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The dance of death

Notes on the architecture and staging of Tamberma funeral performances¹

SUZANNE PRESTON BLIER

The Tamberma of northern Togo (fig. 1) stage elaborate funeral performances called *Tibenti* ("The Dance of Drums") to honor their deceased male and female elders.² These funerary productions follow the same dramatic format each time they are performed. They are presented by a group of artists who act out specific roles in front of and for the benefit of a critical audience, which often numbers several hundred. Because of the significant factor of the audience, and because of the emphatic (if sometimes obscure) "story" being told, performances of this type are set apart from standard Tamberma religious ritual. This distinction is further supported by the essential role in the funeral of designated casts, specific stages, coordinated lighting, dramatic timing, and associated criticism.³ In addition, according to one Tamberma elder, the principal design features of the traditional Tamberma two-story house (figs. 2, 3) are defined by the crucial role that the house potentially plays as a theatre. He explains the

1. My information on Tamberma funerals is based both on the observation and recording of thirty plus funeral segments from seven villages, and on multiple discussions with local Tamberma scholars concerning the ritual, structure, and symbolic meanings of the various funeral parts. This research was undertaken from late 1976 to early 1978. I gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a Fulbright-Hays Dissertation Fellowship which enabled me to carry out this work. The first version of this paper was presented at the 67th annual meeting of the College Art Association in Washington, D.C., on February 1, 1979. I thank Judith Bettelheim for her suggestions and criticism. The paper, in a revised form, was later delivered at the symposium, "African Art as Theatre," which I chaired at Vassar College (September 27, 1980). In its present form it is abbreviated from Chapter V of my dissertation, "Architecture of the Tamberma (Togo)," Columbia University, 1981. I thank the numerous Tamberma who shared with me their knowledge, performances, and ceremonies. In addition, I am grateful to my sponsor, Douglas Fraser, and to Jean Wagner, who drew the map, and Kate Ezra, who commented extensively on the most recent draft. It should be noted that although the principal focus of this study is on the architecture, aesthetics, and related symbolism of the funeral, discussions of its associated religious, psychological, and metaphysical components are treated in greater depth in Blier (1981).

Background information on the Tamberma may help to place them in the broader African perspective. The Tamberma (or Batammariba, as they call themselves) are a traditional Voltaic people living in the remote Atacora Mountains of present-day Togo and Benin. They remain generally isolated from the broader influences of both Christianity and Islam. Paul Mercier (1949, 1953, 1954, 1968) provides considerable cultural information on the eastern Tamberma,

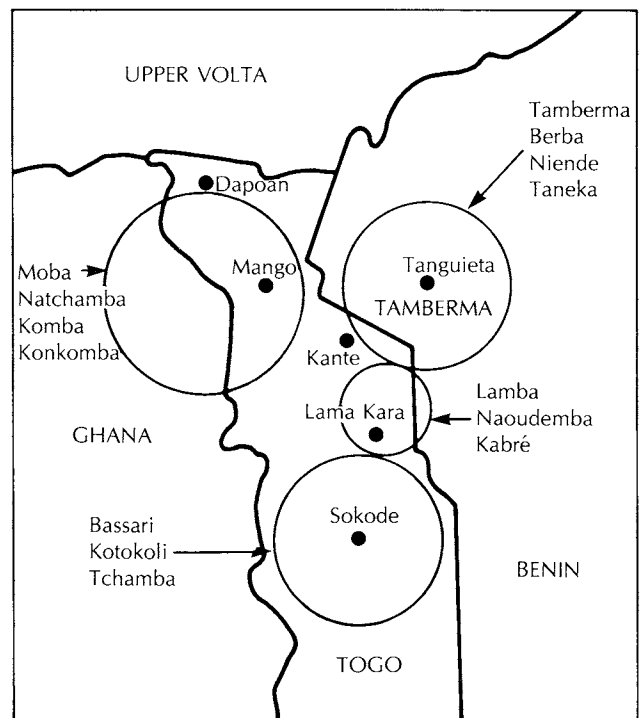


Figure 1. Map of Tamberma area.

differences between the houses of the Tamberma and those of their neighbors, the Lamba, vis-à-vis the differing dramaturgical needs of these two groups. "As the Lamba do not perform their funerals in the same way as the Tamberma perform them, the architecture of the two should not be the same."

In this light, it may be useful to discuss the Tamberma funeral from a dramaturgical perspective. As proposed by Kenneth Burke (1941, 1945, 1952), such a model can be applied to the analysis of symbolic action in both social process and literary form. It can also be appropriate, as here, in describing the complex architectural contexts and the symbolism of a funeral cycle. Appropriately, in the course of its multi-year structure and division into actlike 4 segments, the funeral is viewed by the Tamberma as a type of "play." As one elder explained to me, "In *Tibenti* [the funeral cycle] one 'plays' the deceased." Because of the inclusion of both actual and figurative action, these performances also conform to the wider concept of play as it has been discussed by Huizinga (1938, p. 15).

My treatment of the Tamberma funeral performance is structured around a greatly abbreviated synopsis of its

whom he refers to variously as Somba and as Betammadibe. Leo Forbenius earlier published (1913) information on the eastern Tamberma near Tapounté. K. Kourouma (1954) has provided a brief description of a Somba/Tamberma burial. The Tamberma houses, where these funerals take place, are occupied by individual, generally nuclear, patrilineal family groups (average house size, five persons). These houses stand twenty to thirty feet in diameter and are usually fifteen to twenty feet in height.

Descriptions of the funerals of other Voltaic peoples can be found in Delafosse (1909), Guébbard (1911), Cardinall ([1920], 1921), Rattray (1932), Griaule (1933), Griaule and Dieterlen (1942), Fortes (1949), Ouedraogo (1950), Goody (1962), Froelich et al. (1963), Holas (1966), Glaze (1981), and Roy (1979). For related funerary information see Lane (1958) and Charles (1948). Graham-White (1970, 1974, 1976) has provided the most comprehensive analysis of the various forms of traditional drama in Africa. For other studies see Ridgeway (1915), Delafosse (1916), Dholomo (1939), Murray (1939), Jones (1945), Jeffreys (1951), Traoré (1958), Messenger (1962), Clark (1966), Adedji (1966, 1969), Finnegan (1970), Ottenberg (1973, 1975), Kirby (1974), and Povey (1976). A discussion of the theatrical elements of African art in general is found in Blier (1980).

2. Those persons who have lived for at least ten (today it is sometimes only eight) four-year *Lifoni* initiation cycles after their own.

3. The funeral performances of the Tamberma thus conform to Graham-White's definition of drama (1976, p. 12) as "a presentation before spectators by performers who take on roles and who interact with each other to further a story or a text intended for such presentation."

4. I use the term "act" here to define a unified dramatic segment with a clearly defined beginning and end. "Scene" can be understood to mean a subdivision of an "act" having a particular theme, setting, cast, dialogue, and time.

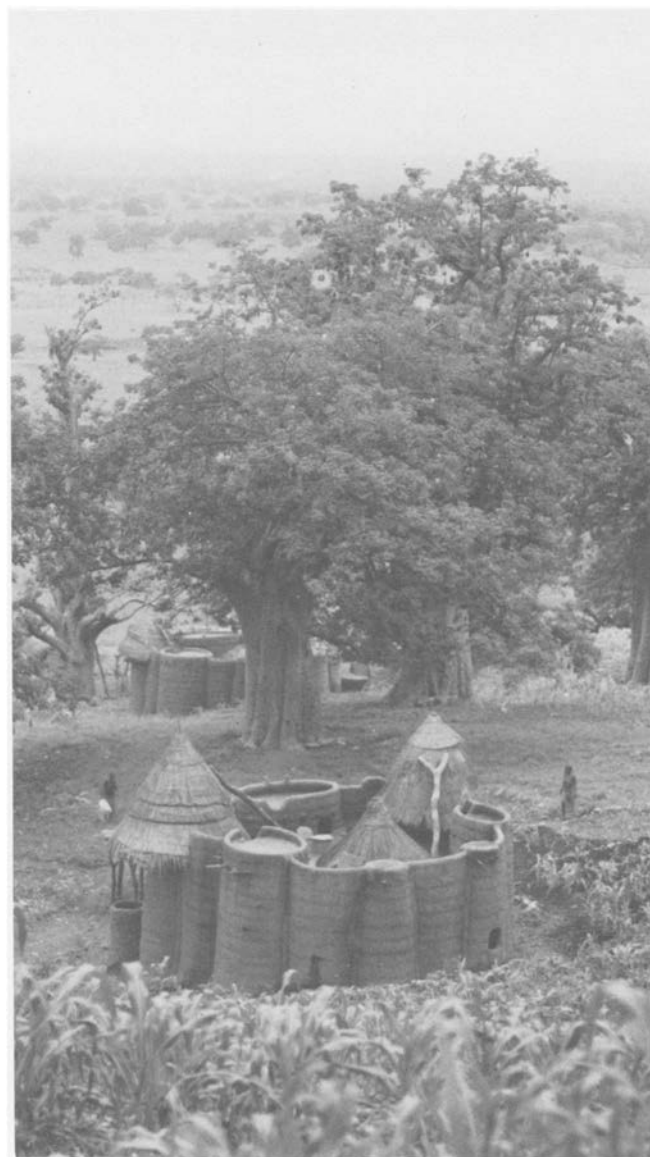


Figure 2. View of Tamberma house from back. House owner and architect: Atchana. Village of Koufitoukou. August 28, 1977.

main events (see concluding chart) in which the multiple dimensions of the traditional drama will be described through the articulation of its settings. Aspects that will be discussed within the context of each funeral segment include the use of the traditional house as a performance theatre, the delineation and symbolism of specific staging areas, the selection and meanings of special forms of theatrical lighting, the employment of stage scenery (and related props, cues, and musical accompaniment), and the principal role of casts,



Figure 3. Facade of Tamberma house. House owner: Tiefieti. Architect: Atchana. Village of Koufitoukou. January 28, 1977.

patronage, criticism, and symbolic action in the performance.

The person sleeps

Every Tamberma funeral play begins with a prologue made up of scenes collectively called "The Person Sleeps" (*Onitiloua*). This preliminary act is a private one taking place on the day of death. It has as its main concerns: the announcement of the death, the determination of the cause of death, the construction of

the tomb, the preparation of the deceased for burial, and the burial itself.⁵ Drawing examples from this prologue segment, I will discuss here two central dramaturgical features in the funeral. These include the choice of stages used in the performance and dramatic structuration.

5. Because the remaining segments of the funeral performances frequently are postponed for a period of time after the death of an elder, this act is often repeated twice: once in conjunction with the actual burial; a second time (using a carved wooded surrogate of the deceased) on the morning before the funeral's first public act, "The Dance of Drums" (*Tibenti*).

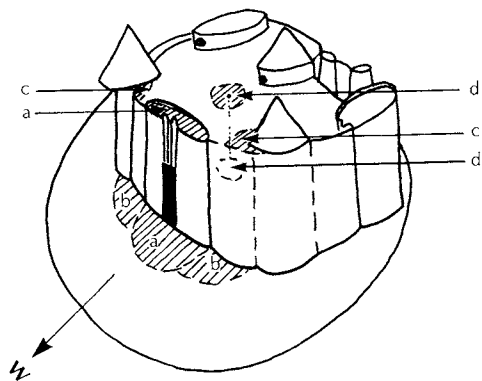


Figure 4. Diagram of house funeral stages. a. house portal stages (upper and lower); b. male and female wall stages; c. male and female granary overhang stages; d. *taboté* hole stages (upper and lower).

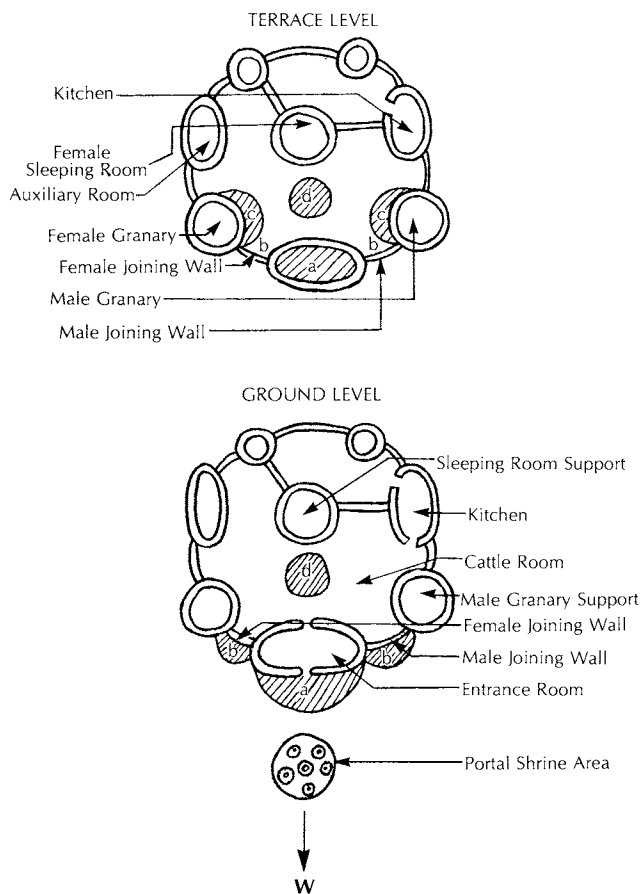


Figure 5. Diagram of house funeral stages. a. house portal stages (upper and lower); b. male and female wall stages; c. male and female granary overhang stages; d. *taboté* hole stages (upper and lower).

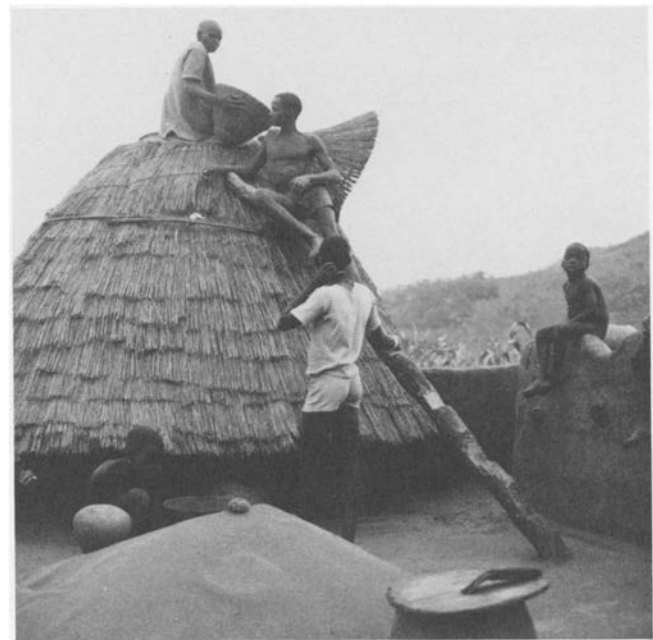


Figure 6. View of Tamberma house terrace with granary and stone-covered *taboté* hole (in foreground). House owner: Baloa. Village of Koufitoukou. December 15, 1977.

