

***TERÀNGA* AND THE ART OF HOSPITALITY: ENGENDERING THE NATION,  
POLITICS, AND RELIGION IN DAKAR, SENEGAL**

**By**

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## ABSTRACT

### *TERÀNGA* AND THE ART OF HOSPITALITY: ENGENDERING THE NATION, POLITICS AND RELIGION IN DAKAR, SENEGAL

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Senegal, a Muslim majority and democratic country, has long coined itself as "le pays de la *terànga*" (Land of Hospitality). This dissertation explores the central importance of *terànga*—the Wolof word which encapsulates the generous and civic-minded qualities of individuals – to events such as weddings and baptisms, women's political process, as well as everyday calculated and improvisational social encounters. *Terànga* is both the core symbol, for many, of Senegalese nationalism and collective identity, and the source of contentious and polarizing debates surrounding its qualities and meanings.

The investigation of *terànga* throughout this dissertation exposes the complexities of social and gender ideologies and practices in Senegal. In addition, this dissertation aspires to investigate the subjectivities, and conditions of Senegalese women as well as their contributions to the social, religious, and political realities of contemporary Senegal, and Dakar more specifically. This dissertation focuses on how *terànga* is debated, talked about, and performed by several groups.

First, it investigates the public discourses of *terànga* as a gendered symbol of national culture and its central importance to the construction of female subjects in their navigation of courtship, marriage, and family relations. Second, an exposé of family ceremonies and the

women who conduct them, demonstrates generational shifts in the interpretation and value given to the process of *terànga* in a contemporary moment where daughters are redefining its meaning from that of their mother's generation.

Third, female state politicians engaged with the *parité* movement for gender equity in political positions utilize *terànga* as a tool to create power and opportunity. Female politicians create charismatic personalities by contributing to the ceremonies of supporters and conducting public displays of gift-giving. Lastly, members of the Muslim Sufi group the *Layene* reframe *terànga* as an ethical obligation to others and God, which they see as a stark contrast to mainstream interpretations. Among the *Layene*, unmarried young women pursue marital relationships and personal piety through engagement with *terànga* by hosting and visiting potential in-laws and religious leaders. As part of the *Layene* annual religious pilgrimage, members of the *teral gann* group demonstrate public piety as hostesses performing *terànga*.

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## Introduction

I came to the topic of examining *terànga* by way of doing research with the Senegalese Ministry of Women's Affairs and the non-governmental organization RADI (Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégré – African Network for Integrative Development). I was following their work with the campaign “the fight against wastefulness” to end excessive spending during family ceremonies. I am indebted to RADI and especially Rokhaya Gaye, the lead juridical consultant who helped me in enormous ways. I began attending ceremonies and making contacts in the government during pre-dissertation research in the summers of 2010, 2011, and 2012. Additionally, these summers were spent taking intensive Wolof language classes at the research center WARC (West African Research Center) in central Dakar. I was able to utilize my Wolof courses and expertise of my brilliant professor Sidy Gueye, to help decipher linguistic elements that proved to be essential to this project.

Upon returning to Senegal in the summer of 2013 I found this campaign to have run its course, and scrambled to find a similar topic with the same individuals. What I found was, literally, under my nose. As I sat around probing people for insights regarding the debate about ceremonies, while of course consuming a beautiful plate of rice and fish, I began hearing a similar phrase when I inquired about gift exchange, “that is not *terànga*, *this is terànga*,” pointing to all of those around the bowl eating together, or enjoying tea together as we chatted. Thus began my journey of trying to decipher what *terànga* really meant. What are the qualities of *terànga*? What does the word mean? Why do some people describe it as money, or a gift, while others insist it is not obligation but something that comes from the heart? How is it that members of the Senegalese House of Representatives employ the discourse of *terànga* during political debates and religious leaders preach the importance of *terànga* to their community? Is

*terànga* an inherent part of life education in Senegal? Is it an obligation, recommendation, or is it deeper than that? Is it an object, an action, or an idea? Once I began to tease out the very complex meanings of *terànga*, and understood a great deal of its many qualities, I wondered what the local, national, and global implications were of the term and its usages. The question of which actors were the principle practitioners of *terànga* became important to understanding how *terànga* constructed certain identities in the Senegalese community.

The majority of my everyday interactions and ethnographic interviews were conducted in Wolof, even with people who spoke French. The time invested in learning Wolof at Michigan State University and summer programs at the West African Research Center (WARC) in Dakar paid off in many ways. My access to people, their ideas and cultural norms was made possible by having a working understanding of Wolof. Senegalese culture is most noticeably reproduced through oral narratives, rich proverbs, stories, and linguistic innovations which were crucial to this dissertation.

There are a few linguistic components of Wolof, which are important to understand in order to translate cultural sentiment. It is also important to note the particularities of style in Wolof that illuminate social interactions and delineate social hierarchies. Wolof proverbs, for example, transmit a compact and teachable lesson often shrouded in oral imagery. Metaphors convey a message without having to explicitly reveal content which they perceive to be secretive or too revealing. This is important for understanding everyday social interactions, the art of hospitality and speech, as well as the relationships between the state and the nation.

Although hospitality in Senegal is spoken about regularly in different semantic contexts, in its banality, it is omnipresent and yet mostly invisible in the everyday. All of my interviews and informal conversations happened in an environment of hospitality, of which you can hear the clanging of small tea glasses on the recorder, or a muffled voice trying to speak between bites.

What my body gained in weight, my research gained in richness. Because of the seriousness given to *terànga*, commensality, and consumption there was often little need to do formal interviews. The hours spent discussing life, politics, and religion after a big lunch and during an especially long *attaya* (tea) session provided me with a great deal of insight and witnessing to *terànga* even in the most mundane ways. Attending large weddings and baptisms where the term *terànga* was used explicitly in reference to public gift exchange, gave a very different and fascinating contrast to the quiet intimate performances of the home.

I even found myself hosting from time to time, which helped my rapport with friends and acquaintances, however not for the reasons I would have guessed. Especially with the Layene young women's group where I spent a great deal of time chatting and again, eating, I learned that in many ways my presence, or rather perceived lack of ability, in their lives served to validate their own abilities, which I was happy to oblige. On many occasions, women and men quizzed me on my knowledge and skill regarding Senegalese dishes and cooking in general. Most of them snickered with joy when I forgot an ingredient or rule (a habit I gladly embellished), because it proved their hypothesis that 'white women' don't know how to cook. No matter that we 'white women' were alive and fed somehow, nourishment was not what cooking was really about. I began to embrace their teasing and constant meddling as their way of telling me of the paramount importance they placed on food, hosting, and the art of hospitality. Every one of these instances I could see the pride women and men had for this art they saw as particularly Senegalese, and women especially for their meticulous care given to preparation, presentation, and consumption.

It is the aim of this dissertation to elucidate the multiple meanings of *terànga* through ethnographies of mostly women's lives and their intimate engagement with *terànga* for many of their life projects. Although men are certainly involved in *terànga* practices and ideologies,

especially their beloved *attaya* sessions, it is women who are the most consistently involved in the performance and art of hospitality. It is, therefore, women's control of *terànga* that allows an investigation of the conditions of women's everyday lives and their importance to national culture, politics, and religion. It also looks at how public discourse regarding family ceremonies and women's command of them demonstrates a public anxiety of what value *terànga* holds in past and current Senegalese society. I do so by analyzing the post-colonial state projects aimed towards conducting behavior by passing legislation such as the 1967 law prohibiting excessive spending for family ceremonies.

Each chapter serves to chronicle all the ways in which *terànga* is practiced, spoken of, and debated by mostly women. Chapter One lays out the relevant political history of Senegal as well as discusses the foundational literature in anthropology that will help frame the dissertation and its further contributions. The chapter will discuss the concept of *terànga* in relation to theoretical canons of nationalism, hospitality, and gender studies.

Chapter Two further examines the paradox of women's subjectivity by considering the double-bind women find themselves in; bound by obligations of generosity and embodiment of *terànga* in order to maintain their marriage and the relationships tied to it, while also accused of an irresponsible management of the family economy citing their excessive displays during family ceremonies and other gift giving instances. The chapter discusses the arguments of state officials, public opinion and popular culture, and interactions with several women as they grapple with the productive and constraining aspects of *terànga*. This chapter develops a semantic field of concepts and cognates of *terànga* that refer to, or relate to *terànga* in many ways, showing its nuances and complexities. By considering the mediatized references to these various concepts compared with women's daily talk and embodiment of *terànga*, it is easy to take the concept seriously and its centrality to the national narrative as well as the everyday experiences of

women. Several women featured in the chapter demonstrate the importance of *teranga* to marriage and a woman's role in the marriage: Marriage, divorce, polygamy, relationship with family in-law. This chapter demonstrates the central role of *terànga* as the medium for which a woman builds relationships with her family in-law, demonstrates affection for her husband. Women see *terànga* as a source of pride and agency as well as a frustration with its increasing social demands.

Chapter Three demonstrates the role of *terànga* as a lifelong project of reputation-making and establishing oneself among other women and family members. At the same time, it shows the generational tensions of how women interpret and use *terànga*. It considers two ceremonies, funeral of an elderly woman, and the wedding of a young woman through the eyes of a female griot in the neighborhood of Medina. The funeral celebrates a woman's life of generosity symbolized by the number of guests present, and the wedding demonstrates the generational tensions as the young bride has little patience for the ritual gift exchange during and after ceremonies, as well as the role of the griot to the events. These generational differences are represented by the figures of *drianké* and *diskette* (or *hôtesse*). An event her elders understand as being correlated to the exchange and demonstration of *terànga*. The lifetime process of *terànga* for past generations seems to be giving way to a prioritization of a more concentrated, individual process for the new generations. *Terànga* remains paramount to how young women navigate their marriages and family in-laws, however their roles as hostesses suggests a *terànga* that is a mixture of global and local influences.

Chapter Four discusses the complex and contested ways female politicians engage with *terànga* as an integral process of "practicing politics" bot publicly and privately. The chapter follows the stories of two female politicians, Aida Mbodj and Ndeye Soukeye Gueye, who have been part of the *parité* movement for gender equity in elected political positions. Their stories

frame the training of young aspiring female politicians who promote the tenants of *terànga*, such as generosity, charisma, and outspokenness as a way to gain notoriety in the male dominated field of state politics. The two established politicians demonstrate their use of *terànga* to establish public personas, generous reputations, and prove their knowledge and appreciation for cultural norms, while at the same time knowing how to subvert the practice of *terànga* as a source of personal and political power. They do this by asserting their power over gift exchanges, both publicly and privately, creating a base of supporters through social visiting and contributions to family ceremonies.

Chapter Five examines the role of *terànga* as the ethical and pious foundation of the Layene community and how the Layene reinterpret *teranga* as a symbol of their commitment to others as a mission from God. While other cases throughout the dissertation emphasize *terànga* as manifested through gift exchange, elaborate ceremonies, and personal reputability, the Layene see *terànga* as an embodiment of their community's quest for greater piety. The chapter discusses some of the religious community's conceptualization of *terànga* and hospitality as an ethical expression of piety by stripping the material exchanges during family ceremonies, and the symbolic markers of difference such as class and ethnicity.

This chapter compares the ceremonies of two Layene friends, one who celebrate the baptism of their daughters in the Layene tradition: void of gift giving, music, and *griots*, or casted praise-singers. Instead, religious singers lead religious singing and the baptism is over after lunch. His friend however, celebrates the baptism of his daughter as mainstream culture does: many gifts, gift giving that goes on into the night, music, visible differences, and *griots*.

Chapter Six discusses the young Layene women of the group *teral gann* (honor your guest) and their engagement with *terànga* as a means to create generous reputations in hopes of securing their marital futures, as well as maintaining them. In addition, their dedication to the

Layene community by serving as hostesses for the annual religious pilgrimage demonstrates their use of *terànga* as a public performance of piety, hoping to establish themselves among the community. The young women illustrate the importance of *terànga* to their courtships and marriages as well as their expressions of piety and membership in the Layene community. By investigating their socializing and hosting practices, and their uses of different types of dress, *terànga* emerges as a symbol of their abilities to navigate the various ethos they encounter in their daily lives, both the social and religious.



## Chapter One

### Terànga as National Identity

*“Senegalese terànga is a tradition we must preserve, just like democracy, stability, and homeland security”*

- Mme Houma Mbaye Dia, Director of Marketing and Communication for the Agency of Senegalese Tourism

*Terànga reew mi lanu bakkoo – Terànga is what we are praised for*

*Tassukat yi danu way terànga- Singers are singing terànga*

*Mbindkat yi danu bind terànga – Writers are writing terànga*

*Sama reew lay jayee, sama reew laay jaay – I’m promoting my country, I’m promoting my country*

- Youssou N’Dour, *Tourista* 1994

This dissertation explores the central importance of *terànga* – a Wolof word which encapsulates the generous and civic-minded qualities of individuals – to gift exchange and hospitality, women’s political process and public piety, as well as everyday calculated and improvisational social encounters in Dakar, Senegal. *Terànga* captures the moral and social standard embodied in an individual's actions, gifts, and speech, and is the core symbol, for many, of Senegalese nationalism and collective identity. In his book *La Philosophie Morale des Wolofs*, Assane Sylla depicts *tarànga* (*terànga*) as the virtue of an individual who knows how to welcome *hôtes* (guests) with generosity and cordiality: "A *hôte* (host) must pamper his/her guest (*hôte*)...as part of the rules of hospitality (1978)." Sylla notes that *terànga* manifests itself in the form of gifts given during family ceremonies such as all the various offerings to most members of the family, for which there are specific words and phrases.

Paradoxically, *terànga* is at the same time the source of contentious and polarizing debates regarding its qualities and definitions. A tension exists between those who valorize *terànga* as the material manifestation of generosity whereas others argue these gifts should be mere symbols

of an individual's internal kindness. In response to these conflicting depictions of *terànga*, I argue the performative act of *terànga* symbolizes the moral and civic qualities of exchanges as well as an idealized cultural that has become criticized as corrupted and no longer representative of Senegalese traditions. In order to investigate this claim, this dissertation focuses on the performances and ideologies of *terànga* among select groups throughout the city, who debate the value and form of *terànga*. This is a way to understand the historical and contemporary complexities of gender, generation, and social and religious orders, as well as developmental aspirations. These groups include: a female *griot*, or casted praise singer, from Medina in the heart of Dakar and the ceremonies she attends; female politicians of the *parité* movement for gender equity in state politics; the Sufi Muslim order, the Layene; and a young Layene women's hostess group.

Senegal, the *Pays de la Terànga* (Land of Hospitality), is the coastal West African nation touted for its deep roots in democratic institutions, cultural innovation, and political and social stability. Having never suffered a military or political *coup d'état*, it is revered as one of the most stable and open societies in the region. The World Festival of Black Arts (FESMAN) first held in Dakar in 1966, one of the many cherished projects of Senegal's first president Léopold Sédar Senghor, demonstrated Dakar to be an important crossroads between Africa and the rest of the world.<sup>2</sup> With a rich history in literature and cinema, Senegal and its capital city Dakar, have long been cosmopolitan crossroads for economic and cultural exchange, serving as a model for postcolonial democratic potentials on the continent. It is known to Senegalese and visitors as the land of *terànga*, because *terànga* is arguably the undisputed symbol of Senegalese culture across the country's many different ethnic groups, social classes, and religious beliefs. However, it could be argued that it is also an urban driven phenomenon just as many cultural changes and

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<sup>2</sup> Senghor's post-colonial goals were to promote local and traditional culture through the arts.

innovations happen in the city (as well as other regions). *Terànga* most likely first became notable internationally in 1961, one year after independence with the newly minted national soccer team called the *Lions de la Terànga* (Lions of Hospitality). The national team, and its name, was part of the political elite's construction of a nationalist narrative, used at times such as their appearance in the 2002 World Cup quarter finals - when they beat the French national team - to promote a public discourse of conviviality (Baller 2012; Diouf and Fredericks 2013).

Although *terànga* is passingly referenced in most scholarship on Senegal as a kind of catch-all cultural trait and celebrated national heritage, relatively little work specifically focuses on the concept itself. Furthermore, the complex dimensions, definitions, enactments, and ideologies of *terànga* have yet to be explored in ethnographic detail. By way of ethnographic research, this dissertation explores the intimacies and public discourses of *terànga* in current society as well as a historical analysis of the contours of *terànga* as a symbol of nationalism and nation-making in Senegal. This can be seen in popular culture and media, advertisements, and day to day talk that serve as a dialectic between the public and private lives of Senegalese. By way of public narratives and debates, and these various texts, I investigate the expression of *terànga* as the marker of aspirational identities and contested realities.

The project of this dissertation is to understand how the members of the groups I researched engage with *terànga* as a process of personal agency, refusal and construction, and affiliation. It also aims to define the lines of religious and social ethics. Much of the debate regarding *terànga*, I argue, is about the source and aim of ethical and social standards that *terànga* represents. Scholars such as Assane Sylla, writing about the Wolof moral philosophy reduce *terànga* to mostly material expressions of generosity and hospitality while ignoring more intangible classifications. I argue that the generosity of gift exchange is only one aspect of *terànga*. Other

interpretations of *terànga* include the expression of ethics, piety, charisma, and agency in forms of self-representation and presentation, hosting, and collective religious praise.

Given that *terànga* is paramount to Senegalese identity, contentious debates regarding its definitions and appropriations bring into question national collective identity, generational desires for prosperity, and gender and social power dynamics. The debates also reveal a polarization in society as to whether *terànga* represents the ethical and moral aims of a Senegal that values mutual aid, openness, and religiosity. Moreover, the debates demonstrate an anxiety of what constitutes the ideal Senegalese, as well as from which reference point this ideal person constructed. Much of the public discourse about *terànga* centers on two issues: an ideal historical narrative of collective identity and the social as the backbone of the reciprocal relationships among families and others instead of personal gain and excessive displays of wealth; and that the state of *terànga* today runs counter to the religious beliefs of the ideal instead of personal gain and excessive displays of wealth; and that the state of gendered perspectives on this matter are complex.

This chapter will outline the main groups with whom I conducted research, and demonstrate the complexities of *terànga* in the contemporary moment, as well as its historical implications. Due to the conceptual nature of this dissertation, each chapter serves as a different case study where *terànga* is a window into the changing social and religious ethos in Senegal as well as their intersections and diversions. First, it investigates the public discourses of *terànga* as a gendered symbol of national culture and its central importance to the construction of female subjects in their navigation of courtship, marriage, and family relations. Chapter Two also discusses the state and non-governmental efforts to curb excessive spending for family ceremonies and the tensions which arise regarding women and development. Second, an exposé of family ceremonies and the women who conduct them, demonstrates generational shifts in the

interpretation and value given to the process of *terànga* in a contemporary moment where daughters are redefining its meaning from that of their mother's generation.

Third, female state politicians engaged with the *parité* movement for gender equity in political positions utilize *terànga* as a tool to create power and opportunity. Female politicians create charismatic personalities by contributing to the ceremonies of supporters and conducting public displays of gift-giving. Lastly, members of the Muslim Sufi group, the *Layene*, reframe *terànga* as an ethical obligation to others and God, which they see as a stark contrast to mainstream interpretations. Among the *Layene*, unmarried young women pursue marital relationships and personal piety through engagement with *terànga* by hosting and visiting potential in-laws and religious leaders. As part of the *Layene* annual religious pilgrimage, members of the *teral gann* group demonstrate public piety as hostesses performing *terànga*.

All of these cases speak to the central investigation of this dissertation: how is *terànga* spoken about, performed, contested, and re-appropriated; and what can these experiences tell us about the nature of women as political actors, religious subjects, and genealogists of historical change and cultural production?

## **Historical Background**

*Terànga* and hospitality are arguably the major aspects of Senegalese sociality. Hosting, visiting, giving gifts, being open and generous towards others as well as the manner in which these acts are conducted and the intentions behind them, are what create the fabric of Senegalese society. Family ceremonies such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals are occasions of ritual, sociality, social (re)production, and where *terànga* is most publicly displayed for the benefit of hosts and guests. The creation of positive reputations by way of participation in ceremonies is crucial for a person's access to resources and help from family members and friends.

### *Kinship and Social Structure*

Senegalese society is fraught with social inequalities (Foley 2010). Stemming from the precolonial period, society is structured by social order and caste, where access to resources and social mobility was predetermined for individuals. For example, one's work, position in the social hierarchy, and relation to others was dependent on whether one was a *géér* (noble), or servile artisans, which included *griot* (praise-singers) and *ñeeño* (the lower classes), and *jaam* (slaves) (Diop 1981). Patron-client relationships involving the noble and servile classes created social-ties based on dependency and loyalty (Foley 2010), and continued throughout the colonial and postcolonial periods. These social-ties, just as today, were most importantly produced at the event of ceremonies in the form of gifts and the vocal exchanges of *griots* and their noble patrons, as well as regular social payments. One's status, along with generational and gender differences, would therefore determine what they were due and obliged to give. Although, as Foley (2010) points out, many contemporary casted Senegalese have become entrepreneurs and held positions of power, yet the caste system remains important to marriage choice.

The Wolof people are the most written about regarding Senegalese society due to their geographic importance during the colonial period. *Wolofisation*, or the adoption of the Wolof language and certain customs by non-Wolof people, has created a hegemonic ethnic identity in Senegal (O'Brien 1998), and especially in Dakar and its rapidly expanding outskirts (Antoine 1999). There are several contributing factors to Wolof dominance: the first colonial capital of Senegal, Saint Louis, is a Wolof bastion (Foley 2010); at the moment of independence, Dakar, also a Wolof stronghold, became the capital; and the colonial dependence on the peanut basin controlled by Sufi leaders and their Wolof *talibé* (Diouf, O'Brien 2002), which began establishing a strong presence in the Dakar markets.

It is this dominance of Wolof and Murid Sufi trading brought to Dakar (Diouf 1992) that

has homogenized many cultural practices such as the elements of family ceremonies that are highly debated now. An example of this is the concept of *ndawtal*, or the contributions of female family members and friends given to a woman on the day of her ceremony. The Wolof are known for institutionalizing the concept of doubling or tripling the reciprocated amount, which has led to the exacerbation of amounts demanded for ceremonies. The many other ethnic groups, which celebrate family ceremonies in differing ways, comprise the diversity of Senegal, including: the Sereer, Manding, Pulaar, Haal-Pulaar, Tukuloor, and Joola (Diouf 2001).

Given the persistence of social hierarchies, the introduction of wage labor during the colonial period (Sall 2010), and the increasing unemployment rate following structural adjustment, financial dependence on kinship relationships has remained the norm, if not increasing in importance. These factors, as well as development aims by political elite, by way of legal processes and reforms, have changed the environment and conditions for which *terànga* operates. For example, the legal efforts to codify family ceremonies as well as Western models that encourage financial savings and women's empowerment to work outside the home, have led to significant shifts in family structure. Additionally, many contemporary urban households have experienced changes from predominantly bilocal and often polygynous domestic groups to a more nuclear family with consequences regarding the occasions of gift giving. Moreover, the efforts to regain African and local cultural values by the newly independent elites such as the first president Léopold Sédar Senghor and the prime minister Mamadou Dia, began a debate of how to define what is truly Senegalese.

### *Politico-religious History of Senegal*

Current state politics and their relationships to religious institutions in Senegal have a long history dating to the colonial period. Senegal boasts a majority 95 percent Muslim

population, with a four percent Catholic minority (Hesseling 1985). The coastal nation was an integral part of the French colonial project in West Africa as the site of its headquarters. The coastal country would also become a portal to the interior of West Africa and an economic boost to French export of peanuts (Diouf 2001). Diop, Diouf, and O'Brien (2002) argue the current nature of the postcolonial state has its roots in a political and economic model of colonial control of peanut production, creating a totalitarian state. The colonial government enlisted mostly *marabouts* (religious leaders) of the Murid order as allies in economic production and mediators to land and labor (O'Brien 2004). A custom that would continue into the postcolonial period, as the important relationship between Muslim leaders and the independent Senegalese state regarding such objects as procuring support for political elections and policy decisions, a term called *ndigël* (Diouf, Diop, and O'Brien 2002). On the other hand, Islam was both a cultural defense against the French and a site of negotiation (Diouf, Diop, and O'Brien 2002).

The Senegalese postcolonial state was constructed under a one-party system and the ideal of an *African socialism*, or an all present state (O'Brien, Diop, Diouf 2002). Mamadou Dia, the first prime minister, opposed the clientelist relationship between the state and Sufi *marabouts*, and was consequently jailed for rumors of a coup attempt in 1962 (Diouf 2002). *African socialism* was also theoretically inspired by the *négritude* movement, which began in the 1930s by Senghor and several other intellectuals of the African Diaspora in France. Both movements favored an emphasis on African and black cultural values, and African socialism sought to create a style of governance that was modeled on "traditional", and patriarchal, African culture and social structure (Diouf, Diop, O'Brien 2002). However, as Mamadou Diouf (2002) points out, this was mostly ideological, and in fact, the reality of Senghor's African socialism meant state control of social, economic, and political matters in society, as well as a political class hired based on party and personal loyalty, not qualifications.



### *Construction of the Postcolonial State*

In the first decade of independence, several laws were passed to institutionalize rules of the household and gendered access to resources. Laws served as a formative model of proper moral and social expectations of the new Senegalese subject. Legal codes such as the *Code de la Famille* (Family Code) passed in 1972, outlined marriage, birth, and inheritance laws for Senegales families (Mbow 2010). Bass and Sow (2006) consider the Family Code to capture Senegalese family as having a "triple heritage" of indigenous, Islamic/Arabic, and European/Christian culture.

An element of the Code that was signed into law in 1967, prohibiting gifts and limiting spending for ceremonies such as weddings and baptisms, was meant, at the time of its inception, to revolutionize the newly independent nation in the model of African socialism, hoping to return to the "traditional" values lost during colonial rule. These measures initially embodied the aspirations of the state to "defend the Senegalese citizen" (RTS 1967) from the financial burden ceremonies had come to represent, while they have reemerged under a rhetoric of economic and moral crisis. Chapter Two will discuss the question of family ceremonies in greater detail, however it was legal efforts such as these that contributed to the Senegalese state's formation of a nationalist consciousness.

Investment in kinship and social networks such as family ceremonies has become the norm (Bugenhagen 2012) due to several factors: decades of postcolonial mismanagement (Diouf 2002); staggering unemployment due to structural adjustment programs beginning in the Diouf administration's first term of the 80s; phasing out of government positions, and decreasing insurance for retirement and state sponsored health programs (Foley 2010). Social networks controlled by women were funded by non-governmental organizations that had taken a larger

role in development projects in the place of government social security (ibid. 2012). Programs included micro-credit loaning institutions and women's empowerment groups, which increasingly promoted women's economic autonomy. However, women have been criticized for taking the funds intended for money-generating activities and investing them instead in social networks to pay for family ceremonies (2012).

President Abdoulaye Wade's terms from 2000 to 2012 proved to be less about *Sopi* or *alternance*<sup>3</sup> (change), and more about a return to state authoritarianism (Mbow 2008). In a contemplative article entitled *Senegal: The Return to Personalism*, historian Penda Mbow (2008) argues that Wade had formulated his political career during the newly independent years, as an opposition member, when nationalism and authoritarian rule were praised. Wade's policies and changes to the constitution have all been power-grabbing moves; while his reign has been solidified by his style of "hyperpersonalization of power" (2008) can be seen in the significant administrative roles given especially to his son, Karim Wade. Mbow also criticizes the abuse of money in politics and among the political elite as having been the decisive factor in Wade's reelection in 2007. The decade and a half of President Wade's administration saw a continual decrease in democratic institutions in exchange for favoritism and clientelism, as well as Wade's quest for prophetic-like status, or total control of state resources and party leadership (Diouf 2013). The result has been further unemployment and distrust in the government.

In 2012, Abdoulaye Wade's former prime minister, Macky Sall, beat him in the presidential election. From the beginning of Sall's presidency he has aimed to correct the ills of the Wade administration by reinvigorating the *Conseil de repression d'enrichissement illicite* (Court of Repression of Illicit Enrichment), an anti-corruption court. In what many saw as a

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<sup>3</sup> *Sopi* (the Wolof word for change) and *alternance* (the French word for change) were the terms used by Abdoulaye Wade's political movement that sought to change the direction of the country following forty years of rule by the Socialist party.

political move, the court's first major case accused and ultimately convicted Karim Wade of illicit use of state funds. A majority of Senegalese, although they wish to see corruption decrease, criticized the court for its ineffectiveness, targeting of opposition party members, and belief in non state-sponsored forms of punishment. Many Wade supporters argue state austerity measures have frozen the circulation of money, whereas the others argue the money during Wade's administration was dirty. Either way, many Senegalese continue to hurt financially as the middle class has struggled to remain vibrant.

### **Rationale for Methods and Ethnographic Subjects**

Choosing my ethnographic subjects for this research was intended to target various lived-experiences of *terànga* and to allow me to discuss important social, political, and religious institutions as points of (moral) reference. As the majority of the subjects I researched were women due to their central role as main practitioners of *terànga* as well as the main targets of criticism regarding *terànga*. I aimed to understand their contributions to historical knowledge and narrative and public politics and piety from their role as practitioners of *terànga*. Each group or individual allows me to observe the diverse contexts in which *terànga* is practiced and experienced. I have been particularly interested in how individuals interact with and beyond the state apparatus, non-governmental organizations, and the family as individuals and a collective through the lens of the cultural institution of *terànga*. For example, my work with Djenaba Kouyate, *griot* woman living in the heart of Dakar, and observing family ceremonies was meant to trace the gift-giving aspect of *terànga* and its importance to kinship relationships, as a medium of social transactions, and as a marker of generational changes. In the case of women in politics, I was interested to see how women's participation in life-cycle events and the practice of *terànga* translated to their roles as state leaders and elites. Given the public nature of their work, these

women are visible representations of the debate regarding family ceremonies and the nature of *terànga*, as well as discussions of development and women's subjectivity. Focusing my last two chapters on the Layene Muslim community aimed to capture discourses directly contradicting the dominance of social obligations such as *terànga*. Instead, the Layene privilege *terànga* as a source of religious communion. Their example offers an interesting contrast to the mainstream popular culture and practices of *terànga*, offering contrastive narratives of national identity.

Attempting to study a cultural concept such as *terànga* meant it had to be regarded as a product of institutional pedagogy. Therefore, this meant I hoped to examine *terànga* from the point of view of various institutions in the city of Dakar, such as: the state and state elites; the family and marriage, and a religious institution. I wanted to understand how the practices and speech acts of *terànga* espoused by these different groups and institutions were connected and divergent through participant observation and discourse analysis. By combing various television series and popular culture sources dealing with contemporary issues of the family, identity, and development I found a wealth of repeating phrases and words that make up what I have conceived of as the "semantic field" (Castaldi 2011) or semantic family of *terànga*. Television, music videos, and music are arguably the most significant ways most Dakar residents interact with news, cultural and linguistic creativities, and political and social debates.

Given my knowledge of both French and Wolof, I was able to rely on various methodologies such as "deep hanging out" (Wogan 2004), conversational interviews and open-ended semi-structured interviews. My participant observation and video recordings were helpful in gathering the visual representations of ceremonies and religious association activities. In addition, I have relied on various texts, such as primary sources, television and radio show recordings, religious CDs, and recorded sermons and taped religious events. The majority of my observations came from listening to conversations between people and inquiring with those

around when there was a word or phrase I heard repeatedly but did not know its meaning. To make new contacts I relied on several gatekeepers to introduce me to other members of the Layene religious family, women in the government and various non-governmental organizations.

### **Methodological and Theoretical Approaches**

Much of my methodological and theoretical choices have been based on prioritizing language, practice, and discourse analysis writ large. Further questions and inquiries stem from honoring the things people say about their lives and actions (Mahmood 2001). I contrasted honoring their voices with observations and analysis of meaning that could be drawn from performances, speeches, and day to day conversations I was witness to. It has been important to strike a balance between interpretation and analysis as well as ethnographic and textual research, a technique promoted by Sherry Ortner (1996). Especially for the topic of public debates, coupling observations of gossip or conduct of ceremonies with newspaper articles and television programs was a rich pairing to understand the realness of the debates among people. The Wolof language is ripe with symbolically packed proverbs and vocabulary describing kinship relations and social interpretations of the world around them. My knowledge and use of Wolof was imperative for the reason that it allowed me to be privy to personal conversations or friendly discussions in a more natural setting than interviews promise.

George Marcus (2005) says that to take on the nation as an object of study one can employ a multi-sited research design aimed to track the "circulation of cultural meanings, and identities", revealing connections among diverse groups. This is how I have aimed to organize my own methodology and analysis of this dissertation spending time in various locations, often encountering new people every day. My rationality for the various groups chosen as ethnographic subjects was intended to trace the circulation of cultural meaning and knowledge that is *terànga* in its many forms. I aimed to understand the interactions of producers of national

pedagogical modes such as mass media, television series, newspaper commentaries, and state legislation and the multiple levels of what Homi Bhabha would call "pedagogical objects" and "performative subjects" (2004) of a shared national experience. Abu-Lughod's work on television in Egypt demonstrates the ability to observe and piece together the "life-worlds" (2005) of ethnographic subjects in order to study something such as the nation. My work also captures similar connections between popular dissemination of an ideal feminine culture through music and television and women's appropriation of the linguistic and cultural inventions to their own lives.

### **Writing about Gender and Women's Experiences**

My objective is to examine how *terànga* concerns women as: institutionalized symbol of Senegalese nationalism, as embodied in everyday urban practice, and as central to their practice of self and the social. I have chosen to use the term 'gender' in the title of this dissertation and as a theoretical category in the way Joan Scott (1986) sees the use of gender in order to acknowledge social relations between the sexes. As Scott argues, the use of 'gender' as a historically analytical category focuses not on sexual difference, but rather on 'cultural construction', which I believe examining *terànga* is an apt way to go about this discussion.

Debate among select scholars in recent decades has shifted from the gender and sex as universal to a feminism which challenges hegemonic Western categories (Mikell 1997). "Third World" feminism (Mohanty 1988) has argued that meanings of feminism and gender are culturally specific and needed to be considered and studied locally. This transition to studying women's experiences is a way to gain new knowledge and avoid simplifying women's experiences, while also placing them within the historiography (Abu-Lughod 2008; Scott 1999). Scott argues that researching the category of gender for historians (and I argue for

anthropologists as well) is to recreate our understanding of history itself (1986). Current preoccupations in anthropology and feminist ethnography are questions regarding not simply cultural specificity, but also critiques of the overwhelming advent of neoliberalism and capitalism as universally experienced and normative forces. Nowhere more contentious is this debate than among Muslim women, and within Muslim communities.

As Saba Mahmood demonstrates in her examination of the women's piety movement in Cairo, the movement problematizes the free subject of the market as the unique solution for a women's liberated identity, offering a different theory of morality as internally cultivated. Her opposition to the liberal subject is that it does not fully represent the diverse choices and experiences of many Muslim women in Cairo who cultivate internal change through reading texts, praying, and wearing veils (2005). Her argument is relevant to my discussion of the Layene women in Chapter Six who also challenge the liberating forces of secularism by opposing ostentatious ceremonies they see as posing a risk to social and moral stability. Instead, the Layene community's focus on practices of piety and submission to God offer refuge from the demanding social obligations.

I am also inspired by Mahmood's theories of subjectivation, ethical formation, and performativity. Borrowing the Aristotelian conceptualization of ethical formation, Mahmood argues that "ethical conduct is not simply a matter of the effect one's behavior produces in the world, but depends crucially upon the precise form that behavior takes," which she describes as the proper enactment of prescribed bodily behaviors, gestures, and markers (2009). Throughout this dissertation, I argue that the significance of *terànga* is also not simply an action that accomplishes a social obligation, but is the personal motives cultivated by a performativity of *terànga*. In other words, the ethics of *terànga* can be found not only by seeing its achievements, but by understanding the manner in which enactments of *terànga* happen. A woman's act of

generosity and internal motivations that take a certain form are important because they shape her personally and build a reputation for her in the community. Extending generosity, or *terànga*, is a performative practice women are constantly perfecting through speech and bodily acts. When considering the intersectionality and divisions of social and religious references, the debates and anxieties regarding *terànga* can be better explained by this description of ethics as a form taken. Moreover, the form and also origination of *terànga* is what is at stake in many ways.

Saba Mahmood's research on the women's piety movement in Egypt engages with Foucault's concepts of ethics and moral codes as embedded in actions, and representations of the self through action in relationship to a set of norms constructed in a certain way of life (2005). These performances of norms then, construct such concepts as gender. Chapter Two addresses the question of gift-giving and instances of *terànga* as producing a set of norms, which are reiterated through public media, and how women's engagement with these performances are what construct their identity as being women. Subjects are therefore produced through a performativity that both refuses identifications and is influenced by external discourses (Butler 1999) such as popular culture and the state campaign to fight against wastefulness.

In her examination of Butler, Mahmood finds that gender and agency are produced through their possibilities of reiteration and re-appropriation, a power of discourse (2009). In fact, Butler would argue that social norms are what constitute the subject and also make agency and resistance possible (Butler 1997). For example, the political oratory and campaigning of female politicians of the *parité* movement demonstrate a public symbol of *terànga* embedded in women's political practice, as well as productive towards their role in expressing the national narrative of *terànga*. Female politicians, especially engage with the spaces of family ceremonies by paying for supplies and giving cash gifts, as platforms for the creation of generous reputations followed by community supporters. The political process is held together just as the other



segments of society, by way of an indebtedness (Mauss 1960) between the politician and her supporters as they form a reciprocal bond of hosting, being-hosted, and creating ambiance at public events. This is a demonstration of respect for the social hierarchy of the noble's (politician) duty to her sovereigns (supporters). Their command of *terànga* is used to demonstrate their political abilities, while the creation of lavish "liveliness" (Allerton 2012) during ceremonies, public rallies, and through beautiful dress establishes popularity and cultural credibility.

The Layene community and the young women of a religious association (*dahira*) discussed in Chapters Five and Six are exemplary of the intersections between the social and religious orders (which I discuss further in this chapter). The community's founder Seydina Limamou Laye prohibited for example, the gift-giving aspect of family ceremonies where a material exchange labeled by many as *terànga* is practiced. Instead he noted that Layene members should pray for *terànga*, which religious leaders have interpreted as the recirculation of the things given to them from God and should be treated not as personal but rather public property. For example, their adoption of uniform and conservative clothing and collective marriages can be interpreted as efforts to shift the focus of instances of social production such as marriage and the "pleasing of the body" (Ortner 1975) to a religious reference where particular bodies hold less significance.

Layene members believed the ceremonies conducted by most Senegalese twisted the definition of *terànga*. To them, *terànga* was a historical narrative from the founder and subsequent leaders as to the ethical qualities of a person who embodied *terànga*, their actions and intentions that are guided by God. Their motives to reframe *terànga* as a religious practice reflects the argument that ethics are not represented by unique ideas only but rather discourses, practices, and modalities of power that influence a subject's formation (Mahmood 2005). In the

case of the young Layene women I conducted research with, the moral subjectivation (2005) of their behaviors, goals, and sense of self come majorly from within the religious community by way of association meetings, and marking themselves as Layene by referring to one another with the same name. Their roles as hostesses demonstrate a kind of public piety as they seek visibility among the Layene members and religious family. Despite assuming the identity of a Layene, the young women are inevitably part of the social sphere that is contemporary Dakar, which brings challenging and diverse moral frames and codes.

### *Marriage and the Family*

One aspect of society that remains a site of struggle between men and women in various ways, is marriage. Marriage is what unifies families, reinforces kinship ties, and reproduces cultural and societal norms (Collier and Yanagisako 1987; Parkin 1987). These norms of marriage have historically been mediated through colonial or independent state laws, family expectations, and religious institutions. Marriage and the relationships between men and women and their families surrounding marriage have been central to the aims of religious reformist groups as well (Bernal 1994; Cooper 2010; Masquelier 2009). Barbara Cooper in her book *Marriage in Maradi* argues that it is through marriage that women and men respond to global and local processes by adapting, negotiating, and contesting their rights and duties (1997). Gender for Africans she claims is often acquired through ritual and social processes such as marriage, as opposed to Western understandings of gender as physiological (Cooper 1997; Mikell 1997).

Marriage has also served as a point of contentious debate regarding gendered authority over wealth and reproduction as well as negotiating change. John and Jean Comaroff contend that the 'civilizing' mission of the colonial project was drawn to legalism, of which marriage and

bridewealth were important (1997). Moreover, negotiating marriage was a way for Africans to also challenge the impacts of colonial rule and capitalism (Chanock 1985). In the French West Africa colonial headquarters of Saint Louis, Senegal, mixed race women used marriage as a way to create prestige and mitigate wealth during French imperialism (Jones 2005). With the advent of French law promoting weddings sanctioned by the Catholic Church, Senegalese were able to fashion new avenues for identity construction within the colonial and Wolof traditions. Literature of contemporary Africa demonstrates that bridewealth and marriage payments are regulated and debated at a growing rate. Bridewealth in Niger is highly debated between religious reformist groups and the Nigerien state while also serving as a way for women to redefine their own social worth and that of junior kin through controlling the terms and amounts of bridewealth (Cooper 1997; Masquelier 2009). In Senegal, women's dispossession of land rights and inheritance has meant that marriage and items for marriage, such as cloth, money and exchange, are ever more instrumental for creating female authority, social prestige, and maintaining social and family ties (Buggenhagen 2012). Efforts to curb spending or limit bridewealth payments thus becomes a battle between power of authority, wealth, and rights as well as a site to study greater forces of change. Women's ability to continue defining the meanings of *terànga* in many different ways demonstrates their central role to matters of national importance in both the public and private spheres.

### *Questions of Development*

Beth Buggenhagen, in her study of global volatility in Senegal, argues that the prominence of women-focused development associations has been at the center of the process of neoliberal reform in Senegal since the 1980s (2012). Since the 1980s there has been a "feminization" of both poverty (Alidou 2005) and development (Buggenhagen 2012) by the

influence of international organizations aiming exclusively to bring women and children out of poverty and economic dependence, protect against religious and domestic subordination, and to bring women into the public sphere. Gender, and women specifically, became the center-piece of development projects in Senegal. In many cases, those opposing bringing women into the political sphere argued it was a Western imposition and not a reflection of local culture (Mikell 1997).

The question of women's control over resources and their complex networks of exchange, topics which are also highly debated, highlight the complicated question of value. Just as the Layene and documented popular opinion have called ceremonies wasteful and therefore not valuable, others argue it is their ability to invest in one another that creates value. As Beth Buggenhagen (2012) has shown the devastating effects of Senegal's devaluation of its currency in the 1980's and structural adjustment policies have left many to invest in social capital such as the circulation of wealth during family ceremonies. Investing in human capital has been a strategy for many women in Senegal to ensure the well-being of their families as the reciprocal nature of these instances of exchange ensure the constant production of value.

