



Lisa Lugrin et Clément Xavier

# YÉKINI

LE ROI DES ARÈNES

éditions  
fablette

**PRIX RÉVÉLATION DU FESTIVAL D'ANGOULÈME 2015**

**PRIX DES LYCÉENS ET APPRENTIS D'ÎLE DE FRANCE 2015**

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## YEKINI, THE KING OF THE RING

Clément Xavier & Lisa Lugrin

A Senegalese wrestling match only lasts a few minutes, but the wrestlers spend almost a year getting ready... and the stadiums are packed! In Senegal, wrestling is more popular than football, helping the under classes dream of a brighter future, and the masses go crazy for it.

In 2010, three renowned wrestlers are competing for the “king of the ring” title : Tyson, Yekini and Balla Gaye 2, each representing a specific aspect of the sport. Tyson has helped bring the image of wrestling up to date, he negotiates his own contracts and his escapades make all the gossip headlines. Balla Gaye 2’s nickname “don’t care” reflects the care-free attitude of his young age, but he is also the son of a former champion.

Yekini is from an island where wrestling has been practised forever and represents the pure, traditional side of the sport. But his refusal to go along with the media frenzy and all the political and financial stakes is making his sponsors increasingly exasperated...

How long will he be able to resist?

## Le Monde

*Their album progresses through concentric imbrications, eyeing the novel of apprenticeship and documentary by the use of archives (true and false “press”, photos, derivative products). The whole provides a pertinent illustration of that “world in which we wrestle, as Barthes spoke, of this excessive spectacle in which is elaborated an emotion without withdrawal.” And where we wonder who will carry the ultimate blow.*

CATHIA ENGELBACH, LE MONDE, 2014

## Télérama<sup>1</sup>

*Over four hundred pages, [Lisa and Clément] put in images a surprising course, very imaginative. And they are engaged in a fine analysis of the country, its forces and its drifts.*

LAURENCE LE SAUX, TÉLÉRAMA, 11/02/2015

### The Authors

Clément Xavier was born 1981 in Maputo, Mozambique. Lisa Lugrin was born in 1983 in Thonon-les-Bains, France. After studying Anthropology and cinema, she turned to comic books. They met while hanging around the school photocopier, which they used to print their first fanzines. Years later they founded Na editions and two international comic book magazines.

The 4th April 2010, on the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of Senegal, Lisa Lugrin and Clément Xavier saw their first wrestling match: Yekini versus Tyson. In April 2012, just after Abdoulaye Wade’s defeat in the presidential elections, they return to Dakar to see Yekini fight once more, meet the wrestlers and begin writing this book.



*Cette histoire est une fiction qui s'inspire  
d'évènements et de personnages réels.*

This story is a work of fiction inspired by real events and real people.

Le premier janvier 2006, Tyson, le roi des arènes,  
remet son titre en jeu.



Comme son surnom l'indique, Tyson est un fervent admirateur des USA. Ses emprunts répétés à la culture de l'Oncle Sam ont dépoissié une pratique sportive un peu folklorique pour en faire quelque chose de branché, à l'image de ses boubous taillés dans la bannière étoilée.



Un combat de Tyson, c'est la garantie d'un spectacle digne d'une rock star.

As his alias suggests, Tyson is a huge admirer of the USA. His repeated borrowings from Uncle Sam's culture have helped rejuvenate a somewhat traditional sporting practice and made it trendy, like his boubou made out of the star-spangled banner. // A fight with Tyson is like going to see a rock star.

Face à la sophistication de Tyson, Yékini a l'air d'un paysan sorti de sa campagne. Ça n'est pas totalement faux, il est originaire de Bassoul, une petite île de pêcheurs accrochée au confluent du Sine Saloum. L'un des coins les plus reculés du Sénégal, où la lutte puise ses racines et se pratique depuis toujours.



La sobriété et la discréction de Yékini ferait presque oublier son palmarès.

Invaincu en 14 combats, il est le seul lutteur à n'avoir jamais chuté.



Compared to the sophistication of Tyson, Yekini has the appearance of a country peasant. Which is not totally inaccurate, seeing as he's originally from Bassoul, a small fishing island situated at the confluence of Sine Saloum. One of the most remote areas of Senegal, where wrestling has its roots and has been practised forever. // Yekini's understatement and discretion could almost make one forget about his prize list. // Unbeaten in 14 fights, he is the only wrestler who has never taken a fall.