Stages and dramatic structuration

Each traditional Tamberma two-story house contains a number of areas that function as stages⁶ during the funeral performance (see figs. 4, 5). These stages derive their form from the actual rooms, alcoves, and wall areas of the house. Viewing places fan out around each stage, either inside the house itself or out-of-doors within the perimeters of the circular landscaped yard. The most public scenes of the funeral are enacted on those stages seen from the largest viewing areas. These are generally located either on the entrance roof or outside the house along the front of its western facade (fig. 7). Other stages, which are reserved for private or semiprivate funeral action sequences, have more limited viewing facilities, usually inside the house or on its terrace.

In the funeral, certain scenes are always performed on certain staging areas. The choice of a particular stage for a given scene is important, for the symbolism associated with each is often central in conveying the principal theme of any related action. In "The Person Sleeps," consistencies in the symbolism and choice of

6. While no specific words for these staging areas (other than their everyday names) are used, their importance for the funeral performance is apparent in their repeated usage at these times.

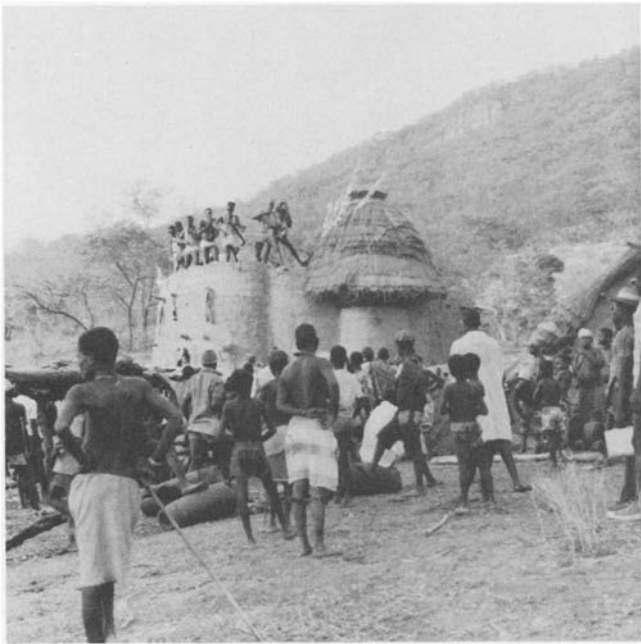


Figure 7. Funeral musicians playing on upper portal stage. Village of Lissani. April 29, 1977. (Note quivers and poles covered with money displayed on facade. Funeral drums are being played in foreground.)

funeral staging locales are clear. The two “portal” stages (the entrance roof and the entryway), for example, are usually employed for those scenes concerned with the ontology of death. In the course of prologue action, the relationship between doorways (the means of architectural transition) and death (the moment of life’s transition) can be seen both in the frequent use of the deceased’s front door as a mortuary stretcher and in the role of the deceased’s house portal in funeral divinations to determine the cause of death. Similar symbolism is displayed in the ceremonial grinding of millet on the mortuary house doorstep before the departure for the cemetery (fig. 8). This prologue grinding action is explained as a reference to the recent death, specifically to the fact that the departed elder will no longer need earthly sustenance. The marking of a miniature tomb in front of the deceased’s portal further defines the reality of death, for it foreshadows the construction of the tomb, which follows at the cemetery.⁷

7. The circular form of this portal “tomb” is delimited around the perimeter of an overturned basket, which is nested over a calabash and chicken. It is a compact visual reference to the Tamberma myth of the Sun’s delimitation of the Earth around the perimeter of a giant overturned calabash (Blier 1981).

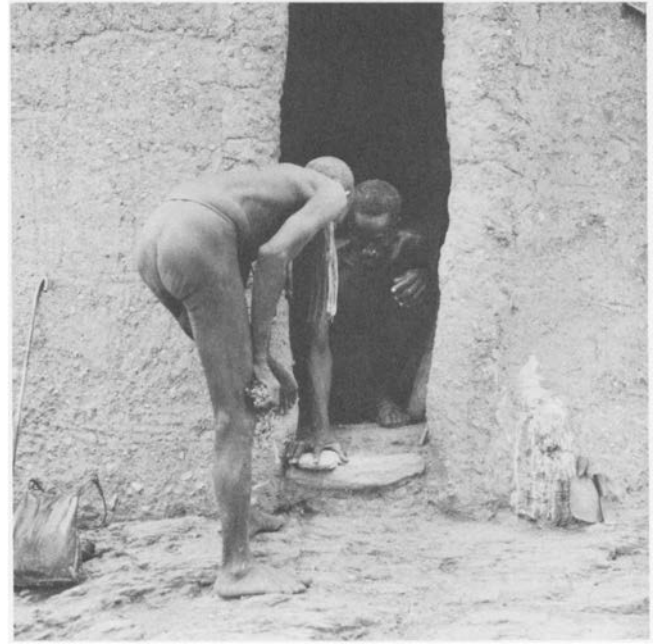


Figure 8. Grinding millet on door step at funeral. Village of Lissani. April 29, 1977.

Other forms of staging symbolism come into play in prologue actions performed on the two house *taboté* areas. The *taboté* stages circle the ceremonial hole (called *taboté*), which pierces through the house in the middle of its main terrace. During the funeral, the

Other examples of portal/death symbolism in the funeral can be seen in the next segment (The Afternoon Dance) by the ceremonial passing of an ax and small hoe (implements used in making the tomb) between two priests, with the last motion of passing being done in the house doorway for the audience assembled outside. In this act, and in the following (Drink of the Dead) segment, comparable death-associated usage of the portal is suggested by the shooting of the house door jamb as a sign publicly marking the death of the male elder of the house. For a deceased woman, this action is replaced by the destruction of calabashes in front of the door.

It is interesting to note that in the common Tamberma metaphor of the house as human (Blier 1981), the door is closely identified with the mouth and with the related action of eating. Such a symbolic linking of mouth imagery and the idea of death in portal symbolism has parallels in other parts of the world (e.g., Mesoamerica, Northwest Coast America, Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia). For the Tamberma, it is one of the many visual references to the philosophical necessity of death for life in Tamberma thought (see pp. 54–56). This is explained by the Tamberma through a series of parallel equations. Greatly simplified, they find basis in the Tamberma observation that in the process of eating (which is necessary for existence) the destruction of some form of life (that which is consumed) is required. Accordingly, for the replenishment of life (regeneration) an equivalent death is necessitated as “payment” (sacrifice — or in this case the normal death of the elder).



Figure 9. Placing house *taboté* stone over tomb hole after burial. Village of Koufitoukou. September 25, 1977.

upper and lower *taboté* stages, which are defined by this hole, find use primarily in scenes of spirit transition. This staging symbolism is based on the role that the *taboté* plays during house religious ceremonies. In these, the *taboté* hole is frequently identified as a means of spirit passage, i.e., as a vertical axis from the house center to the heavens. In the course of the funeral prologue, perhaps the most significant example of *taboté* transition symbolism is found in the taking of the deceased's stone *taboté* cover from its normal position on the house terrace (fig. 6) to the cemetery where the stone will serve as the tomb closure (fig. 9). The transporting of this stone from one funeral stage to another effectively marks the transition of the deceased and his (her) soul from the community of the living to the community of the dead.⁸ Similarly, in the later "turning-over" (*bita*) ceremony of the next act, the now coverless *taboté* hole at the deceased's house is used to signal the transition that the elder's soul makes in its upward flight from this world to the world of the ancestor spirits in the sky.⁹ Likewise, in the following

8. In the frequent identification of the house with the human (see note 7), the house *taboté* is often compared with the human fontanel and solar plexus, the areas most associated with the spirit essence or soul (*liyouani*) of the person. The *taboté* stone must also be seen as an essential part of the separate imagery of the tomb as a miniature version of the house.

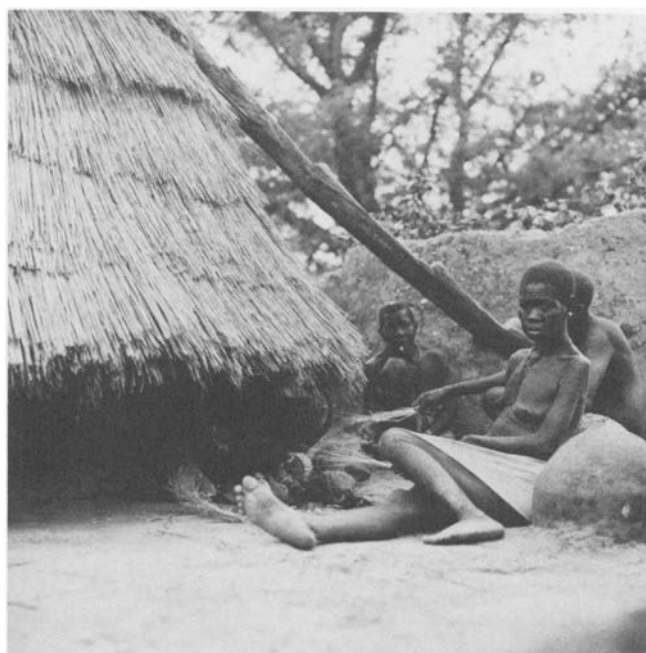


Figure 10. Women singing mourning songs beside wooden figure representing deceased (figure is positioned under straw of granary overhang). Village of Lissani. April 29, 1977.

Figure 11 (Opposite). Mortuary house dressed in funerary cloths. Cowrie and bead strand hangs from portal. Possessions of deceased beside door. Village of Koufitoukou. August 20, 1977.

act ("The Afternoon Dance") this same hole is used as a transitional means when grooming materials are passed down through it so that the deceased (represented by a baobab wood carving on the interior) can be prepared for the soul's final voyage to the world of the dead.

The four remaining funeral stages, i.e., the areas adjoining the raised male and female granaries and the adjacent male and female joining walls, reflect other concerns in staging. These four stages are generally reserved for sequences glorifying the deceased. Male stages (on the south side of the house) are used in scenes that praise deceased men; female stages (on the

9. For a deceased man, this flight is instigated by a ceremonial adversary who stands on the upper *taboté* stage and calls his secret birth name through the hole into the house interior. The deceased's spirit, which is thought to be resting inside, is said to be startled by this occurrence and to exit from the house by way of this hole soon after. The person who plays "the adversary" in this action is selected from one of the initiation classes, which is structured to be in opposition to that of the deceased.



north side of the house) are for those scenes honoring women. The linking of these four stages with the deceased's honor finds support in the frequent association of these areas with a person's identity and wealth in life: the granary usually defines an elder's economic wealth;¹⁰ the adjoining wall area often incorporates his or her sacred wealth (related religious shrines). In "The Person Sleeps" the honorific symbolism of these stages is clear, for it is here where the deceased (or a surrogate figure) will lie in state to receive gifts and songs of praise before the burial (fig. 10). In later funeral acts, these four stages similarly serve as the backdrops for much of the honorific scenery and props (cloths, quivers, money, etc.) which are intended to display the considerable wealth and status of the deceased elder in the community (figs. 7, 11).

Like staging, prescribed forms of dramatic structure also are clearly manifested in this preliminary funeral segment. One can see, for instance, the use of such theatrical structuring techniques as symbolic foreshadowing in the delimitation of a miniature tomb in front of the house door before the elders leave for the cemetery to build the actual tomb. This miniature tomb likewise foreshadows the sequence of action followed in every subsequent act, for in each, the tomb becomes the central structuring element for the play action as a whole. The use of synecdoche is similarly conveyed in "The Person Sleeps." In this and in later funeral acts, the house is generally seen to represent its deceased owner (as a container represents its contents) through its dress (scenery) and ritual use.¹¹ As one Tamberma elder has noted, at the funeral "we [speak of the house and] say that it is a man and it is dead We call the house *takouyèta* (the dead house)."

The dance of drums

The next act of the funeral, called *Tibenti*¹² or "The Dance of Drums," incorporates a separate grouping of

10. Because the prominent granaries serve as containers for the wealth (agricultural produce) of the house members, they are appropriate foci for these scenes of glory. The "male" granary is positioned on the house's southwest corner and contains the crops produced by men; the female granary is constructed on the house's northwest corner and contains the produce of women.

11. Other forms of metaphor that are important in the funeral also emphasize human/house analogies. (These are treated extensively in Blier 1981.)

12. *Tibenti*, which is presented during the course of a night, is differentiated from "The Afternoon Dance" (*Koubenyouakou*), which follows during the next day. *Tibenti* is also the name most commonly

dramatic scenes. These are either presented the evening following the prologue or, more commonly, they are postponed until the festival months of January through April. The action of "The Dance of Drums" centers around a number of generally sober and serious scenes associated with the loss of the family elder. This act is concerned with publicly mourning the loss, with reinitiating the deceased into the various religious associations of the village, and finally with turning out his or her soul so that it will leave for the world of the ancestors. Special forms of theatrical lighting and dramaturgical choreography are important elements in this as in other play segments.

Theatrical lighting

Prescribed forms of lighting are assured in the funeral, both through the timing of scenes to coincide with particular day- or night-light qualities (as defined vis-à-vis the positioning of the sun or moon) and through the concomitant use of fixed, precisely oriented stages for each dramatic sequence. The common employment of special festival months (January through April) and the universal orientation of Tamberma houses toward the west,¹³ also means that the directionality of light — the angle of the sun and moon — remains relatively constant for each funeral drama.¹⁴ The choice of late winter for most funeral performances is significant because during this period the usually tall and thick millet crop that surrounds Tamberma houses is cut to a short stubble. This allows a maximum amount of light to reach the house stages, and provides the assembled audience with both a cleared seating area and an unobstructed view of the front house stages. In addition, food is relatively abundant at this time. Furthermore, because there is a general ease from farm work during this period, there is time to complete the considerable preparations required before the performance can take place.

As with performance staging, certain qualities of natural light are frequently employed in the funeral to reinforce the symbolism and aesthetic values of the dramatic action. Dusk and dawn, the times marking the termination (and beginning) of day and night, for

given to the funeral pageant as a whole, suggesting the centrality of this act for the drama.

13. Tamberma houses are oriented toward the west to face the direction of the Sun God (*Kouiyé*), whose village is in the western sky.

14. During each funeral there is also a concern that an act be scheduled on a particular day of the week — the choice of four market days being made according to village initiation schedules.