### *Narrative*

Privileging voices, especially women's voices (Mahmood 2009), has been a growing ethnographic method (Abu-Lughod 1998). Documenting women's stories offers a much more complete and intimate understanding of women's subjectivity that had too often been eclipsed by focusing on patriarchal forms of power. Saba Mahmood notes that much of the literature in feminist theory has argued that patriarchal ideologies – whether nationalist or religious – work by objectifying women's bodies in a masculinist system of representation. However, she notes, despite this reality, “understanding gendered bodies, far more is at stake than this framework allows” (2009). Gender stretches beyond the confines of a fixed structure, and in the African

context, gender is most importantly connected to performativity and everyday resistances (Abu-Lughod 1990). Although from a Western point of view women's oppression may stem from participation in domestic activities, such participation is also how women insert themselves in the social rankings of their natal and marital families and therefore in macro-political processes (Ortner 1996). I argue that considering women's practices of *terànga* examines the reification of certain gender tropes, while also challenging others. The ethnographies in this dissertation of women in politics, religious associations, and personal accounts of marriage and family life, demonstrate women's complex obligations to social norms, and their agency in using *terànga* as a source of power. Furthermore, the women I have encountered demonstrate different narratives that push back on the notion of a female subject trapped within traditional expectations, and instead exhibit a prideful engagement with *terànga* as a signifier of their agency and identity. In addition, their engagement with *terànga* challenges certain fixed identities, making space for new interpretations and meanings. This is exemplified throughout the various chapters as I discuss shifting generational attitudes towards the purposes and meanings of *terànga*, the engagement with *terànga* as part of the growing presence of women in positions of power, and also debates as to the true purpose of *terànga* as shown through my research with the Layene religious community.

### **Theories of Hospitality and the Gift**

*Terànga*, in Wolof - the *lingua franca* of Senegal - is most commonly translated as *hospitality*, or *hospitalité* in French. However, the concept of *terànga* encompasses a great deal more than the word *hospitality* is capable of capturing. According to Sidy Gueye, a former Peace Corps trainer and Wolof instructor, the noun *terànga* comes from the root *ter/téer* (to follow alongside). Other dictionary sources cite *ter* as meaning honor (Diouf 2003). In this next section

I will discuss the theoretical string of scholars who have taken on the question of hospitality in a variety of ways.

The subject of hospitality in anthropology as well as for anthropologists is a personal one. The very business of doing ethnography depends on some form of hospitality. In fact, this is arguably the first cultural trait anthropologists encounter in the field, and the quality of our time there is determined by how we receive and reciprocate hospitality. The very balance between access or denial to government resources such as research visas or archives, as well as interviews and participation in family events is made possible by the host country and our own intentions.

The Senegalese community is one heavily steeped in religious faith and practice as well as cultural practices of kinship, oral tradition and now modern structures of bureaucracy and democracy. Throughout history, these various ethos, as Saba Mahmood (2009) describes them, have at times conflicted and others mutually constituted one another. Leichtman and Diouf (2009) have argued that Senegambian societies have historically faced the challenges of building new ethical architecture and moral economies for communities in search of peace. The overwhelming presence of Sufi Islam in Senegal, they argue, was in reaction to the "decomposition of moral, cultural and economic practices of traditional communities". In contemporary Senegalese society, the challenge of defining a moral community remains, and I argue the concept of *terànga*, and attendant debates give a particularly interesting avenue to explore these intersections, tensions, and historical longings (Chatterjee 1993).

Cultural theorists such as Marcel Mauss and Jacques Derrida have written about the social power of the gift and hospitality (Mauss, 1954; Derrida, 1997). Here is a discussion by Derrida regarding the subtleties and contradictions of hospitality:

Hospitality, if there is such a thing, is not only an experience in the most enigmatic sense of the word, which appeals to an act and an intention beyond the thing, object, or present being, but is also an intentional experience which proceeds beyond knowledge toward the other as absolute stranger, as unknown, where I know that I know nothing of him - Jacques Derrida *Hostipitality*

The social power is so powerful, argued by Mauss (1954) and Derrida (1997) that the exchange of hospitality and gifts often create a structure of rules that both parties must abide by in order to remain in the social unit and avoid conflict. These unspoken but known rules consist of receiving, giving, and returning the complement of gifts and hospitality. The scholars Candea and da Col (2012) argue in a recent article, *The Return to Hospitality*, attempt to revive a theoretical engagement regarding hospitality that they believe is an anthropological concept that encompasses a great deal more than the gift, as Mauss conceived of it, yet has been given less theoretical importance. They cite for example, how hospitality relates to other phenomena important in anthropology such as identity and belonging, and the relation of the individual to the collective, as well as alterity. Seen in this way, hospitality opens up several possibilities to understand the importance of not only gifts, but also the practices and ideas behind those gifts and beyond them. According to da Col and Candea (2012), hospitality "embeds social transactions in materiality," maintains kinship relationships by connecting the individual to the collective, and increases intimacy. It is what marks the communal rituals of a community as well as the micro-interactions of everyday life – of social etiquette (Ortner 1978). Pitt-Rivers would liken *terànga* to grace, as "an expression of esteem of the desire to please, a product of the arbitrary will, human or divine" (Candea and da Col 2012).

In addition, hospitality "reinforces hierarchical differences and frames class distinctions (2012)." As Judith Still (2010), a scholar of Derrida, argues, Derrida's theories of the Laws of Hospitality describe instances when the characteristics of hospitality such as generosity and sharing, inherent in gifts and food, mimic its definition without meeting the criteria for it. *Terànga* implies a whole set of meanings and norms that are embedded within acts of exchange that create and affirm identities and honor affiliations; self-representation that demonstrates

respect and characteristics of discretion and openness; generosity of time, resources, and emotions. It has become its own ethos at the center of Senegalese national identity, which the shared use and understanding of food, clothing, speech, and personal characteristics go beyond a definition of hospitality. In addition, *terànga* also exposes hierarchies among families and class distinctions as the necessary funds to create atmospheres of welcoming and the gifts and money for meals is not easy for everyone to come by. The reality of increasing demands for new ways of performing *terànga* has led to the predominance of women's rotating credit groups that enable them to pool resources for occasions of *terànga*. These groups, called *mbootaye*, allow women to overcome financial limits in order to meet the social requirements of family ceremonies (Buggenhagen 2012) and essentially "bluff" (Newell 2012) one's individual financial status.

Pitt-Rivers, as discussed by da Col and Candea (2012), talks about hospitality as a "natural law," one that is governed not by divine rule, but out of sociological necessity. Sherry Ortner also refers to hospitality among the Sherpa of Nepal as the model that maintains a social obligation to one another, with risk of conflict in its absence. Hospitality is in fact, as she notes, the main factor that keeps the Sherpa society functioning. I am inspired to consider the distinctions of religious and secular ethos in the work of Sherry Ortner and her analysis of hospitality among the Sherpa. As I underscored previously, *terànga* and hospitality are the central aspects of Senegalese sociality, dictating personal relationships and reputations, access to resources and people, and social mobility. *Terànga* is a social urban contract ensuring collaboration and cooperation. At the same time most Senegalese who are members of one of the Sufi orders and religious associations, play a major role in a person's moral and ethical foundation. Although this has arguably always been the case, public debates about *terànga*, family ceremonies, and especially women's command of them exposes tensions between these ethos. Such tensions arise due to anxieties about the source and qualities of a shared moral and



ethical society.

Sherry Ortner's work on hospitality among the Sherpa sees a contradiction between social hospitality and the ideals of religion. Social hospitality is what she calls 'sensuous susceptibility', the coercion of hosts to get their guests to eat and drink too much, demonstrating an affinity for excess as a promotion of cooperation and aid. This is about pleasing the body, whereas, she argues, religion devalues the body (1975). In addition, religion is the pursuit of personal salvation whereas she notes, hospitality, or the social order is what maintains cooperation and mutual dependencies with one another. It is important to note that Ortner is not saying that religion is against feeding or helping others, rather the issue arises when the social becomes about self-aggrandizement and self-interested as opposed to being socially centric (1975).

A similar tension between social hospitality and religion exists within the Layene community. Although the Layene practice hospitality as a way to relate socially, they also oppose much of the excessive aspects of hospitality because they believe they run counter to the goals of religion. Even as the Layene have based much of the social structure of the community on the principles of *terànga*, it is the premier focus on self-aggrandizing and inequality of social hospitality they reject.

Da Col and Candea point to the strength of Ortner's focus on the materiality of hospitality such as attention to etiquette, the time it takes to prepare food, and "creating a space for joking and conversation (2012)." Emphasizing the instances of providing hospitality, depicts the time and effort put into a meal or hosting that makes *terànga*, or demonstrates the *terànga* that comes from the host. Just as the emphasis on etiquette in terms of the display of food, the dress choices of the female host is also important in conveying the sentiment of *terànga*. Dress choice can also be part of the element of hospitality that serves to create difference and status.

In Deborah Heath's analysis of *sañse*, dressing up, she argues dress is “inflected by accents of identity and difference such as ‘tradition’ and ‘modernity’, religious devotion and heterodoxy” (1992). The dress choices of the various groups highlighted throughout this dissertation, such as the female politicians, the various married women, and the young women of the *teral gann* group demonstrate a kind of heteroglossia: the constant interaction of two meanings, all of which have the ability to condition one another (1992). The female politicians wear local fabrics to show their command of Senegalese culture, while they also adorn themselves with modern jewelry to stand out and command attention. Most interestingly is the case of the Layene women of the *teral gann* group who as members of the Layene community use white dress to erase difference, while at the same time the dresses they wear for hosting and everyday socializing are colorful fabrics that enhance difference. The women choose modern fashions and wear white clothing for religious events, to which they see no contradiction. In all instances, dress is a form of communication (Andrewes 2005), an expression of personal identity as well as a tool to communicate their desires to others.

Political oratory as well as everyday speech acts play a crucial role throughout this dissertation, as does personal representation through dress. The importance of a discussion on dress is that it is one of the most visual markers of difference (social and economic status, and ethnic and cultural), affiliation, and identity. In politics dress is a gateway for women to gain traction in a male-dominated arena. Female politicians in Senegal, just as in the case of Nigeria, use calculated beauty and elaborate dress to create charismatic personas (Weber 1968), demonstrate their "feminine arts" (Bastian 2013), and navigate the political system. Writing about the importance of dress and politics to a female politician in Nigeria, notes, "a woman hoping to demonstrate her mastery of feminine skills would never be caught in anything but a

contained and controlled state of dress". The same can be said in the context of Senegalese women in general, except "feminine skills" can be replaced with *terànga*.

Similarly, the practice of *sañse*, or dressing up, is another example of the dialectical nature of dress which female politicians in Senegal use to gain political momentum, and supporters despite their unequal relationships of patron-client (Heath 1990). Political oratory and dress as constructions of charisma can temporarily bridge these spatial gaps as well as gain the politician access to supporters. The utterance of *terànga* through rhetoric and the physical display of "feminine skills" of dress by female politicians also establishes a sense of unity, if not admiration, between them and their supporters. Wagner (2012) notes that all exchange must be uneven, because an 'even' exchange leaves little to "talk about afterwards," which in the Senegalese case would leave the *griot*, or praise singer and oral traditionalist, mostly unemployed. The importance of welcoming speech is a powerful component of creating a space between two parties, especially in times of conflict when kind words can settle nerves (2012).

One of anthropology's contributions to the study of hospitality has been to demonstrate the tensions between calculation and spontaneity, among others (Da Col and Candea 2012; Dresch 1998; Shryock 2008). The question of temporality and hospitality are also important to consider. Bourdieu said that if a gift is returned right away, it loses its power. Each major event of hospitality encompasses a multiplicity of singular events and transactions where altruism and selfishness are present (Da Col and Candea 2012).

Language and translation have always played an important role in the interpretation and theorization of hospitality. *Hospitalité* in French also has a series of what Derrida would call a semantic family (2002) or operates within a semantic field (Castaldi 2006), meaning several words stemming from a root word, or the qualities or actions of a specific word. For one, the word *hôte* translates as both guest and host. Derrida figures there is a contradictory tension

within hospitality seen between cognates such as the expectation to extend an invitation, *se tendre*, while also holding back (or to oneself), *se tenir*. Hospitality requires intentionality and non-intentionality, and attention and inattention. Many more examples create a field of conjugations of the word *tenere* (to hold or to keep) (2002). In both cases, *hospitalité* and *terànga* elicit a strange kind of togetherness, whether being alongside one another, *ter* (the Wolof word meaning to encounter another), or to *tenir/se tenir*. At the same time, guest and host sharing the same word, *hôte*, demonstrates an ambiguity of roles. Interestingly, the general word for foreigner or stranger in Wolof is *gann*, or guest (Diouf 2003). The Wolof pay no difference to a stranger linguistically, as he/she who is unknown, but rather see them as a guest, just as they would a friend stopping by for lunch or afternoon tea. If a friend were to bring a stranger to lunch, the hosts simply inquire, “Kuy sa gann?” *Who is your guest/friend?* A person who is particularly hospitable is someone who welcomes the guest, or who honors the needs of a guest, called *teral gann* (Diouf 2003).

These semantic musings are important for understanding the root of Senegalese cultural ideologies. Jacques Derrida argues that hospitality is culture (2002) and ethics (2010). Hospitality is an extension of oneself in the form of gifts, shelter, and welcoming. Hosts should always be ready to host, to receive and give, they must be prepared both bodily, through adornment/self presentation, and anticipate the guest's needs. As I pointed out earlier, the contradiction, and what I refer to as the art of hospitality, is one's ability to be prepared, and yet not expectant. This means, one should always be ready for the potential guest, however, their hospitality should appear to be natural and uncalculated. Derrida says these tensions create a culture of hospitality, a structure of welcoming (2002) that conditions both parties. I argue here that this structure extends beyond the boundaries of the home as the site of hospitality, representing an ethical compass for individuals out in the world.

Viveries de Castro (1998) argues that in Amerindian societies, the need to incorporate "close and distant Others such as neighbors, friends, and enemies" is important to constructing their own sense of identity. The same could be said for Senegalese's understanding of *terànga*, that it is an imperative part of how they identify themselves as well as it is how to portray this to others and uphold the national narrative as the Land of Teranga. Nancy Munn's emphasis on value making leads her to argue that the practice of gift exchange deploys the "potency of a person" through material form (1992). The French term, *mis en valeur*, used by men in Cote d'Ivoire, portrays an act of buying beers in an excessive manner that symbolically places value on the social relationships the men intend to create and maintain (Newell 2012). Additionally, to *faire le show* (put on a show) is a similar enactment of material wealth, which necessitates an accumulation of the right kind of clothes and bodily aesthetics as well as ample cash for the public display of wealth, even if the wealth was illicitly acquired, what Newell calls the 'bluff' (2012). The festivities of family ceremonies in Senegal are similarly theatrical, and the material result of women's vast networks of exchange and instances of day to day hospitality. Newell also talks about hospitality as an aggressive act to display power. Oftentimes, a host provoked others to be a guest at his table, or rather pawns in his efforts to compete with others in a potlatch-like exchange.

From Herzfield's notion of 'stranger' is a 'shifter', which documents the relationship between speaker and audience, da Col and Candea argue that hospitality identifies "several levels of collective identity (2012)," connecting matters of the home to those of the nation. The anthropological and philosophical literature on hospitality can be useful not only to theorize the culture of *terànga*, but its importance to nation-making. For instance, Shryock argues that the word for hospitality, *karam* in a local Bedouin dialect of Jordan, is much more than providing food and drink, but is a test of sovereignty. The Bedouin conception of hospitality, much like

*terànga* in Senegal, represents the quality of persons as well as nation-states (2012), and Shryock describes *karam* as a marker of nobility that makes generosity possible (2008). Senegalese discourses about their nation as one of hospitality is served dually by this assertion. On one hand, Senegal is seen as a welcoming place for those to visit, and in terms of national consciousness, Senegal as *the* land of *terànga* is only possible by distinguishing themselves from other nations through a discourse of hospitality. Moreover, the very project of nationalism is the creation of a national quality that sets the nation apart from others, even if it is at the same time professing its openness. The very problem with hospitality is how to enact autonomy and exchange, openness and closure, all in the same social space (Shryock 2012).

Derrida's interest in theorizing hospitality was in an effort to understand political sovereignty and immigrants or foreigners who challenge national borders and identities. The Law of Hospitality, according to Derrida and Kant is a universal right; the host (man of the house, nation, language) must respect the guest (foreigner) while maintaining his status as the host (or sovereign) who remains in control of his domain (2000). Derrida called this oscillation, *hostipitality* in order to render the normally hidden linguistic fact that in Latin, *hosti* – the root of hostile – comprises half of what hospitality means (2010). The host is both welcoming while remaining suspicious. Da Col and Candea discuss Derrida's assertion that hospitality gets to the "heart of the impossible pairing of the ethical requirement of absolute openness to the Other, and the equally necessary exclusionary sovereignty (2012). Much like the theoretical rationalities of nationalism and nation-making, hospitality exposes the tension between what is, and what is not, an imperative factor to feelings of belonging. Even *terànga* is at times given freely, other instances it is withheld to send a competitive message. What seems on the surface as a cut and dry exchange of niceties can possess a somewhat sinister aim in order to make social distinctions.

I argue throughout this dissertation that *terànga* is an ethical and moral code. *Terànga* has been depicted as the "degree of generosity that a person possesses, when considering the moral value of exchange" (Castaldi 2006). Moreover, *terànga* is perceived as the quality of an individual's contribution to society through exchange, writ large. In the Senegalese context, generosity comes in the form of hospitality, and the forms of emotions, intentions, and actions encapsulated in something called hospitality. Using the word *gann* to signify stranger demonstrates Wolof and other Senegalese do not so much focus on the object, but to the ingrained ritual of *terànga* itself.

However, the meanings and practices of *terànga* go beyond a rudimentary definition of hospitality, even as it shares its qualities, forms, and employment. *Terànga* in a sense is a mobile hospitality taken wherever one goes, such as the 'cultural structure of welcoming' (Derrida 2002), guiding interactions, decisions, and personal representations in the face of unknown and known individuals. Judith Still argues there are many instances where the essence of hospitality may appear in contexts beyond the realm of its definition (2010). The concept of *terànga* is both an individual and national identity captured in a material object, and is equally measured by how a person conducts and represents themselves through dress, manners, and speech. Women are especially taught to adopt a constant awareness of *terànga* as one of the most important aspects of their development into womanhood. In order to create this atmosphere, one employs a number of tactics such as being attentive to the needs of guests, both invited and potential passersby. Preparation of food and its presentation is key, as well as a woman's general demeanor while serving others. A generosity of time, resources, and emotions demonstrates respect for the other party, and respect for a shared culture. In the case of women in politics, just as when women are courted for marriage, candidates are judged for their giving and selfless nature and vetted by their peers, potential in-laws and supporters. A generous disposition can make the difference

between political office or continual campaigning as well as between a happy and stable home, or one of conflict.

Despite arguments calling for a reinterpretation of hospitality and the gift, the gift as Marcel Mauss sees it, represents a comprehensive catalogue of social ties. However, where I disagree with Mauss is that his understanding of the gift does not account for the very personal and emotional legacies manifested by hospitality. For example, if a young married woman gives her mother-in-law *terànga* in the form of a gift, she is to present it while wearing a beautiful dress and accompanying hairstyle and accessories. These are not only enshrined within the gift itself but also create a lasting memory of reputation. In other words, building from Mauss' discussion of the *hau*, or spirit of the giver, *terànga* also leaves behind a genealogical legacy of the giver. *Terànga* is something equally captured in a material object (Mauss 1954), as it is how a person conducts themselves through dress, manners, and speech. Not only does the gift, or offering of hospitality, qualify the receiver's reputation, they create a lasting impression of the giver's generosity. Most Senegalese women are especially taught to adopt a constant awareness of *terànga* as one of the most important aspects of their development into womanhood. In order to create this atmosphere, one employs a number of tactics such as being attentive to the needs of guests, both invited and potential passersby. Preparation of food and its presentation is key, as well as her general demeanor while serving others. A generosity of time, resources, and emotions demonstrates respect for the other party, and respect for shared culture.

On the surface, uttering the word *terànga* seems to sufficiently capture an undeniable collective Senegalese identity. However, many different interpretations and uses of *terànga* at times conflict, or offer alternative functions. A discussion of *terànga* reveals another element that goes beyond hospitality as an emphasis of historical hierarchies. *Terànga* is also a historical genealogy of Senegalese culture, and is spoken of during social and material exchanges as a way



to convey an ideal historical culture that may be masked by these exchanges. In other words, the use of *terànga* in instances of exchange, represents what exchange should be, and once was. During family ceremonies, women giving gifts of cloth and cash as well as during informal gift-giving, use *terànga* to describe the exchange. Critiques of the inflating gift exchanges during ceremonies and religious holidays cite they are degrading the historically symbolic importance of *terànga*. It is the inflation of gift-giving and focus on the material rather than the social aspect of giving that are the objects of debates about what the real definition of *terànga* is, and therefore, I believe, is a way to elicit an idealized culture. Critiques of the inflating gift exchanges accuse ceremonies and religious holidays as degrading the historically symbolic importance of *terànga*.

This dissertation regarding *terànga* also problematizes Derrida's focus on hospitality as a question of sovereignty, which relies too heavily on structural and patriarchal notions of the nation and society. Instead, the ethnographies of women in political, religious, and cultural practices demonstrate how hospitality is important to the intimacy of their daily lives and their public contributions to society. The state and NGO campaigns entitled "the fight against wastefulness" created a national dialogue demonizing family ceremonies and the women who mostly control them. These were debates about material exchange and its importance to social relationships, which I have argued is also a debate about the definition of *terànga* and its value.

### **Colonial and Postcolonial Nationalism**

Benedict Anderson (2006) is perhaps the most widely recognized theoretician of nationalism. His argument regarding print capitalism - the commercial circulation of nationally recognized knowledge - consolidates his understanding of nations as imagined communities. By way of a discussion regarding novels, he further argues that print capitalism was a new way for individuals to think about themselves and in relation to others, what Gellner would say is an

invention of the nation (1997). Anderson believes Gellner's use of the 'invention' discredits national consciousness as a fabrication, whereas 'imagining' represents real communities.

It would seem as if Anderson and Gellner have different aims for their discussions of nationalism. While Anderson investigates the evolution of an elite-class capitalist construction of the mostly Western European nation, Gellner is specifically interested in tracing the genealogy of nationalist ideology. Although they both agree nationalism is a reality of the modern era. Gellner discusses the two popular opinions of whether the nation is a cultural trait that stems from an ancient past, or a modern one that was invented by thinkers; arguing that instead, nationalism is a necessary consequence of a specific cultural condition. After all, he argues, the bedrock of social life is culture and organization, and nationalism is the political use of culture identification to determine who belonged. Just as the social organization of the nation was not the destiny or reality of all, Gellner divides Europe into various zones where the creation of nations and nationalism happened in varying stages. Considering that places like the Czech Republic had to be completely reinvented as a nation, and that Gellner argues Western Europe had to change very little as their social organization already resembled many of the components of nationalism, such as a monarch, this begs the question, what about the so-called subaltern world such as Africa and Asia?

Partha Chatterjee's pivotal book *The Nation and Its Fragments* took this question to task. He disagreed with Benedict Anderson's depiction of "modular forms" of nationalism emanating from European countries from which the colonized had to choose. Instead, he argued nationalism in Asia and Africa was predicated on a difference with European concepts of nationalism and modernity by way of three elements: the middle-class struggle against colonial subordination and the construction of an elite class; the construction of a patriarchal nation by refusal of an imperialist feminization of men; and by developing a need for a past, a locally figured history

(1993). More importantly for this dissertation on women's experiences, is what he called 'the women's question' which became an essential piece of anti-colonial nationalist aspirations to protect the spiritual, or sacred "inner" space from the material corruption of the West. For Chatterjee, nationalism in India, and the colonized world generally, divided the domain of culture into two spheres: the material and the spiritual. Western civilization was focused on the material aspects of life such as science and technology, while subaltern, or the East as he called it, was more concerned with the spiritual, matters of the intimate, the home.

The home, or domestic sphere, has long figured into the relationships of power and control, nationalism, and identity construction, as mentioned by Barbara Cooper and her discussion of marriage and the state (1997). Chatterjee discusses the importance of women to the struggle for the Indian nation to define its spiritual (inner) identity, nationalist elites felt was threatened by Western forces. The home became the symbol of the nation, and women the protectorates of a 'traditional' past and present. Hannah Arendt argued the the modern society of the nation is a "curiously hybrid realm where private interests assume public significance."

It is through Chatterjee's quest to find women's voices in the form of sparse autobiographies, that he came to understand the nation as 'fashioned by a hegemonic culture' of patriarchy and class. After all, women had been part of the struggle for nationalism, albeit in the inner space of the home. Moreover, I believe this dissertation also demonstrates women's active and not passive role in national culture and history, past and present.

For Senegal, the *négritude* movement was an example of the "Order of the Other" (Castaldi 2006), in which colonial subjects, led by intellectuals, voiced their objections to colonial portrayals of them. *Négritude* was established in the 1930s and 40s by several scholars of the Francophone African Diaspora in response to the racism they encountered while studying in Paris. Léopold Sédar Senghor, who would become Senegal's first president following

independence in 1960, was one of the founders of this cultural and political movement and ideology, which celebrated African black culture and rejected European imperialism (2006).

The scholarship on postcolonial nation-building asserts that many African states promoted certain practices and vocabulary in an effort to create inclusion. This was in part due to ethnic divisions that threatened the legitimacy of the state and national stability. In their edited volume *Making Nations*, Dorman, Hammett, and Nugent discuss how these efforts also had an affect on how citizens identified themselves, behaved, and lived (2007). Just as many other African countries such as neighboring Guinea, Tanzania in East Africa, and Ethiopia, Senegal was part of a wave of independence from colonial rule in the early 1960s. Similarly, were the efforts to cultivate nationalist unity through the implementation of laws, promotion of cultural heritage, and language which aimed to create a national figure or shared culture.

Partha Chatterjee also argues a crucial element of national consciousness is the need for a past, or a historiography written by Indians and Africans themselves (1993). By conveying the sense of a lost history that needs to be recaptured, and the need to represent their own history, intellectuals are called upon to construct the history. This struggle is still relevant in Senegal. A visit to Dakar by the former French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, in 2007, and his speech to students at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop is illustrative. A response by the historian Ibrahima Thioub is even more so. A passage from Sarkozy's speech follows:

The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history. The African peasant, who for thousands of years have lived according to the seasons, whose life ideal was to be in harmony with nature, only knew the eternal renewal of time, rhythmmed by the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words. - *President Nicolas Sarkozy, Dakar July 26, 2007*

Dr. Thioub's response:

We know this statement does not stem from rhetoric, but from a multi-secular practice that witnessed millions of oppressed and persecuted men and women to whom it offered the opportunity to reconstruct a life of dignity. What your African representatives will certainly not tell you as they welcome you as their guest, is we will only tell you that

which is good and done well. Know this is a tradition, and if I may Mr. President, since you also wish the [political] rupture in France, we also can carry an end to this tradition.  
- Professor Ibrahima Thioub, August 8, 2007

Dr. Thioub seems to imply in his response that Senegal has a tradition of welcoming their guests, and showing discretion and respect for these guests, just as *griots* reserve unique praise for those around them. In reaction to Sarkozy's assertion that Africans have no history (or at least one that matters) - and by addressing the French President's campaign slogan of *rupture* - Thioub threatens to break tradition and tell him what he really thinks. He argues that the figure of an African that is religious and "magical" (Thioub 2007) is a character imagined by European and African elites to serve their own political purposes. Throughout the rest of the letter, Thioub reminds Sarkozy that in fact, it is up to the historians and academics to research and convey to the public the question of history.

Furthermore, the very object of nationalism, as discussed by Dorman, Hammett, and Nugent, uncovers a dichotomous distinction of insiders from outsiders; those who do not belong to the nation are emphasized in order to establish those who do belong. Gellner similarly argued that the defining components of nationalism was cultural homogeneity, which could be endangered by the imposition of others (1997). In a comment about humanists' ideal view of nationalism, he reveals they had hoped that openness, generosity, and hospitality would reign.

In response to one of Gellner's chapters entitled "Does the Nation Have a Navel?," Paul Nugent equally asks "Do nations have stomachs?" Gellner's reference to navels refers to the debate regarding Creationism and Darwinism - which Gellner compares to the debates regarding the birth of nations - that many thought could be resolved by asking whether Adam had a navel or not. Nugent (2010) instead considers the importance of consumption as a "coupling of selfhood with collective experiences" in a context of dis-embedded African states that still boast a strong sense of national identity. The case for consumption as a shared identity is very clear in

Senegal, as noted by Nugent, with a strong sense of collective adoration for specific dishes, such as the national dish, *ceebu jën* (with regional variations). The rice and fish dish among others is a national institution that symbolizes not just a basic need for sustenance, but also objectifies Senegalese values such as *terànga*. Not only is the food itself significant, but the way it is prepared, served, eaten, and with whom it is shared represent the ideals and practices of a Senegalese ethics, which is localized as well as global. Nugent argues that the importance of consumption is not just in the act of drinking tea or eating, but in its power to elicit reflection, creating a "regular cycle of sociability that can be replicated across national space (2010)," and beyond national borders. *Terànga* is exported throughout the world, wherever Senegalese choose to open shops, specifically restaurants. The neighborhood of Little Senegal in Harlem, restaurants in Brooklyn, NY, and the restaurant *Terànga* in Cincinnati, Ohio are just a few examples. Therefore, the power of *terànga* as a symbol of Senegalese nationalism is found in the shared reflections and debates about its qualities and value. *Terànga* as experienced through food currently seems to be the single most unifying marker of Senegalese identity both among Senegalese in Senegal and those living abroad. As well as it is a marker for the changes brought on by democracy and globalization.

### **Gender, National Representation, and Development**

Senegalese nationalist discourse was based on the values of respect and submission, which meant a paternal hierarchy: son to father and woman to man (Diouf, Diop, O'Brien 2002). Chatterjee argues that the 'hypermasculinity' (1993) of the colonialist mentality regarded the indigenous and even Indian middle class as subordinate, weak, and effeminate. In response, the construction of an elite postcolonial class and nation became gendered as discourses of "physical strength as the true history of the nation," (1993) and therefore, in the male image, became the

norm. As leaders of the nation, men sought to protect their mothers humiliated by the colonial intruder (1993). In this case, men are the leaders of the nation, while women are symbols of the nation in need of protection. In her book, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation*, Elleke Boehmer argues that the postcolonial nation was brought into self-consciousness by male leaders, activists and writers, in which women were more often than not, cast as symbols or totems of culture (2005). In many ways Senegal is no exception. Since independence from France in 1960, Senegal has been dominated by male leaders, and legislation that overwhelmingly gives advantage to male-led households. Women on the other hand rarely held formal political office and were mostly relegated to the status of upholding national values as “bearers of tradition” (2005). Although much of this remains the same even in the globalized metropolis of the capital city Dakar, this dissertation seeks to complicate these gendered binaries by examining their engagement with the institution of *terànga*.

The ethnography of this dissertation contributes to the theoretical discussion of nationalism in several ways. My examination of *terànga* and women's experiences demonstrates the possibility of a cultural institution, such as *terànga*, as a centerpiece of nationalism. In addition, the construction of nationalism is not a top-down flow of knowledge, but rather a reciprocal relationship of several actors. Benedict Anderson (2006) argued nationalist consciousness was constructed and relayed through the form of print capitalism and Paul Nugent (2010) wrote that nations have stomachs, as food and beverage consumption in much of Africa, including Senegal, identify themselves, one another, and the nation through a shared dish or drink. In the case of *terànga* we could ask, do nations have generosity? How are shared emotions be the stuff of nations? Johann Herder the German philosopher certainly believed they were (Barnard 2003).

*Terànga* as imagined through speech, popular media, stories, and day to day interactions is what Senegalese understand about what it means to be Senegalese. Senegalese national identity is tied to the cultural institution, or ideology of *terànga*, and although it may at times appear as a mode of consumption through gift giving and social obligations fulfilled by way of cash, *terànga* is not really about objective exchange. It is what encapsulates a historical cultural genealogy, both of an idealized past as well as a demonstration of cultural knowledge of the Senegalese imagined community. Moreover, women's overwhelming command of *terànga* in both private and public domains illustrates their central role in nation-making. The national debates regarding excessive spending and the changing nature of *terànga* could not emanate from the political elite class alone - as has been apparent in the numerous failings of state laws regarding the matters of ceremonies and private spending - but is talked about and debated by those living *terànga* every day. National identity and consciousness is created through these debates about the meanings of *terànga*.

The following chapters in this dissertation will demonstrate the various contexts in which *terànga* is performed and debated. Stories throughout the chapters contextualize larger local and global changes as they are felt by individuals and their relationship to their communities. Each chapter builds on the examples of the previous chapters, while also introducing new ways of thinking about the importance and extent of *terànga* in the realms of Senegalese society, historically and contemporarily.



## Chapter Two

### Representations of *Terànga*: Gendered Debates and the Ideal Woman

*Development is a contract between the state and its nation... Our nation is in evolution and the state is a fundamental support in this initial process, therefore we feel the true African nation is before us*<sup>4</sup> – Mamadou Dia, Former Prime Minister of Senegal, 1961

This chapter discusses the legacy of a patriarchal state and popular culture reifications of gendered expectations of marriage, femininity, and the performance of *terànga* are experienced by women in the city. Moreover, this chapter examines the paradoxical conditionality of women's behavior and assessed worth in the context of marriage: Senegalese women are bound by their obligation of generosity towards others and the embodiment of *terànga* in order to maintain the stability in their homes and between family members, while being accused of an irresponsible management of the family economy as a result. Women who acknowledge frustrations with the hyper-inflated expectations for them to be generous and invest heavily in rituals of social reproduction, also express a great deal of pride and agency that stems from their *terànga* abilities. In other words, the encouragement of women to give generously and indiscriminately presents a conundrum given that the gendered cultural practices of Senegal important to the social fabric are consistently criticized. Women are more often than not at the center of these critiques.

In this chapter I will examine these contradictions and intersections by discussing public discourses found in advertisements, TV shows, music videos, as well as the reoccurring campaign known as the *la lutte contre le gaspillage* ("fight against wastefulness") spearheaded by the Senegalese government and the non-governmental organization RADI, *Réseau africain pour le développement intégré* (African Network for Integrative Development). These texts

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<sup>4</sup> Translation done by author

reflect the diverse linguistic play in creating meaning for women's speech and performance of *terànga*, and the ambiguities women face regarding their marriages, social lives, and as further chapters will show, access to resources and power.

Woven throughout are several vignettes of two married women from the religious group, the Layene, and a young female journalist who illuminate the complexities of *terànga* to the realities of polygamous unions, divorce, and marital conflict, as well as the relationship between women and their female family in-laws. These examples also set up the social and religious tensions of defining *terànga* and women's role in its performance. In order to frame these in the overarching narratives of *terànga* as the Senegalese symbol of national culture, I weave popular culture examples such as news articles, songs, advertisements, and television programs throughout the vignettes. These pairings will allow me to discuss how the consumption of media sources and popular culture are reflected in everyday conversations, practices, and ideologies of women's role as national practitioners of *terànga*, while at the same time criticized for the changes it has endured.

### **State Campaigns to "Fight Against Wastefulness"**

As was discussed throughout the introduction, the initial efforts of the postcolonial Senegalese government aimed to promote a national culture of African values and cosmopolitan aspirations. Mamadou Dia, Senegal's first Prime Minister, was more radical in his ideas for an African socialism and nation-building as a project of ethical training which was quite evident in his public speeches, such as this one:

We want to develop a new man, born from a certain awareness of the world, and also a certain intuition of spiritual value of life's forces, of which its rhythm informs our ascetics: a promise of a new humanism both faithful to Africa, to the vocation of man, and also to that which is universal to us (Dia 1961),

His words invoke as Lacan has said, a “collective memory” in which the true Senegal, the real Africa is one based on implied values (Mahmood 2005). Mamadou Dia had helped craft the initial stages of the *Code de la Famille* (Family Code) (Sow 2003), which would be passed in 1972, and the earlier piece, the 1967 law outlining the permissible amounts to be spent for family ceremonies. Although instrumental in the conception of both projects, he would not be around to see their implementation, as Senghor accused him of planning a *coup d'état* in 1962, and was consequently jailed for twelve years (Barry 2009).

In response to perceived notions of ceremonies as wasteful and destructive, many formal and informal sectors of Senegalese society have adopted political strategies to address the issue. The Ministry of the Family and Women's Affairs has urged women to find the courage to stop excessive spending, oftentimes symbolically implicating themselves; Islamic and Catholic leaders deemed the practice immoral, and local non-governmental organizations such as the RADI, have developed local legal campaigns to advocate against excessive spending. Among these campaigns is the movement entitled 'the fight against wastefulness'. The movement is an effort to revise the law of 1967, and to establish forums for public debate to address how excessive spending for family ceremonies are affecting their communities and possible solutions.

The law N°67-04 reprimanding excessive spending at the occasion of family ceremonies regulates the allowable expenditures for baptisms, weddings, communions, funerals, and the return from religious pilgrimages. The law caps the allowable amount per ceremony at 10,000 CFA (\$20) with the exception of weddings. Weddings, because they are a multiple step process, are allowed 3,000 CFA for the dowry and 15,000 for the gifts and food. In the case of baptisms, all forms of gifts and donations are strictly prohibited. Due to fears of noise disturbances and to prevent further financial stress for providing several meals, an acceptable length of time for the ceremony is also stated. If the festivities begin in the morning it must end at eleven o'clock, and

if they begin in the afternoon the ending time is eight in the evening. By also limiting each occasion to one animal for slaughter, the law effectively limits the amount of mouths to feed. Under the penalty section is included the possible fines if caught in violation, ranging from 20,000 – 500,000 CFA to possible jail time (Republique du Senegal 1967). These sums are extremely low and do not account for years of inflation, even in 1967. However, they mirror a great deal the expectations for religious ceremonies and the symbolic nature of money instead of an economy based upon these exchanges. There have been contemporary calls by members of the National Assembly to reinvigorate the law by updating the amounts to reflect current realities.

This seemingly innocuous and bizarre law was commonly explained to me as a preemptive measure by Mamadou Dia and his government who saw an increasingly upwards trend of spending for ceremonies and believed it would be an issue of moral and economic concern later on. Rosnert Allisoutin, a lawyer and legal consultant for the organization RADI, said the law was and remains a pedagogical tool for the state to promote economic development. An elder woman, Ouley Samb, I interviewed told me in the time of Mamadou Dia, the police would circulate neighborhoods looking for ceremonies that violated the legal limits. Ouley talked about ceremonies when she was a younger woman:

When you had a ceremony, you closed your door and had it inside to be able to give your in-laws *terànga*: money and cloth; and ask for *ndawtal* [contributions given by a woman's family and friends to help pay for the ceremony], group them all together and give the *terànga* to your mother in-law. If the police came and caught you, they would take you to jail.

Many of the post-colonial governments attempted to cultivate national culture *against*<sup>5</sup> a range of practices such as *gaspillage*, or in the case of Tanzania, wearing mini-skirts (Ivanska 2011). The ultimate failure to administer the law has led to its proliferation as a temporal topic of

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<sup>5</sup> Author's emphasis

national concern, thus reinforcing a need to question certain values. Shortly after its inception, the law was loosely reinforced and eventually forgotten, and has instead been a campaigning tool for politicians to establish themselves as civic minded and concerned with social issues.

Excessive spending and the inflated expectations of gift-giving, and therefore *terànga* was seen as a matter of draining private and public funds at a time when national development was crucial both socially and economically. For the Senegalese state, citizens were expected to take personal and public part in the productive and consumptive practices of the developing nation, and avoid wasteful expenditures for family ceremonies. Excessive spending was deemed counter-productive. Moreover, the undertones of the law idealized a traditional past. The postcolonial state desired to return to a normal state of realistic economics by means of reaffirming the moral imperatives of the economy and traditional practices. Debates about family ceremonies and social production were therefore a project in establishing the nature of value (Buggenhagen 2011) and the qualities of the nation-state.

In 1966 the state newspaper, *Le Soleil*, published several articles depicting the debates regarding the urgency of such a law, citing personal accounts of the 1966 suicide of a justice of the peace in response to being accused of dishonoring his family in-law as they perceived his gift to them at his son's baptism to be ludicrously little (1996). This spurred a vote in the senate to instate the law, citing a desire to restore "normativity" in the wake of French legal influence. Moreover, the undertones of the law idealized a traditional, rural past; morality and productivity reflected the desires to return to a normal state of realistic economics by means of reaffirming the moral imperatives of the economy.

In an aired radio interview with RTS (Radio Télévision Senegal), Alioune Badara Mbengue, the Inspector General at the time highlighted that the law addressed an urgent need for the state to "defend the Senegalese people from themselves and from specific

‘parasitic’<sup>6</sup>members of society who had created a system of social coercion regarding excessive spending which many took part in against their own will" (RTS 1967). Excessive spending was a matter of draining private and public funds at a time when national development both socially and economically was crucial (Le Soleil 1996). The law would give individuals and communities the tools to resist against the practice, while the state would work with local police brigades, community leaders, and heads of families to survey ceremonies in neighborhoods to report violations.

The Abdou Diouf and Socialist Party administration of the 1980’s and 90’s marked the beginning of an annual governmental forum “Quinzaine de la Femme” (Women’s Fortnight) which joined the likes of International Women’s Day celebrated in Senegal and in many countries globally. Global feminism influenced the reshaping of dialogues regarding gender inequality, a need for programs that supported women’s presence in the work force, and campaigns to end cultural practices deemed harmful to women. Each year in May the forum gathers around themes relevant to the political, social, and economic climate of the country and women’s experiences. The first annual theme was the “well-being of the family and its role in development” and later became an integral part of the state’s participation in policies proposed by various aid agencies, such as “Women in Development” (Griffith, 1985).

On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1996 the International Women’s Day celebration exhibited the subject of the law and excessive spending as a sub-theme to the greater issue regarding campaigns against violence. Violence against women was characterized as physical, economic, and political. The 1996 forum also marked a substantial platform for the Minister of the Family and Women’s

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<sup>6</sup> the parasitic members of society are most likely speaking about griots and female family in-law members as they are known to be those who profit the most from ceremonies, and also provoke other women to spend more. Griots are known to show up at ceremonies in search of monetary compensation, whether they know the family or not.

Affairs to demand the ministerial council to consider reinstating the law of 1967<sup>7</sup>. This signaled an effort to reinterpret the law considering the current circumstances. The state-run newspaper, *Le Soleil*, published articles about the forum and an accompanying homage to the National Movement of Women of the Socialist Party (Mouvement Nationale des Femmes Socialistes). The article entitled “Homage to the Female Guardians of the Party” wrote that the party president Ousmane Tanor Dieng offered the slogan “the Senegal that wins is the Senegal of women...they are models of generosity, patriotism, and cohesion” (1996). At the same time, the newspaper featured several articles condemning women’s excessive displays of generosity, calling them wasteful and both economically unproductive, and emotionally disturbing to women. These contrasting narratives again highlight the bind women find themselves: saluted for their contributions of generosity to political parties and in society in general, and yet abhorred for the same actions. Praise and repudiation for women's behavior by male-led parties was demonstrated through their rhetoric in campaigns and with the specific laws targeting social domains mostly controlled by women.

