), and Ali Farka Touré in Gao and Timbuktu. More recently, he took portraits of Tiken Jah Fakoli and Oumou Sangaré at Studio Malick in 2002 and 2003-4 respectively. In 2007, Sidibé photographed several Malian musicians and song writers who participated in the public awareness project “Les Africains Chantent Contre le SIDA/Africans Sing Against AIDS.”

Sidibé is well-known by the general population in Bamako,¹⁰⁹ and by members of the photographic community throughout Mali and neighboring countries in West Africa. He was respected for his photographic abilities, artistic sensibility, professional activism, and personal generosity. From 1995 until shortly before his passing in 2016, he served as the President of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.), which was established in Bamako in 1988. He was instrumental in acquiring the support of the National Assembly for the proposed Maison de la Photographie Africaine and the *Rencontres* biennials in Bamako. Furthermore, he participated in several local educational programs designed to teach young Malians photography, such as the Stenope project financed by the French organization Oscura de France. This workshop instructed students how to make and use pinhole cameras and was called *Naye-Naye* (meaning “light” in the Dogon language) by its Malian organizers.

In the last two decades of his life, Sidibé received great international recognition, traveling extensively throughout the continents of Africa, Europe, Asia, and North and South America. His photographs have been exhibited in numerous locales worldwide, as well as published in various articles, books, and catalogues.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Sidibé was engaged in educational and foreign-exchange projects in Mali with Helvetas (now the C.F.P. in Bamako), the National Art Institute, the Conservatoire, and l'École Promo Femme, as well as abroad in the United States and Europe. In 2003, Sidibé was awarded the prestigious Hasselblad Foundation International Award in Photography, the first African photographer to receive the honor, placing him alongside fellow recipients such as Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ansel Adams, Cindy Sherman, and Robert Frank. More recently, he was chosen as the recipient for the 2007 Venice Biennale's Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement award, whose director, Robert Storr, stated “No African artist has done more to enhance photography's stature in the region, contribute to its history, enrich its image archive or increase our awareness of the textures and transformations of African culture in the second half of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first

¹⁰⁹ For example, several of my Malian friends, such as the Traoré family in Hippodrome, have photographs in their family albums that were taken by Malick Sidibé during the 1960s and 1970s. Furthermore, most taxi drivers, particularly those over twenty-five and those centered in the Niaréla, Hippodrome, and Bagadadji neighborhoods, commonly know where his studio is located. Moreover, in the 21st century, Sidibé regularly appeared on Malian television (O.R.T.M.) and was featured in articles in *L'Essor* and other local newspapers for his participation and international renown in the global art market.

¹¹⁰ To print the large-scale reproductions of his work, often featured in these exhibitions, he contracted Philippe Salaun in Paris and Siriman Dembélé and Youssouf Sogodogo in Bamako.

than Malick Sidibé.”¹¹¹ As a result, less than a year later, the International Center of Photography in New York City honored the artist with a Lifetime Achievement accolade during their 24th Annual Infinity Award ceremony in May 2008.¹¹²

During this period, Sidibé was also commissioned to take fashion photographs for designers such as agnès b. in Paris and for French magazines such as *Vogue*, *Elle*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Double, Nouveau Feminine*. His style of photography has become so influential that it has been emulated by fashion designers, popular musicians, glamour magazines (Osterweis 2009; Jackson 1997; *Vogue* 2005). Well into the 21st century, Sidibé continued to experiment with inventive ideas and new photographic genres, such as his *Vue de Dos* series, and developed some innovative thematic ideas for future exhibitions, which he hoped to self-curate but never materialized.¹¹³ Yet in spite of all his renown, until a few years before his death, Sidibé was still regularly found in front of Studio Malick repairing cameras alongside his son Karim (Malick to the right of the door, Karim to the left), often chatting with old friends. Sidibé passed away on April 14, 2016, in Bamako. Shortly thereafter, he was laid to rest beside his mother in his hometown Soloba.

Apprentices: Malick Sidibé has had several apprentices. His first was his cousin Sidiki Sidibé (1960s) who later opened Studio Sidiki in the Boulibana neighborhood of Bamako. Amadou Fané was his second apprentice, from 1968 to 1974. Fané now runs Studio Zoom in the Wolofobugu neighborhood of Bamako near Soudan Cinéma. Another cousin, Shaka Sidibé came next (1970s), later opening a studio in Misira near the Hippodrome. Then there were Youssouf and Karim Sangaré (1970s), the latter of whom now works as a reportage and studio photographer in Kidal for Agence Commerciale Kidal and operates Studio Jeune. After the Sangarés, Sidibé resigned to only accept his sons as his apprentices, finding it wiser to keep the business within the immediate family. He bought cameras for each of his sons and some of his nephews and, even, tried to teach his daughter Asetu the art form, but found that she was “too shy” (Sidibé 2004). The sons he has trained over the years include: Fousseini, Mody, Karim, Mamadou “Dierry,” Hamidou, and his namesake, and adoptive son, Malick Sitou.

¹¹¹ <http://www.labiennale.org/en/news/art/en/76182.html>. Malick Sidibé received the award in Venice on the first day of the biennale, June 10, 2007.

¹¹² Malick Sitou and Amidou Sidibé, telephone communication, 14 May 2008, San Diego; and the International Center of Photography in New York: <http://www.icp.org/site/c.dnJGKJNsFqG/b.3945787>.

