

## The Childhood diseases and practice of Protection in Malinke's societies in Cote D'ivoire

### Abstract:

This pilot study in the Malinke describes and analyzes the diseases to which children are exposed from 0 to 5 years, as well as socio-cultural referents care protection to infants and young children in those societies. The depth individual interviews, focus groups and direct observation have revealed the range of childhood illnesses and care practices provided for child protection. Through the technique of rational choice, we interviewed mothers, fathers, and traditional healers. The collection covered a period of one month, from November 15th, 2015 at December 14th, 2015. The study showed that the commonly encountered diseases are named (bird, fontanel, hot body, sore eyes, the cough, malaria, stomach bloating, diarrhea, anemia, ringworm, malnutrition, stomach ulcer, etc.) and care practices that control the use of so-called magic strings, powders, plants, etc. to allow development and growth of the child. The biomedicine and traditional medicine must work together for a comprehensive care of the health of the child.

**Keywords:** childhood disease, care, child, mother, protection

### 1. Introduction:

In every society, the child survival requires attention every moment that combines with a projection of life in the community for which the quality of the body must be optimized. This is elaborated in a preventive, social and health. (Querre 2007). Children are the seeds of the future, the foundation of society. That is why health concern to governments because they are an essential link in the development of a country. Indeed, sustainable development goals (SDGs) (2016-2030) launched in 2015, will allow the strengthening and consolidation of the welfare of these children and the population. If the MDGs were a set of eight challenges it had to face at the end of 2015, for a better living of communities worldwide, particularly in countries or developing SDGs, them, have almost double: 17 goals in 2030. This is, among others, to eliminate (1) the extreme poverty in all its forms and consequently in the world by ensuring that no one will live with less \$ 1.25 a day ( that is 625 CFA, reference rate of 1 dollar to 500 CFA francs) (2) Likewise, hunger, ensuring food security through the promotion of sustainable agriculture which involves doubling productivity and improving nutrition and income of small producers, (3) improve the health and well-being for all, (4) equal access to quality education, (5) the promotion of gender and empowering women and girls, etc. (Farigoul, 2016).

To do so, each must play its part. In this context, companies in general and African societies in particular have developed specific, medical mechanisms of maternal and child health to give children a normal overall development. Indeed, the population living in both urban and rural areas are prone to traditional medicine that is founder of their culture.

Despite the use of traditional health items, infant mortality is increasing. Indeed, in Africa and particularly in Côte d'Ivoire the infant mortality rate in 2014 was 60, 16% and 58.70% in 2015. Also, the risk of infant death -it is estimated at 68 deaths per 1,000 live births; the risk of infant mortality is 38 ‰ for neonatal mortality and 30 ‰ for post-neonatal mortality. Overall, the risk of child mortality, that is to say the risk of death before the age of five years is 108 ‰. In other words, the Ivory Coast, about one in nine children dies before reaching the age of five years (EDS-III, 2012. P.125)

Moreover, the analysis by region shows wide disparities levels and mortality trends between regions. Indeed, the countries of the Centre as neonatal mortality 52 ‰, 35 ‰ Post-neonatal mortality, infant mortality 87 ‰ and 137 ‰ of child mortality. East Central 44 ‰, 34 ‰, 77 ‰, 133 ‰. North Central 23 ‰ 20 ‰ 43 ‰, 74 ‰. Central West 26 ‰, 22 ‰, 48 ‰, 80 ‰. North 86 ‰ 51 ‰ 137 ‰, 209 ‰. East 48 ‰, 33 ‰, 80 ‰, 134 ‰. Northwest: 67 ‰, 52 ‰, 120 ‰, 185 ‰. West: 46 ‰, 55 ‰, 101 ‰ 145 ‰. South: 40 ‰ 28 ‰, 68 ‰, 102 ‰. Southwest 18 ‰, 33 ‰, 51 ‰, 75 ‰. Abidjan 46 ‰ 23 ‰, 30 ‰. (EDS-III P.129).