Over the years, similar discourses have filled newspapers, radio programs, and television talk shows. In them, the state of the nation is reflected in the praises and criticisms for women’s actions. An editorial from *Le Soleil* in 1999 expresses remorse for the *terànga* of yesteryear, and contempt for the increasing “incivility” of the nation that was once famous for its hospitality (Pires 1999). During the Abdoulaye Wade administration, beginning in 2000, each consequential woman who held the office of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs<sup>8</sup> argued for reinitiating the law of 1967. Ndeye Khady Diop, Minister of “the family, women’s organizations, and small children”, called for a readjustment of the law to match the current economic environment (Le Soleil 2010).

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<sup>7</sup> Le Soleil March 8<sup>th</sup> 1996

<sup>8</sup> This ministry has changed names many times since it’s tenure

When Madame Aida Mbodj – who I discuss in Chapter Four – was minister of the Family and Women’s Organizations, she was quoted as saying “the phenomenon of wastefulness is a vicious cycle...(by continuing it) we cannot cultivate the solidarity of our ancestors’ generation (Diouf 2011).” She admitted that as a woman and mother it was hard to personally deny the very real social pressures to hold large celebrations for the baptism of her first grandson, for example. At the time of her appointment as Minister, her first grandson was in fact born, and she said she was bound by her position to set a good example. It was the pressure of her role as a public figure that forced her to reconsider her actions. In a candid moment, Madame Mbodj showed that even for women of considerable status, their obligations to others and the social process of family ceremonies remained urgent.

Non-governmental organizations such as RADI (Réseau pour le Développement Intégré) also accused ministers and politicians of setting a bad example by publicly spending exorbitant amounts on a wedding or baptism, calling for them to take their role as public figures seriously (APS 2007). I spent a good deal of time with members of RADI and especially their division of legal affairs, which headed up the campaign to "fight against wastefulness". RADI, a non-governmental organization headed by Senegalese, but mostly funded by international sources, was a partner to the large network of women's organizations in Dakar, *Réseau Siggil Jigéen* (Network for Improving Women's Status). Daba Gaye, the legal affairs director of RADI, has been fighting for women's equality and empowerment alongside many of the contemporary development specialists of recent Senegalese history. When I asked RADI's interest in combatting excessive ceremonies, she simply said, "We realized that all of our other development projects were being obstructed by women's obligations to family ceremonies." That is, she said, trying to help women with money-generating jobs to alleviate poverty was futile as many women would simply take that money and invest it in ceremonies. Madame Gaye also



indicated that women needed to be emancipated from the social obligations of gifts, participation in family ceremonies, and strict financial obligations to family members. Rosnert Allisoutin, a legal consultant for RADI told me the initial law aimed to prevent what state representatives feared would become an increasing problem. "Our goal was to empower women to have access to power and resources, and we saw that their obligations to ceremonies hindered their emancipation" he said.

One of the members of Gaye's development groups was Cécile Dieye, a widow with mostly grown children. She described her economic situation that resonated with many others:

I had a job as the secretary at the Chamber of Commerce [in Boon, a suburb of Dakar], but ever since Abdou Diouf distributed our society [referring to the IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programs signed off by Diouf] I can no longer find a job even though I applied everywhere. It has been since 1989 or 90 that I forgot about it and now I sell dried fish. You see, there are no jobs, there is no money. Unemployment is grilling, and everyone is selling and we don't diversify as all the products are about the same.

The flagship program of RADI's campaign to fight against wastefulness was designed to provide money-generating opportunities for women such as Cécile, while also teaching them to save money and holding them accountable for the money they spent. To do so, the women drafted and signed a *code de conduite*, a code of conduct that stated the limits to how much money they could use for ceremonies, and the agreed upon fine to be paid to the group if a woman was to violate the terms of the code. Cécile liked the idea because she agreed that family ceremonies had gotten out of control. I asked why RADI had chosen to address the issue of family ceremonies.

I think its for better living. They think wastefulness is bad, they think that for a country to make itself in the future has to have money, we have to save. When it is a question of sociality and not a ceremony I can understand that, I can be social. I want to give my mother in-law a gift, I can buy her a dress and give it to her, that's no problem. It is nothing compared to when I offer her a gift during a ceremony because I will buy a dress that costs 20,000 cfa (\$10), and give her 25,000 in cash (\$12.50). I don't stop there. I must give her 10 or 15 more dresses, money, bowls, scarves, rosaries, even sandals. Just for her. If she has any sisters, I must give to them as well, and if my husband has sisters and aunts I must give to them. And of course, the griots get the most. I am obliged to do

all of this. Often when I hear there is a ceremony in the neighborhood I immediately don't want to go. The government needs to put us in jail just to stop us from wasting.

Cécile chuckled when she mentioned being put in jail, however, she was emphasizing the crushing obligations women endure regarding family ceremonies. Despite the efforts to instate development models of saving and using money for economically productive purposes, which is the aim of NGOs such as RADI and state-run programs, the preeminence of gift-giving and social payments reigns. How did this situation become as it is now? As I previously mentioned, the legacy of social hierarchies and tight kinship bonds, in addition to growing unemployment and the absence of state social security have contributed to the growing emphasis and intensity of family ceremonies and instances of *terànga* and its mixed definitions. The rest of this chapter will discuss how popular culture and media sources have contributed to this phenomenon by publicizing an ideal woman whose worth and value is wrapped up in her abilities and practices of *terànga*. The ethnographic sketches will also demonstrate women's opinions and frustrations regarding mounting obligations to family and friends.

### ***Terànga on the Ground***

*“A family ceremony is the moment dreaded by every Senegalese woman, the moment when she sacrifices her possessions as gifts to her family in-law...Her behavior is conditioned: no sister in-law will touch the head of any wife who has been stingy, unfaithful, or inhospitable” – Mariama Bâ, *Une Si Longue Lettre*, 1981*

Mariama Bâ's infamous novel, *Une Si Longue Lettre (So Long a Letter)*, depicts the struggles of married women in Senegalese urban society to create and maintain their positions as married women. This semi-autobiographical work, underlines a reality of women's experience in Senegal that is still highly debated today. The story of the main protagonist, Ramatoulaye, begins with

the death of her husband who many years' prior betrayed her by marrying a second, much younger, wife. Despite this deception, she decided to stay in the marriage, and deal with her internal struggles, however her relationship with her husband was never the same. Ramatoulaye, an educated school teacher, writes a series of self-reflexive letters to her best friend lamenting her years of contributing to countless ceremonies and building a welcoming and hospitable home in an attempt to foster stable relationships with her family in-law. Instead, she was cast aside despite her efforts. As noted by Bâ, a woman's behavior is conditioned by these obligations to be generous and hospitable, as it means the difference between a peaceful and stable home, and one of conflict.

*So Long a Letter* has remained a literary classic in Senegal, and Bâ's critique of women's obligations to family ceremonies and Senegalese society remains relevant. In the next section I discuss the similar tensions between marital expectations for women and the consequences of marital realities by cataloguing the various elements required for maintaining kinship ties through gift-giving during family ceremonies. I then feature a young woman, Aissatou, who is a journalist writing about the subject of excessive family ceremonies, while also facing her own challenges within her marriage and with extended family members. Her story highlights the very issues raised by Bâ in her novel regarding women's experience of polygamy and marital obligations.

### **Marriage is Critical, and Not Always in the Way You Think**

Family ceremonies such as weddings and baptisms and the gift exchanges that surround them are the most visible spaces of *terànga*. Elder women with children of marrying age invest in community rotating credit associations called *mbootaye*, which serve as a way to pool money with peers for an annual or monthly collective pay out. This money is often used to host a

wedding for the woman's daughters and to solicit further investments from other female neighbors and family members. The latter investment is a particularly interesting social exchange where the money given is part of a long trend of reciprocity that extends over years of prestations and counter-prestations. A woman who is particularly caught up in these circular networks depend upon their reciprocal partners to contribute to their ceremonies in order to recuperate their investments in their partner's occasions of life-cycle events. For example, a wedding is an event for which the mothers of girls save money years prior. Depending on the group, they meet once a month, each contributing a fixed amount of 5,000 to 10,000 cfa (\$10-20), which is given to the secretary and stored in a cabinet at her home. A particularly upscale *mbootaye* can have monthly amounts of up to 50,000 cfa (\$100).

If a man wants to marry a woman he demonstrates his intentions through a *may bu njëkk*, or first symbolic gift consisting most often of a combination of cash and material gifts such as cloth and jewelry. The price is often determined by how much he has to give and where he and his family set the bar for future reciprocities. This is important, because most official gifting for ceremonies in Senegal follow a system of doubling prices. For example, if the man truly intends to ask for her parents' permission, he must furnish a *warugar*, or dowry consisting of doubling the amount of cash given for the *may bu njëkk*. *Warugar* also expresses the Wolof idea of a moral obligation to fulfilling his promise to marry and take care of the woman (Sylla 1978). The dowry price is usually set by the parents of the young woman, who also are careful to strike a balance between gaining a sizable sum without obligating themselves to reciprocate more than they can afford at a later time. Dowries can consist of a large sum of money accompanied with a bed or similar home furnishings (Masquelier 2009). A small part of the dowry is given to the bride to-be, to the father, and the large portion is left for the mother to manage. The father uses his part to buy kola nuts to pass out to his friends at the official *takk*, or "tying" of the marriage,

or naming ceremony of the Muslim baptism. The mother is responsible for the festivities of the wedding such as many platters of rice and chicken or lamb, drinks, chair and tent rentals for hundreds of guests, and oversees the presentation of gifts with the help of the family *griot*.

Assane Sylla argues *terànga* is manifested in the exchange of gifts (1978). Because gift giving between families is paramount to the marriage process, the mother of the bride must go to the market and buy various types and qualities of cloth, beads, and other amenities called the *waccay* to present to the *njeke* (sisters of the groom or close female family members), *goro* (mother or father of the groom), and just about every other person in the family. This money comes from the dowry and will be used to reciprocate with these items from the market and double the cash amount. The *terànga* in this instance can be described through a whole host of terms indicating the destined party. For example, *wallu mbajen* (gift given to the paternal aunts), *ndawtal* (money given to the mother of the ceremony), and *añu njeke* (money offered to a woman's sisters in-law) (Sylla 1978).

In order to face this challenge on the big day, the mother takes cash from her part of the dowry and in advance of the ceremony divides it up between different aunts on both the maternal and paternal sides, what is called a *lekku ndey* (mother's part), literally meaning 'what the mother eats' (Gueye 1982). Each aunt is asked to bring twice the amount given to her by the time of the wedding, in what then becomes the *ndawtal*, an act of solidarity with the mother, a symbol of their bond through exchange and reciprocity. No doubt, the mother of the bride had also participated in the ceremonies of the women who show up to attest to their shared loyalties. Therefore those contributing *ndawtal* are expected to return at least the amount given to them, and more socially acceptable, is to give twice that.

On several occasions women described to me the strategy of gift exchange. The mother takes a risk by putting all her bets on recuperating the *ndawtal*, as she often seeks credit

elsewhere to purchase everything at the market, in hopes she will be paid back the day of the wedding. The *ndawtal* in addition to the rest of the *warugar* is then transformed into what the mother will transmit to the family of the groom, such as the elements of the *waccay*, such as cloth and cash. Towards the evening of the wedding, the women from the bride and groom's side form a gift giving circle *geew*, which is facilitated by each family's griot, the female praise singer which represents each family. Gifts follow an assembly line type formation from the mother of the young woman to her *griot*, who announces the amount and its destined owner, transferring it to the in-law's *griot* who repeats the amount, pointing to the importance of their master based on the quantity of the gift. This process is called *joxalante*, gifting and re-gifting the same items to enact the trading of niceties and material wealth. Favors are returned, although the family of the young man must wait until the baptism of the first-born to reciprocate in a proper manner. Payments are also added to the gifts to thank the griot for their praises. Examining the elements of gift-giving and the structure of family ceremonies lays the foundation for understanding the critiques of the gift-giving process. The example of journalist Aissatou in the next section demonstrates the complicated reality of living and managing the high expectations women experience in regards to their duty to members of their family. Aissatou is a good example of many women who are caught between the critique of these expectations, understanding the importance of performing *terànga*, and the desire to perform *terànga* to promote marriage stability.

### **It's Wasteful...or Is It?**

Aissatou Laye, a journalist for *La Gazette* a monthly magazine printed in Dakar wrote an article entitled "The *gas* "pillage" in Family Ceremonies: A Social Phenomenon that Extracts from Senegalese Daily Expenses" (2009). The title is meant to be ironic, taking the French word

*gaspillage* (wastefulness) isolating ‘pillage’, the French word meaning to pillage, or steal, pegging ceremonies as places where money is wasted and stolen. The article tells the unfortunate story of Habib who lives in the SICAP neighborhood of central Dakar. "His sister Amy had diminishing hope of finding a husband" wrote Aïssatou, an aspiration most Senegalese women share. Aïssatou continued, "As a local socialite, however Amy had amassed a great amount of investments in her peers’ ceremonies, a ceremony of her own would be the sole way to recuperate that money. With dwindling prospects of her own marriage, she decided to use her unemployed brother Habib to marry Astou, a girl from the outskirts of Dakar." Had she married, the women she invested in would be obliged to reciprocate, and Amy would reap the benefits of her investments, double or triple the original amounts, having grown in interest. Instead she used her brother's wedding as a surrogate.

Amy and her friends take a sum of 500,000 cfa (\$1,000) to Habib’s future sister in-law Ndeye Mbaye. Ndeye Mbaye explains the process of dividing up the sum for the ceremony and the portion to be given to each of her friends and female relatives as an interest loan. She gives each 500 cfa (\$1) before the wedding and expects ten times the amount (\$10) at the time of the baptism, the *ndawtal*, which usually occurs nine months after the wedding. When Aïssatou asked Ndeye Mbaye why it was done this way, she replied with “we found it here, it has always been this way, it is our culture.” To which Aïssatou wrote: “culture, or swindling? (2009)” It was obvious throughout the article, Aïssatou a single woman at the time, did not hold back her disapproval of the system of ceremonies and the woman’s obligations to her female in-laws, saying: "Amy spends 500,000 CFA (\$1,000) for her brother's marriage and yet refuses to pay for her sister in-law's medical bills when she falls ill” highlighting the irony of the situation. In a way, her comment reflected the language of development organizations and the state in their efforts to stop "wasteful" spending as it detracts from practical family expenses. The article was

intended to shine a light on the conspicuous and ‘wasteful’ practices of obligatory gift-giving at family ceremonies, and its destructiveness to women’s emancipation and solidarity. At the time, Aïssatou was outspokenly against these practices, disapproving of the pressures young people felt to keep up with the demands of conducting their marriages as their parents, peers and the rising expectations to demonstrate status. What she saw as an inability to exercise personal restraint in light of these restraining social conventions.

During an interview I did with her in 2010, she spoke about how she hoped the article shined a light on the harms of women’s conspicuous consumption and “wasteful” practices during family ceremonies. She was an aspiring journalist who was dating a similarly driven Senegalese man who had spent most of his adult life training in England. When I caught up with Aïssatou in 2013, she had a much different story to tell as she had recently married her boyfriend who returned from England, years after the article was written. They rented a small apartment in a different part of the city from where his mother and family lived. Aïssatou’s contact with her female in-laws was mostly through texting and phone calls as she was often too busy to visit on a regular basis.

Being married gave her a different appreciation of the significance of gift giving and its role in helping her establish connections with her new family. Although she admitted to drawing the line with her mother and sister in-laws who called regularly asking for phone credit or money, she recognized that her mother in-law had invested a great deal in the welfare of her child, Aïssatou’s husband, and it was her responsibility to show her sympathies symbolically. The gifts Aïssatou gave her mother in-law were symbolic of the loss she had felt since her son married and left the home, and with him the resources of his labor. As a single working man, like most others, Aïssatou’s husband had been the main contributor of household wealth, and its potential loss put a dent in the family’s finances. Most men continue to contribute a part of their



salary to their family post-marriage, and their wives often take care in bringing food supplies and the monthly payments directly to her husband's family as a social visit. These visits and other instances of *terànga* were noted, so too were their absences.

Aïssatou called me one day desperate to talk to someone. I had not heard from her in months following our interview, but I suppose I was far enough outside of her family circle that she could confide in me. She said she was splitting with her husband, even though they had a baby shy of a year-old, because he had decided to marry a second wife without telling her. She felt betrayed and when I asked her why he would do such a thing, she said she suspected her mother-in-law had encouraged him. "She always thought I was stingy" she said.

Polygamous marriages are common. In fact Senegal has one of the highest rates of polygamous unions in Africa (Antoine 2006). Allowed by Islam, men can have up to four wives, however they are required to fully disclose their plans to their current wife/wives. Years of studying marital trends and nuptiality, Antoine and others have found that not only has the occurrence of polygamy increased since independence, its prevalence in urban areas such as Dakar have also gone up or remained stagnant despite previous predictions it would decrease (Mercier 1960, Antoine 1995, 2006). In a 2006 study, they found 66.3% of women between the ages of 50-54 were in polygamous unions, while the numbers of younger women were not far off (2006).

Aïssatou is part of a growing number of professional women who represent the changing dynamic of urban families. Historically, women were brought into the husband's home to assist his aging mother with cooking and house chores (Sall 2012). A man's wife was crucial to the functioning of a household as his sisters also married and moved to their husband's home, leaving their mother without help. When a woman lived in the home with her family-in-law it was the little acts of helping around the house, cooking and attending to her mother-in-law that

constituted the *terànga* of everyday domestic life. Cheikh Tidiane Sall, (2012) a Senegalese sociologist suggests that the current increased expectations to provide gifts and financial support can be explained by the physical separation that many urban families have faced in recent decades. The pressure is arguably greater for women who live with their husbands outside of the family home. Even in many urban polygamous families, especially a husband with substantial means, each woman has her own house with her children and knows nothing about the relationship between her husband and co-wives. Antoine has called this ‘serial monogamy’, as a man rotates between his different wives throughout the week (2006).

In both Islamic law and the Senegalese Family Code women are given the right to handle their own earned wages, whereas men are expected to pay for all of the household needs, including the upkeep of the children and wives (Mbow 2010). Expectations for the family economy are not only high for women, but also for men. Money is the source of a great amount of marital tensions, as husbands and wives argue over the management of personal funds, daily expenses, and the money given to the husband's family. Conversations I had with men in shared taxis (*clando*) argued women’s participation in ceremonies was wasteful of daily expenses, while some women refused this, arguing men didn't want to support their wives financially, and would instead use their money to take a second wife.

Senegal has seen men and women get married at older ages (Antoine 2006) and due to the elevated expectations, many have chosen alternative paths towards marriage. The long standing existence of romantic (companionate marriages) marriages have decreased in the city as women seeking relationships which offer instant financial gain to help circumvent rising economic constraints, instead of the *long durée* (Buggenhagen 2012) of investment in social networks of their mother’s generation. Satisfying a wife’s material needs is seen as a way for men to respect and care for their wives (Hannaford, Foley 2015). In fact, women who do not earn

their own money are dependent upon their husbands to provide them with the money to purchase their mother in-laws gifts, as well as their ability to participate in credit associations to create more economic opportunities.

Aïssatou attempted to balance her career as a journalist, wife, and mother. She admitted feeling uneasy and stressed knowing she was not involved enough in tending to her relationship with members of her family in-law. Although she tried to honor her obligation to her mother in-law, she also defined limits of how much to give and how often. She said those decisions were unpopular, often being called *toubab* by her sister in-laws, the term for white people. In this case, being called a *toubab* was to be accused of believing more in Western culture and shunning local social norms. Aïssatou suspected her financial non-compliance as well as her general absence urged her mother in-law to lobby for another daughter in-law who could fulfill those duties. Aïssatou had every intention of caring for her husband, and yet the dynamics of her obligations to her family in-law did not coincide with her aspirations as a working-class woman or attempts to embrace a culture of savings and frugality; a culture that ran contrary to that of her elders.

To complicate matters further, in many cases it is the mutual exchanges of *terànga* between a mother and daughter in-law that can build a co-conspiratorial relationship. Daughter in-laws often provide gifts and pamper the mothers not only to avoid conflict, but to ensure the mother may advocate for her in times of marital disputes, and the potentiality of the very situation Aïssatou found herself. A woman's bond with her mother in-law can ensure she has an accomplice to confide in and seek shelter if anything were to go wrong.

In the next section I will discuss the similar predicament of Diew, a married woman and member of the Layene religious community I spent time with during my research. She is another example of the exhausting efforts many women go to in order to secure and maintain their position within the extended family and with their husbands.

## “I Pull Out All the Stops”

Every year the Layene family of Ouagou Niayes – a small borough of Dakar nestled near the main fabric market - mark the anniversary of their grandmother’s death. Rose, the daughter and matriarch of the family, gathered all members to celebrate her mother's life as is customary in many Senegalese families. In the morning the men huddled in the courtyard and sat on woven mats to *wacc kamil* (recite the Qu'ran) to ensure God continues to grant her soul peace in heaven, while the women prepared a porridge called *sóów* to be eaten after the prayer. Everyone in the family was invited to the all day event, and the daughter in-laws and other female members came to help in the kitchen and socialize in the morning. Elder women filtered in, wearing elegant dresses with bright blues and yellows, the colors in fashion that summer. The cloth of their dresses extended past their arms as they continuously pulled the sleeves to their shoulders as their armor of bracelets clanged against one another. Neighbors, and members of the Layene neighborhood *dahira* (religious association) also came to help prepare for the religious service after dinner. As evening came, more guests wearing the customary white clothing arrived for the special religious gathering to *sikr* (religious singing)<sup>9</sup> and celebrate the grandmother’s life. Each new arrival meticulously greeted the others by shaking hands and going through the standard Wolof greetings, asking whether the person was at peace as well as their family.

The open courtyard where the kitchen was located, bustled with women working and guests peeking in through the partitioning to greet and socialize. The men mostly passed through greeting women, surveying what was being cooked, and teasing their younger female relatives or

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<sup>9</sup> *Sikr* is an Arabic term for the invocation of God. Most Sufi orders in Senegal engage in religious singing, or chanting. The Layene have a particularly special relationship with *Sikrsikr*, and it is the main way of praising God during their religious ceremonies, family ceremonies, and the celebration of souls passed on. For the Layene, *Sikrsikr* is also paired with synchronized body movements called *jaayu*, used to create a physical connection as well as a spiritual one.

friends before joining the other men in the sitting room. Diew, the wife of Iba – Rose’s son – showed up in bright blue tight jeans and a matching low-cut short sleeve top, less conservative than the locally made *yere Wolof* other women were wearing for the occasion. Diew had the widest range of conservative and modern clothing styles I had come across, and it was always a treat to see what new outfit, hairstyle, and jewelry she would wear on any particular day. One of the uncles commented on her revealing clothes, “what are you doing wearing that? If you’re not careful, Iba is going to find a second wife” he said. She scoffed, “Iba was the one who told me to wear this!”

The exchange started as a teasing<sup>10</sup> session and quickly became a heated discussion as Diew attempted to defend her actions and choices. She gave a commanding lecture about exhaustive efforts she continuously made for the sake of her husband Iba, and his family. She seemed to have a deep affection for Rose and they got along quite well. On many of my afternoons spent at their home, Diew would come and chat with Rose on her way to the market, or shortly after lunch. These included occasionally bringing Rose food for lunch if one of the girls in the house could not cook that day.

I was caught in the middle of the rapid fire debate, not sure whether to slowly exit, but curious to stay. I became a pawn in the argument, a soundboard through which Diew and the uncle could express their opinions. “Lepp laay genne, Emily!" *I pull out all the stops, Emily*, Diew said indignantly. She listed emphatically: “I have two children, I do all the housework (insinuating they do not hire a maid<sup>11</sup>) and cook good food, I wear all the beautiful clothes he wants, I take care of his mom by bringing her food and gifts, I do it all, so he doesn’t need a

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<sup>10</sup> Teasing and joking in Senegal is customary and used in all social situations to establish affiliation, dominance, and create a light atmosphere. This is called joking cousins. For more, see Judith Irvine’s work on joking cousins and language

<sup>11</sup> In many ways having a maid was a sign of wealth and status, but it could also insinuate the wife was lazy and inattentive to her husband.

second wife!” She was determined to convince me and others present for the conversation that she did all that was asked of her as a loving and loyal wife, with pride.

“Ask Penda” Diew said, speaking of one of Rose’s daughters living in the home, as she could testify to her trends in hospitality. “She knows the efforts I make,” said Diew. The uncle retorted with “yes, but a man is allowed to have four wives, plus Iba might want more, and you shouldn’t be wearing that.” This same uncle was always joking about searching for a second wife for himself, partially as a joke, although everyone in the house knew he was serious. He teased me by saying he needed extra help around the house, while the younger woman said under their breath that he should simply hire a maid.

For most Senegalese married women such as Diew, there is enormous pressure to consider all the ways to stand out as particularly generous, accessible, and thoughtful; thoughtful of both how she carries herself and how it affects others. Ironically, standing out did not mean doing things differently, but doing what was expected of all women, but with more enthusiasm and commitment. For example, at an occasion where the unspoken dress code was a traditional, ample Wolof outfit, women could choose a striking pattern, add shiny jewelry and a new hairstyle or weave to catch the attention of others. Every little detail such as a new necklace, bracelet or hairpin made a difference, and especially how a woman carried herself. Diew’s outfit did not fit the occasion, and could be interpreted as a sign of apathy or disrespect to her mother in-law Rose and her husband. Her defensive quip was an effort to demonstrate all the things she was known to do on a daily basis that were specifically aimed towards pleasing her husband and their respective families as well as maintaining her reputation as generous. She emphasized that her husband Iba not only approved her outfit for that evening, but was generally interested in how she dressed as it reflected on him as much as her. By citing the major elements of hospitality and *terànga*, such as visiting her mother in-law and bearing food or gifts while

staying to socialize and lend a hand, Diew's case shows the importance of *terànga* to her marriage. It is so important, that in fact, the threat of introducing a second wife into her union with her husband, is a direct provocation to her performances and quality of *terànga*, past, present, and future.

Although many Muslim Senegalese women grow up in polygamous homes, with the knowledge that they too could be in a marriage with co-wives, Diew's case shows it is met with little enthusiasm. This reality illuminates a similar bind women find themselves in: being told they can avoid having a co-wife if they demonstrate their knowledge of *terànga* and apply it, while they are also told to accept a polygamous household on the basis of religion. A complicated sense of personal agency is challenged by the reality that those efforts may fall short. Many women, including Diew, suggested this bind left them oftentimes feeling defeated as they felt their husband's choice was a reflection of their inability to do enough. At the same time, both men and women acknowledged the choice of polygamy was not really a choice at all, but the will of God.

Everyday gossip was a regular way for women to exchange stories and provide warnings to mind the importance of being a hospitable wife. Everyone knew someone who had a reputation of being stingy and inattentive to her mother-in-law which they predicted had created waves in their marriages and with their family-in-law. The advent of polygamous unions was often the topic of hush-hush gossip, even within the ranks of Rose's home. In fact, Rose's eldest son Seydina had recently married a second wife who was given a room in the home adjacent to Rose's house. It shook up discrete conversations among the girls and women of the house, mostly trying to understand the logic. Had Seydina's first wife not done enough?

Seydina's new wife, Awa was sweet, shy, and strikingly beautiful. She would often show up at lunch time all-made up and wearing a beautiful outfit. When she walked past, with her

went a crisp smell of freshly pressed and perfumed cloth mixed with a peppery tinge from the soap many women used. She came with neatly packaged pans of rice on the bottom and sauce in a small bowl tied on top with a handkerchief. When Rose broke her shoulder after a fall, Awa, along with others, often trekked from the house to the hospital to bring lunch and supplies for her, keeping her company alongside Rose's daughters. Several of the hospitals I visited in Dakar relied on family members to supply food and services for the patient, leaving Rose dependent on the kindness and availability of Awa and others.

The narrative of *terànga* as a way to establish oneself apart from others is everywhere. While perusing the markets, women selling strings of beads or incense yell out promises that their products will make any husband happy and avoid the reality of a co-wife. "Boo ko takke yaw rekk lay gis – If you wear these beads, you will be the only one your husband looks at" shouted out a woman carrying pounds of glittering string beads on her arms and woven baskets balanced on her head. The narrative was repeated in advertisements, popular media, and talk shows directed at women with names such as *Jeeg ak keuram* (A woman and her home), *Feem ci Keur* (Behaviors in the home), and new shows such as *Mokh Poth* (Adoring Wife). These shows discussed women's behaviors, expectations, and changing landscapes of urban marriage.

The next section will discuss two specific TV shows that are among a myriad of topical talk shows focused on the changes *terànga* and the dynamic of urban marriages have experienced. *Mokh Poth* (Adoring Wife)<sup>12</sup> is a new web series created by Carrapide Théâtre, and produced in partnership with Lampe Fall productions ([www.theatre.carrapide.com](http://www.theatre.carrapide.com)). The series laments the disappearance of a traditional household through the lens of several urban couples living in Dakar. The second is an episode of the talk show *Njegemaar* gathering several guests to debate the topic of *sukerukoor*, the symbolic gift given to a woman's female in-laws during the

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<sup>12</sup> Mokh Poth is a Wolof concept to describe a wife who is attentive to her husband's needs, and goes above and beyond in many ways to please him. Adoring wife seemed the best translation I could conceive of.



holy month of Ramadan. These shows, as well as many others, serve as important depictions of *terànga* in society as well as drivers in the debates regarding the value of *terànga*. The contrasting shows offer a look at the two sides of this debate: the centrality of *terànga* to the stability of marriages; and the perceptions *terànga* has become unsustainable and therefore no longer the *terànga* of yesteryear.

### **“If I Don’t Do It, My Marriage Will Be No Good”: Debating *Terànga***

*Mokh Poth*, the web series explores the private lives of several Dakar married and dating couples. During a particular episode, one of the young wives, Nabou<sup>13</sup> is paid a visit by an elder aunt, Seynaba who has brought various market items to show her young and inexperienced niece. After Nabou mistakes the wrap skirt (*sër*) Seynaba has laid out, as a headscarf (*col*), her aunt scolds her for not knowing the difference. Nabou examines the skirt deciding it is something she recognizes from her grandmother’s generation. “Hah, this is what makes the home, this is the sugar of the home” Seynaba says in a disappointing tone. “You<sup>14</sup>, are weak in this world. If you shun our customs it will leave you with nothing. This is part of marriage” as she grips the cloth skirt showing frustration.

Seynaba acts as a mentor for Nabou, attempting to show her the material things and efforts she must accept in order to make her marriage function. In addition to the skirt, which was supposed to show off her figure and to be worn in the home for her husband only, Seynaba brought a number of beads (*bin bin*), and incense (*cuuray*) for Nabou to make her body and the home enticing for her husband. The beads are to be worn around her hips under the skirt, making a rhythmic noise as she walks. *Cuuray* comes in an assortment of scents and molds, each with its own use. A knowledgeable wife knows the difference between an incense that is supposed to

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<sup>13</sup> The names used for the show *Mokh Poth* are made up as they are nowhere mentioned in the credits

<sup>14</sup> She is using the pronoun ‘you’ (*yeen*, the plural for you all, in Wolof) to refer to Nabou’s generation of women

arouse her husband, and those that create a welcoming atmosphere for guests, and even their digestion. *Cuuray*, alongside *terànga* and hospitality of the home are portrayed in the series as unquestionable elements to the cohesion of the home. As Seynabou said, these are the things that make the home. The home is a structure of value because it houses the kinship ties that are produced through hospitality, feasting and gift-giving during family ceremonies (Buggenhagen 2001) as well as the micro-givings of the everyday.

Although not many would object to the importance of these elements to the value of the home and those living in it, there are public opinions that question whether the forms and quantities of exchange have not created fissures within the home and beyond. The popular T.V talk show *Njegemaar*, on channel TFM (Télé Futur Média) chose *sukerukoor* as their topic of debate during the holy month of Ramadan, 2013. The host, a smiling and well-dressed woman had her usual contributors on stage and video clips of people on the street being asked how *sukerukoor*, translated literally as “the sweetening of Ramadan”, has changed. *Sukerukoor* is in fact, a symbolic gift given during the month of Ramadan. Bouncing back and forth between the round-table of guests and prepared interview clips, the host, Adja, began by asking the meaning of *sukerukoor*. One man said “It used to be about *terànga*, now it is what I call ‘sukerukoorwe’.” His play on words was a mixture of Wolof and the French word *corvée*, meaning chore, or duty to say the tradition of gift-giving to family in-law members as a symbolic gesture of solidarity during Ramadan had now become an obligation. Although gift-giving and reciprocating has always been an obligation as Mauss has argued (1960), the difference here is more about gift-giving loosing its illusion as free from obligation, due to its scale of grandeur. The difference between *terànga* as a discretionary symbolic gesture and the obligation of giving, is scale and representation.

Muslims in Senegal believe all of their efforts to pray, act as pious Muslims and good people, including demonstrations of generosity during the month of Ramadan will be paid back to them two-fold. Surat 97 of the Quran says that during the month of Ramadan, God sends the angels down to the closest layer of the seven skies in order to better hear the prayers of humans (Malik 2006). This is especially true for what is referred to as the ‘night of destiny’, or *al-kadr*, when Muslims believe their prayers will have particular resonance. In Senegal, they also believe the blessings received as a result of all generous acts, such as gift giving, *zakat* (compulsory alms, or Islamic tax) will be amplified during the holy month. The *sukerukoor* (literally sugar of Ramadan), according to a woman attesting to its importance, was initially a simple gift of sugar for the cherished *ndogu*, or breaking of fast. It was to help the less fortunate and to better their relationships with neighbors and family in-law members. Along with other displays of *terànga*, *sukerukoor* should be given discretely without any hope of showing off or diminishing the actions of others. It is due to the illusive and omnipotent qualities of *terànga*, that it should be treated somewhat differently from theories of the gift, and even hospitality.

The fear of ruining a marriage if seen as stingy, depicts the real anxiety women feel due to the pressure they are under to present a gift, not just for the *sukerukoor*, but for other religious holidays such as the end of Ramadan known in Senegal as *korite* (Eid al-Fitr) and *tabaski* (Eid al-Adha). Stories float around as a public imaginary telling of marriages broken up due to expectations and consequential deceptions of a family member disregarding the norms of gift giving and *terànga*. Although *sukerukoor* is when gifts are distributed during Ramadan, the end of the feast celebration, *korité* comes with its own pressures to invest in a new outfit to wear at the time of eating the sacrificial sheep, as well as the desire to buy a large expensive sheep. For both holidays, dressing up (*sañse*) for children especially was also important for going around the neighborhood visiting and asking for symbolic coins. For *tabaski* the sheep is sacrificed and

special parts of the animal are divided up and given to the mother in-law, neighbors, and to the needy (see Figure 1). The newspaper cartoon pokes fun at a husband's exasperation with his wife, who thinks mostly about pleasing her family in-law, leaving him with little to nothing of the precious meat he paid for.



Figure 1: **Cartoon from *Le Soleil* Newspaper, Drawn by Samba Fall (1990).** The cartoon depicts a wife separating parts of the sheep to give to her mother (mere), the *tankou ndieuke* (sheep's foot for her sisters in-law), and the *yelou mame* (mother in-law). Her husband feels left out and says “finally, the rest is for the *boutou dieuker* (husband's part)?”

As most programs tend to do, *Njegemaar* had an imam to give testimony from the perspective of Islam. He says the best kind of *terànga* is that which no one is aware that you have given it, only God is aware. Gaining blessings from God by bestowing honor and care upon others should be the only motivating factor. The woman quotes her friend as saying that if she does not give to her sister in-law, her home life and marriage will be a disaster. What may seem a drastic interpretation signifies the deep importance of gift giving to the social stability of communities and inter-personal relationships. Not only does the absence of gift giving cause issues for a woman and her relationship with her husband and family in-law, but the increasing necessity to give gifts has made many reflect on how these acts threaten a pure understanding of *terànga*, and even the fabric of society itself.

The main differences to be inferred in their comments is that although *terànga* can be the act of giving a gift, what distinguishes it from gifting is an implied, and yet identifiable

representation of humility, piety, and a pure heart. Even as all of the contributors referenced *terànga* as a synonym to gift giving, they debated over the real nature of *terànga*. As one woman shared a story about a co-wife who wanted to give a gift to her mother in-law, saying the woman gathered all she had, spent the time to dress in her best attire, and went to pay her mother in-law a visit. She slipped in unannounced, and left just as discretely. No one was aware of her visit, and the woman recounting this story spoke of this as the real sense of *terànga*. For her, *terànga* was the quiet display of affection and care that demonstrated much needed empathy. “We need to have empathy for one another, we need to recognize that life is hard, and we should be doing things for God only.” *Terànga*, as she describes it, catalogues a deeply personal and spiritual rationale. This is exemplified by the T.V show on top of the many political and personal discussions I overheard in which the difference between *terànga* and gifting was made in reference to God, with them saying “te Yalla tax” (because of God). One is to give a gift not because it grants someone higher social or economic status, or guarantees them wealth in some form or another, but simply because it is what God wishes you to do. It should not be for malice, rivalry, or in order to gain status in the eyes of others, but for the common good.

A *griot* woman told the story of co-wives competing for the affection of their mother in-law by outdoing one another through lavish gifts. The first wife (*aawo*) was a woman of means, while the second wife (*ñaareel*) was not. Because the second wife was unable to give a substantial *sukerukoor* gift and was ridiculed and spoken ill of by the family in-law. “A wife who works in the home, cooking and cleaning, lives *terànga* everyday and should be given sympathy” one woman said. This sparked a debate among the panelists about how *terànga* had become corrupted by a purely economic model of relationships instead of material symbols. The sociologist Mr. Mbengue, an invited guest of the show, said personal relationships had become less about the social than the economic. Assuming this debate had potentially unnerved or

confused her audience, Adja the host turned to look straight into the camera at the Senegalese public saying “no one wants to prohibit *sukerukoor*.” Pleading, she continued “because we are the *pays de la terànga*, we are praised as the *pays de la terànga*, and gifts between in-laws are engrained here; they are what help marriages and our relationships with one another,” while another guest says “but things like *sukerukoor* are what is killing this country.”

By revealing the symbolic nature of *terànga* of the past, the guests of *Njegemaar* reveal a deep understanding of how the changes in practices such as *sukerukoor* signal personal responsibilities of representing national culture. Their interventions speak to the general state of identity politics and grieve the loss of a historical *terànga*. They also relay personal accounts of how the daily lives of women are dominated by trying to negotiate these distinctions, despite the great pressures they feel. The next section demonstrates this point well by examining stories from the *teral gann* group - a hospitality group within the Layene community featured also in Chapter Seven - and their personal struggles to navigate the ever-changing expectations of marriage, and their role in maintaining its stability.

### **Engendered Media, Engendered Nation: Contemporary Discussions of Terànga**

The television shows discussed in the previous section are one reflection of *terànga* in Senegalese society. This section will examine food advertisements and popular culture as vehicles for understanding gender expectations, which are tied to the encouragement and performance of *terànga*. In addition, the use of particular language by young women of the *teral gann* group echoes language featured in advertisements and songs and are terms that depict ideal feminine behavior that refers to *terànga*. Paul Nugent (2010), a professor of Comparative African History and who has written extensively on West African culture and history, argues that advertising seeks to establish a link between the individual consumer, the commodity, and a

nation of fellow consumers (2010). Citing the Senegalese national dish of *ceebu jën*, the beloved rice and fish dish, Nugent argues food consumption in Africa is just as much a symbol of nationalism as Benedict Anderson's famous example of printed media (2006). I argue further, that in the Senegalese context, advertisements and popular culture regarding consumption are laced with references to women's shared qualities ideal for matters of the home, and that just as food consumption can be a sign of national identity, so too can the moral quality of *terànga*.

Francesca Castaldi defines *terànga* as that which "covers a semantic field associated with the morality that governs interactions between hosts and guests and the circulation of gifts among a wide network of relations" (2006). A semantic field, as I interpret it here, helps us examine the diverse linguistic play of words that contribute to the rich and nuanced meaning and practice of *terànga*. As I will discuss, various terms employed by women as well as used in popular media forms, comprise this field as they speak of and indicate the ethical qualities of *terànga* as specifically integral to women's performances of gender. The discourses offered by popular culture such as songs, talk shows, and food advertisements depict a woman's worth as tied to the motions of generosity and valorizing the process and not simply the product. For example, popular concepts I encountered both in advertisements and in everyday speech among women were coded with praise or encouragement for their acts of consideration or kindness.

The following example of a conversation I had with my friend Aicha, one of the young women of the Layene family, demonstrates her awareness of *terànga* as more than an action, but an ethical model. My initial confusion of *terànga* as a fixed term was complicated by her descriptions of the intersection of giving, representation, and motive. The language employed by women like Aicha represent an acknowledgement of the cultural imperative of *terànga* and women's relationships built upon it. My friend Aicha and I had a conversation about the meaning

of *terànga* that turned into a deeper linguistic exploration of words that seemed to either reference or stem from *terànga*. This was our conversation:

Me: What is *terànga*?

Aicha: *Terànga* is what is good

Me: That's it? So you mean *terànga* could be a pretty dress?

Aicha: No, not at all. For example, when I give you a dress, that act is *terànga*

Me: What if I wear the dress in front of you in order to show you that you are the one who bought it for me, is that *terànga*?

Aicha: No, that is not *terànga*

Me: (I laugh exasperatingly) but it has the spirit of *terànga*, like generosity?

Aicha: Thata girl! You got it, good faith

Me: So how can it be the sense of *terànga*, but not *terànga* itself?

Aicha: *Terànga* is a way of being

Me: What do you mean?

Aicha: Knowing how to share is *terànga*. Helping each other is *terànga*.

Me: For example, if I have a husband, and I buy *cuuray* (incense), *bin bin* (beads), and other things to make him happy and guests that come to the house, is that *terànga*?

Aicha: Exactly. *Yaa jongé* (Look at you lady!)!<sup>15</sup>

There are several notable elements from this conversation. Firstly, Aicha corrects my misinterpretation of *terànga* by making a distinction between the act of buying and giving as a basic exchange, and the motivating sentiment of those acts. The spirit of *terànga* captures the good faith of the giver, or from whom the action originated, and their intention to render the receiver content and satisfied. The receiver should feel as though the giver cares. In addition, her

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<sup>15</sup> Conversation in French/Wolof: translated by author



distinction between an owner showing possession of an item that was given to them does not capture the essence of that transaction. Secondly, Aicha insists that *terànga* is cultural knowledge that is represented by the act of giving. Knowing the objects needed in a specific situation, such as making a welcoming environment for guests and family, is part of a woman's arsenal of knowledge. A woman's ability to demonstrate her understanding of this cultural knowledge and execute it, is what arguably makes her a woman, thus illustrating my third analysis of our conversation. Aicha's use of the word *jongé*, which is often translated plainly as a cognate for woman (*jigeen*, *jeeg*), is a signifier of a woman's knowledge of *terànga*, its uses, meanings, and contexts. When I finally understood the root meaning of *terànga* as an awareness of the needs of my husband and his family, her praise was acknowledging my symbolic entry into Senegalese womanhood, or at least an understanding of it.