Figure 12. Knocking off house horn and tossing down deceased's bow, quiver, and leather bag from upper portal stage at dawn. Village of Lissani. April 29, 1977. (Note granary cap has been turned on its head.)

example, are generally reserved for those funeral action sequences that are linked to beginning and end.¹⁵ "The Dance of Drums" itself climaxes with the dawn-lit "turning-over" (*bita*) ceremony on the house entrance roof. At the beginning of this dramatic climax, as dawn is seen to approach, the funeral cast and audience leave the warmth of the house interior, where they had been participating in initiation songs, dances, and related action sequences throughout the night. Meanwhile, two funeral performers climb to the top of the entrance roof, appearing dramatically silhouetted against the rich backdrop of the just-awakening eastern sky. During the funerals of elder men, these two cast members cut the male (south) house horn and allow it to drop to the ground along with the deceased's bow, quiver, and leather bag (fig. 12). Immediately following this action, in the funerals of both men and women, the appropriate male and female granary cover is turned over on its head — a *bita* action viewed as a public sign that the elder's life has ended,¹⁶ that life itself has been reversed. At this early hour, the faces and props of

15. It is interesting to note that in Tamberma culture, death and birth themselves seem to be linked with dusk and dawn, i.e., people are generally assumed to give birth and to die at these times. Related rituals usually occur at these times of day as well.

16. Dawn light also serves as the backdrop for the serious

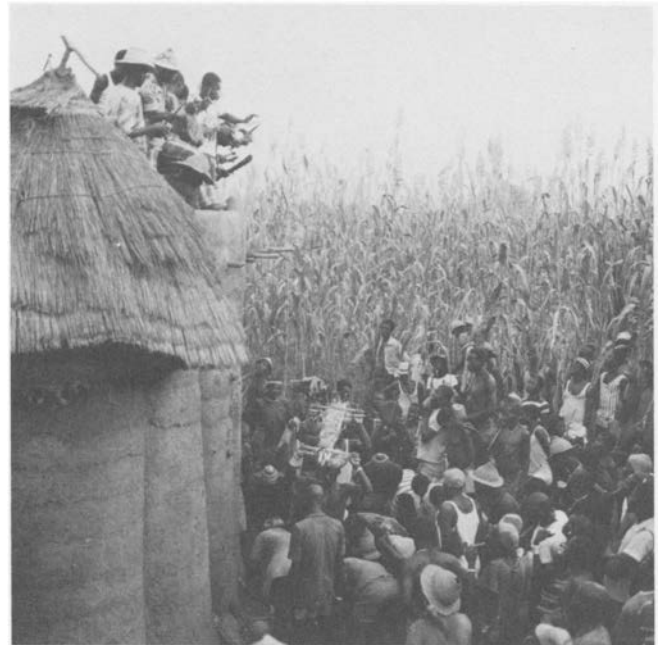


Figure 13. Tossing down cowries and agricultural produce from the house entrance roof onto the mortuary stretcher. Women fan the stretcher with skins and a covered basket. Village of Koufitoukou. October 27, 1977.

the performers on the entrance roof are still very much obscured by the blackness of night surrounding them, but their actions, framed by the blue and red light of dawn, are dramatically distinct. The parallel light qualities at dusk have similar importance in the funeral, especially for the joyful terminations and inception scenes like the gift-giving sequence at the climax of the next act ("The Afternoon Dance," fig. 13),¹⁷ or the children's cereal feast at the conclusion of the third play segment ("The Feast of the Dead").¹⁸

transitional scenes of the funeral epilogue when the deceased's possessions are cast away at the crossroads.

17. The following woman's mourning song, recorded during a funeral "Afternoon Dance," suggests the important relationship between dusk and the departure of the deceased following the climactic "gift-giving" rite discussed above.

The sun is ready to leave the sky
And the rich man N'tcha
Turns the top of his granary
[A reference to the *bita* or turning-over ritual of death]
And leaves for the other village
And I won't see him ever again.

18. Dusk-time references to the potential for life renewal in the later fourth act ("The Drink of Death") include the shooting of the house, the dropping of the calabashes, the competition for the woman's condiment basket, and the buttering of the daughters' toes (see pp. 54–55).

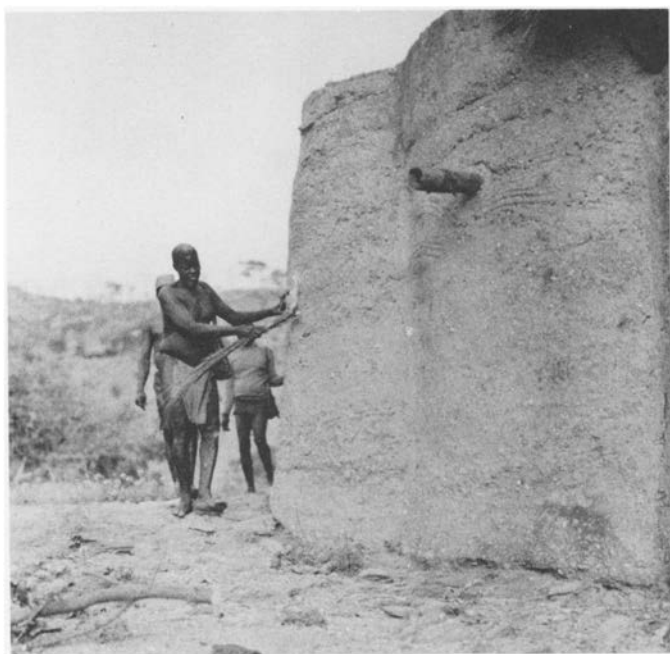


Figure 14. Tapping the house rooms and joining walls with fire and initiation sacra. Village of Lissani. April 30, 1977.

The broadly defined periods of noon and midnight have still other symbolic and aesthetic roles in Tamberma funeral dramas. These light periods are frequently identified by the Tamberma with the paths or "stations" of the sun and moon across the sky. Accordingly, in the funeral, noon and midnight are generally reserved for scenes of process or life passage. During "The Dance of Drums" and the following "Afternoon Dance," the light associated with noon and midnight finds primary use in the processual scenes of initiation. In these action segments, the mortuary house walls and carved baobab figure are sequentially tapped with initiatory sacra as a means of reinitiating the deceased into the various associations that he or she had known in life (fig. 14).¹⁹ Supplementary lighting is frequently used for both the noon and midnight scenes: burning brands and bonfires provide illumination and visual emphasis for somber nighttime actions; the house doorways and windows serve as interior light shafts during the day.

19. Sometimes these initiation segments are also repeated later during the act's climax scene. During the funeral, such initiation sequences are intended to re-create the initiation processes the deceased had undergone in his or her life. In this way the house (which is seen to represent the deceased) undergoes the same sequential processes of initiation that the deceased had witnessed, particularly *Lifoni* (men's initiation), *Likuntili* (women's initiation), *Fayenfé* (war and death initiation), and *Litakon* (twins and fertility initiation).

The contrasting midmorning and afternoon light periods (roughly between 9:00 and 10:30 A.M. and between 3:00 and 4:30 P.M.) are generally associated with scenes of communication, particularly between human beings and the spirit world. Midmorning and midafternoon are ordinarily identified by the Tamberma as the times when the ancestors most frequently descend to earth.²⁰ In the funeral, afternoon sunlight likewise is used for the principal ancestor communication scenes (generally offerings) associated with the ancestral spirits who are said to come to earth to witness and participate in the funeral festivities. This same light period provides an appropriate theatrical backdrop for the dramatic processions back to the house once the cemetery action has terminated (fig. 15). Such processions include an orchestra of horn and flute players, whose music is said to represent appropriately the voices of the returning ancestors. Mortuary divinations, the formalized communication between the deceased and his or her descendants to determine the cause of death, similarly take place during midmorning or afternoon, as does the climax sequence in the play's epilogue ("The Reenactment") when the deceased's spirit is called back to earth to serve as a family ancestor.²¹

Dramaturgical choreography

Dramaturgical choreography or prescribed configurations of movement are also of importance in the funeral performance. These delineated movement patterns have significance both visually, in directing the eye of the audience in a particular manner, and symbolically, by helping to define the content of particular play segments. In Tamberma drama, choreographic movements of the type discussed here replace many of the spoken lines or dialogue central to Western theatre.

Four linear modes of choreographic movement can be distinguished in the funeral: the circle; the horizontal line; the downward line; and the reversal line (fig. 16). The most commonly employed of these

20. According to one elder, it is with this afternoon light that the Sun God's spirit, *Liyé*, comes to earth each day to communicate with the spirits and deities in the house interior. This is also the time when ancestral spirits living near the Sun come down to earth for their daily visits and ceremonial feasts. It is not surprising therefore that, during the funeral, late afternoon is the time when these ancestral spirits come to earth to participate in the action.

21. The importance of transition in the epilogue appears to be a significant factor in the selection of morning light, which is itself associated with the appearance of the sun each day.



Figure 15. Funeral procession from the cemetery to the mortuary house. Village of Koutanliakou. March 4, 1977.

dramatic lines is the circle, a movement pattern that circumscribes forms and delimits their perimeters, thereby reinforcing the spatial identity associated with each. In the funeral, circular lines are formed as clockwise movement patterns when linked to women, but are counterclockwise motion sequences when employed for men.²² Like the form of the house itself, circular movement in the funeral is generally used to suggest themes of gathering together or containment. Thus, when the house (or surrogate body) is circled and “tapped” in the initiation sequences of “The Dance of Drums” and “The Afternoon Dance” (fig. 14), this is seen to assure the placement of the initiatory deity inside the interior of the house and, by extension, inside the body of the deceased elder. Similarly, in the play prologue, when the body is carried in a circle around the perimeter of the house before being brought to the cemetery, this “line” is said to call together the house ancestors so that they will come to the cemetery

22. Clockwise is the direction that follows the right (female) hand around the house, if one is correctly standing in the portal facing west. The counterclockwise direction follows the left (male) hand around the house. This is because Tamberma men are generally said to work with their left hands while women are said to work principally with their right hands. The association of the left hand with the male and the right with the female also finds its basis in a Tamberma myth of the creation of the first human beings. According to this account, in the beginning the male genitals were found under the left arm of the man; female genitals were found under the right arm of the woman.

for the ceremonies to be performed there. At the end of every cemetery scene, the tomb itself is circled. According to one elder, in this circling, one is silently calling the name of the first village ancestor and asking

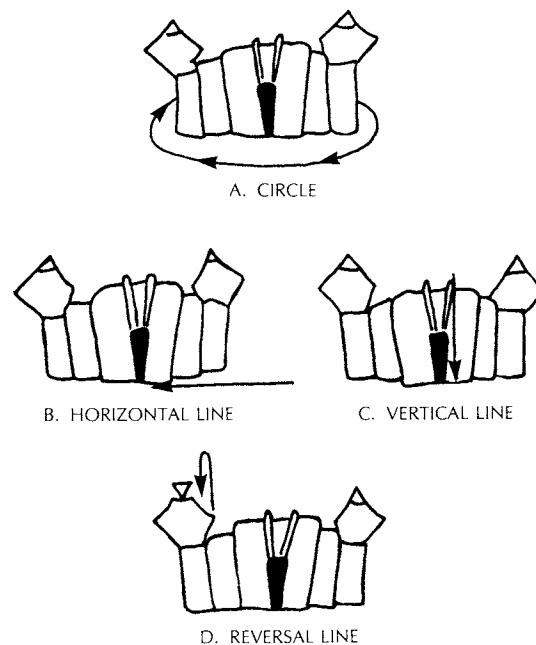


Figure 16. Choreographed movement patterns during the funeral.

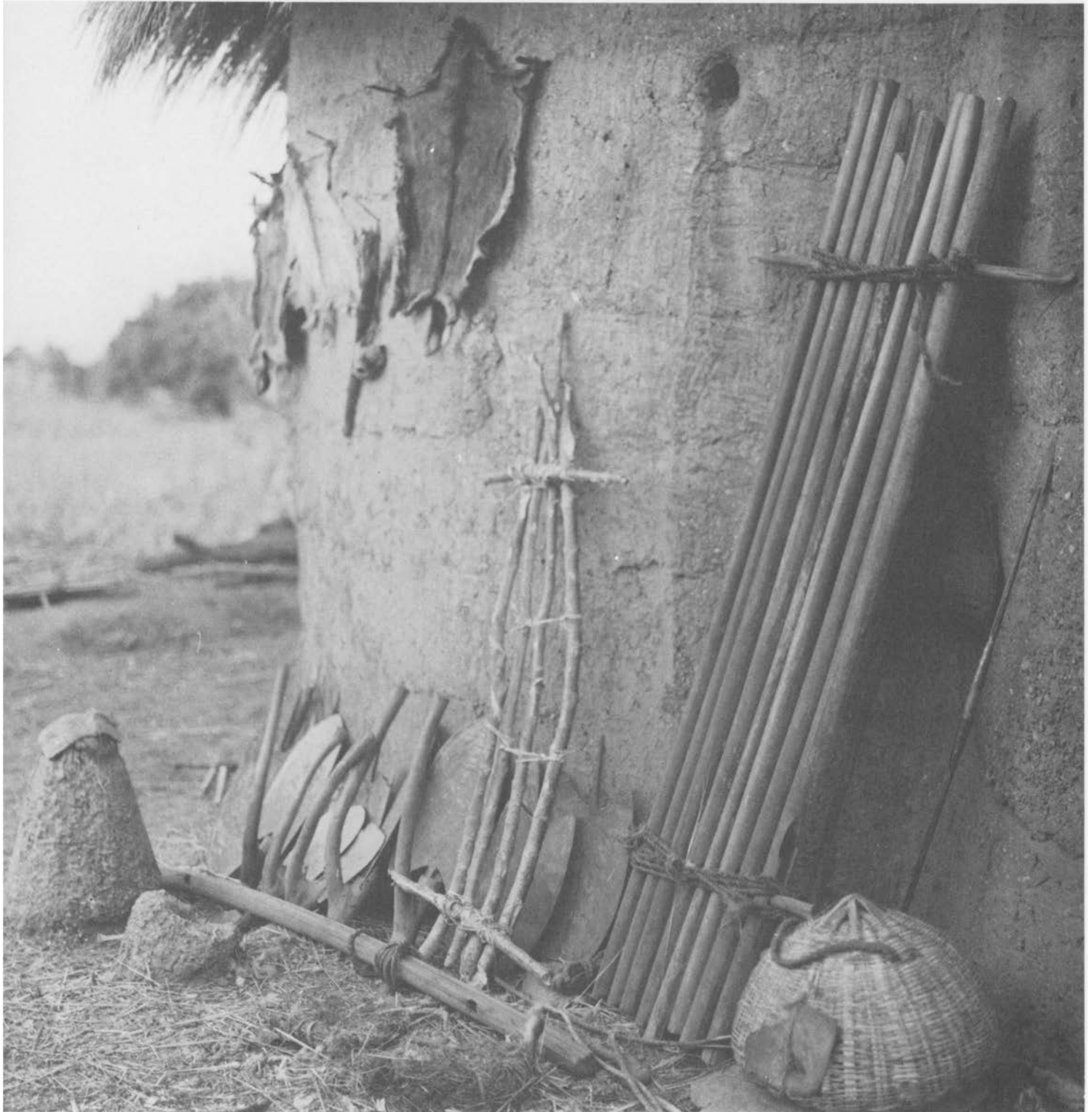


Figure 17. Funeral "props" and scenery lined up along mortuary house facade. From left to right: hoes, stretcher, hoe blades, house door, bow/quiver/sack assemblage (behind door), woman's initiation basket, and lance. Goat skins are attached to the wall above these objects. Village of Koutanliakou. March 4, 1977.

him to unite all the ancestors to come back to the house for the rites that follow. Another circular pattern, the one made around a calabash and basket in front of the door and later at the cemetery to delimit the form of the tomb, also suggests containment, as exemplified in the definition of the chamber that will eventually hold the deceased.