The northwest region is a region where infant mortality is high. It is an environment, moreover, that their medical practices based on popular medicine from our culture, the product of our environment. It is also based on how the disease and its treatment are seen in life and people's beliefs (Rougerie, 1978). In this perspective, the disease often likened to a religious phenomenon appears as an offense to the religious community or prohibited (Memel, 1998) is managed by a healer (flabola in Malinke, arêfwê in Baoule) who cares for using remedies made essentially based on natural plants (herbal medicine); Disease management can, however, be entrusted to a diviner-healer (flêlikêla in Malinke, komien in Baulé) seeking the metaphysical origin of evil before acting. (Memel, 2008).

So this article examines the practices and mechanisms implemented to protect maternal, newborn and child against the risks of diseases in the Malinke societies. How newborn and child are protected in Ivorian society from the socio-cultural referents?

This study was based on qualitative survey data on childhood diseases and protection practices in the Malinke societies.

## **2. Material and Methods:**

This study was conducted in Odienne in the Malinke people. Indeed, the Ivorian health system is originally animist and its practice goes back to prehistory. Indeed, traditional medical practices, however, observed, which had settled between the Fifteenth and Eighteenth century werenotably the anyi-Baoule current came from Ghana, LobiKulango-current from Burkina Faso, current Bambara- Malinké from Mali and Kru current. For disease management, medical practices these Bambara- Malinke current uses mar about, healer (flêlikêla in Malinke) seeking the metaphysical origin of evil before any reaction. Malinkealso inherited another popular medicine, Arab-Muslim, in which the mar about, Imam are the key figures who have a gift of healing. (Memel 2008 p.22). In the northwest region, the ratio of neonatal mortality is (67 ‰); post-neonatal (52 ‰); Infant (120 ‰); Infant and child (185 ‰). And that mobilizes various practices of child care. To carry out this study a socio-anthropological approach to qualitative target, focusing on neonatal maternal and child care practices in this sociolinguistic group was adopted.

Indeed, it has allowed to question the mothers, fathers, traditional healers, as far as mothers concern, it was a question of mothers having two children from 0 to 5 years. Among fathers, it was those with more than 03 children. Traditional healers also have been taken into account by the study. In total, 20 men, 20 women, and 10 traditional healer have been selected. In total, 50 individuals are interviewed.

Also, individual interviews were sent to parents, mothers, traditional healers to collect information about different diseases encountered in children, care practices in children aged 0 to 5 years, perceptions of the disease, the disease contraction patterns, attitudes and disease management mechanisms.

Furthermore, sociologist, anthropologist, was responsible for conducting depth interviews to ensure the quality of data collected. The collection was done in communities and covered a period of one month, from November 15th, 2015 to December 14 th, 2015.

The data were recorded, transcribed manually, and encoded as collection. The analysis was based on the method of content analysis.

## **3.Results and Discussion:**

### **3.1. The commonly encountered diseases**

#### **3.1.1. Disease of the newborn and infant**

Disease occurring in the newborn until the age of 05 years are diverse and sometimes causes the reported behavior of the woman when she was in pregnancy or after childbirth, when it does not respect the deadline indicated to have sexual with her husband.

On the first point, it is recommended that parents refrain from sex, as long as they ensure the development of the child until it reaches the stage denier walking. Earlier, the child develops the disease called "dirt" under the taint of their offspring.

Thus "the child loses weight without apparent cause, whines a lot and that he has the body that heats. »



In other cases, when the child has cough, losing weight or has called bizarre diseases is that the pregnant mother saw the body of a dog. There are also disease of the bird. The child is then dry eyes are open. This is due to bad luck or an evil spirit. In this case, there are medications we put in the eyes and nostrils of the child. When he sneezes, he is saved. The other case of illness cited jumble are the fontanel, the hot body of the child, sore eyes, diarrhea, cough, malaria, bloating the child's stomach. Diarrhea was reported some time during teething.

There are also cases of mishandled navel infection, anemia in children, ringworm. Finally, a minority spoke of yellow malaria, sore stomach, malnutrition, diarrhea and chickenpox in children between the ages of 1 to 5 years. It is quite interesting that the child's illness and the newborn can from the pregnancy of the mother. Thus, during pregnancy, mothers who bear the pregnancy of the child, with signs that were described as common diseases in pregnant women. Then the diseases that occur in pregnancy, even if they fall within the mother; it is caused by the pregnancy of the child.