¹¹³ Sidibé had a number of unpublished, unexhibited negatives stored in his darkroom that he wanted to exhibit in the future under innovative, post-modern themes, such as: *C'est Pas Ma Faute (It's Not My Fault)*, which relates to the Mande notion of *kun fê kô* (see chapter four), including the interesting forms and compositions that surprisingly result from mechanical malfunctions, sitters' movements, etc., that are not the fault or intention of the photographer, and *Le Regard Innocent (The Innocent Look)* which focuses on portraits of small children, as well as photographs that he has taken over the years in and around his hometown Soloba in the Wasulu countryside of southwestern Mali. Before his death, he shared these ideas with Jack Shainman in New York City.



Sidiki Sidibé (b.1943) - Bamako

Sidiki Sidibé was born in Soloba, in the southwestern region of Mali (Wasulu) around 1943. After one year of middle school in Bamako (1957-8), he returned to Soloba and resumed his agricultural work. In 1960-1 he wrote a letter to his cousin Malick Sidibé (his father, Dioumé Sidibé, was the older brother of Malick Sidibé's father) communicating that he wished to work with him. Malick responded right away and asked Dioumé to send Sidiki to Bamako to learn photography under him. Later that year, Sidiki arrived in Bamako to reside and work with his cousin at his home in Medina-Kura, where Malick had already gathered all of this photographic equipment. Everyday, Malick worked at Photo Service and would bring film home with him to print at night.

Sidiki was in charge of drying the prints and getting all of the materials ready for the morning. During the day, while Malick was at Photo Service, Sidiki used to dry prints and prepare identification photos, which consisted of cutting the photos and the envelopes used to house them, placing each individual's photos in one-quarter of an envelope, and writing their name upon it.

These processes continued in 1962, when Malick Sidibé finally found a location on Rue 30-19 (today Rue 508 x 521) in Bagadadji for Studio Malick. He and Sidiki brought the studio equipment to Bagadadji and Sidiki started working at Studio Malick alone while Malick worked at Photo Service. During this period, Malick taught him how to make portraits of customers so that he could take care of the studio. He imparted to Sidiki the importance of focusing on the person—taking into consideration lighting, distance, etc.—“to make everything look good” (Sidibé 2004). As he worked, Sidiki would stand near Malick and follow him closely. Describing his apprenticeship, Sidiki said, “it was like a school,” with Malick as his teacher (S. Sidibé 2004). The darkroom remained at home in Daoudabugu. Every morning, after drying the photos at home, Sidiki brought them to the studio and gave the prints to the customers. Aside from going home to eat lunch at noon, Sidiki would stay at the studio until Malick returned from Photo Service at six o'clock in the evening, when they would work together sometimes until midnight (S. Sidibé 2004).

In addition to studio portraits, Sidiki took reportage photographs at parties called “Cheb Jen”¹¹⁴ on Sunday evenings and at Saturday night dances. Every Saturday he was invited to a party to take pictures. Students and youths would also regularly ask him to accompany them to picnics along the Niger River in Sotuba, 14km from Bamako. Each Sunday, during the picnics, they would eat, dance, play music on their battery-operated record players, and frolic in the water. At this moment he was 19-27 years old and single. He was well-known and people were always asking him to come to their events, which included official political and social ceremonies. Malick was getting older. According to Sidiki, because of his age, he was preferred by young people.¹¹⁵ There were times when

¹¹⁴ Cheb Jen is the name of a Senegalese rice dish.

¹¹⁵ The photographic business in Mali is driven by generational ties. Young people want young photographers (friends, peers) at their parties.

Sidiki would stay at these events until eight o'clock in the morning. Then, he went home to develop and print the negatives the same morning.

Sometime during the late 1960s, Sidiki's brothers started putting pressure on him to get married (so that they themselves could marry). So, around 1969, Sidiki asked Malick to free him so that he could open a studio and start a family of his own. Malick told him to look for a place on the westside of Bamako, along the main road to the airport in the Boulibana neighborhood. Sidiki married in 1970, and his wedding was a grand affair that transpired over a week's time, largely financed by Malick Sidibé. Within a few months Sidiki found a room in a house owned by Oumar Traoré, an elderly Songhai man. Like his peers, Sidiki divided the large room into three smaller rooms (reception area, studio, and darkroom) and, that same year, on New Year's Eve, opened Studio Sidiki. Malick provided him with whatever he needed for his studio: equipment, materials, money, etc. Amadou Fané replaced Sidiki at Studio Malick.¹¹⁶

As "the only photographer on the west side of Bamako," Sidiki was famous and had a large clientele (S. Sidibé 2004). His customers came from as far as Kati, and he was commissioned to take reportage photographs in distant locations such as Banamba (northeast of Bamako), Kayes (west), Koulikoro (northeast) and Sikasso (southeast).¹¹⁷

Due to the increasing prevalence of itinerant photographers, color laboratories, and, thus, a dwindling studio clientele, in 1988, Sidiki left Bamako for Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, where he spent fourteen years farming coffee and cacao. During his absence, his younger brother (and second apprentice) Issa Sidibé took control of the studio, which remained in business when he returned in 2002. In 2004, Issa passed away and Sidiki repossessed the studio, put his first apprentice Oumar Sidibé in charge, and tried to modernize it—all while simultaneously overseeing other business projects (S. Sidibé 2005).