*Jongé* was splattered across billboards around Dakar, advertising butter, seasonings, and cleaning supplies promised their products would allow women to *gëna jongé* (be a better woman) by better performing their duties of *terànga*. *Jongama*, another Wolof term for woman, depicts an especially voluptuous and beautiful one, giving way to the use of the word *jongé*, the active performativity of being a woman. I discuss *jongama* women more thoroughly in Chapter Three. *Jongé*, translated often as *astuces de femme* (feminine tricks), the efforts to which a woman goes to please her husband, guests, and family in-law.

A woman employs different 'tricks' to please others and merit being seen as a full fledged woman, and respected as one. Aicha and her friends employed the term *jongé* when they felt a peer was displaying notable generous, feminine qualities. Although it was usually an exaggerated teasing tone, the ability to adapt to all situations with 'tricks' was no laughing matter. Tricks in this context did not mean to fool or deceive someone rather it signified specific abilities or skills. They swapped stories of tricks they used such as secret ingredients for dishes,

or wearing a specific skirt when a wife and her husband were fighting. As one friend offered a piece of advice based on her own experience, other friends responded with resounding agreement by shouting such phrases as “*yaa jongé de* –you go girl!” and “*yaa baax* – nice work<sup>16</sup>.”

A television advertisement for the bouillon seasoning product aptly called *Jongué*<sup>17</sup>, shows a woman dressed in beautiful African clothing in a kitchen filled with plentiful food while a narrator says “une vraie jongue, c’est reparer ce qui est nouveau, mais indispensable” (a real woman is someone who recognizes novelty and quality). A female griot sings in Wolof “safal ba sës, safal ba faww, safal ba ci biir ciin” (spice it up until you can no further, spice it up forever, spice it up all the way into the pot.) Of particular interest to the discussion of *terànga* is the product’s tagline, “spice it up, all the way into the pot” referring to *jongé* as a process, of which cooking a good meal is just one element. It conveys an imaginary trail of dressing beautifully, generosity in the form of gifts, presence, and hosting that all add up to what *Jongué*, the product and concept, represent as they are poured into the pot (see Figure 2). Moreover, a tasty *ceebu jën*<sup>18</sup> dish is flavorful because of all the time, care and effort put into it, and the accompanying aesthetic.



Figure 2: *Jongué* Advertisement

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<sup>16</sup> “Yaa baax” literally means “you are good” but can be translated differently given the context. Here, it is a praise for a woman’s actions of giving or looking nice. In this way, the concept of ‘doing good’ things is a process that makes someone ‘good’.

<sup>17</sup> Spelling variations are common in Wolof as it is not a standardized language. In most lay speech, Wolof is written with French phonetics, hence why the ‘e’ in ‘jonge’ is written as a ‘ue’ in ‘jongue’

<sup>18</sup> In French phonetics *ceebu jën* is more often written as Thiebou Djuene

In the second *Jongue* advertisement, the iteration of “Senegalaise ba cibir tchin” (Senegalese woman all the way into the pot), emphasizes the particularly Senegalese, and nationalist feminine qualities of *jongé* (see Figure 3). A similarly well-dressed woman stands in front of a large backdrop of the Senegalese flag, as she represents the iconic green star in the middle yellow section.



Figure 3: **Jongué Senegal Advertisement**

Another similar term, *defar ba mu baax* (do it to the hilt), found throughout various ads, was a call to do everything until it was just right, and over the top. If one of Aicha’s friend’s showed up well-dressed and made up she would be met with such a greeting. These terms are the stuff of everyday vocabulary, praising a woman who pampers her husband or her family in-law, and who is kind to her friends, while also displaying a physical beauty of clothing, jewelry, and makeup and hair that reflected the goodness of her heart. The female singer Amy Colle Dieng recorded a song entitled “defar bamu bakh” (to the hilt) reminding women it is their distinct responsibility to make their men happy.

As is quite apparent, the semantic field of *terànga* is wide. Terms such as *jongé* or *defar ba mu baax* are coded language exchanged between female friends and relatives which symbolize women’s deep connection to *terànga*. These terms were used in many different occasions while maintaining the core of *terànga*. For example, a woman who gives her mother in-law a *sukerukoor* gift during the holy month of Ramadan is depicted as *jongé* by her friends, family,

and media demonstrate a dialectic between everyday speech and public discourse. In fact, during Ramadan of 2014 I told Aicha I had given some money for a new mattress and fabric to my then mother-in-law. Aicha shouted *Cey, yaa ngiy jongé, de!* Je savais pourquoi je t'ai apprécié” (Wow, you are a real Senegalese woman. I knew there was a reason I liked you!) she said to show her respect for me and my knowledge of female culture and practices. *Jongé*, therefore, implies an act of generosity that secures affiliation and promotes a woman's demonstration of respect and knowledge.

When I asked Aicha about another term I heard in similar contexts, *feem*, she said it meant *jongé* in every way. I always chuckled at her responses such as this one, seeming so obvious to her, but initially bewildering to me. That is until I understood the links of these terms as part of the representative language in the semantic field of *terànga*. Although a seemingly convoluted answer, her response in fact, says a lot about how she perceives the importance of conducting herself in a way that ensures she is always alert to the needs of others.

In 2014 one of the most popular songs heard on the radio, played during weddings, and blasted at commercial sale events, was the song *Jigeen Feem* by Titi, real name Ndeye Fatou, also nicknamed the Lionesse of Senegalese music. *Jigeen Feem*, meaning a woman with many talents and abilities, engages Titi and her female audience in a conversation about marriage and a woman's responsibility to its well-being. When her album *La Lionne* (the Lionnesse) hit the market, people went crazy for it.

*Feem* is translated in the dictionary as a *slogan* (Diouf 2003), however in everyday language it refers more to the many facets of women's behavior and abilities, especially when referring to her relationship with her husband and those close to him. These behaviors mostly demonstrate her ability to be dependable yet spontaneous and loving. Popular iteration of *feem* has become its own slogan for a woman who goes to great lengths to please her husband by

showering him with good meals, and impressing him with small tokens of affection embedded in her performances as a doting wife. A great deal of this centers on food, its preparation, display, and her attentiveness to the small aesthetic details. Similar to commercials advertising different products to help women spice up their food, Titi uses the metaphor of spices to indicate ways to spice up the marriage.

Jigeen, boo beggee am manore	- Ladies, if you want to be successful (be capable)
Na gene feem	- Give it more
Na safa saf	- Spice it up even more
Bes bu ne indil feem yu bess	- Everyday, come up with something new
Bul ko xebb ndaxte	- Don't underestimate (a woman's abilities) because
Day jonge te bare feem	- You should act as a woman and show your talents
Fi ak mu ngi mbegg	- If you do it, he will be happy
Yokkal dose bi bu ko wutaal frontier	- Add more, don't hold back

Titi gives advice to women on how to make their husbands happy by using their feminine charm and cooking skills to create a welcoming environment. While lyrics are laced with sexual innuendos tied to food. To spice things up indicates that by making the food spicy and full of flavor will result in a spicy and healthy marriage. Encouragement for even more (na gena feem) and to not hold back privileges excess as an ethical obligation to others. Generosity is found in how a woman demonstrates affection and selflessness. Even more so, “add more, don't limit yourself” speaks both about a woman not holding anything back for the benefit of her guests, while also speaking of physical borders, *frontiers*, evoking hospitality not just as a project for stability of the home, but for the nation as well. This is echoed in state tourism rhetoric about being open to strangers and welcoming them without question.

In the music video for *Jigeen feem*, Titi is seen preparing a meal for her husband played by the famous comedian *Saneex*, as the husband busy at work in his office, filling out paperwork (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObiJOtDMdUc>). Upon returning home, he is seen sneaking tastes of the food while she fills the bedroom with rose petals on the bed, perfume on her body and in the room, while changing from her cooking rags to a beautiful and more appropriate dress to accompany the service of the meal. All part of her tricks for her art of hospitality. As the video continues, and several dress changes later, she has diligently exposed her various *feem*, through dress, food, and an atmosphere of comfort and romance. Therefore, food, dress, decorum and beauty are signs of a woman's successful management of the home and marriage. The dish she presents her husband is overflowing with rice that could feed the whole apartment complex. The video demonstrates the central role of bodily and culinary aesthetics to this process of women's constant innovation and flexibility for the sake of their home life. The song continues with the bridge:

Jigeen, jigeen jonguel ba mu matt	- Women, women be a woman to the hilt
Wonne say feem	- Show them what you got
Ja ke fo, ja fekk ko	- Play, have fun with him
Miin nga ba miin naa la danu wara sey	- You and I are connected we should make it work (get married)
Yall na ma boole ak yaw danu wara sey	- God put us together we should make it work (get married)

This series of lyrics speaks to and as the voice of women to their husbands. The use of the word *sey* (marriage) as a verb demonstrates marriage as an active and ongoing process which needs nourishing, just as the body does, to function. The active support of her marriage was comprised of all the aforementioned elements such as food, beauty, and attention to detail. *Sey*

was often turned into *seysi*<sup>19</sup>, meaning ‘to bring home the marriage’, but referring to a woman who is particularly crafty in pleasing her husband. Young girls joked delightedly with their friends who recounted ways they had pampered their husbands, boyfriends, or family in-law by yelling out “seysi nga de - you did it!”, a similar phrase as “*jongé nga de!*” Giving gifts particularly to a mother in-law or female relative, cooking a tasty and beautiful meal for an important guest, or going out of their way for their husband would merit such a compliment. Also, showing up to a function particularly well-dressed would solicit similar praise. It was uttered not only to praise but to encourage future similar actions.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that women in Senegal are bound by the obligation of generosity and embodiment of *terànga*, at the same time they are accused of irresponsible management of the family economy. The example of Aissatou’s article painted a picture of women as perpetrators of unrealistic social obligations for personal benefit, while Aissatou’s personal story showed her as a victim of these obligations. Popular media such as music and advertisements depict an ideal woman and encourage them to be hospitable and generous. In this context, *terànga* chronicles a woman's generosity and a feminine ideal. If a woman is both knowledgeable of *terànga* - knowing when, what, and the mannerisms needed to give gifts and hospitality - and give *terànga* than she is considered a real woman, *jongé*. If she does not display knowledge and practice than she is not truly a woman.

A woman's responsibility to her marriage is connected to the process of gift-giving, hosting and visiting family in-law members, and creating a home made up of these relationships. Several of the women I encountered tell stories of the desires and efforts to live up to these

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<sup>19</sup> The suffix –si in Wolof means an action which is directed back to a specific location. For example, *delloosi naa sama kër* means ‘I came back to my house’.

expectations while confessing the often disappointing reality of maintaining the pace of a changing social environment. Their stories coupled with public opinions show a complex engagement with *terànga* as one that is both a source of pride and personal agency, as well as reflecting the frustrations of inflated gender expectations and misinterpretations of *terànga*.

The state campaign to “fight against wastefulness” reveals historical and contemporary debates about the nature and value of *terànga*, and women’s specific representation of national identity. Moreover, the campaign represents new tactics for economic and social development that often run counter to the social realities of women. They wish to fulfill their cultural duties while also contributing to the economy of their families, however, maneuvering both can be tricky.

The examination of *terànga*’s semantic field of concepts illustrates how the women represented in this chapter take their role as hospitable and generous very seriously. The female host of the show Njegemaar argued the act of gift-giving such as the *sukerukoor* is essential because Senegal is regarded as the *pays de la tërànga*. However, she agreed with her guests that the current forms of *terànga* need to be reconsidered. The ethnographic data discussed in this chapter, compellingly demonstrates the importance and function of *terànga* to women’s performativity and her contributions to a stable home; while at the same time, highlights the frustrations and anxieties Senegalese have regarding the methods and expectations of *terànga* to securing a stable future.



## Chapter Three

### Circuits of *Terànga*: Family Ceremonies, Reputation, and Generational Misgivings

Family ceremonies, such as weddings, baptisms and funerals are "moments of consequence" (Meneley 1996) in Senegal experienced as opportunities for building solidarity among family members as well as the subject of contentious and polarizing national debates. Historically they have represented the heart of Senegalese cultural and social reproduction as sites in which kin (Sow 1985) gather to reaffirm their relationships through the exchange of gifts (Mauss 2000) and demonstration of support. However, the government and the general public increasingly criticize family ceremonies as sites of "excessive and wasteful" (Sow 1996) displays of wealth, leading to social and moral degradation (Masquelier 2009), and economic hardship.<sup>20</sup> Chapter Two discussed these tensions.

Gift exchange and the complex debt networks dominated by senior women are the foremost targets of criticism of the current state of family ceremonies. For women, investments in social networks have proven to be much more dependable due to the volatile state and global economies (Buggenhagen 2012). Yet, women are cast as wasteful, and their involvements in ceremonies are deemed counter-productive to economic development, detrimental to social cohesion, and immoral. For example, The Ministry of the Family and Women's Affairs urges women to find the courage to stop excessive spending,<sup>21</sup> Islamic and Catholic leaders deem the practice immoral, and local non-governmental organizations have developed legal campaigns to advocate against excessive spending.

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<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, in *Cosmologies of Credit*, Julie Chu argues that the ritual burning of money was not the destruction or waste of value, but rather an act of transforming it in an act of exchange between the visible.

<sup>21</sup> Sow, "Journée Internationale de la Femme: Ceremonies Familiales, A nouveau, le gaspillage"; "Le Gaspillage Des Nouveaux Riches Au Sénégal : Me Madické Niang Et Me Nafissatou Diop Donnent Le Ton," *Xibar.net - Référence Multimedia Du Sénégal*, n.d.

And yet as I have demonstrated, and intend to elaborate upon, gift exchange is an extremely intricate and important piece to families' cohesion, and especially for women's reputation as generous and honorable. The previous chapter has focused on how women are encouraged through advertisements, songs, and everyday speech about *terànga*, to be reputable by serving their husbands and families, even while certain forms of *terànga* remain controversial. Many of the people I encountered and the numerous editorials and media I have discussed in this chapter express a concern that *terànga* as a cultural value has been stripped of its original value to symbolize the excessive, parasitic, and unrealistic objectives of Senegalese women's exchange networks. Increasingly, various social actors in Senegal are publicly debating what constitutes *terànga* and what doesn't and, therefore, how the nation represents itself.

This chapter explores the anatomy of ceremonies as spaces of cultural and social reproduction and innovation. They are sites where women's "vibrant sociability" - elaborate and discrete displays of etiquette and generosity - comes to fruition, which, I argue, characterizes *terànga* enacted through women's everyday encounters (Meneley 1996). Beyond the enclosure of ceremonies, the social hierarchy of women in Senegal is highly dependent upon the mastery of *terànga* as expressed by hosting, visiting, and even the smallest monetary and emotional exchanges between friends and strangers. As elaborated in the introduction, *terànga* captures the both micro and macro expressions of generosity and a deep investment in one's relationship with others and how generosity affects both guest and host. I consider Marcel Mauss' famous "total social prestations" in order to capture the intense networks of reciprocity, hosting, and visiting that are pervasive in Senegalese society, of which ceremonies are the most public displays.

At the same time that family ceremonies are a place to witness both the manifestation and continual renewal and creation of women's identity, they also reveal changing generational expectations and desires. What was once the dominant way of social reproduction – the time

consuming and involved activities of elder women – is now considered by many younger Dakaraises<sup>22</sup> to be outdated. In an environment of economic crisis due to failed structural adjustment policies, young women increasingly seek relationships that provide immediate financial gain (Hannaford, Foley 2015) instead of the *long durée* exchange networks of their mothers generations. In order to demonstrate both the importance of *terànga* and reputation to a woman's life as well as the generational divisions on the matter, I focus on the funeral of an elder woman, and the wedding of a young woman through the perspective of the *griot*, or *gèwël*,<sup>23</sup> the Wolof word for those who are uniquely tasked with "imparting social knowledge to the next generation" (Stoller 1994).

I demonstrate how women's reputations are entangled in the process of *terànga*, and how *griot* women are important stewards of reputation-making (Buggenhagen 2012). I further argue that although there are real generational tensions as to its definitions, *terànga* remains an important aspect of women's personal pursuits, however differently expressed and inspired from new and changing sources. Helping women represent themselves by facilitating the gift-giving process, and pointing out the positive qualities of those around them, in a sense, shows how the *gèwël* is a curator of the art of hospitality, serving as a mobile mouthpiece (Schulz 1997) of the qualities so cherished by Senegalese, and to which they aspire. The songs and praises of *griots* also illustrate their instructional motives, teaching young women about the important aspects of successful marriages and how to avoid household disputes.

This chapter examines the different aspects of family ceremonies as discourses of performance and speech of *terànga*. It also explores the particular agency Senegalese women derive from practicing *terànga*, encompassing the intentions and practices of kindness and

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<sup>22</sup> Dakaraise is the French word for women living in Dakar

<sup>23</sup> Griot is the masculine form whereas griotte is the feminine. Each language of Senegal has their own word for griot, in Wolof it is gewel. When referring to griots in general I will employ the masculine form, and griotte to specify when I am speaking about female griots.

generosity. I argue that women's socializing work and representation of the family at ceremonies is a productive part of women's identity, sense of pride, and agency. *Terànga* is also central to the functionality of the home in respect to the community at large. On the other hand, the ethnographies in this chapter illuminate real generational tensions regarding the meanings and purposes of cultural practices such as *terànga* and its temporal effects on their marriages, family lives, and general social lives.

In order to explore the role of *terànga* and ceremonies in women's identity formation processes and the tensions between generations, I examine the role of *griot* women (*griotte*) as facilitators of the expressions and practices of *terànga*. *Griots* traditionally serve as custodians of culture and presently embody competing discourses about family economics, tradition and modernity. By discussing the lyrics of their songs and praises as well as their management of ceremonies, I analyze the anatomy of family ceremonies, especially *terànga*, as crucial to a woman's success in her marriage and family life and the role of the *griot* in promulgating her reputation. Part of the discussions regarding change and prosperity in Senegal is focused on the Senegalese woman and the female body. The proper body continues to be up for debate. Women of high social status known as *drianké*, who represent the urban feminine ideal (Buggenhagen 2012), and more recently the younger generation of women known as *diskette*, are figures embodying material exchange and the importance of *terànga* to the construction of a desirable and revered personality. These female figures also visibly demonstrate the generational changes in how *terànga* is interpreted and appropriated. Ceremonies performed by female family members and their new in-laws, and rehearsed by young women trying to assert themselves are, therefore, places where personal identities and one's place in the social hierarchy are worked out. For older women, veterans of ceremonies aim to recuperate their investments from friends and family as well as maintain their reputations.

“This mother has sacrificed everything, and with the help of God, this is the result,” a *griot* woman cries out to the attentive wedding guests around her as she transfers a gift from guest to the mother and host. The overflowing sea of friends present at the woman’s daughter’s wedding was a showing of support by her peers, effectively representing all of the hard work she had put into securing a future for her daughter on the back of her own reputation, a reputation that had been years in the making. As host of her daughter’s wedding, the mother was in effect, reaping the benefits of her years of social visiting, contributions to friend's and family’s ceremonies, and kindness in the form of gifts and cash. The griot woman, *gèwël* in Wolof, a master of ceremony and traditional praise singer, spoke highly of the mother, reiterating that the daughter would never have been in a position of marriage if not for the years of her mother’s hosting, visiting, and generosity of time and resources.

Family ceremonies, such as weddings and baptisms in Senegal are the major sites where Senegalese families gather to celebrate births, new unions, and the lives of loved ones who have passed on. More specifically, they are opportunities to create and strengthen affiliations within and between families. For the women that mostly control the planning and organization, as well as the performance of the ceremonies, they are especially important spaces for the manifestation and cultivation of honor, reputation, and worth. Women's hard work over years of saving, organizing, and establishing themselves as respectable through various day to day performances of *terànga* come to fruition during ceremonies. What Beth Buggenhagen has called a “virtual exchange of reputation” (2012) in her work with Murid women in Dakar, symbolizes the spirit of women’s efforts of generosity and hospitalities that are embedded in the things given during the events. Ceremonies are especially opportunistic spaces to show off the results of their reputation. I employ the concept of *terànga* in order to capture the complexity of exchanges, which engages with and extends theories of the gift, and arguably even hospitality.

### ***Griot Culture and Work: Djenaba Kouyate***

*Griots* were part of the ñeeño social hierarchy, who served the *geer*, or ruling class (Diop 1981). This type of social organization, known as castes, has been prevalent across West Africa in societies such as the Malinke, Bambara, Wolof, and Toucouleur among others (Tang 2006). *Griots* are historians, musicians, genealogists, and praise-singers, whose importance has endured the test of colonization and liberal post-independence political change (Leymarie-Ortiz 1979). Castes of the great Wolof and Toucouleur kingdoms have framed Senegalese society and continue to do so in many cases, where *griots* act as “repositories of the history of their people” (Panzacchi 1994) in a society that has survived mostly on rich oral traditions. *Griots* followed nobles into battle, created prestige for their noble masters, and today, still create the ambiance at public and private events such as family ceremonies.

As one *griot* woman, Djenaba Kouyate, explained to me, “Géwël dafay defar - a *griot* solves problems.” “What do you mean by that?” I asked. “Géwël day indi jamm, defar société bi” she insisted. “*Griots* make the society, they bring peace.” Djenaba described being a mediator for two families who have an issue in her neighborhood of Medina in the heart of Dakar. “You just talk until they come to an understanding.” Talking is exactly what Djenaba and most *griots* do in Senegal. They are masters of the spoken word, traditionally serving as praise-singers and historians to the ruling class. Considered a sub-caste category of the ñeeño, *griots* are known as the *sab-lekk*, translated as “those who live off of their songs” (Diop, 1981). They followed kings and queens to public events singing their praises, and reciting family genealogy, acting as a kind of *porte-parole* for the ruling class.

Djenaba, a Bambara woman who comes from a long line of Malinke (Mandika) *griots* from Guinea and Mali, sees her role as one that helps to stabilize society and ensure a constant

environment of positivity, peace, and self-sacrifice for others. She is called upon by many families to conduct weddings and baptisms and lend support during funerals. There are several kinds of *griots*, Djenaba tells me, each with their own specialty. Some are trained singers and musicians like her grandfather who played the *xalam*, a small lap string instrument. Others such as Djenaba are more apt for speaking praises and handling the intricate gift exchanges that take place during ceremonies. Both her mother and grandmother on her mother's side were trained singing *griots*. The case study of urban griot culture exemplifies modern linguistic and cultural hybridity. Although Djenaba is Bambara, she grew up in the neighborhood of Medina in Dakar, where her parents also spent most of their lives, and her practices as a *griot* at ceremonies are conducted in Wolof, even at weddings of Bambara families. However, she is still very dedicated to her Bambara and *griot* heritage, belonging to a *tuur*, or family association with other notable Bambara *griots*.

Contemporarily, *griots* get a bad rap, accused of contributing to the inflation of family ceremony celebrations and being parasites for families hurting economically (Diop 2016). When I asked how the *griot* culture in society has changed, Djenaba mentioned it had not changed so much, except for the appearance of more people occupying the role of *griots*. The multiplication of *griots* on television, in ceremonies, and in politics has raised the question of what a true *griot* is today. As Dorothea Schultz points out in the case of *griots* in Mali, Senegal has seen a surge of female *griots* becoming pop stars, especially with the booming of broadcast media and music videos (1997). Coumba Gawlo Seck is an example of a popular singer who comes from a *griot* family, *gawlo* being the Fulani word for *griot* (Leymarie-Ortiz 1979). Even the famed singer Youssou N'dour is named a modern day *griot* for having mixed traditional instruments with modern drums to create the beloved and wildly popular *mbalax* music. In the biographical documentary, *I Bring What I Love*, Youssou tells the story of his *griot* heritage on his mother's

side. Because his father was not *griot*, he went to live with his grandmother to learn about the *griot* culture and train as a singer as traditional *griots* were known to do (2008).

“If a Kouyate tells you they are a *buur* (noble), they are lying,” Djenaba says, “All Kouyate are *griots*.” At many of the ceremonies where I accompanied Djenaba, she and family members often left frustrated with those impersonating *griots*, saying she and her family were the real *griots*. “Concerning *griots*, there are a lot of categories, but we, the Kouyate, are the first category of *griot*,” she specified. The Kouyate family in particular was one of the personal *griots* to Soundjata Keïta, founder of the Mali Empire (Zanetti 1993). In fact, the Kouyate have a long history of being loyal companions to the Keïta family, ensuring their history is passed down through the generations. Djenaba describes the Kouyate as the original and true *griots*, often sacrificing themselves for the sake of safeguarding the historical knowledge. She tells the story of two Kouyate brothers who served the emperor Keïta:

In the time of Diatta<sup>24</sup> Keïta, the Keïta and Kouyate families shared the same mother and father. The elder and younger brothers go into the forest to hunt for food. Upon spending three days without finding anything, the older brother goes and hides in the bushes, coming out with meat. He cuts up wood and grills the meat until it is ready. He gives all the meat to his brother and water to wash it down. When the brother finished eating, he asked “we have spent three days in the forest without seeing anything to eat, where did you get this meat?” The elder brother turns and does this (showing near his ribs) revealing the blood pouring from him and says, “I couldn’t go back to our home and tell them my little brother died. They would ask me what killed you?” He said, “he was hungry. That is why I hid, cut out a piece of meat, and gave it to you. Today, I am your *griot*.”

Djenaba’s story of the Kouyate brothers illustrates the role of *griot* as an ambassador of *teranga* culture, promoting self-sacrifice for the betterment of others as well as the importance of continuing the historical record of the royal families. Contemporary *griots* serve as the representatives of the acts and dispositions of ordinary people as it is culturally frowned upon to tout one’s own reputation. “I can call out to someone and say, 'Your dress is beautiful, very

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<sup>24</sup> Short for Soundjata (author’s own addition)



beautiful, you are a good person, you love your mother, or you love your father,” Djenaba said, something a common person would never advertise about themselves. This is an example of how *griots* interact daily with close ones.

Accompanying a woman of high status, whether they are a noble or not, to family ceremonies is also an important part of a *griot*'s job description, offering praises of the woman's stature, noble qualities and heritage. By recounting the story of the two brothers and emphasizing her unique position as the vocal representation of a person's reputation, Djenaba voices her pride as a cultural ambassador, thus arguing the central role they play in Senegalese society, held together by elements of *terànga*. Because family ceremonies are the central events in the life of most communities and families and where *terànga* is most publicly displayed, the *griot* is also key to managing the flow of gift giving among women.

Every visit to Djenaba's home I would find her sitting under a parasol behind a waist-high table selling vegetables she acquired from the nearby market. The vegetables were not particularly crisp, and customers were few and far between; in fact, it seemed her business was dependent upon loyal friends and neighbors. I asked her why she sold vegetables if she was a *griot*. “There is not enough work for me. People don't value *griots* anymore. It used to be that there were ceremonies every night; sometimes I was at two or three a week. It used to be that you couldn't go two days without there being a baptism. Now people don't have any money.” She noted that the number of ceremonies had dwindled because now people were becoming educated and learning not to spend excessively and choosing to have smaller and more contained ceremonies, often omitting the participation of *griots*. This reality has threatened her livelihood and ability to pass on traditions to the next generation. Her younger sisters, also technically *griots* as well, were even less active in ceremonies because there just wasn't enough work. Instead, they held jobs elsewhere in Dakar shops.

## Creating Reputations: Generosity as a Lifetime Project

*Kuy dundu kenn geremul la, soo dewee kenn du la joy*

*If, while you are living, no one thanks you, when you die, no one will cry for you*

I had the opportunity to accompany Djenaba to several ceremonies, watch her perform her duties, and stand next to her in the center of the gift giving circle, known as the *geew*. On one particular occasion, there was a wedding next door to her home that she was invited to help conduct. The neighbors were from the Toucouleur ethnic group that had known Djenaba for a long time. She would only play a backseat role as the family had another griot to conduct the main ceremony. A young daughter was marrying into a family that lived in Guediawaye, a sprawling suburb, or *banlieue*, of Dakar. The neighborhood of Medina, or ‘native quarter’ (Betts 1971) where Djenaba lived was one of the original fringe quarters where black Senegalese were sent by the French colonial administration. As part of segregation from the French and in response to a reoccurrence of the bubonic plague in 1914, Medina served to separate black Senegalese from the French (Betts 1971). Those from Medina referred to themselves based on their *rue*, or street. Djenaba lived on *rue 6*, in-between the main street, Blaise Diagne, and the seaside. If greeting a fellow Medina resident, the street name sufficed for establishing residential affiliation and therefore identity to a certain spatial milieu. The houses often were separated by a shared wall, and so the neighborhood was populated with close quarters.

The wedding was to take place in the early evening, but I showed up early to spend the day with Djenaba. I found her washing clothes in her courtyard while the children and other women of the house emerged from their rooms, constantly weaving back and forth around her. Their home was like many in Medina and Dakar, with an open space courtyard surrounded by closed-off rooms and an open kitchen and sitting room. An open-faced well was the central piece of the

courtyard, which saved Djenaba and her family from troubles during the water crisis that hit Dakar a few months earlier. A main pipe bringing water to Dakar had cracked, cutting off water to a large number of homes in Dakar, leaving residents dependent on kind neighbors and occasional water trucks to tide them over. Djenaba was proud of their well, and especially their ability to help others in the neighborhood as they lined up to fill their buckets with much needed water for cooking and bathing. It was an indication, for her, of the unique tight-knit community of Medina, one of the last remaining family neighborhoods in Dakar, according to her.

Benefactors of the water would deem it an act of *terànga*, demonstrating her desire to be generous towards others and represent her role as the peacekeeping *griotte*, a female griot. There was a feeling of seclusion and uniformity in the design of the streets that sheltered them from the main arteries of Dakar and allowed children to run around and play and to easily duck in and out of neighbor's homes, which closed only at night before bedtime. Men sat outside of homes socializing as they enjoyed tea or their morning coffee and baguette breakfast sandwich from a makeshift restaurant.

As I entered the courtyard of Djenaba's house, she called me by my Senegalese name, Nafi, saying, "A woman, *sunu yaay*, our mother, died down the street. I need to go to the funeral." "Can I go with you?" I asked. "Sure," she replied, "but there won't be much to see," referring to my interest in watching her perform ceremonies, such as the wedding to be held that evening. However, the experience of going with her to a funeral was very profound to me, especially in the contrast to the weddings and baptisms that I normally attended. We exited her house and proceeded slowly down the crowded street. Along the way, Djenaba greeted and was greeted by all who we passed, as she offered short bursts of praise to those she truly knew, living up to her duties as the community *griot*. The house of the deceased woman was adorned with beautifully tiled walls that enclosed the courtyard, minus the open column that let in the sky and reflected so

beautifully on the tiles. Plants gave it an illusion of being a rainforest-themed resort. The initial greetings were somber as everyone waited for the family to return from the cemetery. Djenaba explained that I must wait to utter the condolences *siggil ndigale* until they arrived. They arrived, we said our condolences, and we headed for the open kitchen to help prepare the lunch and beignet donuts for guests arriving later in the afternoon. As we chopped, stirred, and peeled, friends and family reminisced about the elderly woman who had died. “Ndey saan, ku baax lawoon, ku xamoon terànga.” *Oh dear, she was a good person, a person who knew terànga (she was so generous)* Djenaba said in a low tone. All agreed by shaking their heads to emphasize their sadness. “Cey, Yalla.” *God is mysterious.*<sup>25</sup> Another offered in a comment that came straight from her diaphragm, expressing a profound disbelief as well as amazement of God’s plan.

Djenaba was especially helpful organizing the cooks and making sure the family had all they needed. In her role as *griot*, she coordinated guests and welcomed them by finding chairs to sit in and announcing their arrival to others. An intense downpour began but did not discourage Djenaba from getting soaked as she scurried around finding umbrellas for family of the deceased to make their way from one house to the next. In the small circle of women, I sat with, one in particular asked me what I was doing in Senegal. “I’m researching family ceremonies,” I said. “Did you see this funeral? No matter what, we are always together,” she responded.

Anne Meneley argues that women’s socializing – visiting and hosting – never ends; it is a process that is constantly being created and recreated (1996). Many of the women present at the funeral also came to the wedding later that evening. Their presence at both of these events demonstrates this constant and productive socializing that is important to their personal development and also that of those they are visiting and supporting during these life cycle events.

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<sup>25</sup> This is the author’s translation. The Wolof use of “cey” is more of a sound emphasizing the word that follows as well as expressing disbelief.

It has a double purpose of representing the bond they share with the mother of the bride, and ensuring that their future events would be well attended as a symbol of their mounting generosity.

The proverb found at the beginning of this section translates directly as “If, while you are living no one thanks you, if you die, no one will cry for you.” In other words, only a person who has spent a lifetime of demonstrating generosity towards others will be grieved. By eliciting the deceased woman’s generous tendencies, their presence at her funeral was to pay tribute to her lifetime of generosity, without which, her funeral would have been poorly attended. Arguably, a woman’s journey towards a crowded funeral, and also a spot with God in heaven, begins publicly with her wedding, where she is officially brought into the fold of gift giving and obligation and then is continuously nourished throughout her life.

The *griots* then, such as Djenaba, are the public human historical records of these women’s personal efforts and those of their kin before them. As the rest of this chapter demonstrates, heritage, honor, and generosity are lifetime projects. Harking back to social hierarchy of Wolof society, the concept of generosity was an “aristocratic prerogative which the nobles (*geer*)<sup>26</sup> had to constantly display to justify their status (Leymarie-Ortiz 1979).” Although caste is still very much important to Senegalese society, the ability to change one’s social status by way of wealth has arguably leveled the playing field for creating reputations by expressing generosity in many forms. The expectation to be generous and give *terànga* is, therefore, on the shoulders of all women, and the diverging abilities and desires to do so illustrate the growing generational divisions of opinion and practice of *terànga*.

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<sup>26</sup> Author’s own addition to quote

## Wedding Gift Exchange and Generational Divides

We returned home from the funeral in time to eat lunch and get ready for the wedding. Lunch, which was served in a large bowl, was another reminder of the seriousness that is *terànga*, in even the smallest details, as I was the only one allowed to sit on a stool, towering over the others sitting on the floor. Djenaba's younger sister, who had prepared the meal, gave me a polished spoon with decorative designs on the handle that was exclusive for guests, making their pliable spoons seem sad and defective. She made sure I had the best helpings of fish, sauce, and vegetables to the point that I felt embarrassed by the pampering. Following the meal, they asked what I wanted to drink and sent a young girl of the family to the corner store to buy a liter of Coca-Cola. It was easy to see that they were determined that I feel welcomed, well-fed, and satisfied.

We got ready to go to the wedding, taking our time to *sañse*, dress to impress. When I complimented Djenaba on her eye shadow, she gave it to me without a flinch. I quickly learned to give compliments intelligently, ensuring they knew I appreciated their beauty, but did not obligate them to give me their precious items. Djenaba wore a flowing pink and orange *boubou* dress, traditional for older women. It was worn-looking and less fancy than some of the new dresses made of imported stiff wax fabric from Mali. Most *griots* of Djenaba's stature were easy to spot in ceremonies due to the plain nature of their dress and the specific way they wore their headscarf, often wrapped as a turbin and gathered and tucked at the side with the remaining fabric hanging down. We made our way next door as the tents were being put up, blocking traffic and street access. As guests arrived in beautifully vibrant dresses made with local fabrics of adapted and creative fashions, the male *griots* began playing drums and singing to announce their arrival in hopes of catching the ear of a guest in order to exchange praises for payment. They had all come to congratulate the bride following the *takk* (tying of marriage) ceremony that

had taken place at the mosque by the male elders of each family following the five o'clock prayer.

The bride was driven up in a fancy, white Mercedes and was mobbed by musicians, friends and family trying to get a first look. Her dress was a bright red shiny batik *cuub* fabric, the most expensive. It was decorated with intricate silver and diamond-like sequins, and matching bracelets, necklace, and hair pin in a mountain of perfectly styled hair. She had spent most of the day at the salon getting her hair and makeup done. It was customary to match the colors of her dress with her eye shadow, giving a rainbow of color on her face that served as a tableau. The powder on her face contrasted with her black skin, giving it extra definition and beauty. She headed inside, sweeping across all corners of the house with a fanfare of admirers behind her singing her praises. An inordinately large crowd squeezed into each room as she slowly and methodically paraded through the house to show off for expecting guests. Her discrete demeanor hardly matched the swirl of excitement that surrounded her. She often bowed her eyes as if to not bring attention to herself despite the occasion. Everyone crammed in to get a peek.

Djenaba, who had been waiting patiently, grabbed her megaphone and proceeded to compete with the other voices and make her praises heard. Another griot woman with a loud boisterous voice mined for money, "Hey pretty girl, give me some money." Djenaba was much subtler, announcing the girl's beauty and the honor she brought upon her family as she was much more familiar with the family's history. At a different wedding to which I accompanied Djenaba, there was a young *gével* woman who stole the show with her boisterous energy and commanding presence, not to mention the evocative songs she offered to the crowd. Djenaba was an afterthought to the audience, and yet the woman who came with the griot approached Djenaba praising her style as "pausé," or calm and collected, not all about "showbiz" as are the trends of newer generations of *griots* trying to keep up with the increasing demand for ceremonies to be

entertainment (Panzacchi 1994). She asked Djenaba for her number, stating she would call her the next time she needed a *griot* for her ceremonies.

Following the indoor tour, the bride continued outside to the tent which was secluded from the hustle of the street. The white tent basked with dimmed lighting that reflected the bright colors of guests' formal attire. Guests were separated into two facing crowds by an aisle where the bride and her close friends, or *hôtesses* (*hôtesse yi*, in Wolof), hostesses danced behind her. They all wore matching wax fabrics but in differently tailored styles to reflect their own tastes. However, all the styles were donned with elaborate ruffles and intricate embroidery and enhanced their slender bodies. The outfits symbolized unity for the bride and were practical for being easily recognizable when fulfilling their duties as hostesses serving food and drinks to guests. During the procession under the tent, each girl performed to the rhythmic chant of her name sung out by a male *gèwël* and his drummer dressed in street clothes. She marched towards the bride, who sat on a large throne-like chair, giving her the illusion of being a queen.

The march of a particular *hôtesse* was a slow saunter showing off for the crowd by handing bills to the griot and his entourage as the men proceeded behind her, chanting, "Rokhaya, wonn ma say xarit." *Rokhaya show me who your friends are*, in a theatrical display of affiliation to the bride. A female griot stood up and began singing in Pulaar, booming with a beautiful and crisply trained voice. She held the microphone with confidence and seemed to serve as the traditional Toucouleur cultural element of the ceremony. Her repetitive song was recounting the family genealogy by singing the names of individuals and, in effect, praising them. The *hôtesse* friends of the bride seemed less interested in this piece, walking back and forth in the aisle as she sang, mostly passing by her as if she were not there.

The *hôtesse* symbolizes the modern, desired young woman, or *diskette*, as she is also customarily called, who aims to flaunt her physical attributes through tight fitting and revealing



clothing. The *diskette*, according to T.K Biaya, is a young slender, fashion model type that was known to frequent discotheques and bars, appropriating a Western stereotype of the 70's (2000). Referring to a woman as a *diskette* was to emphasize her charismatic appeal and beautiful body. Elder women of notoriety known as *drianké*, in contrast, represented wealth and prestige by the excess of large flowing dresses, elaborate jewelry, and commanding presence. *Drianké* refers to women who are well-endowed with large bottoms and the style and elegance that depict the ideal traditional Senegalese woman (Nyanmjoh 2005). For the young women, the title of *hôtesse* meant a focus on physical beauty. Strutting was a sort of rehearsal performance proving they could personally create a welcoming atmosphere, demonstrating their willingness to be of service. Francis Nyanmjoh argues, that in many ways, the *drianké* are the *diskette* of yesteryear, similarly shaped by the expectations of fulfilment echoing from across the Atlantic, having already proven themselves as mature and notable women (2005).

Nyanmjoh cites the annual Jongoma competition that takes place in Dakar, which represents the ideal *drianké* woman. Voluptuous contestants saunter up and down the runway in front of an audience and judges while holding the essential materials that are part of her feminine and hospitable arsenal. Her walk is a slow and discrete display of her features while she palms an *and*, or clay pot used for burning incense in the home. For this occasion, the pot was filled with strings of beads, *bin-bin* she discretely threw out to the enthusiastic crowd. *Kersa*, or discretion, is one of the valued characteristics a woman can have and is encouraged in all of her actions. Nyanmjoh argues the Jongoma contest was created in order to challenge the image of Senegalese women put forth by Miss Senegal, which represented the more modern, young *diskette*, than the well-rounded *drianké*, whose appeal lies within both her physical beauty and her skills of *terànga* in the home and beyond.

Youssou Ndour, in his song *Ndar*, the Wolof word for the northern port city of Saint

Louis, sings of the *terànga* he finds in *Ndar*. Saint Louis, the first French colonial capital, is often described as where the Wolof display the most enthusiastic *terànga*, taking it very seriously. One lyric describes what he likes most about the *terànga* he finds in Saint Louis, exemplified by a beautiful *drianké* woman who embodies *kersa* (discretion) by walking as a “guinea fowl,” a small bird known for its slow saunter as if it has nowhere to go in a hurry. The woman’s gate symbolizes her desire to project self-control, command of sexuality, and also to encourage a welcoming space. She is careful to not bring too much attention to herself by having a calm disposition, often refraining from smiling or making sudden movements. This is in sharp contrast to the young *hôtesses* and bride who command attention by raising their arms and dancing provocatively, actions usually reserved for the representative *griottes*.

Beth Buggenhagen’s depiction of generational tensions and conflicting ideas of social reproduction and creating alliances is particularly demonstrative of the differences between the *drianké* figure and the young *diskettes*. Buggenhagen focuses on the concept of *sañse*, the art of looking good, to illustrate the changing standards to which the different generations aim to create a “social persona” (2012). She describes the wedding of Penda, a young Murid woman, where the elder women were upset that Penda had taken too much time at the salon, making guests wait for her arrival. Young brides go to the salon in the morning and spend most of the day there as hairdressers outfit them with elaborate hair weaves and makeup. Penda’s mother, Soxna, expressed frustration with her daughter’s fashion choices, which were noticeably rooted in American pop culture’s conceptions of beauty. Whereas Soxna’s generation saw *sañse* as the embodiment of their intricate social networks (symbolized by fabric and gifts given and received), Penda’s choice of dress and mannerisms expressed self-interest (2012). Soxna’s unease, Buggenhagen points out, is symbolic of her generation’s angst over changing practices and expectations of women’s social reproduction. Penda’s emphasis on the appearance of

physical beauty for personal benefit runs counter to the sentiment and passion behind something such as *sañse*.

In what could be interpreted as the newer generation's rejection of *terànga* as a serious and worthwhile practice, I would argue there is, instead, a reorientation of the inspirational origins of *terànga*. Much of the scholarship focused on Senegal cites the globalizing trends brought on by emigration, Dakar as a major hub for cultural influxes of market products, and mediascapes promoting global popular culture, as well as suspended periods of economic hardship. Due to the economic precarious situations of Dakar families, as in many places in contemporary Africa, young women seek innovative ways of securing immediate financial benefits with less emphasis on previously central concerns with kinship, social networks and reproduction (Hannaford and Folley 2015).

