

# the NICOLSight

M Term 1, Volume 5

February 2009

## Music Workshop

We were a motley crew when we finally gathered at 11 am for the workshop scheduled to start at 9; three griots (traditional musicians), a Protestant pastor's wife, a Catholic elder, two Mennonites (of which one was a shoe repairman and the other a Bible Translator) and me, who is completely unmusical and non-siamou. Souleymane Traoré (Solo), had carefully selected each participant but the only unifying factor I could detect was they all shared a common language and were interested in music to some degree. The purpose of the workshop was to compose

Christian songs in Siamou and record them. I was sceptical at what we could accomplish in two days with the resources we had. Only the stories of the creation and Adam and Eve were translated, only Solo was literate in Siamou and the griots weren't even Christian.

Mary Hendershott, the visiting ethnomusicologist who led the workshop, guided us through some techniques of how to make a good refrain using a selected Bible passage and then Solo read through the creation story. Then we discussed what spoke to us most in the story. One of the griots started picking out a tune on the balaphon (wooden xylophone) and started singing his interpretation of the story off the top of his head.

A little while later, Ruth hesitantly started singing a refrain she had composed. The others sang along obediently but with little enthusiasm. Then someone in the group mentioned that it was being sung in the Jula scale. The griots 'transposed' it into a Siamou scale and, suddenly, everyone jumped up and started singing and dancing to this new melody being played on the balaphon and drums. The whole atmosphere of the room radiated joy in the combination of music and song praising God in their mother tongue.

We only composed and recorded four rough drafts in this workshop but many seeds were sown. The Christians present listened to the stories of creation and Adam and Eve in Siamou for the first time. The griots heard these stories for the very first time. The joy of working together and composing music in their own language sparked remarks of, "Let's do this again!" We pray that the seeds will take root and grow.



### **Composing**

*Traoré Seydou Philippe,  
Jabati Amidou,  
Jabati Siaka on balaphon,  
Jabati Brahima on djembe*



### **The singers recording**

*Traoré Oussmane, Traoré Seydou Philippe,  
Traoré Souleymane, Coulibaly Ruth*

The following are links to our facebook albums:

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=83254&l=9e208&id=541721498>

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=50620&l=f2569&id=541721498>

<http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=40868&l=9c186&id=541721498>

## Translation Tidbits

**Genesis 25:24-26:** Jacob is well known for deceiving his older brother, Esau, out of his birthright and his father's blessing. The significance of this story is lost though in a culture where the **second** twin born is considered to be the oldest child. How can this story then be translated to convey the depth of the deception?

**Genesis 27:43:** Rebecca talks to her son, Jacob, counselling him to flee to her brother's country. In Siamou, the literal translation becomes: "Are you listening to me, my father?" In this culture a mother shows the extent of her love for her son and the gravity of a situation by addressing him as 'my father'.

## What happens next

**O**n February 21, we are returning to Ouagadougou where we will stay until the beginning of May. The first thing on the agenda is three days of translation checking; the next step in my training process in Bible translation. Following that I will be working on several Siamou documents and Norm will work on the Samogo Megavoice project; all the while we will be preparing for our 'small, life-changing addition' to the family. Though the delivery date is near the end of March, we are registered for a ten day workshop at the end of April so we will spend the first month as a family of three in Ouaga—during hot season where the lows are in the 90 degree range.

## Praise Items

- We have moved into our house in the village and I LOVE it! I feel I am living in luxury with a fridge in my kitchen, space to cook, smooth cement floors and a queen-sized waterbed.
- The last two doctor's appointments have been positive for me and the baby.
- After two serious bouts of malaria in December, Norm has switched to other medication and, with the move to the village, is enjoying better health.
- In our August newsletter we asked for prayer for our relationship with the mason. He offered to build the wall behind our house to make up for what we lost in the door fiasco. He finished the wall and built our guesthouse too, doing a fabulous job. We are grateful for the healing of this relationship.

## Addresses

The opportunity to align with God's work in Burkina Faso is made possible through the prayer and financial support you give. Your notes of encouragement and gifts of finances are greatly appreciated. If you would like to express your support of the ministry in Burkina Faso with a donation, you may send it to:

**Mennonite Mission Network**  
1601 W. Beardsley Ave  
PO Box 370  
Elkhart, IN 46515-0347

## Prayer Concerns

- Pray for continued good health, as well as a problem free delivery.
- Pray that the two weeks Souleymane Traoré, Paul Thiessen, and I will be working together in translation and checking will be productive.
- God has said 'no' to a new Siamou Bible translator for this year (due to a lack of funding). We hoped to have a revisers' workshop in February but this has also been pushed back. Pray that we will be able to involve other Siamou in the task of Bible Translation to give them ownership of the project.



- I will need to get house help in the village to keep up with the daily chores. Having someone work in my house for me is a new experience.

## Please send personal mail to:

Norm and Lillian Nicolson  
PO 40, Orodara  
Burkina Faso  
West Africa

email: [Innicolson@mennonitechurch.ca](mailto:Innicolson@mennonitechurch.ca)