Apprentices: Sidiki trained his cousins Issa and Oumar Sidibé in photography and employed them at his studio.

Gaoussou Sissoko (b. 1922) - Ségu

Gaoussou Sissoko was born in Ségu in 1922. Educated in Bamako, in 1950 he went to work for the National Office of Irrigation (Office du Niger) where he was employed until 1994. By 1953 he was also working as a part-time, self-taught photographer in Ségu taking pictures with his (6x9cm) Kinax camera, which, as Elder reported, he had "stolen" from his brother "when he came to visit from the Ivory Coast" (Elder 1997). Sissoko acquired his second camera from his sister, who was married to a diplomat stationed in

¹¹⁶ Generational ties played an important role. Young clients want photographers their own age—especially for reportage. So, studios must take on young apprentices who are around the same age as their clients. The young photographers are more socially active and bring more patrons to the studio.

¹¹⁷As an apprentice at Studio Malick, working for Malick Sidibé during the 1960s, there is no doubt that, like Malick's other apprentices, some of Sidiki's photographs have been unwittingly published as Malick Sidibé's work in several monographs and catalogues since the 1990s. This practice is not necessarily controversial. In Mali, like many contemporary artists' workshops, and those during the Renaissance, an apprentice's work is the property of their mentor, who owns the studio, with their work commonly attributed to that "master" photographer.

the Soviet Union. Over the years, he learned some photography and darkroom techniques from his colleague Bogoba Coulibaly. Between 1953-1970, Sissoko was an active photographer, working out of his home where he had both his studio and darkroom. In 1995, Sissoko suffered a stroke and, according to Elder, was partially paralyzed (Elder 1997). Little of his archival materials remain in Ségu. All of his negatives and equipment were passed to his son who resides in Sikasso.¹¹⁸



Rachid Sitou (b. circa 1962) - Mopti

The son of professional photographer El Hadj Tijani Àdìgún Sitou, Rachid Sitou was born in Niamey, Niger, circa 1962. During the 1970s, he learned photography from his father, for whom he took reportage photos at the night club Refuge at the Hotel Campement and documented accidents for the police and insurance companies in Mopti. Sitou left his father's studio Photo Kodak to open his own studio Maxi Photo in the same city, where his brother Moussa Sitou became his assistant. Unlike his father, who made only a few, Rachid took several "Yorùbá style" photographs using double exposure techniques.¹¹⁹ (For example, he would take pictures of himself shaking his own hand.) Eventually, in the 1980s, Rachid Sitou left

Mopti for Niamey. Today he resides in his father's hometown, Saki, Nigeria (Sitou 2004).

¹¹⁸ During my stay in Mali, I was never able to meet Sissoko personally. This account derives from Elders' dissertation "Capturing Change" (1997).

¹¹⁹ Like many photographers working in black and white in Mali, both Tijani and Rachid Sitou made some photographs in which two negatives were printed on the same sheet of paper using a process known as "double exposure." (Often these images were created for special occasions, such as New Year's Eve or the Muslim holidays of Ramadan and Tabaski, for which a written slogan would appear beside an individual's portrait.) "Double exposure" implies that a single negative was exposed to the same piece of photographic paper two or more times or that more than one negative was exposed to the same paper to create a montage image. Tijani did not use double exposure techniques other than for holiday postcards. Rachid, on the other hand, did. For example, he would expose the same negative more than once onto a sheet of photo paper to create imaginative scenes, such as a man shaking his own hand. Rachid's brother Malick described these photographs as "Yorùbá style" because in Nigeria there is a tradition of photographers using double exposure to create images of twins, called *ere ibeji* (which is discussed by Sprague 1978). Rachid Sitou did not, however, use "double exposure" techniques to create *ere ibeji* (twin) photographs for his Yorùbá clientele in Mopti (Sitou 2004).



El Hadj Tijani Àdigún Sitou, “Oloóre” (1932-1999) - Mopti¹²⁰

El Hadj Tijani Àdigún Sitou was born Yorùbá (indicated by the *kéké* scarification marks on his cheeks) in Sakí, Nigeria in 1932.¹²¹ As a teenager, Sitou attended night school for three years to learn to read and write in Yorùbá at an adult education center in his hometown. Shortly thereafter, he began traveling to Ghana with his relative “Thomas.” Together they sold various goods, moving between markets on bicycles, “bush taxis,” or trucks to places like Kumasi, Bolgatanga, and Tamalé. However, their travels in Ghana ceased after the Deportation Act of 1957 when the country exercised the right to expulse all foreigners.¹²² After Ghana they went to Burkina Faso,

Benin, and then Niger trading Ghanian black soap and other commodities. From Niamey, the capital of Niger, Sitou and his younger brother Aziz followed a well-travelled trade route along the Niger River that brought several Sakí natives to Gao, Mali. In Gao, Sitou met Moussa Alagbo, who introduced him to Mahaman Awani (more commonly known as Juppau), one of the town’s few professional photographers. In 1967, Sitou entered into a formal apprenticeship with Juppau, learning studio, darkroom, and reportage practices until 1970.