Another key choreographic form in funeral performances is a horizontal one. This is often used in the play as a means of uniting time, place, and persons. The funeral parade from the cemetery represents one such horizontal line (fig. 15). It unites the ancestors, village inhabitants, and present cast of characters, bringing the action from the tomb to the house.²³ This linear mode is essentially a profile one: a pattern of movement intended to be seen from the side. It is a visual device that pulls the eye both to the place where the line originated and to the place where it is going.

The two final choreographic patterns used in Tamberma funeral performances include a distinct downward motion,²⁴ which is used to suggest separation, and a reversal or turning-over motion, called *bita*, which is employed to allude to death (the reversal of life).²⁵ Both of these lines are clearly shown in the climax scene of this act (fig. 12) (see p. 45). At this time, in a man's funeral the male house horn and the deceased's possessions are dropped to the ground in a downward line. This is said to force the spirit of the dead person to separate itself from the house. During this same climax scene, the deceased person's house granary cap is turned over onto its head — a motion of reversal signaling that life has ended.

Both of these choreographed motions also have significant visual import. The reversal line emphasizes the silhouettes of images, since in turning things on their heads one is forced to see them as independent shapes having a particular quality and dimension devoid of normal cognitive or functional associations. In contrast, the downward line visually points up the purely frontal aspect of a given form. Appropriately, in

23. Horizontal lines are also important in joining separate persons or elements on occasions such as initiations, warfare, hunting, or marriage. Another major form of horizontal line, the path, defines the linkages between houses, villages, and ethnic groups.

24. A parallel (but invisible) upward motion is associated with the separation of the spirit of the deceased from the house. Thus after the terrace *taboté* stone has been removed, the spirit is thought to make its transition to the ancestor world by traveling vertically through this hole.

25. This *bita* or turning-over pattern is also found at the cemetery, for each tomb is defined by an overturned jar. At the mortuary house, the deceased's sauce bowl and possessions are similarly "turned on their heads" when they are displayed along the facade.

the funeral this line is most often employed on the upper portal stage in the center of the house facade.

The afternoon dance

The second act of the funeral, called "The Afternoon Dance" (*Koubenyouakou*), begins at about noon on the day following "The Dance of Drums." Through its multiple scenes, the major actions of the preceding evening are repeated, but the overall emphasis is shifted from one of sorrow to one of joy for the deceased. This act, in its repeated action sequences, focuses on the reinitiation of the deceased and the exuberant send-off for his or her soul. These scenes serve to glorify the deceased and to honor his or her family. The act climaxes with a vibrant dance and a shower of food and money for the deceased's voyage to the other world (fig. 13). These riches are dropped onto the mortuary stretcher from the upper portal stage at dusk. The *fabéné* drumbeat accompanying this action emphasizes the theme of voyage and transition at this time. Its "song" is as follows:

Tcha, tcha
[exclamation of shock]
Where is he? Where is he?

He has had enough of this world
And has left for another.

Scenery and props

In this, as in other acts, scenery is an important means of reinforcing the dramatic sequences. When we arrive at the house of the deceased, we are immediately aware that this will be a drama concerning death. The appropriate granary cover has been turned on its head (fig. 7), and the deceased's essential worldly possessions are grouped together on the corresponding male or female side of the entrance (figs. 11, 17). We also see that three funeral drums have been positioned together in front of the same house area (fig. 7). The presence of these drums reinforces one of the funeral's central themes, a vibrant "dance of death" choreographed to the rhythm of drums.

Most of the additional scenery elements that make up this stage set express the honor due to the deceased (figs. 7, 11, 17). Imported cloths, fresh animal skins, cowrie (shell money) strands, and money draped on poles are displayed on the granaries, male and female joining walls, and upper portal terrace to symbolize the wealth of the deceased. Bows, quivers, hoes, and



Figure 18. Interior *taboté* area with a woman's initiation headdress (on the mound), a cowrie-decorated cow tail (on the headdress), bells, and rattles. Village of Koufitoukou. October 27, 1977.

agricultural produce are similarly amassed along the facade (or interior) to show the deceased's hunting and farming talents. Forked sticks, flutes, and a man's initiation headdress recall an elder's membership in *Lifoni*, the initiation society for men. Lances, chicken cages, horned headdresses, bells, (fig. 18), and condiment baskets define association with the women's initiation cycle, *Likuntili*.

Props taken primarily from the scenery compositions also have an important part in many Tamberma funeral segments. Thus, in the second act, when the action shifts to the house after the semiprivate meal at the cemetery, hoes are taken from the facade scenery arrangements to serve as props for persons representing the deceased man's adversaries. These hoes are used to shovel dirt and weeds onto the house as a means of insulting the deceased.²⁶ The same props are later taken up by young men representing the deceased's *Lifoni* "brothers" as they plow a circle around the house to praise the elder's lifelong work. The lance and antelope headdress similarly become props for a performer portraying the deceased's "elder daughter" as she runs to meet the returning funeral parade. The animal-skin

26. Such an insult is also part of one's honor and fame, for, like one's name and accomplishments, it is a significant aspect of one's identity.

wall coverings, the condiment basket, and again the initiation headdress function as props when they are taken to fan the surrogate body as food and praise are rained onto it (fig. 13).

Cues, sound effects, and orchestration

Cues signaling the onset of dramatic action also make use of the scenery elements. One important "cue" seen in the second act is the removal of both the mortuary stretcher and the quiver/bow assemblage from the facade, indicating that the action has moved to the cemetery. Later, the taking down of the house cloths and the beating of the funeral drums serve as additional cues that the parade is on its way back from the cemetery and that soon the house will become the stage for action again. Since the drum and flute songs represent the voices of the ancestors, women of the family are often troubled by hearing them. These women frequently go into trances at this time, thereby responding immediately to "cues" for action. More subtle cues, such as the departure of the musicians, the Earth priest, and the "guardians of death" from the house environs, also are an important means of determining when various semiprivate scenes will take place.

Certain elements in the scenery are used to give an additional dimension of sound to the dramatic scenes, making them more poignant for the general audience and for community elders who may have trouble seeing. The hoes and initiation equipment are employed particularly well with this in mind for they are often knocked together or tapped against a hard surface. The bells, flutes, drums, and horns provide more formal musical accompaniment in certain scenes. During this act, an orchestra composed of women musicians performs for several hours on the lower *taboté* stage of the cattle room, providing musical backing. Through their bell and choral arrangements, the acoustical vibrancy of this earthen, low-ceilinged, multifaceted room is aptly demonstrated.

A male orchestra consisting of six instrument sections (playing flutes, horns, and drums) also has a key role in the production. This orchestra joins the procession from the cemetery, then circles around the house and moves into its interior, playing on each of its various funeral stages (figs. 7, 19). The musicians begin on the ground-level lower *taboté* stage, then continue upstairs to the terrace-level *taboté* stage. Next they advance to the upper portal stage (fig. 7) and the upper male and

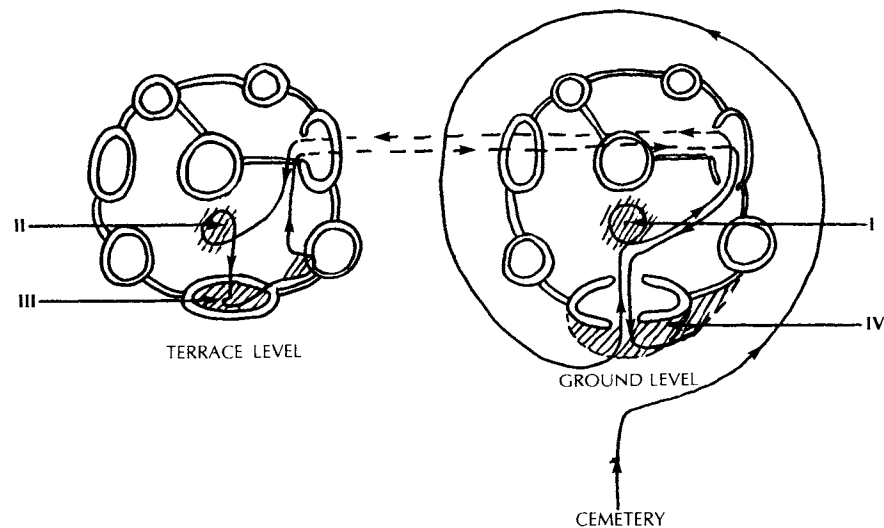


Figure 19. Funeral orchestra path through the house stages. I. lower *taboté* stage; II. upper *taboté* stage; III. upper portal stage (male and female granary stage); IV. lower portal stage (and male wall stage).

female wall alcoves. Finally they return to the outside, where they play facing the entrance on the lower portal stage (see p. 55). Through this movement pattern the accoustical qualities of these various house environments are also distinctly brought out.

Casts

The definition and roles of the cast of characters in the funeral performance can also be seen in this play segment. As a group, many of the principal actors form part of the procession when it leaves the cemetery to come to the house (fig. 15). Each member of the cast is generally distinguished by a special costume or prop. Leading the procession is the village Earth priest, who represents the village founder. He carries the basket and ax (or arrow) that were used in delimiting the tomb.²⁷ This person also is identified as the artistic and dramatic director of the funeral pageant, assuring that the prescribed "scripts" will be correctly followed.²⁸ Because the Earth priest is an important political leader of the community, incorrect action would be interpreted as disregard for his considerable power.²⁹

27. The digging of the tomb is said to re-create the first act of taking possession of the village earth.

28. Since he is also in charge of the burial rites of the funeral prologue, he is one of the first persons notified when a death has occurred.

29. Such an incident occurred at the funeral of one man who had recently moved to a new village. The Earth priest from his natal

Behind the Earth priest in the funeral parade appear the persons who serve as the "guardians of death." These two men and two women are selected from the village at large to take care of the deceased. They are each generally assumed to be somewhat clairvoyant (able to see the invisible as well as to foresee problems). During the funeral they have roles analogous to producers, for they are responsible for coordinating the participants and overseeing the play as a whole. They take on a wide variety of behind-the-scene tasks during the preparation and performance of the funeral. In the prologue, for example, they are responsible for readying the deceased for burial. In the first and second acts, they oversee the accumulation and display of props and scenery. In the third and fourth acts, they collect millet beer, grain, and meat, then control their distribution as payment for special cast members. Throughout, the "guardians of death" ensure that all runs smoothly. In the cemetery procession, the male guardians often carry the mortuary stretcher; female guardians generally hold bowls that contain offerings of food and drink used at the tomb.

The gravedigger, family members, and orchestra

village protested that the cemetery actions were incorrect, since he had not been asked to participate and since his rights as the family tomb keeper had been overlooked. Because error in action, casts, or timing may anger the village ancestors and Earth Goddess, for whom the Earth priest is responsible, the accurate performance of the ritual scripts is particularly important to him.

players follow these pageant leaders in the parade. The gravedigger, a *Fayenfé* (war and death association) member, usually carries the two hoes used in digging the tomb. These are set back to back against each other in a closed composition. The family members (or more frequently persons representing them) are also distinguishable in the parade. The person portraying the "first daughter" of the deceased, for example, often carries an offering vessel. Other children and siblings are set apart by special white necklaces. In some villages the person portraying the widow wears a headdress made from the deceased's overturned sauce bowl, which has been pierced at the center with an arrow. The sauce bowl, ordinarily a metaphor for life, has in this way been dramatically turned over and shot. The orchestra, which follows behind this grouping, is identified not only by their associated instruments but also by the music they play.

Most of the remaining cast members, having stayed behind at the house with the gathering audience, begin their parts only after the parade returns from the cemetery. Shortly before the parade appears, persons representing the adversaries of the deceased man defile his house with dirt and weeds. Simultaneously, certain young women of the family fall down in a state of possession after hearing the distant ancestral voices of the funeral flutes and drums. As the parade draws still closer, performers from the village *Fayenfé* association rush out to dance for the soul of the deceased, who is assumed to be accompanying the funeral parade back to the house. In so doing, the *Fayenfé* members honor the deceased by suggesting he died in war.³⁰ While they are dancing at the front of the parade line, a woman playing one of the daughters of the deceased

30. The cemetery parade, which is called *fakunàfa* ("The War Line") also reinforces this theme of war, as do the parade songs played by both the *layolala* and *takwasenté* flutes at the funerals of men. Their melodies are traditional tunes of battle meant to inspire men into action to avenge a village death. In the villages of Lissani and Koufitoukou, these flutes sing the following:

To kill a man is good
All day long we crouch over
[in battle position]
The tree sap is divided in the bowl
[the arrow poison is ready]
The sun is up, it should remain standing.
[note importance of noon sun]
The crowd which has gathered
should stay here together
[as witnesses to the revenge]

The "adversary's" shooting of a poison arrow into the deceased's quiver and portal later in the "Drink of the Dead" is still another clear allusion to the deceased as a fallen warrior.

appears wearing a *Likuntili* (women's initiation) headdress. She greets the parade and feigns an attack on the dead man's soul by thrusting her initiation lance toward the oncoming parade members.³¹ After the parade has arrived at the house, and the orchestra has finished its performance on the various house stages, the priests of the major village religious associations take on roles as special "initiators," tapping the house (and by extension the deceased) with their initiation equipment.

Play aesthetics

The various members of the funeral cast contribute as artists to the play's overall aesthetic image through their carefully choreographed movement patterns and through their use of the house facade for arrangements of scenery. Such compositions are each aimed at "enhancing the beauty of the house," as one elder explained.

A variety of aesthetic factors are taken into consideration by these artists during the performance. The criteria used are similar to aesthetic factors that are important in other Tamberma art forms, particularly architecture. The first is visibility, e.g., each part or element of the composition or movement sequence must be clear and thoroughly "readable." For this reason, the musical instruments, hoes, quivers, cloths, and skins arranged on the facade are carefully placed so that the distinct features of each will be seen (figs. 7, 11, 17). Vessels, similarly, are often turned on their sides so that both the top opening and interior surfaces will be open to view. Visibility is also an important characteristic in the choreographed funeral movements. In these, slow and deliberate actions are emphasized so that none of the essential elements will be missed.

The second aesthetic principle found in the funeral play is one stressing the repetition of forms within the whole so that each motif will be clearly defined. Repetition becomes an important factor both in scenery compositions (like the multiples of hoes, cloths, quivers, and flutes used in the facade arrangements) and in the structuration of the overall funeral cycle (emphasizing multiply repeated segments and action modes). Another

31. Her attack is a re-creation of the killing ritual performed by the husband at the termination of women's initiation. The importance of specialized funeral actors became clear to me when, after observing five or six different funerals, I noticed that the same woman was identified in each as "the daughter of the deceased." On further questioning, I was told that this woman represents "the daughter" for each funeral performance in that village. This actress is generally an adult woman, and the role requires considerable energy.

aesthetic consideration in the funeral is framing, which can be observed in the parade paths that carefully encircle and thus give emphasis to the forms or spaces they circumscribe (the tomb, the cemetery, the house, etc.). In scenery compositions, the use of framing is evident in the choice of plain background spaces to set off the scenery compositions and assemblages.

