



The Contributions of Soothsayers and Supernatural Powers for Political Success in Mofolo's *Chaka* and Niane's *Sundiata: an epic of Old Mali*

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the political contributions brought about by soothsayers and supernatural powers for the success of the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies. It points out some soothsayers and supernatural forces that have worked behind African political scenes. In fact, medicinal plants, charms, predictions, and magic were used by soothsayers and supernatural beings for the political success of their nations. Some African leaders like Chaka and Sundiata succeeded in developing their nation thanks to the help of soothsayers and the supernatural powers.

Keywords: *Contributions, Soothsayers, Supernatural Powers, Political Success.*

Citation: ABDU IDRISSA Souley (2021). The Contributions of Soothsayers and Supernatural Powers for Political Success in Mofolo's *Chaka* and Niane's *Sundiata: an epic of Old Mali*. *International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Studies*, 3(6), 262-285.

INTRODUCTION

This article explores the different approaches and activities associated in the ruling of a nation. But it mostly analyses the soothsayers' and the supernatural powers' spiritual methodologies and actions related to the running of African societies, precisely Zulu and Mandingo medieval ones. It discusses the physical involvement of soothsayers in their nations' political affairs such as advising, spying, decision-making, and fighting.

This article analyses as well the involvement of supernatural beings in medieval Zulu and Mandingo nations' political activities either physically or spiritually. The supernatural beings mostly work behind political scene by choosing a nation's leader indirectly. Consequently, soothsaying, medicinal plants and magic appear in the political arena using by leaders as prescriptions from soothsayers or supernatural beings. In sum, soothsayers, supernatural beings and supernatural powers participate in political maneuvers or diplomacies between people or nations.

This paper examines also the influences of the contributions of soothsayers and supernatural powers for political successes on the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies of the epics. The analysis of this article is based on three sub-sections: "The Spiritual and Medical Contributions of Soothsayers for Politics in *Chaka* and *Sundiata*", "The Spiritual and Medical Contributions of Supernatural Powers for Politics in *Chaka* and *Sundiata*", and "The Impacts of the Contributions of Soothsayers and Supernatural Powers for Political Success in *Chaka* and *Sundiata*".

The Spiritual and Medical Contributions of Soothsayers for Politics in *Chaka* and *Sundiata*

This sub-section examines the spiritual and medical influences of soothsayers on the ruling of Zulu and Mandingo societies of the epics. These mystical and medicinal supports are either used directly by soothsayers to help leaders politically or are prescribed by soothsayers to leaders to be used for the better ruling of their nations. However, before these divine and healing contributions, soothsayers have also played the roles of advisers, spies, decision-makers, and fighters which are very important in politics.

Writers like Niane [1] and Mofolo [2] point out advising, decision-making, spying, fighting, and mediation as some political tasks performed by soothsayers for the betterment of their nations. When NaréMaghan was in doubt about the prediction on Sundiata because of his infirmity, he sought advice from the old soothsayer blacksmith, Nounfairi.

'To answer the king's question he replied, 'When the seed germinates growth is not always easy; great trees grow slowly but they plunge their roots deep into the ground.'

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

'Of course,' replied the blind seer. 'Only the growth is not as quick as you would like it; how impatient man is' [1].

The above quotation shows an old soothsayer blacksmith giving advice to his king concerning the future of their nation.

Mofolo also remembers Isanusi, Chaka's soothsayer, advising him saying that:

[...] the medicine which remained to be used was one which he did not have with him; he said it was a medicine associated with the spilling of blood, with killing: 'It is extremely evil, but it is also extremely good. Choose!' The doctor placed matters in Chaka's hands; he told him, without hiding anything from him, that that medicine was truly evil, then he, for his part, stood to one side so that Chaka could act according to his wish. 'I want it,' said Chaka [...] When he said so the doctor looked at him for a long time without saying a word, and then he said: 'Very well. Let's go and look for it' [2].

Even though the remaining medicine is very important for the ruling of Chaka's kingdom, Isanusi warned Chaka about its danger. But, Chaka took no notice of these pieces of advice, all that he wanted was kingship, a great kingship. In addition, after Chaka received the last medicine, "[...] the doctor advised Chaka very strongly to obey Dingiswayo with true obedience, to work happily for him, because it was through him that he would attain the kingship he wanted" [2].

It follows from the above that Isanusi was not only doctoring Chaka, he also gave him some pieces of advice necessary for the achievement of the great kingship he was yearning for.

Later on, Isanusi sent Chaka two of his apprentices, Ndlebe and Malunga. The latter said to Chaka:

Our business is to come and live with you, to look after you and be near you in times of war; besides, a big war is close at hand in which you will distinguish yourself in the eyes of your king more than you have already done hitherto. We will stand by you in these wars: Ndlebe will be your ears and will hear all the news for you; I will be your arm, and will fight for you. But the two of us will only enter the battle when it is already well joined, and well advanced. During peacetime, when there are no wars, I shall stay by your side and discuss all your plans with you; which means that when you have an idea in your mind you must tell me, and I shall seek a way in which it may be put into action so that it may be accomplished well in accordance with your wishes. Ndlebe, for his part, will sit in the courtyards of the royal houses, and also near the king, and the people will talk quite freely in his presence without taking any note of him since, as you yourself can see, he is, in appearance, a half-wit [2].

Malunga, apprentice soothsayer of Isanusi advised Chaka to tell him all his thoughts so that he could advise him how to realize them.

In addition, during Chaka's first war with Zwide, Ndlebe discovered that the latter had laid an ambush for Chaka and his people:

[...] Ndlebe came to Chaka [...] [and] said: 'My master, there is danger lurking here in the forest, you must be on the lookout, and be ready to defend yourself. Zwide has hidden numerous armies in the forest, and this running away of his is no running away at all, but simple a strategy to lure you into the forest so that you may be surrounded and all killed. I advise you to pull back your regiment as if you were resting since it was the first to go into battle, and not to go back to the attack before I return [2].

Ndlebe's advice allowed Chaka and his warriors to avoid a terrible ambush in which Zwide and his people would have killed them.

As far as Sundiata is concerned, he too obtained great pieces of advice from Sogolon,

[...] a wise mother. She knew everything that [her co-wife,] Sassouma could do to hurt her family, and so, one evening, after the children had eaten, she called them together and said to Sundiata.

'Let us leave here, my son; MandingBory and Djamarou are vulnerable. They are not yet initiated into the secrets of night, they are not sorcerers. Despairing of ever injuring you, Sassouma will aim her bows at your brother or sister. Let us go away from here. You will return to reign when you are a man, for it is in Mali that your

destiny must be fulfilled.’ [Also when DankaranTouman formed an embassy including Sundiata’s griot to SoumaoroKanté, Sundiata wanted to react but her mother who was a soothsayer said] ‘Stop!’ [...] ‘Let it go. It is Sassouma who is acting thus, but she does not know that she obeys a higher order’” [1].

Sogolon as a soothsayer, knew that the actions of her co-wife came from the gods who wanted her son to exile in order to learn the art of war and that of governance. So, she advised her son to obey to his destiny drew by the forces of the nature. Therefore, the acceptance of these pieces of advice allowed Sundiata to get well prepared for his mission which is the recapture of his kingdom from Soumaoro. As a good advice follower, Sundiata, during all his way to freedom continue to ask his soothsayers some occult advice:

[...] At Sibi [where he met the sons of Mali waiting for him], Sundiata decided to consult the soothsayers, of whom the most famous in Mali were there.

On their advice Djata had to sacrifice a hundred white bull, a hundred white rams, and a hundred white cocks [...]

[Then to vanquish the king of Kita who was protected by the jinn] Sogolon’s son had in his army some infallible soothsayers. On their advice, Sundiata invoked the jinn of Kita Kourou and sacrificed to them a hundred white oxen, a hundred white rams, and a hundred white cocks. All the cocks died on their backs, facing upwards; the jinn had replied favourably. Then Sundiata did not hesitate any longer and first thing in the morning he gave the signal to attack [1].

Like Chaka received from his soothsayer, Ndlebe, tactical pieces of advice based on the supernatural powers; Sundiata also received some from his soothsayers. These pieces of advice paid off because they allowed Chaka and Sundiata to take good decisions and win battles over their enemies.

“However, SoumaoroKanté, being a great sorcerer, knew that the son of Sogolon had set out and that he was coming to lay claim to Mali. The soothsayers told him to forestall this calamity by attacking Sundiata, but good fortune makes men blind” [1].

The king of Sosso would have killed Sundiata on his way back Mali when he had not got many soldiers as suggested by his diviners. If Soumaoro had accepted this advice, he would have taken a good decision. But, he neglected the advice of his soothsayers and paid the price later.

Issa Korombé had also paid the price of neglecting his soothsayer, Alfa Gounou’s advice. The day he was going to die, Alfa Gounou told him that he had to withdraw from the battle ground because that day was not a favorable one to him. But Issa Korombé replied, “God forbid, no one will tell it after me.”¹ So, he was killed after he had played a great havoc in the rank of his enemies.

The most important aspect of leadership is decision-making, soothsayers can be good decision-makers because:

[...] there are certain times and circumstances when a witch [a soothsayer] must make the decisions others are not able or willing to make [...] For all these reasons witches are given a healthy level of respect, awe and ... fear.

Making a political decision can indeed be very difficult. At the moment Malunga, Ndlebe, and Chaka were talking about Zwide and his people who were going to attack them without great motivation:

[...] Isanusi suddenly burst into view among them, and he came in already talking: ‘Let your courage rise, Chaka, I have come, and there is no manner of harm that can befall you. Ndlebe, go out and shout and spread the word among the crowds outside that Zwide is going to attack them early in the morning, and that they must get ready. Malunga, run and prepare the armies with medicines in the way you know, and quickly. You, Chaka, undress.’