### 3.1.2. Pregnant women

Regarding the frequent diseases in pregnant women, all respondents have cited in priority, diseases called sympathetic signs of pregnancy, vomiting, spitting, and smells. That pregnant women cannot stand not because of his condition, nausea, dizziness etc.

Indeed, respondents described some changes in attitudes and behavior in most of these women that the respondent explains: "When a woman is pregnant, her face becomes pale, she often loses weight, there are others women who grow, pulse pounding, his palm is hot, she vomits, she spits, she nausea, it can be nervous, she have a strong desire to eat, she sleeps a lot, it becomes lazy, she don't want to feel some persons and she like to eat kaolin. ". It is, moreover, that attitude that led some respondents to consider "the pregnancy as" disease "because the pregnant woman becomes "strange ".

That is the raison why parents (fathers, mothers), traditional healers and healers implement all means of prevention against evil spirits, the geniuses, spells, sorcerers considered as eaters of souls or very dreaded spell throwers especially by pregnant women. Similarly, prohibitions are imposed on a pregnant woman to protect her child in order not to have difformed children, or children who have supernatural diseases..

If the pregnant woman is involved in the disease of children, it is because it occupies a position of centrality in the life of the child. It supports all pregnancy with prenatal diseases that might occur. In addition, she takes care of her child. How to provide care to newborns and children are implemented?

## III.2. The treatments for childhood diseases commonly encountered

Very often, parents associate the evocation of a disease indicated care for this disease cited. Thus, diseases commonly encountered are first presented and care practices related to certain diseases then.

Indeed, if the pregnant woman is the object of attention and protection from his parents and the community, the child, who is coming to bear up to 5 years is too. This child is protected against diseases and is also coveted by malicious people.

We will now examine provide care to newborns and young children in case of illness.

### III.2.1. In new borns and young children

Regarding the care of newborn and young children, we must first know that early, older women (experienced women) would arrive to diagnose a child who is not sustainable. Indeed, many respondents have, the question of what would be the danger signs in a baby at birth? They have raised the case of fetal distress can cause disability in children. Some suggest having the ability of observation to detect this type of child.

The child when it is born, we must look into his eyes or pinched, if he is not crying, in this case, is not a good child.

"This would imply that at birth, if the child does not cry, he was born sick. In this case; "We will give him spankings and if he refuses to cry, we put the finger in his throat and he has to sneeze. It is only traditionally done. "

### III.2.2. Care practices

The parents adopt several types of treatments, of which curative treatment is multifaceted and variable and depends on the type of disease and its category (natural or supernatural). It is an approach that is comprehensive and holistic that is to say, it takes into account the individual, the living environment, the spiritual, mental and physical appearance. This treatment is based on plants and minerals used in various forms, alone or in combination.

Care is also the form of powder. The plants are first dried (in the sun or on the fire). Washes, baths and friction made for the baby or child are very common because most often cited by respondents. Enemas that are almost systematic before the baths and applied as soon as the child is not doing well. Then there incantatory words, considered giving the drug its power, and therefore essential to healing. The sacrifice, which is made before or after the child's birth is a "purifier" goal. It can be of various shapes ranging from the offering to action to kill an animal. In general, either the baby or the child, the place, the instrument, the choice of the animal is taken into account at the sacrifice. It is made by parents (if the child) as a gift to the deity to protect or cure. It is almost always accompanied by a ritual ceremony.

#### **Powder Kobowoulé:**

This powder kobowoulé fights stomach ulcers of the Child, the body warm. It is put into a glass of water and drink it.



#### **Timi-Timi (Waltheria indica (Sterculiaceae))**

Heal the belly of the child makes you fat, it is necessary to boil wash and give drink the mixture of these two drugs.