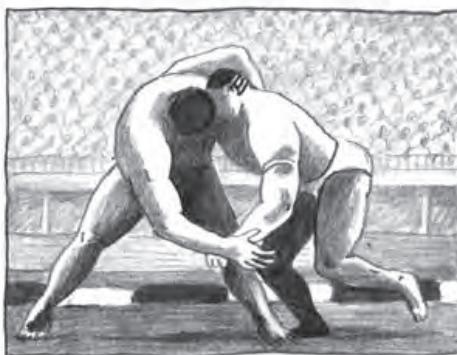
Mais peut-être plus pour longtemps.  
Tyson est un monument de la lutte.

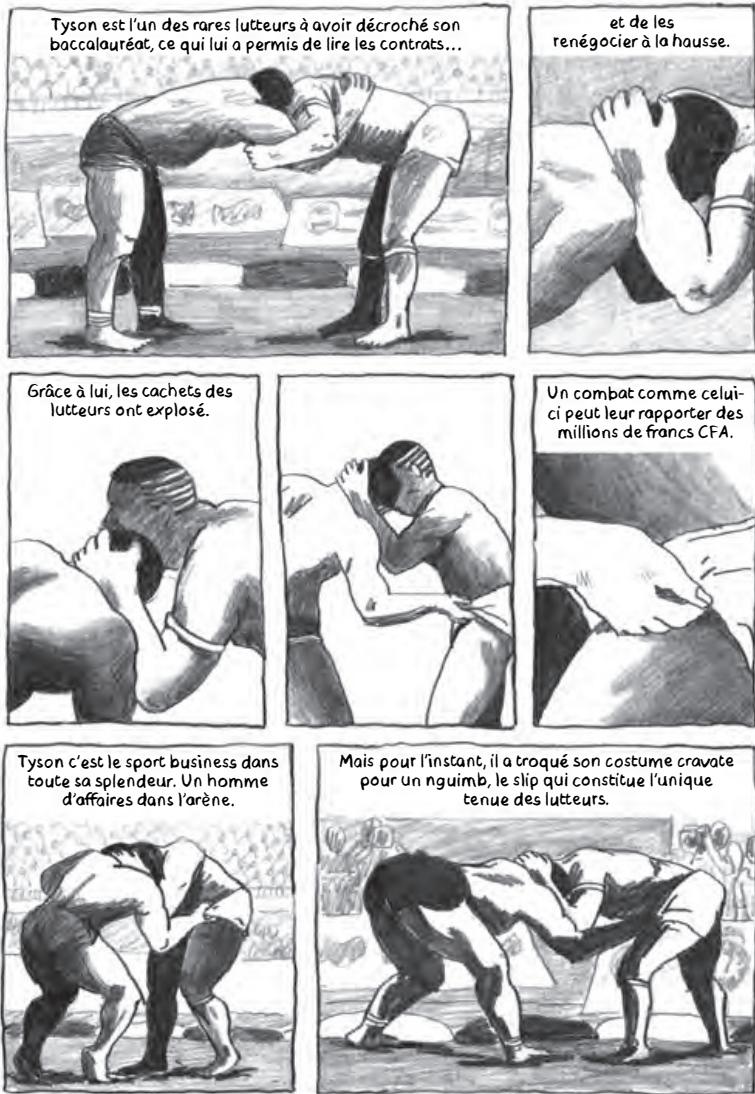


Il a rendu ce sport encore plus  
populaire que le football.



Et il en a modernisé les pratiques.





Tyson is one of the few wrestlers to have passed his high-school diploma, giving him the ability to read his contracts... // ...and renegotiate them to his advantage. // Thanks to him, wrestlers' fees have sky-rocketed. // A fight like this can make them a million CFA francs. // Tyson represents the commercialisation of sports in all its' splendour. A businessman in the ring. // But for the moment he has traded in his suit and tie for a nguimb, the underpants that make up a wrestler's only piece of clothing.



Yekini is expecting to wipe his feet on the king of the ring's starry banner. // The American dream waviers.



La réalité rattrape Tyson sous les traits de son rival, un beau bébé d'1m92 pour 140 kilos de muscles.



Avec la force désespérée d'un Sisyphe, Yékini soulève Tyson...



et le fait rouler comme un caillou.



Les fans de Yékini exultent.



Leur champion vient d'écraser le roi des arènes.