Confident in his abilities, after training with Juppau, Sitou left Gao in 1970 to scout cities along the Niger River for an ideal locale in which to open his own studio.¹²³ He first visited Ségu, but found the market there flooded with photographers, so he continued southward to Bamako, Mali’s capital city. In the Bagadadji neighborhood, Sitou reconnected with Souleyman Cissé (an old family friend and trader from Niamey), who introduced him to Malick Sidibé. Not long afterward, the two photographers became friends, and Sitou acquired most of his photographic equipment at Studio Malick. Heeding Sidibé’s advice, Sitou soon moved on to Mopti. There, with the help of his friend Bassirou Sanni (another Yorùbá photographer from Sakí), he found a good

¹²⁰ Sitou’s biography was informed by several interviews with the Sitou family between 2004-2020 and one with Jean Bignat in Mopti in 2004.

¹²¹ Traditionally, Yorùbá surnames are unique to each individual and are called *Oriki* (the names of God’s attributes). For example, Tijani’s *Oriki* is Àdigún. *Adi* is “a person who ties.” *Gun* means “to make it perfect.” Thus, only god is Àdigún; only god is perfect. His son Malick’s *Oriki* is Ajao, “person who conquers and triumphs” (Sitou 2006). Post European contact, Yorùbá families have taken “European-style” last names that are passed down the paternal line. Muslim Yorùbá often appropriate Arabic numerical terms for this purpose. For example, *Situ* means “sixth” in Arabic, while *Sanni* means “second” and *Lawal* means “first.” Each of these represents the “family name” of Yorùbá photographers in Mali. The Yorùbá spelling of Tijani’s Arabic last name is Sitú. However, the Sitou family has come to use the French spelling because that is how it appears in all of their official identification documentation that has been used in the francophone country of Mali (Sitou 2006).

¹²² Malick Sitou referred to the period of the Deportation Act of 1957 as the *Busua Kore*, meaning “gather people and kick them out” (Sitou 2006).

¹²³ According to Tanya Elder’s account, along the way, Sitou bought a Ghanaian box camera and took identification pictures and portraits as an itinerant photographer in rural areas between Mopti and Jenne (Elder 1997).

location for his studio Photo Kodak, which he opened in 1971.¹²⁴ Soon thereafter, Tijani Sitou became one of the community's most celebrated photographers.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Photo Kodak¹²⁵ was perhaps the most popular studio in all of Mopti, strategically located on l'Avenue de l'Indépendance, the only road leading in and out of the city, across from the fish market in the center of town. Its façade, demarcated by a brightly painted wall and large Kodak sign, featured a window cabinet encasing the most recent of Sitou's photographs. Designed in part to advertise his latest styles and poses, the display attracted the patronage of many passersby.¹²⁶ Thursdays (market days) and Saturdays saw the most business, particularly in the evening when people were less occupied. The busiest occasions were celebratory events: weddings, the Muslim holidays of Ramadan and Tabaski, and national holidays, such as Independence Day (September 22). By 1978, the enterprise was so successful that it funded Sitou's journey to Mecca (*hajj*), thereafter earning him the coveted title "El Hadj."

In his studio, like many of his colleagues, Sitou provided a host of material aids (or props), such as paper flowers, portable radios and "boomboxes," Muslim attire, toy guns, and a telephone. He also featured painted canvas backdrops created by Malian artists, such as Sidi Cissé, that depicted manicured gardens, lighted city streets, airplanes, and eventually hotel pool scenes and famous international cityscapes. To provide a sense of intimacy and camaraderie, (like his mentor Juppau and his colleagues in Gao such as Azeem Lawal), Sitou offered various painted board cut-outs in the shape of a heart to artfully frame friends, relatives, and couples.

Studio portraiture was not the only genre in which Tijani Sitou worked, however. During his career, along with his apprentice-son Rachid, he also supplied photographic documentation for the police department and insurance companies in Mopti, such as Sabunyuman ("good cause") and C.N.A.R. ("Compagne nationale d'assurance et de reassurance"). Likewise, he and Rachid frequented public and private venues such as hotels, restaurants, and homes to record weddings and other celebrations, along with political and cultural events of the State. However, Sitou preferred studio work, where his artistry was most creatively expressed and where he spent the majority of his time.

Until the early 1980s, the majority of his images were created in black and white, and, like most photographers in Mopti at the time, Sitou bought his photographic materials from Frenchman Jean Bignat, whose corner shop was still operational in 2004, though he

¹²⁴ According to the Sitou family (cooperated by Malick Sidibé in 2004), the studio in Mopti was opened in 1971 (Sitou 2004). Tanya Elder alternatively cites 1973 as its founding date (Elder 1997: 68).

¹²⁵ The name of Sitou's studio changed around 1990 to Studio Ouvert Nuit et Jour Amadji Tidiani Shitou et Fils Photographe Gangal B.P. 112 Mopti. In 2004, the sign over the studio entrance read: Studio Photo: El Hadji Tidiani Shitou Oloore: Photographe à Gangal, B.P.: 112, Mopti, Rep. du Mali. The studio was closed in 2005 when Malick Sitou moved to the U.S. and his brother Ibrahim Sitou relocated to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

¹²⁶ Sitou also used the case to display photographs that had only been partially paid for—a strategy to shame customers (who often did not want their images publicly displayed) into paying in full to collect their pictures (Sitou 2006).

no longer sold photographic supplies.¹²⁷ Patrons appreciated black-and-white prints because they were better able than those made with color technology to withstand the climactic challenges of Mali's heat and sunlight and therefore lasted longer. At the time, those prints were also less expensive and more readily accessible than ones in color. Like many photographers in Mali, Sitou preferred black-and-white film and valued the artistry of the darkroom. However, circa 1982, color became more fashionable in Mopti and was preferred by the young clientele. But it was not yet a viable option. In that early period, color film had to be mailed off for processing by companies like Photo Rush in France, which required several weeks. A few years later, due to less expensive and more convenient color technology, the advent of commercial laboratories, and the influx of amateur "street" photographers (who, free from the overhead of costly rent, electricity, and taxation, could undersell studio prices by more than thirty percent), studio businesses started to decline.