Waltheria indica (Sterculiaceae)

**Dawada** (Scopariadulcis (Scrophulariaceae):



**Scopariadulcis(Scrophulariaceae)**

“**Dakabanandjrou**” or Children’s magic string:



It attaches to the child's kidney; that fight against all diseases small, warm body, diarrhea, bird, allows for "all fours" to grow normally without teeth sharp pain.

The study on childhood diseases and protection practices has delivered results in terms of both axes. It was a question of commonly encountered diseases and care for childhood illnesses.

The disease of the newborn and the child is both natural and supernatural. In African design diseases obey the principle of double causality is to focus, in addition to natural causes of disease, the origins of the supernatural order. What makes the disease a reality independent of its medical definition. This is what these authors allude. So Abidji In Ivory Coast: "diarrhea are associated with natural elements, disease, growth and interpersonal relationships" (Kouakou Bah, 2005, p.204).

Also, physiological changes during the growth of the child are accompanied by diarrhea; since this stage of the existence of the child is the sign of the acquisition of certain experiences. It marks "the most meaningful experience that can be lived, and especially as a highly valued status as 'exalted', 'lights', 'release' as appropriate, and anyway

enriched" (Laplantine, op. cit: 138). Regarding diarrhea in interpersonal relationships, it is the result of several systems of the body.

Indeed, "in the African environment, the disease does not result from a single organ dysfunction, one or more of the human body system ..." (Yangni-Angaté 2004: 18). In the relational etiological model defined by Laplantine, "the disease is both a warning suggesting that an offense (voluntary or involuntary) has been committed, a call to order that requires repair, restore order community relations itself undermined by the fact the illness of one" (Laplantine, op.cit: 73). Generally, the disease, in Sereerjir, can be of various origins: it may be natural (associated Roog God) On the link between the concept of "God" and the notion ... or come of pangol (Hex) or (cannibal), also called o okiinyeng (person of the night) We will address the different interpretative registries Sumaannidig in children, is happening in Niakhar. (Faye, 2009 p11). Moreover, the disease even if it is objective in the body, reflects our conflicting relationship to the social. Social representations of the disease will be built around the relationship between individual and society. (Wone, 2004). So, diseases that occur in infants and children are more or less biological, medical, psychological, social, and cultural. These biomedical approaches interpret the disease from the biological and social sciences from the social.

Thus, diseases encountered are usually multiple and vary from one individual to another; as is the case with Akyé, where the disease is multi-dimensional: physical, social, cultural and spiritual. (Kouakou, 2012 p.5). Various authors (Bonnet, 1986; Jacob, 1988), studying the "bird disease," showed that the convulsions of a child are assumed result of the flight of a bird, the night over the child (or mother during pregnancy). Fainzang (1986) emphasizes in this regard the size of both causal and metaphorical many traditional disease categories.

At Niakhar, these representations exist, and convulsions are considered a possible expression of super natural diseases from childhood: diid (fear), kum has lass (attachment), a (pestle disease) o poox and muus o (dog diseases and cat). (Faye, op.cit P.17).

In the current literature, hyperthermia, coma, seizures have been recorded in the supernatural explanation register (Foster, 1995; Mwenesi et al., 1995; Williams and Jones, 2004).

Popular designs, often based on easily identifiable symptoms like fever, convulsions, cough, diarrhea, evoke natural order causalities or magical order. Some of their interpretations is based on assimilation to animals or places that evoke the disease or on commonly accepted explanation of the origin of evil (Zempleni 1985).

As for diarrhea called 'disease', the latter is perceived as "regression that reaches the body as pain and suffering explicit" (Memel-Fotê 1998: 28).

Some mechanisms exist to protect the mother and child: there are care such as leaves, roots, decoction, barks, magical ropes, Quranic verses, etc. are used to protect children against the supernatural diseases. The answers for diseases occurring in the newborn up to 5 years are diverse and sometimes causes the reported behavior of the woman when she was in pregnancy or after childbirth, when it does not meet the specified time to resume sexual relations with her husband. The child protection is on a cultural system in place in social environment.