Balance of mood, theme, and action also is important. Thus each funeral play contrasts periods of relative activity with periods of comparative calm; somber actions are alternated with joyful ones; day scenes are followed by night scenes. Likewise, scenery compositions carefully balance the diverse colors, forms, compositions, and textures of their various elements so that this juxtaposing will provide greater interest. A similar concern can be seen in the repeated use of multiple levels of space in the funeral play, both for staging areas and with respect to the movement sequences and scenery compositions associated with each.

Criticism

Critical reaction to the funeral performance shows a concern for these aesthetic criteria as well as for other dramaturgical factors such as the size of the production, the wealth of scenery, the number of people in attendance, the "script" interpretation, and the intensity of the drama. Because funeral productions often have several scenes occurring simultaneously on different stages for different audiences, an appraisal is usually formulated independently, according to the role and place of each viewer. Nonetheless, an overall criticism is generally made as well.

Funerals with few actors, props, or sparse scenery are said to be dull and joyless by young and old alike. Such was the case with one funeral performed in the middle of the rainy season when there was no time for an elaborate performance. A funeral for a dead baobab tree (which had been "sponsored" by a village ancestor) during the same period was similarly viewed as uninteresting. Its purpose was solely to fulfill a ritual requirement. On the other hand, funerals with an abundance of stage scenery, an extensive cast, a large audience, and vibrant action are discussed for many years.

The feast of the dead

"The Feast [Cereal] of the Dead" (*Boukoukia*), the third funeral segment, takes place on the day following "The Afternoon Dance." It provides the setting for

payment of the various funeral expenses. The most important participants in this act are the relatives of the deceased. In "The Feast of the Dead," the deceased's maternal relatives receive large quantities of food (cooked cereal and fresh meat) from the ultimate patrons of the funeral play, the paternal family of the late elder. This is in recognition of the role of the maternal relatives as corporate mothers. Appropriate portions of meat and cereal are also set aside in this act for the Earth priest, "the guardians of death," the musicians, and others who played significant parts in the funeral production.

Performance payment

"The Feast of the Dead" climaxes at dusk with the offering of multiple balls of cooked cereal (presented on a winnowing tray) to family children standing in front of the door on the house's lower portal staging area. This action is seen as a direct reference to the finality of death (the deceased no longer requires food) and to the potential for future life (new children) since the necessary payment (the funeral) has been provided. This feast has particular importance because for the Tamberma food and eating are common metaphors for life.³² Such an association between food (the principal means of payment) and regeneration is suggested in funeral songs such as the following, in which the house serves as a symbol of the great loss:

I want to speak and my voice remains inside,
My house is broken* and no longer exists,
 [*the family line is broken]
Can I leave so that someone can give me food?*
 [*something to fill my emptiness (children)]
And I will come and make porridge* to drink
 [*food for the newborn baby]
Then sleep.
 [with peace of mind]

Significantly, the broad concept of payment that is so strongly emphasized in this act also provides one of the principal structuring devices for the funeral play as a whole. In each act there is an inherent theme of payment. The first two acts incorporate dance presentations, the third centers around food, the fourth focuses on drink. This formal sequence — dance, food, drink — also is followed in other Tamberma sacrifices as payment to a particular spirit or deity. Thus the

32. As the funeral song of the *linankoua* flute notes sadly, "This youth has refused the food, this youth has refused the food" (that is, he or she no longer feels hunger or has need to eat).

dance defines the motion of sacrifice; feast is the offering; and drink is the gift making it sacrosanct.³³

The drink of the dead

In the preceding sections, we have discussed several key themes important to the development of the funeral's central story. "The Person Sleeps" begins by announcing the recent death; "The Dance of Drums" brusquely sends away the deceased's soul; "The Afternoon Dance" serves to honor this spirit on its trip to the world of the dead; and "The Feast of the Dead" provides payment for his or her life. The next act, "The Drink of the Dead" (*Bakouna*), which takes place usually three days later, can be viewed as aimed primarily at encouraging the deceased to return and bring forth children in the families of his or her descendants. The stress on rebirth in this act is emphasized in various songs of the funeral. The following, a good example, uses a metaphor of a poorly kept house to suggest the plight of families who are without offspring because of the failure of ancestors to return and sponsor young:

House owners * arrange their houses well.
 [* the ancestors]
 And what do you * do?
 [* the ancestors of my lineage]
 Your house fell in front.
 [there is no future]
 House owners arrange and keep their houses well.
 And their houses are solidly built.
 Others make their houses well.
 The brother of Iyonta, your house is still closed,
 [the portal is closed because there are no
 occupants]
 And I saw that a small tree has covered the door.
 [because the house is empty of children, weeds
 have taken over]

Symbolic action

The importance of life renewal in this fourth act brings us to the question of symbolic action and its role in the theatrical structure of the funeral.³⁴ A series of

33. Meals and sacrifices at the tomb during the various funeral acts also serve as payment — in this case to the village Earth Goddess. The goat, cereal, and beer offered at this time are, in addition, a gift to the deceased so that he or she will feel welcome in the new home. They are further meant to recompense the village elders who took part in the burial and later rituals at the cemetery.

34. Although regeneration is the principal theme of this act, other types of symbolic action are found throughout the funeral. Each performance, in fact, uses various symbolic action modes to present ideas concerning history, religion, nature, and cosmology.

symbolic actions are central in this act as a means of assuring the future pregnancy of young women of the house so that the life recently lost will be replaced. With this in mind, during "The Drink of the Dead" segment, the deceased's married daughters and daughters-in-law are asked to stand in the center of the house cattle room on the lower *taboté* stage, facing west into the late afternoon sun. Here, on the spot where they will eventually bear children,³⁵ a family aunt smooths butter (an allusion to fatness and fertility) on their small toes (metaphors for children.)³⁶

Other types of regeneration found in symbolic action during this act document the Tamberma theory of conception, a theory deriving ultimately from the Tamberma account of creation. According to this legend, when the earth and sky originally separated, the first Tamberma male ancestors who were living on earth fell ill and died. Immediately after, their wives became pregnant and soon bore children. Death accordingly was necessary for new life to spring forth. Symbolic actions that allude to this death-birth relationship are numerous.³⁷ In one scene of this act, an adversary of the deceased man is asked to shoot an arrow through the late elder's quiver, which is placed against the portal. This action (which also occasionally occurs in the prior "Afternoon Dance") is seen not only to injure his pride, but also to establish publicly the death of the deceased so that new life will soon follow in the family.

During a parallel segment of a woman's funeral, the shooting of the quiver is often replaced by the destruction of ten to fifteen calabash bowls in front of the door. These vessels, assembled by the female guardians of death on the entrance roof, are important Tamberma symbols for marriage and the procreative powers of women. They are dropped from the roof and are then trampled on by the men standing below. In addition to this dramatic destruction, there often follows a competition between the family of the woman's parents and the family of her husband to see who will catch and retain her closed condiment basket after it has been dropped from the terrace roof. The family that is successful in keeping this basket is said ultimately to

35. Tamberma women deliver their children positioned under the *taboté* hole facing west.

36. The names of toes are the same as those given to Tamberma male children according to their birth order — *N'tcha* (big toe), *N'po* (second toe), *N'koué* (third toe), etc.

37. A separate ritual action requiring a husband to shoot a miniature straw arrow into his pregnant wife's stomach, so that her pregnancy will hold, further points to the necessity of death for life in Tamberma thought.

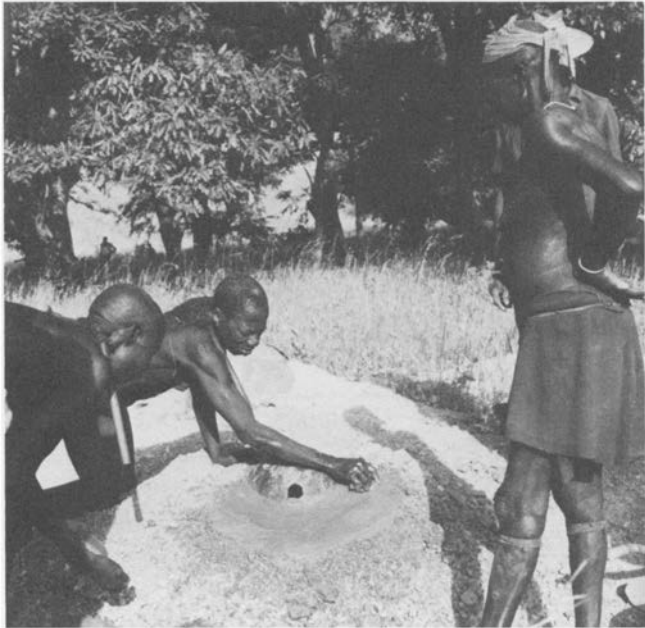


Figure 20. Plastering the tomb terrace. Note upper rounded surface of the overturned water jar and west-facing “portal” of the tomb. Village of Koufitoukou. October 31, 1977.

receive the deceased woman’s aid in bringing forth children. In this context, the closed condiment basket (like the calabash) suggests her womb, just as the adversary’s arrow alludes to the deceased man’s part in the reproductive process.

Related symbolic action takes place at the cemetery as the living son and daughter of the deceased (or persons representing them) complete the tomb “terrace” (fig. 20). Their participation in this construction is said to assure that future children will be strong architects and house plasterers. The talent is thought to pass from the late elder to the descendants at the tomb.

The path followed by the funeral musicians from the cemetery to the house, then through its stages (fig. 19), also has symbolic importance. It is intended to show the soul of the deceased the road it should take in coming back to form the new child.³⁸ In this and in

38. A young priest explained how the musicians’ path and the conception path are tied. According to him, when the two ancestors [a woman and her brother] want to create and sponsor a child, they follow along the funeral procession path from the cemetery to the house. After reaching the house, they stop first outside the door facing either the north or the south side of the portal, depending on the sex of the future child. They then enter the interior cattle room, standing for a moment on the lower *taboté* area. Next they proceed up onto the terrace (via the *taboté* hole itself if the child is to be clairvoyant). Here, as the sister sits on the *taboté* stone cover and investigates her



Figure 21. Lifoni initiates carrying bows, quivers, leather sacks, and whips. Cloth streamers are suspended from their straw hats. Village of Kounadokou. May 15, 1977.

other acts, the flute and voice songs of these musicians are aimed at encouraging the deceased to return quickly through their praise of his (or her) hunting, farming, and child-producing qualities. To make the point clearer, the assemblage of the deceased’s personal possessions (*tinanti*) — the eating and cooking vessels (fig. 11), shoulder bag, condiment basket, walking stick, quiver, and bow — as well as the cords, roots, and baskets associated with the funeral are placed beside the door. Because of the distinguishing personal “dirt,” or essence, found in them, they are said to assure that the ancestor will return to the correct house.

Symbolic action linked to regeneration is also important in the various initiation sequences in the funeral. These initiations are intended to make certain that the resulting children will be acquainted with the associated initiation deities and therefore will not suffer from fright and possible death at meeting them later for the first time. Thus a priest explains the ceremonial red and white or black and white dotted forms which are painted on a corpse before burial.

old sleeping room, her brother climbs up onto the front entrance roof to look out across the village to see what has changed so that he can report back to his ancestral village. The couple then enter the sleeping room and together form the fetus, the man modeling it of sacred earth and the woman plastering it with a smooth layer of skin.

When a man dies, you do *Lifoni* [men's initiation] to him again — that which he did before he died. And when he brings out a child, the child will know that. If you do not do this, when he dies, the child will refuse [to be initiated] . . . the child will die.

As a reinforcement of this idea, several Tamberma elders have suggested that the funeral play as a whole is structured around the men's and women's initiation cycle. This is defined not only by the rituals and ordering of the various funeral sequences, but also through the use of house scenery to recall the image of the novices as they emerge from initiation rites (fig. 21). As one priest explained, "Dressing the house with funeral cloths is like dressing the novices at *Lifoni*" (men's initiation). In the final public rites of initiation, rich cloths are draped over the shoulders of the male and female novices (like those draped over the upper stories of the funeral house) (fig. 11), cowries are hung around their necks and waists (like those placed around the portal), and horned headdresses are placed on their heads (paralleling the earthen horns on the center of the entrance roof). Through symbolic action, the house is thus reinitiated to represent and nurture its new youth (future offspring).

The reenactment

"The Reenactment" (*Likou*) is the funeral epilogue. It takes place a year or two after the main funeral sections described above, and serves both to summarily repeat the events of the preceding acts and to terminate the mourning period through various multivillage parades, mock battles, vibrant drum tattoos, and contests of power. The end of the mourning period is defined through the casting away of the deceased's assembled portal possessions (*tinanti*) at the crossroads. When combined with another late afternoon crossroad and portal scene, which entices the deceased's soul back to the house with food and drink, and the subsequent construction of an ancestor shrine (*liboloni*) beside the door, this effectively reincorporates the deceased — who now is an ancestor — into the house. As the funeral epilogue, "The Reenactment" is an appropriate

play segment for closing observations on the importance of theatre in Tamberma architectural design.

Architecture and theatre

It is clear that a dramaturgical analysis offers much to our understanding of Tamberma architecture with respect to its structure, symbolism, and use. Important factors of architectural design are determined by the potential need within each house for precise staging and performance areas. Theatrical factors also influence house landscaping and orientation. For this reason the front yard is designed as an expansive area that can seat large audiences. The western alignment of Tamberma houses assures a consistency of lighting for theatrical effect and symbolism. Numerous decorative and structural elements in the house likewise are built with their theatrical use in mind: the earthen house "horn" can be "cut," the granary covers can be turned on their heads, the door can be removed and used as a stretcher.

Architectural criticism also takes into account the important use of the house as a theatre. Of the houses I saw completed in 1977, one was criticized because its incorrect room placement would adversely affect the amount and direction of interior light for the performance. Another was derided because its misplaced roof supports would greatly impair interior funeral dances. An admonishment heard during a different ceremony ("He says his terrace is not solid, so dance less, and do it . . . slowly") suggests that the quality of the performance itself may be threatened when structural standards in Tamberma architecture are not maintained. Finally, the dramaturgical use of the house helps to make certain the maintenance of high overall aesthetic qualities in architecture, so that the dramas presented at these house theatres will have a consistent and visually powerful staging. Appropriately, therefore, many Tamberma men, as they approach the age of Tibenti (i.e., their sixties) commission a grand, more spacious house within the traditional mode. Such men are, in essence, designing the theatres that will be used for their own funerals.

CHART ³⁹

Outline of the funerals of two Tamberma elders, a deceased man and a deceased woman from two different villages.