A handful of studios persevered, however, and Photo Kodak was among them. Sitou continued to work at his studio through the 1990s, when African photography caught the attention of Western collectors, dealers, and curators, and thereby gained much recognition in the international art world.¹²⁸ By 1994, Mali's capital inaugurated the continent's first festival of African photography—a biennial entitled *Rencontres de la Photographie Africaine (African Photography Meetings)*. In a small exhibition affiliated with the festival's second Bamako opening, in 1996, portrait photographs by Tijani Sitou were on display in Ségu alongside those of two of his colleagues, Hamadou Bocoum (from Mopti) and Adama Kouyaté (from Ségu).¹²⁹

¹²⁷ In 1957, Jean Bignat began selling photographic supplies at his store: Est. Jean Bignat Commerce General, Rue 59, Porte 5, Komoguel II, Mopti. In 2004, I had the opportunity to speak briefly with Bignat about his involvement with the photography community in Mopti over the years. Sitou initially acquired his photographic equipment from Malick Sidibé and over the years, in addition to the materials he purchased from Bignat, he periodically traveled to Bamako to obtain photographic supplies at Studio Malick. He also purchased "cheaper" Nigerian products in Mopti from Saka Bello, a Yorùbá trader (Sitou 2006).

¹²⁸ Sitou's images have been exhibited several times since 1996. All but the *OFF* exhibition in Ségu (1996), the *Mopti à la Mode* exhibition (2007, 2009, 2018), and the exhibitions associated with the launch of the Archive of Malian Photography (2017), transpired without the knowledge or permission of the Sitou family.

¹²⁹ On January 5, 1995, Svend Erik Sokkelund came to Sitou's studio with two colleagues and took some negatives from Sitou's archives to be printed for the *OFF* exhibition. However, to the dismay of the Sitou family, the negatives have not yet been returned. On his website (www.african-collection.dk) Sokkelund claims that some of the reproductions that have been made from the negatives are now part of the Permanent Collection of the Danish Center for Culture and Development in Copenhagen. He was never given permission from Tijani or the Sitou family for that transaction. Furthermore, without the Sitou family's authorization or consent, he currently offers prints of these negatives for sale via his website, presented under the heading "The Sokkelund African Collection." When I spoke with Sokkelund at Fondation Seydou Keita in Bamako (November 2005), he stated that he had no intention of returning the negatives to the Sitou family. Shortly thereafter, he was ascertained and released twenty-four hours later by the Malian police on charges filed in Bamako concerning similar treatment of negatives created by another professional photographer in Mali whose family is still seeking retribution for the "theft" of the negatives and wants them returned.

After his passing, in 1999, Sitou's photographic legacy continued in the work of his sons, Malick and Ibrahim who kept their father's studio in business until 2009.¹³⁰ Continuing the tradition of his father and honoring his reputation as a model person, Malick Sitou signs his father's posthumous prints with Oloóre, the latter's Yorùbá nickname, meaning "Someone Who Does Good."

Tijani Sitou belonged to two photographers' associations: Association des Photographes à Mopti and Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.).

Apprentices: Sitou had several apprentices. Most of whom were Yorùbá, originally from Sakí, including "Séku," Maman Traoré, Adama Bamba, Rachid Sitou (son), Raouf Sitou (son), Dramane Sitou (nephew/adopted son), Moussa Sitou (son), Malick Sitou (son), Ibrahim Sitou (son), and Brehima Atanagbowo.

Youssef Sogodogo (b. 1955) - Bamako¹³¹

Youssef Sogodogo was born in 1955 in Konzanso-Kadiolo-Sikasso, Mali. In 1975, at the age of twenty, he enrolled at l'Institut National des Arts (I.N.A.) in Bamako where he studied design and plastic arts under Moussa Dembélé and Baladji Cissé. That same year, he began learning black-and-white photography by observing and conversing with photographers in Bamako, such as Béchir Touré in Niaréla, from whom he received his first camera (a German Zenit). The second photographer he observed was Zan Diarra in Bagadadji, and the third was Mamadou Watara (Ouatara) in the same neighborhood. In these early years, Sogodogo began his photographic education by taking pictures of his family members. During that time, until 1979, he also created reportage photographs in Mali. From 1980 to 1986, he continued his reportage work taking pictures during the "artistic, cultural, and sportive festivals in the region of Gao and in the areas around Bamako" associated with the national Youth Week (Sogodogo 2004). In 1983 he began photographing women's hairstyles for the Museum of the Sahel in Gao (where he served as the director for five years), with the desire to capture and preserve their ephemeral beauty and to memorialize different cultural aspects of Mali, especially those in Gao. From 1986 to 1988, Sogodogo made diverse reportage photographs throughout the country.