À travers cette victoire, la lutte parle, affirmant haut et fort que plus qu'un sport et qu'un business...



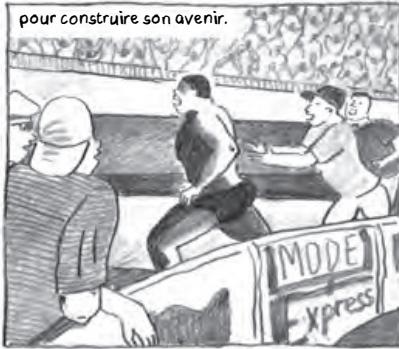
elle est une tradition, une culture...



celle d'un peuple qui regarde au plus profond de son histoire...



pour construire son avenir.



Yekini's fans are delirious. // Their champion has just crushed the king of the ring. // This victory asserts wrestling as more than a sport or a business... // it is a tradition, a culture... // held by people who draw deep into their own history // in order to build their own future.

Elle a un visage, celui de Yékini, officiellement intronisé roi des arènes en direct à la télévision.



# Voici

Des  
Arènes  
Sénégalaises

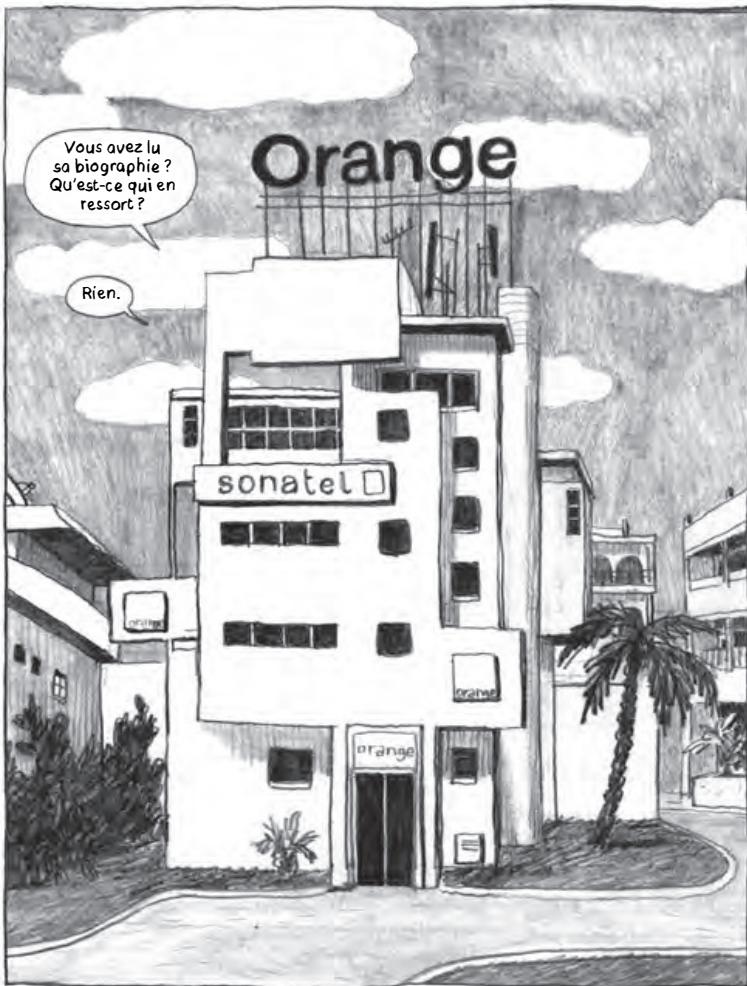
## YEKINI LE NOUVEAU ROI DES ARÈNES



QUI EST-IL ?  
D'ΟÙ VIENT-IL ?  
QUE VEUT-IL ?

Après cette victoire, le monde de l'arène est chamboulé.  
Les promoteurs réfléchissent aux prochains combats qu'ils vont organiser.

Dans les coulisses, les sponsors étudient le profil de leur nouveau champion,  
en espérant que son image se vendra bien.



His victory really shook the arena world. Promoters are thinking about their next fights. Behind the scenes, the sponsors are studying their new champion, hoping that his image will be profitable. // Did you read his biography? What sticks out? / Nothing.



Dead calm, dead boring. / What a good start! // Yekini's most spectacular moment was when he opened a bottle of Coke! // He seems sympathetic. / «Sympathetic», that's him all right! // Adorable, even! A big teddy bear you just want to cuddle! // The problem is that we're not selling soft-toys, but combat sports! // You did say «a sport»? I was starting to have doubts... // Wrestlers are busier fuelling their own gossip columns than the sports pages.