¹ « -Que Dieu m’en garde, déclara Issa. Personne n’ira le raconter derrière moi! » (Kesteloot and Dieng, 2000: 387)

NB: All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Chaka's sadness and his fears were banished at once when Isanusi arrived; he was very happy and he undressed gladly, and Isanusi worked on him to prepare him for the important task which he was about to assume on that very night [2].

It follows from the above that the arrival of Isanusi, the great soothsayer has allowed to take a quick tactical decision to get ready and wait for the enemy.

This involvement of soothsayers in the medieval Zulu political arena can also be seen in the medieval Mandingo political arena. Soothsayers were consulted at all the political levels. As a result, when Queen SassoumaBéréte for a political reason took the decision to kill Sundiata because he was becoming a threat to her son's ruling; she associated soothsayers in her decision-making. Niane reports that:

Sundiata's popularity was so great that [...] The queen mother [SassoumaBéréte] wanted to put an end to this popularity by killing Sundiata ... she received the nine great witches of Mali ... When the nine old hags had seated themselves in a semi-circle around her bed the queen mother said:
'You who rule supreme at night, nocturnal powers, oh you who hold the secret of life, you who can put an end to one life, can you help me?'
'The night is potent,' said SoumossoKonkomba [the oldest of the nine witches], 'Oh queen, tell us what is to be done, on whom must we turn the fatal blade?'
'I want to kill Sundiata,' said Sassouma [1].

The above quotation shows indeed that soothsayers intervened in decision-making. Most of the time, they were consulted when certain political decisions were very difficult to be taken. Subsequently:

[...] After the flight of DankaranTouman [...] Soothsayers were consulted as to the fate of the country. The soothsayers were unanimous in saying that it would be the rightful heir to the throne who would save Mali. [Consequently] a search party was formed to seek him out. Among the people included must be mentioned KountounManian, an old griot from the court of NaréMaghan; MandjanBéréte, a brother of Sassouma's, who did not want to follow DankaranTouman in his flight; Singbin Mara Cissé, a diviner of the court; SirimanTouré, another diviner; and, finally, a woman, Magnouma. According to the clues of the soothsayers they had to search towards the riverine lands, that is, towards the east" [1].

This occult unanimous decision-making from the soothsayers led to the creation of a searching team in which we have two soothsayers who would guide the team through good decisions. This search team finally found Sundiata; and after a great mediation, Sundiata came back and freed Mali from the repression of Soumaoro.

On the other hand, soothsayers can be spies. In reality, diviners can help in the acquisition of information which is very vital for a nation's ruling. As a result, Isanusi who was requested everywhere and could not be always with Chaka, provided him with a good spy soothsayer, Ndlebe. Isanusi comforted Chaka saying that, "Ndlebe's most important role will be to sniff out the gossip and the secrets for you; there is no evil plot that can be hatched and take root without him knowing about it, even if it were to be discussed in an ant-bear's hole, I swear" [2].

The information that Ndlebe brought to Chaka allowed him to protect himself, and to win wars along with his soothsayers because they were great fighters as well.

In addition, BallaFasséké, Sundiata'sgriot, who was also a sorcerer spied Soumaoro to get information on the king of Sosso. Niane reports that:

One day when the king was away, BallaFasséké managed to get right into the most secret chamber of the palace where Soumarao safeguarded his fetishes. When he had pushed the door open he was transfixed with amazement at what he saw [2].

The information collected by the griot and the one brought by Nana Triban, Sundiata's half-sister who was given by force to Soumaoro as wife by DankaranTouman to avoid war; allowed Sundiata to defeat Soumaoro.

Soothsayer were also great warrior. Mofolo remembers through the below long quotation how Chaka was greatly helped in battle by soothsayers: Isanusi, Malunga, and Ndlebe. When Chaka was ready to attack Zwide and his warriors:

[...] he looked round he saw Ndlebe on his left-hand side with his battle axe already raised and waiting for them to appear. He was excited, and was very different from

that dim-wit of yesterday and the day before; the veins in his body stood out, and he was like a wounded lion which felt the pain in its wounds, and was ready to avenge its blood.

Chaka looked to his right and he was greatly surprised when he saw Malunga already standing by his side with his short spear at the ready. He was completely quiet and his eyes which were blood-red, stared furiously at that narrow little path from which Zwide was going to appear. He stood like a crouching wild beast getting ready to leap [...] Zwide came into view with his people, and they were squeezed so tight [...] Chaka rushed on them killing them rapidly [...] Malunga stabbed them in the same manner as Chaka, but he even surpassed him in number he killed [...] On that day Chaka's arm grew swollen from the work of stabbing and killing [...] [And later at the second war with Zwide, one can see Isanusi, the great soothsayer himself] [...] could not contain himself any more, and he left Chaka alone on the side of the mountain and ran into the battle. He grabbed his shield by its handle, and even as he joined the battle, people began to fall at an amazing speed; his servants then came and fought on either side of him, and they mowed down the enemy in a frightening manner. Towards mid-day Chaka ran and joined the battle, and when his warriors saw him their courage rose once more, and they fought like men [2].

The above quotation teaches the courage and determination of soothsayers on battle field. They were great warriors who fought along with their leaders or their people to free or to develop their nation.

As far as Niane is concerned, he reports that, "MamadiKani [a hunter soothsayer, ancestor of Sundiata] conquered all the lands which stretch from the Sankarani to the Bouré" [1].

Another soothsayer who fought next to Sundiata in the battle with Soumaoro was FakoliKoroma:

FakoliKoroma [...] was the son of Soumaoro's sister, Kassia. Fakoli had a wonderful wife, Keleya, who was a great magician like her husband [...] Soumaoro abducted Keleya and locked her in his palace. [For this reason Fakoli joined Sundiata in fighting his uncle. He said:] 'I salute you, Sundiata. I am Fakoli, king of the tribe of Koroma smiths [...] I bring you my strong-armed smiths, I bring you sofas who do not know what fear is' [1].

Be it in Zulu or Mandingo medieval societies of the epics soothsayers who were involved in war were great fearless warriors. Unlike ordinary human beings, soothsayers can know in advance what will the outcome of a war can be and they know as well what plant or incantation to use to be invulnerable or invisible on the battle field. Thus, their courage and self-confidence.

Soothsayers can also fight supernatural beings to restore political stability in their communities. Hayidara reports in a long quotation how his hero, Fanta Maa, the father of the Bozo hunters, got his community rid of a mysterious crocodile:

A crocodile was in the east, in a city-state called Nyanu [this crocodile having eaten the animals of the villagers began to chase the men in the village to devour them]
They used all means to get rid of the crocodile; nothing helped.
[...] They sent the Bozo to an embassy in the land of Fanta Maa.
[...] He said, "Next Friday is not the right Friday;
the following Friday, either.
The following Friday, [i.e. the third Friday]
he said: "Only then could I [come and get you rid of this crocodile, then he added]
the ram of sacrifice to the genie of the waters,
as well as the white bull,
as well as a hundred white cola nuts,
[...] With a white rooster.
[You bring me] all this that I will offer as a sacrifice to the Genie of the waters"
[...] Now Maa was about to consult the spell.
He practiced divination by dust;
yes he practiced geomancy.
In the mystery of God, he was looking for the double of the crocodile.
He then realized that the crocodile was not an ordinary beast.
Killing the crocodile would be much more difficult

than he, Maa, would have believed.
 It wasn't just a crocodile, it was something else.
 That's what the dust gave him to read.
 [...] He continued his quest [for the double] of the crocodile.
 He continued to sacrifice.
 [...] He [Maa] continued with his bewitching operations and he played the call.
 He mounted his stratagem.
 When his stratagem was sure
 and that he was convinced to have bewitched the crocodile,
 he said to his younger [brother], "[Now] we are going to fight the crocodile.
 He was standing in his canoe, the canoe that was assigned to him.
 There were the jars of medicine; there were his fetishes and his bags of hexes.
 There was his call. And the call was screaming.
 He had bewitched the crocodile with the call so that he had nothing to fear from the
 watch.
 The call screeched and seemed to speak a strange language.
 The Bozo still use the water today.
 the crocodile appeared; he raised his head and huffed ...
 [The crocodile tried magic tricks on Maa several times, which Maa thwarted with
 those amulets and magic potions he has with him in the canoe. So the crocodile asked
 Maa to spare him, saying:]
 O Maa! I am not a crocodile, me! [I am the crown prince transformed into a crocodile
 to punish the village]
 He said: "This one here installed [on the throne]
 [...] He's a bastard; he is not a son of our father.
 He is not a son of Nyanu.
 My father married his mother while he was sucking, and he raised him.
 Her mother has become the favorite.
 It pleased the dignitaries of the Court.
 They banded together to induct him,
 when my father died,
 thus moving me away from power,
 and placing him in my place [...]
 O Maa! save me.
 spare me by the grace of your mother Fanta ...
 And all the [other] dead mothers, it [the crocodile] called on them one by one. "
 He [Fanta Maa] says, "I won't spare you."
 [So, he harpooned the crocodile with his three magical harpoons soaked in deadly
 poison]”²

²« Un crocodile se trouvait à l'est, dans une cité-Etat appelée Nyanu [ce crocodile ayant mangé les bêtes des villageois commença à chasser les hommes jusqu'au village pour les dévorer]

Ils usèrent de tous les moyens pour se débarrasser du crocodile ; rien n'y fit.

[...] Ils envoyèrent en ambassade des Bozo dans le pays de Fanta Maa.

[...] Il dit: « Le vendredi prochain n'est pas le bon vendredi;

le vendredi suivant, non plus.