Furthermore, my research with young women in Dakar suggests a shift from *terànga* for the purposes of nourishing extended family and social networks to investment in *terànga* for securing husbands and establishing a life with him and their children. The *diskette/ hôtesse* pairing represents a kind of global *terànga* that gains both inspiration from Western styles and local appropriations. This is symbolized by the linguistic borrowing of *hôtesse*, the French word for hostess, and of the consumerist and commodity reference to industrial hospitality services. The hostess in literature on hospitality focuses on the female body as being particularly hospitable, both motherly and erotically (Still 2010). McNulty, however, argues that feminine hospitality is an oxymoron as women are rarely hostesses in their own right, but rather representative of the man, the host (2007). The linguistic distinction between *hôte* and *hôtesse* as discussed by Derrida illuminates the interiority of the hostess to the host. Levinas describes hospitality as maternal-feminine, echoing the cultural imaginary of hospitality as feminine (Still 2010). Anne Allison describes hostess women in Japanese night clubs as crucial commodities for

men to be successful businessmen in Tokyo (1994). In the context of Senegalese ceremonies, using language such as *hôtesse* implies also seeing women as the helper to the *hôte*, who is the male and legitimate host.

Considering the young *hôtesse* as embodying “sensual appearance,” a beautiful surface with good service (Haug 1986, Allison 1994), recognizes her position as a representative of not only the male host and his honor, but also her desire to demonstrate her potential ability to be a good host in her own right. In an effort to cultivate a theory of “feminist hospitality,” Hamington discusses McNulty’s assertion that hospitality is two things: personal identity construction; and a representation of the nation and its culture (2010), which I find particularly useful in order to consider the image of the *hôtesse* as the modern ambassador to globally and locally inspired *terànga*. Pnina Werbner discusses the new way of conceptualizing cosmopolitanism as rooted in local culture, also known as vernacular cosmopolitanism, which she describes as an aspirational outlook and mode of practice (2008) that incorporates a great deal of imported cultural notions into local practices, which I believe the young *hôtesse* women embody.

Senegal, and particularly Dakar, is a very cosmopolitan place according to Ulf Hannerz’ assertion that cosmopolitanism is a voluntary openness to the culture of others. It is especially the contrast these cultures offer that makes the allure of mixing styles and modes especially cosmopolitan (1990). I argue that the mounting stresses of ceremonies and the maintenance of marital ties have caused young women to be innovative in constructing ways of “being in the world” to fulfill old and new aspirations (Makhulu, et al 2010), of which *terànga* is a primary source. As the rest of the chapter will demonstrate, the young bride’s disdain for *terànga* as a tool to reinforce kinship ties and family honor runs contrary to that of her generation’s appropriation of *terànga*, not because she finds *terànga* to be useless, but rather because she understands *terànga* to be more productive in other ways.

## The Anatomy of a Family Ceremony

The wedding in Medina continued, and Djenaba mostly stayed in the shadows, waiting for her role as the facilitator of the gift giving process. Her role as the *griot* was to mediate the flow of gifts to ensure no one was left out. Most gift-giving circles, or the *geew*, took place in the same space with a slight change in orientation of chairs. Women of the two families of the bride and groom would take front seats with their *gewelu juddu* (family griot) such as Djenaba. Non-essential guests, such as neighbors and friends, were audience members sitting at the peripheries. *Griots* consulted with the mothers on how to proceed with the infamous *joxalante terànga* (Sall 2011), a back and forth of gifting and reciprocity originating from the *warugar* (dowry) and *ndawtal* contributions given to the woman and her family by the groom's sisters and aunts. For this family, there was a dowry of 500,000 cfa (\$1000).

Djenaba and the *gewelu juddu* of the groom's family stood in the center as representatives of the respective families. Suitcases of cloth, gold jewelry, and kitchen utensils such as buckets for laundry and cooking materials known as *waccay* are dropped down in the laps of the bride's family. In strategizing with Djenaba, they begin the process of presenting the gifts to the groom's family. It is critical to factor in all of the important parties, beginning with the mother-in-law (*goro*). The calculation of gifts to each person is made based on the initial *warugar* and is then doubled in return to the family-in-law. In a gamble, the mother of the bride takes her share of the dowry and divides it up between close friends and family before the wedding, trusting they will return with ten times the amount given to them.

The *ndawtal* is ceremoniously presented as support for the mother to enable her to shower the new family-in-law with *terànga*. As guests bring their money and cloth, the *griotte* calls out, singing their praises, and are rewarded with a bill of 1000 cfa (\$2) or 500 cfa (\$1). Another *griotte* shared with me that the switch from a 500 cfa coin to a bill, which happened in 2012 by

the Banque Centrale des États de L’Afrique de L’Ouest (BCEAO), meant *griots* were getting paid a great deal less. Cash bills were much more aesthetically pleasing, easier to wave around, and given more frequently during ceremonies. The 1000 cfa bill was the lowest paper amount offered until 2012, and so someone wishing to only give 500 cfa would be too embarrassed to do so in coin form, making them pay double what they wished to. This benefited the receiver, but that had changed with the invention of the 500 cfa bill. A *griotte* calls out “Doom ja ndey ja” *Like daughter like mother*, which is often followed by some variance of the proverb examined earlier in the chapter, referring to the marriage of the young woman as a symbol of her mother’s personal virtue and years of sacrifice for the good of her daughter.

To ensure the continued exchange networks of friends and family, *ndawtal* contributions are recorded in a notebook for women to remember who gave what, when, and how much they must reciprocate at the person’s later ceremony, usually two to five times the original amount. The exchange of *terànga* continues with the mother of the groom and his sisters or close female relatives or friends. The *premier njeke* is the most honored and is given *terànga* that can equal amounts of 50,000 cfa to 100,000 cfa (\$100-200) plus cloth. Djenaba yelled out, “Njakk, may na fukki junni premier njeke, six yard wax, xartuum, gis nga lii?” *The mother gave the premier njeke 50,000 cfa, six yards of wax fabric and khartoum fabric, did you see this?* she says. She hands it off to the *griot* who relays the message and passes it along to the *premier njeke*, saying “La la ihlala, xoolal terànga bii” says the *griot* to the mother of the groom. “*My God, did you see this honor they gave you?*” Followed is the *deuxieme njeke*, the second in line of sisters or important female family members, who is given equal money and four yards of wax fabric and khartoum fabric, the stiff batik dyed cloth from Mali. Many ceremonies such as this one in Medina have a *groupu njeke*, a group of residual female relatives or friends who are brought into the gift exchange fold to ensure no one is left out.

*Njeke*, the term given to a woman of the groom's family, is recognized during ceremonies and given gifts to reinforce her importance. Traditionally the *njeke* was the married older sister of the husband who was also symbolically considered the "jabar" (wife) to her sister-in-law throughout her marriage to her brother. The position of being married to her brother's wife served as way for her to act as a confidante and marriage mentor to her sister-in-law in case of marital issues, or to offer general knowledge of how to manage the household. Often times, the first born female child is named after a woman's *njeke*, who becomes the child's godparent, watching out for him or her.

As part of her role of mentoring her sister-in-law, the *njeke* would provide advice about the intimate parts of the wife and husband's relationships, revealing house secrets to the wife about satisfying her husband and creating a universe of intimacy. This universe consisted of a welcoming home environment that was visually beautiful and stimulating, with a pervading smell of incense and special clothing and undergarments intended for her husband's eyes only. The mentoring role of the *njeke*, I deduced, has become more symbolic than practical. The role of *njeke* is now easily bestowed to a friend or rich female cousin instead of the groom's married sister. In some cases, Djenaba told me, the *njeke* was even an unmarried friend, therefore negating their ability to give the wife any educated mentoring about marriage, sexuality, or marital conflict resolution. Instead, the honor was given to a woman the family felt could provide financial assistance and prestige to the family and future children, because although the *njeke* are given gifts and cash at the wedding, at the baptism of the first child, the woman will reciprocate with even larger sums of money and gifts, and the *njeke* will also provide gifts as the symbolic guardian of the child and to reaffirm their allegiance to the mother.

When I began hearing the word *terànga* in the context of gift giving, I was initially bewildered with what seemed to me a stretch of its definition of hospitality. As stated in the

introduction, this dissertation is intended to examine the different meanings and practices of *terànga* in modern urban Senegal, especially for Senegalese women, and to expand our understanding of the concept in all of its complexities. I argue that in the instance of gift-giving and exchange, *terànga* is not simply a material object or a matter of “social life” (Appadurai 1986) or “spirit” (Mauss 1924) between two people, but rather the cultivation of generosity and affiliation that preceded the gift and will continue to grow from it. Moreover, referring to *terànga* in this case also catalogued not only a person's legacy of generosity, but also an acknowledgement of the historical genealogy of *terànga*. Da Col and Candea argue that hospitality is a more encompassing concept than the gift as theorized by Marcel Mauss because it touches on other theoretical problems interesting to anthropologists such as generosity, identity, and belonging (2012). In most descriptions of *terànga* I encountered, whether it was giving a gift, presenting guests with a cooked meal, or greeting someone on the street, people always talked about the intention and shared emotion behind the action. It was important for them that the act of giving or sharing was accompanied by a deep meaningfulness that accounted for the past and present efforts of the individual.

To demonstrate this point, I digress to the story a friend relayed to me while drinking tea at his house. Following dinner at the friend's place, I asked the two men I was sitting with how they would describe *terànga*. Ibou Laye quickly said *terànga* was not just hosting a guest, but it was how the woman represented herself. He told the story of dropping in on a friend one evening uninvited, to find them preparing to have dinner. His friend invited him to stay and so he did. He said he was mostly curious to see how his friend's wife would deal with the improvisation of their guest. She seemed perturbed he said, and she took an inordinate amount of time to cook, dragging it out in hopes that he would grow weary and leave. Upon seeing he was still there, she brought out the food and set it on the blanket she had spread on the ground. Ibou described her



body language as less than enthusiastic, even passive aggressive as if to tell him he was unwelcome. When seen from the surface, she was a perfect host, providing food and drink and all the necessities to accompany it; however, she had ultimately failed because he did not like her disposition. In retaliation, he chose to eat very little and left soon thereafter, effectively showing her his displeasure. Da col and Candea also point out that hospitality is as much about reciprocity as it is about the “tension between spontaneity and calculation” (2012) in which Senegalese women are supposed to be open to spontaneity and yet always be prepared for the eventual uninvited, yet expected guest.

**“Terànga, Kenn Du Ko Xacco”:** *Nothing is Eternal, and Intentions are Everything*

The wedding in Medina went so late that most guests lost interest after the food was given out and returned home. Following the exchange of gifts, Djenaba and the bride’s family and other *griots* packed into a small room of the house for the *yebbi* (cataloguing of gifts), to add up the amounts of cloth, buckets, and money they had left to give out to the *mbajjen yi* (paternal aunts), *groupu njeke* (group of female relatives), father of the groom and his brothers. It was late and the various *griots* were urging the young bride to pay attention and respect the process of providing gifts to everyone in her husband’s family. Panzacchi, in her article about modern day *griots*, notes that the younger generation is increasingly impatient with the presence of *griots* at ceremonies and generally speaking, arguing they are parasitic and serve no real purpose (1994)

The bride was tired and wished to finish this step and move on as she still had to be transported to her husband’s apartment where they would live together. She had slumped into a chair; her once stiff fabric dress had loosened and was equally droopy. She became agitated and asked if they were finished several times.

“You need to learn patience, young lady, how are you going to survive your marriage if you

can't learn patience?" her aunt said.

"Dama sonn te kenn menul wax ne mayuma, may du force," the bride quipped. *I'm tired, and no one can say I didn't give enough, I'm not obligated to give.*

She stormed off saying she was getting ready to take off for her husband's apartment despite not having finished separating gifts, as her elders grumbled she wasn't being mature. The elders quickly packed everything up and got in taxis headed for Grand Dakar, an equally busy neighborhood where the bride was to live with her husband. In the taxi on the way over, Djenaba and another family griot griped in frustration about the young bride's behavior. "If she doesn't learn patience, she is going to be returning to her family's home soon," insinuating the marriage would end in divorce because the girl would not have the skills to overcome impatience or exercise *kersa* (discretion) if she only mouthed off in disapproval. Hannaford and Folley describe the ideal characteristic of a good wife as *muñ*, or patience, the ability to remain stoic, self-composed, and uncomplaining in the face of challenges (2015). "She needs to learn that *terànga* is everything, gifts are important," said Djenaba. "If not, she is going to have a rough marriage."

As the young bride and the woman from the other story demonstrate, although gifts are important to give and also receive in order to carry out further displays of *terànga*, the gifts and giving alone cannot make a woman. The saying *terànga, kenn du ko xacco* is telling in this instance. *Xacco*, the verb *to tug*, gives the sense that something is either being fought over, or taken with disregard for whether it is deserved or not. Negating *xacco*, therefore, instructs us that *terànga* cannot be simply given or claimed but is dependent upon the personal qualities of the receiver. The receiver is bestowed with *terànga* because they are perceived as friendly, generous, and have honorable qualities. Disappointment in the young bride's disregard for the importance of intention embedded in *terànga* is a sign of frustration with her lack of appreciation for custom. *Terànga* therefore is something given or reciprocated to those who have worked for it by

demonstrating generosity, openness towards others, and the ability to show self control (Meneley 2005). She was not winning any points with an attitude that advertised her displeasure, despite ultimately giving what was required of her. Voicing her frustrations coupled with her poor posture showed her lack of discretion and restraint, and respect for the process.

Another problem, it seemed, was her resentment with giving gifts to those with whom she was not personally familiar. To the elder women of her family, they believed she was misunderstanding the importance of *terànga* as a defining practice in her marriage and personal life. Djenaba was concerned that the refusal to engage in *terànga* - and therefore cultivate characteristics of a good host, a generous woman, and active participant in the family and community - would cause the young woman serious troubles in her future. In the end the gifts were divided and found their rightful owners; however, the bride had arguably done more harm to her cause than good. For Djenaba, it was not enough that the gifts were given because the intentions behind them were not sincere nor desired.

We arrived at the apartment complex which was next door to the club Thiossane, owned by Senegal's charmed singer Youssou Ndour. Climbing the stairs and chanting their arrival, Djenaba and the other *griots* carried the cooking bowls, buckets, and utensils useful for the bride's daily responsibilities to her husband and his family, a process known as *ceet*. Although the money and gifts given to her family are mostly intended for her, much of it ends up in the hands of her sister in-laws as *terànga*. At the front of the line was the bride with her head draped in a beautiful green and black *sëru njago*, a handwoven strip-weave cloth (Buggenhagen 2012) with tints of silver thread used to cover her before her husband arrives.

Her friends, or *hôtesses*, followed her to the bedroom where she sat on a wood carved bed as others surrounded her on all sides. She remained covered and her husband arrived to join her on the bed and began eating *lakh* (milk porridge) out of a calabasse brought in by one of the family

*griots*. They shared the *lakh* as everyone cheered and the *griots* began wailing descriptions of the richness of the event and its significance. Each griot began placing the plastic wrapped fabrics, buckets, and utensils on the bed and to the side of the bed until the bride and groom were surround by a fortress of wedding gifts. The symbolism was not lost on everyone as these gifts would become the essential tools for the bride to create a real fortress of a home that is welcoming from the inside-out, what Adeline Masquelier calls enclosure, a notion so vital to female productivity and respectability (2009). Her room and home would become an enclosed and hospitable space with all the materials she would need to offer *terànga* to her husband and visitors.

## **Conclusion**

The two ceremonies depicted in this chapter illuminate a few key points in the life cycles of women in Senegal and also the angst felt across the generations. Chapter Two discussed how ceremonies are represented through mediatized debates that bring together multiple voices about the divisive popular opinions of ceremonies and *terànga*. As the two ceremonies represent, traditionally reputations are extremely important and cannot simply be bought, but are exchanged and crafted over the *longue durée* (Buggenhagen 2012). The expectation for young women to be mindful of the process for themselves and their families is increasingly inflated and stressful, and the diligence necessary seems no longer realistic for a young generation struggling to remain “useful” (Hannaford and Folley 2015). The young bride demonstrated a sincere bewilderment of the exact purposes and importance of the relationships bound by ceremonial exchange.

Furthermore, young women, such as the *diskette/hôtesse* are exposed to an increasingly individualized process of identity-making as consumers and producers of social and other forms

of media serve to project an image of respectability in the midst of urban chaos (Buggenhagen 2014). These young women are increasingly open to outside cultures because these cultures provide a certain personal autonomy that local customs do not (Rosander 2005). Hannaford and Foley cite prolonged economic distress on the continent has meant people increasingly find innovative ways of interpreting “being in the world” (Hannaford and Folley 2015, Makhulu, et al 2010:19). The young bride’s resistance and frustration over the tedious gift exchange, in what is an important rite of passage for her mother’s generation, demonstrates a shift in the weight given to these kinds of exchanges and the spirit behind them. Previous generations would have seen gift exchange during ceremonies as the crucial element to creating lasting relationships and reputations, but for the newer generations, is seen as not only unproductive and unnecessarily time consuming, but even counter-productive and wasteful.

As young couples in Dakar increasingly choose to live alone in apartments and houses away from the family home, so do their lives become spatially separate from the everyday social intercourses essential to life. The ceremonies become, then, as the sociologist Cheikh Tidiane Sall relayed to me, the place where families can heal the psychological wounds of this separation, increasingly a reality since the introduction of wage labor in Senegal (2009). They are a place where each family member can receive the part (*wall*) that would be a natural aspect of living in the same space. However, the young bride embodies the growing tensions between the importance of *terànga* to women's identities, and its feasibility in light of the rapid economic and socio-cultural changes. That is, whether following the lifetime project of reputation-making of her mother’s generation is applicable to her and her peers’ current situations.

The *griot* figure in this chapter, such as Djenaba, has served as a medium through which to explore the cultural transmission of *terànga*, and its shifting definitions. *Griot* songs, praises, and practices demonstrate how Senegalese society is pregnant with *terànga* culture, and yet its

importance and practice are highly debated, especially between the generations. I have argued that the absence of continuity across, and even within the generations regarding the substance and aim of *terànga* does not dismiss its cultural potency and omnipresence.

## Chapter Four

### **The Politics of *Terànga*: Gender, Power, and the Political Equality Movement in Senegal**

In this chapter, I discuss the complex and contested ways in which women's engagement with *terànga* has been integral to the process of 'practicing' politics-- both publicly and privately in Senegal. It also aims to explore how the involvement in ceremonies and the practice of *terànga* are gendered political performances that demonstrate how the very conditions that perpetuate women's subordination are at the same time an important part of redefining women's social worth (Masquelier 2010) as any social institution can simultaneously liberate and constrain (Lambek 2015). I explore how women in politics not only engage in the practice of *terànga* as an obligation and performance of gendered norms, but also as a means of subverting existing limitations for political and personal opportunity.

To do so, I showcase the experiences of two important female figures, Aida Mbodj and Ndéye Soukeye Gueye, who have occupied key positions in the government and are veterans of political space in Senegal. They have also been active in the *parité* movement for gender equity in positions of political decision making, discussed in this chapter. Their biographical histories and knowledge of women in politics and society that offers a rich source of material from which to analyze the role of *terànga* in their personal and professional lives. Senegalese women are constantly visiting and being visited as well as engaged in or organizing an exchange between family members, in-laws, colleagues, and friends. These exchanges range from offering abundant food, giving money during ceremonies, and offering praises during public and private events. In line with such experiences, the stories of the seasoned politicians, Madame Mbodj and Madame Gueye, demonstrate how these practices exceed the parameters of the family and are instrumental in the creation and negotiation of a specific type of public persona based on their

mastery of *terànga*. In this chapter I weave their stories with discussions about several elements of *terànga* that are important to these women's highly nuanced gendered political identity.

The first element I address is the duality of the concept of *personnalité* (personality), a French term which refers to a person who is an independent thinker with a strong will and commanding disposition and a friendly charismatic persona. Much like Max Weber's theory of charisma, *personnalité* chronicles an individual personality set apart from others due to an aura of exceptional qualities (1968). In the French context, a *personnalité politique* indicates a socially and politically prominent person. Scholars such as O'Brien have written about Senegalese charismatic male religious leaders involved in a system of clientelism with their disciples as well as politicians (1975). These studies have dominated Senegalese scholarship on political economy and politics, while women's political process has garnished little attention. However, women are increasingly part of the *personnalité politique* in dynamic ways. I argue that having *personnalité* is the desired result of a woman's use, or redirection, of *terànga* to display her qualities as generous, popular, and outspoken. These characteristics are as important to a married woman's ability to weather the demands of her marriage and family in-law as they are to a woman navigating a professional career.

*Terànga* is essential to creating and negotiating *personnalité*, and *personnalité* is important to women in politics as they aim to develop a successful political persona and gain support. Weber asserts that the importance of charisma and, therefore, *personnalité* to the foundation of political institutions is based on an obligation of followers to their leader (1968). The charismatic personalities displayed by the women I discuss in this chapter are infectious and draw people in to a reciprocal obligation to one another.

Exchanging hospilities and attending the ceremonies of supporters is a main part of how politicians, especially women, garnish support, called their *base* (political followers), the second



element I explore in women's engagement with *teranga* and politics. The political importance of the generation of these women following independence was paramount, providing the social networking necessary, yet they remained only helpers in men's campaigns. It is their daughters who have continued these traditions, using their status as female leaders in their communities to make waves in Senegalese politics. I argue that *teranga* in political practice has been instrumental in both the reification of gendered perceptions of women's role in society, both publicly and privately, and conducive to a redefinition of it. The final element to be discussed is how these women are able to then subvert, or redefine, the practice of *teranga* and the culture of family ceremonies as a source of personal and political power and, therefore, contest the limits in which gender has been their defining quality. *Teranga* is, moreover, a way in which women create reputations, demand respect, and exercise power. It is also the practice of furthering and contesting gendered norms in politics and society.

*Teranga* is most publicly displayed during family ceremonies such as weddings, baptisms, and funerals with the exchange of gifts, food, and honoring one another with words of appreciation and praise. These spaces also garner a great deal of public criticism and debate about the representative nature of *teranga*. Newspaper articles, public opinion, and popular culture argue that family ceremonies have become excessive, wasteful, and degrading to the social and economic vitality of Senegal. Women are singled out as the perpetrators of these 'damaging' behaviors,<sup>27</sup> and politicians have increasingly been under fire for their own transgressions because of excessive spending during ceremonies. In attempting to understand the irony of this conundrum, I interviewed Fanta Gueye Ndiaye, a lawyer with the Association des Juristes Senegalaises-AJS (Association for Female Senegalese Lawyers) and consultant for the Ministry of Women's Affairs. She had taken part in a televised debate entitled "Family

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<sup>27</sup> Le Soleil 2010

ceremonies and wastefulness," exploring the changing nature of ceremonies and new appropriations of *terànga*. When I caught up with her, she said, "When we [the Senegalese government] created the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 1978, the unraveling of the law started. Female politicians such as Caroline Faye and Adama Dieng, in attempts to accompany their male counterparts, needed women's support, which they could find by going to neighborhood ceremonies, giving money, and calling *griots*<sup>28</sup> to come and sing. That is where people started wasting all kinds of money. It was more than a ceremony; it was a campaign."

She asserted that ceremonies had become spaces of campaigning, and akin to institutionalized *terànga*, especially for women trying to break into the male-dominated realm of state politics. The debate regarding women's involvement in ceremonies as excessive and irresponsible has only gathered more steam since the 2010 national assembly vote to enforce a *parité* law, requiring an equal representation of men and women in all government positions. Scrutinizing women's behavior in family matters has become a popular means of questioning whether women are capable of participating in state politics. Given these debates, women in politics and supporters of the law have pushed back against opposition for women holding important political and social roles.

## **The Politicians**

The two main women of interest to this chapter are Aida Mbodj and Ndeye Soukeye Gueye, women of the same generation who have been active in state politics in some form or another for several decades. Aida Mbodj, a child born into a political family, is the former Minister of Women's Affairs under Abdoulaye Wade's government, the former mayor of Bambey, which is a sizable community in central Senegal, and currently the president of Bambey's political

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<sup>28</sup> A griot is a traditional praise singer and family genealogist who accompanies family members to events announcing their reputation and affiliations with other attendees.

administration. She is a champion of Wade's political party, *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (Senegalese Democratic Party), which she joined in 2000 after a long run with the socialist party of Senghor and Diouf. She won a representative seat in the national assembly even after the party was defeated for the presidency in 2012. Ndéye Soukeye Gueye, now retired and seeking an election bid for mayor of her suburb of Dakar, served as the director for family affairs, an office under the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Both women have had dynamic political careers and seen great transitions in women's access to and participation in governmental positions and influence on political parties. A great deal of their success can be attributed to their work directly on or behind the scenes of the *parité* movement, thanks to their political influence and social networks. Their experiences demonstrate several shifts in women's roles in unofficial and official party politics and also the constant importance of *terànga* to their marriages, friendships, and political careers.

### ***Personnalité: Identity Politics and the Pursuit of Political Parité***

In spite of the passing of the *parité* law in 2010, the debate about excessive spending during family ceremonies as women's business (Buggenhagen, 2011) has often been used to discredit women as incapable of holding political office, citing their frivolous and fiscally irresponsible behavior around ceremonies as evidence. COSEF, Conseil Sénégalais des Femmes (Senegalese Women's Council), the organization most instrumental in promoting the *parité* legislation, denounces these statements saying that if women are unprepared to serve in office it is only because they have not had a fair shot at being elected, which the law attempts to rectify. Since the law was passed, COSEF and other partner organizations have held trainings to help women understand the law and to prepare them for political careers. One training session I went to was held at the women's association co-op headquarters in Dakar and was attended by COSEF

members and other women interested in pursuing political office. Rokhy Gassama, the training leader, began the training by referencing some of the important female leaders in Senegalese history back to the time of kings and queens as a way to demonstrate the origins of their political legacy, and tapping into the socio-historical imaginary these women's stories have become. The official focus of the training was to define what it meant to be a good and successful politician, and the necessary process to achieve this goal. The women were taught to capitalize on the feminine qualities innate in their already thriving social identities and networks, which I interpret as engaging with specific elements and practices of *terànga*.

When asked to brainstorm the qualities of a good politician, the women unanimously agreed that *personnalité* was of utmost importance to succeeding in politics, and life for that matter. As I have indicated previously, *personnalité* has dual meanings that evoke a fine balance between independent ideas and respect for social norms and relationships. It also entails being charismatic and strong willed while displaying humility. The term is often used in reference to *terànga* and ceremonies, when a woman is expected to provide gifts at important occasions and to show affection to those close to her without making herself seem too excessive or disingenuous. During a wedding for example, the mother of the bride will publicly pronounce the links between herself, her family, and the individual who has bestowed her with a gift. Similarly, politicians who participate in a ceremony of a supporter will publicize their affection for and affiliation with the host, demonstrating their respect for those who support them, while garnishing a reputation of generosity, loyalty, and *personnalité*. This is also paramount to the second element I will discuss later: creating one's *base*, or group of supporters.

Aida Mbodj is exemplary in how one cultivates a political *personnalité*. I first became interested specifically in Aida as a representative of women in politics when she was the minister

of the Family, Social Development, and National Solidarity.<sup>29</sup> I had witnessed her overwhelming popularity during several political rallies such as one which took place at the Presidential hotel *Le Meridian* for the mass political meeting called the *Quinzaine de la Femme*, (Women's Fortnight).

Like any rally, the *Quinzaine* gathered women from associations across Dakar and its suburbs. The sound of whistles and cheering was overwhelming, reverberating against the walls as Aida took the stage. Supporters chanted "Aida! Aida! Aida" to the rhythm of drumming and clapping. She was a superstar being encouraged by her fans, and she soaked up the moment, waving and acknowledging the crowd before giving a speech with conviction, power, and a familiarity that made her seem personally approachable to each supporter, of which she was known to have many. The women surrounding me commented on how brave she was, how beautiful and well dressed she was, and how much *personnalité* she had. She was respected by opponents and adored by many who didn't share her politics. In fact, during one of my many meetings with women's empowerment groups headed by development organizations, I would often hear a song on repeat. The song was a women's empowerment anthem by the famous singer Coumba Gawlo entitled *Femme Objet*, in which she praised Aida as a woman of *fula ak fayda*, a common phrase depicting someone who is brave and has personality. These were not mere coincidences, but rather Aida's intimate understanding and engagement with *terànga* as a complex and contested political tool, at times calculated, others spontaneous. She had mastered the art of *terànga* as both the exchange of gifts and participation in ceremonies, as well as the embodiment of beauty, generosity, civility, and openness.

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<sup>29</sup> This office has changed names several times in the past. At times it is simply the Ministry for Women's Affairs, at others it is the Ministry of the Family, the Protection of Children, and Women's Affairs.

## **Femme Leader, a Mother-Daughter Affair: Evolutions in Women's Participation in Politics**

Aissatou Mbodj, as she is legally named, has occupied some of Senegal's most prestigious and influential governmental positions. Born into a political family originally from the north of Senegal, they ultimately settled in Bambey, close to the holy city of Touba, home to the Murids, one of Senegal's Sufi Muslim groups. Her father, El Hadj Amadou Mbodj, had been to a private school in Saint Louis under the colonial government and later worked for the French controlled peanut industry. Her mother, although formally uneducated, was a leader among the women of Senghor's *Parti Socialiste* (Socialist Party). In Bambey, her father worked for the local municipal government and was in charge of voting processes, a memory that stands out for Aida as a young girl. Eager to help, she was employed by her father to write names on the voting cards, teaching her both how to write and steeping her in the culture of politics. "My first writings were on the front and backs of voting cards," Aida reminisced. Early on, Aida was recognized by important figures who passed by the house, such as Pierre Senghor, the first mayor of Bambey and the brother of Senegal's first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor. He told her mother that her daughter was going to be a leader because she was noticeably open, caring, and generous.

When I asked her what it means to be a female leader in Senegal, she said it depended on the woman's character and personality, and began with an anecdote from her childhood: "When I was a child, I would ask my mother if I could have a baptism for every sheep that was born. If a sheep were born, I would call all my friends from the neighborhood and have a baptismal ceremony just to gather people together. We would pretend to cook and serve the meal to everyone. It was from this I got my sense of politics." Even as a child, Aida was assembling peers and creating an inviting space that mirrored a ceremony, where her peers could engage in

an exchange of *terànga*, food, talk, and gifts. Relating this ceremonial space to that of practicing politics is important, as it demonstrates the crucial role that *terànga* plays in her identity and practice as a politician. She understands the important place that rituals of exchange, obligation, and reciprocity hold for her process, something she learned from her mother.

Aida's mother was also known for her generosity and ability to assemble people, especially other women. She was an example of how central women were to the politics of her generation following independence, even before they occupied official positions in the government. Men often employed women to organize and animate rallies, to cook, provide music and general *ambiance* (atmosphere), sporting ribbons and *musoor* (headwrap) in party colors. Known simply as the leader's *jigeen*<sup>30</sup> (woman), they were an integral part of Senghor's ability to gain supporters in the rural towns throughout Senegal.

Women who were part of a *mbootaye* (women's organizations) in the community would host touring politicians, serving as a supportive network demonstrating hospitality to the political party members. Aida uses the verb *terou* as a verb and a noun, meaning to host and give hospitality as well as a place of hospitality, or respite. Their homes served often as a base camp for politicians to rest and also hold campaign rallies or small gatherings. Social groups were natural environments to create alliances and exercise them during each other's celebrations. This meant women were also much more informed about what was going on in the community as Aida pointed out when she told the story of her mother informing leaders of the party when a political seat was vacant due to having participated in the prior occupant's funeral.

Politics in Senegal are all about who knows you and your family, and your relationship to the community, Aida explained to me. "A person will vote for you because your mother was the namesake of their child," she said. "That is what Senegalese understand about politics." Being

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<sup>30</sup> In this instance the term *jigeen* refers to a woman as a male politician's female helper.

the namesake of a child is an honor bestowed upon a woman for the purposes of the baptism based on the woman's reputation as kind and generous, characteristics the new parents would hope to pass onto their child.

### **Ndéye Soukeye Gueye: Representations of *Personnalité***

Ndéye Soukeye Gueye, recently retired from her job as Director of Family Affairs, was seeking election as mayor of Guediawaye, a small suburb of Dakar. Her home was in a new development in Cité du Golf and was decorated with a number of beautiful glass figurines and plates in a sitting room primed for guests. I originally met her when she was the acting Director of Family Affairs, a division of the Ministry of Women's Affairs having worked with several ministers during her tenure. She was often sent out on missions for the minister to hold workshops or public forums on a number of issues. For one important mission, she said, "I was supposed to accompany a group of women to New York for the annual United Nations conference on women. I demanded a meeting with the president to ask for more women than the four granted to us." Taking so few members was shameful to her, given Senegal's place as the beacon for women's rights in West Africa, and as the land of hospitality.<sup>31</sup> "I showed up at the presidential palace with a huge group of women and said that if we were going to go to New York we needed to do it *sénégalaisement* (Senegalese style), go, and go big."

For Ndéye Soukeye, *sénégalaisement* meant going to the U.N meeting with a large group of well dressed women in their vibrant clothing, taking command of the stage with inviting beauty and swift rhetoric. In Senegal, the presentation of self through beauty and a booming voice meant you were heard and respected, and that you respected your audience. It did not go unnoticed by UN representatives, leaving President Wade so pleased that upon their return he

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<sup>31</sup> *Le Pays de la Teranga*



handed them an envelope of money, a classic way in Senegal to demonstrate your gratitude and support. “Abdoulaye Wade likes to be considered as generous and appreciated by others,” she said. “Macky Sall, a former prime minister to Abdoulaye Wade and current President of Senegal since 2012, on the other hand, has no personality.”

President Wade, for her, had an understanding of the social norms of reciprocity and hospitality. “Money is how Senegalese people show appreciation for one another,” she said. Having a *personnalité*, therefore, is translating these understandings into displays of affection. The Wade administration was controversially well known for being too generous and steeped in tradition,<sup>32</sup> whereas the new administration under Macky Sall has, on the surface, taken a different, more austere approach in an effort to crack down on state corruption.

Female politicians are especially scrutinized for their behaviors and persona, as Ndéye Soukeye mentions in her description of the former Prime Minister Aminata Touré. “I sent her a letter of congratulations upon her nomination in 2013, warning her of the potential pitfalls of being too lawfully minded,” she said. Having grown up next to Madame Touré as a child in Thiès, and working with her while Touré was a program coordinator for the United Nations, Ndeye Soukeye held Touré in high regard. However, *Madame* Touré, nicknamed by the Senegalese public as ‘Mimi’, was often accused publicly of being too Westernized and out of touch with Senegalese values and too harsh in her campaign against corruption. Her focus on lawfulness and justice, as Ndéye Soukeye pointed out, was not how most Senegalese saw the world.

Madame Touré was first hired by the Sall administration as the Minister of Justice to head up the newly created Cour de répression de l’enrichissement illicite (Crei), a special court in the justice system to track down illicit use of government funds. She was chosen to succeed Abdoul

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<sup>32</sup> Tradition here means following beliefs of sorcery and the importance of griots. (relating to others through exchange of money instead of following bureaucratic rules of relationships)

Mbaye as prime minister in September of 2013 due to her performance with the court. During her tenure as prime minister, however, she was often referred to as the *dame de fer* (Iron Lady), a reference to her stern, Margaret Thatcher-like style as a strict and no-nonsense leader, something most Senegalese cannot identify with. An anecdote from a friend of the Prime Minister was that if a meeting was called at nine am, Madame Touré would be there on time, alone, contrary to the accustomed *heure Sénégal* (Senegalese time) of an hour or so after the posted time and with an entourage. During the local elections in the summer of 2014, Madame Touré lost her own district of Dakar and major seats for the president's party, prompting him to fire her from her position as prime minister. One can only speculate why she could not garnish adequate support. However, Ndéye Soukeye's comments warning her of the political peril of shunning practices of *terànga* as part of many politician's success hint at Madame Touré's lack of a robust *base* because many women found it difficult to relate to her.

It was no secret that Aminata Touré was all business and against frivolity, with no *griot* at her heels or fanfare of women to greet her at large events. On top of it all, she had a very minimalist fashion sense. Women often joked that she only had one wig, one style, contributing to her perceived lack of *personnalité*. Just as Ndéye Soukeye and her group at the UN conference saw the importance of representing Senegal and themselves through beautiful dress, many women took issue with Aminata Touré's indifference to it.

### **Aida's Success: Terànga as Political Practice**

One's *base* is the foundation of any politician's success. Many of the followers have personal connections or have been positively affected by the politician's work in the community. No matter their original connection, the relationship is fostered through a system of reciprocity between the politician and their *base*. The system of reciprocity is exercised during mutual

visiting and hosting social events, providing financial assistance to community members during trying times and for ceremonies. These events offer support to party sympathizers and in return provide the politician with a public forum from which to gain publicity and further their reputation as generous and charismatic.

Aida was a master. Despite being in the opposition party following the PDS' defeat in 2012, Aida, on top of her role as Mayor and House Representative of Bambey, became the first female President of the Departmental Council of Senegal following the local elections of 2014. She was often solicited for T.V interviews, one for which I was present, the show *Champion* on the newest station *SenTV*. During the days leading up to the taping, Aida and others were on the phone with her key people in Bambey organizing buses to bring her “*jigeen*” (her women) to Dakar from Bambey to create the *ambiance*<sup>33</sup> for the show. Traditionally, women, having played the subordinate role to politicians, were relegated to dancers and singing *griots* and male drummers in order to prepare the crowd of a political rally (Heath 1990).

There were so many people that they didn't have enough chairs for everyone and people were standing along the sides. Aida's *griot*, Mbaty Thiam, introduced her to the crowd and cameras, singing out her praises, “Def nanu ko ministre de la femme, mu bayyi waram . . . danu ko begg, jox ko ceram.”<sup>34</sup> *They made her minister of women's affairs, she never left the path, we love her, give her the respect she deserves. Griots* are crucial to the power of political oratory because much like the *geer*, noble class, politicians often speak through them in order to maintain their composure (1990).

“Before we start, I don't think we have ever seen a gathering quite like this on our show. When we talk about political ability, she has shown it to us today” exclaimed Mbaty Thiam in response to the crowd. Her colleague and political analyst, Momar Diongue, followed with a

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<sup>33</sup> *Ambiance* is the French word for mood, or fun environment.

<sup>34</sup> *Cër* is the Wolof word that is used in similar situations as *terànga*. It means to give someone their due respect and honor they deserve. This is often done by giving the person a gift or praising them through song.

proverb, “Bes du tuute boroom lay tollal” *The grandeur of the event reflects that of its host/the day is only as important as it’s owner.* “Soxna (Madame) Aida, people say you are a *grand* politician, what is your process?” the moderator asks. Aida responds: “I’ve never forgotten my *base*, and I have never changed my phone number because I never forgot who got me here, these people,” as she points to the crowd.

Her *base* is comprised mostly of women from whom she has garnished support over the years via family ties, and through work with local women’s organizations. They were all present at the taping and many other occasions to which I accompanied Aida to. In fact, she owns a house in Touba, the holy Murid city, that is only occupied during the Murid pilgrimage, the *Magal*. Once a year, she dusts off the sofas and beds to invite all of her family and supporters to her home. They are welcome to eat and drink to their delight and rest in one of the many empty rooms. She hosts a feast of epic proportions, offering aid to those who come to visit without question. The *Magal* of 2013, I witnessed a house filled with happy guests chatting about politics, receiving blessings from local imams. Instead of battling the crowds to visit the great Touba mosque, Aida’s home offered a peaceful environment with the benefit of blessings from the pilgrimage by proximity. During our interview she spoke in detail of the importance of humility and seeing oneself as always in need of others and available to them as well. When I asked her what she would do in Bambey during her visits, she replied, “damay politique,<sup>35</sup> *I’m practicing politics*. One of the main ways Aida “practiced politics” was in cultivating relationships and giving back to her supporters by being present during their family events such as a son’s wedding, the birth of a grandchild, or the death of a supporter or their family member. Participating is important and so are financial contributions to help lessen the burden of the ceremony. Just as family ceremonies are crucial to the functioning of social and familial

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<sup>35</sup> Damay politique literally means “I am in the process of politicizing.” It is an active use of “politics” as a verb.

relationships, they are also central to political processes, of which Aida Mbodj is a perfect example.

On one of our weekend trips to Bambey I accompanied Aida to the funeral of a community member, and the wedding of one of her supporters' sons, a woman who had served as a *militant* (most fervent followers) to Aida for many years. Aida was being honored at the wedding as a *mbajjen* (aunt/motherly figure) to the young man. Early on in the day when the festivities began Amy Diop and her guests, including Aida and her entourage, gathered in a circle to exchange words of praise. Amy and the *griots* in attendance yelled out a barrage of kind words of Aida's loyalty and generosity to their family, having always attended their celebrations as well as being there in times of grief. Through the medium of Aida's *griot*, she passed along bills to the others in recognition and gratitude for their praises. Amy Diop and other *militants* had come to support Aida and her family the weekend prior as she hosted a day of prayer for the anniversary of her father's death. Amy and her son presented us with drinks and snacks as Aida offered her financial contribution for the wedding. Amy was beyond pleased, assuring me of her affiliation with Aida as a friend, honorary family member, and leader. She said Aida had given her a position at the mayor's office and they had been inseparable ever since.

I sat next to Aida as the young bride came to join her new husband's home. As the bride progressed towards her new room, head and face covered with a *seru njago* (woven cloth used ceremoniously for weddings and baptisms), Aida announced, "Come give your mother-in-law a kiss." Her iteration of mother-in-law symbolizes her as an extension of Amy and as a mother figure to the young girl as she joins the family. Her participation and offerings of *terànga* to Amy are semi-private yet are public displays of affection that add to Aida's reputation as giving, caring, and present in the lives of those who support her. In turn, Amy and others like her, show their support during Aida's political rallies or other state sponsored events, which are usually

televised.

The day following the wedding, Aida was assisting in the opening of a new basketball stadium next to the Bambey mayor's office. She waited until the stadium was filled with onlookers and her female troops, the Amazonian Women, lined up ready to make some noise. As she entered the stadium to cut the ribbon, she was surrounded by Amy Diop and her other *militants* who followed her everywhere. They were carrying matching yellow scarves, just as Aida's mother and friends had done. These women are part of a network of people who are involved in an intimate exchange of social investments with Aida. Wherever she goes, she is engaged in a calculated display of *terànga* that affirms her affiliation with her *militants* and creates new opportunities to collaborate with others. What the women gain in reciprocity and celebrity status, Aida gains in an image of adoration.

### **Heroines and the Socio-Political Imaginary: Terànga as a Form of Political Power**

"Politics have existed for a very long time in Senegal, and so has women's participation in them," says Ndéye Soukeye. She begins to tell me about the rich history of the women of the great kingdoms in the Senegambia, and their roles in the ruling of their territory and people, of which many Senegalese are aware today. The stories of these national heroines of Senegal such as Ndaté Yalla Mbodj and Aline Siteo Diatta are part of a national imaginary, representing collaboration with and resistance against the French colonial project or destabilization in the region, and women's powerful roles in history (Toliver-Diallo 2005). A comic book about Ndaté Yalla Mbodj, directed by the sociologist Fatou Sarr Sow (2012), depicts the queen refusing gifts of cloth from the French followed by a young child pondering why she would do such an act. The storyteller tells the child that Ndaté Yalla was a woman with great authority who was not corruptible. Gifts whether given, received, or refused are used to send messages of power that

women are particularly privy to.