In December 1998, Youssef Sogodogo received the first prize, "Seydou Keïta," of the Ministry of Culture in Mali from President Alpha Oumar Konaré for his photographs of women's hairstyles.

In 2004, Sogodogo was employed as the conservator and restorer of textiles at the National Museum in Bamako. He is also currently the Director of the International Center for Photography (C.F.P., formerly Helvetas) in Bamako, where he has worked since 2002, the same year he began creating photographs in color. In 2001, Sogodogo was a resident photographer in Bal, Switzerland, and held an exhibition of his images there. In addition to

¹³⁰ Malick left for the U.S. in 2005. Ibrahim closed the studio when he left to find work in Equatorial Guinea and, later, Brazzaville in the Republic of the Congo (Sitou 2009).

¹³¹ Information in this biographical overview was gleaned from interviews with Sogodogo in Bamako during 2004 and from the photographer's curricula vitae.

heading photographic studies at the C.F.P. he has also taught workshops for l'École Promo Femme and at the Conservatoire Nationale in Bamako. In 2002 he worked with the former on a project photographing colonial architecture. In the future, he would like to publish an extensive collection of his photographs of regional women's hairstyles.

Apprentices: As a teacher at Helvetas and C.F.P., Sogodogo has mentored numerous students in photography. However, the only apprentice he named was Amadou Sow.

André Touré (b. 1911) - Bamako

André Touré was, perhaps, the earliest practicing Malian photographer recorded in extant literature. During his teenage years, Touré was a student at the École d'Apprentissage, a colonial educational institution, in Bamako. In 1928, at the age of seventeen, Touré was employed as a photographic assistant by Georges Gizycki, (an independent photographer and journalist working for the Agence Economique de l'A.O.F. and the Inspecteur du Service Generale des Textiles from 1928 to 1931). Touré and Gizycki traveled around Mali to Buguni, Sikasso, Kutiala, Ségu, and Bamako taking documentary photographs of agricultural, geographical, topographical, and textile production scenes. Likely, Touré exemplifies one of several Malians since the late nineteenth century who were hired and trained in the field of photography by European photographers, working in some documentary capacity for the colonial administration. However, his case is the only one that was documented in the holdings of the National Archives at Kuluba, where no further information about André Touré was provided (Archives Nationales, Kuluba. "Repertoire de Dossiers de Personnels," *Fonds Recent Serie 1C 1918-60* [1989], 1C5.17).



Kélétigi [Kélétigui] Touré (b. 1922) - Kayes

Kélétigi Touré was born in Kayes circa 1922. In 1936, around the age of fourteen, he began traveling throughout Mali and Senegal as an itinerant photographer. Three years later, in 1939, he opened his first studio in his hometown. In these early years, he used a large box camera to create his black-and-white photographs. In 1946, he began working with a smaller, more mobile (6x9cm) camera.

What little has been published on Kélétigi Touré's oeuvre derives from the work of Svend Erik Sokkelund, who has been conducting research on the photographer since the period of the first *Rencontres de la Photographie Africaine* in 1994, with a collection of Touré's photographs and brief bios featured in few publications (Olivia 1997; and Mesplé 1996: 5-28).

M'Barakou Touré, "Barak" (1922-1992) - Gao¹³²

According to Érika Nimis, M'Barakou Touré was born in 1922 in the region of Timbuktu. More commonly called "Barak," Touré was a State doctor who learned photography as an

¹³² This account derives from two publications by Érika Nimis on photography in Mali (1996 and 1998).

apprentice to Abdourahmane Sakaly in Bamako.¹³³ After working in Ménaka, Asongo, and Gao for his medical profession, Touré eventually became a photographer for the Commissariat de l'Information (which later became A.N.I.M.).¹³⁴ In 1968, he left medicine to delve full-time into photographic work, and, in 1976, he opened his studio Photo Sport, in Gao.¹³⁵ M'Barakou Touré passed away in 1992, during his pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*).

Abdoullaye Traoré - Bamako

According to Oumar Siby, director of the photography department at the Agence Nationale de l'Information Malienne (A.N.I.M.) from 1968 to 1978, Abdoullaye Traoré was one of the institution's "great photographers" (Nimis 1998). Touré, more commonly known as "Berlin" (in honor of his sojourn in former capital of East Germany), is reportedly deceased.



Alitiny Traoré, "Lito" (b. 1962) Diré - Bamako

Alitiny Traoré was born Songhai in Diré (region of Timbuktu) in 1962. In 1975, Traoré began learning photography after his uncle, Ali Touré, gave him his first camera—a Rolleiflex medium format (6x6 cm) camera—which he had purchased from a friend in France. From 1975 to 1979, Traoré worked as a photographic apprentice at his uncle's Studio de la Boucle du Niger in Diré. In 1979, he traveled to Bamako to study accounting at the Centre de Formation Technique de Quanzanbugu (C.F.T.Q.). However, the only work that he could find in the city was photography. Because of this, and his love for the medium, he decided to make photography his profession. At this time, he began working with Adramane Atikou Cissé at his studio Photo Askia in the neighborhood of Misira, (which no longer exists).¹³⁶ In 1986, along with his friend Abdoul Karim Fofané, "Lito" (a nickname given to him by his friend and his uncle when he was young), opened his own studio Photo Picsou in the neighborhood of Hippodrome in Bamako, because at that time there were no photographers in the area.¹³⁷ Throughout his career, Traoré has worked predominantly in black and white, and currently has his color film processed at Lion Photo (now Sun Color) in Bamako. In addition to portrait photographs, over the years, Lito has made reportage pictures of Malian musicians such as Ali Farka Touré, Airad B., and Kanja Kouyaté, and has taken reportage photographs in Bamako and

¹³³ Érika Nimis reported that M'Barakou apprenticed to Sakaly in 1947, a year after Sakaly first arrived in Bamako and eight years before the establishment of his first studio (Nimis 1998).