You should be pleased, then. Yekini has the lifestyle of a nun! // He never goes to sleep after 10 PM, so he can be in good shape for his training, which lasts all day! // I doubt we'll see him in nightclubs trying to pick up loose starlets! // Not like Tyson! // Indeed not! But Tyson was a dream! He was an easy brand to sell! / He cost us a lot of money! / He made us a lot of money! // What do you suggest? That we magically undo his defeat? // Yekini's victory is the best thing that could have happened to us.

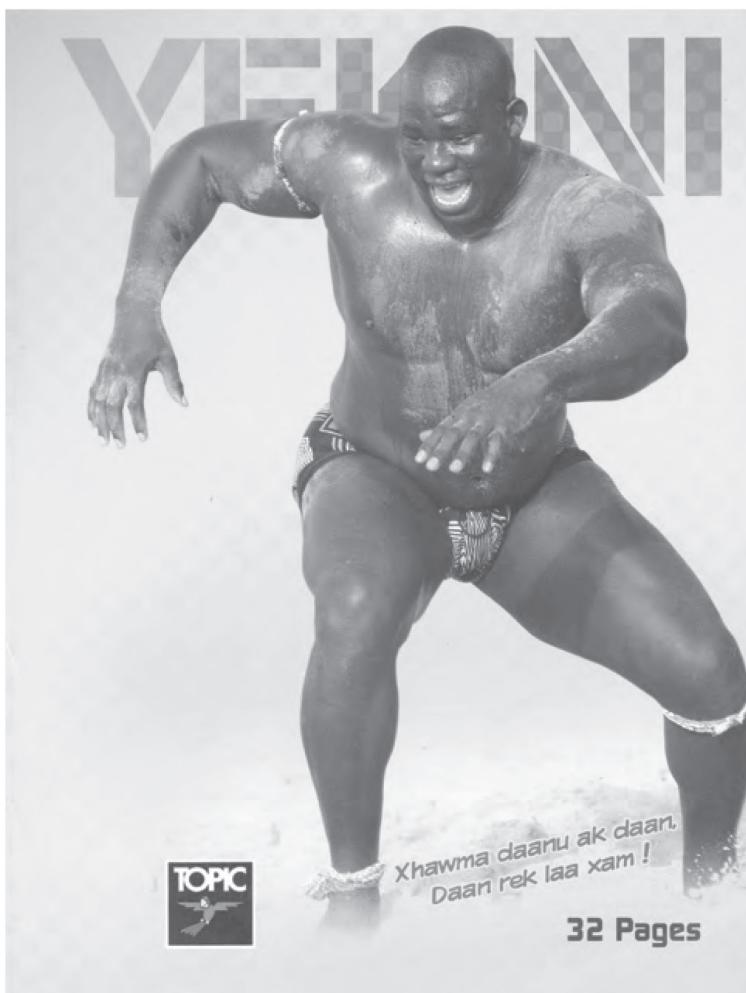


This is our chance to return to less «bling-bling», more traditional values. // All this debauchery was starting to become indecent! // Let's not forget, most wrestling fans can barely afford to eat once a day // And buy our telephone cards! // Yekini will help us attract a new audience, who up until now considered wrestling as as sport for thugs. // He'll give young people a positive example. From hard work and discipline, comes triumph. // We just need to find the right tie-in product. / Herbal tea? / Sleeping-pills? / Slippers?



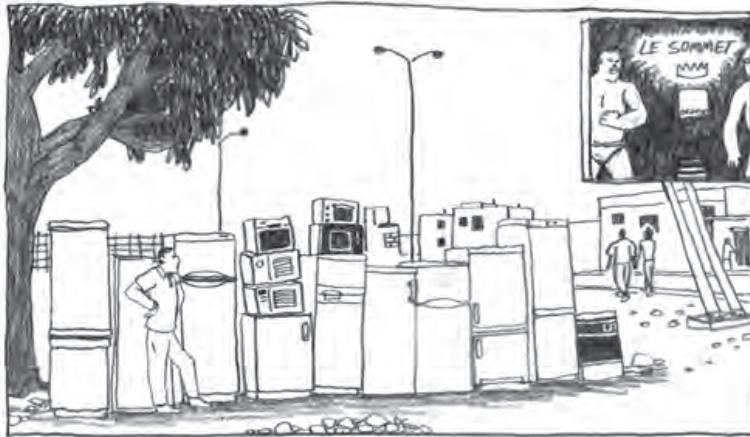
We have to find a way of exploiting Yekini's educational skills. It's one of his main assets! // We could put his picture on diapers! // We'll just write "Yekini, king of the ring" on them... / and the babies can make portraits of him! // Oh yeah, like a colouring book! That's educational! // Great idea! // That stuff about colouring books, I mean!