Le vendredi d'après, [c'est-à-dire le troisième vendredi]

il dit : « Alors seulement je pourrais [venir vous débarrasser de ce montre, puis il ajouta]

le bélier de sacrifice au Génie des eaux,

ainsi que le taureau blanc,

ainsi que cent noix de cola blanche,

[...] avec un coq blanc.

[Vous m'apportez] tout cela que j'offrirai en sacrifice au Génie des eaux ».

[...]A présent, Maa s'apprêtait à consulter le sort.

Il pratiquait la divination par la poussière ;

oui il pratiquait la géomancie.

Dans le mystère de Dieu, il cherchait le double du crocodile.

Il s'aperçut alors que le crocodile n'était pas une bête ordinaire.

Arriver à bout du crocodile serait bien plus ardu

que lui Maa n'aurait cru.

Il ne s'agissait pas d'un simple crocodile, mais d'autre chose.

C'est ce que lui donna à lire la poussière.

[...] Il poursuivit sa quête [du double] du crocodile.

Il continua à sacrifier.

Lui [Maa] continua ses opérations d'envoutement et il joua de l'appeau.

Il monta son stratagème.

Lorsque son stratagème fut sûr

et qu'il fut convaincu d'avoir ensorcelé le crocodile,

il dit à son [frère] cadet : « [Maintenant] nous allons combattre le crocodile.

Il se tenait dans sa pirogue, la pirogue qui lui fut affectée.

Là se trouvaient les jarres de médicaments ; là se trouvaient ses fétiches et ses sacs à maléfices.

Là se trouvait son appeau. Et l'appeau criait.

Il avait, à l'aide de l'appeau, ensorcelé le crocodile, de sorte qu'il n'ait rien à craindre du montre.

L'appeau crissait et semblait tenir un langage étrange.

Aujourd'hui encore les Bozo utilisent l'appeau.

le crocodile apparut ; il leva la tête et souffla...

[Le crocodile tenta plusieurs fois des tours de magie sur Maa que ce dernier déjoua avec ces amulettes et potions magiques qu'il a avec lui dans la pirogue. Alors le crocodile demanda à Maa de l'épargner en disant :]

O Maa ! Je ne suis pas un crocodile, moi! [Je suis le prince héritier transformé en crocodile pour punir le village]

Il dit : « Celui-ci que voici installé [sur le trône]

[...] c'est un bâtard ; ce n'est pas un fils de notre père.

Ce n'est pas un fils de Nyanu.

Mon père a épousé sa mère qui l'avait au sein, et il l'a élevé.

Sa mère est devenue la favorite.

Il a plu aux dignitaires de la Cour.

Ils se sont ligués pour l'introniser,

The above quotation shows that soothsayers can indeed help in politics using the different aspect of the supernatural powers like divination, bewitching, magic objects, and incantations. Fanta Maa the hero of Hayidara [3] used all these supernatural aspects to restore to Nyanu its political stability disturbed by the heir apparent who metamorphosed into a monstrous crocodile to disturb the social and political stability by killing animals and people. Since the heir apparent was no longer a person but a dangerous crocodile, Fanta Maa could not spare him. Consequently, the hero killed the monster for the social and political well-being of Nyanu.

African soothsayers had as well fought the white colonizers by the use of magic. Even though the white colonizers won the battles against Africans, they underwent the power of Africans' supernatural powers. Among the great leaders who fought colonization we have supernatural power holders such as Sarrounia Mangou, El hadj Omar Tall, Béhanzin, Alpha Saibou to name only few. It was even said that it was under the potency of Sarraounia's supernatural powers that Capitain Voulet and Captain Chanoine were assassinated by their skirmishers. In addition, Achebe reports in *Arrow of God* how a white governor had been punished mystically by an African chief priest. The history is as followed:

The sudden collapse of captain Winter bottom on the very day he sent policemen to arrest the Chief Priest of Umuaro was clearly quite significant. The first man to point the connection was John Nwodika, Second Steward to Captain winter bottom himself. He said it was just as he feared; the priest had hit him with a potent charm. In spite of everything then, power till resided in its accustomed place.

'Did I not say so?' he asked the others servants after their master had been removed to hospital. 'Was it for nothing I refused to follow the policemen? I told them that the Chief Priest of Umuaro is not a soup you can lick in a hurry.' His voice carried a note of pride. 'Our master thinks that because he is a white man our medicine cannot touch him.'

The story of Ezeulu's magical powers spread through Government Hill hand in hand with the story of Captain Winterbottom's mysterious collapse [...]

[Ezeulu gave Captain Winterbottom a time of respite thinking that white people would understand and free him but such was not the case. Then,] Captain Winterbottom had a setback in his recovery and for another fortnight no one was allowed to see him. Among the servants and African staff on Government Hill the rumour spread first that he was insane and then that he was paralysed. Ezeulu's reputation continued to rise with these rumours [...]

Then one morning, on the eight Eke market since his arrest he was suddenly told he was free to go home. To the amazement of the Head Messenger and the Chief Clerk who brought him the message he broke into his rare belly-deep laugh.

'So the white man is tired?'

The two men smiled their agreement.

à la mort de mon père,

m'écartant ainsi du pouvoir,

et le mettant à ma place [...]

O Maa ! épargne-moi.

épargne-moi par la grâce de ta mère Fanta...

Et toutes les [autres] mères défuntes, il [le crocodile] les invoqua une a une.»

Il [Fanta Maa] dit : « Je ne t'épargnerai pas ».

[Alors, harponna le crocodile avec ces trois harpons magiques imbibés d'un poison mortel] (Hayidara, 1987: 157, 161,

165, 167, 169, 171, 175, 177, 181, 185, 187)

'The white man is like that,' said the Chief Clerk.

'I prefer to deal with a man who throws up a stone and puts his head to receive it not one who shouts for a fight but when it comes he trembles and passes premature shit' [4].

After the white administration freed the Chief Priest, Captain Winter bottom, the governor, recovered. It follows from the above that even the white colonizers had been fought by soothsayers by the use of the supernatural powers.

Further, soothsayers can be intercessors or mediators. To tell the truth, diviners can intercede to solve plea on someone else's behalf or to act as a mediator in a dispute. When Chaka went back to recapture his kingdom, he faced his three half-brothers "In the battle Mfokazana [Chaka's half-brother who was ruling] was defeated and killed. Even though Dingana and Mhlangana were not involved in that battle, Chaka wanted to kill them but Ndlebe pleaded for them" [2].

Moreover, the search team that is mentioned earlier to find Sundiata was composed with the most important persons of a society: "[...] KountounManian, an old griot from the court of NaréMaghan; MandjanBéréte, a brother of Sassouma's, [...] Singbin Mara Cissé, a diviner of the court; SirimanTouré, another diviner; and, finally, a woman, Magnouma"[1]. Their task would be to intercede so that Sundiata would answer to the supplications of his people. But also to mediate Sogolon and her children to the sons of Mali. Even though Sassouma Béréte was the one who expelled them, all Mali was guilty. Such a delicate mission needs the above social members. Kountoun Manian, a griot who would report the journey and the outcome of the mission to the younger generation. Mandjan Béréte symbolized the royalty, the equal of Sogolon and her children. Two diviners, Singbin Mara Cissé, and Siriman Touré for mystical affairs. And a woman, Magnouma, simply because women were very important in African societies and were involved in many political aspect in Mandingo society. Nonetheless, the number of these social members should draw attention. One griot, one person from the royal family, one woman but two soothsayers. This shows that soothsaying played an important role in Mandingo society. Even the mission went from a consultation of soothsayers; and should continue under their supervision. They were the ones who gave "[...] the clues [...] to search towards the riverine lands, that is, towards the east"[1]. Finally Sundiata was found and he put an end to the hegemony of the sorcerer king of Sosso, Soumaoro.

Poc asserts that soothsayers are good in:

[...] communicating messages from the dead... beyond their manipulation of supernatural powers as magicians, these village specialists were also mediators who contacted the other world through the technique of trance" [5].

It follow from the above that soothsayers can help to communicate with the ancestors' spirits. Isanusi too helped Chaka through a mediatory system to obtain blessings from his ancestors for the ruling of his kingdom. Mofolo explain through the below long quotation:

[...] Isanusi [...] dug a little on Senzangakhona's grave and made a hollow which was not too deep, and he cradled himself in it and then began to speak in a language which Chaka did not understand. He spoke with much sadness in his heart, his voice full of emotion; he spoke not to Chaka but to those in the grave, and as he spoke the soil of the mound over the grave began to shake and tremble[...] Isanusi spoke again with much more sadness than before, and his voice was smaller and humble, like someone in great distress making a supplication; then he paused, and as soon as he did so Ndlebe and Malunga started at the same time to sing a lament, a song of sorrow, and they sang it with more sadness than those carrying a dead person to the grave. As they were singing that lament, Chaka heard a voice rising from under the depths of the soil, out of the grave, speaking in that same language that was spoken by Isanusi, and Isanusi continually responded to it. While Chaka listened in surprise, he constantly heard his name being mentioned even though he did not understand what was being said; he heard the name of a great-great ancestor of his being mentioned, and heard him respond; he heard the name of the one who succeeded that one also being mentioned, and he too responded, and so on up to his father, Senzangakhona[...] Chaka heard his father's voice speaking exactly as he knew it, as it was when he was still alive[...] Senzangakhona spoke [...] by saying: 'Chaka, my child, it is I, your father, talking to you, I am with my fathers and my grandfathers, and it is the desire of all of us that our combined kingship, the kingship of each one of us separately, should fall upon you, and be united there. May you be a powerful king who is not ruled; may you conquer all your enemies. May your shield protect you from your enemies' spears, and may your spear kill; may your nation pay you much respect and fear you. Be a man; be a king' [2].