. Indeed, in Serere villages in Senegal, there are ways to prevent that one can relate to the natural cause of diseases and which will, for example, diet and lifestyle principles, and also means of prevention related to supernatural causes of diseases . This will be rules or magic-religious practices to preserve health, as not derogate from the customs (ancestral laws), obey the elders guarantors of social order, strictly follow the forbidden, rule wisely devoted formulas (prayers, incantations ...), submit to the sacrificial rites, wearing amulets that protect the bad luck. The "Lucky charm" may look like a small leather bag closed hermetically containing substances or writings that are symbolically protective of the "bad" spirits. They may refer symbolically to the body part to be protected. Quranic amulets contain transcripts extracted from the Quran and symbolize the protection of Allah. The charms can be worn in different ways: necklace, bracelet, tied around the waist, sewn into the garment at the body part to be protected. (FRANCOIS P. 2009 p.12).

Also, in every society, her child survival requires attention every moment. This develops into a social preventive approach and health. Indeed, child care within the Fulani society Seno region in northern Burkina Faso, is to avoid

the child being ill by protecting, making it strong and at the same occasion, optimize its aesthetic qualities to maximize social integration where the body is particularly directed. (Querre 2007 P1).

These preventive practices can be classified in three categories: symbolic objects, plants to strengthening virtues tonics and massage. Indeed, to reach objects "symbolic", powdered graphite, moreover constantly protects sand dust from his eyes in the air and prevents conjunctivitis. Also, a string necklace covered with beads suspended in the neck of the child to ensure her beautiful teeth, a cotton string tied on hips will give it a beautiful arch to the buttocks, another on the ankles strengthen his legs. (Madina Querre, op.cit.7).

In addition, "fortifying plants" accompany the child feeding, data as a tea. In addition to the milk, it is sometimes given to the child, from the first day, an herbal tea morning, noon and night to strengthen the child. (Querre op. Cit.10). "Massages" enhance the care and beauty of the body of the child. Indeed, it is coated with cow butter or shea and a small amount is introduced every morning in his anus until the age of four. These actions aim the development of the beauty of the body in its physical development, but also in its control. Preparations are emerging in the social body control, which is already part of a body sculpting newborn. The body must meet a "phenotype" marker of group identity is a set of innate physical characteristics that must be managed by the individual and his family. (Querre, op.cit 13).

In Ivory Coast and especially in Akyé Safi kpo in French means "the big white pearl". It protects the child or establishes his or cure all case of illnesses. The dog's tooth represents the dog that is hunting witches to ensure child protection at night. The Black Pearl, as for her places the child in a black veil, making it invisible to the wizards. Bédza to protect or care for the child against the "bird disease" or convulsion in official medicine. (In Akyé). In the Baoule childcare. Bedje gnaman meaning in language Baoule "string teeth." In the Baoule childcare, mothers know that teething can cause children, headache, fever, diarrhea, etc. This object is used to protect children against these evils. N'glon'glo gnaman or 'top up the string of "treats" the disease of the bird. " it is the convulsion in children. (Kouakou, 2012 p. 3-8).

The supports means of the child's pain aged 3 to 5 years is an imperative in Europe using medicated means. Two drug treatments are experienced in this society. This is to prevent pain by a care and apprehension of the child that can be generated by this treatment. (Charbonnier, 2012 p.16).

#### **4. Conclusion:**

This study of childhood illness puts across the various ills of newborns and children. These diseases are different natural or supernatural. They require protective care to give the mother an easy delivery, development and growth of the child. The objects of culture, magic potions, cords, leaves, herbal teas, powders, bark, Quranic verses, bracelets, etc. are used for the care of the newborn and infant. These practices are in favor of keeping the child healthy. The biomedicine and traditional medicine must work together for a comprehensive care of the health of the child.

#### **5. Acknowledgment:**

Our thanks go to the site of National Institute of Public Health (INSP), which funded our pilot project on socio-cultural practices of maternal, newborn and child in the Ivorian societies ". This project permits us to write the present article. We also thank the health research unit of reproduction in Ivory Coast (CRESAR-CI) for giving us training on "scientific communication" and "the methodology in research action". We express our deep gratitude for the important contribution of all those who participated in the article on "Childhood diseases in malinke societies." We greatly appreciate the time and attention that these people have generously given to us with their ideas and comments and help us improve this article.