ONITILOUA "The Person Sleeps"

Deceased female elder.⁴⁰ Koufitoukou village. Oct. 25, 1977.

Setting: House of deceased, a woman who died in her sleep on Sept. 26, 1977. The description below is of the formal *Onitiloua* ceremony that was presented one month after the death, on the morning that the funeral cycle opened. This performance, except where noted, duplicates the *Onitiloua* ceremonies that took place in conjunction with the burial on Sept. 26. Information in brackets refers to differences between the two *Onitiloua* presentations.

5:30 A.M.

A baobab figure,⁴¹ carved the night before to represent the deceased, is brought upstairs and is placed in the woman's bedroom by her son. [Sept. 26: No figure is carved; this is the time when the son makes the announcement of the death to the family and clan elders.]

6:00 A.M.

Fayené (war and death association) priests arrive with medicines and a sacred roan antelope horn.⁴² They are led up onto the terrace by a male "guardian of death." [Sept. 26: They approach the sleeping chamber walking backward.]⁴⁴ After consuming some medicinal powder, they enter the bedroom. They turn the figure over and back with the horn, then "flex" and tap the major joints.⁴⁵ Medicinal powder is pressed onto the solar plexis.⁴⁶ [During the original ceremony, additional powder is also placed in the mouth and nose.] After leaving the chamber, the priests wash their hands near the terrace drainpipe. [Sept. 26: Medicinal powder is given to family members who have seen the deceased.]⁴⁷

39. In the compilation of this material I wish to thank Rudolph Blier for the generous use of his field observations of the same ceremonies. These added to my own have allowed for the detailing of the frequently concurrent activity of the funeral.

40. This woman never married. She was, however, a person of considerable status in the village. Being the last of her paternal lineage, she followed the Tamberma custom of remaining in her father's house and bearing children for him (in his name) through an outside lover. In this way she was responsible for the continuity of a lineage that otherwise would have perished. At the time of her death, she was living with her oldest son.

41. Baobab is an extremely soft wood, both on its surface and in its core. It is therefore seen to resemble human flesh. As a tree, the baobab is a frequent metaphor for marriage (and the children thereof). The baobab is also closely identified with the ancestors because they

Deceased male elder. Lissani village. April 29, 1977.

Setting: House of deceased, a "younger" elder who died unexpectedly late in the evening of April 28, 1977. The *Onitiloua* ceremonies described here were presented the morning of the 29th, at the time his death was announced.

5:00 A.M.

The death is announced to the family and village elders. The deceased is taken to the cemetery and is buried in the tomb of another family elder.⁴² (It has not yet been decided if the elder is old enough to have his own tomb and to be given a formal funeral.)

5:30 A.M.

The decision has been made by the village elders to have a funeral, and a rough figure is carved from a baobab branch to represent the deceased.

6:15 A.M.

The figure is brought upstairs and is placed in the central, terrace-level sleeping room. Women of the family enter the sleeping room to stay with the figure. Outside the house, young family men make a stretcher out of branches. Village elders begin arriving.

commonly sponsor baobab trees in the same way that they sponsor children in their families.

The baobab figure itself is carved very roughly: the bark is not removed and the subsidiary branches of the piece are used to indicate limbs. Two incised lines are the only indication of the head and genitals. The carving is done by an elder from the lineage of the village founder.

42. Later, if troubles arise because the deceased did not have his own tomb, a new one will have to be constructed and the body (or a part of it) will be transferred.

43. This roan antelope horn shelters the war and death deity, *Fayené*, and is used in association with sacred medicines to treat illnesses linked to death.

44. The back is a frequent Tamberma metaphor for death. It is also commonly associated with the past. The arrival of the priests

6:20 A.M.

Village elders begin to arrive. [Sept. 26: Women "guardians of death" enter the sleeping room and bring out the possessions of the deceased — a jar, covered calabash, fibers — and put them in the granary.]

6:30 A.M.

Women "guardians of death" inside the sleeping room begin to wash the figure with water and kapok (native cotton). They feign to shave the figure with a blade, then they place new hipcords (red and black) and a new leaf *cache-sexe* on the figure. Shea butter is smoothed over its surfaces.⁴⁸ Women of the family come into the chamber to stay with the figure. They talk about funeral arrangements. Outside, young men of the family make a stretcher of branches.

[Sept. 26: Family women remain in the sleeping room with the deceased until 8:30 A.M. At this time, male "guardians of death" take the body out onto the terrace for washing. It is placed facing north in a seated position with its arms crossed. The women "guardians of death" flex and stretch the deceased's fingers and joints. They wash the body and shave the head. The deceased's red and black hipcords, leaf *cache-sexe*, and jewelry are removed. The old cords are broken and they and the *cache-sexe* are passed outside, over the back of the house. New cords (of the same color) and a new *cache-sexe* are put onto the body. Melted shea butter is rubbed over the limbs and torso. The jewelry is taken downstairs and is placed on the door lintel.]

9:30 A.M.

Divination: The carved figure is taken out-of-doors and is placed on a stretcher, secured with a rope. It is supported on the heads of two bearers (young men from the family) who stand facing the portal⁵⁰ (on the north side of the doorjamb). In response to questions put to the deceased by a family elder, the deceased moves the bearers to knock against the doorway, then to touch persons, shrines, or paths to identify the cause of death. (In some funerals, divination is also done during "The Dance of Drums" and "The Afternoon Dance.")

[Sept. 26: A short divination is done with the actual body to determine where the funeral will take place. At this time, the *Fayenfé* priests and village Earth priest go to the cemetery to dig the tomb. On the way, they stop at the house of another of the deceased's sons (symbolically her

with their backs toward the deceased is also a means of protecting them from the dangers of death.

45. This is seen to make it easier to move and bury the deceased. It is also viewed as an essential part of the process of preparing the deceased for the new birth (the child) he or she will sponsor. The loosening of the joints at this time is explained as a means of assuring that the new baby will not be born crippled.

46. The solar plexis is associated with breath (life), as are the nose and mouth.

6:50 A.M.

The carved figure is brought downstairs by two male "guardians of death." They place it in the center of the cattle room (the man's own bedroom), head in the east and feet in the west.⁴⁹ The *Fayenfé* priests arrive and place medicine on the figure. The priests eat additional medicine and place some in the mouths of family women and children.

9:15 A.M.

Divination: The figure is brought outside and is attached to the stretcher. It is borne by two men who stand facing the portal — on the south side of the doorjamb. The deceased moves its bearers to pass through the house and to touch various shrines and members of the audience to indicate the cause of death.

47. To cleanse the danger of death from them.

48. The washing, shaving, and oiling of the figure (like parallel action on the body) and the cutting of the cords of the deceased before burial are aimed at the newborn baby so that he or she will emerge from the womb correctly washed, shaved, oiled, and naked.

49. This is the position people take to sleep.

50. The importance of the portal for this divination is also based on the association of the door with the mouth of the house, e.g., the source of its speech (Blair 1981).

natal home as opposed to her marriage or "husband's" home)⁵¹ and mark a circle in front of the door around the perimeter of a basket overturned on a calabash and hen. This form is repeated at the cemetery to delimit the tomb portal. At 4:30 P.M., the tomb is completed.]

10:40 A.M.

After divination has been completed, the figure is removed from the stretcher and is brought upstairs onto the terrace, placed on a mat under the female granary overhang. A condiment basket⁵² is placed beside the head. Here, women of the family fan the figure with grasses while singing mortuary songs composed for the occasion. Throughout the day, friends and family come to pay their respects, bringing gifts of produce (men bring "male" crops, women bring "female" crops), which they place beside the figure. Songs of the women continue throughout the day.

[Sept. 26: The body is placed (after washing) under the female (north) granary overhang on the terrace level. It is positioned on its side — facing north with the head toward the west and the feet toward the east.⁵⁴ A condiment basket from the deceased's bedroom is placed beside the head. The deceased's son brings down millet from the granary and lays some here as well. A blue-and-white-striped pall is placed over the body.⁵⁵ Women of the family sit beside the body and fan it with grasses. Other members of the family arrive to pay their respects: pregnant women walk backward in approaching the body; young women are led in with their eyes closed. These visitors (most with gifts of food) continue to arrive throughout the afternoon.

4:30 P.M. The body is painted with a pattern of red and white spots by the female "guardians of death." Four men from the family then carry the body around the back of the terrace and down through the kitchen to the outside. The body is secured on the stretcher with a rope. Straw from the sleeping-room roof is used as a covering. Supported on the heads of two young men, the body is carried clockwise around the outside of the house. A guinea hen⁵⁶ is offered against the side of the portal, and the bearers move off toward the deceased's natal house. Here food is offered to the stretcher before its bearers go to the cemetery with the body. Arriving, they walk around the new tomb in a

51. The house of birth (or one designated as such) is where the major funeral ceremonies take place. For a woman, this is not only in recognition of the significance of her own family but also of the fact that it is here (most likely) where she will bring out a new child. Because of the special circumstances of this particular funeral (the woman had not married), it was decided that the house where she died (her older son's house) would be used to represent her "marital" house, while that of a younger son would represent her "house of birth." The house choice was made during the course of the mortuary divination when a family elder asked the deceased (through the corpse) where she would like her ceremonies to be held. At that time she moved the two stretcher bearers to go toward the house of her younger son.

10:30 A.M.

When the divination has been completed, the figure is put back in the center of the cattle room. The Earth and *Fayenfé* priests go inside with a hoe and ax. They hit these two implements together, passing them between their legs from behind. This is repeated three times, the last time as they are emerging from the door. Millet is ground on the doorsill by the Earth priest. Following this, the Earth and *Fayenfé* priests delimit a circle in front of the door, using the circumference of a basket overturned on a calabash and rooster⁵³ for the pattern. The dirt from the center is taken up and is sprinkled along the path the two follow in a counterclockwise tour around the outside of the house. The elders leave for the cemetery and there they make a mock tomb using this same pattern.

11:30 A.M.

The figure is brought upstairs by a male "guardian" and is put under the overhang of the male (south) granary. It is rested on a straw mat. Beside it are put bells, four cow tails, a miniature bow, and a men's initiation headdress. A goatskin is brought up and is also placed under the figure. Mourners arrive throughout the day, bringing gifts of produce and tobacco, which are placed beside the figure. Women of the family, fanning the figure with straw, present songs of mourning.

52. This basket is where a woman's sauce ingredients are kept. It is stored in the center of the woman's bedroom, under the roof pinnacle. A basket of this type is also an essential part of a woman's initiation.

53. It is explained that the rooster will announce the arrival of the deceased when he reaches the village of the ancestors in the western sky. In a woman's funeral, a hen is used instead. The hen is seen to be more appropriate for women because it is female and because it is closely associated with the female Earth Goddess.

54. This is in reference to the position in which women are buried.

55. This cloth and the other funeral cloths are imported. They are stored in a jar in the first (founder's) house of the village.

56. This is the fowl that women most often consume.

clockwise direction, then put the body down to the east of the tomb. A *Fayéné* priest removes the body from the stretcher and flexes the major joints. He sits the body upright with the feet in the tomb, facing east. He cuts the hipcords and lowers the body inside. After entering the tomb and arranging the body comfortably, the priest comes out and places the house *taboté* stone over the hole of the tomb. The loose earth from the tomb is piled up over the center.]

6:30 P.M.

At the house, the figure and associated gifts are brought down to the center of the cattle room from the granary overhang. Preparations for the evening's *Tibenti* "Dance of the Drums" are begun.

[Sept. 26: *Onitiloua* concludes with the burial described above.]

6:00 P.M.

The figure is brought downstairs to the center of the cattle room with the assembled gifts.

TIBENTI "The Dance of Drums"

Deceased: Same woman. Koufitoukou village. Oct. 26, 1977.

Setting: "Marital" house of the deceased. Three funeral drums are placed against the facade in front of the female (north) joining wall. Inside, the carved baobab figure is placed on a mat in the center of the cattle room floor with gifts of produce.

7:15 P.M.

Women sing mortuary songs with accompanying dances around the carved figure.

8:15 P.M.

The three funeral drums are brought out away from the facade and are played. The carved figure is taken out of the house by a "guardian of death" and is secured to a stretcher. This is borne by two men, who make a tour around the outside of the house in a clockwise direction. They proceed in the same direction around the three drums in front. The two men carrying the stretcher then stand in front of the door and receive gifts of produce, which are tossed down onto the stretcher from the entrance roof. Women fan the stretcher with animal skins and the deceased's condiment basket.

9:20 P.M.

To the tempo of a smaller portable drum and accompanying songs of those in attendance, the two men carry the stretcher to the home where the woman was born.

9:40 P.M.

Arriving at the "natal" house, the body is carried around it in a clockwise direction. Then the two men dance with the stretcher in front of the door.

Deceased: Same man. Lissani village. April 29, 1977.

Setting: House of deceased. Three funeral drums are placed outside in front of the male (south) joining wall. Inside, the carved figure is resting on a skin and mat in the center of the cattle room. Around the figure are a variety of agricultural produce, a man's initiation headdress, cow tails, bells, and rattles.

8:45 P.M.

Mourning songs are sung by women around the carved figure in the cattle room. The funeral drums are played outside in front of the house. A bonfire is built nearby. Inside, burning brands provide illumination. The mourning songs and accompanying dances on the interior are continued until midnight.

9:45 P.M.

The figure is removed from the stretcher and is brought inside. (The stretcher is placed beside the door.) Inside, in the center of the cattle room, the figure is placed on a mat and is surrounded by cowries (money), produce, bells, rattles, and an egg. (In most villages a woman's initiation headdress would also be placed here.) The female "guardians of death" change the hipcords and leaf cache-sexe of the figure to those worn by a bride (e.g., white in color).⁵⁷

10:15 P.M.

Mortuary dances begin inside this house over the figure.

12:05 A.M.

Initiation dances (for women's initiation) are performed over the figure in the cattle room. These alternate with mourning songs and ceremonial hoeing dances until early morning.

3:15 A.M.

Climax rites of women's initiation are performed over figure by female initiation priests. Initiates continue with association songs and dances.

12:15 A.M.

Men's initiation ceremonies begin in the cattle room. Musicians and all others leave the house. Four priests enter: one holds a burning brand, one holds an ax, the others hold various initiation *sacra*. They make a circle around the interior, taping the walls with their equipment.⁵⁸ Emerging from the door, the first priest taps the top, bottom, and sides of the door with the burning brand. The four then circle the outside of the house in a counterclockwise direction, tapping each house joining wall and room in turn. An orchestra of village flute and horn players then enters the house. A ceremonial "adversary" of the deceased goes up onto the terrace. After a verbal signal, he loudly calls the name of the deceased through the *taboté* hole. Simultaneously, all the musicians start playing.⁵⁹ They proceed immediately to move through the various house areas, playing first on the ground floor over the figure, then on the terrace, circling the *taboté* before going up to the entrance roof.

1:00 A.M.

Mortuary songs and dances over the figure are renewed in the cattle room.

2:00 A.M.

Women perform a mortuary, slow-paced "hoeing" dance over figure.