Receiving ancestral blessing is something in which Africans believe a lot, it leads to life success. The above quotation shows that Zulu believe in it. However, this can also be found among the Mandingo. When Sundiata came back from his exile, he mediated himself with the spirit of his mother by means of sacrifice. Niane remembers that:

"At Do [...] Djata and BallaFasséké betook themselves to the famous plain of Ourantamba [...] The inhabitants of Do had raised a great mound on the spot where the buffalo had expired. Sundiata sacrificed a white cock on the mound. When the cock had died on its back a big whirlwind swirled up and blew towards the west. 'Look,' said BallaFasseke, the whirlwind is going towards Mali.' 'Yes, it is time to go back there'" [1].

The above mediatory system allowed Sundiata to receive blessings from his dead mother. The position on which the white cock died showed that Sundiata was connected to the spirit of her mother. As for the whirlwind that took the direction of Mali, it showed the hero that he could go back and reconquered his kingdom under the supervision of his ancestors.

To conclude, soothsayers were also great political visionaries who planned, organized, and controlled how their notables and dignitaries were ruling the different parts of their kingdoms. After the recon quest on his kingdom and having giving back each king his kingdom; Sundiata as an overlord organized every year a great meeting where all the social and political problems were discussed. Niane reports that:

After a year Sundiata held a new assembly at Niani, but this one was the assembly of dignitaries and kings of the empire. The kings and notables of all the tribes came to Niani, the kings spoke of their administration and the dignitaries talked of their kings [...] Fakoli, the nephew of Soumaoro, having proved himself too independent, had to flee to evade the Mansa's anger. His lands were confiscated and the taxes of Sosso were payed directly into the granaries of Niani. In this way, every year, Sundiata gathered about him all the kings and notables; so justice prevailed everywhere, for the kings were afraid of being denounced at Niani" [1].

It follows from the above that Sundiata practice during his ruling as emperor the concept of *check and balance*. The latter is a political concept that allows the king to modify some oppressing laws and to control the ruling of his commissioners so as to prevent them from exerting too much power over the people.

The subsection has discussed Soothsayers' political contributions in Zulu and Mandingo medieval societies of the epics. It has painted soothsayers as good advisors, decision-makers, spies, intercessors, and fighters. Soothsayers had played these important role to bring their contributions to the political arena of their nations. These political contributions were mostly based on the supernatural powers. However, these soothsayers or sorcerer leaders were frequently helped politically by supernatural beings through medicinal plants and magic to achieve political goals.

The Spiritual and Medical Contributions of Supernatural Powers for Politics in *Chaka* and *Sundiata*

This subsection examines the usage of medicinal plants and magic for political purposes. It also explores the interventions of supernatural beings in the medieval Zulu and Mandingo political arena of the epics.

To begin with, some leaves, barks, and roots of plants have been used by soothsayers or leaders to achieve political attainments. Mofolo remembers that the old woman of Bungane, "[...] was very famous for her knowledge of charms to make one popular, charms that brought good fortune, and charms that caused a king to be loved greatly by his people and by the other kings"[2]. These charms made most of the time from medicinal plants have been necessary for the ruling of medieval nations. A leader who is neither popular, nor loved by his people may find it difficult to rule well. So, soothsayer advised leaders to use supernatural powers even in their decision-making. Mofolo remembers Malunga saying to Chaka:

[...] I have brought you a medicine which you must chew before you speak to the armies, so that by the time you speak to them you have already chewed it, and it is in your mouth. That medicine will work wonders with your troops. It is called sweet-mouth [...]

[...] Malunga gave him the medicine and Chaka chewed it and kept on swallowing its juice, and then he went back to the armies. In the dead of night he came again to the troops and found some of them sleeping. He roused them and told them that that was not the time to sleep, but a time to be alert because it might happen that the enemy would fall upon them in their sleep [...] [When he finally finished his speech] All those who heard him were full in their chests, and they cried, their tears rolling

down their cheeks in the darkness of the night; they wondered what kind of war this was about which Chaka spoke with such gravity; they said. 'Where we have been ordered to go, there we will go, though it may be the place of dying.' Their lungs were lifted high with excitement, and they waited for dawn with much longing, wishing that the night would pass so that they might enter into games, and also having resolved to fight in such a way that Chaka should never again have cause to talk to them in that manner.

[Two days later, after that war, and the death of Dingiswayo, when the time to fusion Chaka's kingdom and that of Dingiswayo came, Malunga reminded Chaka about the chewing medicine given its potency to dull people's mind. He said him again] The day before yesterday I gave you a medicine to be chewed just before you go to address the regiments. It was for precisely this day that I prepared that medicine. The hearts of all the warriors who heard you on that day are clinging to you, and they will never agree to be commanded by anyone else but you [2].

This bark or root of plant that people chew for supernatural result is common in African countries. For instance, in Niger, in wrestling ground we can see some wrestlers chewing magical bark or root before they wrestle. This is supposed to help them to defeat their opponents. There are also some marabouts who made some charms that one should keep in mouth before asking for a loan or before making a love declaration. These charms would allow to have the loan even if the person is not willing to give it. It would also allow to have the love of a girl even if she is not in love with the person.

Likewise, Mofolo reports how far Isanusi and his apprentices went in the usage of the supernatural powers on Chaka's people just to allow him to make incontestable decisions. They have used so much evil medicines that Chaka's people became like robots. Mofolo remembers Ndlebe's report to his master, Isanusi:

'I have prepared the people's minds, those of men and women alike, so that they should feel that every deed performed by Chaka is good for no other reason than that it is performed by Chaka who has been sent by the gods among the people. Furthermore, I have secretly given them the *boreba*, the medicine that dulls the mind, so that even where they might have had doubts, their minds should react without intelligence, they should be dull, and lack awareness of what is going on; they should look upon Chaka, and even think about him, the way they would think about Nkulunkulu' [2].

If Isanusi and his apprentices had stopped at the stage of the usage of the '*boreba*', things would not have been worse. But they continued until they got Chaka performed human sacrifice by himself, killing the person he loved the most, Noliwa for political reasons, great kingship. Mofolo reports the discussion between Isanusi and Chaka in the below quotation:

[...] [Isanusi said to Chaka] it is quite difficult to obtain the kingship you want [...] because the medicine for obtaining that must come from you [...] if you want such a kingship, every time you go to meet the enemy, your warriors must eat food mixed with medicines containing the blood of someone you love most dearly, one who is constantly in your thoughts, who is in your heart day and night, whom you love more than all the people in this entire world [...] I know of one king in my country who strengthened his royal city with the blood of his first-born son when he was seeking a kingship of this nature, and he fortified the city gates with the blood of his last-born son; which meant that he was left without children.

Today, Chaka, we are teaching you witchcraft, how sorcerers kill their own children or their parents in order to ensure that they shall be efficient in their sorcery [2].

By accepting such an advice from Isanusi, mixing Noliwa's blood with some plants to get a powerful medicine, Chaka has taken the non-return path. The medicine had been of course a success but Chaka had lost the last spark of mankind that existed in him. Such kind of medicine is really to be avoided, since it causes the destruction of one's family. It is a medicine obtained devilishly that can lead to soul damnation.

Niane [1] also points out the use of the supernatural powers in Mandingo political arena. Mali's bright future is said to have depended on the cripple son of Sogolon. In a medieval Africa where the political development of nations depended on powerful leaders, the hero chosen by the gods for Mali was cripple. "People had seen one-eyed kings, one-armed kings, and lame kings, but a stiff-legged king had never been heard tell of" [1].

Nevertheless, when Sundiata made the decision to walk, it was an *iron rod* that he told his griot to go and take from the forge. This *iron rod* which was magic and was made by the soothsayer of Sundiata's father, Nounfaïri purposely to

solve the problem of non-eligibility to the throne of Sundiata. Before he died, the old soothsayer entrusted it to his son until the day which Sundiata took the decision to walk. So, when Sundiata said to his mother:

‘[...] I am going to walk today,’ [...] BallaFasséké, who was present, ran to the master smith, Farakourou, to order an iron rod [...] When BallaFasséké came to order the iron rod, Farakourou [son of Nounfaïri] said to him, ‘The great day has arrived then?’

‘Yes today is a day like any other, but it will see what no other day has seen’ [1].

Far from medicinal plants used mostly by hunter soothsayers, this *iron rod* came from a blacksmith soothsayer that helped mystically the hero to achieve his most political decision, eligibility to the throne.

Magic can be used to help soothsayers or leaders to have information about some plots coming from their enemies. “[...] Faro [...] puts a drop of her milk in each of his ear [Biton Coulibaly’s ears], which allows him to hear any plot that is brewing against him”[6]

This milk coming from a divinity is magic, it helped Biton throughout his ruling to hear the plot of his enemies to make good and fast decision to overcome their plans.

In addition:

It’s by giving suck to the Zarma warrior Issa Korombé that Kassai, the one breast woman, the hero maker, transmitted to him powers which made him the master of war («wangougn») who put an end to Touareg and Fulani hegemony over the Zarmas of the region of Boboye.³

Another essential magic object used to liberate a nation is a *cock’s spur*. Sundiata succeeded to free Mali owing to a white cock’s spur at the battle of Krina. In fact, After Sundiata got from his half-sister the information about how to destroy Soumaoro’s supernatural powers, he worked on it:

[...] It was [...] an arrow [...] made of wood and pointed with the spur of a cock. The cock’s spur was the *Tana* of Soumaoro, the secret which Nana Triban had managed to draw out of the king of Sosso [1].

Furthermore, *altars* made on the names of divinities and *ancestral tombs* were used to solve political problems. These *altars* and *tombs* became cult places where many people went to invoke the divinities or ancestral spirits. In Niger for instance, the tomb of great saints are venerated. The grave of Alfa Mamane Diobbo in Say is frequently visited. People go to Say to pray on the grave in exchange of life successes.