Ndéye Soukeye explains that their roles were primarily based on where they stood in the royal family and as part of the noble cast. Women had potentially a great deal of influence on their husband's reign, and depending on a woman's position as a first or second wife on down, she represented the family at ceremonies and public occasions. Because ceremonies remain a space almost entirely dominated by women, they are also spaces where women cultivate relationships and reputations, which are carried into other domains.

Many of the contemporary female politicians I spoke with elicit the names of these heroines as part of their family history, or as symbols of women's historical power and importance, just as the COSEF training leader had done. Aida also spoke of Ndaté Yalla and her sister Njëmbët as representations of female leadership early on. Njëmbët, the future queen of *Waaló* in northern Senegal at the time, chose to marry a Mauritanian king in order to avoid a conquest of her kingdom by rivals from across the Senegal river. "Leadership has a long history among women; women know leadership" Aida insisted, as she pointed out the family relations with Ndaté Yalla, who was from the Mbodj family, which is important to Aida's genealogy as a political figure. Despite conflicting narratives of these women, their myths and histories hold a great deal of meaning in current struggles for women's empowerment and their place in the realm of politics and other positions of power. *Terànga* and women's involvement in ceremonies were and still are an important process for them to affront these challenges and opportunities.

Years after our first meeting, I sat down with Ndéye Soukeye for an interview that turned into a rich narration of her time as a married woman, the nature of polygamous households, and women's struggle to take control of their status as daughter and sisters in-law. She was full of stories about her sisters' perception of her as a snooty politician, and her own battles with her first mother in-law. In fact, the day of our interview happened to be the baptism of her niece,

which she refused to attend in protest of her sisters' quest to destabilize the in-laws in hopes of financial gain. One sister, she said, mocked her, "*Madame la ministre* doesn't want to go," implying that Ndéye Soukeye was above the activities of normal women due to her professional status.

"My mother-in-law made my life so difficult. You can't even imagine" she laughed. I asked her what she meant by that. "All mothers and sisters-in-law give you a hard time, demanding a great deal from you and treating you terribly," she recounted bitterly. One day, she said:

I asked my mother in-law to sit down in my room. I lit some incense, and I told her that after ten years of her treating me poorly I was still here. I didn't die, I didn't go crazy, and when I look at my husband I don't feel anger towards her, because I love him. I'm not leaving this house, even though I know you go and see these *marabouts*<sup>36</sup> to cast a spell on me. You will see!

Following a state mission with the minister, she took her per diem paycheck, went to the market, and bought all of the things her mother-in-law loved: dresses, beautiful cloth, makeup powder, and gold jewelry. She also bought a suitcase to put all of the gifts in, much like what women do for ceremonies. In fact, to judge whether a woman was generous enough during a ceremony, the number of *valises* (suitcases) is considered. Madame Gueye then stood up to demonstrate what she did with the gifts, miming a large suitcase placed on her heading, parading into her mother in-law's home and circling her as she began dancing and singing *louanges* (her praises). The *louanges* are specific songs usually sung by *griots* or female relatives to show their respect and appreciation for the person and his or her family. These praises cite the family's heritage and the individual's reputation as a generous and reputable person. "I sang and danced before I set down the suitcase in front of her. She let out a scream and cried. Her sister who was visiting from Thiès told my mother-in-law that she was shamed today. 'Do you think you

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<sup>36</sup> A marabout is either a Muslim religious leader or a person who mixes the belief in spirits with that of Islamic texts. Marabouts are visited by people who want solutions or spells to cast on others. Ndeye Soukeye explained that in polygamous households women are more than likely to visit a *marabout* due to jealousy, wanting to make their husband dislike a co-wife, or to protect themselves from the harmful spells of their co-wives or other jealous parties.



deserved all these things? Leave this woman alone.”

Ndéye Soukeye’s act of presenting her mother in-law with gifts of splendor and by mocking her with praises she does not deserve subverts the unifying act of *terànga* into an act of defiance and retaliation for years of mistreatment. It is not malicious, but rather an assertion of power. She is using her hard earned government money to give her mother in-law the very things she normally feels entitled to from her daughter in-law, as part of the obligation of *terànga* between *goro yi* (in-laws), but in a way that shames her. Shaming, and the avoidance of shame in Senegal, is a fact that most women live with on a day-to-day basis. In fact, the Wolof proverb “*xaalis moo faj gacce*” (only money can cure shame), points to the importance of giving money during a baptism or wedding in order to avoid future personal and family shame, and can also be a way to shame someone by either withholding or giving so much it demonstrates superiority. Due to the tensions that exist between women and their in-laws and among co-wives in a polygamous household, women spend a great amount of resources and energy trying to avoid or deal with shame through gifts and other offerings of services and hospitality. “If you do not have a strong *personnalité*, you [women in general] will never survive your marriage,” she said indignantly.

Ndéye Soukeye’s story is illustrative of the different sides of how *terànga* works to establish power and demand respect. In most instances *terànga* is necessary to walk the tightrope of family and marital relations, and in her case it can be used to assert herself as a smart, sophisticated, and strong woman. Her *personnalité*, she said, was due to the fact that she is educated and has her wits about her, knowing, therefore, how to stand up for herself when her mother-in-law is treating her unfairly or her sisters mock her. Shaming in this case can take many forms. By lighting incense in the room, she signals to her mother in-law that she is attempting to make her feel welcome and relaxed in a non-confrontational environment, even as she is threatening her, “You will see.” By also presenting her with abundant gifts, she is working

within the parameters of *terànga* as a normative practice, and yet in doing so she is subverting its essence to demonstrate her disapproval for her mother-in-law's behavior and impose herself as strong in the confines of the home they shared. By refusing to attend her niece's baptism and withholding contribution, she is placing shame upon her sisters and voicing her disdain for their behavior.

Aline Siteo Diatta, was revered as *jigeen gu mëna goor* (a woman who was more than a man), for her mysterious ability to make it rain, saving her drought stricken region from starvation (Toliver-Diallo, 2005). She also stood by her abilities in the face of adversity from the French and others in the community. This phrase has become a popular appropriation to many female leaders or women of power to signify that beyond a certain point of attained status or public importance, gender is both no longer a limiting factor and also a seemingly flexible idea. Its flexibility comes with the women's ability to call upon their feminine or masculine qualities to serve certain purposes. Through their performances of *terànga*, the construction of *personnalité*, and also the rejection of the strict meanings of these obligations, the women are negotiating and subverting gender norms and expectations.

Aida told a few stories of how the social limitations of being a woman, attainment of the status of a politician, and her use of gift giving and *personnalité* complicate the strict gender divides that are prevalent in mainstream society. She also tells the story of a visit to her neighborhood mosque during her time as minister where she encountered opposition to her status as a woman and yet is resolved in the fact that it is not a static definition. She said:

During *Qadir*, the 27<sup>th</sup> day of Ramadan, the imam of the big mosque of Sacré Coeur invited me as a guest. He took me into the mosque and there were people protesting saying that he only wanted money from this woman [Aida] who loves the riches of life. The imam listened and began citing a passage from the Quran. He said there is a passage where God said, when a

woman reaches a certain level of power, God says I am the one who did that because God owns power and he is the one who gave the woman a part of his power, he said I have emancipated her so that she may sit with men.

It was customary for Aida to give gifts and *terànga* to representatives of religious communities during the holy month of Ramadan or for religious pilgrimages. The *terànga*, which was presented either as personal or an official state donation, as she described it, was in the form of sacks of rice, money for food, and money to purchase a cow, which had specific sacrificial importance. In return, she often received blessings and special recognition from the religious clergy and their *talibé* (followers). Ndéye Soukeye told similar stories of bringing gifts and food for communities she visited along her route of political missions. Aida talked about her visit to the town of Medina Gounass near Kolda in southern Senegal, which had just experienced a fire, damaging a great deal of the community's structures. Medina Gounass is home to a religious community known for being very conservative, including their attitudes towards women. She was sent by President Wade to donate supplies such as mattresses and provide financial help but was turned away by representatives of the religious leader, saying he did not meet with women. Upon realizing the purpose of her visit, "I had tons of food and a great deal of money to give," Aida said. The leader called her back to apologize and said he did not realize she had arrived. To this Aida said, "At a certain point, I am in charge of an important political position. I forget sometimes I am a woman." She believed that her delegation of gifts and *terànga* presented an identity stronger than that of her being a woman.

## **Conclusion**

*Terànga*, as demonstrated in this article, is the central concept around which these women's political identities and practices are based. It is also the process through which they negotiate and

contest their gendered identities in Senegalese society. By creating a *personnalité* based on a balance of generosity and self-restraint, these women utilize *terànga* as a way to create a popular reputation among women who will become their *base*. They nurture their *base* and gain political authority via a constant reciprocal relationship of visiting and participating in each other's family ceremonies, exchanging pleasantries and *terànga* and, therefore, as Aida called it, "doing politics." At the same time that their process has them embodying the gendered norms of feminine, generous women, they challenge these norms by redefining the very meanings and utility of *terànga*, questioning the static nature of gender roles. Women in the political space are encouraged to embody the beauty, generosity, and openness of *terànga* in order to make headway in their campaigns and persona, and also to learn to transform its core definition to reinterpret their social worth (Masquelier 2009) and political possibilities.

## Chapter Five

### *Guests of God: Layene Ethics and Reframing the Concept of Terànga*

“The Prophet Muhammed was asleep, now he has awoken and God has put his soul in my body. I am the Prophet of God, the *Mahdi* (Basse, 2003).” It was Seydina Limamou Laye who uttered these words on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1884. The *Appel*, (call to followers) as it is known to the Layene (People of God), marked the founding of this Sufi Muslim order in the small coastal village of Yoff, now a booming metropolis nestled on the periphery of Dakar. Yoff at the time was a small cluster of homes belonging to the Lébou people, who believed strongly in spirits, and initially met his pronouncement with suspicion (Mori 2010). The Lebou are considered to have preserved a pre-Islamic worldview (Robinson 1997), and Limamou Laye intended to show them the path to Islam. At the time of the *Appel*, Seydina Limamou Laye (Our Master Imam of God) (Glover, 2012) stood at the precipice of the West African coast and announced he was the *Mahdi* (messenger of God), the reincarnation of the Prophet Mohammed, or the *Black Prophet* (*prophète noir*), sent by God to continue his mission (Laborde 1995).

Cécile Laborde is among the few scholars to write about the Layene, arguing that the inculcation of Seydina Limamou Laye as the black prophet and his son Issa Rahou Laye as the reincarnation of Jesus was in the image of neo-Christians in Africa in the nineteenth century. In her book *La Confrerie Layenne et les Lebou du Senegal*, Laborde asserts the Layene particularism was found in their revolutionary thinking, which attracted many women seeking to explore their spirituality (1995). Douglas Thomas argues Seydina Limamou Laye was a nationalist, in terms of ethnic nationalism, due to the fact that when he called for followers he did so at a time when the colonial regime had threatened the social identities of the Lebou people (2012). Limamou Laye, therefore, was credited for bringing legitimacy to black Africans

because God had chosen for the prophet to be brought back as a black man, and the Layene were to be the hosts of the *Mahdi*. In fact, they take their role of sacred hosting very seriously.

Although there are certainly aspects of Limamou Laye's image and philosophy that are based in ethnic nationalism, the evidence I have found of his lasting influence in contemporary Layene communities, points to him as more of a universalist, seeking to offer solutions to the problems of human kind. He promoted local customs, such as *terànga*, as the remedy for problems that ail humankind universally. Limamou Laye himself may have represented an autochthonous figure, but his sermons and actions showed aspirations of universalism.

Seydina Limamou Laye rests inside a pristine white mosque on the beach in Yoff, where his *talibé* (followers) gather for Friday prayers. Issa Rahou Laye, who took over the prophetic mission of his father, was laid to rest in Camberene, the coastal village north of Yoff, making these two locales the heart of the Layene community. Limamou Laye called upon humans and *jiin* (spirits) alike to put their faith solely in God and the *Mahdi*, and dedicated their lives to the teachings of Islam (Robinson, 2004). His sermons have been documented and used by the successive *khalifah-générales* (caliph), such as his sons and grandsons (Glover 2012).

In the middle of the Lébou stronghold along the Dakar coast, where beliefs in spirits were practiced, Seydina Limamou Laye preached a monotheistic Islam (Triaud 1996) and combatted certain local customs (Alaa Indé Laye Ba 2014). These customs included social hierarchies based on caste and wealth, inequalities of gender and between ethnic groups displayed through family names and non-religious celebrations of life cycle events. These non-religious elements of family ceremonies included the infamous *geew*, or gift giving circle, similar to the potlatch described by Mauss (1960), home to competitive giving and counter-giving. Seydina Limamou Laye discouraged these customs on the basis that only the acceptance of God as the Almighty would solve personal and communal issues. All other beliefs in spirits, hierarchies, and the exchange of

material wealth would mean destruction. Layene particularism, therefore, took the shape of the uniformity of white clothing during religious events, name erasure and re-naming, and the outlawing of “*gaspillage*,” the same “wasteful” or excessive aspects of family ceremonies taken on by the state in their campaign against “wastefulness.”

This chapter examines the role of *terànga* as the ethical and pious foundation of the Layene community, and how the Layene reinterpret *terànga* as a symbol of their commitment to others as a mission from God. They conceptualize this obligation by promoting a culture of ‘openness’ (Peters 2009) or *ubeeku*, demonstrated through the practices of name-switching, uniformity and equality, and as a portal practice for greater piety and approval of God. While the culture of naming in Senegal plays a large role in social interaction and identity, the Layene have chosen to erase the traces of ethnic and class hierarchies by referring to one another as Laye (child of God). Name-switching is a way to erase the social markers of difference and inequality embedded in last names, in order to create a welcoming space for all to be unified as children of God, the very goal of the Layene interpretation of *terànga*. Names are important to the Layene; however instead of paying tribute to the hierarchical caste system, they wish to reorient their identities towards a higher power and represent their fervor for the *Mahdi*. The uniformity of dress and stripping down of ceremonies to their religious core are also ways of altering social engagement. I argue that in the face of growing social disparities and inequalities, the sermons, ceremonies, and practices of the Layene are efforts to redefine *terànga* as a ‘pedagogy of inclusion’ (Peters 2009) and equality based on the common understanding that everyone is simply a human sent to earth as a guest of God.

In his book *Acts of Religion*, Jacques Derrida argues that Islam is a religion of hospitality (2002). As the book of one of the three Abrahamic religions, Islam has many examples in the Qu'ran of hospitality as the ultimate form of demonstrating one's adherence to Islam and

submission to God. Derrida emphasizes the language of humans as sent to Earth as a guest in order to fulfill God's plan (2002).

This chapter discusses these proposals by exploring the foundation of the Layene community and faith, and components of their ethical framework through an analysis of sermons, interviews, and participant observation of ceremonies and religious events. An additional and crucial component is also the perpetuation of oral histories and myths regarding the religious leaders and their families in order to underline moral and ethical principles of the community. I aim to also place the Layene principles within the context of Islamic understandings of generosity and hospitality, as well as certain Layene practices of Islamic law such as the *zakat* (religious alms giving), one of the five pillars of Islam. The Layene present an interesting case of adapting Islamic and local traditions of hospitality and social production in a national environment fixated on the social mobility that *terànga* offers. In order to explore these assertions, I propose ethnographic sketches of a collective wedding held by the religious family and the organizer, Idrissa Thiaw, a son of the current Khalif, and compare the baptisms of two friends that demonstrate the contrasting nature of Layene ceremonies and those that lie on the spatial peripheries of the community.

When investigating the government sponsored campaign "the fight against wastefulness," Ndeye Soukeye Gueye, the director in the office of the Ministry of Women's Affairs I spoke of in Chapter Four, cited the Layene as being an example to emulate. The campaign spearheaded by the Ministry intended to combat the phenomenon of excessive spending during family ceremonies such as weddings and baptisms. She noted the Layene were the most successful at eliminating the frivolous and unsustainable trends of current Senegalese *xew yi* (ceremonies). Ceremonies in Senegal are spaces where families, friends, and neighbors gather to reinforce social ties, explore personal and social identities, and to display *terànga* through the exchange of



gifts, food, and pleasantries. Ceremonies are sites in which women especially demonstrate their economic worth and social capital while also affirming kinship ties and other affiliations (Buggenhagen 2012). The Senegalese government and numerous development organizations have long argued ceremonies have become exorbitantly expensive and are economically unsustainable and socially detrimental. Contemporary Layene members, or *talibé*, say their community does not condone large displays of gift giving during weddings, baptisms, and funerals. In the absence of *griots*, there are religious singers that lead songs known as *sikr*, religious chants praising God and the founder. This aspect compels members to focus on the purely religious aspects of ceremonies: prayer, ordination, and invoking the name of God.

The display of *terànga* in mainstream ceremonies focuses heavily on the material expression of recognition that often relies on the acknowledgement of others based on their social standing and family relationship. Early on, the issue of ceremonies and wastefulness was an explicit part of Layene sermons, urging members to live within their means. Ceremonies are interpreted as a space to reinforce personal and communal faith in God and the Prophet, not to demonstrate personal material wealth. Ceremonies, therefore, under the instruction of Seydina Limamou Laye and his successors, became an alternative site of religious practice, celebrating new unions and births as an occasion to reinforce members' part in the community through repetition of prayers and songs. I was told on many occasions that members like to have *sikr* be the first sounds babies hear in order to begin their life with the name of God. The quintessential *geew*, or gift exchange circle, of family members with *griots* in the center is rarely seen at Layene ceremonies, as outlawed by the *Mahdi* (Seydina Limamou Laye), especially within the confines of the Layene villages. Popular music normally blasted through speakers is replaced with recorded religious chants. *Griots* are rarely seen; instead religious singers orchestrate shared singing memorized by members from a young age. Dancing and listening to music is said to distract members from

their focus on piety. In any of the monthly magazines produced by the Layene community, there are reminders to abstain from ‘wastefulness’.

### **Hospitality, Islam, and Ethics**

*Terànga* is central to the narratives of Layene religious leaders and community members, and woven throughout Layene sermons. Inspired by Jacques Derrida’s theory of hospitality *as* ethics (Derrida and Dufourmantelle 2000), I discuss the Layene philosophy as one that intends to reframe the meaning of *terànga* towards a specifically divine pedagogy, not as the expression of generosity and affiliation through material means. Derrida also finds a correlation between the conditional principles of hospitality, the obligatory relationship between host and guest, and the instructional conditions under which Muslims should be approached and received (Stephenson 2014). Similarly, for the Layene, *terànga* is a pedagogy of ethics, of how to be in the world and with each other, God’s wish for humans to serve one another. This pedagogy, encapsulated in histories of Seydina Limamou Laye, his sermons, and their appropriations by successive Khalifs, are rituals geared towards reminding Layene members that they are subjects of God. The sermons of Seydina Limamou Laye read like a diplomatic accord, proposing solutions for peace and measures to eradicate poverty. As I will explore later, the requirements of *zakat* and the practice of *ziar* (giving and receiving greetings of a religious leader) among the Layene community are taken seriously in this manner. Reconsideration for the meaning and practice of *terànga* are at the heart of Seydina Limamou Laye’s sermons in discouraging racial and ethnic discrimination and the social divisions traditional ceremonies create by emphasizing social hierarchies and wealth disparities.

In an article entitled, “Divine and Human Hospitality,” Jesuit priest and scholar John Navone discusses the relationship of humans and God as that of a guest and host (2004). He asserts we as

humans are guests of God to “this land” (2004) and God invites us to welcome others as our guests given this truth. Hospitality has long been a principle of Muslim faith as a way to promote reverence and congeniality. Kindliness and generosity (Stephenson 2014) and piety (Meneley 1996) underpin relationships between persons and fellow Muslims. Relationships, as Meneley cites from the Qur’an, are nurtured through generous acts of visiting, hosting, and communication and acknowledgement of the shared faith of Islam (1996). However, Stephenson (2014) argues the importance of hospitality stems from the required pilgrimage (*hajj*) fulfilled by all able-bodied Muslims as most pilgrims are guests to Mecca. Surat 146 of the *hadith* states one of the best ways to go to paradise is by showing hospitality to a traveler or guest (Haleem 2008).

Hospitality, as Derrida sees it, cannot simply be partitioned off into one aspect of ethics, but is ethics and culture itself and, therefore, pervades everything (Dufourmantelle and Derrida 2000). This certainly seems to be the philosophy of the Layene and greater Senegalese community in their interpretation of the importance of *terànga*. Hospitality is also pedagogical (Peters 2009) in that, by way of social laws, it instructs a way of being with others. Given that *terànga* is an explicit concept used in Layene foundational texts, this seems to hold true.

### **Seydina Limamou Laye and the Birth of the Layene Faith**

As Seydina Limamou Laye stood in front of the Lébou population of Yoff, he preached the new lessons of the Layene faith, which would become the *hadith* (lessons of the Prophet) of the *Mahdi* and the community. The Lébou are a subgroup of the dominant Wolof ethnic group, traditionally fishermen along the coastal regions, known to be deeply steeped in beliefs of spirits, and who adhere to a caste system that is inherently unequal in structure (Diop 1981). A main principle was the emphasis on equality between people, no matter their economic or social class, or especially their ethnic background. This was in the context of an area historically divided by

caste and ethnicity, a reality Limamou Laye felt hindered equality and social cohesion.

Wolof society is highly stratified, organized into what ethnographic literature calls 'castes' (Irvine 1978). Castes categorize people into social groups that often have occupational specifications. These specifications are coded into family names that continue to mark individuals by their place in the social hierarchy. Irvine notes that castes are ranked both as wholes in relation to each other, but also families and individuals within their caste (1978). The Wolof cast system is hierarchical with the *géér* (noble) as the highest class, followed by the *ñeeño*, a large class split into several smaller occupational classes such as the *jëf-lekk*, *sab-lekk*, *uude*, *gévël* (griot), and *jaam* (slave) She also hypothesizes that verbal conduct follows the caste framework, "in which speechmaking is a caste specialization (1978)." The dynamic between the *géér* and the *gévël* is illustrative of this point. The griot is a praise singer and family genealogist who act as the voice of the noble class and ruling families. At public events, such as family ceremonies or political rallies, *griots* specialized in the art of *jottali* (recounting) where the noble speaks softly to the *griot* and the *griot* transmits the message to the crowd in a loud commanding voice. Not only is it dishonorable to speak loudly and therefore forcefully, different speech patterns distinguish a noble from lower classes. Within families there are generational hierarchies. Elders, especially elder males, are the head of families, while children are subservient to adults.

More importantly, Laye felt, status distracted people from their devotion to God and the Prophet, the real judges of who would reap the benefits of the afterlife. To accomplish God's benediction and erase these hierarchies, he suggested followers refer to one another with a common "lahi", or "laye", derivatives of Allah, or God. Last names such as Seck or Ndiaye (common Wolof surnames) became simply, Laye.

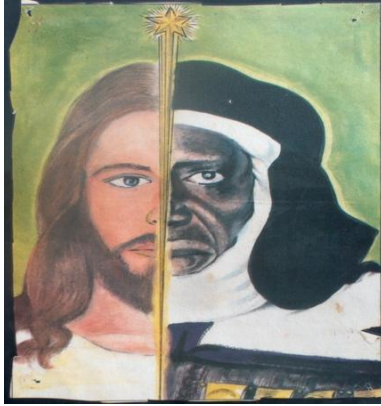


Figure 4: **Seydina Issa Rahou Laye and Jesus Christ Painting**

When Layene members interact, the usual Arabic greeting, “Asalaamalekum,” is mixed with the invocation of God, “Laye,Laye, Laye” in a distinct rhythmic pattern. Passersby greet one another in this fashion as well as when entering into a Layene family home. Despite these distinctive religious and linguistic markers, members of the Layene community are not separate from the cultural hybridity of the city and live with and among those who are part of other religious groups and affiliations. Front door murals (see Figure 4) serve as markers among the heterogeneous mixture of the city. And yet, this reframing of names ensures their inclusivity by erasing markers of difference and, therefore, welcoming all who as equal in the eyes of God, whether they be Layene or not.

Upon his death in 1909, Seydina Limamou Laye was succeeded by his son Seydina Issa Rahou Lahi who is praised as the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The photo of his faced fused to the face of Jesus is hung in most homes and at large religious events. Limamou, stemming from the word imam, meaning religious leader or guide, and Laye (God) his last name, are recurring names you will hear during prayer services and while walking the narrow paths of Yoff-Layene and Camberene, the small traditional fishing villages where most Layene families reside. The villages are spatially demarcated by the visual groupings of white-clothed pedestrians and the evocation of standard Layene greetings. These greetings are markers of Layene identity that fade

as the villages melt into neighboring *banlieues* and *cites* (outskirts). Layene members also live throughout the neighborhoods of Dakar and especially along the coastal *banlieues* of the city, however, not as densely. The Layene community faces encroachment from the expanding city and limited expansion, spreading members to other parts of the city and country, and yet they enjoy a particular *de facto* autonomy from other groups and government involvement in local affairs (Ross 2006). John Glover points to the Layene as being steeped in local beliefs as well as modern, global aspirations of universalism (2013). Other Sufi orders such as the Murids and Tidjanis claimed their headquarters in rural areas located in the heartland of Senegal, meaning the Layene are a particularly urban religious group. Although, at the time of their founding, Dakar was but a small cluster of patterned homes along the coastline.

### **Narratives of *Terànga* as a Historical Pedagogy**

Libasse Thiaw, now known to his followers as Seydina Limamou Laye, or the *Mahdi*, was born to Alassane Thiaw and Coumba Ndoye. The story of his mother, Coumba, reads like a folkloric myth. Her life and death are important to the historical narratives and pedagogies of the Layene community. During the time that the *Mahdi's* soul was resting on the former slaveholding island of *Gorée*, he searched for the woman who would become his mother, Coumba. Limamou Laye claimed it was the Lebu people he would live among, and Coumba was chosen to bear him based on her characteristics of generosity and piety. She would pass these on to her son, Seydina, and would play a fundamental role in the philosophy of the Layene community upon Limamou appearing as the one sent by God. It was upon her death in 1884 that Seydina faced the Lébou community to profess his identity as the *Mahdi*.

Coumba was known for being the most generous and hospitable host in Yoff village, sharing her kitchen utensils with neighbors and inviting passersby to come inside the family complex to

rest, eat, and drink, as she always cooked more than enough. Besides being known as the “mother of all”, she earned the nickname of Coumba *Djagata* (who brings), signifying her constant nurturing of relationships with others, a main principle of the Layene faith (Thiou, 2014). If guests were sparse, Coumba charged Seydina with the task of seeking out strangers from beyond the village on his way to his fields, giving strangers his prayer beads to take back and present to his mother as proof of being sent by him. Coumba welcomed them as she would other family members or neighbors. This story is perpetuated during religious ceremonies, religious leaders wishing for members to be graced with *terànga*. In fact, most imams often ended their sermons with the blessing, “*Yall na Yalla yokk seeni xéwël, seeni tërànga,*” (May God bless you all with happiness and ensure you have more than enough to share). When I asked what he meant by that, I was told that blessing someone with *terànga* meant they would have enough food and money to be able to help and be hospitable to others. In the next chapter, I will further discuss the importance of Seydina’s mother, Coumba and how her narrative has had lasting effects on women’s identities and the centrality of *terànga* to them.

### ***Guests of God: Tèrànga as Ethics***

*“Yaatal leen seeni saqet, gann yangi new” Widen your fences, the guests are coming*

- Seydina Limamou Laye

Layene history is rife with examples of *terànga* as a form of sharing and community service. During my visits with members of the religious family I would constantly hear repeated stories of the actions of the founder and Layene Khalifs. Such was the case of the story of the third Khalif, Baye Seydi Thiaw, gifting 364 hectares of land to the Senegalese government to make room for the present Parcelles Assainies of Dakar, which now borders Yoff. Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first president of Senegal, was willing to pay a great deal of money with the help of

the World Bank. The twenty-six units that comprise Parcelles Assainies were built on by the Senghor administration to accommodate the large exodus of Senegalese coming from rural areas of the country seeking economic opportunities in the city (Diop 2013). Idrissa Thiaw said his great grandfather, Seydina Limamou Laye, predicted the immigration of rural peasants to Dakar. In his prediction, he called upon his followers to welcome them by widening their thatch enclosures to make room for guests from the hinterland. Upon first read, this may seem a strategy for keeping others out by enlarging the dimensions of a family compound. However, because the welcoming of others happens most often within the home, a larger compound meant more room for guests.

Mame Seydi Laye, a scholar and *talibé* of Seydina Limamou Laye overheard me speaking with an informant about *terànga* among the Layene. He piped in to add that you could find reference to *terànga* in every paragraph of Limamou Laye's sermons because it serves as the foundation for how everyone should act towards others. "We should never forget that we all come from paradise, and we should live like inhabitants of paradise, as you will find no inequalities in paradise. *Terànga* can be defined as generosity shown to everyone, no matter their religious affiliation or race. If we all lived the way Seydina Limamou Laye said we should, we would all be at peace." He asked if I was familiar with the French song by Florent Pagny, with the lyrics *savoir sourire sur un inconnu qui passe* (know to smile at a stranger who passes by). "It's a French song, but it explains perfectly our philosophy about others" he said. Mame Seydi's example of this French song, I argue, is to remark that there are really no strangers, because as children of God, humans are his guests, guests on earth from paradise. As I noted in the introduction, the Wolof word *gann* signifies guest and is used to refer to strangers.

*"And I [God] did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship me (Alone)"*  
– Quran 51:56

*"In Islam, the hospitality relationship is triangular; it consists of host, guest, and God."*



*Hospitality is a right rather than a gift, and the duty to supply it is a duty to God.”*  
– Aisha Stacey, *Treating Guests the Islamic Way*

These quotes, coupled with the reminder from Mame Seydi that all humans are united, contend that hospitality and *terànga* are a human right. Because *terànga* is the right of all, it is also the responsibility of all. To give *terànga* is to fulfill one’s duty to God and to acknowledge the connectedness of humans in their duty to God. Religious leaders repeat Limamou Laye’s sermons and give sermons of their own at public events big and small, far and close to home. While adding their own interpretations, they invoke his name and his words to remind followers of his message. The beloved son of Khalif Abdoulaye Thiaw, Serigne Cheikh Mbacke flew all the way from Dakar to Columbus, Ohio to lead the religious conference for the Association of the Layene of America. Layene *talibé* drove from New York City, Rhode Island, Canada, and South Carolina to attend the conference. The conference theme was *Peaceful Co-Existence: How to Live Together as One*. He repeated throughout his sermon that if everyone understood that God created all of us, and could take us all away without notice, we would soon let go of our ideas of being better or more important than others because it is not up to us. “We are all the same, be the same, *ay doomu Adama lanu*” (we are all children of Adam) he repeated. “You all need to love each other. If you don’t then there is no point to this all. Tell yourselves that if you see another Layene, it is as if you are looking at heaven itself.” This statement echoes Stephenson’s point that kindness and generosity are to be the marker of solidarity among Muslims (2014). It wasn’t exclusionary to the Layene only; in fact, he repeatedly cited a need for better cohabitation with the other main Sufi orders in Senegal, the Murid and Tidjanis, among others, and across to other religions as well.

Serigne Cheikh Mbacke Thiaw Laye was named by his father after one of the great religious leaders of the Murid order. In a public display of solidarity and sharedness with the Murids,

naming in this instance was an effort to symbolically lessen the gap that made them strangers to one another. Sprinkled throughout were examples of how to have a better relationship with God. “The two most important acts that a Layene can do are, one: pray and praise God (through prayer and *sikr*), and to improve your relationships with others by helping one another. If you don’t do that, prayer is never going to help you” he reiterated while banging his hand on the table for dramatic effect. During his sermon, Serigne Cheikh thanked everyone for their hospitality and care in bringing him to Columbus. He said the best way to payback one’s *terànga* was to *teral Yalla* (be hospitable to God) by being hospitable to other children of God and accepting Yalla as the only God. For emphasis, he began singing softly a *sikr*, welcoming singers to join in and complete the phrase. With beautiful tone, he sang, *Bu nu noonu ngir bannil / lu mu doon mooy Yalla tax / Soppante moo gënnel / mooy terànga ajjana* (Love one another / Do not be enemies because it is God who willed it (it is heavenly *terànga*) / It is God’s *terànga*).

Female singers on one side of the room picked it up and amplified the song, while the men joined in on the third reiteration. Serigne Cheikh’s comments and emphasis on the social relationships and relationships between God and his children are solidified by *terànga*. These relationships are also made possible by God’s *terànga* of giving humans the ability to live on earth.

Thus, there is an assertion that *terànga* is the form that carries out the mission of God which is based on the foundation that they are all simply guests to this earth, *gannu Yalla* (guests of God). In other words, as Serigne Cheikh argues, “because God is who put us here, and could take us away at any moment, we would do best to understand that we are all just passing through, guests of God’s land” and should see *terànga* as the guide for behaving with one another. Moreover, these worldly possessions we profess to own, exchange, and hoard are in fact, not really ours to give or receive. They are the loaned properties of God. In the following sections of

this chapter, I will demonstrate and discuss the various ways in which the Layene community reframes *terànga* as a practice in ethics and piety, displayed through songs, sermons, ceremonies, and inter-personal communication.

### ***Sikr* and *Tudde Yalla*: Singing the Lessons of Seydina Limamou Laye**

*Ne négligez pas d'invoquer le souvenir d'Allah partout où vous vous trouvez. Le rappel du souvenir d'Allah diminue les mauvaises actions et multiplie les bonnes.*

Do not neglect the invocation of God wherever you find yourself. To remind of the memory of God diminishes the bad actions and multiplies the good.

– Seydina Limamou Laye

*Sikr* (invocation of God), is an essential part of the teachings of Limamou Laye and practiced widely throughout the community by way of a *dahira* (religious associations) (Laye Basse 2003). An Arabic term for religious singing, *sikr* is incorporated into the Wolof language. In fact, most singing regarding the Qu'ran is done in Arabic, and *sikr* (*zikr*) is sung by all members in Wolof. Much like gospel singing in a Baptist church, *sikr* is a call and response between religious singers and the chorus of followers, ending with a unified repetition. Songs range from simplistic lyrics for easy and short rhythms, to the more complex stories. These songs serve as religious pedagogies (Mahmood 2005) even beyond group meetings as they are recorded and circulated as CDs, played on the Layene radio station, Diamalaye FM, and watched on YouTube. They also contain messages about members' moral obligations to one another and other subjects ranging from the avoidance of illegal use of funds, proper forms of prayer, and the importance of *terànga*. The constant listening and singing of *sikr* ensures mass access for members of the community to learn about Layene and Qur'anic teachings. Women are also encouraged to sing, not just among themselves, but out loud at religious ceremonies, something shunned by other Sufi *tarixas* of Senegal, adding to the particularism of the Layene (Laborde

1985).

*Waykat* (singers), such as Mbaye Seck Bâ, also known as Mbaye Seck Laye, record songs to distribute at events or to sell at a local media shops in Yoff. Much like the resurgence of charismatic religious leaders who proselytize overwhelmingly through broadcast media in neighboring Mali (Schultz 2012), religious singers in Senegal produce discs that can be heard in homes throughout Layene households. Layene of the diaspora listened to MP3 files of *sikr*, allowing them to feel connected by listening. Mbaye Seck was chosen as an apprentice by Cherif Ousseynou Laye, a childhood friend and son of the first Khalif, Issa Rahou Laye. When I asked about his career as a singer and the importance of *sikr* to the Layene community, he said “*sikr* is all we know from the time we are children.” He grew up singing and had a knack for it, beginning by learning songs containing Qu’ranic verses. These would be instrumental during large Layene public events and intimate *dahira* meetings. He was adamant about the difference between a *griot* and *waykat*, criticizing the role *griots* have come to play in Senegalese society as only having their best interests at hand and following around those who have money. “A *waykat*,” he says, “is different because they only work for God, not for the recognition and wealth of this world”. In trying to understand the difference, I teased and said, “so, you are a *griot* of God?” He laughed and beamed with pride saying, “*voila*, that’s it!” Pressing further, I asked, “but I thought *griots* were practicing *terànga*, as they transmitted the praises and gifts of their “master”<sup>37</sup> to other parties?” “Loolu, du *terànga*, arnaque la” (that is not *terànga*, it’s stealing) he quipped with a smirk. Using the French word for thievery or stealing, he remarked that referring to *griot*’s work as *terànga* seemed to be an insult upon a purer meaning of the word.

Most religious groups in Senegal employ *sikr* as a way to praise God during religious

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<sup>37</sup> The quotation marks around the word *master* is the choice of the author.

conferences or services. The Layene, likewise, seem to have a special relationship with *sikr* as the main medium with which to study and reinforce their religious messages, as demonstrated by the singing of *sikr* even at family ceremony celebrations. Mbaye Seck and his friend Ibou Laye said their attachment to *sikr* is also as much practical as it is pedagogical. During ceremonies such as funerals, *sikr* is important for the repetitive *tudde Yalla* (naming of God) to ensure the ascension of the deceased's soul to heaven, and also songs praising the Layene family members. The practical avoidance of gossip, specifically among women during idle time, is solved by continual singing. Gossip is frowned upon as it indulges in material desires and distracts from concentrating on God. Not only is music prohibited during ceremonies, but members are discouraged from listening to popular music, even privately. Instead, they are encouraged to *sikr* while they work to keep their minds fresh on religious teachings. One of the many afternoons I spent with Mbaye Seck and his family in the Layene village of Camberene, I would hear his wife Binta, singing *sikr* songs in the kitchen while she cooked. "*Yaggal fi Baye Abdoulaye, Laye Laye, Laye La Laye*" (Long Life to Father Abdoulaye).<sup>38</sup> The song wishes the current Khalif a long life followed by a staple rhythm praising Laye. During religious association meetings, the singing would become so intense and spirited that I found myself swept away by the energy and joy Layene members had for their praises. It was always electric.

At a Friday night *dahira* service (religious association), the imam announced the upcoming wedding of a member and encouraged all members to attend and represent the *dahira*. One of the family members also invited me to the wedding that was to take place in Grand Yoff, a populated neighborhood in Dakar, far from the Yoff-Layene. From a bird's eye view, the wedding, it looked like any other with a tent beautifully decorated awaiting the ambiance of guests and the couple to stroll down the aisle. However, there was no music, just a tape of a

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<sup>38</sup> Father Abdoulaye refers to the current khalif of the Layene Abdoulaye Thiaw. Baye is the Wolof word for father.

professional singer singing *sikr*, on repeat. An elderly neighbor had just died that morning and, therefore, the wedding guests were asked to keep their voices down. As the bride and groom arrived discreetly, Alioune, one of Mbaye Seck's singing counterparts, followed behind them singing *sikr*, waving his hands to invite guests to join in. They all stood, swaying with the rhythm of the singing. It was a collective praise for the founder Seydina Limamou Laye, as if he were present for the blessings of the new marriage.

Another interesting aspect of the Layene's use of *sikr* was what Ibou Laye described as a way for people to shift their attention from the distractions of this world to a religious frame of mind in order to pray. The prayer the Wolof call *timis* happens at sunset and is the group prayer of the day in most households. A man of the house calls for prayer by singing a familiar *sikr* as family members join in and line up behind him with their prayer mats. As the voices multiply, the *sikr* gains momentum and becomes a strong chorus, setting the tone for prayer. The droning sound of the chants was meant to drown out other thoughts and direct their attention to a religious mindframe. The Layene family I featured in Chapter Two, with whom I spent the most time, did such a ritual every evening at dusk. Members are encouraged to partake in neighborhood *dahiras*. Layene *dahira* are mostly a space to invoke the name of God and the *Mahdi* through *sikr*. Although *dahira* meetings weave in sermons from a dedicated imam, the *sikr* is the main heartbeat of their gathering as the Layene believe naming God and the Prophet in groups amplifies their praise and benediction.

*Sikr* is a pedagogical tool for spreading the word of God, praising him, and instructing Layene members of the moral principles of the Layene faith. These songs are also practical for keeping members awake during overnight sermons and focusing attention on God. Singing centers everyone on a shared religious experience and reminds members of the philosophy adopted and taught by Seydina Limamou Laye. Most of these songs contain lessons such as

"treat your neighbor as you treat yourself" or "do not dwell on this world's offerings", and recount the histories of how the Layene community was created as well as its global connection to Islam.

### **Visual Representations of Equality: "White is the Color of my Heart"**

I began frequenting a *dahira* in the neighborhood of Castors, attending their Friday night ceremonies. At every *dahira* meeting I witnessed, a sea of white-clothed followers swayed back and forth, in some ways, more brilliant than the colors of the bright colored wax fabrics they normally wore. Men stood in a circle leaning into a microphone, as if pouring out their soul into a song of praise. The women, sitting and facing them, swayed to absorb the *sikr*, and movement around them, occasionally patterning their arms in unison to the singular beat of a resounding woman's voice over the microphone. The momentum of the song built, and with it, everyone's body seemed light, infected with the emotion of their words and rhythm. In a country known for its vibrant wax fabrics and beautifully colorful clothing, these women and men chose to wear white. They were all dressed in white: white veil, white dress, white tunic, all white. This pertains to either the intimate Friday night Layene worship service in a member's courtyard (see Figure 5), or the annual pilgrimage to Yoff commemorating Seydina Limamou Laye's first call to followers (see Figure 6).



Figure 5: **Dahira meeting, Camberene** Figure 6: **Appel 2014 Official Ceremony**

During one of my first trips to Yoff, I couldn't help but notice the uniformity of everyone's dress, white skirt and flowing top, white headscarf and veil draped over the women's heads and swept across their shoulders. Their legs and arms were covered, while men wore a white loose fitting long tunic with matching pants. So different from the fashion landscape of the rest of Dakar. I asked my friend Ami, who first introduced me to the Layene and took me to the quarters of her religious guide, what the significance is to wearing all white. "White is the color of our heart. The heart doesn't distinguish between rich and poor," she said. Another member who was huddled on the floor next to Mame Libasse, a great grandson of Seydina Limamou Laye, chimed in and said "*couleur bi ngay sol, rafet, loolu la sa xol wara mel, sa xol dafa wara rafet*" (the color you wear should be beautiful, the way your heart should be beautiful). White was said to be the symbol of purity and a color of peace and unity, reflective of one's heart. For the Layene, a pure heart meant a heart that is joined with all other hearts, blind to this world's differences such as race and class, elements that have historically been important to Senegalese social structure. White reflects both the outside and inside, representing peace and purity, as well as a social and economic equality, essential components to the teachings of the Layene. Seydina Limamou Laye also wore a white uniform of a wrap around his waist, long cloak, and turbin. Ami's comments about the purity of one's heart reflect the Layene interpretation of *terànga* as a source of



unification, not division. A heart that is joined with other hearts, as she says, is more open to the needs of others and to fulfilling those needs through *terànga*.

Just as discussed in the section regarding *sikr*, the wearing of white clothing also symbolizes a transition to or occupation of a religious space and identity. On many occasions of all day religious events, the morning gathering and sermon did not have a dress code. However, the afternoon and evening events where *sikr* was conducted white clothing was strictly enforced. Members are turned away or not allowed to pray under the large tent if they are not wearing white. Female singers sitting in the center of the tent were the most watched for transgression of uniform. By changing clothes, simplifying their dress, Layene members entered a space of equality. Most members told me the white outfits are also important because they are the cheapest, ensuring all members could pay to have an outfit made. This was for convenience but also to protest the segregating factors of wealth and social status.