3:00 A.M.

Repeat of midnight ceremonial sequence with priests tapping interior and exterior house walls with initiation *sacra*. Procession of musicians follows through house areas.

58. This procession, and that around the outside of the house, are seen not only to reinitiate the deceased but also to re-create the original migration of the village founder from *Linaba* (the village of human creation). During the migration, the founder brought fire and the necessary initiatory *sacra* to the village for the benefit of its future inhabitants (Blier 1981).

59. These are seen to represent the voice of the deceased.

57. The changing of the woman's hipcords during the course of the funeral follows the same sequential ordering associated with women in life; puberty, marriage, and adulthood are marked by the differentiated color of the hipcords they wear.

5:45 A.M.

Initiation songs terminate. The house is draped in mourning cloths and the female granary cap is turned over on its head.

5:30 A.M.

Climax "turning-over" (*bita*) ceremony: The bow, attached quiver, and sack ⁶⁰ of the deceased are carried by an "adversary" to the house entrance roof. A flute player accompanies this man. The adversary proceeds to cut the male (south) house horn from the facade, allowing it and the bow/quiver/sack assemblage to fall simultaneously to the ground in front of the portal. The earthen horn breaks on impact; ⁶¹ the bow and quiver are then leaned against the portal on the male (south) side of the doorjamb. The male granary cap is turned on its head.

KOUBENYOUAKOU "The Afternoon Dance"

Deceased: Same woman. Koufitoukou village. Oct. 27, 1977.
 Setting: House designated as the woman's birthplace. Skins (2 cows, 3 goats) and funeral cloths are draped from the door and upper facade walls. The deceased's sauce bowl is overturned on the ground to the north of the door. Beside it is her cane, the stretcher, and an assemblage of animal skulls (the remains of offerings to the deceased). The north granary cover has been turned on its head. Calabashes have been assembled on the entrance roof. Three funeral drums are set against the facade in front of the north joining wall. The carved figure is in the center of the interior cattle room, placed on a mat, surrounded by bells, a condiment basket, a cow tail, rattles, agricultural produce, and an egg. A cowrie belt is wrapped around the figure's waist along with the white "bridal" hipcords.

12:00 NOON

Initiation: *Twins* initiation is performed by female priests of this association through special dances and songs presented over the carved figure. (In most villages, women's initiation rites for the figure are also performed at this time.)

1:00 P.M.

Elders and other principals go to the cemetery.
 The Earth priest carries the mortuary basket and calabash.
 The male "guardian of death" carries the stretcher.
 The deceased's son brings a goat.
 A *Fayéné* member ("tomb digger") carries two hoes.
 The "daughter of deceased" carries a bowl of cooked cereal.

Deceased: Same man. Lissani village. April 30, 1977.

Setting: House of the deceased. Animal skins (1 cow,⁶² 3 goats, 4 sheep) are displayed on the portal and upper facade walls. Quivers are suspended from the facade. The male granary cover has been turned on its head, and money (attached to poles) is displayed from the male granary. The deceased's bow, quiver, and sack assemblage is placed to the south of the doorjamb. His bowl is overturned beside it. Hoes and initiation equipment are arranged along the front of the male joining wall with three mortuary drums. Flutes and horns are suspended from wooden hooks beside the door. Inside the cattle room, the carved figure is placed on a mat surrounded by produce, rattles, bells, a miniature arrow, a cow tail, and a woman's initiation headdress. A cowrie belt is wrapped around the figure's waist.

12:20 P.M.

Mortuary songs are presented by the family women over the figure. (In most villages women's initiation ceremonies take place at this time.)

60. These objects, which every adult Tamberma man traditionally owned, symbolize the essential male role as warrior and community protector.

61. In the associated anthropomorphic house imagery, the entrance horn is frequently compared to the human testicle (Blier 1981). At the funeral, when the horn is cut from the facade it is thus a powerful metaphor for a man's defeat in battle. During war, a man's final vanquishment is marked by a similar action.

62. As is the Tamberma custom, the principal gift of the son of the deceased (the paternal lineage) to the deceased's maternal lineage is a cow. It is killed in the entryway of the mortuary house and is butchered at the house door (placed in front of the entrance on the ground). This exemplifies further the considerable death symbolism associated with Tamberma house portals.

1:30 P.M.

At the house young people begin assembling for dances and song bouts.⁶⁴ Inside initiation songs continue. (At the cemetery, the goat is killed,⁶⁵ then prepared over a fire.)

3:00 P.M.

Kapok and water are brought into the house by female "guardians of death." They pass these around their backs two times, then use them to wash the carved figure. One woman goes to the terrace, wraps shea butter in a leaf, and passes it (on a stick) down through the *taboté* hole into the cattle room. A blade (razor) is passed down the same way. They wash and shave the head of the figure, then wipe its body with the shea butter. The cowrie belt, hipcords, and leaf *cache-sexe* of the figure are removed. New red and white hipcords and a new *cache-sexe* like those worn by married women are placed on the figure. The figure is painted with red and white spots.

3:15 P.M.

At the cemetery: Elders eat the meal of goat and cooked millet. The Earth priest buries the goat head in the center of the tomb. He offers some of the cereal and sauce first to the sun (toward the sky in the west) then to the tomb.

63. The first action is explained as a way of showing the widow that she no longer needs to be afraid that the deceased's spirit is hiding in the house (behind the door). The second action is intended to renew her force and to give her new life. A similar offering of food in three gestures is performed for young initiates on their emergence from *Lifoni* and *Likuntili* as adults.

64. For many young people, this is by far the most interesting feature of the whole funeral. The songs that are presented here are composed by the youth for the occasion. Their themes commonly focus on recent cases of love lost and won, past village sorrow, and

1:15 P.M.

(In most villages if the deceased's widow is still living, she is taken outside by the female "guardians of death" and is made to sit three times on the fork that supports the house door at night. She is then offered food, which she accepts after three gestures.)⁶³

1:45 P.M.

Young people begin gathering for dances and songs beside the house. (Women's mortuary songs continue inside.)

2:00 P.M.

The principals go to the cemetery.

The Earth priest carries a mortuary basket and calabash.

The male "guardian of death" carries the stretcher.

The deceased's son carries a bowl of cooked goat in sauce.

The "adversary" of the deceased carries his bow, quiver, and sack assemblage.

The "daughter of the deceased" carries a bowl of cooked cereal.

Musicians take their horns, flutes, and drums.

2:30 P.M.

At the house, the female "guardians of death" wash and "shave" the figure in the cattle room with kapok and water. At the cemetery, goat meat, sauce, and cereal are offered by the Earth priest to the mock tomb. Elders eat the remaining food under a tree nearby. The bones of the goat are buried in the earth of the mock tomb.

3:20 P.M.

At the cemetery: The Earth priest with his basket and calabash stands facing the "tomb" (looking east). The others fall in behind him. They circle the "tomb" twice in a counterclockwise direction, then leave for the house of the deceased. The musicians' flute, horn, and drum music provides accompaniment.

humorous incidents during the year. As an occasion when young people from the area gather together, there is considerable flirtation at this time.

65. This is explained as payment for the Earth Goddess in recompense for her having accepted the deceased into her realm (the earth).

3:30 P.M.

The Earth priest stands facing east in front of the tomb with the mortuary basket and calabash. Others fall in behind him carrying their various accoutrements. An Earth priest from the neighboring village also joins them. They circle the tomb once clockwise and proceed home to the sound of a drumbeat.

3:40 P.M.

As the audience hears the distant funeral drum at the house, a "daughter of the deceased" in a women's initiation headdress brandishes a lance in feigned attack on the procession. The cloth and skins are taken down from the facade. The bowls used to wash the figure are placed outside next to the female joining wall.

3:55 P.M.

The procession arrives at the house of the deceased from the west. It travels around the house perimeter in a clockwise direction before disbanding in front of the door.

4:05 P.M.

The male "guardians of death" enter the house, bring out the figure, and attach it to the stretcher. Straw from the bedroom roof is used as a covering. Men of the family bring up the assembled produce to the entrance roof.

4:30 P.M.

The stretcher carrying the figure is borne by two young men of the family. They stand in front of the door, facing the doorjamb on the north side. Divination with the figure is begun, with the spirit of the deceased moving the two bearers to indicate persons, paths, and shrines that may reveal something about the cause of death.

3:30 P.M.

The procession continues to the house. As soon as the flutes and drums are heard at the house, the skins are removed from its facade. Simultaneously, the "daughter of the deceased" rushes out in the direction of the procession, wearing a woman's initiation headdress and carrying a lance. She feigns an attack on the procession. At the same time, members of the *Fayenfé* association dance out toward the arriving procession and confront the line, using their sacred roan antelope horns.

3:40 P.M.

The procession arrives at the mortuary house and approaches it from the west. Coming to the entrance, they continue in a circle around the outside of the house in a counterclockwise direction. Arriving back at the front of the house, the procession disbands. The "adversary of the deceased" then climbs up onto the entrance roof from the terrace. He drops the bow/quiver/sack assemblage to the ground in front of the portal.

4:00 P.M.

The quiver assemblage is attached to the doorjamb (on its south side). "Adversaries" compete with each other to shoot through the quiver with poison arrows. (In some funerals, following this, the deceased's initiation brothers hoe a circle around the perimeter of the house.)

4:15 P.M.

Women's initiation dances are performed over the figure in the cattle room. This is followed by the men's joint-tapping initiation sequences (a repetition of the midnight ceremonies the night before). The figure is then painted with red and black spots by female "guardians of death." Following this, the *Fayenfé* and Earth priest enter and perform again the ceremonial passing of an ax and small hoe between their legs as they stand back to back. The last passing is done in the portal in front of the audience.

4:40 P.M.

The figure is brought out and is placed on the stretcher. Straw from the bedroom roof is used as a covering. The buffalo horn headdress of men's initiation is placed at the head of the stretcher. Two young men bear the stretcher and make a tour around the outside of the house in a counterclockwise direction. (In cases where the deceased is an Earth priest or a priest of men's initiation, a hole is cut through the center of the male joining wall, and the figure is brought out of the house this way.) Those who are carrying the stretcher then return to the house portal (to the south side of the doorjamb) and the figure is divined. The bearers point to a variety of shrines, persons, and paths in their movement sequences through the house and its environs.

5:15 P.M.

When the divination has been completed, the bearers carry the stretcher to the front of the door, standing parallel to the facade. Female "guardians of the dead" then go up to the entrance roof and drop the assembled calabashes down to the ground in front of the door. The male family members in turn climb up to the entrance roof and shower the agricultural produce and a few cowries (money) down onto the stretcher. During this time, women fan the stretcher with the condiment basket, initiation headdress, and skins. The produce that falls to the ground is picked up by the elders nearby. The stretcher bearers proceed in an exuberant dance (still carrying the figure on their heads) around the front yard, then around the drums assembled there.

5:45 P.M.

Still dancing with the stretcher, the bearers leave for a field near the cemetery. They are joined by young men and women who accompany them with songs. After arriving at the area near the cemetery, the figure is detached from the stretcher and it is burned. (Usually the children of the woman's family of birth will fight with those of the woman's husband's family to see who will retain this figure.)⁶⁶

5:30 P.M.

After divination, the stretcher bearers return to the portal and stand parallel to the facade. The men of the family toss the agricultural produce down onto the stretcher while the women family members fan the stretcher with the skins and initiation headdress. The stretcher bearers then perform a vibrant dance, first in front of the house, then around the assembled drums. Elders nearby pick up any food that has fallen to the ground.

6:00 P.M.

The stretcher bearers leave for the houses of other family members, where gifts of food are showered onto the stretcher. Young people of the village accompany them with songs. The bearers then move on toward the cemetery. Arriving, they enter alone and dance twice around the deceased's tomb. They then leave the cemetery to an area just outside. Here the stretcher is detached and the figure is buried.

BOUKOUKIA "The Feast of the Dead"

Deceased: Same woman. Koufitoukou village. Oct. 28, 1977.
Setting: House of deceased (her "marital" house). The deceased's sauce bowl is turned over beside the north side of the door.

Deceased: Same man. Lissani village.
[Not witnessed]

4:30 P.M.

Women representing the maternal relatives of the deceased and elders from her paternal line arrive and go directly up to the house terrace. Baskets of fonio (brought by members of the paternal lineage) are placed on the roof of the kitchen. The meat from eight goats (provided by men of the paternal lineage) is placed in the male granary. The discussion begins when five goats are presented to the "mothers" by the paternal relatives. The "mothers" refuse this small quantity. A debate based on precedence, proverb, humor, and mock anger continues for an hour and a half, at which time the paternal lineage adds two goats, for a total of seven. The "mothers" agree, and the goats and baskets of fonio are packed.

66. This, like the fight for the condiment basket, is aimed at acquiring the deceased's support in sponsoring a new child (see note 69).

5:45 P.M.

Outside in front of the door, the "guardians of death" put small mounds of prepared fonio cereal on a winnowing tray. These are presented to the children of the house, served with a meatless sauce.⁶⁷ The remainder of the goat and grain are divided between the various participants of the funeral by the "guardians of death." Following this, a small offering is made to the deceased's sauce bowl beside the door.

BAKOUNA "The Drink of the Dead"

Same woman. Koufitoukou village. Oct. 31, 1977.

Setting: House designated as woman's birthplace. Six cloths hang from upper house walls. On the north side of the doorjamb are found the deceased's overturned sauce bowl, her covered condiment basket, a small broom, her cane, and a water jar turned on its side. Beside these is an upright branch supporting a variety of animal skulls, and the mortuary basket. In front of the female joining wall are two large jars filled with millet beer (shaded by several branches). Three mortuary drums are in front of the same area. The north (female) granary cover has been turned on its head.

12:00 NOON

Women's initiation songs and dances are presented in the center of the house cattle room. These along with the mortuary songs continue until 2:30 P.M.

1:30 P.M.

A male "guardian of death" opens the first jar of beer and distributes some to the gathered elders. Young people in the village begin to gather for songs and dances outside.

2:00 P.M.

The principals proceed to the cemetery.

The Earth priest holds a basket and calabash.

The female "guardian of death" holds an empty water jar.

The "daughter of the deceased" carries a small pot of beer and a calabash of flour.

One of the sons of the deceased carries a drum.

The "gravedigger" (*Fayenfé* member) carries two hoes.

A male "guardian of death" holds a small hoe and an ax.

Same man. Lissani village. May 28, 1977.

Setting: House of deceased. Quivers are hung from the upper facade walls. Poles attached with money are secured to the male granary. (In most villages cloths are also hung from the facade.) Two large jars of millet beer are placed in front of the male joining wall along with three funeral drums. The deceased's overturned sauce bowl is to the south of the door next to his bow/quiver/sack assemblage and a branch supporting animal skulls and the mortuary basket. Hoes and initiation equipment are lined up along the south joining wall. Horns and flutes are hung from hooks on the entrance wall. The south granary cover has been turned on its head.

12:15 P.M.