¹³⁴ In this capacity, he likely worked with Mr. Thierry and Malim Coulibaly, and perhaps Moumouni Koné and Ousmane Keïta, taking documentary photographs for the governmental press.

¹³⁵ This information derived from Tanya Elder's account. However, it is interesting to note that the name of his studio in Gao, Photo Sport, is similar to that of Mahaman Awani's Photo Esport Gao studio, which operated from 1958 to around 1972 (Elder 1997).

¹³⁶ After Cissé passed away his children were unable to continue the business (Traoré 2004).

¹³⁷ According to Lyto Traoré, Picsou is a character in a French cartoon who "likes to search for money too much" (Traoré 2004).

Timbuktu. As of 2004, all of his negatives and some of his photographs were preserved in his studio archive.

Traoré is a member of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.).

Apprentices: Traoré's apprentices include Gaousou Dabo, and since 1986, Mohammed Dicko. However, he has had several other unnamed apprentices.



Baba Traoré (b. 1942) - Bamako

Baba Traoré was born in 1942 in Bamako and attended elementary school in Mourdhia. In 1958, he obtained his first camera—a Kodak Brownie Flash, which was purchased by his older brother—and began learning photography at Photo Club under the tutelage of Jean Assoune, where he stayed until 1962.¹³⁸ That same year, he started working under Malick Sidibé as a photographer at Photo Service, where he remained until 1970 when the store went out of business. After Sidibé left for Kati, during the time of Magné before Bittar, Baba Traoré was responsible for the company's reportage photographs, the first of which were made on Sept 22, 1960, Mali's National Independence Day. In February 1971, Traoré opened his own studio Photo Royale in Bamako in the neighborhood of Dar-es-Salam.¹³⁹ In 1975 he left that locale to open another studio on the Avenue de la Nation, which he also christened Photo Royale—a name, he says, that “just came to him” (Traoré 2004). Over the years, like so many of his colleagues, Traoré purchased his photographic materials at La Croix du Sud. Eventually, he started acquiring them from a Kodak “salon de la photo” in France and Photo Kina in Germany. Since 1981-2, he has been the exclusive Ilford representative in Mali, distributing black-and-white paper, film, and related materials, which he said no longer works well because “no one buys black-and-white products” (Traoré 2004). Since 1983 he has participated in various international photographic events and conferences in Europe, Africa, and the United States, most notably the “35^{emes} salon international de photo, cinema, video” in Paris. In 1987 he became affiliated with Fuji film and bought a color film developing machine from the corporation. However, he complained about this method of processing pictures, preferring the time when photographers “researched and composed everything. Now it is all automatic; just the push of a button. It is not as creative” (Traoré 2004). He has traveled extensively in the context of photographic distribution symposia, visiting Paris (Ilford), Lyon (Ilford), Holland (Fuji), Cologne, Germany (Photo Kina) and Las Vegas (Fuji). As of 2004, Traoré worked as a businessman and distributor of Fujifilm photographic materials in Mali and continued to attend photographic expos in Africa, Europe, and the United

¹³⁸ After his first camera, Traoré obtained a Kodak Starluxe camera (like the Brownie, only smaller), then a Mamiya, and later a medium format (6x6cm) Yashica. In the 21st century, he uses a Nikon (35mm) camera (Traoré 2004).

¹³⁹ Sidiki and Issa Sidibé said that they worked with Baba Traoré, and Sidiki said that he trained Traoré (S. Sidibé 2003; I. Sidibé 2004).

States. He is also the owner of Color Bank Formation in Bamako, which provides workshops for professional photographers on the theoretical foundations, technologies, and practical applications of photography and video. In this capacity, since 1991, he has worked closely with Siriman Dembélé.

In 2004, Traoré was on the market for a new color developing machine as his was in need of repair. Nevertheless, he continues to make and print photographs at his studio, where he simultaneously sells photographic products. Like his compatriot, Youssouf Sogodogo, Traoré has made a series of black-and-white (as well as color) photographs of local hairstyles.

Baba Traoré is a member of the Groupement National des Photographes Professionnels du Mali (G.N.P.P.M.).

Apprentices: Traoré approximates that he has had between seven and ten apprentices over the years, including: “Ibou,” “Coulibaly,” and Moctar Sy—each of whom left Photo Royale to open their own studio practice (Traoré 2004).

Hassan and Hussein Traoré “Traoré et Frères” (1930-1985 / 1930-1996) - Mopti
Hassan and Hussein Traoré were Soninke twins, born in Mopti in 1930. According to professional photographers in the city and the photographers’ sons, the Traoré brothers were the first Malian photographers in Mopti. Of the two, Hassan was the photographer, while Hussein was the manager/salesman. Hassan learned photography from their Lebanese neighbor Rahel Moukarzel (the first photographer in Mopti) who owned a darkroom in which Hassan printed his negatives. Hussein traveled to Bamako and Ségu, as well as to neighboring countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, to buy photographic materials (Traoré family 2004).