### **Names and 'Name-switching'**

*Servir Dieu est un devoir de toute créature, car Dieu le Très Haut a dit : Je n'ai créé les hommes et les djinns qu'afin qu'ils m'adorent*

*Serving God is an obligation of all beings, because God, the All Powerful said: "I created men and spirits so that they will adore me*

*Koran, chapter 51, verse 56*

Senegalese society is held together by names. Names are important because they identify what kind of family an individual comes from, their cultural practices, and one's social possibilities, which are historically determined at birth through the caste system (Diop 1981). In his article on name-avoidance among Cameroonians, Anchimbe asserts that the ways people address one another at first meetings has to do with the "representational" and "social" functions of language and how these correlate with the negotiations of power, friendliness, and social

balance between interactants (2011). Given that social relationships in Senegal emanate from direct lines of descent (*filiation*), which is recognized by family names, the individual's role in the group and their moral characteristics are arguably predetermined by their family's origins (Dieng 2008). Therefore, an individual's face value is tied to their last name, indicating where they come from, and their familial and ethnic membership.

In the custom of joking cousins, Senegalese use names to create immediate connections and break down barriers between one another (Irvine 1975) by mocking the hierarchy of ethnicity and class. Strangers who meet, share a cultural understanding that publicizing one's name leads to a joking exchange intended to soften the interaction and establish a sense of sharedness (1975). The Layene profess to rid themselves of what they believe to be the divisive and unequal realities embedded in naming, such as the emphasis on social hierarchies. "Namelessness" as Anand Taneja argues, is based on a religiously focused definition of hospitality and welcomeness (manuscript forthcoming). The erasure of names among a Sufi group in India exhibits the desire to disallow the presence of divisiveness. Naming creates a barrier in which hospitality cannot reign, therefore compromising their religious principles. Instead of total erasure, the Layene, practice of name re-designation is the double meaning of exclusion and inclusion. By excluding last names, which are markers of caste, social status and ethnicity, they aim to make way for an inclusion under a different name, Laye, signifying child of God. In reality, Laye is mostly symbolic as Layene maintain their last names for official purposes, yet use Laye most exclusively when interacting with other Layene. Just as someone can convert to Islam and have the same status as someone who was born Muslim, Layene see naming as a tool to be welcoming instead of exclusive based on social categories.

Most Layene members I talked to said the last name Laye was to recognize everyone's inherent equality in the eyes of God. Mbaye Seck often repeated the phrase "*Ku gën mooy ku*

*gënna ragal Yalla*" (Those who fear God most, are the best) refuting the sentiment that humans can distinguish themselves through names, riches, and power. It is how people relate to one another on a basic level, and during occasions such as ceremonies, the importance of social rank makes a difference between whether you are included in the gift exchange, or not, and whether you receive gifts, or not. For the Layene, erasing names is not just about the unity that 'Laye' brings, but as a shared identity as children of God. In the case of marriage, the erasure of names symbolizes an openness to inter-ethnic marriages, avoiding strictly endogamous marriages based on kinship. In many circumstances in Senegal, Wolof parents will refuse a marriage proposal for their daughter to marry someone who is not Wolof.

Although ethnicity is much more than simply a last name, the erasure of names is also symbolic for their allowance of inter-ethnic marriages. Among the Layene, there is less language of "joking cousins," a staple social tool to create connections with others by finding links between family names and traits that surnames might evoke (Smith, Galvan 2006). The tradition is part of the caste system wherein the qualities of a *ñeeño* (paupers) were questioned by a *buur* (noble) indicating that the *ñeeño* were less clean and ate too much rice because they were too lazy to farm millet (Irvine 1975). Nowadays, the joking happens between fictive cousins of different *xeet* (ethnic group) or among an ethnic group determined by *sant* (last name). It is one of the most markedly important mediums of social interaction between strangers, and among family and friends. It could be said that it is what distinguishes between host and stranger. Senegalese society is framed with these markers of difference; fundamentals of the caste system, however used to tease, still remains divisive. The name-switching of Layene philosophy aims to promote equality by erasing these markers of difference and replacing them with familiar sounds of a unified community of children of God. What follows are ethnographic accounts of how these philosophies are incorporated into daily Layene activities and formal religious and social

events.

### **Equality: Eradicating Poverty**

The five pillars of Islam consist of the declaration of faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. These are the basic, yet universal, obligations of all able-bodied Muslims (Esposito 2010). The Layene, similar to all other Muslim groups, strive to respect these rules; however, the *zakat*, also known as “compulsory giving,” is particularly institutionalized by the religious leaders of the community. Employed Layene members residing especially in the two Layene villages of Yoff and Camberene are asked by the religious leaders and family to dedicate a specific percentage of their working wages as *zakat*. This money is given to a centralized treasurer who lives within the compound of the Khalif, conserving it until a member of the community is recognized as in need. Members of ALA (Association of Layene of America) living in Columbus, Ohio and elsewhere, have their own strategy for *zakat*. Many of them have set up an automatic payout from their paycheck to the Association’s fund. In the case that a member has lost their job or needs financial assistance, the funds serve to help them. Most Layene I spoke with in Senegal recognized that the *zakat* system they have developed is a kind of *terànga* that helps to eradicate poverty. There is also *sarax*, the giving of alms which differs from *zakat* in that there is no fixed amount or time requirement. Giving *sarax* is also said to bring good luck to those who give and receive it, serving as its own motivation.

### *The Collective Wedding*

Idrissa Thiaw, the son of the current Khalif Abdoulaye Thiaw, spoke with me about the principles of *terànga* that his forefathers instilled in him and the Layene community. Most of the children of the religious family are involved in the exercises of the community. On top of leading

children's Qu'ranic classes, he has been charged with organizing the annual collective wedding, or *takku ndeuss*, that takes place in Yoff under the direction of his father and family. *Ndeuss* (or *ndes*) meaning the mat laid down for prayer or meetings (Diouf 2003), signifies a collective activity. Passed on to him by several Khalifs, Idrissa organized a tour of the Layene communities around Dakar, meeting with imams from each district to identify and register those who wish to be married, with or without a partner in mind. After meeting with the parents to receive their blessing and to counsel them on the wishes laid out in the *hadith* of Limamou Laye regarding marriage, Idrissa notes their children's names in a book that will be used the day of the collective wedding. "Limamou Laye wants everyone to marry no matter their family background," citing the French phrase *l'amour est plus fort que l'homme* (love is stronger than man/the heart wants what it wants), Idrissa spoke passionately. "Limamou Laye warned during his sermons that if the youth remained unmarried it would ruin the world." In fact, to ensure children grow up understanding the importance of marriage and the responsibility it teaches, the Layene will often give their daughters away in marriage at the time of their baptism, most likely to a friend's young boy. This practice is to ensure she grows up knowing responsibility to another. When the children become adults they make the choice between whether to remain married, or divorce and marry someone they prefer instead. This is a legally registered marriage and divorce, a divorce that is not looked down upon by the Layene, as the marriage served its purpose of educating the children as they grew up.

Idrissa developed the story further saying that Limamou Laye not only preached about equal opportunity for marriages, but he also lived by example. If a young man would come to him explaining he could not marry because his parents objected to him marrying a girl from a

different family,<sup>39</sup> or he did not have the money or space to offer his new bride, Limamou Laye would help. He would pay for the religious marriage fees, and offer a room in his house for them to live until they had established themselves, asking one of his wives and to take up with a co-wife.

December 7th, 2014 was the day of the collective wedding in Yoff-Layene. On the surface it seemed the same as any large religious conference with members wearing the usual white clothing and swaying with the rhythm of *sikr*. To the side, however, were parents and representatives of the couples being joined in union, entering the mosque with an imam from their district who would perform the short ceremony and exchange of money that covered the fees. The standard fee was 10,000 cfa (about \$20), half for the imam and half as a dowry for the bride. Couples were far from the scene; instead the young women were at the salon with a few close friends, and the young men were kept company by their friends drinking *attaya*, or tea. The couples might host a small gathering following the ceremony taking place in their honor.

Layene members from the villages, Dakar, and even other regions in Senegal would join in, saying that being married under the eyes of God, collectively, increases the couples' *baraka* (fortunes). Just as collective prayer amplifies their call to God, a marriage with the blessing of the whole Layene community is special. As the ceremony came to a close, one of the religious family leaders approached the microphone to announce the number of couples married, 118, and to reiterate the significance of the collective wedding. "May God bless their unions and the whole Layene community," he belted to an agreeing crowd, who responded with a boisterous *sikr* song. When I sat down with Idrissa to talk about the wedding ceremony, he explained the history behind the collective weddings. "Wastefulness was one of the first things that Baye Laye decided to get rid of." He said Baye Laye felt one of the ills of society was for young people to

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<sup>39</sup> Different family here means a family from a different ethnic group of socio-economic background that does not correspond to the status of their family.

not get married or get married later in life, and that this was due to the constantly rising price for dowries and ceremonies. The social pressure he alluded of giving money no one had was unrealistic and destructive. “Limamou Laye foresaw these divisions created by trying to be better, saying "*kenn genul kenn, ku gena ragal Yalla moo gen*" (no one is superior to anyone, those who fear God the most are the best) he spoke and broke into *sikr* singing.

### **Two Friends, Two Baptisms: A World Apart on the Margins**

Mbaye Seck Ba Laye and Ibou Ndour Laye have been best friends since they were born. Their two houses, which their father’s built, touch on one side and share a common sandy courtyard. As members of the Layene faith they share most of the same activities, although Mbaye Seck lives in the limelight as a religious singer, and Ibou Laye mostly avoids it. Mbaye Seck has been married to Binta for nearly twenty years, and when I first met them they had three boys. Ibou Laye had not been so lucky, but had just recently married a shy, sweet woman, Nabu. Ibou and Mbaye Seck were known for being master *attaya* (tea) makers and consumers, having lively discussions while waiting for a batch to brew. The two men, measuring each over six feet five inches, have infectious, whole body-shaking laughs. Most every tea drinking session I attended was accompanied with explanations of what it meant to be Layene and how they differed from other groups in Senegal. Knowing the nature of my original project on the campaigns to fight against wastefulness in family ceremonies, they would often emphasize the fact that the Layene did not waste. Upon inquiring what they meant, they both said that the Layene didn’t allow the aspects of family ceremonies that were wasteful and that they did not use each other for financial gain, as did griots, who Mbaye Seck openly disliked. Listing off a number of aspects of ceremonies, Ibou said, “The Layene, they do not have *griots*. We don’t give money, just the essential religious elements.” In fact, both expressed that men particularly

disliked what they called the ‘folklorique’ elements of mainstream ceremonies.

*Mbaye Seck and Binta Laye*

Mbaye Seck’s wife, Binta, gave birth to a baby girl at the beginning of October, 2013. The baptism followed seven days later, a Layene custom, instead of the majority of Muslims in Senegal who baptize on the eighth day. The religious naming ceremony took place at nine in the morning presided by Mbaye Seck’s childhood friend and son of the Khalif Abdoulaye Thiaw. That morning the rain was merciless, making many guests late as the rain had flooded many of the sandy routes to the house. Chatter of the weather causing the baptism to start later than it should filled the hallway of the house where guests crowded in refuge. As the last male guests arrived and gathered in the living room, they huddled together and sang *sikr* songs while the women in the next room shaved the baby’s head in preparation for her baptism. When the women brought her in, we covered our heads to signify the divine encounter with God the space represented, and began to sing and pray. The imam announced she would be called Soxna Oumou Khary. Everyone sighed and pronounced *machallah* to show their approval and bless the good news. Oumou, Binta’s adoptive aunt who took care of her after her mother passed away when she was young, was named the *turandoo*, or namesake. Due to the weather, Oumou arrived late and, upon hearing the baby was named after her, she cradled the baby and cried with pride. Babies’ names are significant as they symbolize affiliations. For boys’ names there is a particular uniformity depending on rank from oldest to youngest. The oldest boy is named Libasse, followed by Seydina, Mandior, and then Babacar after the successive Layene Khalifs. The girls’ names are up to the discretion of the father, who can be convinced by his wife to name their daughter after someone meaningful to her, if she presents a good case.

We took off our veils and draped them across our shoulders like a scarf, and ate the standard



porridge called *laax* as everyone reminisced about Soxna's namesake while fussing over the baby. Several women sitting on the edge of the bed offered praises of Oumou's qualities of patience, generosity, and piety, which they hoped would be bestowed upon the baby. The crystal clear voice of Mbaye Seck's fellow religious singers rings out, praising the goodness of the name Oumou. Throughout Oumou Khary's life, she would be reminded of her namesake's characteristics as a guide for her own behavior. The power of names is an important factor in the development of personal qualities serving as an admonition to aspire equal greatness. This is evident in the high occurrence of sons being named Mohammed throughout the Islamic world, and among the Layene, the names of past Khalifs or influential imams. The names are symbolic of the personal affiliation to the namesake, as well as the legends of revered personalities.

Binta changed into a beautiful sequined dress, and guests began singing *sikr* songs praising Seydina Limamou Laye the prophet, and God. The content of the event remained religiously focused with the repetitive invocation of God and praising of Baye Laye and his legacy. There was no *geew* (the circle under a tent created at ceremonies in order to exchange gifts and words of lineage led by griots). The Layene preferred gifts given for the baby to be presented in advance with discretion (*sutura*). There were, however, female members of Binta's family from Thies that wore extravagant clothing and began singing as a *griot* would. Mbaye Seck later told me Binta's family from Thies would have a large festivity if it were up to them and he said as the man, he wouldn't allow it, "It's not how we Layene do things" he said. One woman from Binta's family began taunting me to reveal my secrets of marriage, inviting me to her house for tutorials on the items needed for pleasing one's husband and establishing a welcoming home. Her demeanor and stylistic language made it appear as if she were a griot, the very type of personality Mbaye Seck had vocalized his disdain for.

Most male guests had made their way up to the second floor and were singing and rejoicing

while crowding onto a mattress on the floor or plastic chairs shaping the contour of the room's walls. It looked like most Layene gatherings, a festive, yet minimalist scene. The ceremony was confined to inside the home with no tent set up for a multitude of guests or attention from outside, and no music blasting from speakers, as is customary of most ceremonies celebrated beyond the Layene villages. When Binta emerged from her room she was dressed in a pink and blue sheer dress with a matching bow in her hair, and the women surrounded her chanting "*Binta, sanse nga, sanse nga, Laye Laye Laye La Laye*" (Binta is all dressed up, all dressed up, praise be to God). Their chants followed the rhythm and melody of Layene religious *sikr* sung at gatherings, while the words were a mix of praises to God and acknowledgement of Binta's special occasion. The procession continued up the winding stairs as she joined Mbaye Seck and the other men leaving her role as the star to blend in as another voice in the choir. The room boomed with joyous singing that elevated with every verse. Guests continued singing after lunch, which was served by young women who were neighbors or family members of Binta. After lunch and a few more impassioned rounds of singing, most of the guests went home. By four in the afternoon, all the guests had gone.

Days following Soxna's baptism I returned to Mbaye Seck's house for lunch to recap the events of the baptism. I expressed that the event seemed very calm and simple, and he replied "*Gis nga? Simple rekk, te dunu sonn.*" (You see? Just simple, and no one is tired). His comment on 'being tired' was a reference to ceremonies of non-Layene members that were extravagant and stressful. "*Duñu sonn, duñu yaq. Sikr, tudde Yalla, ñibbi.*" (We don't tire ourselves, we don't waste (money). Sing, praise God, and go home).

The baptism for Mbaye Seck and Binta's daughter reflected the desires expressed by the Layene community. For Mbaye Seck it was a calculated choice to remain within the confines of a mostly religious focused baptism, running contrary to the expectations of Binta's family from

out of town, in effect denying them the performance of cultural rituals known by all women throughout Senegal. The various elements of the baptism demonstrate a marrying of religious and cultural notions, such as the instance of *sikr* singing with references to God and the material aspects of Binta's clothing and style. However, Mbaye Seck demonstrated a purposeful shift towards a baptism focused mainly on the religious elements, such as the baby being named and blessed by an imam followed by *sikr* singing, as well as a rejection of non-religious aspects. These included the evening gathering of women from both families forming a gift-giving circle, excessive demonstrations of food, music, and material exchange, as well as the prolonged stay of guests at their house. Mbaye Seck's insistence that a baptism consists of naming, praying and praising through *sikr*, and fulfilling their social and religious duty of *terànga* by feeding and welcoming guests, goes against the grain of social obligations found in most Senegalese households. *Terànga* was not denied or relegated to the shadows, rather for him and many others in the Layene community, *terànga* was a gesture of one's acceptance of God and Limamou Laye by fulfilling their duties to one another.

### *Ibou Laye and Nabu*

The picture looked much different for Ibou Laye and his wife, Nabu, who did not live in the same home. Ibou lived in his family compound and Nabu lived with her family in a home that lay just outside the limits of Camberene in Parcelles Assainies Unité 2. Ibou and Mbaye Seck joked leading up to the baptism that given that the baptism would take place at Nabu's house with her family in charge of the event, he would turn his cellphone off and run away once the religious ceremony had taken place. They roared with laughter as he said "No one will find me until a few days later," so as to avoid the parasitic family members who would be asking for money, he admitted. The day of the baptism began with a swarm of people, the men gathered in

the living room and women watching Ibou's sister prepare the baby by shaving her head with a razor that was dipped in a deep *calabasse* (gourd) with a few kola nuts in it. Her curly little hair floated in the water as she cried to the strange touch of a razor and the cold water to her head. I pulled my scarf over my head and found a place on the floor amongst the men as they quietly sang in a buzzing unison. Ibou's sister brought in the baby, who was swaddled in a shimmery blue and white *sëru njago*, the ceremonial woven cloth given to babies for their baptism. As the imam held the baby, praying over her, the Layene men sang "*Laye Laye Laye Seydina Rassoul Laye.*" (Praise be to God, Seydina the Prophet of God) while guests from the central town of Kaolack looked on. They were members of the Niassene religious family, a small Sufi brotherhood, invited by Nabu's family as they are members of the Niassene community.

"Alhamdoulilah," the imam announced as the singing ceased. "*Tudde naa ko Ngoye Ba. Yall na ko Yalla guddal fannam, Yalla na ko Yalla samm ko, aar ko, Yall na ko Yalla jox ko barkel, dundel ko Islam.*" (I have named her Ngoye Ba. May God grant her a long life, may God protect her and implant her in society, may God bless her and show her a life of Islam). He asked those present to recite several *fatiha* (Qur'anic verses) individually, followed by a joining of voices back to the *sikr*. Singing "*Mohamadou Rassoul Laye,*" they swept their open palms over their face as to wash the prayers and blessings of God over them. Mbaye Seck who was sitting next to the imam and representing Ibou Laye, announced they were going to give Ngoye Ba away in marriage to a young boy, customary of many Layene baptisms. They began collecting the necessary sum for the *dot* (dowry) in order to officiate the marriage. In a metal platter were wrapped mint candies, kola nuts, and the 10,000 cfa (\$20) to divide between the imam and the father of the boy, who was present. The father agreed to the union, and they prayed. Mbaye Seck erupted in song backed up by the *waykat* (religious singer) Alioune who sang for the baptism of Mbaye Seck's daughter, reminded those listening about what Seydina Limamou Laye said. "He

said to boys and girls, *sikr* instead of listening to music and dancing, instead of insulting your neighbor or gossiping.” He sang of praising and remembering the life and lessons of Seydina Limamou Laye and to accept and live them.

Following the religious ceremony, Ibou and the men disappeared. Where the baptism for Mbaye Seck’s daughter ended after the religious ceremony, the baptism for Ibou’s daughter had just begun. Ibou introduced me to Ndeye Fatou, a young unmarried Layene woman, a few days prior to the baptism while I paid a visit to Nabu to give her a few gifts. Unbeknownst to me at the time, my act of giving a gift away from the gaze of others was a sign of respect and discretion, something that pleased Ibou and his wife. He said this act was the sign of a pure heart, a Layene heart. When we encountered Ndeye Fatou, she pretended to run from Ibou, as he caught her and brought her back in. “She is running because she is afraid. She was named the baby’s *njeke*, the term for a female relative or friend of the mother who is honored at the ceremony and serves as a role-model for the child. Ibou Laye had chosen Ndeye Fatou to be one of three women to be the baby's *njeke* despite her being from his side of the family, as it is customary for the wife to choose among her female relatives. In return Ndeye Fatou was to give gifts and money to Ibou's wife for the baby and to acknowledge her role.

Ndeye Fatou took me to her house for lunch, and to get ready for the evening festivities. After lunch while she showed me a documentary of the Layene community, she admitted she couldn’t sleep for a week once she found out about her role. She had never participated in a ceremony with an official position and was afraid of the craziness of it all. "What do I give and how much?" Ibou’s family in-law were from the Niassene Sufi Muslim order who did not exercise restrictions on how ceremonies were conducted. Out of his control as a Layene man, the ceremony promised to be grandiose and Ndeye Fatou's task proved to be daunting as she struggled to put together a package of fabrics and money for Ibou’s wife. During lunch she was

obviously anxious, worrying about how she was to handle the pressure, and whether she would know what to give and how much.

As night fell and the tent outside the house filled with beautiful guests, dazzling outfits, and the rare sounds of drumming and music in that neighborhood, Ndeye Fatou positioned herself near the outskirts of the open circle where the gift giving would take place. Accompanied by her family's griot, who was helping her strategize the gift giving process, she listened attentively as the mounting sums were announced. She panicked, asking the elder women around her what to do and what it all meant. Another female *griot's* voice boomed, "Wow, look at this *terànga*: my master just gave 50,000 (\$100)." It is customary for someone in Ndeye Fatou's position to follow suit of the first and second woman and even give more if possible. She had made the mistake to give her gifts to Ibou's wife discretely the night before, as a good Layene would, depriving herself of the public recognition at the ceremony. Women's acts of giving mean personal and family honor translating to future prospects in marriage and membership in social networks. When I asked Ibou why he chose Ndeye Fatou as his daughter's *njeke*, especially knowing she is Layene, he said it was important for her to experience it at least once, to know what is expected of women in society because she was inexperienced and sheltered, and will encounter practices different than their own. On our way back to her house, she divulged her fear of having not given enough, possibly bringing shame to herself and her family. She castigated her *griot* for not being forceful enough compared to the second *njeke's griot* with the loud and charismatic voice.

## **Conclusion**

The two baptisms are evidently different, even as they share similarities. They visually represent the festive versus the austere. The sounds of the baptism for Ibou's daughter included a

great deal of chatter, music, and speeches referencing the material aspects of *terànga*. Oumou Khary's baptism looked like a religious ceremony, men dressed in white, and most women wearing colorful, yet conservative dresses. Although Binta and Mbaye Seck received gifts such as a washing basin for the baby, baby clothes, and other items for day to day use, they were given discretely and not publicly. Sounds emanating from their house were that of *sikr* sung in unison. Guests singing along were lulling themselves to the repetition of the songs and their message, while Ibou's ceremony was loud and chaotic, with a different energy flow. The baptism within the Layene town of Camberene was controlled and presided over by mostly men, whereas the ceremony on the fringes, the men escaped the female dominated evening festivities. One focused on God as the grantor of *terànga*; the other created an environment of material exchange as a form of *terànga*. However, both arguably believe the role of *terànga* is to establish an ethos, driven by an ethics that privileges the nurturing of social relationships. As the two baptisms have especially demonstrated, the practice and ideology of *terànga* has many different facets and interpretations.

The practices and foundation of the Layene community itself sees the importance of recovering positive human relationships by establishing *terànga* as a social transaction with pietistic aims. In addition, the hesitations and anxieties of the young woman Ndey Fatou reveals an important point suggested by Saba Mahmood. She has argued that the secular ethos as opposed to an ethical framework built upon by religion is not necessarily more liberating. In a way, the Layene community offers refuge to young women such as Ndey Fatou from the tyranny of social obligations that are stressful and contentious. Identifying with the principles of the Layene community, she is able to shelter herself from specific milieus on the basis that certain practices beyond her beliefs do not correspond.

## Chapter Six

### **“Welcome to the Honor your Guest Club”: Negotiating Womanhood and Piety through *Terànga* Among the Layene Religious Community**

On a Saturday evening, I entered a crowded sitting room packed with chatty and lively young women. I made the rounds of the room lined with sofas displaying embroidered doilies on the armrests, shaking the hand of each woman. Smiling as they looked me over, they scanned my outfit, an underwhelming top and jeans. One girl sported a relaxed tunic and wrap skirt with large hoop earrings protruding from a tightly wound headscarf, while Aicha Laye, the girl I accompanied to the meeting, wore jeans and a t-shirt. As I continued, I greeted another girl wearing an evening gown packed with sequins and lace as if she were stopping by before her main formal attire event. A loud booming voice erupted from a small-figured body in the corner, Mané Laye, who wore a hijab, yelled at me to come sit next to her. Her hijab was anything but austere, decorated with sewn flowers and shiny pins keeping it tight in place. The women’s variety of dress and styles demonstrate the intersections of religious-inspired attire with local fabrics, and more Western styles. After all, these women live in the Muslim dominated urban environment of Dakar with fashion inspirations that they encounter through popular culture, new models seen in magazines, television, and the marketplace. They are also embedded in the culture of the Layene religious community who profess different ideas and goals for the representation of clothing as I discussed in the previous chapter and will give more in-depth examples in this chapter. Women who wear the hijab outside of religious contexts, their dress choices also reflect their desires to be seen a certain way. Such is also the case for those wearing elegant, flashy clothing in conjunction with jeans and a t-shirt. For some, dress is a temporal and flexible identity-marker; others consistently wear certain clothing to make another impression.



In this chapter, I examine the women of *teral gann*, and their engagement with *terànga* through their instances of hosting, visiting, dress choices, and their performance as hostesses at the annual pilgrimage. These elements of women's practice are important as they comprise the social embodiment of *terànga* as an expression of piety and religious affiliation, as well as the women's navigation of social and marital relationships. I also discuss the language of religious singing and the oral histories of important female figures that reinforce the importance of *terànga* to the construction of an ideal Muslim Layene woman. Women of *teral gann*, however, do not live apart from the secular influences of the state, popular culture, and their Muslim and Catholic neighbors espousing different beliefs.

In many ways, the women's multifarious engagements with *terànga* are representative of the tensions and ambiguities between secular and religious ethics. Through the narratives of Dakar's Sunnite women, Erin Augis demonstrates religiousness as a form of activism to weather challenges of social changes (2012). The Layene women also show an intersection of the spheres. As members of the Layene community, which discourages privileging material expression of *terànga*, the women are warned of resulting social conflict and distraction from more pietistic goals. Paradoxically, as members of a society such as Senegal, which places great value on the material exchange of cloth as socially paramount, the women are placed in a bind. Therefore, not only are the women charged with the duties of *terànga* and hospitality during the *Appel*, *terànga* is also a central aspect of everyday urban life. Analyzing their activities and choices grants a look at how they navigate these ambiguities of *terànga*. Moreover, an examination of *terànga* as an expression of religious and filial piety is especially important to understand women's negotiation of agency, power, and affiliation.

The young women's group, *teral gann* in Wolof, literally translated as "Honor the guest," was a group created by the president of the Castors *dahira* in order to perform specific

hospitality duties during the annual pilgrimage. The president's niece, Aicha Laye, was introduced to me by Mame Libasse, a great grandson of Seydina Limamou. I met Mame Libasse during the Layene celebration of the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan where he received his followers (*talibé*) in his home and offered blessings and prayers. Religious guides such as Mame Libasse also offered daily spreads of food for the *talibes* to gather and break fast at sundown. *Talibés* of all generations, dressed in white, would visit him to receive blessings. As they kneeled beside him stretching out their palms, others mimicked, following along as Mame Libasse whispered prayers into their hands. He had the habit of greeting everyone with the phrase *ziar naa la*, an Arabic word meaning to give blessings to others. Even his *talibés* who call over the phone for religious blessings are greeted with this phrase. At the end of the celebration, Mame Libasse introduced me to Aicha and the young women of the Castors *dahira* (religious association), some of whom were members of *teral gann*, named after their neighborhood of Castors, in central Dakar, joining members from nearby households. They had rented a large van to trek across town for the event and were paying their respects to Mame Libasse, who served as the purveyor over their *dahira*. Aicha invited me to the following Friday's prayer service.

Apart from Friday services, the women of *teral gann* meet monthly in order to organize their participation for the annual religious pilgrimage to celebrate the anniversary of Seydina Limamou Laye's *Appel*. Even so, this group primarily serves more as a space for these unmarried and newly married young women to discuss life experiences, confide in one another, practice hospitality skills, and of course, gossip. They are seeking to reinforce their affiliation to the Layene faith at the same time they are helping each other navigate new and complex stages of womanhood.

Mami Laye, the president of the group and the hostess for the meeting, emerged from her room with treats. She curtsied and winked as she offered a drink to me from the platter she

graciously held with both hands. All of these young women<sup>40</sup> were members of a small female group, part of the Layene. *Teral gann* (honor your guest), was the name chosen by the group because the members would be in charge of the hospitality services during the annual Layene pilgrimage to Yoff-Layene. Each year, the various *dahira* (religious associations) and their sub-groups such as the *teral gann* take part in the annual *Appel* (call to followers), the main religious holiday to commemorate when the founder, Seydina Limamou Laye, first called upon the Lebu and Wolof people of the area to accept him as the prophet of God as he continued his mission. To mark the occasion, groups such as the *teral gann* feed and entertain members and non-members in-between the large religious ceremonies. Yoff and Camberene households are packed with *dahira* members from all over Senegal and their guests, in the ultimate display of *terànga*. Women are crucial to keeping everyone well-fed, content, and comfortable as the various activities are quite taxing. Members are encouraged to invite those outside of the community to demonstrate hospitality and *terànga* as essential parts of fulfilling Seydina Limamou Laye's teachings of being welcoming to all. The *teral gann* group takes their duties and the *Appel* very seriously as an opportunity to fulfill their religious and social duties, and to show off their talents.

Group meetings are held to raise money for the outfits they will wear as hostesses during the *Appel*, also serving as a space for sharing in the challenges of being young, married, and unmarried women in Dakar. As my opening description of the women's dress indicates, they live within shifting cultures of fashion, materiality and religiosity, and the pressures to find partners

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<sup>40</sup> In this chapter I choose to use the term young woman interchangeably to demarcate the transition from an unmarried girl (*xale bu jigeen*) and a married woman (*soxna* in Wolof, or *madame* in French). These distinctions whether used in linguistic play, or seriously, were important distinctions made, and I aim to honor that. "Young women" is my chosen way to demonstrate when I am referring to the *teral gann* group in general as some of them are married, while others are not. The transition from girl to woman did not seem to be a question of physical maturation, but of attaining a higher social and material status due to a woman becoming married. This is at least in the urban and current modern era.

and maintain them by way of performing *terànga*. Despite the pressures, the women's engagement with *terànga* is aimed towards securing a family life that will grant them greater purchase of their own future. Chapter One featured several of the Layene women from the group and their definitions of and trials with *terànga*.

Marriage and a family remain the desires of most women. This is the case, in spite of growing challenges to navigate the expectations of unions with husbands and their families in-law due to financial pressures and economic hardship. The endeavors to become wives, be good wives, and maintain successful relationships within various overlapping ethos is done through, I argue, women's intimate and complex relationship with *terànga*. Layene women are no exception.

### **La presidente: “Mami” Soukeyna Laye Diao**

Soukeyna Diao is her official full name, however, she is called Mami Laye by her friends and family. She has been the acting president of the *teral gann* group since 2011 and was responsible for calling and organizing meetings. All communication of money pooling, events, and what to wear during the events originated from her. Mami was a student at the Université de Cheikh Anta Diop (UCAD) in Dakar and comes from a family highly invested in education. She hoped to marry a man that would allow her to work outside of the home as she had ambitions to use her degree. Her quick wit made Mami a person not to argue with. During group meetings at her house she floated back and forth between business of the day and gossip, often speaking with an instructive rhetoric about her, acting as a motherly figure to the others, despite being a peer. She had a great deal of knowledge about the Qur'an, having studied at a Qur'anic school before entering public school, and about history of the Layene faith and its foundations.

During a particular Friday night *dahira* service, I caught Mami as we were leaving and asked her about something Mame Libasse had said. He had closed the service with a group prayer asking God to grant his followers good health, blessings, and plenty of *terànga*. I asked Mami why Mame Libasse would pray for everyone to have *terànga* as if it were an essential part of their day to day life. “Because it is,” she said, as if my question had no basis. In fact, she assured me, *terànga* was essential to their overall well-being as individuals and a community. “If we pray for God to give us *terànga*, it’s like we are praying for him to give us everything we want and need. If we want money, it’s God who gives it. If we want something to drink, it’s God who gives it. That is why we ask for God to give us more and more *terànga*” Mami said with confidence. The ability to give, which is granted by God, is therefore, what truly measures someone’s goodness and piety.

*Terànga* to her was the ability to create an environment in which the guest feels at ease and welcome because the host has more than enough to please the guest. Asking God for *terànga* and, therefore, anything they want, indicates that *terànga* encompasses a great deal more than simple hospitality services. It underlies a principle value in Senegal of sharing resources and an even more deliberate moral imperative among the Layene of treating all members equally. As I discussed in the previous chapter, *terànga* among the Layene is the foundational ethical framework that serves to reinforce God as the greatest host and giver of all. This philosophy creates a pedagogy of social relations that is based on fulfilling their duties to others and the re-appropriation and circulation of God’s goods. She continued to say: “Because, if you only have one apple to cut up, you are not going to be able to have enough for a lot of people. If God grants you *terànga*, you will be able to share with many others, that is why we ask God to grant us *terànga*.” The performance of prayer, therefore, plays an important and active role in the framing

of *terànga* as a religious and ethical philosophy that is embodied in movements and verbal and nonverbal communication to others as an extension of their pious pursuits.

Pronouncing the name of God through greetings and *sikr* (religious singing) purifies the soul and body, she says. “That’s why we sing *sikr* at weddings and baptisms. That way your life will be pure as you enter it and during it.” During funerals, members also *sikr* to send off the deceased’s soul in peace. In fact, many women in the *teral gann* group reiterated this point, emphasizing why they listen to Layene religious tapes or sing their own songs instead of listening to popular music. “Music just fills your mind with unnecessary messages; instead we should be focusing on God,” says Penda, a member of the *dahira* (religious association). Mami added that *sikr*, especially during the meetings with everyone singing together, frees up your heart from all the pain and sadness you feel. She says “Wherever God is, pain and hurt cannot follow, so we follow him.” Having attended many of the *dahira* sessions, I found the sweeping collectivity of *sikr* both infectious and cathartic.

A Layene wedding I attended in Grand Yoff, in inner Dakar, a young girl admitted they did not strictly follow the proper wedding rituals of the Layene. However, the wedding ceremony was still void of popular music and was animated instead by several religious singers which felt like a hybrid scene of a black gospel church and a *dahira* meeting. In terms of dress, these ceremonies display no superficial difference with non-Layene weddings, with female guests wearing beautiful gowns and men sporting a freshly pressed tunic and pants combination. Yet, the the marriage ceremony and celebration looked much like a religious gathering, as the bride and groom joined in a chorus of unison *sikr* singing and coordinated body movements. Their hands were in the air praising God as they smiled and sang.

## Heritages of *Terànga*

Mami then shared with me the story of Seydina Limamou Laye's mother, Soxna<sup>41</sup> Coumba Ndoye, and her practices of *terànga* as the symbolic principle of the Layene community. It was not long after her death in 1883 that her son, Libasse Thiaw, proclaimed he was the *Mahdi*, or reincarnation of the Prophet Mohammed. Coumba Ndoye is revered by all Layene, especially women, as a virtuous and generous woman due to her welcoming nature, even to strangers. Mami emphasized that Soxna Ndoye never wanted an empty household at lunch time, something most Layene households shared in common, always trying to solicit guests to share the meal. Coumba's household always had an abundance of food, inviting anyone to come in and share a meal. Mami reiterated Coumba's love for regularly sharing so much that she would send her son Seydina out to find wandering strangers to feed. She sent him with one of her scarves to give to strangers he encountered on his way to the fields, insisting they return the scarf, proof of having met her son, in exchange for food and a resting place.

According to Mami, it is Madame Ndoye who championed the tradition of *terànga*, giving the Layene a reputation as being particularly hospitable. In fact, she was nicknamed Coumba Jagata after the Wolof word *jagat*, meaning to carry, symbolizing all the bowls of food and water she carried for her various guests. These stories place *terànga* as a central guiding principle of the Layene, demonstrating the obligation to others as a social and religious imperative.

Chapter Five discussed *teranga* as an ethical foundation, and the narrative of Soxna Ndoye is exemplary. She serves as a reference of an ultimate motherly figure, thus feminizing *terànga*, exemplifying her story for other women. She reminds Mami and others that being hospitable to others is the ultimate expression of womanhood, and is something to be celebrated and diligently practiced. Emphasizing her status as the mother of the Layene founder and therefore the Layene

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<sup>41</sup> Soxna is the Wolof term for Madame, or Mrs.

community, also places her story in a religious context. Coumba Ndoye's acts of hospitality were for the betterment of others; at the same time her story positions *terànga* as among the most cherished values of the Layene community. The lack of details beyond nourishing and lodging guests suggests an early and lasting focus on the heritage of *terànga* as a religious obligation within the community. Coumba's devotion to hospitality as a reflection of her piety shows the honor in religious focused sociality. Similarly, among the Mouride order in Senegal, the legend of Mame Diarra Bousso, the mother of Amadou Bamba who founded the Sufi group the Mourides, is retold as a moral imperative for female *talibe* (disciples). Women and men alike emphasize the unflinching submission of Mame Diarra, demonstrated by stories of her *muñ*, or patience and piety (Rosander 1998). Both cases show the importance of historical narratives of the champion Sufi mothers whose characteristics have become inscribed in the everyday imaginary. The emphasis on generosity and hospitality are unmistakable and speak to the nationalist discourse of *terànga*, as well as a localized meaning specific to each *tarixa* (Sufi order).

According to Cecile Laborde, Seydina Limamou Laye believed the Layene woman played an important role in the religious community, bringing in a great deal of women described as lucid, enthusiastic, with a rare spirit of independence (1995). This is seen through the narratives of heroines such as Coumba, and women's intimate participation in the religious community. What follows are ethnographic vignettes that demonstrate the different ways in which young Layene women engage with, embody, and talk about *terànga* as a way to navigate their courtships and relationships and negotiate their positions in society. Members of the *teral gann* group perform *terànga* as part of their religious membership in a quest for greater piety and recognition within the community.



### ***Teral Gann: Practicing Terànga***

One evening I accompanied Aicha to Mami's house, where a meeting was in full swing. Aicha had changed from her low cut shirt and jeans to a beautiful *yere Wolof* (typical Wolof clothing), a wax fabric two-part dress, with heels, much like what the other girls were wearing. She inevitably wanted to make an impression with her friends, in addition to feeling beautiful. It seemed like a mini fashion show, not unlike most occasions where female friends gather, having taken obvious care in getting dressed and put together after their morning and mid-day cleaning and cooking duties. The meeting was in the evening when they had all cleaned up after cooking lunch and beginning dinner, a time they took to dress up and stroll around the neighborhood and pay social visits to friends. With each new entrance of a member came comments from the group about her dress or new twist on a style.

Mami brought out sweet hibiscus tea and donut holes, which she served with a smile and curtsy, like a proper host would. The guests would be remiss if no one were to comment on or poke fun at her hospitality skills. The girls were laughing and talking about the men in their lives, friends, and celebrity news. Aicha beamed about her beau who she called Mr. Fall, and herself Madame Fall. Calling herself Madame Fall prematurely, demonstrated her desire to be married and given the respect of a married woman. They spoke openly and uncensored, hitting topics such as pending marriages, their family life, and their relationships with their husbands and families in-law. When most of the snacks were gone, Mami began asking for the month's dues of 5,000 cfa (\$10), a part of each member's participation for the *Appel*. Scheduled contributions during the year provided funds to the *dahira* to buy food, supplies, and their outfits to be worn during the annual meeting. These would serve the purpose of demarcating their role as the hostesses of the event, serving guests, *dahira* members, and representing the *dahira* by presenting their greetings and support to their religious leaders.

## **Dress, Talk, and Representation: Religious Pursuits and Cosmopolitan Complexities**

The young women of *teral gann* are like most women their age in the city, trying to cultivate respectability to become wives; and as wives, workers, family members, and desirable women. As part of the Layene community, they also seek to establish themselves as pious members through the active participation in the *dahira*, various Layene events where they plan and provide hospitality. The presence of *terànga*, especially within the confines of the home and family matters, is most visually practiced and represented by women. This is done through the presentation of the home and serving food cooked, as well as self-presentation translated through choices in clothing, jewelry, and beauty. The clothed and adorned body represents one element of *terànga* as it creates a welcoming environment while also showing affiliation to particular identities such as Muslim, modern, and Senegalese. The *teral gann* members demonstrate the rehearsal and performance of *terànga* as important to their daily pursuits and expressions of respectability through talk, dress, and cooking and serving.

At a *teral gann* meeting, members were involved in a lively debate about new fashion styles sweeping across Dakar as seen on television being sported by politicians and television personalities as well as magazines such as *Aminata*, or *Dakar People*. I chimed into the sometimes three-way conversation and made a comment about another member's headscarf, a beautiful blue, wrapped around her face so as to accentuate the sewn flowers on the side. The topic became immediately interesting to all the other members, each with their opinion. "I think it's beautiful and classy" one said, "When I get married I want to be an Ibadou," said Aicha. Ibadou, the term in Senegal for a Muslim woman who covers her head but not face, are increasingly desirable to young Muslim women in the city. Wearing a headscarf often demonstrates a woman's status as a married and devout Muslim as well as a level of sophisticated classiness that accompanies the headscarf style. The headscarf exudes a certain put

togetherness and conservative identity that advertises the woman as possessing the coveted trait of *sutura* (discretion).

Another member changed the subject to female politicians. I asked the group what they thought about Aminata Toure, the female prime minister of Senegal at the time, and many agreed that she was smart and well-spoken, but that she has terrible fashion sense. “I mean, she is brave, I’ll give her that, but she doesn’t know how to dress or look nice, no one listens to her,” one girl said. As opposed to most Ibadou women, female politicians are often portrayed as women displaying more manly characteristics of speaking out and forcefully. It reminded me of many conversations I’ve overheard equating the presumed quality of a woman’s character with her dress and overall physical presentation.

On the other hand, it was not uncommon to hear women of all ages boast about Aida Mbodj, the former president Abdoulaye Wade’s right hand woman from the PDS party (Parti Démocratique Sénégalais) highlighted in Chapter Three. Whether one agreed with her politics, she was often revered for her fashion taste, class, and generosity, regardless of whether you were for or against her politics. Aida chose carefully her dress for each occasion, veiling and lowering her voice during interviews with ToubaTV (the Mouride religious channel), and using large hand gestures, a loud voice, and flashy yet tasteful dress during political rallies.