Besides, before Sundiata went back to reconquer Mali, he had sacrificed a white cock on an *altar*. The latter was a place where, “The inhabitants of Do [Sundiata’s mother’s country] had raised a great mound on the spot where the buffalo [Sundiata’s mother’s wraith] had expired” [1]. This sacrifice on the *altar* reassured him that he could now go back and recapture his kingdom with all the blessings of his mother; for, “Son-Jara’s mother dies, [...] in order to enter the next world to better serve him through powerful occult”[7].

As for Chaka, he went to his father’s *grave* where his soothsayer interceded to him to get ancestral blessings for the ruling of his nation.

[...] Isanusi [...] dug a little on Senzangakhona's grave and made a hollow which was not too deep, and he cradled himself in it and then began to speak in a language which Chaka did not understand. Chaka heard his father's voice speaking exactly as he knew it, as it was when he was still alive [...] Senzangakhona spoke [...] by saying: 'Chaka, my child, it is I, your father, talking to you, I am with my fathers and my grandfathers, and it is the desire of all of us that our combined kingship, the kingship of each one of us separately, should fall upon you, and be united there. May you be a powerful king who is not ruled; may you conquer all your enemies. May your shield protect you from your enemies' spears, and may your spear kill; may your nation pay you much respect and fear you. Be a man; be a king' [2].

To connect Chaka to the spirits of his ancestors, Isanusi needed to use the *tomb* of Senzangakhona, Chaka’s father. *Ancestral graves* represented as cellphones and incantations as credits used to be in contact with dead persons. The scene began by a cavity digging on the *grave* through which the soothsayer can talk to the ancestors through incantations. Then

³ " C’est en faisant têter le guerrier Zarma Issa Korombé que Kassai, la femme au sein unique, la faiseuse de héros, lui transmet les pouvoirs qui furent de lui le maître de guerre («Wangougn») qui mit fin à l’hégémonie des Touaregs et des Peuls sur les Zarmas de la région du Boboye." (Pantengouh, 2005: 7)

followed the ancestors' answers to the call of the soothsayer who came and blessed Chaka for his political needs. This shows the great belief of Africans in using *ancestral graves* to get connect with dead for political successes.

Even Soumaoro, the wicked sorcerer king of Sosso received posthumous honors:

After fleeing Son-Jara's army through several villages, Sumamuru [...] arrives at the bank of the Niger River [...] Even in defeat, this great sorcerer cannot die a natural death. And if you go to Kulu-Koro even today, you may find the spirit of Sumamuru dwelling in a sacred stone, to which you may pray for a favor. [It is reported that when Son-Jara and Fa-Koli held Sumamuru at blade point:]
Sumamuru dried up on the spot [...]
He has become the fetish at Kulu-Koro.
The Bamana worship him now, my father.
Susu Mountain Sumamuru,
He became the sacred fetish [7].

SoumaoroKanté's supernatural death owed him to be worshipped as a deity. The above quotation shows that even nowadays people go to Koulikoro where his spirit is lodging in a sacred stone to pray for favors that can be of political orders.

Divinities and spirits can as well help soothsayers, or heroes politically by advising, making a decision, spying, fighting, or mediating. Divinities and spirits can perform these political activities through their own voices, dreams, possessions, or using animal cries and movements.

Taking a usual spiritual early bath at the river, Chaka was one day visited and blessed by an enormous snake, *the King of the Deep Pool*. However, that divinity would not be alone in the strengthening of the hero according to the two voices that Chaka heard when the snake disappeared. These two voices, '*The stentorious voice*' and '*the very soft voice*' represented each a divinity that Chaka did not see. After some predictions, '*thevery soft voice*' gave Chaka a significant political advice "[You will succeed] Yet you must go by the right path" [2]. because a leader who is ruling following a wrong path will cause the ruin of his nation and his people will be fed up him. It is important to note that the divinity, '*thevery soft voice*', did not appear to Chaka, he has just heard the voice.

However, Kassay, the sorceress queen had been visited physically by a jinn who took the appearance of a human being. The jinn told her about a political decision that he had taken which consist in making love to her to conceive a son that Soni Ali Ber could not kill. Since, a prediction told the Soni that a son of his sister would kill him to become king and Soni kept on killing his sister children. Kesteloot and Dieng report that:

[...] One day, very late, in the depths of the night, a man came dressed in beautiful clothes [...] he was tall [...] A perfume could be felt everywhere. He came and sat down next to Kassay. They chatted and chatted. He said to her: "Truly Kassay, I would like to make love to you. Once we sleep together, you'll give birth to a boy Si can't kill. It is he who will kill Si and become king."⁴

Hayidara also recalls the story of Ba Fanta, a Bozo woman, who fails to have a child with her husband. Ba Fanta conceived a baby by uniting herself to a jinn. Hayidara remembers that:

Ba Fanta went to get some fire wood.
She arrives at the place of collection of fire wood.
A male jinn came out of the grove
and came to talk with her.
She said to the male jinn, "Alright!
My husband is, of course, Jenginè.
But I didn't have a child by him."

⁴« [...] un jour, bien tard, au profond de la nuit, vint un homme habillé de beaux vêtements [...] il était grand [...] Un parfum se sentait partout. Il vint s'asseoir à côté de Kassay. Ils causèrent et devisèrent. Il lui dit: "En véritéKassay, je voudrais te faire l'amour. Une fois que nous aurons couché ensemble, tu donneras naissance à un garçon que Si ne pourra tuer. C'est lui qui tuera Si et deviendra roi. » (Kesteloot and Dieng, 2000 : 405)

Hmm! the jinn male says: "You will have a child
 If you united yourself with me..."
 He said: "You will have a jinn child, however."
 So she replied: "No harm in that!"
 He said, "Well, on thursday,
 come and meet me.
 [...]
 If you go to Joron-Kulu,
 We will see each other ".
 She came to unite with the jinn.
 [...] that thursday.
 By the grace of God, she came to conceive."⁵

This decision-making between the two women-Queen Kassay and Ba Fanta- and their supernatural lovers provides later these women's societies with heroes who have contributed in their social and political development.

Niane remembers also the great political decision taken by the buffalo woman for Mali. She decided to offer her life to the hunter in exchange of the below political condition:

"The king promises the hand of the most beautiful maiden of Do to the victor. When
 all the people of Do are gathered and you are told to choose her whom you want as
 wife you must search in the crowd and you will find a very ugly maid-uglier than you
 can imagine-sitting apart on an observation platform; it is her you must choose. She
 is called Sogolon Kedjou, or Sogolon Kondouto, because she is a hunchback. You

⁵« Ba Fanta alla chercher du bois mort.

Elle parvient au lieu de ramassage du bois mort.

Un djinn male sortit du bosquet

et vint s'entretenir avec elle.

Elle dit au djinn male : « D'accord !

Mon mari est, certes, Jenginè.

Mais je n'ai pas eu d'enfant de lui. »

Hum ! le djinn male dit : « Tu auras un enfant

si tu t'unis à moi... »

Il dit : « C'est un enfant de djinn que tu auras, toutefois ».

Alors elle répondit : « Aucun mal à cela » !

Il dit : « Eh bien, jeudi,

viens à ma rencontre.

[...]

Si tu te rends à Joron-Kulu,

nous nous verrons ».

Elle vint à s'unir au djinn.

[...] le jeudi.

Par la grâce de Dieu, elle vint à concevoir. (1987 : 15)

will choose her for she is my wraith. She will be an extraordinary woman if you manage to possess her” [1].

The buffalo woman had been working behind the political scene of Mali by making a great decision for its development. She accepted to die so that her double, her wraith, Sogolon, could appear on Mali’s political stage. The buffalo woman influenced the choice of the hunter who would have chosen the most beautiful girl of Do instead of the ugliest one, Sogolon, the only one capable of bearing a child who would develop Mali politically.

Concerning Sundiata, divinities had contributed in his last fight with Soumaoro. They raised Sundiata’s spirits by showing to his soothsayers the downfall of the sorcerer king of Sosso in a dream, thus the liberation of Mali. Niane remembers when Balla Fasséké, “[...] said to Sundiata that the soothsayers had seen the end of Soumaoro in a dream” [1].

Achebe mentions an Igbo divinity, Agbala, *the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves*, that communicated by possessing its priestess. That divinity through possession made a political decision for the Igbo people. When a daughter of Umuofia had been killed by the members of an enemy village:

Okonkwo had been chosen by the nine villages to carry a message of war to their enemies unless they agreed to give up a young man and a virgin to atone for the murder of Udo's wife. And such was the deep fear that their enemies had for Umuofia that they treated Okonkwo like a king and brought him a virgin who was given to Udo as wife, and the lad Ikernefuna. [Some years later]

[...], Umuofia has decided to kill him [Ikernefuna]. The Oracle of the Hills and the Caves has pronounced it. They will take him outside Umuofia as is the custom, and kill him there [8].

Umuofia’s political approach was good because it had avoided war synonymy with much bloodshed. However, the divine political decision-making had also shed the blood of an innocent, Ikernefuna. According to their custom the boy’s blood was shed in compensation of the blood of the daughter of Umuofia’s. Ikernefuna should not pay for a crime he had not done, even if it should have retaliation, it was the murderer of the woman who should be killed. But soothsayers act according to the wishes of their gods.

Isanusi and his apprentices, Ndlebe and Malunga, were rather supernatural beings, spirits, than soothsayers. Here are some clues that prove it. When Chaka asked Isanusi:

[...] where do you come from? Where are you going? Where is your home?

[...] The doctor took his stick and pointed up to the sky [...]