Before they built their studio Traoré et Frères (“Traoré and Brothers”) sometime during the 1950s—which, according to the oral accounts of photographers and family members today “was the first in Mopti”—the twins used to take black-and-white portrait and identification pictures in the outdoor courtyard of their home. In this early stage, like many of their colleagues in Bamako, they would hang a decorative fabric along the wall of their courtyard to serve as a backdrop. During holidays, important events, and on Wednesdays and Thursdays (regional market days), they experienced the highest volume of customers. According to their sons, lines would extend from their studio all the way down the street, from afternoon until early morning. Many of their customers were rural Fulani herders and Bozo fishermen. Some of these itinerant clients would sleep on the roof of the house until it was their turn to have their photo taken. The twins even hired a Bozo interpreter to direct the clients to turn their head, sit down, look straight, etc., and, later, their sons played that role. The Traoré brothers also took reportage photographs. According to their sons Amadou, Hassan “Roi,” and Dauda, Hassan and Hussein traveled with, and took pictures of, political visitors and famous hunters, as both men were hunters. Their studio closed when Hassan died in 1985. It is now arranged like a museum, with pictures of the twins and some of their equipment on display around the room. Part of their photographic archives is at home in Mopti. Another collection is kept in Ségu

with Solomon Traoré (Traoré 2004), and the rest were in the possession of Alioune Bâ as of 2004 (Traoré family 2004).¹⁴⁰

Though Hassan took only black-and-white photographs, the Traoré brothers' sons, such as Hassan "Roi" (who today is a reportage photographer), work in color. In fact, today an A.G.F.A. (color film company) sign is displayed above the studio door. The twins' sons who have worked in photography include: Sori, Dauda, and Hassan "Roi" (Traoré family 2004).

Youssouf Traoré (b. before 1920-c. 1989) - Buguni, Bamako

Little has been written about Youssouf Traoré, and precise information about his life and work is not easily found. However, gauging by the accounts of professional photographers in Mali today, it is fair to say that Traoré was one of the earliest Malian studio photographers. For instance, during interviews with Moumouni Koné, Adama Kouyaté, Moumouni Koné, and Malick Sidibé, along with Boundiala Kouyaté "N'Boundiala," Youssouf Traoré was cited as one of the two oldest and most well-known Malian photographers in Bamako, before Mountaga Dembélé. According to Sidibé, Kouyaté, and Koné, Traoré was older than Seydou Keïta, and worked originally as a mason before he left the profession to become a photographer (Sidibé 2004; Kouyaté 2004; M. Koné 2004). In 1947, Youssouf Traoré trained Moumouni Koné in photography. Koné claims that his teacher was one of the most well-known, and one of the first, Malian photographers to work professionally in Bamako (M. Koné 2004). According to Seydou Keïta, Youssouf Traoré was one of the few professional photographers around Bamako when he first began photography in the 1940s (Magnin 1997). Par historian Érika Nimis' account, from 1937 to 1941, Traoré was a successful itinerant photographer working in and around Buguni. Using a large format (13x18cm) wooden box camera, he took outdoor photographs and printed his images using a frame-press. Later, he operated a studio in the Dravéla neighborhood of Bamako,¹⁴¹ and, like many of Bamako's early photographers, he frequented Pierre Garnier's photographic supply boutique Photo-Hall Soudanais (Nimis 1998). Upon retirement, Traoré handed his studio over to a Guinean photographer who subsequently destroyed all of Traoré's archives (along with his own) when he returned to Guinea some years later.¹⁴² As a result, none of Traoré's negatives remain. And locating examples of Traoré's original prints is not an easy task.¹⁴³ However, one image of a class portrait taken by Traoré at a

¹⁴⁰ However, Solomon Traoré told me that Alioune Bâ has all of the twins' archives and directed me to talk to Issa Tangara (a cousin in Bamako) about the situation (Traoré 2004).

¹⁴¹ According to the stamp on the back of one of his photographs (now housed in Moumouni Koné's archives) his studio was located in the Dravéla neighborhood of Bamako (M. Koné 2004). However, Érika Nimis holds that his studio was located in the neighborhood of Wolofobugu-Bolibana (Nimis 1998).

¹⁴² In Mali, when a photographer transfers his studio to someone he also transfers his negatives. Moreover, in the early years of professional photographic practices, it was customary for photographers to burn or otherwise destroy their negative archives, as well as those of photographers who worked before, with, or under them, either periodically or upon the abandonment of one's studio practice (Nimis 1998; M. Koné 2004).

¹⁴³ An attempt to locate Youssouf Traoré's surviving prints would require a thorough survey of extant personal family albums and photo archives within the capital city.

school in Bamako is known to exist among the archival collection of Moumouni Koné (M. Koné 2004).

In 2004, Sidibé stated that Youssouf Traoré had died at least fifteen years prior, which suggests that he passed away in 1989 (Sidibé 2004).

Old Studio Contact: The stamp on the back of a school photograph taken by Traoré, which is housed in Moumouni Koné's collection, contains the address of his former studio. It reads: Traoré Youssouf, Photographe, Rue 121, Angle 120, Dravéla, Bamako.