Women's initiation songs are presented in the middle of the cattle room. These are continued along with mortuary songs until 2:45 P.M.

1:45 P.M.

The first jar of millet beer is opened by the male "guardian of death" for the elders. Village young people assemble for dances and songs outside.

2:15 P.M.

The principals proceed to the cemetery.

The Earth priest holds the mortuary basket and calabash.

The male "guardian of death" carries the stretcher.

The "daughter of the deceased" holds a small pot of drink and a container of flour.

The "widow" of the deceased carries a sauce bowl (like that of the deceased).

The "adversary" carries the bow/quiver/sack assemblage.

Musicians bring their flutes, horns, and drums.

(Usually female "guardians of death" carry an empty beer preparation jar).

67. Fonio accompanied by a meatless sauce is the food which new mothers are given during the week after delivery. This is said to give them energy.

2:20 P.M.

Beer and flour are offered to the tomb by the Earth priest.
The rest of the beer is shared by the principals.

2:30 P.M.

The water jar ⁶⁸ is turned over on top of the tomb. A hole is pierced in the western side of the jar. A "terrace" is plastered by the "daughter of the deceased" in front of the jar. She feigns to kneel on this "terrace" next to the deceased's son.

3:15 P.M.

Those at the cemetery form a procession behind the Earth priest, facing east in front of the tomb. They circle the tomb clockwise and proceed back to the house, each with the appropriate accoutrement. They walk to the beat of the single drum.

3:25 P.M.

When the drum of the approaching cemetery procession is heard at the house, the cloths are removed from its facade.

3:45 P.M.

The procession arrives at the house from the west. In front of the door it stops, then continues around the house in a clockwise direction. They enter the cattle room, where to the accompaniment of the drum, the female "guardian of death" (with a water jar) and a "daughter of the deceased" (in an initiation headdress) dance together. They then move outside and dance together in front of the female joining wall. Other women take up these accoutrements and continue the dance.

4:15 P.M.

The remainder of the millet beer is distributed by the male "guardian of death."

68. The water jar, which defines a woman's tomb, is seen to represent her primary role as the supplier of water for cooking, building, and bathing. The beer preparation jars that mark the tombs of men allude to their significant functions as priests (offerers of beer) and furnishers of grain (millet).

2:50 P.M.

The Earth priest offers beer to the "tomb."

3:00 P.M.

A "terrace" is plastered by the "daughter of the deceased" in front of the mock tomb. She feigns to kneel on it. (Ordinarily a large beer preparation jar would be placed upside down on the tomb with a hole pierced in its western side.)

3:20 P.M.

The principals form a procession behind the Earth priest, who stands facing east in front of the tomb. They make a circle around the tomb in a counterclockwise direction and leave for the house. The horns, flutes, and drums of the musicians provide accompaniment.

3:30 P.M.

At the house, as the musicians are heard, the attached money is removed from the granary. A younger "daughter of the deceased" wearing a woman's initiation headdress, rushes out to attack the procession with a lance. A *Fayenté* association member dances out toward the procession, feigning an attack on the line with a roan antelope horn. Several young "adversaries of the deceased" toss dirt through the house door with hoes.

3:45 P.M.

The procession arrives at the house from the west. It stops in front of the door, then circles the house exterior in a counterclockwise direction. The musicians enter the house and play first in the center of the cattle room, then on the terrace around the *taboté*. Finally they move up onto the entrance roof before exiting from the house to play in front of its door. After this the female "guardian of death," carrying an empty beer jar, and the "daughter of the deceased," in her initiation headdress, dance in front of the male joining wall.

4:10 P.M.

The male "guardians of death" distribute the remaining beer.

5:00 P.M.

(In many villages calabashes are dropped from the entrance roof at this time. In addition to this, the deceased's closed condiment basket is dropped from the female joining wall by a female "guardian of death." Her own children and those of her natal village fight to catch this basket. The victorious person flees, with the other children in pursuit.)⁶⁹

5:00 P.M.

The deceased's daughters and daughters-in-law are asked to stand in the center of the cattle room (under the *taboté* hole) facing west. Shea butter is spread on their little toes by a family aunt.

5:20 P.M.

An "adversary of the deceased" goes up to the entrance roof with the deceased's bow, quiver, and sack assemblage. He proceeds to drop this to the ground in front of the door. The assemblage is picked up and is secured next to the doorjamb. As the audience gathers nearby, other "adversaries" attempt to shoot poison arrows into this assemblage. Each is allowed three shots.

5:50 P.M.

Offering of a chicken and beer to the deceased's overturned sauce bowl. A prayer is addressed to the deceased so that he will return quickly.

6:15 P.M.

A men's initiation dance is performed inside the house and in front of the portal.

LIKOU "The Reenactment" ⁷⁰

Deceased woman. Likou not yet performed.

69. Because in this particular funeral the woman never married, there is no need for a competition between the woman's own family and that of her husband for the deceased's support and allegiance in sponsoring children.

70. The *Likou* ceremonies for the man and woman whose funerals were described above had not yet been performed at the time I left the field. For this reason, I have included here instead the description of a *Likou* for a neighboring village man.

Between the "Drink of the Dead" and "The Reenactment," three separate ceremonies are generally performed in these various villages. The first two are timed to coincide with the beginning and end of the rainy season. As the rains arrive, the *tinanti* (possessions) of the deceased (his or her branch of offered animal skulls and the overturned sauce bowl) are brought into the house interior. At the end of the summer, when the rains have dissipated, they are returned outside. In both cases, the ceremonies take place at approximately 9:30 A.M. and are accompanied by an offering of millet beer.

The final ceremony before "The Reenactment" occurs the day before the public scenes of *Likou* are presented. This preliminary ceremony takes place in the late afternoon and consists of the uprighting of the deceased's sauce bowl and an offering to his or her soul. The motion to upright the deceased's bowl at this time is the first of several symbolic actions that mark the end of the mourning period and the return to normal family life.

Deceased man. Koutanliakou village. April 23, 1977.

Setting: House of deceased. The deceased's sauce bowl is placed upright to the south of the doorway. Beside it are the broom (used to sweep around the funeral objects during the intervening mourning period) and the hair of family members shaved during the same time. Standing upright beside the bowl and broom is the deceased's bow, quiver, and sack assemblage. Nearby at the juncture of the entrance and the male joining wall is the stick holding the skulls of various animals offered during the funeral. The mortuary basket used to delimit the tomb is attached here as well. Set against the male joining wall beside this stick is a large jar of millet beer and three funeral drums.

4:30 P.M.

The Earth priest goes to a path-crossing ("crossroads") behind the house and builds a small mound of earth in the center to represent the tomb. The "daughter of the deceased" plasters a terrace on its surface. The Earth priest offers beer to this "tomb."

4:45 P.M.

A group of young people meet near the first (founder's) house of the village.

5:00 P.M.

Playing horns, flutes, and portable drums, the village youth march in a procession to the house, arriving at the portal from the west. The males (who play the instruments) are in the front; females are in the back. They stop at the front door of the mortuary house, then proceed around the outside in a counterclockwise direction. They disband in front of the door.

5:30 P.M.

Beer is distributed by a male "guardian of death" to these musicians and to others in attendance.

6:00 P.M.

A goat is killed by the brother of the deceased in front of the house. This is a gift to the "adversary of the deceased" in recompense for the dangerous role he played in the funeral action (in forcing the deceased's soul away from the house). The goat and a portion of millet are prepared for him.

6:30 P.M.

The "adversary of the deceased," in his last funeral action, gathers together the deceased's bow/ quiver/ sack assemblage along with the forked stick containing the animal skulls. He also carries the mortuary basket into which the hair, broom, and sauce bowl have been placed. He brings these to the crossroads behind the house and throws them to the ground beside the new "tomb." The cow hide used to cover the deceased as he was transported to the cemetery is also left here.⁷¹

7:20 P.M.

At the house, a male "guardian of death" takes out the heavy forked log that is used to secure the door at night. He pounds this up and down in front of the door three times, then he and others in attendance depart for their respective houses for the night.

* * *

April 24, 1977

Setting: House of the deceased. Three funeral drums are placed in front of the male joining wall. Beside these are two large jars of beer.

11:30 A.M.

People from the maternal and paternal lineages of the deceased begin to meet at the mortuary house, along with elders from the various villages nearby.

71. The children of the deceased are not permitted to see this action of transporting the possessions to the crossroads because of the trauma it might cause.

12:00 NOON

Women of the deceased's paternal lineage leave for a crossroads in front of the house (the area where the path of the village meets the house path). One woman carries a small amount of cooked cereal enclosed in a leaf.⁷² Another holds a bit of rich sauce made from domestic cheese and pounded sesame seeds. At the crossroads, the leaf is opened and some sauce is added to it. The women wait for a fly⁷³ to land on this food. When none appears, a small amount of tobacco, beer, and kola nuts⁷⁴ are added in turn. After the fly lands, it is trapped in the leaf and is brought to the house. In front of the door, the same process is repeated until another fly is trapped.

12:35 P.M.

Some of the prepared beer is distributed by the "guardians of death" to the maternal relatives of the deceased, then to others in attendance.

12:40 P.M.

Drums are heard approaching from the north, and soon a procession of young people from a nearby village come into view. They continue toward the house (making a turn so that they arrive from the west), young men in front playing drums, and young women in back. While they are advancing toward the house, individual young men leave the line and run ahead to eat special vines of power⁷⁵ provided by elders of their village standing in front of the door. The young men rejoin the line. After reaching the portal, the procession continues around the house in a counterclockwise direction.

1:00 P.M.

The line disbands in front of the door, and immediately the elders of the deceased's village play the traditional call to battle on their horns and flutes. Hearing this melody, the male members of the arriving group then move out to about 300 feet in front of the house, reassembling in a north-south line. Closer to the house, a parallel north-south line is formed by young men of the deceased's own village. In the crouched, bow-shooting position, the two lines feign a battle with each other.

1:15 P.M.

When the mock battle has been completed, the young men of both villages return, and those who had earlier eaten power roots proceed to demonstrate their power by "throwing" objects (through extrasensory means) into the house facade. Elders from the two villages who are also powerful find and remove these "power" objects from the house. They retrieve forms as varied as stones, pieces of iron, a lizard, an arrow, and spice seeds from the deceased's entrance, sleeping room, and granary.

1:35 P.M.

The drums of a second village are heard approaching, and after the procession reaches the house from the west, it

72. This leaf, which has a pungent odor, is also used in divination and in ceremonies associated with a person's soul (*liyouani*).

73. The deceased is thought to return to the house transformed into the body of a fly.

74. These are said to be the deceased's favorite foods. In addition, if there is someone at the crossroads who is known to have fought with the deceased, he or she is asked to leave so that the deceased's soul will feel comfortable in returning.

75. These are from a plant said to have no roots.

also circles the house in a counterclockwise direction. Additional line combats and displays of power are presented.

2:20 P.M.

A third procession consisting of the youths of two smaller nearby villages arrive and the same is repeated.

4:00 P.M.

A mortuary song is presented at the house portal by a male elder of the deceased's family.⁷⁶

5:00–8:00 P.M.

There is a general break in the action as the participants go home for dinner. Those who have traveled far eat with relatives or friends living in the village of the deceased.

8:00 P.M.–4:00 A.M.

Young people from the various villages regroup at the mortuary house and remain here singing and dancing throughout the night. Their songs and dances are alternated with drum tattoos performed by young musicians from these same villages.

(April 25, 1977)

5:00 A.M.

Five yams are brought out from the mortuary house by an elder of the deceased's paternal lineage. These are placed in front of the door. A calabash of beer is placed beside them. A "guardian of death" pounds the forked log that supports the door three times in front of the portal. An elder from the deceased's family presents a song in front of the door.⁷⁷ As he sings, he dances with his arms crossed in front of his chest (his hands on his shoulders).

5:30 A.M.

The yams are taken to the crossroads behind the house. A fire is built of millet stalks, and small pieces of one of the yams are cooked. The yam pieces are given to representatives of the deceased's maternal lineage. Beer is also brought to the crossroads for them.

6:00 A.M.

The fire is transported on the millet stalks to the center of the house cattle room and is placed under the *taboté* hole.⁷⁸ A large pot of millet beer is rested beside it along with the whole yams. Loose earth is also brought into the cattle room and some of the beer is added to this earth. The two are mixed into a malleable composition. This moist earth is then taken outside and is used by an elder of the deceased's paternal lineage to form an attached ancestor shrine (*liboloni*) for the deceased on the entrance wall (to the south of the door, beside the shrines of important male ancestors of the lineage). More beer is offered to this shrine.⁷⁹

76. This song is recorded below. It emphasises the regeneration essential to both "The Reenactment" and the previous "Drink of the Dead" segment.

The deceased is like a tree
with a ripe fruit
And the people unite today
to harvest the fruit.

77. This song is as follows:

The terrace is broken
The pigeons have seen the fruit
The pigeons have seen the fruit
Tahèhatehota cries as the guinea hen
cries in the valley *
Do the singers sing also?
The maternal uncles came and missed him
Were you asleep?
Rest no more with crossed arms
Because one killed your father.
[* incessantly]

78. This repeats the central action of the house new-fire ceremony, which is undertaken at the time the terrace roof is completed (Blier 1981). The fire, among other things, cleanses the house interior so that the ancestors who are transported to the house in the ancestral roof beam will feel welcome. The beer placed in the center of the cattle room is intended for their enjoyment and as encouragement for them to remain here.

79. The construction of this shrine for the deceased effectively reincorporates his spirit into the house. The beer, used as part of the shrine, is seen to encourage him to remain (see note 78). This construction also recalls the new-fire ceremony described above (note 78), for at the conclusion of this rite, a similar shrine is placed on the house portal for the first ancestor of the lineage.

6:30 A.M.

The elders reenter the cattle room and stand in a circle around the fire. One holds a beer jar, one holds a chicken, one carries a calabash with yams, another a musical horn, another castanets of iron. The final one is a singer. They circle the fire in a counterclockwise direction, then proceed out the door and around the house in the same direction, singing as they walk. Every few steps, the horn player gives two blasts of his instrument and the castanet player strikes his fingers twice. After returning to the front of the house, the maternal relatives are given three chickens, the yams, and two pots of millet beer.

7:00 A.M.

The three funeral drums are brought out in front of the male joining wall. A line of young musicians forms nearby to play the portable drums. To the rhythm of these and the funeral drums, a final mortuary dance is performed by the young people in attendance.

9:15 A.M.

The widow is brought out of the house by a man from her natal family. She is led to the crossroads in front of the house. One of her own children rushes out to get her and bring her back.⁸⁰

9:30 A.M.

A female "guardian of death" sweeps along the male side of the house facade to remove the remains of the deceased's belongings. A chicken⁸¹ is given to the Earth priest by the brother of the deceased. The funeral has been completed.

80. The child, in going to the crossroads for his widowed mother, thus shows that he (and his village) will provide for all her needs and that she should not return to her natal village.

81. This is the same chicken the Earth priest originally used under the mortuary basket to delimit the tomb.

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