Sur la couverture des cahiers diffusés à travers tout le Sénégal, le nouveau roi des arènes danse au-dessus de sa célèbre formule : "Je ne sais pas tomber. Je sais seulement faire tomber !" Plus qu'un simple produit dérivé, c'est un véritable symbole qui est adressé aux jeunes fans de lutte.

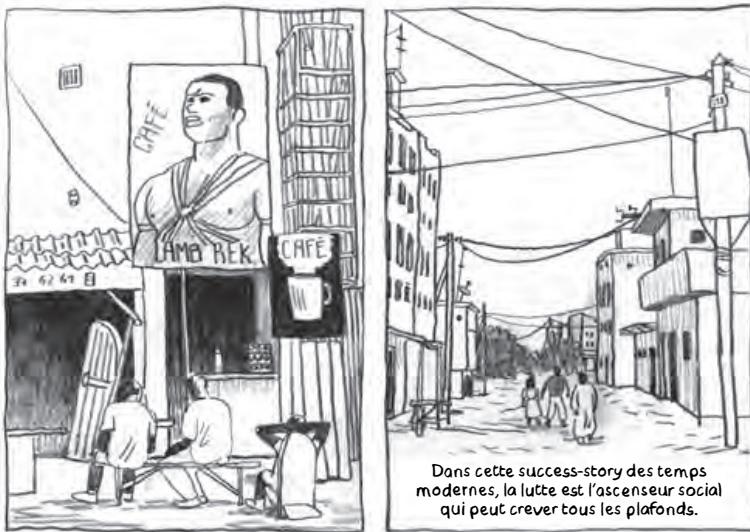


On the cover of colouring books all over Senegal, the new king of the ring is dancing over his famous catch-phrase : "I don't know how to fall; I only know how to make others fall". More than just a tie-in, it's a real symbol addressed to young wrestling fans.

Obligés d'arrêter très tôt leurs études pour travailler, ils reçoivent ces cahiers comme une gifle.



Yékini s'affiche en modèle de réussite classique où l'éducation est au sommet de la pyramide. Ceux qui en sont exclus ont appris des lutteurs un tout autre conte de fées, auquel ils ont désespérément besoin de se raccrocher.



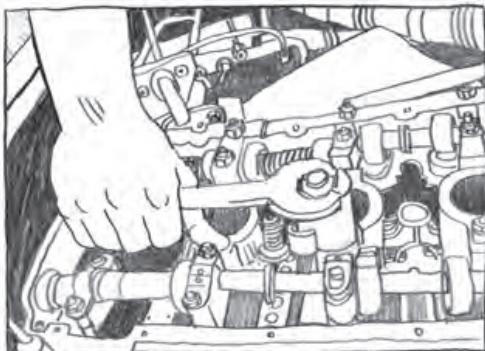
Dans cette success-story des temps modernes, la lutte est l'ascenseur social qui peut crever tous les plafonds.

Often forced to drop out early in order to work, they perceive these books as a real slap. // Yekini represents a classic success model in which education is at the top of the pyramid. Those who are excluded from it have learned from wrestlers another fairy-tale that they desperately hold on to. // In this modern-day success story, wrestling acts as a social ladder with no limits.

Leurs cahiers d'écoliers sont les murs décrépis des ateliers de mécanique, par exemple, où ils apprennent dès leur plus jeune âge un métier utile et pratique. En guise de garde-chiourme sur la couverture, à la place de Yékini et de ses pas de danse, le bonhomme Michelin affiche ses rondeurs généreuses.



The garage's decrepit walls act as their school books, where they learn a useful and practical trade from an early age. Instead of Yekini and his dance moves, the generous curves of the Michelin Man act as wardens.



You see, if we don't do our homework we'll end up like him! // Hey, nerds ! / So, you decided to drop your books for a second and come and see the real world? // Are you good at math? / Sure, otherwise I wouldn't be a mechanic!



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