[As for Ndlebe, he was] without any doubt, a half-wit [...]

[And Malunga’s] [...] features, especially his face, show plainly that he is not a person” [2].

The above hints show that Isanusi, Ndlebe, and Malunga were much more supernatural beings than mere humans.

As a spirit, Ndlebe had performed wonderful political actions that helped Chaka in his ruling; these political actions involved spying. When Chaka was still at Dingiswayo’s kingdom, Ndlebe had stopped a conspiracy against him through his role of spy. Ndlebe had also reported Chaka his father’s death which is of great political matters for the hero. Mofolo reports in this long quotation that:

As Chaka was thinking [...] Ndlebe woke up, and he scratched himself, ploughing into his flesh with his nails with that half-yawning grin just like a dog scratching itself with its hind leg. He yawned exactly like a dog that had just woken up from sleep, and he looked this way and that way, and then began to get up, raising himself with his hands while his loins remained on the ground, twisted. He looked at Chaka and his ears suddenly stood up and became like little caves, and listened, and then he got up and walked away. He walked with clumsy steps like an imbecile, with the strands of his many-plaited hair hanging down on all sides, and his little blanket of dry hide barely covering his hips. When he returned he told Chaka that he [Chaka] had been plotted against by Dingiswayo’s paternal uncle and two other men, for the uncle had been greatly hurt when he saw Chaka being raised above him in rank. Chaka reported this to Dingiswayo and it was those plotters who were killed instead of Chaka.

Later in the afternoon that same day, as the shadows lengthened, Chaka saw Ndlebe stiffen his ears like a dog picking up a scent and off he went in a fine trot exactly like a dog trotting with its nose in the air when it is attracted by a scent, and went in a westerly direction. [Three days later when] he returned and he was covered with dew like a wild dog. He signaled to Chaka with his eyes to come to him, and when they were alone together he said: 'I bring you very painful news today, even though I believe that it should make *you* happy. Your father, Senzangakhona, is dead' [2].

The above quotation shows that Ndlebe was not only a spirit but could also hear information from far away thus his quality of good spy. He saved the life of Chaka from a conspiracy and brought to him the news of his father's death. The divulgence of the plot led to his enemies' destruction and the news of his father's death allowed Chaka to get ready to go back for his throne.

Seydou [9] also mentions the contribution of supernatural beings in political decision-making. In fact, ChêkouAmadou and his in-law, BoûbouArdoGalo are fighting for a political supremacy. Boûbou refuses to practice Islam and continues to humiliate ChêkouAmadou and his scholars using the supernatural powers. One day,

Chêkou awoke in the morning;
 he summoned the scholars.
 [...] He told the scholars that it was time for them to put an end to BoûbouArdoGalo's hegemony!
 They made their preparations; they entered a spiritual retreat and they held a meeting to destroy Boûbou.
 The genies, from everywhere in the country, wherever they were, were gathered that day at Hamdallâye.
 They said to them: "BoûbouArdoGalo ..." Immediately they [the genies] scattered!
 [Then Chêkou] Amadou [in person] entered a spiritual retreat.
 [...] He held the rosary by its end,
 he stood facing east
 and all the genies, wherever they were, found themselves in front of him, all of them came running that day.
 He said: "BoûbouArdoGalo ..." Immediately, they scattered.
 He chained all the old genies
 and let the young genies wander here and there.
 [...] Facing the four cardinal corners
 he did the same thing.
 He finally turned to ÂliSoutourâré [a jinn]
 that he had at his service [...]
 [The Genie said to Chêkou] I remain powerless in front of him [BoûbouArdoGalo]
 He said, "In that case, what should we do?"
 He said: "The best, then, of course, here is:
 he has a musician,
 alute player,
 [...] When I scared him,
 if his master can no longer hear the strings playing,
 he will no longer be able to fight! "
 [After the Genie succeeded to part Boûbou with his griot by scaring the latter, the former gave the secret of his invulnerability by himself to his enemies]
 He finally said to them: "Go then to such and such a tree;
 you will dig to take such and such a root;
 you bring it and you hit me with it.
 You will shave my head-he continued-
 take away the amulet that is there.
 You will remove it from my body,
 you will try your weapons against me
 and then you will do as you please, for today you will have got me!"
 they followed all the instructions.
 [...] and when the weapons had struck him down,
 then the horsemen devastated Nêné."⁶

⁶« Chêkou s'éveilla, au matin;

il convoqua les lettrés.

[...] Il dit aux lettrés qu'il était temps pour eux de s'occuper de Boubou ArdoGalo !

Ils firent leurs préparatifs ; ils entrèrent en retraite spirituelle et ils tinrent séance pour s'occuper de Boûbou.

Les génies, de partout ou, dans le pays, il s'en trouvait, furent rassemblés, ce jour-là, à Hamdallâye.

Ils leur dirent : « BoûbouArdoGalo... » Aussitôt ils [les génies] s'égaillèrent !

[Alors Chêkou] Amadou [en personne] entra en retraite spirituelle.

[...] il tint le chapelet par le bout,

il se plaça face à l'est

et tous les Génies, en quelque lieu qu'il s'en trouvât face à lui, ce jour-là tous accoururent.

Il dit : « BoûbouArdoGalo... » Aussitôt, ils s'égaillèrent.

Il enchaina tous les vieux

et laissa les jeunes errer çà et là.

[...] Aux quatre coins cardinaux

il procéda de même.

Il se tourna enfin vers ÂliSoutourâré [un jinn]

qu'il avait à son service [...]

[Le Génie dit à Chêkou] je suis sans moyens contre lui [BoûbouArdoGalo]

Il dit : « Dans ce cas, qu'est-ce qui est le mieux ? »

Il dit : « Le mieux, dans ce cas, assurément, voilà :

il a un musicien,

un joueur de luth,

[...] Quand je lui aurai fait peur,

si son maître n'entend plus jouer les cordes,

il ne pourra plus se battre ! »

[Après que le Génie réussit à faire fuir le griot du héros, ce dernier donna lui-même le secret de son invulnérabilité à ses ennemies]

Il leur dit enfin : « Allez donc à tel arbre ;

vous creuserez pour y prendre telle racine ;

vous l'apportez et vous m'en frappez.

Vous me raserez la tête-poursuivit-il-

ôtez-m'en donc l'amulette qui s'y trouve.

Vous l'ôterez de mon corps,

vous essaieriez vos armes contre moi

et alors vous ferez à votre guise, car aujourd'hui, vous m'aurez eu ! »

It follows from the above that supernatural beings had contributed to the downfall of BoûbouArdoGolo's domination over Muslim Fulani of Massina. Supernatural beings allowed ChêkouAmadou and his scholars to get political supremacy over BoûbouArdoGalo.

Like soothsayers, supernatural beings also used animals' cries and movements to achieve political actions. To begin with, Sundiata' and Soumaoro's owls would be supernatural beings or would be inhabited by spirits after incantations from the two sorcerer kings. So, as supernatural agents they had played the role of intercessors and mediators accordingly to the wishes of their respective masters, Soumaoro and Sundiata. Below is an extract of the owls' discussion on behalf of their masters:

'Stop, young man. Henceforth I am the king of Mali. If you want peace, return to where you came from,' said Soumaoro.
'I am coming back, Soumaoro, to recapture my kingdom. If you want peace you will make amends to my allies and return to Sosso where you are the king.
'I am king of Mali by force of arms. My rights have been established by conquest.'
'Then I will take Mali from you by force of arms and chase you from my kingdom'
[1].

Even though these birds were conveying messages of their masters, they were doing so under supernatural forces known by Sundiata and Soumaoro who invoke these supernatural forces to inhabit these owls.

Like these owls which were acting on the influence of divinities, "[...] the turtledove [...] is the messenger of the gods of the bush [...]"⁷ DaniKouyaté's film "*Keita! L'Heritage du griot*" shows that the gods of the bush achieved political actions through their messenger, the turtledove. The two hunter brothers had been advised by the gods through the bird about where to find the buffalo.

In addition, when Sundiata's arrow hit Soumaoro, the jinn with whom he had made a pact warned him through a black bird which flew over the battle field to run or perish from Sundiata's hands. Niane reports that:

[...] the vanquished Soumaoro looked up towards the sun. A great black bird flew over above the fray and he understood. It was the bird of misfortune.
'The bird of Krina,' he muttered.
The king of Sosso let out a great cry and, turning his horse's head, he took to flight"
[1].

It follows from the above that Soumaoro knew already what he should not see that black bird at the battle of Krina. He knew what the sight of this bird meant, because the jinn would have told it to him. So, after such terrible evidence, he took to his heels.

This subsection discussed the political contributions of the supernatural powers in the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies. It had shown how some medicinal plants like Malunga's '*boreba*' and some magical objects like Nounfaïri's '*iron rod*' had contributed in the political arena. In addition, some supernatural beings had also worked behind political scenes through their animal messengers to contribute in the political emancipation of the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies of the epics.

The Impacts of the Contributions of Soothsayers and Supernatural Powers for Political Success in *Chaka* and *Sundiata*

This subsection discusses the upshot, the effect, of soothsayers' and the supernatural powers' political contributions for the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies of the epics. Chaka and Sundiata as well as their people obtained some political successes thanks to their soothsayers; but also thanks to some divinities, spirits, magical objects, and medicinal plants. These political successes led to the emancipation of the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies. These successes

ils firent tout cela.

[...] et que les armes l'eurent terrasse,

alors les cavaliers dévastèrent Néné. (Seydou, 2010 : 227, 229, 231, 241, 243)

⁷« [...] la tourterelle est la messagère des dieux de la brousse [...] » (Hampaté Bâ, 1973: 339)

occur from the different political aspects that the first and the second subsections of the article have discussed: advising, decision-making, spying, interceding, and fighting.

