

Nyamakalaw of Mande

- „The nyamakalaw are a major professional class of artists and other occupationally defined specialists among the Mande-speaking peoples of West Africa.“ p.1
- They are primarily composed of *blacksmiths, potters, leatherworkers and bards* (singers).
- They represent a caste in the Mande „Caste“ System

Caste System:

Horonw	→ farmers, nobles
Jonw	→ slaves or descendants of former slaves
Nyamakalaw	→ tradesmen, craftsmen

There is a bond within the nyamakalaw caste which serves two purposes; it keeps them together and separates them from the rest of the Mande society. This bond is their delicate and incomparable dealings with nyama, a source of power and energy behind every task and movement.

- Words possess high levels of nyama.
- It is present in inorganic material like minerals, and is released when the ore is melted
- Nyama, the life force and power an animal once possessed is retained in the leather

Like many other caste systems, Mande-speakers are born into their occupations, or their positions. However, in the Mande system, individuals are not necessarily confined to this occupation for life.

Griot:

Griot is the term for the profession and function of an expert and teacher in traditional music in Mali. The griots have the social role of collecting stories of their region and passing them on through music and traditional ceremonies. In the past it also belonged to their responsibilities to exchange and pass on knowledge between regions. The griots are responsible for orally passing down traditions and cultural knowledge. They are employed for ceremonial performances to act as masters of ceremonies and musicians.

Banzumana Sissoko: (Banamanankan, spoken poetry)

"He has been identified with the nation as a whole since the break-up of the Mali Federation in the early 1960s, when his patriotic songs gave his fellow Sudanese the courage to rise up and march on Senegal. It is known that whenever Banzumana's music is played on the National Radio uninterrupted for several hours, Malian people suspect that some major change is taking place in the destiny of the country." p.183

Massa Makan Diabaté: (French, written poetry)

"Many people consider him the founder of modern Malian literature." p.183

He always said, that one never creates a literature, one only continues a tradition by adding one's small contribution to it.

Bibliography:

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