These are especially:

- Mr. YAO KONAN, Sociologist, inspector of social laws at the National Institute of Public Health
- Dr. KOUADIO M'bra KOUAKOU GOD-GIVEN, Teacher and researcher at AlassaneOuattara University of Bouaké.

## 6. Reference:

1. Bonnet D. Cultural representations of malaria in Moose of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou, Document ORSTOM; 1986.
2. Dione D. Use of child care in the Niakhar zone: analysis from verbal autopsies, Cheikh Anta Diop University of Dakar, Medical thesis; 1999.
3. Emy P. The child and his environment in Black Africa, traditional education on trial, Paris, L'Harmattan; 1987.
4. Fainzang S. "The interior of things." Disease, divination and social reproduction in Burkina Bisa, Paris, L'Harmattan; 1986.
5. Farigoul S. Sustainable Development Goals (internet). Sustainable development. (Quoting 11 June 2016). Available at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/fr/-goals-sustainable-development/>
6. Faye SL. Sumaandiiig of the childhood malaria: the dynamic performances rural SereerSinig (Senegal), in social and health sciences, vol.27, No. 4 p118; 2009.
7. Foster C. Treatment of malaria outside the formal health services, Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, 98, 29-34; 1995.
8. Francois P. popular interpretations of the ills of pregnancy and medicines used by pregnant women in Africa, illustration by a survey in villages Serer of Senegal, Midwife Diploma Bachelor, High School Provinciale Mons-Borinage-Centre. Provincial Institute of Higher Education Nursing paramedical category; 2009.
9. National Statistics Institute (INS) and ICF International. Demographic and Health Survey and Multiple Indicator of Ivory Coast 2011-2012. Calverton, Maryland, USA: INS and ICF International, 561 p; 2012.
10. JP Jacob. The sense of limits. Disease, witchcraft, religion and power in Winye, Gourounsi Burkina Faso, PhD of the University of Neuchatel; 1988.
11. Kouakou Bah JP. Child Health: a sociocultural approach to diarrhea in Abidji of Ivory Coast, in European Science Journal, vol.8, No. 14; 2005.
12. Kouakou Bah JP. Child Health in the African puèrilculture: the case of Ivory Coast Akan, place and publisher; 2012.
13. Laplantine F. Anthropology of illness. Paris, Payot; 1992.
14. Memel-Foté A. (ed.) The representations of health and illness among Ivoirians. Paris, Harmattan; 1998.
15. Harris Memel-Foté, Health, illness and medicines in Africa, Abidjan, Publisher, CERAP, 184 p; 2008.
16. Mwenesi H., Harpham T., R. W. Snow Child malaria treatment practices Among mothers in Kenya, Social Science and Medicine, 40, 9, 1271-1277; 1995.
17. Nzeyimana AS et al. People nosology of childhood illnesses in western Ivory Coast. Implication for malaria. Manuscript No. 2766. Medical Anthropology'; 2005.
18. Mr. Querre "Social issues around the child's body," Face to Face [Online], 10 | 2007, posted October 1, 2007, accessed April 3, 2016. URL: <http://faceaface.revues.org/95>.
19. G. Rougerie The General Encyclopedia of Côte d'Ivoire: the life of the nation, Abidjan, Paris, New African editions; 1978.
20. HA Williams. Jones COH. A Critical Review of behavioral issues related to malaria control in sub-Saharan



Africa: what-have social scientist contributions made? *Social Science and Medicine*, 59, 3, 501-523; 2004.

21. Yangni-Angaté A. "psycho-cultural aspects of traditional medicine." *The revaluation in traditional medicine*. Abidjan, CEDA, pp.17-31; 2004.
22. Zempleni A - The "disease" and "causes" *Introduction in Ethnography*, 2, 13-44; 1985.

Author & Affiliation

**DOUKOURE Daouda (DD)**  
Ph.D in socio- anthropology,  
Researcher at the National Public Health Institute in Abidjan (INSP),  
Ivory Coast.