Soothsayers' and Supernatural beings' advice had given wonderful results for those who took notice of them. An advice brings serenity, confidence, and discernment for its follower. King Naré Maghan lacked peace in his heart because Sundiata who is said to have been the savior of Mali was seven but crippled. After he had talked to Doua, his griot and Nounfaïri, his soothsayer, the King regained confidence. Niane asserts that, "This conversation [between the king and his soothsayer] and Doua's confidence gave the king some assurance. To the great displeasure of Sassouma Béréte the king restored Sogolon to favour [...] because the disheartened king debarred Sogolon from his house and she lived in semi-disgrace for a while" [1].

These wise pieces of advice brought serenity to King Naré Maghan who was totally lost and worried about the destiny of his kingdom. This political conversation allowed the king to have faith in his crippled son, Sundiata; it also reconciled King Naré Maghan and his wife Sogolon.

Following an advice can in addition lead to fame or reputation. Subsequently to Isanusi's advice to Chaka: to obey Dingiswayo, to work well for him, in order to obtain the kingship he wanted; Chaka executed. Within three days Chaka became very famous by killing a terrible madman who was destroying people's properties. He as well forced his overlord's enemy's army into a disorderly retreat by defeating it completely. Mofolo reports Chaka's success due to his soothsayer's advice in the below long quotation:

Since he was not in the battle itself, Dingiswayo was the one who saw clearly the way in which that battle was fought, and better than anyone else how well Chaka performed. We will not tell how pleased he was with Chaka, nor how the women honoured him with their shrill ululations on that day, nor how songs were composed for him: let the reader imagine these things for himself, how it was on that day. What is surprising, however, is that while Chaka was being thus praised and sung, the other warriors did not grow envious, but instead they were the very ones who spoke highly of Chaka, and even suggested to the King that he be promoted to his senior regiments, consisting only of seasoned braves; and indeed the king did so, and also honoured him by making him commander of one of the top-ranking regiments.

That is how Chaka made his arrival known at Dingiswayo's royal village. After only three days he was already known, and counted among the most renowned braves, the king's trusted ones. And now Chaka was happy here at the royal place where a warrior was a highly valued person, and the spear never slumbered.

[Also at another fight with Zwide, Chaka distinguished so much himself that] The women's ululations when the armies entered the village were something never heard before. Dingiswayo came back to his royal place as a King and a conqueror who had scattered his enemies. Chaka's name was spoken in praise by all the women, songs were sung for Chaka, songs were sung about Chaka.

On that day Chaka was promoted to commander of all Dingiswayo's armies. In many subsequent wars he was sent alone in charge of the armies while the king remained at home; but even when the king was present, he would give the command to Chaka and Chaka would be the one to pass it on to the armies.

[...] the young girls of [the] palace can hardly swallow their food when they think of [Chaka], and [...] they fear each other's rivalry, each one saying to herself: "I pray that Chaka should not pass me by and be taken by So-and-so" [2].

It follows from the above that Chaka obtained fame, reputation, renown, or celebrity thanks to his soothsayer's advice which told him to obey his overlord and to work happily for him.

Sundiata too obtained fame by following the advice of his mother, Sogolon, a soothsayer. The option of exile advised by Sogolon to her son produced sweet fruits. In fact, it was at Mema that the hero began his first war campaigns. There, he became a great warrior who was loved and appreciated by everyone. Niane remembers that:

They [soldiers] spoke about nothing but him in the camp. Men were even more surprised by the lucidity of his mind. In the camp he had an answer to everything and the most puzzling situations resolved themselves in his presence.

After three years the king appointed Sundiata Kan-Koro-Sigui, his viceroy, and in the king's absence it was he who governed.

The king's choice was approved of both by the army and the people; the people love all who assert themselves over them. The soothsayers of Mema revealed the

extraordinary destiny of Djata. It was said that he was the successor of Alexander the great and that he would be even greater [...] Sundiata inspired confidence in the sofos by his example, for the sofos loves to see his chief share the hardship of battle [1].

As stated earlier, at the end of the second subsection, supernatural beings had also given pieces of advice that paid off. The two brother hunters and Soumaoro, the king of Sosso, had been advised by divinities by the use of birds. While the gods of the bush used the turtledove to advise the two hunter bothers, the jinn with whom Soumaoro signed a pact used a black bird to advise him. The gods of the bush advised the two brother hunters through the bird's cries to go to the river side where they can find the buffalo woman. And the jinn advised Soumaoro by the means of a black bird to run or die.

The two hunters as well as Soumaoro followed the divinities' advice and succeeded. The two hunters brought to King Naré Maghan the right woman who bore the savior of Mali, Sundiata. And Soumaoro through his flight escaped from being killed by Sundiata.

An advice leads mostly to a decision-making, soothsayers and supernatural beings as well as medicinal plants and magical object served as agents of decision-making that allowed to obtain great political successes.

The middle ages Zulu and Mandingo soothsayers and divinities used to make great decisions that influenced their nations politically. Moreover, some medicinal plants and magical object had been used to obtain a total agreement of the people. The first subtitle of this article has discussed the Aftermath of Dingiswayo's killing, Chaka's overlord. Isanusi, a soothsayer but also a supernatural being burst into view among Chaka, Malunga, and Ndlebe and took decisions; because the latter were slow in their decision-making about Zwide and his people who were going to attack them. This quick decision-making led to the below political success:

Chaka's sadness and his fears were banished at once when Isanusi arrived; he was very happy and he undressed gladly, and Isanusi worked on him to prepare him for the important task which he was about to assume on that very night. Even before he finished working on him, the armies outside, on hearing that Zwide was once more on the move, made hurried effort to find Chaka and to tell him that he was the one to whom they were looking for protection against their enemies.

Then when Isanusi finished, Chaka went out to where he was being clamoured for; and the armies spoke to him in a united voice saying: 'You are Dingiswayo, and all of us bestow on you his kingship and say to you please save us and fight for us, we you're your people. We give you Dingiswayo's kingship in this manner with events moving fast as you yourself have no doubt heard. Zwide is coming in the early hours of the morning, and his intention is that not a single one of us should escape. Our eyes are turned towards you so that you may command these armies in the way you commanded them while their owner was still alive; you taught us and we listened and heard. Today we will listen to you not only as our commander, but also as our king.

[...] It was a [...] battle that lasted three days. [...]

[...] The following day found him in command of all the armies, commanding them as his own, and not as someone else's property; and now as today's sun goes towards its setting, he is a king, a victor who has just scattered a nation greater than his own in strength; as it goes to its setting, he is the king of kings, and nations tremble before him. To show how other nations trembled in fear of him, Matiwane, on hearing how Chaka had routed Zwide whose nation had been so large, took to his heels and only stopped when he reached the Maloti mountains [2].

Similarly, decision-making from the epic Mandingo soothsayers, saved Mali from the yoke of Soumaoro. It was about a unanimous occult decision-making through which a searching team was created to find the savior of Mali, Sundiata. This searching team included two soothsayers who guided the group through good occult decisions. This search team finally found Sundiata; and after a great mediation, Sundiata came back and freed Mali from the oppression of Soumaoro. But, even before Sundiata went back to Mali, he knew from the searching team that soothsayers from Mali:

[...] have consulted the jinn and they have replied that only the son of Sogolon can deliver Mali. [Then the griot of the team addressed him in this words] 'Maghan Sundiata, I salute you, king of Mali, the throne of your fathers awaits you. Whatever rank you may hold here [at Mema], leave all these honours and come and deliver your fatherland. The brave await you, come and restore rightful authority to Mali. Weeping mothers pray only in your name, the assembled kings await you, for your

name alone inspires confidence in them. Son of Sogolon, your hour has come, the words of the old Gnankouma Doua are about to come to pass, for you are the giant who will crush the giant Soumaoro [...]

Sundiata got up and all the envoys stood up while Djata went out. He was already king [1].

It follows from the above that Sundiata got fame even before he went back to fight Soumaoro. Malians knew already about the prophecy which said that Sogolon was an especial woman who would bear a son through whom Mali would be saved.

As stated in the second subsection of this paper, divinities like the buffalo woman and the gods of the bush for whom the turtledove was the messenger had taken decisions that led to the great achievements of Sundiata, the freedom of his fatherland. In addition, some medicinal plants like Malunga's *chewing medicine* and *borebawere* were used in decision-making since they dulled people's mind. Some magical objects like Nounfaïri's *siron rod* used to cure Sundiata's infirmity. The *cock spur* used by Sundiata to destroy the supernatural powers of Soumaoro, as well as the magic *milk* of queen Kassay and the god Faro used respectively to strengthen Issa Korombé and to allow Biton Coulibaly to spy his enemies, were all used for political purposes that had allowed the above heroes to reach some great political attainments.

These medicinal plants and magical objects used in decision-makings led to wars. The latter fought by the heroes with the help of divinities and soothsayers provided the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies with some political successes.

For instance, Isanusi advised Chaka to change his disgraceful national name. According to Kunene the ancient national name was "*Ama Fenulwenja* (People of the Male Organ of a Dog) [...]" [2]. Mofolo remembers Isanusi's and Chaka's discussion:

[...] 'Here is a little matter which I nearly forgot to mention: since the name of your nation is so ugly why don't you abandon it, Chaka, and find yourself a beautiful one with a pleasing sound, one suitable for a king like you and a nation such as yours?'

'Such as?'

'You can find one for yourself; do you think that even national names must be obtained from doctors? These are matters for the kings to decide. However, this one you have now is disgraceful.'

Chaka agreed that the one they had was ugly and disgraceful, and at that very moment, there was a low rumbling of thunder to the west [...]