The girls of the *teral gann* group talked about how their hospitality reaches its full potential and recognition through the credibility and resources of their husband. Wearing white for Layene events also symbolized their affiliation and identity as a pious Muslim. As the women demonstrated in their own fashion choices and talk about their admiration for women who wear headscarves, or their attention to what to wear, dress is a part of a woman’s social and religious identity. In this case, their dress choices and admiration showed that although there were varying types of dress to demarcate space and affiliation, this ambiguity did not diminish their piety or

affiliation to the Layene community. In fact, similar or different fashions can have multiple meanings that demonstrates a woman's global aspirations.

During meetings and other times spent with the girls it was apparent that the topic of hospitality preoccupied their minds and time a great deal. The unmarried girls sought to employ calculated styles of dress to mark different occasions and company and learned recipes to demonstrate their skills of taking care of and impressing guests, while the married women gloated about the meals they cook for their husbands and moaned about the pressures they felt to keep up with demands of gifts and displays of affection for their family in-laws. Through the years of watching and assisting their mothers, young women accumulated knowledge of cooking and presentation. If a mother had done her job, the young women would leave the homes having learned the necessary recipes and steps for cooking tasty dishes.

### ***Terànga* as Serious Business**

For the weekly *teral gann* meetings, the girl hosting did most of the leg work, but was often assisted by another girl to fry up a snack or make juice. They were all friends, many related, such as Aicha's sister and cousin, also members. Although it was an "official" meeting, these were women who socialized in the same crowd and had been friends since childhood, bound together through family, generation, locality, and the Layene community. After having attended several meetings, I offered to host one Saturday afternoon, and, consequently, uncovered a great deal of the unspoken rules of hosting. Aicha came over early, skeptical of what I was going to make, insisting I should make the classic beignets (fried donut holes) and serve it with something simple that everyone liked. I had chosen to attempt an elaborate recipe of cream puffs and a non-alcoholic mojito to impress, and treat them to something new. Aicha quickly began ordering me to go buy flour and yeast, and a packet of *bissap* leaves (hibiscus) to make

sweet hibiscus tea. After returning with the necessary items, I was a simple bystander as she toiled away in the kitchen. An elder aunt of Aicha had also come along to most likely supervise my hospitality, as she was not part of the group nor had she participated in previous meetings. She ended up shunning me from my kitchen, taking total control while making Aicha watch as she explained the necessary steps. Both Aicha and I were relegated to kitchen aids. In the hierarchy of cooking skills, she was the expert, Aicha was still an honorary amateur, above me, and I was the white girl who didn't know any better.

Due to my cultural understanding of hosting and hospitality, my objective had been to introduce them to something I knew and liked, but I quickly found it was not about me. What would make my guests feel pampered yet comfortable was the point, an essential known fact for being a successful host. Many people told me that the art of hospitality and the sign of a good woman was having a sense of what guests (expected and unexpected) might want to eat on any given day, a skill that was cultivated over time. A woman does not only calculate her meals for members of the house, but for potential unannounced guests. She should consider what has been made in the previous days, careful not to prepare the same dish twice, but make a crowd pleaser. This is assuming the family has the means to indulge choices. As soon as all the other girls arrived, they began poking around in my kitchen, adding a little of this, taking control of that. And despite knowing I had nothing to do with my own get together, they offered their usual praises, "Oh, this is so good. Your *teranga* is good." Overstating the quality of my hospitality by its recipients is just as important as being an overly attentive and enthusiastic host.

These small gatherings among friends were not exactly the same scenario as a woman's home or a large meeting like the *Appel*; however, the meetings were opportunities to practice taking command of their own space and direction of resources. As the snacks were presented, the girls chatted about their favorite things to make guests. Aicha gloated about the young men who

came to visit and what she served. Each shared their twist to a classic recipe, or talked about a new type of seasoning being sold at the market. They grew up as girls preparing meals for the household and helping elder women in the home when guests came over as an accessory to the household *teranga*. It is not until a woman has her own home and husband that she can truly claim ownership over her skills and acts of generosity. What struck me most from this moment was that although the presentation and aesthetics of a meal may garner individual satisfaction and recognition, what is given as *terànga*, such as the meal and choice of snacks, was not for the woman's individual benefit. In fact, it is this recognition and self-sacrifice to please guests that is an essential piece of the intentionality of the art of hospitality.

### **Aicha Laye**

Aissatou Sow (Laye), known as Aicha, is a young, unmarried girl who lives with her uncle Papa Jean Seck, and family in a compound type home in the Dakar neighborhood of Ouagou Niayes. The family home, surrounded by newly built apartment high rises, groups together Aicha, her cousins, and others from her large family. Her aunt Rose, the matriarch of the family, said the home belonged to her father when the neighborhood was occupied mostly by homes instead of towering apartment complexes. Aicha is smart and educated, having attended a technical business school for the equivalent of a master's degree. Her mother sent her from Saint Louis in the north of Senegal to live with Papa Jean and go to school starting at the age of six. The Saint-Louisian household where she was born was not a Layene household, and it was not until she moved to Dakar that she began devoting herself to the Layene community and faith. She was dependent just as others upon the pedagogies of Coumba Ndoye's story to become versed in the language of Layene communal faith. When I first met her she was working for an insurance company, selling auto insurance for commission and looking for any opportunity to

open her own business. Every morning she woke at five in the morning to mop the floors before going to work. Going to her office, although arduous with morning traffic to trek across Dakar, was an escape from the grind of duties in the home, cooking and cleaning. Due to her work schedule, Sunday, and her only day off, was always her duty to cook lunch. She was far behind her peers in cooking *savoir faire* because of her studies and work, and because she did not grow up with the mentorship of her mother. Her other female relatives in the home traded off the other days, in what they called *aye*, the girl or woman who cooks the meals for the day. Polygamous households also use the term to describe when one of the wives was visited by her husband or shared a bed with her husband. It was considered her time to take care of him and to assume the role of wife and cook for him and others.

In the home where Aicha lived, her uncle, Papa Jean was the man of the house, her aunt Rose the matriarch, and a combination of cousins and siblings lived there. Besides Aicha, there were two other able-bodied females in the house: Penda, a young widowed mother, and Mane, a young cousin sent to Dakar from her rural town to help out with chores. Everyone said the house is too quiet now, having been much more lively before many of the young girls married and moved out and several of the young men went to Europe. Their perception of empty was quite different from my own, as it seemed every room was occupied with hardly enough seats open in the TV room. For the most part, Senegalese like bustling homes, with lots of company and people to chat with and feed. A full house is a happy house, and a quiet house is a sad one. Aicha always worried that living alone would be lonely and boring, as it could only allow sad thoughts to ruminate. I spent most Sundays with Aicha at her house as she prepared lunch and dinner and chatted with her neighborhood friends who would stop by. The young girl, Mame Diarra named after the mother of the Mouride founder, who was renting a room above their home had become Aicha's best friend. One could often hear them teasing each other through the upstairs windows

that looked down into the open aired kitchen. One Sunday I was over and Aicha had finished her chores and cooking early. Mame Diarra came down to find us attempting to make a Senegalese porridge made by slowly and tediously sifting water and millet flour together with your hand. To make small pellet-like balls, you had to lightly mix the two ingredients requiring a great amount of patience. Mame Diarra instantly burst out laughing saying Aicha was incapable of doing it, noticing Aicha's unsettled look. Joking between friends can seem aggressive, but even insulting a friend is a loving gesture. "Scoot over and let the master take over" Mame Diarra said. They talked about how Aicha was trying to learn these skills because once she left her family home she wouldn't have anyone's immediate advice. Her knowledge and abilities were key to performing *teranga*, requiring practice.

### **Cooking, Hosting, and Visiting: Terànga and Wife Material**

At the time I met Aicha, she was being courted by a young Layene man who had been recruited to play for a Spanish soccer team in Spain. Introduced by mutual friends, they had never physically met, but were connected through Skype and other web-based communication. Desiring marriage with a man who had emigrated to Europe or the United States was a growing trend in Senegal as a way to circumvent the difficult marital expectations of young women and men in current Senegalese society (Foley and Hannaford 2015). During a Sunday cooking session, she stirred the pot and sliced vegetables while musing over Malick Fall. She told me she had had other boyfriends but never connected with them the same way. She was ready to be married. It was not uncommon to hear her say, "Oh Emily, sey neex na, metti na," when referring to marriage as good and difficult at the same time. The noun *neex* refers to something that is good but a more precise usage would be to describe food or something as tasting good. As I discussed in Chapter One, Wolof has a great deal of proverbs that treat food and cooking as a



euphemism for marriage, relationships, and sexuality. A marriage that is *neex* is one where all parties are satisfied materially and physically.

With marriage would come security and status, as well as a great deal of responsibility to her husband and her family in-law, something she would constantly fret over. It was not hard to see why she wished for marriage, given the current status she held in the family as the young maid and occasional cook with no claims to her own household, goods, and family. Her job as an insurance agent was far from her dreams of owning her own business, and paid dimly. Although opening a business was prosperous a decade ago, the city is now arguably over saturated with small clothing and specialty shops with very few customers. It was easy to see in the marketplace, stall after stall of similar products, women and men trying to gain loyal customers. Many women instead get their hands on a sack of cloth or trinkets to sell to friends or acquaintances. Hardly a sustainable business. Marriage would provide her with the opportunity to stake claim to her husband's wealth, assuming he had some, for the life they would build together, and allow her certain privileges. Her engagement in hospitality for guests would take on a different meaning, belonging to her and contributing to her own development instead of being lost in the fold of her family's honor. This is not to say that upon leaving her home to marry meant the end of her ties to her family, quite the contrary. Through her marriage, bonding two new families together, Aicha would bring honor to her family as a devoted wife and bridging figure between the two units.

In order for marriage to be a reality, Aicha always knew there was a pressure to build a rapport with Malick's family and friends, especially in Malick's absence. She deliberated over the right time to go visit, not wanting to cause unnecessary gossip by being seen in their neighborhood, but not giving the impression she didn't want to visit. The potential for being sighted by a jealous ex-girlfriend who wished her ill was a calculation she had to consider when

planning a visit. Ex-girlfriends were often known to visit *a marabout* to bring new girlfriends like Aicha bad luck. She spoke a great deal about this, worrying he even had other girlfriends in Spain she couldn't know about. Nonetheless, Malick's friends from Yoff-Layene began calling her to make her acquaintance, and she reciprocated. They would call her as a courtesy to their friend, Malick, and check in to see how Aicha was faring and to coordinate a visit to her home in Ouagou Niayes.

She called me one day, nervous and stressed about a visit from Malick's friends, and what to serve them as snacks and what their visit really meant, begging me to come over and support her. This would not be a simple meet and greet, but rather her opportunity to prove herself as a generous host with class and a sweet disposition to back it up. When the Saturday evening arrived, three young men arrived bearing smiles and friendly greetings. With the help of several of the girls from *teral gann*, Aicha consecrated her whole day to prepare, beginning hours ahead of time going to the market to get fresh baobab fruit to make juice, to the corner boutique for canned pineapple and milk. This was the toned down version of what she wanted to make, a fruit salad with shaved coconut and the favorite handmade cream, but she couldn't find the funds from friends and family to pull it off. She fretted over her outfit, changing several times, not wishing to seem too traditional, yet sophisticated. The traditional *yere Wolof* would be too formal and seem she was trying too hard, so she went with skinny jeans and a cute top saying *dafa toubabe*. "White people fashion" in Senegal often indicates the clothing was a gift from a family member or friend coming from Europe or the United States. The term *dafa toubabe* (displaying characteristics of a white person) is used to describe both a woman who dresses and acts sophisticated as well as a woman who turns her back on tradition. Aicha demonstrated the complex negotiations young women her age made between appearing too modern or not enough, and too traditional and not traditional enough. On a different occasion I met up with Aicha after

she had returned from a neighbor's wedding, where she had simply dropped in to congratulate the bride but had not given a gift or money. She griped that a few of her peers had called *her toubab* due to her apparent disregard for tradition. In their eyes she was effectively trying too hard to be white by turning her back on tradition by hesitating to take part in gift exchange during family ceremonies, being seen as stingy and selfish. The ambiguities of choice in dress demonstrate both a creativity and an anxiety about self-representation and identity.

Upon the men's arrival, I sat in her living room chatting with them while we waited for Aicha to serve and entertain her guests. She and the other girls of the house frantically assembled the fruit cocktail and drinks while yelling at Aicha to go attend to her guests. Instead of asking me to be her buffer, keeping them occupied, she instead planted me next to them while she shuffled back and forth between the sitting room and the outdoor kitchen. Despite being her peers, Aicha was shy and looked away while talking with the men, a nervous habit of hers, but also a sign of respect when talking to men and elders. She rarely sat for more than a minute in order to refill their glasses and bring in several waves of fruit and yogurt. The men reassured her they were full and well taken care of in a dramatic back and forth offer-refusal-counter-offer, an important ritual when being a host and a guest.

After an evening of new acquaintances and good food, I asked Aicha about the purpose of their visit. "They came to spy on me and report back to Mr. Fall; I think he wants to get married," she giggled. "It's like when the aunt goes to the village to see what the girl's family is like, where she comes from." It was customary for a member of the family to pay a visit to potential in-laws to gain knowledge about the qualities and values of the family. Each of the three guests promptly called Aicha in the days following their visit to greet her and thank her for the hospitality, implying that they had put in a good word for her with Malick.

One of the young men invited Aicha over for dinner the next week, which his wife prepared, giving the two women a chance to bond. Aicha came bearing diapers for their five-month old son as a gift, a demonstration of affection and budding affiliation to Malick and his family. The contrast in their situation was evident. Aicha had provided some small snacks and homemade drinks while Seydina's wife laid out a spread of grilled fish and French fries on a bed of shredded carrots and lettuce, garnished with decorated eggs and mayonnaise, topped off with store bought Coca Cola and Fanta. The meal was a reminder of that which Aicha so desired.

Several months later she asked me to accompany her to Yoff-Layene to pay a visit to Mr. Fall's family, the next step in their courtship and her process of proving herself as a generous woman worthy of their family. This time she was even more nervous, running around soliciting friends and family for money to buy one of Mr. Fall's sisters a gift for her newborn baby. She had assembled a package of diapers, lotions, perfumes, and trinkets to give the family and new mother. Her outfit was the more conservative *yere wolof*, a fitted dark red patterned two-part dress with bright yellow designs, which she matched with earrings, necklace, and a new hair weave. Aicha, a skinny and beautiful young girl, in her eagerness to make a good first impression, insisted we stop at the market to buy tights with foam inserts on the sides and back, giving the illusion of having large hips and butt, a sign of prosperity and wealth in Senegal.

Her anxiety regarding her outfits and outward appearance for both occasions is important to consider. As Janet Andrewes notes, dress is experienced by the body as well as a form of communication to those looking (2005). Aicha's attention to what her dress will communicate to those around her is contingent on the small details that help her occupy her desired image. Sewing a small piece of a shoe strap is most likely unnoticeable to others, but is known to her, and if not fixed will weigh on her mind and possibly distract her from embodying a hospitable and intentional young woman. Buying pads to help fill out her figure is as much a psychological

element to her personal presentation as a physical one. Her choice in dress factors both those she hopes to impress as well as a way for her to imagine herself a certain way through a type of habitus, or technique of the body (Andrewes 2005) or performativity of gender (Butler 1999). Wearing jeans and a nice top with well coiffed hair allowed her the freedom of quick movement for hosting, while maintaining her beauty. She believed it demonstrated she was flexible, and modern-minded. Mauss argued in his work on techniques of the body, that cultural values were coded in bodily movements (1973). In the case of Aicha, her movements not only portrayed certain values but produced them. She effectively displayed her willingness to work hard for her guests, putting their needs ahead of her own. Visiting Malick's family she showed flexibility and knowledge of proper dress when socializing with potential in-laws. The hindered mobility of her dress and heels showed she was the guest, not intending to be running around the kitchen. These different forms of dress work to condition Aicha's body for the benefit of others and for her own sense of self.

Upon arriving at Malick's family home, Aicha was surrounded by his entire family, who was gathered to meet her, appreciating her gestures of gifts and her dress and overflowing our cups with juices and Coca Cola. They looked her up and down, smiling approvingly. They took her around to various homes in the narrow sand filled pathways in the Layene village greeting everyone, "Laye . . . Laye, Laye," as onlookers commented on the procession of guests. When we arrived at the sister's house, Aicha discretely placed the wrapped package of gifts next to the woman and oodled over the baby. "*Oh, Aicha kii xam na terànga*" (Wow, Aicha she really knows how to give)" the sister says, continuing by blessing the occasion with a comment about Aicha's devotion to Seydina Limamou Laye, the Layene way, and her family's history of being faithful and charitable Layene. It was not simply her offering of gifts to which the family's comment was directed, but her dress and style. Her bodily presentation accompanied the gift as it

signaled to the family she embodied her generosity and intentions, communicating them through dress.

There was rumor going around Aicha's household after Mr. Fall Skyped her father from Spain to greet him, that he was going to ask for permission to marry her. After months of developments, it seemed he was finally ready to marry Aicha. Aicha was ready, eager to become a wife and mother as she had completed her schooling and training in management a year before and was tired of being the young cook and maid in the house. In addition, the day of the Layene collective wedding was coming up and she felt he was going to take advantage of the occasion. The topic came up during one of our group meetings, and I inquired how the members felt about sharing their wedding day with several other couples. "It would be great," says Nabu, one of the more noticeably devout Layene girls. "What is the purpose?" I ask. "It adds to the prosperity and blessings of your marriage because it is coming straight from God and the Khalif," says Mami, as others agreed. Collective weddings are certainly believed to contribute to the religious sanctity of the marriage, and they were also instated by Seydina Issa's desire to provide an alternative to the increasingly expensive and excessive nature of weddings in Senegalese society. He saw the escalating delay in marriage as due to high bride prices and lack of funds to pay for the wedding and accompanying gifts; the collective weddings served to shift the focus to the divine aspect of marriage. In fact, when I asked Layene members about weddings and baptisms, they began with the religious requirements, noting everything else was either frivolous, wasteful, or unnecessary.

Malick's proposal never came. Aicha grew frustrated with his behavior, not calling when he said he would, not knowing what he was up to due to the distance that separated them. She constantly mentioned she was more serious about him than he was with her, always waiting for his calls. Malick had been married before and it seemed the relationship had become complicated with his success and opportunities to travel, leaving Aicha to believe he was unwilling to dive

back into a new marriage. The women of the *teral gann* group often complained about the lack of commitment from their boyfriends and *goor Senegal*, Senegalese men in general. “*Emily, goor Senegal, ceey! Caxaan rekk.*” (Senegalese men aren't serious), says one of the girls exasperated by the prospects of finding a man willing to take their relationship seriously. When I bring up the issue with the men in Aicha’s family, they snap back saying it is the women who only want to look beautiful and marry rich men who will buy them nice clothes and presents. Aicha’s brother said, “Once they find someone who can offer them more (financially), they are gone.” They went so far as to say that Dakar women had become lazy and complacent, no longer accepting of hard work and managing a household. Although these comments were often voiced with an aire of sarcasm, there was a palpable grievance between men and women on the subject of marriage and relationships. For Aicha, her frustrations came from having had invested a significant amount of time and precious resources into her relationship with Malick, hoping her efforts to show his friends and family her hospitable nature and generosity would pay off. She sheepishly said she was done with men, but ultimately knew that was the risk of the game. Still, she wondered whether she had done enough to impress him and his family.

Aicha felt she had done everything right. She was considerate, welcoming, and beautifully tasteful. She had given gifts to his family, from money she saved up and solicited from family and friends, impressed his friends, and been a perfect and calculating host with charm. During their courtship Aicha would seek religious blessings from her guide in Yoff-Layene on behalf of Malick and for his benefit, effectively demonstrating her thoughtful and selfless nature. His unwillingness to be serious with Aicha left her with little hope and frustration, unsure of what she had done wrong.

Eventually, Mame Diarra and other friends began advising Aicha to move on, recognizing the dead end that had become their relationship. They assured Aicha she had done everything

that a good girl would do, citing her trip to Yoff and the gifts given to Malick's family. Mame Diarra had accompanied us to Yoff that day to visit his family and had seen Aicha through a great deal of the windy path of her relationship, as she had experienced her own commitment challenges with her new husband. Was it a question of her patience, lack of charm, or had Malick's family been hesitant to give their approval of such a union? Whether it was something about Aicha or beyond her control, her focus on the central role of hospitality and generosity as the make or break ingredient to her success in becoming Malick's wife demonstrates its precise importance. In the next section, I will discuss the specific factors of dress to the Layene community and *teral gann*.

### **Dress Code: Heteroglossia and *Terànga* as Public Piety**

As the *Appel* drew closer, the young women met every weekend. There was an excitement in their voices, everyone asking me if I was getting ready for the occasion, financially and spiritually. Several of us, weeks ahead of time, visited the batik fabric market to pick out the fabrics for the various outfits. With the help of a vendor who is also part of the Castors *dahira*, the girls browsed through glass cabinets packed with vibrant colored stacks of cloth. They argued over the colors, agreeing that blue "*dafa xewi*," (meaning out of style), and red was equally what they wore last year. "*Il faut mu pop*," says Mami, insisting it had to be the popular color, not out of date, and must stand out. Each outfit holds a specific purpose over the span of the two-day event in order for the women to be presentable hosts. At times it felt I was in a vaudeville act, taking off and throwing on a new outfit and matching makeup, just to do it all over again. It seemed there weren't enough hours in the day for the outfits we needed to wear. They decided on a shimmery pink and grey batik for the evening dress to serve dinner to the Castors *dahira* and their guests.



On another outing, Mami chose a yellow embroidered fabric to present dinner to their religious guide and son of the current Khalif, Abdoulaye Thiaw. It was accompanied with a matching head scarf and white veil. A black and orange wax cloth was chosen for a full-length dress with decorative pockets. The black dress was to be worn for the first day's lunch, as the girls lined up to serve large platters of mounded rice and fish to guests who had been invited from within and outside the Layene community. In fact, a main purpose of the *Appel* for many people is the opportunity to pamper guests with all you can eat food and drink, therefore giving the women an opportunity to display their own generosity and that of the *dahira* and community. The various outfits and the hostess persona were public displays of piety (Deeb 2006), granting the young women opportunities to enact their piety by serving the religious community and leaders. Capitalizing on the very public nature of the *Appel*, the *teral gann* women demonstrated *teranga* in the form of clothing and self-representation and hosting to cement their affiliation to the Layene community.

Although Mami argued the matching outfits were for practical reasons in order to identify themselves to guests as hostesses, the significance of the fabric and dress was much more to them. Similar to the *hôtesse* in Chapter Three, these women were enacting an identity that spoke both to the *teranga* practices of their mother, and to the new kind of cosmopolitan actor wishing to show their ties to global fashions and culture. This could be described as heteroglossia, the interaction of two meanings that have the potential to condition one another (Heath 1992); in this case the intersections of traditional and modern, as well as religious and secular forms of dress. Deborah Heath discusses the Senegalese social practice of *sañse*, or dressing up, which takes place at ceremonies as well as *dahira* or religious meetings. The practice of *sañse* is important in terms of marking difference and creating reputations. For the Layene, *sañse* remains relevant; however, their aim to wear white clothing and erase social differences would seem to run counter

to the objectives of *sañse*. Even still, the young women of *teral gann* demonstrate an ease of appropriating style and *sañse*, even as they maintain their religious commitments.

Each *dahira* that gathered in Yoff from all over for the *Appel* would do the same hosting at houses throughout the village. Friendly competitions formed between the different generational *maas* and their clothing choices for the *Appel* picked up a few weeks before the event. The *teral gann* group was in charge of the hosting whereas their elder sisters were the cooks. Equally as excited to don beautiful new cloth patterns and clothing designs, the elder women similarly saved up to buy matching outfits. Aicha and her sisters jokingly plotted against each other to find out what styles the other group had chosen, mocking one another for the ugly dresses they had worn.

Price of cloth and clothing in Senegal is both desired and a sign of either material wealth or strong kinship and social relationships (Kirby 2013). A woman's clothing and its implied value sends a message to others. In the case of the expensive cloth *bazin riche*, the popular cloth in the market, its bearer aims to advertise personal and social wealth (2013), whereas the Layene women and community see clothing price as significant in a different way. The white fabric and dress mentioned in the previous chapter is one of the signifiers of the Layene community. Dress was also temporal. The *teral gann* members embellished local styles while recognizing the importance of representing Laye principles through dress.

While at the market preparing for the *Appel*, the young women picked out the cheapest white cloth, which served as their outfit for the official religious ceremonies, and is consequently the only fabric officially required and promoted for the event and most other religious ceremonies. In fact, the cheap white cloth preferred by the Layene is a principle of which they preach, have a great deal of pride, and mark as a symbol of Layene morality. Members were all reminded to buy the cheap cloth, costing 400 cfa (75 cents) a yard as opposed to other more

expensive fabrics at 1500 to 2000 cfa a yard (\$3-4). The price symbolized their efforts to be uniform in dress and equal in socio-economic status, demonstrating a sense of humility and solidarity. A patch with the Castors *dahira* symbol was ironed onto the pocket of the dress to advertise their affiliation. A low price and poor quality of the fabric, as well as its color was a way to evoke a different focus, not of social hierarchy but of pious solidarity, another example of the diverse and ambiguous identities (Masquelier 2009) which they constantly navigate.

The *bazin riche* or *jisneer* fabrics were not necessarily publicized by those buying or wearing them; however, one look at the eye-catching colors and stiffness (sign of a good, new fabric) gave itself its own value that was publicly recognized. Despite the cloth's symbolism, it was easy to understand their preferences for the colorful dresses the women chose for the other hosting events. However, even the plain white dresses the young girls found ways of decorating discretely with a pin or colorful headscarf peeking out from under the veil. At the market, Mami and the others insisted on buying brand new veils to increase their blessings, warning that taking them out of the plastic packaging before the event would take away from the significance of its newness. The fashioned hosting dresses will be worn again for different Layene prayer gatherings throughout the year, offering a chance to wear them more than once and to coordinate group efforts.

Dress for the Layene demarcates space and religious identity. There is constant tension between more conservative Layene members promoting simplicity and uniformity, and the young women excited for any opportunity to show off their fashion and beauty. This does not mean, however, that the religious sentiment and blessings behind wearing white was lost on them. Men's dress does not change as drastically as that of women; they wear the fitted tunic with pants or a large flowing *boubou*. Young men wear a t-shirt and jeans during a normal day. The male guests who had come to visit Aicha on behalf of their friend Malick voiced their

frustration with young girls' disregard for conservative dress while living in and visiting Camberene, one of the religious Layene villages next to Yoff-Layene. Camberene is the Wolof translation of Kem-Medine, citing the holy city of Medina in Saudi Arabia (Sylla 1985). It was a known fact that Layene members living outside of the religious villages throughout Dakar were less considerate of the dress code and other regulations on ceremonies; however their fear was that it had also begun to happen within the confines of the villages.

White clothing is required for most Layene events and women are asked by the Layene clergy and elders to restrain from fancy hairdos, weaves, and flashy makeup and jewelry, especially during the *Appel*. The elder women of the *dahira* half-jokingly threatened the young women that they would not be admitted into the official ceremony if the greeters could see their hairdos or braids. During the Friday night *dahira* meeting the week before the *Appel*, the imam and *dahira* representatives made a similar comment, reminding the young women to only wear white and that hairdos were not important. Before entering spaces where prayer or sermons are being conducted, all members are admitted only with white clothing and a white headscarf, or *musóor*, for the women that covered the top of the head and the ears.

On a separate trip to the countryside with the *dahira*, we visited a member's village outside of Thies on the road towards Linguère. It was a day trip to include her family, Papa Jean Seck's brother, in a *dahira* service such as the regular meetings on Friday nights. Each generation group, including the *teral gann* women, wore their matching outfits from a previous *Appel*. The men wore a nice tunic, and those helping set up the sound system wore t-shirts and pants. In their outfits we all had lunch and socialized before beginning the prayer meeting. After lunch, members were called to the courtyard joining all the homes to observe the afternoon Muslim prayer. The men began singing religious songs as a call to prayer lining up behind a member who leads the prayer. Following the prayer, everyone returned indoors to change into their white

tunics and white wrap skirts and loose fitting tops with three quarter length sleeves. Women will often wear a headscarf wrapped tight against their head covering their hair in case the veil draped over it slipped unknowingly. As we approached the mats, each woman fiddled with her veil, adjusting it, making sure it was on tight enough before she arrived at the mat, the temporary entrance into a religious space designated for specific dress, behavior, and reflection.

The temporal uses of the veil, or *musoor*, was for the young women a sign of religious devotion and respect for the prayers and songs they were singing to God. Some girls chose to wear them beyond the religiously constructed space for a multitude of reasons, one being beauty and fashion, another being the construction of a religious identity. In most cases, all of their clothing, including the veil, was an effort to give themselves social and religious legitimacy. Aicha went through a period of wearing the veil on a daily basis, and when I asked her why the sudden change, she said she just liked how it made her feel. She had often admired the veils of her friends and the girls would talk about a female news reporter who began veiling, saying, “*machallah*,” she is so beautiful, virtuous, and brave”. The reporter who had recently wed received criticism for her choice to veil on camera, as many said it would make her seem unprofessional. She did it anyway, and Aicha thought the veil and more conservative dress were symbols of status and devotion to a new married life. What seems to be a myriad of contradictions between veiling, not-veiling, or both at different times, highlights the many ethos young women float between. For them, there is no contradiction. Instead, dress can be at any particular time something that anchors them to these intersecting ethos, experimental, or simply their desire to be seen as dynamic.

## Conclusion

Since doing research between 2013 and 2014 I have followed many of the *teral gann* women through Facebook. During which time, Awa Cheikh, one of the members married to her longtime boyfriend. I was struck by the photos showing her transition from being mostly absent from posting photos of herself as an unmarried, somewhat plainly dressed girl to actively posting photos of herself dressed in beautiful expensive-looking clothes. Her previously-sparse clothing that were tailor-made to fit to her body alone, transformed into patterned fabric which billowed superfluously. It was the difference between a Mademoiselle and a Madame, and the excess cloth symbolized her ability to buy extra. She posted photos of large platters of her home-cooked meal with mounds of rice, decorative egg slices, and several whole chickens, a drastic sign of her shift in status. With marriage, she was privy to a whole new wealth of resources that allowed her to focus on the aesthetics of the meal. The comments linked to the photos explained she was naming the plate after her single girlfriends as if to offer a shout-out from the other side. Before marriage she lived within a short bus ride from Aicha and the others who lived clustered together. She moved far out to her husband's commune of Bargny, a seaside town off the road towards Thies, the closest city to Dakar towards the heartland of Senegal. With limited abilities to have friends over, cook for them, and to show off, Facebook photos were a way to stay connected and broadcast her new life. Buggenhagen has argued that women's selfies and other photos on social media are important for creating an image of a bright social future (2014). By sharing photos and dedicating them to her sisters of the *teral gann* group, Awa was giving them a visual of what their lives can and will soon be. Her new status offered her a wider range of possibilities for *terànga*, which she was sharing with the friends that saw her through the other stages of her life up to marriage.

The importance of cloth as cultural expression, the materiality of social relationships, and as historical forms of exchange have been well-documented both for West Africa and other regions (Tranberg Hansen 2013). Cloth has served as a trading material for centuries, as well as an important piece of family heritage. As a commodity it holds a great deal of sentimental value, not only in its materiality, but also in the social importance embedded within it (Andrewes 2005). For Senegalese women, receiving cloth is an honor bestowed upon them from a friend, or a family member recognizing them during a wedding or baptism. It is an acknowledgment of their part in the family social network. This honor, in and of itself, is meaningful, and what the women do with the cloth and how and when they wear it is also indicative of its importance. For younger women without husbands and sparse social and economic capital, cloth is harder to come by. The conversation I shared in Chapter Two between myself and Aicha is demonstrative of how dress and its bearer are a visual representation of the relationship between two people, gifter and receiver, or between a person and his or her religious association. Cloth has long been a marker of wealth. The choice on behalf of the Layene to buy cheap cloth in order to redefine wealth complicates these patterns.

Wearing Western clothes more suitable for their young, hoping-to-impress selves is common in the city. The transition to married life is often noticeably accompanied by a shift in tailored clothes. Cloth and clothing are chosen carefully given the different circumstances, spaces, and company. Dress sends a specific message to others about the person and about how they feel about the people and situation they are in. Dress can convey respect and also indignation. Indignation can be in the form of a woman purposefully choosing not to wear a well-thought-out outfit in order to protest or send a message of disapproval to the host. Women amass a wealth of cloth through their participation in these groups and family ceremonies, and spend a great deal of time and money making outfits for future events where they may show off. For men, cloth and

beautiful dress is important for themselves and also for how their wives represent them. Men do not often visit markets as shoppers; in fact, their tailors come to their homes, or their wives shop for them in the market. The times at which men are most invested in well-made and expensive clothing is for the religious events at the end of Ramadan, known as *korite* (or Eid al-Fitr), and *tabaski* (Eid al-Adha), when each head of household (male) must sacrifice a sheep.

Young women are constantly negotiating their position in the Layene community as well as the secular ethos that surrounds them. In this chapter I have argued that *terànga* has been both a tool for exercising piety and a skill in which they methodically practice in hopes that it will grant them marriages and notoriety among the Layene community. In the case of dress, the young women of *teral gann* wear certain fashions to demarcate space, temporality, and identity. Dress is both part of the art of hospitality - wearing certain clothing during visits and socializing and a result of it. The group meetings and planning for the annual religious pilgrimage give these young women an opportunity to discuss, practice, and hone their skills in preparation for a lifetime of *terànga*.



## Conclusion

In this dissertation I have aimed to explore the nature of *terànga*, its performances, and the centrality of *terànga* as a form of national and personal identity in Senegal. As a concept, *terànga* is mentioned in most scholarship in order to clue the reader into a slogan of Senegalese national culture (Buggenhagen 2012; Gasparetti 2011; Diouf 1994). However, the objective of this dissertation has been to examine the various textures and contexts of *terànga*, how it is performed, idealized, and debated among diverse groups and individuals in the city of Dakar.

Throughout the dissertation I have used ethnographic data to develop several arguments. First, *terànga* is a symbol of Senegalese national identity, and public debates regarding its definitions and values demonstrate an anxiety about the ethical and social future of Senegalese society. Second, women's engagement with *terànga* demonstrates their obligation to societal conventions and is at the same time, a point of agency for women in both private and public spheres. In addition, *terànga* highlights women's historical importance to nation-making and cultural production. Third, *terànga* encapsulates a historical genealogy of Senegalese culture, and is spoken of during social and material exchanges as a way to convey an ideal historical culture that is perceived by some, as masked by these exchanges.

Finally, *terànga* be thought of as the degree of generosity an individual possesses when considering the moral value of exchange. In other words, the generous legacy of an individual is captured in the manner in which the exchange of gifts, pleasantries, and consumables such as shared food and drink take place. The paradox of the concept of *terànga* to Senegalese lives is that, on one hand, it is a celebrated practice and demonstration of cultural knowledge and national identity, yet, on the other hand, it is symbolic of an idealized culture that now entails moral and social decay. Therefore, as Senegalese people express frustration with the nature of

*terànga*, they are effectively articulating an anxiety of the well-being of the nation itself. This includes what many Senegalese perceive to be the core values and ethical standards of Senegalese identity, which is represented by *terànga*, and also problematized by it.

Investigating *terànga* has allowed me to consider points of social and religious contestation and disparities, as well as creative intersections that demonstrate the ambiguities of contemporary city life in Dakar. I have argued that these conflicting narratives and interpretations of *terànga* since the post-independence period expose real anxieties about gender and representation, and the sources of personal and inter-relational ethics. While at the same time, my research on *terànga* highlights the progressive bond between what is considered to be traditional and modern, religious and secular, and apolitical and political. In other words, the various expositions of *terànga* are exemplary of how Dakar residents craft complex identities that blend these aspects even as they seem to be in direct conflict. It is, in fact, the conflict that exposes the importance of *terànga* as a symbol for working out issues of identity and representation. Dakar (and Senegal), and as much of the "developing world," is in the bizarre position of being hyper-aware of its continual development, including its successes and failures, given the lurking presence of development organizations and state projects aiming to both develop new strategies while discouraging others. It seems only fitting that something so central to Senegalese identity as *terànga* would be part of this ongoing self-reflexivity.

I have chosen to highlight a small number of people in each chapter in order to demonstrate the complexities of this problem. The several Layene women discussed are examples of young women navigating the messiness the world has become. As they aspire to find meaning in their life through religious communion, they are also enveloped in the obligations of the social world around them. Being Layene and Muslim also has its rules and expectations. What I found most interesting during my time with them was that the social world

governed by ceremonies and gift exchange was stressful and undesirable, and that in many ways being Layene seemed to offer them a reasonable escape. This is not to say, again, that the Layene community did not have its own challenges; however, directing *terànga* towards a spiritual and, therefore, productive outcome greatly benefited them. As several chapters have shown, there is a friction between social and religious interpretations of *terànga*.

Throughout this dissertation I have demonstrated how the subject of gender has been important to the conceptualization of *terànga* as a national symbol and personal practice. In addition, *terànga* is also evidence of the performativity of gender as the mode of identity construction. Chapter Two attempted to demonstrate how women's subjectivity takes form as they encounter the obligations and possibilities of *terànga* in their marriages, social groups, popular culture, and the state. The double-standard of women's obligations of *terànga* and the critiques of these contributions was present in the campaign to "fight wastefulness" and the popular media examples encouraging women to do all that was necessary to maintain their marriages. Furthermore, the popularization of words such as *jongé* and *feem* (terms for female identity) were used to describe the successes of womanhood as linked to *terànga*.

The women featured in Chapter Three demonstrate a real generational tension as to the interpretations and practices of *terànga*. Elder women remain invested in the complex social networks that help fund ceremonies and create reputations for themselves. Younger generations of women have less patience for these processes, and yet respect the art of *terànga* in different ways. For the younger women, *terànga* is a personal cultivation of reputation and is kept mostly within the ranks of peers as opposed to privileging kinship members with whom they have little contact. Hostesses embody *terànga* through dress and public hosting and serving. Their modeling performances during ceremonies as hostesses aims to prove their skills of generosity.

In addition, the *griot* Djenaba Kouyate and the varying valuations of her work represent the question of cultural survival in the face of changing social relations and economic decline.

Chapter Four then demonstrated how the practice of *terànga* in the political arena is a form of agency and resistance against gender norms for the women of the *parité* movement as much as it is a reification of gender norms. The female politicians demonstrate a creative ability to subvert the limiting factors of *terànga* and gender expectations, and use them for personal and political gain. It is important to note that these women's practices of *terànga* have historically been a sign of women's domestic political power, and their increasing entrance into public politics is equally marked by *terànga* practices.

Chapters Five and Six demonstrated the Layene community and women's engagement with *terànga* as an anxiety about their futures as wives, pious Muslims, and successful women. I have argued that their performativity of *terànga* is their process of becoming women and cultivating a reputation of generosity and piety. Their ability to navigate between the social obligations to peers and family and the, at times, conflicting expectations of the ethical standards of the Layene community complicates our ideas of the static identities of women and Muslims. The various dress choices of the *teral gann* women also demonstrate this point as well as argue that ambiguity does not necessarily mean youth are lost or somehow uninterested in local customs or developing religious faith.

This dissertation has ultimately demonstrated *terànga* to be a central piece of Senegalese realities that are constantly in flux and contestation. It symbolizes the anxieties and innovations of Senegalese society as citizens seek to make meaning out of life. The hesitations between the social and religious, and sometimes both, sources of well-being are captured by the debates regarding *terànga*, its meanings, uses, and appropriations. Throughout my fieldwork and writing of the dissertation I have come to the conclusion that *terànga* is the way Senegalese people make

meaning out of life, both symbolically and literally. In the instances of gift exchange that are highly criticized for becoming too materialistic, *terànga* serves as a way to evoke a sense of what these exchanges should represent.

For a woman to create peace and stability with her mother in-law, despite the obvious tensions, naming the exchange *terànga* signals a desire to cultivate and maintain a peaceful relationship. Female politicians utter *terànga* as a way to insert their narrative into historical importance by demonstrating the legacy of *terànga* to political movements in Senegal, and women's unique contributions. The Layene community speaks of *terànga* also as a historical genealogy of struggle against worldly status and material things, and instead see *terànga* as a symbol of their spiritual connection to God and others. For the women of the *teral gann* group, *terànga* serves as a way to practice piety and gain recognition among the religious community as well as benefit from the religious leaders who provide guidance and prayers. Guided by narratives of Coumba Ndoye and her hospitality and excellence in the art of *terànga*, the young Layene women generate opportunities for marriage and status among the community.

This research contributes to scholarship on Senegal in many ways. Scholars of Senegal have long referenced *terànga* in an abstract way, whereas this dissertation considers *terànga* as its point of interrogation. Given the centrality of *terànga* to the Senegalese nation and individual identity, this dissertation illustrates how *terànga* is lived by Senegalese themselves. Therefore, this in-depth consideration of *terànga* gives other scholars a nuanced understanding of the illustrious and infamous concept that can be useful for further scholarship on inter-family relationships, marriage, and women's subjectivity in mostly unexplored arenas of politics and the Layene community. It also begins a conversation regarding the intersections of culture and politics in political space, and women's contributions in particular.

The contribution to the wider discipline of anthropology lies in its concentration on theories of hospitality and gender in the subfields of anthropology of religion, and legal and political anthropology. The practice of hospitality is often passed off as a cultural given, and is often not politicized, nor considered a source of contention. This dissertation not only considers hospitality as a window into the complexity of human subjectivity and creativity, but directs our attention to how humans navigate the intersecting influences of state politics, religious faith and practice, and transforming families.

This dissertation helps support the assertion made by Saba Mahmood and other scholars of the Islamic world, that the imposition of secular governments and Western modernity does not necessarily mean a decrease in religious faith and practice. In addition, the Western secular world is not unproblematic and does not serve as the only framework for progress. In fact, by regarding the case of traditions such as *terànga* and their debates, it becomes clear that, in many instances, membership in religious communities have become ways for many to deal with increasing, and often unattainable social expectations in what many have called moments of economic and social crisis. The generational and group tensions regarding *terànga* poses interesting questions regarding cultural perpetuation and collective national identity.

The main contribution I feel that is made by this dissertation regards the day to day struggles for women to define their place in the intimate and national narratives of society. As women discuss *terànga*, and they are objects of discussion, they are reflecting on the *terànga*, and, therefore, their lives in their youth. Elder women recount a desire to uphold their understanding of *terànga* in order to safeguard community solidarity. For younger generations, the women worry about their prospects of marriage and stability by considering newer forms of *terànga* to fit changing expectations and realities in the city. These forms may consist of turning a young woman's efforts towards recognition and membership in a religious community, or by

way of participating in elaborate and public ceremonies. Many professional women such as the female politicians I discussed aspire to break into the male-dominated sphere of public service by embracing the feminine traits and tricks of *terànga*. *Terànga* is a way to understand the complex ways Senegalese women are central to national identity-making, and *terànga* also urges us to take seriously the national and global effects of culture that is, at once, unanimously believed, and yet, diversely experienced.

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