He then said: '*Zulu! Mazulu!*' (the sky, people of the sky)[2].

After the changing of the national name, Chaka also made some reforms and changes:

[To his defeated enemies Chaka said] I place before you two alternatives [...] you give up your national name as well as your language, and join my regiments, and become Zulus, then you shall live; if you refuse, then I will kill you all [...]

Chaka built this royal city [...]

It was a city of immense size, unequalled among all the nation past and present in sheer bigness and the number of its inhabitants, as well as the power of its owner.

[...] everyone who entered had to shout greetings, with his spear and shield and cloak left with the guards at the entrance; he would then have to prostrate himself, and come forward creeping on his stomach; and then when he was half-way across the court, he would have to shout the royal greeting '*Bayede*' [...] It was at this very court that Chaka received kings through their emissaries, and that events of extraordinary magnitude took place.

Before we end our description of the city, we should state that Chaka was in the habit of walking in this section [another part of his city palace where his women were] disrobed of his skin kaross, wearing only his fringe skirt. This he did at the request of his 'sisters' so that they might feed their eyes on his beautiful body [...]

Even on the battlefield his men, when wounded and about to die, would request the king, as their last wish, to disrobe so that they might admire his body for the last time, and thus die in peace; and he would, indeed, do as they asked.

Chaka also built many military villages because so many people could not all stay in one place

[...] Chaka abolished circumcision, saying that it was useless, and that it served only to waste the time which the boys could have spent learning the art of war.

[...] Chaka refused to let his troops marry, saying that marriage was suitable only for people of mature age [2].

Among these reforms and changes brought by Chaka some were good, but some overthrew Zulu customs and culture. Changing a national name or a royal greeting is not bad; nevertheless, abolishing circumcision and refusing to let his troops marry are bad reforms. Circumcision and marriage are parts of African customs, culture and even traditional religions. It was through circumcision that young boys were initiated to many things like wrestling, the art of war, and obedience. In addition, young boys were initiated to divinities, to medicinal plants, and the supernatural powers. HampatéBâ agrees that, “Wangrin was first initiated to the small divinities of non-circumcised boys, *Thieblenin* and *Ntomo*, then he was initiated to *Ntomo-Ntori* once circumcised.”⁸

Sundiata too had done some reforms and changes after his brilliant freedom fight with Soumaoro. At the gathering of Sibi, Sundiata had united many kingdoms into one, and became their emperor. Niane reports in this long quotation that:

[...] BallaFasséké, the high master of ceremonies, set the allies around Djata’s great throne [...]

[After BallaFasséké greeted the audience on behalf of his master, Sundiata, he said] ‘[...] in order to respect tradition, I must first of all address myself to the host of us all, Kamandjan, king of Sibi; Djata greets you and gives you the floor.’

[The king of Sibi greeted one by one the assembled kingdoms and reminded them the sufferings and the humiliations that they have underwent due to Soumaoro. Then, he said:] ‘A man came to us. He had heard our groans and came to our aid, like a father when he sees his son in tears. Here is that man. Maghan Sundiata, the man with two names foretold by soothsayers.

Henceforth it is from you that I derive my kingdom for I acknowledge you as my sovereign. My tribe and I place ourselves in your hands. I salute you, supreme chief, I salute you, Fama of Famas. I salute you, Mansa!’

The huzza that greeted these words was so loud that you could hear the echo repeat the tremendous clamour twelve times over. With strong hand Kamandjan stuck his spear in the ground in front of the dais and said, ‘Sundiata, here is my spear, it is yours.’

Thereafter, one by one the twelve kings of the bright savanna country got up and proclaimed Sundiata ‘Mansa’ in their turn. Twelve royal spears were stuck in the ground in front of the dais. Sundiata had become emperor. The old *tabala* [drum] of Niani announced to the world that the lands of the savanna had provided themselves with one single king.

It was amid such joy that BallaFasséké composed the great hymn ‘Niama’ which the griots still sing:

*Niama, Niama, Niama,
You, you serve as a shelter for all,
All come to seek refuge under you.
And as for you, Niama,
Nothing serves you for shelter,
God alone protects you.*

[Then, Sundiata began the division of the Savanna world.] He returned the spear to Kamandjan and the king of Sibi prostrated himself before Djata, as is done when honoured by a Fama.

Sundiata took TabonWana’s spear and said, ‘Fran Kamara, my friend, I return your kingdom to you. May the Djallonkés and Mandingoes be forever allies.

One by one all the kings received their kingdoms from the very hands of Sundiata, and each one bowed before him as one bows before a Mansa [...]

Sundiata pronounced all the prohibitions which still obtain in relation between the tribes. To each he assigned its land, he established the rights of each people and ratified their friendship. The Kondés of the land of Do became henceforth the uncles of the imperial family of Keita, for the latter, in memory of the fruitful marriage between NaréMaghan and Sogolon, had to take a wife in Do. The Tounkaras and the Cissés became ‘banter-brothers’ of the Keitas while the Cissés, Bérétés and Tourés were proclaimed great divinities of the empire. No kin group was

⁸ « Wangrin fut d’abord initié aux petits dieux des garçons non circoncis, *Thieblenin* et *Ntomo*, puis à son adolescence, à *Ntomo-Ntori*. » (Hampaté Bâ, 1973: 18, italics added)

forgotten at KouroukanFougan; each had its share in the division. [...] To FakoliKoroma, Sundiata gave the kingdom of Sosso [...]

After a year Sundiata held a new assembly at Niani, but this one was the assembly of dignitaries and kings of the empire. The kings and notables of all the tribes came to Niani, the kings spoke of their administration and the dignitaries talked of their kings [...] Fakoli, the nephew of Soumaoro, having proved himself too independent, had to flee to evade the Mansa's anger. His lands were confiscated and the taxes of Sosso were payed directly into the granaries of Niani. In this way, every year, Sundiata gathered about him all the kings and notables; so justice prevailed everywhere, for the kings were afraid of being denounced at Niani."

Djata's justice spared nobody. He followed the very word of God. He protected the weak against the strong and people would make journeys lasting several days to come and demand justice of him. Under his sun the upright man was rewarded and the wicked one punished.

In their new-found peace the villages knew prosperity again, for with Sundiata happiness had come into everyone's home. Vast fields of millet, rice, cotton, indigo and fonio surrounded the villages [...] Each year long caravans carried the taxes in kind to Niani. You could go from village to village without fearing brigands. A thief would have his hand chopped off and if he stole again he would be put to the sword.

New villages and new towns sprang up in Mali and elsewhere. 'Dyulas', or traders, became numerous and during the reign of Sundiata the world knew happiness [1].

The above long quotation has pointed out many successes brought by soothsayers' and the supernatural powers' political contributions. Thanks to soothsayers and the supernatural powers, Sundiata and his allies won the war over Soumaoro's great army; peace returned in the savanna kingdoms.

The griot as master of ceremonies coordinated the speeches of the different allies who lacked words to thank Sundiata for having liberate them from Soumaoro's yoke. Sundiata was praised, a song was composed for him because he ended up to unite the savanna kingdoms into one under his governance.

But, Sundiata decentralized power by giving back to his allies their kingdoms. He reinforced the unity of his empire with '*Fun-poking*' or '*cousin in jest*' a cultural aspect that allows two different ethnic group which are called '*banter-brothers*' to joke with one another without quarrelling. This cultural aspect that can be found throughout Africa, reinforces its unity and helps in peacekeeping.

A political aspect worthy to be mentioned that Sundiata practiced during his ruling as emperor was the concept of *check and balance*. The latter is a political concept that allows the king to modify some oppressing laws and to control the ruling of his commissioners so as to prevent them from exerting too much power over the people. This allowed Sundiata to rule with justice. Every year he assured that everything was on truck by gathering and checking the ruling of all his dignitaries and kings. Administrators who misbehave or went against Sundiata's authority as well as thieves were punished. All the kingdoms forming his empire prospered under his fair ruling. All these wonderful achievements would not be attained without the help of soothsayers and the use of supernatural powers.

The above subsection has analyzed the outcomes brought to Zulu and Mandingo societies by soothsayers' and supernatural powers' political contributions. The subsection has pointed out the wonderfulness of following soothsayers' and supernatural beings' advice. Accepting good advice allowed Sundiata and Chaka to make good decisions and won some wars that led to the prosperity of their nations. Both heroes enlarged their nations, they brought some political reforms and changes that developed their nations. The heroes, mostly Sundiata ruled his people by decentralizing power and under the concept of check and balance. However, while, Sundiata developed cultural aspect like '*Fun-poking*' to unite his people, Chaka destroyed some cultural aspect like circumcision and marriage in favor of the art of war. The political contributions of the two heroes' soothsayers and supernatural powers helped them to achieve desired political results to develop their nations.

CONCLUSION

The article has discussed the spiritual and medical influences of soothsayers and supernatural powers, as well as the political success brought by the latter to medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies. The discussion has painted soothsayers as political counsellors, decision-makers, spies, intercessors, and fighters. Soothsayers had played these political roles

using medicinal plants and magic. Consequently, some medicinal plants like the 'boreba' used to dull Chaka's people's mind, some magical objects like the 'iron rod' used to cure Sundiata's infirmity, and the 'turtledove' use to convey the divinities' messages, had contributed to the political emancipation of the medieval Zulu and Mandingo societies. They had been used to dull the people's mind, to cure infirmity, and to convey political messages coming from the gods. In addition, the analysis has shown that soothsayers and supernatural beings had played the role of advisors, decision-makers, spies, intercessors, and fighters; to bring their contributions to the political area of their nations. These political contributions which were typically based on the use of the supernatural powers had brought peace and prosperity mainly to the medieval Mandingo society of the two epics.

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